

## Few Wives 201

Chapter 201: Talk with Layla...

"Everyone agrees to the plan, right? I'll only take Chloe and Audrey with me while the rest hide close by as backup?" Muku asked for confirmation.

The girls nodded in agreement. It was best to keep the infiltration team as compact as possible. The goal was to do the work without being discovered after all.

"Wait... What about Tilda?" Audrey suddenly asked Chloe. Tilda was once a very important person in Chloe's life after all.

"Umm, let's make my dad the primary target. If it's not inconvenient to take her along when the time comes. We'll do so. We shouldn't go out of our way to get her out though. It's not like she'd die if she stays there" Chloe replied in a slightly chilly voice.

"R... right" Audrey replied in an unsure tone.

She didn't know how to react to Chloe's chilliness toward Tilda. It was rather amazing how much Chloe liked Muku. To the point that she practically disowned her caretaker for being rude to Muku.

She was again reassured that Muku really couldn't give up on any of the girls in that life. Who knows what would happen...

"Anyway, let's move on. It's time to discuss something equally important and a lot closer to home. What's our game plan for the World Evolution?" Muku spoke. It was finally time to talk about the World's Evolution. He didn't care about the unrepentantly rude Tilda, so he just ignored her matter.

"It's simple really. We'll do what we've always done... Get stronger" Layla was the first one to speak. Her words were undeniable as well.

That was practically their only choice. They couldn't reason with beasts after all. Just like how humans couldn't reason with chickens. Even if beasts had the thinking capacity to reason, which chickens didn't have. They probably still wouldn't want to reason with their food.

So what if the food was smart? Food will forever be food. Especially when it could stab you in the back and eat you instead.

"Great plan. Let's start by having those that are R2 reach R3 and those that are R1 reach R2. It should be doable in less than twelve hours if you focus on that alone" Muku agreed with the plan. He proceeded to urge the others to get stronger.

"Oh, right, before you go. I learned from Iris that the voice we are always hearing is called The Messenger. As for whose messenger and stuff like that. She didn't say, she kept most of the details hidden like always. However, that's not what's important. What matters is that we know how to address it" Muku told them one more thing before some left to rank up.

As for why he didn't ask Iris to go deeper and tell them more about this Messenger she was talking about... Well, they had enough problems already. Knowing such things reeked of more problems. Which he didn't want...

After he spoke, Chloe, Hope, Emily, Elsa and Freya left to rank up. They were all close to it anyway. So, it shouldn't take too long.

"Can we talk for a bit?" Muku was about to go and practice his domain when a voice came from behind him. He felt a light tug on his shirt as well. Prompting him to stop in his tracks.

It was Layla who had called him from behind. It seemed the girl really had something to talk about based on her actions from earlier.

"I have to go see Jade" Emily spoke as she left. There was a somewhat gloating look in her eyes as she passed by Muku.

"I also have something to do" Audrey also excused herself. She practically flew out of the room like she was running away from something.

Muku found both their actions rather odd but he didn't think too much about it. After all, Layla was as reliable as Chloe if one didn't involve her fixation with winning.

For that reason, he didn't think too much about what she could want. He just turned back to her and began speaking.

"So, what do you want to talk about?" He asked curiously.

"Let's go talk outside..." Layla replied while walking toward the exit.

The way she did it, made it seem like Muku could do nothing but follow. She could be really pushy if she wanted to be.

While Muku felt a little uncomfortable with her actions, he just chalked it up to her weird personality. So, he quietly followed behind her.

The outside she talked about turned out to be outside the mansion property entirely.

She didn't even stop there. She kept walking until they were a whole kilometre away from the mansion.

"Umm..." Muku made a confused sound. He was completely lost to what was going on. It was kinda making him feel a little uncomfortable.

Was she planning to take him out to the woods and end him? No, she wouldn't do that, would she? She wasn't that type of person, nor did she have any reason to do it.

"Don't worry, we're already here. I brought you here because I want us to have a little spar. It's just to help me get used to my current abilities a bit more..." Layla finally told Muku what was going on.

"Oh! That's all? You scared me for a bit there. Sure, how do you want me to help you?" Muku spoke while sighing in relief in his mind. He was starting to suspect that Layla might have somehow found out about what he did with Audrey.

"Nothing much, just fight me with your metal element alone while I use my ice alone" Layla replied.

The moment her words fell, the ground below them started freezing up. Frost spread until half a kilometre was covered by it. Then it went up into the air. It reached a height of around forty meters and then closed off. Such was a simple feat for a Rank 3 like Layla. Even if she was a newly ascended one.

"Well... This is definitely impressive and quite beautiful. However, doesn't this tilt the battle too much into your favour?" Muku asked while looking around at the crystal-like dome.

It was a rather beautiful sight with the reflection of the sun's light which made it seem surreal. Layla's ice manipulation capabilities were so good that she could make her ice look like diamonds. Of course, it was still cold as hell.

"Maybe a little bit. But you have your physical capabilities and you're more used to this rank than me so..." Layla defended herself.

"Well, fine..." Muku agreed with her logic.

Of course, he could argue against it with some very logical points. However, he would rather not argue with a girl. He'd definitely lose the argument whether he's more logical or not.

"Thank you for understanding. We'll begin when this ice reaches the ground" Layla spoke with a little smile on her face. She then tossed the ice she had created into the sky.

Muku silently agreed and prepared to start fighting. His mana was already swirling around him. Layla was a pretty formidable opponent after after all.

"What do you think one should do when they feel conflicted between anger and happiness?... I said, vent" Just before the ice reached the ground. Layla took control of it.

She then asked Muku a question. Which she proceeded to answer before Muku could.

"What?... AHH!" Muku was about to ask what she was talking about when he was ambushed.

Not by an unexpected enemy like Ares or something like that. It was actually Layla who ambushed him.

Just when he began speaking. She stopped the ice to the ground. Encased her fist with ice then disappeared into the shadows. She appeared in front of the unsuspecting Muku within the next second and punched him in the gut as hard as she could.

If Muku was expecting it, it wouldn't have hurt too much since he could tense up his muscles. It even put on an armour. However, he was caught completely off guard.

Layla was also not supposed to use anything else but ice. So, her use of her Shadow Element added to the surprise. Not to mention that he wasn't expecting it.

No wonder the brat created a shadowy area. While the ice let light in, it was still a bit dark. Which wasn't significant to Evolvers like them with their improved senses. For that reason, Muku didn't suspect anything when he looked at the environment which was perfect for Layla's Shadow Element.

He was regretting it a lot. He should have known that something was up. There were so many signs that something bad was good to happen. Yet he ignored everything.

"What are you Ahh! Ahh!" Just as Muku was trying to ask Layla what she was doing. She attacked him again.

He was attacked two more times before he flew up to get away.

**Bang! Boom!**

Just when Muku thought that he was safe in the sky. An ice pillar descended from the sky and hit him hard on the back. He instantly plunged to the ground and broke through the ice.

"Ahhh!!!" His suffering wasn't over, however. The ice around him started constricting around him. It seemed like Layla was really trying to kill him.

Which confused him heavily. That's when he remembered the words she said. "What do you think one should do when they feel conflicted between anger and happiness". There could only be one explanation...

She had somehow found out about what he did with Audrey. Why tf was he getting caught by everyone in less than 24 hours?!...

Chapter 202: Disappointed Layla

"Not only did you break your promise. You decided to hide it from me as well?!" Layla exclaimed.

Unlike before, or any other time actually. Her face was very expressive, showing a lot of emotion. There was nothing but anger on her face.

It seemed she really didn't like people who broke their promises. It was surprising that she managed to hide all that wrath for so long.

Muku's mind cleared up after realising why he was getting beat up. He then surrounded himself with his Telekinesis Domain. The ice within the domain's range which spanned a few metres instantly turned to nothingness.

He was also just in the when he activated his domain. A few seconds after he activated it, a huge ice sword around seven metres tall and a meter thick descended on him. Which scared him greatly.

"Are you really trying to kill me?!" Muku exclaimed in shock while standing up.

He still felt a little dizzy from the impact. His stomach hurt like hell as well. He definitely needed to see Hope after they were done... Damn! She was busy ranking up. It seemed like he'd have to suffer for a bit.

Wait... Was that why Layla waited until that moment before she acted? How insidious! It seemed that the saying was true... "It's always the quiet ones..."

"Why didn't you notify me of your action" Layla didn't answer his question. She asked one of her own instead.

It seemed like she was done with attacking him at least. Which Muku was happy about. Or maybe, she had just realised that attacking him would be pointless without a domain of her own. She couldn't bypass his domain otherwise.

Which was one of the reasons why lower ranks were helpless in front of R3s. Well, whatever the reason was. As long as he was no longer getting attacked. That's all Muku cared about.

"I was going to tell you... It's just that so many things came... Cough... Okay, maybe I wasn't going to say anything. How exactly did you want me to start such a conversation?! Come up to you and say I slept with your mother?" Muku tried to lie his way out of it.

