

Few Wives 231

Chapter 231: Raya's light...

On Raya's side...

Unlike Muku's multilayered trial, which had ten floors. The school just being the first floor despite its unreasonable size and difficulty. Raya's trial was just a single floor.

However, that single floor's map was big enough to match Muku's ten floors. Mrs C had recreated the lowest level of The Beast Forest for her.

She had filled it with beasts ranging from R1 to R3. Each had their territories, just like in the real Beast Forest. It was even more organised than the real thing though. This was because no stronger beast would invade the weaker beasts' territory.

This meant that Raya was free to hunt comfortably. She'd start from the lowest level territory. The one in which R1s resided.

Then she'd kill her way up. Getting stronger at every turn. Just like in Muku's case, she was restricted to only her physical prowess. As were the beasts she fought.

Although the situation was relatively controlled. Real danger still existed. She had to start at the very bottom of rank one, after all. Her bloodline's natural enhancement was also removed. Which left her on an equal playing field with her prey, without the slightest advantage. Something she had never dealt with before.

Due to her bloodline, she always stood above those of the same level no matter what. Because of her bloodline, she could fight PR1s with a LR1 distinction.

However, because of Mrs C. When she was at LR1, she really was just at LR1. The prospect scared her and excited her at the same time. Much like in Muku's situation.

However, unlike Muku. She was also fighting trauma. Which was her greatest challenge in the forest.

Because of her bloodline. Her intelligence was too developed from an early age. Which messed her up inside when she had to fend for herself while alone in the wild.

It really didn't take rocket science to understand. A weak and self-aware child would obviously be scared if left alone in a dangerous forest. Especially with all the close brushes with death Raya had.

Now she had been pretty much put in the same situation. Her body was shaking a bit throughout the whole situation. However, she still soldiered on.

She knew what a great opportunity she had been given. That reason alone was enough for her to face her fears.

While she was as oblivious as Muku about who Mrs C was. She was even more awed about her capabilities than Muku was.

Unlike him, she knew a lot about Monarchs. This was a perk she got from her inheritance among other things. Through that, she was certain that Mrs C was definitely beyond monarch-level power. Which should have been impossible since Monarchs are literally gods in the eyes of beasts everywhere.

So, the appearance of a being she felt was even stronger than her gods shocked her quite a bit.

She had tried to give Muku a heads-up from his mindscape before. However, before she could do so. A voice told her to keep quiet. Then a hand descended in the mindscape from above and yanked her out.

She instantly gave up on the idea of saying anything. Whatever Mrs C ordered was her command!

It seemed her efforts were fruitful since she was offered such an opportunity. She was very certain that the gains from the trial would be beyond her imagination.

And so, with such thoughts swirling in her head. Raya hunted and hunted then hunted some more.

Within two days she was already a rank two. Within a few more days, she had reached R3! Her improvement speed was light-years ahead of Muku's.

Which was no surprise. Mrs C expected as such. Even without her bloodline's support. Raya was a natural genius.

Her bloodline pretty much added wings to a rocket. If she had decided to attack Muku and the girls back then... Death was pretty much certain for the whole group. Luckily for them, she had developed an interest in Muku instead.

Which led to a little plotting on her part to make sure that their paths crossed. However, that doesn't really matter at the moment.

What mattered was how Raya had just reached R3 and regained her dragon form. She was getting ready to travel into the last stretch of territory.

She could sense various strong auras in the forest. All of which were stronger than her. There was a special aura among them. It seemed to be the weakest at the first probe.

She couldn't figure out its exact strength. The aura would flicker in and out. Raya decided to stay away from it for that reason. It was better to deal with the others first.

Although she had a rather rebellious spirit at times. She wasn't stupid. She knew that it was always better to deal with what you were comfortable with.

She was certain that whatever was there would be the highlight of her trial.

With that thought over. She made a game plan then jumped into the forest.

It was time to hunt. Her wounded body radiated strength and resolve. There was not even the slightest amount of fear involved.

She had long beaten her trauma, after all. Which she did at a much faster pace than Mrs C expected.

That just highlighted how special she was. Next to her, Muku seemed pretty ordinary.

Fortunately for him, his new mother's eyes still glowed the most when she looked at him. Otherwise, he might have lost her soon after gaining her. To his new companion too!

Raya's light was just that bright!...

...

A few more days later...

Raya had managed to clear out the whole third zone. All that was left was the final beast she had been avoiding. Her physical prowess had also skyrocketed.

After a few days of observing it. She still couldn't make sense of how strong it was. Or what it was.

The creature was in a cave so she couldn't see it from a distance. No scent came from the cave. So, she couldn't use that to get a general idea either.

The only reason she didn't completely back off was because of Mrs C. She thought of the situation this way... Since Mrs C put the beast there. It should be something Raya can defeat if she tries hard enough.

Not to mention her PR3 physical strength. She was confident that she would be able to win with such strength on her side.

If by any chance the beast is a Pseudo-R4. With her current strength, she should be able to run away. That would require a little luck, of course.

"Sigh... This would be a lot easier with my teleportation..." Raya spoke to herself in self-doubt.

"Well, whatever, it's not like I'll die if I lose anyway... I think" With a little self hyping up. She got on her way.

She then slowly proceeded to the beast. Holding her breath and minimising her presence as much as possible. The deep forest had all kinds of vegetation.

So, natural camouflage wasn't a problem. The problem was her white court. It stuck out like a sore thumb in the green forest. Fortunately, her speed was enough to reach her prey before she was discovered in prior battles.

She just didn't know if it would work out against the current enemy. With such thoughts, she got closer and closer to the cave.

Confusion started building up the closer she got. Her head was filled with nothing but confusion by the time she reached the cave's entrance.

No beast had jumped out to attack her yet. She couldn't even sense any animosity from the cave.

The aura she sensed before had gotten a lot clearer though. Oddly enough, she found it very familiar. She couldn't place where she had come across it before though...

"Well, since you won't come to me. I'll come to you" Raya spoke in a low and slightly nervous voice. She then made her way into the cave...

And what awaited her inside was...

"Is that me?!" Raya exclaimed in shock. Then...

BOOOM!

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Boom!

Her huge body flew across the sky. It broke through multiple small trees before slamming hard into a huge tree. Which stopped her in her tracks with little to no damage.

Her body lay unmoving on the ground...

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Back on Muku's side...

It was a few days later after his battle with the five cynocephali. He then went on to clear the Third floor which had ten of them. Then the second which had fifteen. Finally, the first, which had twenty.

The number increase after each floor seems reasonable and fair, right? Wrong! While the beasts didn't increase by too much. Their strength always saw a significant increase.

So, no matter how much Muku got stronger, they would always be stronger than him. They would also always have the numerical advantage.

Honestly, it was hell for him. He wasn't even sure how he cleared all the floors. Most of what he could remember was him getting, gang-uped on, ragdolled, bitten and scratched.

The him who stood still on the first floor as the only remaining thing in the building... Was unrecognisable.

He stood shirtless with scratches all over his upper body. Which had been painted red with his own blood.

A chunk of flesh was missing from his right shoulder. His left hand hung loosely at his side. It was probably broken...

His grey track bottom had turned crimson. Also from his own blood. His once bright eyes almost seemed lifeless. His unbreakable axe had long fallen out of his hands. He was so tired he couldn't hold it...

Hell, he could barely keep himself from falling over.

"Mom... Please save me" Muku tiredly spoke.

He gave up...

Chapter 232: Isn't it obvious?

Muku stood still waiting for Mrs C's response.

There was no way he could handle what was next. Even though he hadn't seen what it was yet. The trial was too hard for him. He did all he could and it wasn't enough.