However, after being glared at by Layla, he decided to tell the truth instead. It was like the girl could tell whether he was telling the truth or not.

Seeing how she had changed so much. To the point, it seemed like life had been blown into a machine. Muku decided to never ever break any promises he made to her. The girl was way too scary when she was angry.

Why did all the girls have to be crazy when certain conditions were met? Couldn't they just be the sweet and uncomplicated girls he taught before?

"Hmm, makes sense. I'll give you that. I won't even hold what you did against you. It's understandable that you couldn't resist. It also helped her rank up. So that's good" Layla spoke.

She was mostly calm by that point. It seemed her "venting" solution worked. Her emotions were getting back under control.

"You won't? Really? Thanks for understanding. I..." Muku was surprised that she was so accepting after all that. However, he was interrupted before he could finish speaking.

"Don't get ahead of yourself. If you break any promise you've made to me again. I'll break your legs. Don't think being stronger than me can keep you safe. I know where and when you sleep" Just when Muku was starting to feel better. Layla said some words that made him feel a chill go down his spine.

He had been wrong all this time! Jade wasn't or possibly Emily I'm some cases, weren't the most unstable factors in the team. Layla was! He knew enough about the others to steer clear of everything that triggered them. However, Layla was different. She mostly kept to herself. He didn't know how to deal with her.

It would suck to wake up one day with broken legs and not know why they were broken. He couldn't help but sweat at the possibility. Should he just ditch the team and start solo ranking?

"Don't overthink it. As long as you keep your promises, you won't ever see this side of me again" Layla spoke. It was almost like she read Muku's mind. Emily wasn't the only one with the gift it seemed.

Either that or Jade and Muku just had super expressive faces. Which was more believable than Emily and Layla being mind readers.

"With that done. Let's go back" Layla spoke. The dome crumbled around them as her words fell.

"Ow! Hey!" Whether by intention or accident, a small ice shard flew over and hit Muku on the head. He had taken down his domain. So, he no longer had protection. Which prompted a scream of pain from him.

Layla didn't look back. She continued walking as if she didn't hear his little cry. Which made it obvious that it wasn't an accident. She really didn't miss any chances...

After that, the two walked back to the mansion. With Muku walking some distance behind Layla. His guard was also up. Lest he got ambushed again.

"Wait... How did you find out? I mean, Audrey probably acted suspiciously around you. However, she definitely wouldn't say anything. So, how were you so sure of what happened?" Muku asked a question that suddenly popped up in his mind when they were about to reach the mansion.

"No comment" Layla replied without looking back. Her walking speed increased a bit as well. It was clear that there was something she didn't want him to know.

"No, you aren't going anywhere until you give me something to work with. A hint at least. You can even tell me a name. The person won't know anything" Muku activated his Telekinesis Domain. Locking Layla in an invisible dome with him.

"You should be happy that I let you off so easily. Yet here you are trying to force some information out of me. How much do you want to let me down today?" Layla spoke in a disappointed tone after turning back to look at Muku.

"... Argh, fine. I'll find out some other way. Muku took back the domain and flew away. He clearly wouldn't get anything from Layla.

"Hehe, it worked like she said it would" Layla spoke to herself after Muku left.

She even giggled, to show how pleased she was with herself. She had been sceptical when that person told her that it would work. It seemed the person had studied Muku a lot more than her.

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In Muku's room...

"Sigh... I didn't know I'd go through so much trouble because of that moment of weakness... Luckily, it was worth it. Let's forget it all for now and improve my domain" Muku spoke to himself as he sat on his bed.

His body felt rather sore from the beating. But, it could be ignored. He then sat in a meditative position and closed his eyes. A thin layer of mana and mental energy began circling around him.

He soon entered a state of deep meditation. He had to make his Telekinesis Domain as strong as possible before the infiltration. The stronger his domain was. The better the chance they had at succeeding.

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At NL Base. In William's office...

"So, where are we with our plan Abel?" William asked in a commanding tone while sitting on his desk.

The air around him was nothing like the one he had when he spoke to Chloe and the others. The William in front of Abel at that moment radiated nothing but coldness. Which was his usual state when Chloe wasn't around.

"We're almost done. We're just waiting for the final batch which Tilda and the others should arrive with soon. However, we could have been long done by now if..." Abel replied seriously.

For certain reasons his ability didn't work on William, so he never tried using it on the man. For that reason, he chose to be as straightforward as he could when interacting with William. Even though both of them knew just how much of a snake Abel was.

"I don't need your input. Just your report is enough. I'm the leader here, we do what I want. The Monarch accepted my plan anyway. So, just do what you're told" William replied in a chilly voice. Even cutting off Abel.

Chloe would be surprised by his work disposition. She always thought that he was a rather cold person. However, she had no idea that he was actually a lot warmer when he interacted with her. Which would have probably made her feel a little happy. After all, it showed his care for her.

"Sure, you're the boss after all. Anyway, as I was saying. We should be done just before the evolution. Which will leave us in the perfect situation" Abel replied while backing off. Though it was clear that he wasn't too intimidated by William.

"Good. You're excused" William spoke then returned to reading the papers on his table. He no longer cared about Abel since he had learnt what he wanted.

Abel looked at him with a serious expression on his face for a moment. Then he broke out into a smile before getting up and walking out.

He walked around the base until he eventually reached a huge metal door in the basement. He looked at it for a bit with a little smile on his face. He then walked toward it.

There were ten guards who surprisingly radiated auras of R3 Evolvers! They ignored Abel as he walked closer to them.

The moment he arrived in front of the door. They all put their hands on it at the same time. Then they began channelling their mana into it. Which went on for a full minute before they stopped.

When they did, the door opened up a little bit before Abel walked right through. It immediately closed right after he entered.

The guards got back into position and continued standing in silence...

Chapter 203: Rank Two Freya!

Early morning, the next day...

There were just a few hours left before the World Evolution commenced. Everyone was gathered in the lounge.

Even Jade was present. She seemed to be feeling a lot better than the day before. Which was good. Muku wanted to talk with her for a bit. However, it wasn't the right time. So, he had to put it off for a bit.

There was something major about to happen. Which they both wanted to be around for. It was probably why Jade even bothered coming out. Maybe with some nagging from Emily. But still...

Anyway, their plans seemed to be going in the right direction. Almost everyone had successfully ranked up!

Only Freya was left. She could have done so away from the other but she chose to gather everyone before doing so. She wanted everyone to be around for the event. She had the feeling that it was going to be something special.

"Okay. Everyone is here. You can go ahead and start now" Muku spoke while looking at Freya with expectation in his eyes.

As for what happened the previous day with Layla and whatnot? He had decided to forget all about it. Not like he could do much to the snitch anyway. After sitting back and thinking about it. He had pretty much figured out who the snitch was.

It was likely Emily. That brat's smug expression when Layla asked to speak with him said it all. She definitely knew what was up. She was so petty that she sold him out even after getting a good deal out of him.

Anyway, he didn't mind. It just showed how much it hurt her. She was just venting. All that mattered now was going forward with their plans for the future.

The first major event on the agenda was Freya's rank-up. They were all very curious to see how it would change the mansion.

"Okay" Freya replied then closed her eyes as she sat cross-legged on the mat.

The moment she did the others could sense her mana quickly leaving her body and getting absorbed into the mansion. Glowing white lines that made patterns that were somewhat similar to those on circuit boards appeared on the walls and floors.

Every wall and floor in every room of the mansion was covered by the markings. The others just looked on with awe waiting to see what happens.

"Can you please create for me the strongest metal you can?... Which isn't Mithril" Freya who had suddenly opened her eyes asked Muku to do something.

"Sure... How much?" Muku didn't ask any questions. He was willing to help in any way he could.

"There... Feed it into that whirlpool. I'll tell you when to stop. In different colours please" Freya replied while pointing at a weird whirlwind that had appeared on the floor. It looked like the floor had turned to liquid as it was really swirling around like a whirlpool does.

"O... Kay" Muku was a bit startled by the appearance of the whirlpool. However, he still did as he was told. He then began creating the strongest metal he could and began feeding it into the whirlpool.

He thought that he'd be done after doing it for a little bit of time. However, even ten minutes later he was still feeding the whirlpool that seemed like a bottomless pit at that point.

He didn't stop though. It made him feel even more fired up. He wanted to see how much of his metal could the whirlpool take.

It was only after thirty minutes that Freya finally told him to stop. She actually managed to make him expend almost half of his mana. Which was something even the strongest R2 wouldn't be able to do in battle.

While the circumstances were different from a battle. It still increased the expectations Muku and the girls had for what Freya was about to do... Whatever it was.

"Everyone... Please close your eyes" Freya gave the others a warning.

No one was feeling rebellious. So, they all did what they were told. Even though they did as they were told. Their eyes were still affected a bit.

This was because an intense white light instantly covered the whole mansion the moment they did. It was so bright that their eyelids couldn't completely block off the light. They all reflexly covered their eyes with their hands after that. Which did a better job.

The light wasn't just a quick flash. It persisted for around thirty seconds before finally fading.

"It's okay to open them now..." Freya's tired voice sounded soon after. It was only then that everyone opened their eyes.

"What was that abo... Woah!" Muku's sentence was interrupted by the sight in front of him.

Wherever he looked. He was met by an awe-inspiring site. He knew that it was still the same mansion. However, the way it looked, he suspected that he had been transported somewhere else.

It looked super luxurious before. However, now it looked not only luxurious by inviting at the same time.

The walls and floors had been replaced or infused with the metal he created before. The floor was now a mixture of black and silver tiles arranged in a certain order. It was mostly black with streaks of silver going in between the larger black spots.

The walls were mostly a dark grey with golden linings. Which was the pattern the roof followed. Golden circles were going on around the Beast Core lights. The decorative chandelier was golden as well.

Even some of the furniture, such as chairs and tables had been affected. They were made a lot more durable and better looking. There were a lot of other things which won't be mentioned because the author isn't an interior designer so he doesn't know what those things are either... He's also mansionless so...

That all wasn't the best part, however. The best part was how, somehow, Freya managed to preserve the R3 properties of the metal. For that reason. The mansion's physical defensive capabilities could ward off attacks from normal R3s.

As Muku's current strongest metal. Despite having created it at LR3. It could actually ward off attacks of up to PR3s as long as the attackers aren't anything special and they don't use their domain.

It was almost impossible for an R3 not to use their domain. However, it was a huge improvement from the initial R1 defence. Now, as long as they ignored the normal objects in the mansion. Elsa and Freya could literally use all their abilities without having to worry about destroying the mansion.

Hell, even the others could use their abilities inside as long as they were weaker attacks. If Muku had used his Mithril, maybe even the group's strongest attacks wouldn't have been able to do anything to the mansion.

"That's not all. Let's go outside. There's something I want to show you all!" Freya spoke before anyone could say anything else.

She tried to get up on her own but her body felt too weak to do so. Emily went to help her up. With Emily's help, she led the group outside.

Soon they were outside and looking back at the mansion. Awe in their eyes. It looked different from the outside as well. However, that wasn't what Freya wanted to show them.

"Weapons!" Freya called out. The word she called out made the group open their eyes wide even before something happened. It was pretty obvious what was to come from the word alone.

The very next moment, large silver guns appeared on the roof of the mansion. There were ten large guns on the roof. Every direction had at least two guns pointing there. They looked really imposing.

"Fire!" Freya called out again.

Whoosh!

BOOOM!

A fiery yellow energy beam came out of one of the guns and shot into the distance. A large boom sound was heard soon after when it reached the ground.

The attack was surprisingly as strong as a Psuedo-R3's!

Everyone was greatly shocked. Freya had just reached R2. How the hell was her firepower so strong already?! Even with the KP from the dragon incident only got her to MR2. Just like Elsa.

Elsa was the most impacted by Freya's display of strength. She had secretly been happy about being stronger than someone. However, now it appeared she was the weakest again. That wasn't a problem.

The problem was how she had been surpassed so easily and by such a large margin. She didn't even get a chance to fight back. Which really sucked. How was that fair?

"How are you so strong already?!" Elsa couldn't stay silent in such a situation. So, she asked the question on everyone's mind.

"Huh?... Oh! You think that's my strength? No, no! That's the power from a beast core. Without beast cores, I wouldn't even be able to shoot one beam with my current mana. It takes a lot to operate the whole mansion" Freya was first confused by what Elsa was talking about.

She quickly cleared things up after understanding what she meant. Her class was obviously pretty amazing. However, it was heavily dependent on resources. Which the others might have missed after being blinded by its various functions.

She on her own was still the weakest in the team. So, she didn't feel overly happy despite her upgrade...

Chapter 204: Mana GPS?!

"Oh... But still, I'm so jealous. Even if there's the use of outside mediums, it's still part of your strength. After all, you're the one manipulating it" Elsa spoke.

She still didn't feel any better. No matter what the details were. As long as Freya could use that power. Then it was her's even if she didn't acknowledge it.

"Well... If you put it like that. But still, I can only use it around the mansion otherwise I'm really just average with my second-hand plant magic" Freya compromised in her reply. That way, both their sides would become valid.

"Oh, by the way... Is that all? I'm not saying that I'm disappointed or anything. I just want to know so that I can prepare my heart if there's more..." Muku spoke after Elsa returned to her quiet state.

"Well, there are two more things for now. However, one of them which is a barrier around the mansion needs something called a barrier stone. Which we don't have. I don't even know what it looks like. Hopefully, we'll come across it someday" Freya replied with a slightly disappointed look on her face.

She also wanted to see what the barrier would look like. She only had the general information that came with her class. So, while she had an idea of how the barrier would look like and had seen barriers in real life. She wanted to see one around their mansion.

"Oh, it's like that? Well, such is life. We can only hope then... What about the other thing?" Muku also felt disappointed about not getting the barrier.

However, he didn't hang on to the disappointment. There was nothing they could do about it after all. He chose to focus on the other thing. From her words, it seemed that it was on the table. Which was great.

"Let's go back inside for this one..." Freya directed everyone back inside. She was really good at holding out on the surprises. Not letting even a single word slip.

Soon they were back inside. Everyone looked at Freya curiously. They were trying to guess what she was about to do. However, nothing came to mind. Her actions weren't hinting at anything they could guess.

She just stood there with her eyes closed. They could sense a thin layer of mana spreading from the mansion to the surroundings. The layer went even further than the limit of their senses. For that reason, they couldn't figure out what was going on.

However, no one interrupted her. They just patiently let her do her thing. They were bound to find out soon enough anyway.

A few later, Freya finally opened her eyes. She was still very tired. Without the beast cores doing all the heavy lifting. She would have definitely fainted a long time ago.

"Mana GPS" Freya called out. The moment she did. A mini version of the mansion along with the area within five kilometres appeared in front of the group. It looked like a full-colour holographic image. It was a literal recreation of every physical thing in that area.

The areas with higher mana concentrations were shown by a brighter colour than the surroundings. The brightest area was the mansion for obvious reasons.

If Freya was stronger and had R3 beast cores. They might have been able to cover another five kilometres and be able to see the NL Base.

"Luckily I prepared my heart" Muku spoke while looking on in awe. Freya had been reinforcing the correctness of his decision to take her every day. And on that day she definitely got rid of any questions anyone might have had about her usefulness. She did so with a big bang.

She herself could feel that she had finally done something that only she could do. While it was apparent from the start that such a thing was inevitable. Finally being able to do it, still felt amazing.

She could finally feel more at ease in the group. Now, even if she didn't count Iris' various advantages to the group. She could confidently say that she was enough.

"What's that?" Jade spoke suddenly when everyone was still revelling in the hologram.

The others instantly looked at the area she was pointing to. It took a little effort for some to notice it. This was because there were a lot of details on the 2.5 square metre holographic image.

What Jade was pointing at were various humanoid shapes. Of course, such a thing wouldn't be worth noting. However, there weren't supposed to be humans around that area. Especially inside trees.

That's right, there were people hiding inside trees. Obviously spies, likely sent by Abel again. They were only discovered because humans were made to stand out on the holo image no matter what.

Of course, the effect was weaker on weak people. This was why they had been missed by everyone. Even Audrey who didn't lose much to Jade's senses missed them.

If not for the coincidence, it was a really smart move. They were outside the detection range of everyone at the mansion. On top of that, Jade and Audrey wouldn't be able to find them even if they

looked around for them because their auras were weak and mimicked the trees somehow. Unless maybe the spies looked at them. Which they likely knew not to do.

The plan worked so well, that Muku's group didn't even know how long the spies had been there. A disturbing part of the event was how they kept on discovering more after seeing the first few. It was like a puzzle coming together after figuring out one key step.

The group had found twenty spies by the time they were done. The spies were suspiciously placed in every direction of the mansion. So, they were actually surrounded.

The spies were too far away to do any significant spying. So, the major reason they were there was probably to notify whoever sent them the moment Muku's group left. If they decided to do so.

The large numbers were likely to ensure that the message was received no matter what. Realising such a thing made the expressions of everyone turn serious.

It seemed someone cared about them more than they thought. After all, it was so close to the World Evolution(WE) yet someone still felt the need to send out spies instead of concentrating their power in preparation for whatever was to come.

"What should we do now? They probably saw the mansion's upgrade as well as the beam attack" Emily was the first one to speak.

She felt like whoever sent the spies had gone too far. Which was a sentiment everyone likely echoed. Sending so many people was a clear sign of bad intentions.

"Yeah, you're right. I bet the message has already been sent back. As for what to do now?... Well, that's obvious" Muku replied as his aura began rising.

It was clear to the girls that he was pissed. He had been nice enough to send back the first spy. Yet they still dared send so many? Whether it was Abel or someone else this time. It didn't matter. He won't let the blatant disrespect go that time around.

"Jade, Layla. Let's take care of them" Muku spoke as he walked out.

He called out to the two girls in his group he was sure were prepared to end their enemies without lingering emotions. The time for civility was over.