He felt pain all over his body. Everywhere hurt so much he didn't even know which part hurt the most.

Both his hands had long turned numb. Maybe they would be the most painful otherwise...

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In room zero...

"Hmm... I guess it really was too much for him. However, he did way better than I thought he would. Should I reward him in some way?" Mrs C spoke to herself thoughtfully.

There was a proud look in her eyes as she looked on. Even though he didn't finish the whole thing. He didn't give up until the very last moment.

Not many people could do such a thing. The author being one of them. There's no way that dude would even make it past the eighth floor...

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Back in the trial dimension...

"I accept your surrender. Which, unfortunately, means you've failed the trial. So, you can't get the final reward" Mrs C's words rang out on the first floor.

Muku heard them and slightly nodded his head. He was a little disappointed about not getting the reward. He didn't know what it was, but he was certain it would be something amazing if it were from her.

However, he really couldn't go any further. His body just couldn't take it anymore. He had reached his current limits...

"However... I have two choices for you. You can take it as a little gift for making it so far. Which was beyond my expectations. Anyway, you can choose to either quit right now and come out empty-handed. Or, I'll return you to your peak condition and you fight the last boss. If you beat it, you'll get a secondary reward. It won't be as good as the first prize, but it would definitely be worth it. So, which shall you choose?" Mrs C's voice sounded again.

"Isn't it obvious?" Muku spoke coolly as he looked up into the sky... Well, he looked up at the roof. It would have looked cooler if he were outside, okay!

"Hehe, I knew you'd make the best choice" Mrs C replied. Muku's body began healing as she spoke.

Soon, Muku was completely healed. His body was as clean as before. All the blood stains were gotten rid of. His clothes were fully restored as well.

Even his physical and mental fatigue was eliminated. His body was definitely battle-ready!

"Umm... What the hell is this?!" Muku suddenly exclaimed.

"What do you mean? Didn't you choose to continue? You know, like the hot-blooded young man you are?" Mrs C's confused voice sounded.

"Continue? Hot-blooded? What? What?! No! Do you think I enjoy getting beaten up? Why would I want to continue? So what if I don't get anything? I'm okay with that! Get me out of here! My choice is to give up! I'm done! Knowing you, whatever is out there is going to be a nightmare! Why would I want to face it even after saying such embarrassing words? Do you just want me to say it again?!" Muku threw a tantrum.

He was pissed off. Who told her he was that hot-blooded? He had just gotten out of hell. What would he want to jump back in?! Hell no! He was done!

"Oh... So, that's what you meant? Well, too bad. I've already healed you. I guess you can only face it now. Good luck!" Mrs C's unapologetic voice rang out.

Before Muku could say anything...

"ROOOOOOOOOOAR!"

"Oh, come on!" Muku complained while looking at the walls of the building that were cracking just from a roar.

It looked like the building would implode soon. Unwillingly, Muku had to run outside.

And as soon as he made it out. The building collapsed, turning into nothing but a pile of rubble.

The roar might have been powerful. However, it was actually just a final nail in the coffin.

It was actually all the battles Muku had in the building that did all the damage. Although, there was no mana used. The shockwaves from the exchanges were still very destructive.

If Muku hadn't tried his best to avoid direct clashes whenever possible. The building might have given out long ago.

Fortunately for him, that didn't happen. Otherwise, he would have been either buried in the rubble. Or had to jump out through a window.

As for why jumping out the window was a problem. Well, the creature that just roared the building to destruction was outside.

If he jumped out, he would have had to face it with a much weaker power level. And even with his current power level. Just the initial glance at the beast sent chills down his spine.

"You've gotta be kidding me..." Muku spoke to himself while looking at the creature standing still in the distance.

It was a cynocephalus... On steroids. Yeah, there was no better way to put it.

It stood at a hulking four metres tall. It has spikes at the back of its hands. Canine teeth which extended out of its mouth... Which made it more appropriate to call them sabre teeth. Sharp claws at least thirty centimetres long.

A pitch black coat with a white patch that looked like a scar across its face. Not to forget the bloodthirsty crimson eyes. Quite frankly, the thing looked scary af!

And that wasn't all...

"What the hell! It even has wings too?! How's that fair?! And what dog has wings?!" Muku exclaimed while looking at the two giant bat wings on the cynocephalus' back.

He would have run back inside if the building hadn't crumbled down. Unfortunately, the other buildings were too far... There was no way he was going to turn his back against such a creature.

"Mom! Please save me!" Muku screamed hysterically.

Sometimes, losing face isn't too bad. Especially when a four-metre-tall beast is giving you a death glare from a distance.

"Sorry, but that is no longer an option. You can only use that card once per floor, so..." Mrs C's voice sounded from the sky.

Whether she was telling the truth or she just wanted to watch him get beaten up. He didn't know... Wait, was that part of the things she forgot to mention?

He knew it! He was the one who was going to get screwed because of her carelessness! He called it from the start! Such an unreliable mother!

"What do you mean I'm unreliable?! I went through the trouble of catching a rank six beast and weakening it enough for you to be able to fight it! I think you should be calling me a great mother instead! Hmph!" Mrs C's complaining voice rang out.

Clearly, she had been listening in on Muku's thoughts...

"Why not get beasts my rank?! Wouldn't that be more practical? And stay out of my head! Haven't you ever heard of the invasion of privacy?" Muku exclaimed angrily.

He wasn't touched at all. Who knows how long it will take him to reach R6? Why must he go through a beating from a R6 when he's literally half of that?!

Even if it was weakened. It definitely had way more experience than him. Unlike the lower-ranked beasts. The creature was definitely just as smart as he was. His human intelligence and experience were both nullified.

It was also stronger than him with at least 70% Psuedo-R4 strength when he was only at 30%. There was a 50% difference. Even 10% would have been too much! Why would he be grateful for that?!

"Tsk, fine! Be that way. They do say kids are quite rebellious when they are still little, after all..." Mrs C's voice sounded out again.

The cynocephalus seemed to have been locked in place by an invisible force. Otherwise, it would have long attacked Muku.

Which he had noticed already. That's why he was so passionately calling out his mother... It was quite odd to call out the person you know is protecting you, but whatever. She was the one who put him in the dangerous situation anyway.

"I'm twenty!" Muku protested.

"Again, little. You're basically a few seconds old baby to me..." Mrs C replied.

"What?! How old are... Cough. You can release the beast. I'm ready to fight" Muku spoke.

He was also about to ask how old she was. However, his instincts warned him against that. So, he changed his statement. It was rather forced and obvious, however, it was all he could do.

"Hmph! At least you were smart enough to stop yourself. You'd better never mention age when you're back home. You could get all your blood sucked out in your sleep" Mrs C spoke. She randomly said something which made a chill go down Muku's spine.

He couldn't help but think of Audrey. Sweet Audrey would never do something like that just because he mentioned her age, right?... Right?!

Well, he wasn't planning on finding out. He'd just take Mrs C's words for it. Better safe than sorry.

"The beast will be free in 3... 2... 1..." Mrs C's voice rang out.

The moment she reached 1... Muku stopped breathing. Then..

"ROOOOOOOOOOAR!" A familiar roar rang out. It was even louder without the walls.

Muku's whole body was instantly covered with goosebumps. He knew he was about to have the most difficult fight of his life...

Chapter 233: Fake Raya?!

Raya's trial ground...

"Blargh!" Raya, who hadn't moved for a few seconds, suddenly spat out a mouthful of blood.

She then weakly got back to her feet. While she was in her dragon form. Her body had shrunk from its giant size. She was just five metres long and reached around four metres in height.

She was just an infant Eastern dragon, so she looked somewhat like a wingless Western dragon...

(A/N: You know, like Raya from Raya. That's definitely not what inspired her name... I'm not that unoriginal, I swear! (^_^)

Anyway, after she got to her feet. She looked toward the cave. Her eyes were still full of disbelief. Which seemed to overwhelm even the pain she felt.

Her eyes widened even further when she confirmed that she didn't see wrongly. A beast was reflected in her eyes. A beast quite familiar to her.

It had flaming yellow eyes, snow-white scales, pitch black fur going down its spine and deer-like antlers among other familiar features. Even the very aura was the same.

That's right, the beast Raya was seeing was herself. Well, not exactly herself, but a doppelganger. Every feature was on point!

If she wasn't the one seeing the doppelganger, she would have definitely thought that it was her. That's how convincing the copy was.

It was a rather eerie sight, to be honest. If she had human skin, her whole body would have long been covered in goosebumps. Just like Muku...

The doppelganger was slowly making its way towards her. She was so creeped out that she would take a step back for each step forward the copy took.

Which, of course, made her bump into a few trees. That didn't stop her, she would just adjust her position and continue retreating.

"Don't be afraid little one. It's just a test. It's the last part of your trial which I organised after some thought. Your talent is so great I had to think outside the box. I worked it out and realised that you were pretty much guaranteed to win against any opponent I could send unless they had absolute power. Which would make the whole trial pointless. So..." Mrs C's voice rang in the forest.

"You chose to have me face myself?" Raya continued Mrs C's statement. Hearing Mrs C's voice had calmed her down. It helped her get over the chilling experience. She had never been so creeped out before, in her whole life.

"Yes! Aren't I the smartest? Who, apart from themselves, can be a genius's greatest foe? No one, that's who! Especially you. The only way you can shine even brighter than the brightest light is by outshining yourself. Of course, if you can succeed by literally beating yourself... You won't be disappointed by the reward" Mrs C continued speaking. Her tone sounded a lot prouder than usual.

"Umm, I guess that makes sense... However, can you tell me what the copy can do if you don't mind? And can you please make it stop for a bit? Its slow approach is really creeping out," Raya spoke.

"I think it would be easier to tell you what it can't do. This is because it can do and think of anything you've ever thought of up to this point. What it can't do is go beyond those thoughts. So, the only way to defeat it is by thinking outside of your usual box... Since, you know, it has access to the whole box" Mrs C replied.

Her reply made Raya almost faint on the spot. It was the worst news she could hear.

As someone who had to survive on her own from the start, Raya had to do a lot of thinking. She also had the time for it in between her rare hunts.

For that reason, she had thought of anything related to fighting that she could. She was probably the first beast in The Beast Forest to create fighting techniques. She also studied all the creatures around her, to identify their weaknesses. While doing so, she, of course, studied herself.

Which was a good thing at the time since she would know better what needed to be protected. At the very least, in the modern era, no beast did such a thing.

She was definitely an oddball. Which made her even more despised by those around her. Adding to the hate she received for her bloodline...

In retrospect, her being a genius might not have just been because she was born lucky. She definitely put in the work.

Anyway, all that didn't matter. What mattered was that her opponent literally knew her completely inside and out. All her moves, strengths, tendencies and most importantly weaknesses...

She was definitely screwed. Her face would have gone pale from the realisation if she were human.

"Umm... Can I surrender?" Raya instantly gave up. She saw no way out. The best she could hope for in the fight was a draw. And that would also come at a steep price. She didn't see the point of paying when the reward was only for a situation where she won.

"There was, you and Muku both shared a single chance to surrender. Unfortunately, he used it first... A few minutes ago even. So, there's no other option but to fight" Mrs C gave Raya a lazy and clearly made-up reason as to why Raya couldn't back down.

"Right. Okay, that makes sense. I completely understand" Raya spoke bleakly.

Though she knew that it wasn't Muku's fault. She still cursed him out in her head. She had to vent in some way, after all. And there was no way she would curse Mrs C. Even in her head...

"Good that you understand. I've always liked smart children. Anyway, the fight will start in 3... 2... 1..." Mrs C replied shamelessly then immediately got things moving.

"Fight!" She shouted exaggeratedly at the end.

Boom!

The copy instantly exploded forward. And as if mocking Raya. It used her special method for a short speed burst.

Even though she had already been told about it. Raya was still surprised. Seeing and hearing were different from knowing, after all. Then...

Bang!

Boom!

Raya took a dragon slap to the face. Her body spun into the distance before crashing into another tree.

While she wasn't in her best mental state. It was undeniable that the copy was owning her. From the cave to now, she has been receiving without sending at all.

"Pathetic... How are you the real me? I'm clearly better" Fake Raya spoke... Apparently, she could talk!

"What the..."

Bang!

Raya was about to express her disbelief when she received another attack. Her body flew into the distance again.

"Tsk, why are you surprised by my ability to talk. You idiot? I'm a replica of you, so obviously I can talk" Fake Raya spoke in a disdainful tone.

Although, she had taken a cheap shot on Raya that time. What she said made sense. Raya shouldn't have been surprised by something so obvious.

But she was... Did Fake Raya know that she would be surprised? Was her familiarity with Raya already showing results? And on a psychological level no less.

"Huff! You've certainly had your fun. Now it's my turn..." Raya, who had finally managed to collect herself, spoke as she got up.

The fire in her eyes that had gone out when she first saw Fake Raya was rekindled.

Boom!

She used the same speed burst move that Fake Raya used before. In less than a second, she was in front of Fake Raya. Her right claw was stretched out ready to return the favour.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!....

Unfortunately for her, Fake Raya wasn't distracted like she was before. So, she clearly saw everything coming. Which allowed her to react appropriately.

Fake Raya managed to easily block off each and every one of Raya's attacks. She did it so easily it was almost like Raya was fighting with her own mirror image.

And unless you're Patrick Star, there's no way you can beat up your mirror image...

"Roooar!" Raya roared in frustration as she retreated back.

Fake Raya didn't pursue. She just looked on with a smug look on her dragonic face. If she could smile like humans, she would probably be grinning from ear to ear.

"Pathetic... Not even a single blow landed. You really can't beat yourself after all. Just give up if you can't do it. Stop wasting everyone's time" Fake Raya rubbed salt into the wound of Raya's frustration.

"Shut up! Tsk... Aren't you supposed to be like me? Since when was I so chatty mid-battle? You're ruining my reputation in front of Mrs C you arrogant loudmouth!" Raya spat out curses at Fake Raya.

"Oh please, we both know that you're very capable of doing what I'm doing. You've thought about it after all. You just never got the chance to implement it. And how do I know that?... Oh wait, I'm yo..." Fake Raya was busy retorting when...

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Boom!

Raya took the chance when she was distracted and made her move. She didn't stop at one though. She did a triple combo before backing off.

Fake Raya hit hard into a tree as a result. She finally tasted her own medicine.

"Well played..." Fake Raya complimented Raya while getting up.

"Well, you're not the only one who knows me inside and out..." Raya replied with a happy glint in her eyes.

It seems the trial wasn't impossible after all. If she plays her cards well. She might really be able to beat herself up...

Chapter 234: Suppressed nature

Fake Raya quickly got to her feet.

"Don't get cocky. You only landed these attacks because you took advantage of my lapse in judgment. That's not going beyond yourself now, is it? If anything, it just proves that you can't do it" Fake Raya burst Raya's happy bubble as soon as it formed.

"Tsk... I really hate myself right now..." Raya complained as she got ready to attack again.