Especially with his ranked-up team and their superior classes. He was certain that they could already take care of most LR3s with their current strength.

He wasn't worried about there being someone stronger than that. After all, rank three beasts were still rarer than diamonds. Not to mention that the one he killed only gave him 0.1% KP. This meant that one would need to kill ten of them for just one percent.

Which was practically impossible in the current world. Maybe after the WE, stronger people with MR3 strength and above would appear. But, that was a future thing. In the present, LR3s were the peak!

"I've been looking for a way to vent" Jade spoke as she followed behind Muku. She had been looking for a way to completely shake off her current mood. And it seemed she had found it...

Layla didn't say anything. She just quietly followed behind the two. Clearly in agreement. The others looked on. They had mixed emotions on the matter.

They all understood what Muku and the other two were going to do. It was something they were too scared to do. So, seeing their teammates seemingly finding it so easy to make up their minds about it. It felt weird to them.

However, they didn't say anything. They all understood that it was something that had to be done. Even Chloe was in support of the plan. Despite the possibility that the spies could have been sent by her father. Her father was under the control of a major enemy so she was okay with going against him.

The world had changed after all. One could no longer show weakness. There was no law be order to rely on. Only showing your strength could protect your interests.

Muku and the two girls went their separate ways soon after exiting the mansion gates.

Muku flew at an ultra-fast speed that broke the sound barrier just from his take-off alone.

Jade ran in another direction at a speed that also broke through the sound barrier.

Layla took advantage of the morning shadows cast by the long vegetation in the area. She Melted into the shadows as she also made her way to her targets.

The spies weren't paying close attention to the mansion to avoid detection. Which made them take a little time to notice what was going on.

They only noticed Muku and Jade since Layla was moving through the shadows.

However, by the time they noticed Muku and Jade. The two were already upon them.

Their chances of escaping were minimal at best...

Chapter 205 Shadow Domain!

"Rain of Silver" Muku cast a spell the moment he reached the spies.

Silver, water-drop-shaped metal appeared in the sky above the spy.

Before they could react. The metal rained down on them at unimaginable speeds.

Some were killed off without even being able to react. Some managed to react and put up different defences. However, the power difference was too large and they were also killed off.

Their defences didn't slow down the bullets even by a millisecond. Those who were a bit of distance away wanted to run away. However, they were also killed off before they could even break out of their tree disguises.

By the time Muku was done with his side. It looked like a bunch of trees were bleeding human blood.

.....

On Jade's side...

She arrived at a slightly slower time than Muku. Which gave some spies the time to ditch their disguises. However, before they could do anything else. She was on them.

Her method of killing was even more brutal than Muku's. She went right for the head. She ran around blowing one head after the other with her Beast Aura-covered fists.

Her speed was so fast that by the time the brain matter spread all over the place. She was already a distance away. The matter that got on her fists from the punches was immediately burnt away by her green flames.

She was done with her part within a minute. No spy even managed to scream before dying.

"Huff... I feel a lot better now. Who the hell said that killing humans was different from killing animals? That didn't feel different at all... Maybe I'm just crazy..." Jade spoke to herself while looking around with an oddly calm expression.

It seemed the bloody sight didn't bother her at all. For a human to not be affected by such a thing. Especially when it was their first time doing it. Maybe she really was crazy...

...

On Layla's side...

Her group was the smallest with only three spies left. However, they had enough time to react.

So, they all used the spell that qualified them to be in that job. "Earth Escape!"

It was a spell that allowed them to literally dive into the ground and swim away. They would become completely undetectable as well. Which would have been great for spying if it didn't drain their mana like crazy. It was how they all got into position in the first place.

While the skill couldn't get them all the way to the NL Base. It could at least give them a better chance of making it.

So, the three dived into the ground and went in three separate directions. Layla barely missed them. However, she wasn't worried.

She had been prepared for something to go wrong anyway. She was actually hoping for it to happen. For it gave her the chance to try out her new trick...

"Shadow domain" She called out softly.

The area within two kilometres around her turned pitch black. Forming a black dome if one looked from a distance away.

Unlike physical element domain. Energy domains didn't start out small. Which made them perfect for scenarios like the one Layla was in.

Despite their larger sizes making them less potent than physical domains at the beginning. They were still strong enough for the enemies Layla was facing.

She knew of their weak strength from the start. So, she was pretty certain that the skill they used wouldn't take them past two kilometres. She had been weak before so, she was certain of that.

As she predicted. The three spies reappeared within the barrier. They had managed to get close to one and a half kilometres away. Which was better than she thought. Luckily she had been careful and stretched her domain as far as she could.

The three spies who had appeared in three different directions looked around them in confusion. They were wondering if they had lost their sight. After all, it was still early in the morning. The sun had just come up. So, there was no way it was already night. A completely black night at that.

However, they didn't get a chance to contemplate the situation a little more. All three had their heads instantly sliced off their heads within three seconds after emerging.

This was because Layla's Shadow Domain had a broken ability. Which she called "Omnipresence" Within her domain. She was aware of anything and everything. And, she could appear anywhere instantly.

So, the spies had lost the moment they fell into her domain. Only strong opponents of around the same strength had a slight chance of being able to resist.

Obviously, stronger ones could dispel her domain. So they were the only ones who were absolutely safe from the devastating ability... until she became as strong as them.

A horrifying fact about her domain was the fact that it was still just an embryo. It wasn't a completely formed domain yet. This meant that there was a high chance new capabilities would be included in the future.

Thinking of such possibilities made Layla wonder what she was thinking in the past. She once looked down on her shadow element. Taking it as a support for her ice. Although it has always been a vital part of her "Shadow Charged" series of spells. Which were definitely her best and strongest.

Well, that time had passed. She had the feeling that her shadow element would only get more and more outstanding from then on.

Of course, there were drawbacks. It drained at least three times more energy to use her shadow domain than her ice domain. From that math, she knew that realising her ultimate idea into reality wasn't going to be easy...

With the spies taken care of. Muku and the two girls returned to the mansion. There was less than an hour left until the awaited moment...

.....

At NL Base...

"Hhm?! All twenty were killed? It seems my future friends are a lot more capable than I thought. Does this mean war? Maybe it wasn't a fluke that they managed to resist me before... How interesting..." Abel who had his eyes closed while relaxing in his room spoke to himself.

He didn't even bother opening them. He was so relaxed that one might think he didn't know about the pending WE.

And as for how he knew about the deaths of his spies without being there? Only he knew such information...

.....

A while later, at the mansion...

"Okay, is everybody ready? We have roughly around ten minutes before the evolution..." Muku asked the girls who were seated around him.

He had already lifted the mansion into the air in preparation. The WE could begin at any moment after all. A matter worthy of note was how the mansion had gotten a lot easier to carry after Freya's rank-up.

As for why that was. He didn't know. He wasn't complaining though. He could probably keep the mansion levitating for a month or more with its current negligible mental energy consumption.

The difference was almost as big as the one between heaven and earth when compared to before. He remembered the first time when his head almost exploded from just lifting it up two meters. Times were really changing...

"Yeah. We're ready. We can't wait to get the matter over with so we can proceed with the NL Base plan and then move on with our lives. I feel like we've been here too long despite it only being a few days" Emily was the one who replied first.

She took the chance to express her dislike of their current location. Which was understandable when there was a Monarch lurking around. The Ares experience was enough for her.

If it wasn't for wanting to help Chloe. She would have definitely urged the others to leave the moment the Monarch was mentioned. Though they probably wouldn't have needed urging...

"I agree. This place sucks" Surprisingly, it was Chloe who supported her first.

Although she has reunited with her father because they went there. The bad news that came with it was just way too much. She was even cursing her father in her head for getting into such a mess.

How dare he ditch her for years, only to turn up in such a situation. Maybe she should team up with everyone after saving him and beat him up. Such venting would be acceptable after such an ordeal right?

[Time up. World Evolution will begin in 10... 9... 8... 7...]

Just as the group was getting into the conversation. A familiar voice rang out in their heads. Along with the heads of everyone else all over the world.

It was time for the world to change again. Which will bring both new opportunities and disasters for everyone involved. Some were excited. Most were scared out of their minds.

Well, whatever the state of mind people were in. The evolution had come. What their fate would be. Everyone would find out soon...

Chapter 206: Obsolete R3s

[... 3... 2... 1...]

The whole world went silent for a split second when the number "1" was called out. Everyone held their breaths. Then...

BOOM!

The first thing which people expected to occur didn't occur. Everyone expected to be hit by an earthquake like last time. However, that's not what happened.

They were hit by a strong gravitational pull first. Many fell to the ground. Luckily mana had strengthened everyone's bodies. Even those with Brittle Bone Disease had been cured. Otherwise many would have had their bones broken from the sudden increase of the world's gravity.

It wasn't even a 2× increase, but a 4× instead. Which was the limit the normal person in the apocalyptic world could take. However, everyone will have to go through an adjustment period, which will likely get some people killed.

The gravity change was so sudden the mansion almost fell from the sky. Muku had gotten too comfortable while focusing on the outside. Fortunately, he reacted quickly enough.