She wished she could use mana. It would have made things a lot easier. There were some new abilities she had gotten after the bloodline awakening ritual which she hadn't studied yet. Those abilities would have been her key to victory if they were on the table.

Unfortunately, the world was never that nice. Or was it Mrs C who wasn't that nice? Well, either way, Raya was in a really sticky situation.

She wouldn't give up though. She wasn't a quitter after all. She was also someone who had a lot more clarity during battle.

So, her next step was obvious. She engaged Fake Raya for another round. And just like the previous one. Not even a single blow landed.

However, she wasn't disheartened. She was taking her time to study herself again. She was looking for any possible gaps in her refined fighting style. Maybe the gaps were too big. It would be better to say she was looking for little slits at most.

While small, they would give her a starting point. Unfortunately, her thoroughness was working against her that day. She couldn't find anything.

After all, for the longest time. She was under the impression that she had no gaps. Which wasn't something she just said. It was backed up by years of self-improvement.

Anyway, she knew that there was no way she was as perfect as she thought. No mortal was perfect after all.

Yet, she couldn't see anything. It seems she had become blind to her shortcomings from some point.

Was that what Mrs C was trying to show her? Was there some big hole in her techniques she convinced herself didn't exist to the point she couldn't see it?

Yes... That had to be it. However, what was it? She still couldn't see anything despite that realisation.

Which was understandable. Just like in math. One could admit that they are incorrect when their answer doesn't match the one that's already proven.

However, at the same time, they could still be confused as to why they were wrong. After all, they would have used their own formula to get to an answer. The formula which would seem very reasonable in their heads. The formula which would have led to a seemingly reasonable and foolproof answer.

Such was the situation Raya was in. It had dawned on her that there must be something wrong with how she did things. However, she still couldn't see what that was...

Second after second, minute after minute, until hour after hour. Raya and Fake Raya engaged in battle.

One would think that after so long. Someone who has gotten in at least one lucky hit. However, no, neither did. They both had answers to everything the other one threw.

Things were starting to slow down though. They were starting to run out of power. Raya was in a more precarious situation though.

She was nowhere close to one hundred percent even at the start. Which was because of all the battles she had gone through. Then there were the heavy bits she received from Fake Raya before.

On the other hand, Fake Raya was in her peak state when they began fighting. So, while they seemed to be equal in strength for the time being. Eventually, Fake Raya would gain the upper hand.

That too without putting too much effort into it. She would just have to keep up her current pace until Raya can't take it anymore.

Which was her plan all along. It was obvious on her face. Unlike Raya whose eyes reflected panic and agency, her eyes reflected nothing but calm.

The kind of calm Raya shows when everything is under control. Which made the situation even more annoying for her when she saw that calmness in Fake Raya's eyes.

{Okay, little one. It seems you're rooted in your ideals a lot deeper than I assumed. Let me assist you a little bit. That way I won't feel as bad about taking away your right to quit. You Raya, your problem is that you seem to have completely suppressed your beastly nature. It's not bad that you have it under control. However, it shouldn't be suppressed. You should take control of it and guide it. Make it fight for you in the way you want. After all, it's who you are. I honestly don't know how your fighting style turned so human even before you knew humans existed...} Mrs C's voice suddenly sounded in Raya's head.

The whole scene had frozen. Both Raya and Fake Raya were stuck in place. It was safe to say that Mrs C probably paused them like a movie so that she could speak without interrupting the battle.

Raya, whose mind was as vivid as ever, didn't bother herself with that. She had other things to think about. Those things being what Mrs C said about her suppressed beast nature.

As much as she loathed to admit it. Mrs C was right. Growing up in the chaotic beast world where there was only one law. Which was the law of the jungle, "Eat or be eaten". Raya grew to despise the forest and its residents.

For that reason, she stopped relying on her natural instincts when hunting. She chose to think about all the steps first. After trying it out successfully. She saw no reason to turn back. And so, the juvenile dragon completely abandoned her beastly instincts.

She felt like such things were beneath her. Which led to her becoming completely blind to everything her beastly instincts could do for her.

The only thing she accepted was the ability to sense approaching danger. She'd even give herself an excuse as to why she didn't abandon that too. Which was "all living things probably could do it too. And it wasn't like she could turn the danger sense off anyway"

With that, Raya's biased existence continued. That is, until now... A light bulb went off in her head.

{Thank you Mrs C} She thanked Mrs C in her head.

{There's no need child. I'm mostly doing this because you're my son's companion} Mrs C replied.

{Even still. Thank you} Raya, who had already realised as much, didn't mind.

What mattered to her was that she was getting significant benefits. She just saw it as part of the benefits she got from tying herself down to Muku.

She had taken an educated gamble after spying on him for a while. From what she observed during that time. He was destined for something great. And she was already seeing the benefits.

As for the part where Mrs C literally admitted to breaching her rights. She chose to ignore it. There was no point in mentioning it after all. It wasn't like she could sue Mrs C because of it.

Not to mention that she felt like it was all part of Mrs C's plan. She probably had been planning on guiding her from the start. She just used the "rights" thing as an excuse. If that's how it was, Raya was really grateful. Muku was a really lucky bastard for randomly gaining such a mother.

{Well, okay. I'll let you get back to it then} Mrs C spoke. Then time began moving forward again.

Raya's battle with her fake self continued. She kept up with the same intensity as before so as not to rouse the suspicion of the other side.

She knew herself enough to know that if Fake Raya suspected any foul play, she'd probably go all out. Which wasn't something Raya could take at the moment.

She needed time to figure out how to reconnect with her long-abandoned beastly nature, after all.

To think a beast would actually forget how to act like one. She was truly a special case. Then again, many politic...humans forget how to act like humans. So, maybe it wasn't that surprising.

Soon, Raya created some separation between herself and the copy. Which made Fake Raya very happy. For whatever reason, she liked appearing like she was superior to the real Raya. So, when Raya backed off, she felt great.

"Tsk, you trash. Just give up already. It's clear that there's nothing you can do to me. Now it's just sad. You're embarrassing both of us!" Fake Raya spoke in a disdainful tone.

"Now you just sound like a broken record. What makes you think I'd listen to you now when I didn't listen before? Are you sure you're me? I know for a fact I'm not that dumb. I would never shamelessly say that when I know that it's only because of our different starting points that you have the advantage," Raya, who couldn't take the idiot's nonstop chatter, retorted.

She really was starting to wonder if this copy of her was really her. It didn't act like her at all! She would have long used all her capabilities to end the battle if she were the other party. Yet, it was dragging it out as long as it could. Not to mention the chatter...

Well, then again. Maybe what Fake Raya said before was true. She just never got the chance to act like how Fake Raya was doing. Maybe she would be as insufferable if the tables were turned.

"Don't reply, you've said enough. Now it's my turn to speak. All I have to say is, your time is up. You had your chance. Now it's my turn," Raya spoke while looking at Fake Raya seriously. Whom she had cut off just when the other party was about to speak.

Even her aura changed slightly to reflect her new attitude...

Chapter 235: Stifling sight

"Pfft, you think just claiming that it's now your turn will change anything?" Fake Raya spoke while rolling her eyes.

Raya didn't respond. She just closed her eyes for a second. She was preparing to do it. Realising all the beastly impulses and nature she had been bottling up.

Fake Raya was going to be the recipient of it all. As for what would happen. Only time will tell.

"Hey! How dare you close your ey..." Fake Raya was about to explode in anger from the perceived disrespect when...

Raya opened her eyes. What Fake Raya saw froze her in place. Even before Raya moved, she knew that she was screwed.

BOOM!

Raya exploded forward with all her Rank Three might. The ground beneath her and the plants around her were all squashed by the pressure she released. Se plants were uprooted soon after she passed them by.