Soon after the gravity fiasco, the much-awaited earthquake came. It was at least five times stronger than the last one. The world increased in size again. Its diameter increased so much that it became one-fifth of Jupiter from the initial one-eleventh.

Which meant more travelling for everyone. However, that wasn't really that important at that time. As the World was still shaking, a dense wave of mana flooded the whole planet. Which meant one thing... The portals were at work again.

The old portals that were numerous in every city had actually all disappeared at some point. Which was why no one had seen them for a while.

However, that wasn't as good as one might think. Which was because in their place. Large red-coloured portals that practically reached the skies appeared. Which meant the larger and more dangerous creatures were finally able to come through. No one was prepared for them since they appeared with the evolution.

Fortunately, the large portals were only a tenth of the smaller portals from before. They were also placed in areas as far away from large human populations as possible.

Which would give people a little breathing room... Well, that would have been the case if hordes upon hordes of beasts didn't exit the portals. Despite being way less in number. The portals actually spat out a lot more beats than the smaller portals from before. The world would have long been flooded if it didn't increase in size.

The first waves ranged from unranked beasts which came out for the portals running. They were trying their best to run away from the beasts behind them. Most failed and were killed off accidentally or intentionally.

Those that made it didn't stop until they were completely out of sight. Which had become easier after the evolution. This was because plants all over the world had been boosted in growth and size.

Most of the world's land had become forest. Nature had long wiped out most of the inventions of men. Which, honestly should have been done long before...

Anyway, after the unranked beasts came rank ones, twos and threes. Surprisingly, they were all doing the same as the unranked beasts did.

Even the R3s that were the dominators of the world just a few minutes before were running for their lives. Which would have horrified Muku's group if they were there to see what was going on.

They had barely stepped into R3. Yet R3s were now practically obsolete. That's just how unforgiving the apocalyptic world was.

Following behind the terrified R3s were... Behemoths. That's the only word fit to be used in the situation. Creatures that had an average height of fifty metres couldn't be addressed with any other term. Well, they could, but Behemoths was simply perfect.

The R4s had finally made their appearance. Their aura alone was enough to dispel any domain from R3s without even doing anything.

The difference between R3s and R4s wasn't simply one rank. Going from R3 to R4 was like being reborn. The very energy in the bodies of R3s and R4s was different. No matter how strong a R3 was, it could never step up to an R4.

This was because R4s had what was called Advanced Mana. That's right, going from R3 to R4 wasn't just ranking up. It was evolving. The second significant evolution a creature goes through.

The first one was the subtle evolution one goes through when they are killing unranked beasts. That's subtle numbness all over the body. Which was actually the body getting primed for the use of mana.

The evolution to R4, however, wasn't as subtle or easy. Which many will find out soon enough. The point of the matter was that base mana couldn't do anything to Advanced Mana. It was like hitting a rock with an egg. There's no chance the egg will win the exchange by breaking the rock. Even a boiled egg cannot break a real rock.

Which made the actions of the R3s quite understandable. Anyone with even half a brain would do the same.

There was a twist in the script, however... Even the R4s looked nervous. What would make such godlike creatures nervous?

The answer was simple actually. R5s had also come to join the party. Soon after all the R4s in a certain portal had gone through. One R5 walked through.

The moment it did. The world around it paused. All the beasts that hadn't been able to flee into the distance stopped in their track. Some were so scared they couldn't even breathe.

"So... This is The Blue Planet from Legends, huh? It doesn't seem very impressive to me" The beast spoke. Muku would have found the language familiar if he had been present.

It was the same language Iris and the four beasts spoke before. The weird language that everyone understood without having heard anything like it before. He had even tried to ask Iris about it before.

However, like always she held out on the information. She didn't even give a reason for not wanting to say. She just stayed silent while looking at him until he gave up.

Anyway, that didn't matter at the moment. What mattered was the appearance of the R5. Its literal physical appearance.

One would think that it would be a creature even bigger than an R4 right?... Wrong!

It was actually human-sized! It also had two legs and two hands like a human. In fact, it looked exactly like one of the creatures in human mythology. One of the most hated creatures as well.

Green skin, around four feet in height, an ugly face, a long nose, and an evil and cunning glint in its eyes. That's right, it was a damn goblin!

However, unlike in all the stories. It clearly wasn't a weak creature dominated by everyone. It was the one dominating everyone. It also didn't seem to be lustful at all...

Well, then again, it wasn't really a typical goblin. It was actually the humanoid form of some R5 beast. As for why it looked like that. It was a story for another day...

"Hhm? Why aren't you all moving? Don't you want to go out into the world and explore? Come on, move it along. You're blocking my sight" The goblin spoke after noticing the frozen beasts.

However, instead of moving after hearing its words. Despite understanding it perfectly. None of the beasts moved. They started shaking in fear even more intensely than before.

"What? Are you defying me? I'll kill all of you where you stand if you don't move right now!" The goblin spoke threateningly.

The beasts were thrown even deeper into the pits of fear. One R4 couldn't take the pressure any more, so it moved. It was a fifty-metre-tall leopard that was definitely the nightmare of many.

Despite its size. It was super fast. Unlike a normal leopard that would need around 13 minutes to run 100 kilometres if it was fifty meters tall.

That beast leopard wasn't normal. It wasn't just fifty metres tall. It was also a rank four. For that reason, it was infinitely better. Which gave it the ability to run one hundred kilometres within thirty freaking seconds!

However, that was all nothing in front of the R5 goblin. Before the leopard could even fully raise its leg, it was dead. The head had been long blown off. Within the first millisecond, it was dead.

That was to say, the goblin was at least one thousand times faster than a second. Which was a horrifying thought.

Bang!

The leopard's headless body hit the ground with a loud sound.

"Hehe, except for this one," The goblin spoke while sitting on top of the leopard's giant back. It was holding some brain matter in its hand. Feasting gleefully as it spoke.

Seeing its actions. Instead of continuing to stay still. The other beasts instantly made a break for it. Which should have been a bad move after the first one to move was killed right?

Not really, they were just repeating a common event. The goblin had such a thing many times before. So, they were very familiar with it.

However, it was unpredictable. Sometimes it would spare the first one to move and kill a tenth of those who stayed still. At other times, like then, it would kill the first one to move only.

Which left the beast not knowing what to do. If it wasn't because of the predetermined order of going through the portals. The stronger beasts would have definitely been the first ones to go through.

However, life was a big. Things seldomly went the way you wanted them to. Fortunately for the beasts, they no longer had to deal with the goblin anymore.

Unless maybe they were unlucky enough to meet it again someday...

And fortunately for the world, it appeared that only one R5 would appear from a single portal. Otherwise, everyone would have been cooked.

"How I love this game. Their fear is always very fragrant. I do wonder what the fear from humans smells like though..." The goblin spoke to itself as it looked on while the beasts ran away with their tails in between their legs.

It couldn't wait to step into the world and terrorise humans. Only if there weren't those dumb rules which stopped it from attacking bases or carrying out large massacres...

If not for that. Oceans of blood would have run free wherever it went...

Chapter 207: Moved down the food chain?

Back on Muku's side of the enlarged world...

The shaking has just stopped. Everyone was feeling a bit heavier. The mana in the surroundings had gotten a lot denser.

The trees and other vegetation had skyrocketed in size. Some now reached a hundred metres in height. Of course, they were in the minority. Most were at most a respectable sixty metres or shorter.

Seeing a normal-sized tree like the one in their mansion had gotten rare. The large tree probably didn't qualify to be called a tree anymore. It had been demoted to a shrub.

The world around them had really turned into a jungle within a few minutes. They didn't know which being was acting behind the scenes of all the events that were going on. However, they couldn't help but respect it. Anything that could do such a thing definitely deserved respect.

Emily even had to burn away some trees for them to have a place to land. Which was oddly not easy despite her new R3 strength. The trees were surprisingly very resilient.

Actually, it wasn't that surprising. They were apocalyptic world trees. They were huge and drunk on mana. So, of course, they would be tough.

"I'm not sure how to feel about this... It's like a completely new world," Freya spoke while looking around.

No matter where she looked, all she saw were trees. Only the sky was still clearly visible. What made the situation was the comical size of the trees. She felt like an ant standing next to them.

The world's relatively balanced proportion system had been completely destroyed. Either that or humans had just been moved further down the food chain. To the level of ants no less.

In their present world, it was actually possible to be stepped on and killed by mistake. Like, a rank four beast could be passing by and not notice your insignificant self below it. Then... Squash... You're dead.

The beast wouldn't even notice that it killed something. Just like how humans don't notice when they kill ants below them...

What a horrible ending that would be... It definitely was not undeserved after all the atrocious acts humans had done. Of course, there would be many innocents who would die, but that's just life...

"Yeah. It's definitely going to require some adjustment time, like with the new gravity..." Emily replied to her while also looking around.

The feeling of being in an apocalypse sunk even deeper into everyone's mind. Just when they thought that they had completely assimilated into the new world. Something that made them realise that they were still far from that occurred. Maybe for the hundredth time.

They felt even more uncertain about their future. They could somewhat hope themselves up before. Since everything still looked relatively the same. Just that, houses and such had been destroyed.

Then, however, the familiarity had been completely removed. Fortunately, the change had come in stages. If it has all happened at once... Who knows if anyone would have been able to adjust.

While some had definitely killed themselves because of the apocalypse. Such cases would have definitely been at least a hundred times greater if they had been tossed into a giant jungle in one go.

"Damn! Even the group is super hard to break!" Jade spoke in amazement.

She had gotten curious after seeing Emily struggle to burn a few trees. So, she punched the group to see if anything had changed.

It was a spontaneous idea. s

So, Jade was really shocked when a relatively strong punch of her's did little damage. The punch that would have created a huge crater before only created a shallow hole. The hole wasn't even a tenth of what she was expecting.

"It seems the WE really lives up to its name. It allows the planet to adjust to the strength of the beings residing on it. I bet we won't even be able to break the sound barrier with our speed anymore..." Muku spoke while observing the spot Jade punched.

"So, basically, we can't be too reliant on the old world's laws of physics and such right?" Jade asked a rhetorical question. She was just emphasizing the fact so that everyone was on the same page.

"Yeah, it seems so. We'll just have to figure things out as we go along. Just like with everything else..." Muku replied.

"Ye..." Jade was replying when something interrupted her.

BOOM!

A large explosion sounded from the distance just as Jade was speaking. Everyone's attention was instantly drawn in that direction.

"Did that come from..." Emily spoke. Then trailed off at the end. She didn't want to say anything she wasn't certain of.

"Yes... It came from the NL Base's direction" Jade, who was more certain, spoke.

She couldn't see anything with all the trees blocking the way. Not to mention the extended distance between them. However, her hearing was still top-notch. She was still able to pinpoint the direction.

"It seems we might have to proceed with our plan a little sooner than expected... Of course, that's if you're all willing" Muku while looking in the direction of the base.

His facial expression looked serious. He could feel that something major had been set into motion. Something he wouldn't have wanted to be involved with in normal cases.

"I'm game... However, I think I'll stick to being the backup. We don't know what might happen if I go in, after all. Which sucks, I wanted to be part of the fun" Jade was the first one to express her willingness to participate.

It seemed she was feeling better and better the more time that passed by. That too, despite everything that was going on. Which was pretty amazing.

Well, it would be amazing if she wasn't just getting better at hiding how she really felt. It was a matter Muku really had to address soon...

"I would have liked a little more time to at least get the initial idea for my domain. However, it appears that my father is on a mission to make my life harder..." Chloe was the second one to express her participation. Which was to be expected, really.

"With me, the three who were going in are all accounted for" Audrey indirectly expressed her participation. Followed by everyone else.

While they all would have liked some more time to adjust to the new world. They all knew that when such things happen. The more you delay, the graver the situation is likely to get. So, they might as well get it out of the way the moment it began.

Even if they couldn't first do a reconnaissance like they would have liked. It couldn't be helped. The situation just didn't allow it.

With that, the group went and carried out their last-minute preparations. Then the mansion took to the skies. It couldn't be left there, after all.

The distance between it and the base had gotten too big. So, it had to be reduced again.

They didn't know how lucky they were that the portals had appeared far from human settlements. Otherwise, their very mundane activity, by that point, of moving the mansion. Could have gotten them killed.

What could they have possibly done if a rank-four aerial beast attacked them? Nothing that's what. They wouldn't even be able to get away in a normal setting. All they could do was quietly die.

So, they might have to consider grounding themselves for a while very soon. The skies weren't their old playground anymore...

.....

At the NL Base, just after the explosion...

"What the hell Abel?! I thought you said everything was stable! What would have happened if I hadn't acted on time?!" William shouted angrily at Abel.

"It's a natural accident, boss. We didn't know that the change in the world's laws would be so impactful... We didn't know they'd change at all. So, please understand. You managed to save the essence anyway. So, it's fine, right? The Earth Elementalists can quickly rebuild the rest," Abel replied in a passive-aggressive manner.

"Hmph! Didn't you say you were always five steps ahead of the game?... It better not happen again" William cooled down a bit after hearing Abel's reasonable words. However, he still took a jab at Abel for being cocky before.

"R-ight... I guess I stand corrected in that. I'll take my leave for now. There's a lot of work to do." Abel replied with a forced polite expression on his face.

Even his hands were clenched. He was definitely close to breaking. To avoid that from happening. He quickly left.

William silently looked at him go. He wasn't stupid. He could see that Abel was close to breaking.

However, there was no reason to fear. After all, they had been given distinct roles by the Monarch. Abel had no other option but to obey.

For their shared goal, Abel would definitely obey. No matter how much his pride is wounded. He was like a defanged snake in William's hands...

After Abel left, William looked outside his window. His sight focused on the green smog-like substance that had covered the base's sky.

While he had acted on time. There were still some slight losses. The smog was one of them. Along with the huge hole in the ground just behind the base...

Fortunately, his daughter and friends weren't around. They also wouldn't be coming over for a while... Right?

Chapter 208: Infiltration (Pt 1)

Sometime later...

"What's that green stuff in the air?" Audrey asked while pointing forward.

The pointing was just a reflex. Everyone had noticed the smog already. It was pretty apparent from the wall they were sitting on.

"Whatever it is, it makes my skin crawl", Jade replied while looking at the goosebumps which had formed on her hands.

Her instincts were in chaos. She felt both the urge of wanting to attack and wanting to retreat. She felt a hatred from deep within her she couldn't understand at the same time. It was even more intense than the time with Abel.

"Hey, are you okay?" Emily asked while putting her hand on Jade's shoulder. She could sense that Jade was getting worked up. Remembering what they spoke about before. She quickly acted.

"Y... Yeah. I am now. Thanks for that" Jade replied while calming down. Feeling Emily's hand on her shoulder grounded her.

"Should we pause the plan for a bit until you're good?" Muku asked with concern in his voice. He didn't know what the problem with Jade was yet. However, that didn't matter. He'd still pause everything for her.

"No, I'm fine. We can proceed. I'm just the backup anyway. My state shouldn't affect too much of the plan anyway" Jade replied while signalling the team to continue with the plan.

"Okay, it's decided then. We're taking a break before going ahead with the plan" Chloe spoke before Muku could.

The rest of the team agreed with her. Despite Jade's protests. No one budged. They just quietly looked at her protesting. She soon gave up and focused on getting into peak condition.

She had realised that they wouldn't proceed until she was completely fine. So, she decided to focus on that. Which worked, she managed to calm herself down after a little rest.

The moment she did, the group proceeded on their journey. The mansion stopped at roughly the same distance from the base as before. A distance where it would take some effort for those at the base to spot it. Especially with all the smog.

They cleared out some ground as quietly as they could. Which required killing a few weak beasts. Then the mansion landed.

Muku then took Audrey, Chloe, Layla and Emily closer to the base. He'd leave Audrey, Layla and Emily just before the base. Then he'd proceed inside with Chloe.

The initial plan was to take Audrey with him. However, Jade's situation required it to be changed a little. He had to leave Hope to watch over her. In case something happened.

Hope could use her poison element to paralyse Jade if need be. She didn't act too much or was physically outstanding. However, Hope was definitely one of the most dangerous, if not the most dangerous, members of the team.

So, leaving her with Jade was the best choice. She could neutralise a distracted Jade easily enough. The others could only use harmful methods in such a situation.

Anyway, Muku and Chloe should be enough for the mission anyway. So, it was all good.

....

"Okay, you'll hide here. If anything goes wrong. Chloe will send a signal. It will be very easy to spot, so we don't need to decide on anything specific" Muku spoke to the girls who were going to be their immediate backup.

The girls nodded in understanding. After which, Muku and Chloe headed straight for the base. They just flew forward directly since they were concealed completely under his barrier.

They soon noticed what they assumed to be the source of the explosion and green smog. Which was a hole that was being fixed by a group of Earth Elementalists.

Oddly enough, the work that should have been easy for just one of them seemed taxing to them all. Even with their combined might, they could only manage to slowly cover up the hole which had been covered up by a tarp just a few meters inside it. So, Muku and Chloe couldn't see inside it.

They could guess what could have been going on, however. It was probably something related to the Monarch. For that reason, they didn't dare get closer. Taking a look from the distance was enough.

Even if they could sense an intense and eerie energy being emitted from the hole. They still didn't go take a look. They weren't the heroes of the world who went around seeking trouble...

The duo then proceeded with their mission. The front door wasn't closed because of all the activities that were good on. So, they just walked right through.

They knew their destination, so they made their way there quickly. They only had to worry about not bumping into anyone. Sound wasn't an issue in the barrier. They could even sing at the top of their voices if they wanted to.

"So, what's our next step after getting him?" Chloe asked as they moved forward.