She was a new Raya. An unhinged Raya. Unlike before when she moved with grace and precision. Now, all that could be seen from her actions was beastly wildness. There was no class at all.

It was almost like a different personality had taken over. However, that wasn't the case. The juvenile dragon had just switched gears. If anything, she just completely let herself go.

In less than a second she was in front of Fake Raya.

Bang!

Although Fake Raya was stunned by the sudden change. She still managed to react in time. This led to a successful block of Raya's attack.

However, she winced a little. This was because Raya's attack was surprisingly stronger than usual. It also seemed to have been spontaneous so her prior information on Raya became useless. Which led to an awkward block. Then...

Bang!

Boom!

Out of nowhere, Raya's tail came swinging toward Fake Raya's Face. She was hit before she could react. The tail swing was so strong it through her away.

Raya didn't let up though. She instantly pursued. She was already beside Fake Raya by the time the latter got up. Then she bit into her neck.

A move Raya would normally not have even tried until the opponent was exhausted. That way, resistance would be weak and she won't be injured too much. Which would be advantageous in a dangerous environment.

However, she didn't seem to care about all that in that moment. All she cared about was ending Fake Raya's life.

She didn't stop at just biting her neck. She ragged dolled her as well. Slamming her on the ground as hard as she could.

Of course, Fake Raya, who still had energy, resisted greatly. She would scratch at Raya's Face and hit her with her tail. However, it was all pointless. Raya's grip on her didn't loosen at all. She took the hits and kept on biting.

Soon enough, Fake Raya's resistance began to weaken. It continued like that until she could barely move at all. She had run out of air to breathe as well as energy to resist with.

After all, she had tried her best with everything she had to get out of Raya's death grip. Unfortunately, all her efforts were unsuccessful.

After a while longer. The chatterbox, Fake Raya, breathed her last. It was only then that Raya let go of her neck.

"ROOOOOOAR!" For the first time in like forever, Raya celebrated a kill by roaring into the sky.

Her mouth was painted red by Fake Raya's blood. Her body, on the other hand, was painted red by her own blood.

Fake Raya had done quite some damage in her struggle after all. If she had continued a little longer, she might have successfully gotten out of Raya's death grip.

As if to prove that point. Raya immediately slumped to the ground after finishing her roaring.

She just lay there looking at Fake Raya's dead body.

It was then that the sight that had surprised fake Raya began to fade. That sight was Raya's eyes which had changed colour. They had actually turned red when she opened them before.

Which was a colour Raya despised whenever she saw it in the eyes of other beasts. After all, it was the colour of madness... In her point of view anyway.

Then again, all those who had red eyes were rather savage in their behaviour. So, maybe she wasn't wrong.

Soon, the redness was completely gone. Her fiery yellow eyes returned to their normal colour.

"Argh. This hurts so bad... I'm not doing that again unless there's no other option... And it's really weird to look at my own dead body like this" Raya complained to herself as she powerlessly lay on the ground.

She didn't even have the strength to look away from Fake Raya's body. So, she could only look at the stifling sight without being able to do anything.

"You know that you only won by luck right? You are nowhere close to reaching what Mrs C wants you to reach" Suddenly, a familiar voice sounded in front of Raya, who had closed her eyes.

Her eyes instantly snapped open. They widened as soon as she saw who had spoken.

"What the hell?! You even have a soul?? And how are you still so proud even after death you bastard!" Raya cursed in anger.

Her initial fear of the ghostly Fake Raya, who was floating above her corpse, disappeared when she remembered what she said.

So what if she spoke the truth? How dare a dead loser be so arrogant?? And since when did doppelgangers have souls?! Wasn't Mrs C a bit too committed to the trial?? Who does that??

"Tsk, of course I have a soul you idiot. You have one as well. So what can't I, when I'm an exact copy of you?" Fake Raya replied while rolling her eyes in disdain.

"..." Raya didn't speak anymore. She did want to keep on entertaining the idiot. Maybe that way the idiot would go away.

"If you think ignoring me will make me go away then you have another thing coming. You killed me, so prepare for a lifelong haunting!" Fake Raya continued chatting away. Which was unfortunate for Raya. It seems her plan failed soon after being made.

"Good job little Raya! I knew you could do it!" Just when Raya was about to go crazy from the chatty ghost's nonstop chatter. Mrs C's voice sounded from the sky.

When it did. Even the chatty ghost respectfully shut its mouth and paid attention. Which was understandable. After all, from where Raya stood, Mrs C was literally Fake Raya's creator.

As for how she did that... Only Mrs C would know. Raya just hoped the ghost would get erased soon. Otherwise, she might have to come up with ways that would allow her to kill a ghost.

Fake Raya's ghost suddenly gave Raya the stink-eye as if she knew what she was thinking.

"Thank you. But like this idiot said. It was all due to luck" Raya replied humbly.

"Even still. A win is a win. And now you know what path to take to gain greater power. Which is always a good thing. Anyway, let me heal you up and we'll go see Muku's final battle. I'm sure you want to see how he's doing right? We'll settle your price after he's done" Mrs C spoke.

As soon as her words rang. The sight in front of Raya changed. She found herself back in room zero. All her injuries were completely healed and a table full of meat was in front of her.

Mrs C was sitting a distance away from the table. Then there was the familiar screen which caught her attention. On it, Muku was shown. And he looked... Pathetic.

He looked like he had both feet inside the grave. Just his head barely hung outside due to stubbornness.

Seeing him uplifted her mood a lot. Just like they say. There's always someone better... Though in this case it's more appropriate to say that there's always someone worse! And Muku was definitely worse.

"Feel free to eat that while you watch. It's your victory meal. I'm sure you're hungry after all you've been through" Mrs C spoke while casting a slight glance at Raya. She then got back to watching Muku on the screen.

Raya quietly acknowledged her words and dug in. It had been a while since she had eaten anything, after all. Which was before her bloodline awakening ritual, in fact.

If Muku wasn't feeding her with so much schadenfreude through his suffering. She would have completely lost herself in the food. Fortunately, she could do both.

And saw, a happy Raya who was enjoying her feast. And an even happier Mrs C, with glistening eyes, focused their eyes on Muku. The guy who felt like he was the unluckiest person in the world.

.....

A while ago...

Muku took a deep breath to calm down his nerves. He had to be calm if he wanted to successfully defeat the monster in front of him.

He couldn't let its terrifying sight terrify him. He was the guy who had faced two Monarchs and lived after all. He had even killed one of them recently... Well, Jade did that, but he did most of the work. So, it should count as his kill, right?

Especially when he was the one who destroyed the Monarch's immortal soul!

Anyway, that doesn't matter. It wasn't the time to continue thinking of such things. It was time to fight!

Those thoughts had done their work. They had given him the confidence he needed.

The monster cynocephalus was going down! It was nothing compared to Monarchs!.

Boom!

Muku was so hyped that he was the first one to make a move. He dashed toward the beast at high speed.

He wanted to use his speed to deal with it. After all, such a hulking creature had to be slow, right?...

Chapter 236: Beating...

Tap!... Tap!... Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap...

With one tap after the other, Muku's speed kept increasing as he ran circles around the Cynocephalus King(CSK). That's what he had decided to call the monster he was facing.

The intervals between the taps were getting shorter and shorter as his speed increased. After a few seconds of running, his speed had increased a lot. Out of all his teammates, only Jade in her new form would be able to keep up. Everyone else, including Audrey, would only be able to see a blur.

With such thoughts in his head, Muku made his move. He figured that even if the CSK could see him. It shouldn't be quick enough to react to his attacks.

So, he changed his trajectory. He stopped running circles around the CSK from a distance. He made a beeline for the CSK from behind.

Even if the beast's skin was as tough as it looked to be. It shouldn't be able to resist his full power attack supported by his built-up momentum, right?

A slight smirk appeared on Muku's face as his eyes focused on the CSK's wing joint. He figured he might as well take out the wings first. After all, it would definitely turn into a nightmare for him if the CSK decided to use them.

He could already visualise the scene of his axe digging deep into the beast's wing bone. Which would instantly take flying off the table. At the very least it would make it painful to do.

Swing!

Whoosh!

"Eh?!"

Boom!

Muku was quickly reminded of a troublesome fact of life. Just because you make a plan and wish it to succeed. It doesn't mean that it will.

Just as his axe was about to dig into the wing bone of the CSJ. The beast, without even looking at him, dodged.

The way it dodged pissed him off as well as impressed him. It didn't move a great distance away. It turned to the side just enough to barely avoid him.

The move was the very definition of don't overdo it. Do just enough. And it worked like a charm.

The scene would look quite cool if it were played in slow motion. Especially if the camera focused on Muku's changing expression. It went from confident, then confused, then surprised, and finished off with an annoyed look before the boom.

That's right, the beast didn't do anything to him. It just avoided him and let his momentum smash him into the rubble of the school building. What kind of beast fought like that?!

Did the bastard have Ultra Instinct or something??! Was is also a DBZ fan like him?? Should he prepare for a Kamehameha?!

Such messy thoughts went through Muku's mind as he got out of the rubble. His head was spinning a bit. Fortunately, the beast didn't make a move, or he would have been done for.

It just looked at him with an arrogant and amused expression. He was certain that if it could talk. It would probably be throwing insults his way as well!

"Argh. I guess I misguided the situation. It seems it's time for a new pla.." Muku spoke to himself. His eyes were laser-focused on the CSK as he did.

Even if it didn't seem to be planning on making any sudden moves. That didn't mean that he should let his guard down.

He suddenly paused mid-speech. That's because the CSK's figure suddenly became blurry. Before he could make sense of the occurrence, his vision went dark.

It wasn't that he went blind, but a large hand had grabbed his head. It covered his head as well. Even his nose was covered. He had to use his mouth to breathe.

Just as he was about to struggle out of the big hand's grasp it tightened around his head...

"Ahhh!" Muku screamed in pain. His struggle became frantic. However, he couldn't break free no matter how hard he tried. The worst part was how he knew that it was toying with him.

It definitely had more strength than it was using. It could easily crush his head if it wanted to. It was deliberately using just enough strength to make it hurt but not cause significant damage.

Muku instantly realised it. He had unfortunately stepped into a sadist's territory...

Whoosh!

Boom!

After enjoying his screams for a bit. The CSK tossed Muku into the distance. His body hit the ground with a boom!

And it hurt Muku quite a lot. He was so overwhelmed by the pain that he couldn't move for a bit. He just lay there breathing heavily.

Even though he hadn't used his strength that much. He already felt tired. Maybe due to all the screaming the beast had him do for a few minutes.

It would add a little pressure every time his screaming went below a certain level. It was a true sadist.

And again, it didn't make a move when Muku was lying weakly on the ground. His clothes already had some tears from the two impacts. Some parts of his body were also bruised.

In just two moves from the CSK, the situation became clear. Muku was probably not going to win this one. Even his peak condition didn't seem to be good enough for the fight.

The situation looked bleak...

However, Muku wasn't disheartened. He had faced similar situations before. He made it out alive then, so he can make it out alive now!

With that little self-hypnosis session in his head. Muku got up again. The fire for battle was burning even more intensely in his eyes. How dare the beast look down on him?! He'll make it regret not finishing him off when it had the chance.

What Muku seemed not to notice was how he was hyping himself a lot more than usual. In fact, he pretty much never had to hype himself up before.

Even his hands were shaking subtly. Which he didn't notice. Or was ignoring. It seemed he was subconsciously unwilling to face the creature in front of him...

He then picked up the axe, which had been graciously and condescendingly tossed back at him. It was by far his most arrogant opponent. Even more than the Monarchs.

"Ha... Argh!" Just as Muku was about to scream and rush forward. His war cry was halted by a punch in the gut.

It wasn't an overwhelming punch which tossed him into the distance. But a ouch just strong enough to knock the air out of him and hurt like hell.

The disregard and disrespect the CSK had for him were too much! It literally chose to fold its hand into a fist instead of just finishing him off with its nails. One stab to the gut with them would have done the job. Yet, it didn't do that.

It still wanted to toy with him some more. Which was understandable since it had been bored for quite a long time. To could only stand there with nothing to do as Muku went from floor to floor killing off its kin.

So, of course, there was no way it was going to end him so easily. It would make the situation as long and as painful as possible.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Unlike before, it didn't stop and let the embarrassment sink into Muku's mind. It continued giving him one ouch after the other.

All of the punches were measured. They didn't break anything, they just hurt.

Muku tried to defend, of course. However, his axe had been knocked out of his hands again. His hands always seemed to be one step too late when he tried to block the attacks with them.

And so, for a few more minutes. Muku got the shit beat out of him. He looked like a little kid being bullied by an adult. The sight would have made all the girls cry if they were present.

Even Mrs C, who was watching, no longer had the usual smile on her face. There was a hardened expression on it instead. It was almost like she was trying her best not to interfere.

Bang!

Boom!

The CSK slapped Muku into the distance after getting bored of punching him. It was time to change things up it seemed.

"Hehe, argh. Cough, cough! I've never been beaten up so much. Luckily, none of the girls are here to see this. I wouldn't know where to put my face then" The battered and bruised Muku laughed to himself bleakly as he struggled to get to his feet.

It took him almost a minute to finally be able to make it. His whole body was sore and his face was swollen. He could barely see the beast with his slightly opened eyes.

The current him looked like a boxer after an intense match. In fact, he looked worse. Even boxers wouldn't look like that after a match. The ref would have long stopped the match.

"Hey! You! What are you still standing there for, huh? Shouldn't you have already knocked me off my feet by now? Are you getting tired already?" Muku taunted the CSK like a madman.

Yeah, he had to be mad. Otherwise, there was no way he would sanely ask for a beating, right?

The CSK's amused expression turned slightly cold. It was being considerate and letting him recover a bit. Then continue beating him up. Yet the trash dared to taunt it?

Maybe it had held back too much in its attacks. Yes, that had to be it. Maybe it should show him a little more of its abilities lest he thinks it won due to luck when it finally chooses to kill him.

Whoosh!

With such thoughts, the CSK made its move. At a slightly faster speed than before. It made its way toward Muku.

Since he hadn't been able to react to its prior speed. Increasing it was overkill. However, the trash deserved it.

This time, it was also going to make it hurt...

Stab!

The CSK stabbed at Muku's shoulder with its long claw. However, the result was different from what it expected.

Its eyes widened in surprise...

Chapter 237: Fighting chance?

"What? Why do you look like you've seen a ghost?" Muku asked provocatively.

The CSK looked at his beat-up face for a bit then looked a little lower. Its eyes reflected Muku's hand grabbing its claw just before his shoulder.

That's right, for the first time since the fight began, Muku was actually able to stop one of its attacks.

Interestingly enough, it was all by mistake. It wasn't as intentional as he made it seem.

The thing was, after being beaten so badly. It hurt just to keep his eyes open. So, he closed them soon after taunting it. There was no point in keeping them open when it hurt to do so. They were useless anyway.

He was actually hoping it would finish him off. That way Mrs C would end the trial. He saw no hope of winning it, after all.