"Well, the world has changed way too much. For that reason, I think the best thing would be to stay close to a barrier. We can't even properly deal with LR3s, after all. So, it's safe to assume we'd be easily bodied by the newcomers. If possible, I would have liked to stay here. Unfortunately, the Monarch had to pop up. We can only go back to where we came from for now. Better the devil we know, right?" Muku told her what he was thinking.

While he had his erasing gaze. A broken ability that could instil fear into any creature's mind. However, it would be useless if he was attacked by something that could kill him before he even saw it.

He might be arrogant at times. However, he wasn't stupid. He knew that fighting even when the odds are stacked against you is only admirable in movies or other situations. When it came to dealing with beasts in the apocalypse, caution when you know you're outmatched was the way to go.

"That seems logical. Knowing you, we'll have to reach at least Rank 4 before going anywhere, right? I guess we're going to be grounded for a while then..." Chloe replied, taking a slight jab at him.

However, it was clear that she supported the plan. She was just making a joke to lighten up the mood a bit. They were in a pretty dangerous situation after all.

"You know, you didn't have to notify me of how much you can see through me" Muku replied with an eye roll.

It kinda sucked how they could all see through him. Yet, he couldn't even claim to completely understand any of them. Life was just not fair.

"Hehe... Hhm? I can't sense anyone inside the office..." Chloe laughed smugly. Then she noticed how they couldn't sense anyone in William's office.

It was only then they realised something. They didn't even know if the office was his room. There was a very distinct difference between the two after all.

If it was just his office. Then finding him there would depend on whether he had work or not. Which shouldn't have been too often in the current world. Which meant he'd probably spend a lot more time in his room.

Since they didn't find him in the office. They'd have to go around the base looking for him through his mana signature. Which they couldn't do openly for obvious reasons. If they tried searching over a larger distance. Their mana output would increase by a lot. That would pretty much be no different from announcing themselves to the base's strong members.

"Well, I guess we can only do this the slow w..." Muku was replying dejectedly when he noticed someone coming their way.

Chloe noticed the person as well, and a frown immediately appeared on her face. It was the lady Muku disliked the most in the apocalyptic world. The whom Chloe felt complicated emotions for.

That's right, it was Tilda. She seemed to be in a rush. Within a few seconds, she had already passed them by. They were so hidden that she couldn't sense anything, not to mention her rushed state.

She also wasn't like Jade who was extremely sensitive to being looked at. Being a mage type kind of made people dependent on their mana. So, their senses were usually average at best. That is when compared to those with more physical classes in the same rank.

For that reason, Tilda didn't sense the gazes focused on her. Or maybe her subconscious mind did, but it was ignored.

"Tsk, why am I the only one who gets sent on these random errands? There's like nine more people who could be here. Is this what they mean when they say I'm the right-hand woman? This is bull, I'm still just an assistant even after the apocalypse!" Tilda complained to herself while unlocking the door to the office.

Muku and Chloe just looked on unmoved. It was natural for people to complain like that after all. Especially if her situation was as she was saying. A situation where she was given an empty title.

Anyway, Tilda entered the office after unlocking it. She came out less than a minute later holding a briefcase.

It was a weird black briefcase. As for why it was weird... It wasn't because of its looks, but how the mana in the surrounding area was slowly gathering toward it...

Tilda continued with her business. She locked the office and then left at the same hurried speed as before.

Muku and Chloe looked at each other briefly. The next step was obvious to both of them. They immediately followed after Tilda.

Maybe they'll find William wherever she was rushing to. The chance of that happening was pretty high actually...

Chapter 209: Infiltration (Pt 2): Finding William

A while later...

"I should've known..." Muku spoke with a dark expression on his face.

They had followed Tilda throughout the base. Until they came in front of a huge metal door. Which just happened to lead in the direction of the hole they avoided before.

They could already sense the intense energy radiating from behind the door. It seems they couldn't avoid the area after all.

"Maybe it won't be that bad... We can get in, quickly get my father and get out" Chloe spoke.

She was trying to stay positive. Though internally she was also complaining. Why could things never be simple? It would have been great if they just found William where they thought they'd find him. Do their thing and get out. But noooo, there always had to be twists!

"Yeah, maybe you're right... I just hope we don't get spotted. This is not a fight I want to have" Muku spoke seriously while looking at the ten R3s who were busy opening the door.

If he added Tilda to the mix, the opposite side would have eleven R3s. His side only had two. While he was very confident in their abilities. It had been a while since he had actually fought against humans. Hell, he had never even fought against enemies with roughly the same power levels.

The best he had done was sparring with the girls. Which could hardly be called a real fight. For that reason, he wasn't sure how it would go if he went against someone of the same rank he wasn't familiar with. Especially eleven of them.

Even his and Chloe's op classes might not help. Hell, who knew whether the other side also had similar ranked classes?

Fortunately, such a situation didn't occur. Maybe the people were too focused on their task to notice. Or his domain was just that good at concealment. Either way, the situation worked out for him and Chloe.

The moment Tilda stepped through the door. He and Chloe flew directly above her. So, by the time the door closed. They were already inside.

However, their journey wasn't over, apparently. There was only a dark path with stairs that slanted down. So, they had to walk behind Tilda as they headed deeper and deeper into the cave-like structure.

After a little while of walking, they could finally see some light at the end. It was that eerie green light from before. The energy was pulsating from whatever the source was going every which way.

They could feel it getting stronger and stronger the closer they got. In all honesty, they wanted to turn back right there and then.

However, their mission and their own curiosity, they couldn't turn back. They didn't know when the thought formed in their minds, but they couldn't help but desire to see the source of the energy.

Before they knew it. They had made it to the end of the tunnel. After a brief adjustment period to the sudden change in light intensity, everything became clear to them.

What was in front of them was actually a beautiful-looking room. It was a rather big room. Its width and length were definitely more than twelve metres.

It had clean white tiles on the floor. Pure white walls. If not for the roof being missing. They wouldn't have been able to identify it as the source of the explosion from before.

However, all that didn't really matter. What mattered the most was the floating and glowing green human figure at the centre of the room. They couldn't see any clear human features. Just the general outline of a human.

The light coming from the figure was too intense. Not to mention the energy waves which made it hard for them to breathe. All they could tell was that it was likely a woman from the shape.

Being so close to the figure was rather overwhelming. They stepped back a bit just from reflex alone.

Yet, for some reason, Tilda seemed to not even feel the pressure. She walked deeper into the room. Closer to the figure. She did it so easily as if she was taking a walk in the park.

There were ten other people in the room. Nine of the people were Abel and the eight commanders. The last person was William. Their mission's objective. Just like Tilda, the people seemed to be completely fine standing so close to the being.

Another thing was how all of them had eerie green eyes. Their eyes had changed from their usual colours. They now matched the glowing figure. Even Tilda's eyes had turned the moment she stepped into the room.

There was a reverent look in all their eyes. Other than William, Tilda and Abel, the rest were on their knees facing the figure. It almost seemed like they were... Praying?

The scene crept the duo out. It was almost like they had accidentally stepped into the headquarters of a cult. Hell, that's definitely what they had stepped into.

They were at a loss for what to do. They had found William. However, they couldn't get any closer to him due to the intense energy.

Though, honestly, even if they could. Would the ten people with him just look on as they took their leader away?

The situation was definitely not in their favour. They could only watch as the situation progressed. Maybe they'll get a chance, and William will move toward them or something.

As for trying to sabotage what was going on... That was out of the question. How can you sabotage something when you don't know wtf is going on?

They could try attacking the figure from a distance and see what happens, of course. However, what if it blows up and kills everyone involved, including them?

So, watching was the only way to go. Which they quietly did. Muku adjusted to his role so quickly to the point that he created chairs for both of them and then sat down on his.

Which warranted an eye roll from Chloe. Who tf gets so comfortable behind enemy lines to the point of taking a seat?! She was certain that if he had popcorn, he would have taken it out as well.

Even though she was internally complaining. She also sat down. The seat was already there, right? So, with the two hidden spectators having sat down, the show proceeded.

Tilda quietly handed the briefcase to William. Who put it down on the floor immediately before proceeding to open it.

The moment he did, the mana in the surroundings wavered. The mana that had been moving all over the place all began moving in one direction... Toward the briefcase.

Fortunately, mana wasn't getting sucked out of people as well. Otherwise, Muku and Chloe would have been screwed. However, it did make it harder to keep the domain stable.

If Muku's mental energy hadn't been tempered by his constant use of it. His domain would have given out in such a chaotic situation.

Soon, the situation stabilised. It seemed that whatever was in the briefcase had gotten enough mana. Everyone could feel that the mana in the area had thinned out. Which would probably be fixed soon enough.

It was still an amazing feat though. Such a thing wasn't something anything could easily do. It was like sucking the oxygen away from an open area so quickly that it leaves a brief deficiency in the area. That was unheard of!

"Hahaha... With this charged-up shard from a fallen Monarch's core, our dreams shall come to fruition!" William laughed out madly as he spoke for the first time since Tilda and the duo arrived.

"..." Seeing her father's mad expression made Chloe feel uncomfortable. She didn't know how to react. It also made her wonder if he could still be saved.