That's when something amazing happened. With his eyes closed. He could actually "see" the CSK. His hearing was somehow creating a mental image based on sound!

It was probably only possible due to his greatly enhanced senses. He was finally able to follow the CSK's movements. Which he wasn't able to do with his eyes.

The whole situation was a coincidental surprise. A welcomed coincidental surprise. So, with a slight smirk, he made his move. He perfectly caught the beast's claw.

Then spoke a few words to make it seem cool and all. Unfortunately for him, his beat-up face sucked away all the aura. The scene still seemed more funny than cool.

And Mrs C's laughter in Room Zero was a testament to that. Though she was genuinely happy that he had finally found a way to actually make headway in the battle. She was really considering pulling the plug, after all. She didn't enjoy seeing her son getting beaten up with no benefit to it.

Anyway, back to the fight. The Cynocephalus King backed off a bit. It jumped a few metres back. It then looked at Muku intensely trying to figure out how he did what he did.

After scanning his body for a few seconds, he saw that nothing about him seemed to have changed. Well, except for the arrogant grin on his face.

The CSK made a move again. It figured that Muku stopping its attack was just a lucky block. So, there was no need to pay attention to him.

As for his irritating grin... Well, it was about to wipe it off his face by ripping an arm off. After all, for him to smile like that. It only meant that it was too lenient with him before.

It was time to get a bit more serious. Taking away a hand would just be the start. He was going to know pain!

Whoosh!

Boom!

A familiar scene occurred. One side committed to a sure-kill attack. Then the other side easily dodged it. Which led to the attacking side slamming hard into rubble.

The only difference was the switch in roles. It was the CSK which attacked and Muku who dodged.

BOOM!

Rubble flew everywhere. The angered CSK was revealed. Unlike Muku, it wasn't injured by the crush at all. It immediately got up and it was pissed.

It was one thing to block its attack. But to mock it by copying its move? How dare the ant do such a thing! Did he think they were on equal footing?

Boom!

Instead of its prior refined movement technique which made no sound. The CSK exploded forward at full speed this time. It was no longer in the mood for jokes. It just wanted to rip Muku apart.

"Hmm", Muku made a thinking sound as the CSK approached. His eyes were still closed.

And he dared not open them. What if the auditory mental map was a fluke? He could risk losing it before the battle was won. It wasn't as good or as clear as his mana sense. But it was way better than his eyes. It had given him a fighting chance after all.

Which brought him to his current problem. While he could "see" the CSK now. He wasn't sure if his attacks could actually do significant damage to it.

Its hide seemed thick and tough after all. Which he felt was the case from how it was unfazed by the crash before.

So, his axe might not be able to easily break through with his limited strength. Maybe he would be able to make little cuts with it. However, unless he could make a thousand of them to form the legendary "death by a thousand cuts", he doubted a few cuts would do anything.

And it wasn't like the CSK would just let him axe it all over. So, he really didn't know what to do.

Well, whatever, he'll focus on keeping it at bay first. Then come up with a plan on how to injure it as the fight progresses...

Jump! Miss!

Just before the raging CSK reached him. Muku jumped into the sky. Which made it miss again.

Although the CSK didn't expect another miss. It was prepared for it. So, it didn't smash into something like before. It somehow managed to make a perfect turn and come back for another attack despite the momentum.

Its beastly speed ripped apart the ground wherever it stepped in its quest to decimate Muku.

Unfortunately for it, he somehow managed to evade every attempt. If it were a brainless creature. Its anger would have only increased. However, it was quite intelligent.

And because it was intelligent, it had long figured out that Muku wasn't dodging it by chance. He also didn't block the first attack by luck. He had definitely found a method to counter its speed.

It just hadn't figured out what that method was. Which was why despite having calmed down. It kept up the mad act as it studied Muku.

That way he wouldn't put his guard up. And it can destroy him with ease the moment it figures things out.

Its act paid off. It soon figured out how Muku was able to track it. It noticed his closed eyes and his subtle actions. Muku would always turn his head away from it ever so slightly. Which positioned his ears in the optimal hearing spot.

Seeing such actions, and his subtly twitching ears. The CSK instantly discovered his trick. Its eyes glowed in delight the moment it did.

It was finally time to continue having fun with him. The inactive wings on its back began twitching as it came to a halt some distance away from Muku.

Soon the twitching turned to weak flapping. Which then turned into strong flapping that made dirt fly all over the place. Then...

BOOOM!

It took off into the sky. Initially, it held off from using its wings because there was no need. Muku was simply too weak for such an effort. Afterwards, Muku started dodging its attacks, so it wanted to figure things out first before putting another card on the table.

When it realised Muku's technique. It immediately decided on what to do. It took off into the sky.

While the takeoff was rather "loud". The moment it got into the air, Muku's expression turned grim.

He instantly realised that the CSK had a troublesome skill. It was literally the one thing he hoped it didn't have. And that was, soundless flight!

That's right, it had the rare "soundless" flight that a few owl species in the Old World had. Which was quite surprising.

However, that's not what mattered to him. What mattered was... His new skill was now useless. Just when he was starting to get used to heaven, he was thrown back down into hell.

His eyes instantly snapped open. The swelling on his face had long gone down. Which was one of the perks of being an Evolver. Even without healing spells or fruits and whatnot. An Evolver's natural healing capabilities were already decent enough.

It was only when the Evolver had serious injuries that external help was needed. Which wasn't the case for Muku. The CSK had been focusing on pain instead of long-lasting, serious injuries. So, while dodging its attacks, Muku recovered significantly.

While things still looked bleak. At the very least he could clearly see his end coming now.

He looked up to face the CSK. It looked down at him with a familiar arrogant expression. It was as if it was silently saying, "I've figured out your trick, what's next?"

The look it gave him was really irritating. However, there was nothing he could do about it. Without his usual cheats, he really was outmatched by the beast.

He really wished Mrs C had left him his Telekinesis at least. That way, he wouldn't have been completely at its mercy like now.

It was really frustrating. To think he thought he had finally found a way out for himself. Yet there he was back at the starting line again.

Suddenly everything turned grey in front of his eyes. It seemed like the world around him had been paused. His body had been paused along with it. All he could move were his eyes.

The CSK seemed to have it worse though. It was completely frozen along with the background. The scene seemed quite eerie.

However, Muku wasn't scared or anything. He knew who the culprit was after all.

{Tsk, you could at least pretend to be afraid} A familiar yet dissatisfied voice sounded in Muku's head.

Chapter 238: Wait! I'm adopted!

{Why should I? I'm pissed off more than anything. How could I not when my "mother" signed me up for a beating?} Muku replied in his mind.

He couldn't speak at the moment anyway. Though he was certain Mrs C could hear him. His tone was completely unbothered. It was almost like he wasn't the same person who was frustrated a few moments before.

{Oh come on. You make it seem like I enjoy watching you get beaten. In fact, it's quite the opposite. I like seeing you win. And I'd never put you in a situation you can't win. However, it seems I need to help you with this one a little. I put you in the situation after all... Should I?"} Mrs C spoke.

She then gave Muku an option to either accept her help or reject it. Muku was quite proud after all. So, maybe he wouldn't want her help. So, she let him choose.

{What kind of question is that? Of course, I want your help! I'm getting beaten up here! It would be great if you could give me one of my abilities back} Muku replied instantly.

Like hell he would reject free help. Hell, if he wasn't certain that she wouldn't let him go without finishing the trial. He would have asked to leave!

Did it take away some of his aura? Yes, yes it did. However, the girls wouldn't know. So why should he care?!