They could maybe take him away from that place. However, could they save him?

"What are you thinking about?" Muku suddenly asked her. Bringing her back from her chaotic thoughts.

"... Nothing" Chloe responded exactly like how you would expect a girl to respond. The obvious untrue "nothing".

"Okay. Remember, I'm here for you if you want to talk" Muku could only reply in the safest way he could think of.

"Hehe, wouldn't it be weird to do that in this situation?" Chloe replied with a little chuckle. She could see that he was trying his best despite his confusion. Which made her feel better.

"I guess you have a point there... What is doing?" Muku agreed to her words. He then brought her attention back to William.

He had taken out what he called the shard of a Monarch's Beast Core out of the briefcase. If what he said was true then... Where tf did he get it?!

From Iris's information, the last Monarch died aeons ago. Long before her time even. So, for William to have a shard of one of them in the modern day... How did that come to be?

As Muku was still trying to make the situation make sense. William proceeded to take the shard toward the glowing figure.

The shard really looked the part. It was small enough, he could even hold it with one hand if he wanted. It flowed with different colours of light. Probably because of the mixed mana it absorbed. Unlike the figure, it didn't release any overwhelming aura.

Soon, William was standing in front of the figure with a shard in hand. He then held it out towards the figure. He pressed it against the figure's chest.

Before, the duo could wonder what he was trying to do. The shard actually sank into the figure's chest.

The moment it did. The whole world seemed to freeze for a moment...

Chapter 210: The Deal

On the opposite side of the planet...

"Well... That's a place I'm definitely not going" The R5 goblin spoke to itself. It had been busy eating the arm of a human when it felt a chill down its spine.

Similarly ranked beasts worldwide sensed it and had the same reaction. They all decided to stay away from that area.

Which was good news for the humans there... If they survived. Not to mention that R4s and lower only felt a great sense of danger without knowing which direction it was coming from. So, the danger was only reduced slightly.

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"Tsk... That old thing might really succeed in coming back to life this time. Unfortunately, we can only watch... If only there was someone strong enough to end it before it regains any of its power. Unfortunately..." A deep voice spoke from the void.

It was actually the voice that confronted Iris before. For such a Being to take notice of the green figure. The situation had to be quite dire. After all, Ares' possession of Mest or his attempted assassination of Muku didn't even appear on the Being's radar.

Other Beings in the void also took notice of the figure's emergence. Like the first Being, they also couldn't do anything about it. It had been completely undetectable before that moment.

If they had known sooner, they might have been able to send some of their servants to deal with it. However, those servants couldn't do anything now. It was too late. The world might be doomed.

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Back at the NL Base...

"Finally... After so long. I'm back" The green figure's feminine and calm voice sounded in the room.

While its words seemed to be those of joy. There was no happiness in the tone at all. It was as if the Being was an emotionless robot which tried to express emotion. However, it was unsuccessful.

Its features were still hidden behind the green light. The only change was how it was no longer floating in the air. At has landed down as it spoke.

The moment its feet touched the tiles. Faint cracks appeared on them before slowly recovering. It seemed they weren't placed there just to beautify the place.

Very likely, if they weren't there, the ground would have been corroded away. Just from coming into contact with the figure.

"Well done my children... Especially you William. I very much appreciate this vessel you provided me..." The figure spoke while caressing William's cheek.

"Anything for you My Queen... However, I was wondering when I'll receive my reward" William replied in a fervent voice. Especially when he mentioned the part about the reward.

"Right... I did promise to rejoin you with your partner... As did I the rest of you. Bring them to me" The figure spoke calmly.

Hearing her words, William and the rest of the people present became even more excited.

One R3 Earth Elementalist in the room snapped his fingers soon after. The moment he did. The wall a distance away opened up widely. It seemed, there was a hidden room in the hidden room.

Which surprised Muku and Chloe. They hadn't been able to sense anything different about that wall from the others. The Earth Elementalist must have been a rather skilled one to pull off something like that.

While Muku was silently praising him as he looked on. Some weird glass-topped coffins rolled out from the room.

The moment they did. The duo felt a chill go down their spines. The situation had suddenly turned into a horror movie.

"Mother?!" Chloe suddenly exclaimed in surprise while looking in the direction of the coffins. She hadn't seen her mother for so long that she could barely remember her face. However, the moment she saw her body in the glass coffin. She knew who she was right away.

The sight shocked her into a still state. Her mind was instantly bombarded with an overwhelming amount of emotion. She felt faint for a moment. To the point that she almost fainted. That showed just how heavily impacted by the sight she was.

Muku was trying to make sense of what she just said. So, he couldn't figure out what to say to her. Was the lady in the coffin really her long-deceased mother? How was she... Not a skeleton in some grave somewhere?!

As Muku thought about such things. A light bulb went off in his mind. With everything that was going on, and everything that he heard. He might have figured out what William's motivation for doing what he was doing was.

It looked so obvious from where he stood. Yet, it also seemed impossible. It couldn't be possible, right?

Could William be just a brokenhearted man who had made a deal with the dev... Monarch, to bring his wife back?

He was so smart, why would he fall for such a thing? Shouldn't such things be impossible? Everyone knows you can't bring people back from the dead... Then again, Emily... Well, whatever, he'll find out what was going on soon enough.

He couldn't help but feel respect for William if that really was his motivation. For him to love his wife so much, to the point of doing such a thing. What a real one!

Who cared about the natural order of things and pretty much selling out humanity?

Only heroes needed to care about the world. Everyone else only needed to care about themselves!

As Muku and Chloe were stuck in their chaotic thoughts. The coffins moved forward until they were in front of the resurrected Monarch. William and the others had moved back to give the Monarch and the coffins enough space.

"I will do as promised, for I always stick to my word. However, before that, William. Can you remind me what our deal was again? The original version..." The Monarch looked at the coffins briefly before asking a question.

"Umm, sure? The original deal was that we would help you gather human life essence, and in return, you'd restore the souls of our loved ones as well as make their bodies healthy enough to house them. Thereby bringing them back to life" William felt a little confused as to why he was being asked such a thing all of a sudden. However, he still answered it to the best of his abilities.

"Correct. What about the revised version?" The Monarch asked another seemingly random question.

"Sure. The revised version. What we agreed upon after the apocalypse began was slightly different from the original. We offered to switch human life essence with beast life essence because humans are now almost an endangered breed. And we're still grateful for that. You're truly a benevolent Monarch," William curbed his confusion and replied again.

He even added a little compliment at the end to please the Monarch. It felt rather odd to everyone present to see such a proud man leak someone's shoes so much.

"Exactly. However, there was a little condition I added, right? Can you refresh my mind on that?" The Monarch continued...

"Oh, yes. You said that since we changed a detail about the initial deal. You could also do the same if you wanted to. However, you said that it won't affect our reunion with our loved ones. To which we agreed" William replied seriously.

He was someone who had climbed up from the bottom. So, he knew how to adapt to the situation whenever there was a need for it.

"Correct again. I really like your clear memory" The Monarch replied. Even throwing a little compliment in William's way.

Everyone just silently looked on. Abel had a slight smirk on his mouth which no one noticed. As for why that was, only he would know. The others from the base were just looking on with fervent gazes.

Chloe, on the other hand, had a dark look on her face. She had noticed a certain detail from William's words he didn't seem to care about.

The detail was how he likely massacred an unknown number for a while just to satisfy his own selfish needs. Though she heard that it was for her mother. She still couldn't stomach the act.

His actions disgusted her very much. She was certain that her mother would agree. The humans he sacrificed weren't his to do so. If it was just criminals it would have been slightly better. However, from the way he spoke. He was probably killing people randomly.

His actions were definitely beyond redemption. She couldn't save him from such a thing...

While Chloe focused on that detail. Muku was focused on another. Which was how William seemed to have come into contact with the Monarch even before the apocalypse.

His expression darkened immediately. He could already smell the evil secret society made up of sell-out humans lurking in the dark.

The future would be rather troublesome if his guess was true. They already had enough problems. Yet more kept on popping up.

"Thank you, My Queen" William replied.

"Let's get on with it then. It's time you all are reunited with your loved ones... In death" The Monarch spoke softly. It seemed to have been done with asking questions.

William and the others were happy after hearing the first part. However, they were shocked by the second. Before they could ask for clarification, however...

"Ahhhhh!"× 10.

All but one screamed out loudly. Their body was suddenly attacked by unimaginable pain. They also felt weak and couldn't move. They could barely keep their eyes open as they fell to their knees.

It all started immediately after the Monarch spoke. Light green energy began coming out of their bodies and flew toward the Monarch before disappearing into its body.

"Don't look at me like that... This isn't betrayal. I'm doing exactly what I promised. I'm going to reunite you all with your loved ones on the other side. This is what you get for going against our initial deal... Now, di..." The Monarch stood still as the light green energy, different from its own. Flew into its body.

The energy was actually the life essence of William and the others. The ten were ageing at a visible and quick rate. If nothing changed they'd probably die soon.

CRACKLE!

BOOOOOM!