{Tsk, you know son. Being realistic isn't cool at all. Why can't you be a little more hot-blooded like other youngsters?? Anyway, here, I'm going to share with you an ancient physical technique. It won't guarantee a win and takes a long time to fully master. However, it should give you a fighting chance if you're lucky enough} Mrs C spoke in a pouty tone.

She wanted to see her son be hot-blooded and heroic. Yet there he was trying to get as many benefits as he could. She just ignored his requests and gave him what she wanted to.

Before Muku could retort, his head suddenly felt heavy. Unknown information began to unravel in his mind. It didn't hurt, however, he felt overwhelmed and dizzy. It didn't take even ten seconds before all the information was successfully transferred and comprehended.

However, he felt like it had been hours. He probably would have vomited if his body weren't frozen in place. Maybe that's the real reason why Mrs C stopped time. After all, the CSK would have stopped attacking instantly if she had ordered it to stop.

Anyway, Mrs C silently let Muku digest the new information in his mind.

{Hey! This says I need at least a week to get to the initial comprehension stage!} Muku complained immediately after going through everything.

{That's only if you're a normal person. You're my son. With my genes, I'm sure you can do it within minutes. Anyway, good luck son. Time will continue ticking in ten seconds... Wait, can time still be counted when it's paused? Well, whatever. As long as you understand, right?} Mrs C replied in her usual unreliable time then poof. She was gone.

Muku's eyes were instantly drawn to the time which floated in front of his eyes. There were five seconds left before he had to get back to taking a beating.

{Wait! I'm adopted! Where would I have gotten your genes?!} Muku screamed hysterically in his mind.

However, he didn't get any reply. Well, that is unless he takes the muffled laughter as a reply. Mrs C was clearly enjoying his misfortune.

Unfortunately for him, time ran out before he could further his case. The battle was underway again.

The CSK had had enough of looking down at Muku. It was time for action. It held out its hand to the side. Readying its one-shot kill move. It was going to rip out Muku's guts in one go.

The initial plan was to play around with him a little more from the sky. However, its instincts were telling it that it shouldn't waste any more time. And there was no way it would ignore its instincts. They were part of what had gotten it to R6 in the outside world after all.

So, Muku's time was up...

With that thought. The CSK's figure turned blurry in the air.

BOOOM!

A loud explosion rang out the next moment. The place where Muku stood before, now had five large claw marks. They were so deep that they had been engraved into the ground.

The CSK was finally starting to show its true strength. If it had used that move at the start. Muku would have long been dead.

His bits and pieces would have been all over the place by then. It was his luck that it had been in a playful mood...

A perplexed look appeared on the CSK's face as it looked at Muku. Who just blinked back at it.

That's right, Muku wasn't ripped apart like it expected. It hadn't actually physically attacked him. It gathered momentum with its claws and sent out wind blades with them. Yeah, it was that strong.

Even without mana, it could use mana-like attacks. Just its brute strength was that amazing. And that was with its power suppressed to 20% Half-step Rank 5. That's right, it wasn't even as strong as Muku thought it was in terms of Rank.

It was just slightly stronger than him in that regard. However, it knew how to properly use every bit of its power. Plus the racial superiority which naturally gave it a lot more strength and other advantages compared to Muku.

All that made it seem like a demigod to Muku. Which, from the beating he was getting, it pretty much was.

Anyway, it seemed Muku had found another way to combat the god. Of course that was with a little help from Mrs C. Which the CSK didn't know.

It looked at Muku with confusion in its eyes. His eyes were open the whole time. So, he shouldn't have used that trick from before.

The tables had switched again. It was its turn to feel frustrated. How could it not when an ant keeps on resisting its will? At the times it's most confident as well. It was almost like he was mocking it.

"ROOOOOOAR!" Its suppressed beastly nature was close to exploding out. It instinctively let out a loud roar.

The red in its eyes was starting to turn darker. More bloody and brutal. It was a creature that had gone a long time without being opposed after all.

BOOOM!

Again it exploded out in full strength. Or more of, it exploded out in full strength for the first time. This time, it didn't matter if Muku was able to sense it from a distance away. He wouldn't have enough time to react before it was upon him.

Which was the case this time. However, unlike before, it didn't seem like Muku had been planning to jump to the side from the start. It looked like he wanted to meet it head-on.

Which was the maddest thing he had done so far. It was literally coming at him with all its strength and he dared wait for it? What else other than "madness" could that be called?

BOOOOOOM! A loud explosion rang out upon impact.

Which in itself was quite surprising. After all. With their difference in strength. Muku should have been steamrolled with no resistance at all.

Yet there he stood seemingly unarmed. He looked up as the CSK looked down. His right hand was holding its left wrist.

The area behind him and to his left had been flattened. Somehow, it wasn't Muku who suffered the attack's full force. It was the ground which did instead.

"Blargh!" Suddenly Muku who had been standing still as he stared into the CSK's eyes defiantly spat out a mouthful of blood.

"Cough!. Cough! I told her I was adopted and wouldn't be able to do it. But still, I guess this is better than nothing" Muku spoke to himself as he wiped his mouth.

He took back his gaze from the CSK as he did so. It was almost as if he didn't see it as a threat anymore.

If the CSK wasn't already angered to the limit. It would have been angered even more. Though its desire to end Muku increased.

And so, it bit down. Since its hands weren't working, it might as well use its mouth, right?

Bang!

However, before it could do so. Muku made his move first. He punched it in the chest???

What help would that do? Especially when done from just an inch away??

Yet, surprisingly, the seemingly weak punch managed to push the giant CSK back. It was forced to take a few steps back from Muku and grab its chest as it did so.

Its anger instantly vanished. That was because it felt it. For the first time since the battle(beating) began, Muku actually managed to hurt it. There was no open wound on its chest. However, it felt some internal pain.

It didn't hurt too much. However, it couldn't be ignored. It was something Muku shouldn't have been able to do in the first place, after all.

"Tsk, I guess I'm still trash. That didn't do any significant damage at all... Hehe, surprised? Well, prepare to be shocked. You really should have ended me when you had the chance" Muku complained to himself then taunted the CSK after noticing its confused gaze.

This time it wasn't a death-seeking taunt. It was a confident one. Only someone with a real plan would have. It was different from the bluff from last time.

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In room zero...

"Hehe, I guess it's time for the real battle to begin. As expected of my son. He actually managed to get the idea of it quicker than I did. Of course, I won't tell him that. Lest he gets a big head" Mrs C spoke to herself with a wide grin on her face as she looked on.

Her eyes glowed with anticipation...

Chapter 239: Beating... Reversed!

The CSK gave Muku a hard look for a second. Then...

Boom!

It had seen such a bluff before. It wouldn't waste its time trying to figure out his new tricks.

So what if he managed to sting it a little. That doesn't change the fact that it still had an overwhelming advantage.

An advantage it was about to fully showcase. It was going to pound away at Muku until he couldn't take anymore.

Which was a solid plan. After all, he had spat out a mouthful of blood just from blocking one attack.

If one attack couldn't take him out. It would hit him with its best shots over and over again. It had the strength and stamina for, it after all.

Who cares if he has some fancy new trick? It was going to show him that all tricks are useless in front of absolute strength!

Boom!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!...

The CSK didn't waste time and immediately jumped into action. It exploded forward and began giving Muku its best attacks one after the other.

And as it thought. He really couldn't take it. While he was blocking every single attack. He began spitting out blood from the very first hit. It was already at the tenth hit and Muku had turned pale.

Probably from all the blood he had lost. He probably wouldn't be able to last much longer.

With that realisation, the CSK's arrogant look reappeared in its eyes. It was even cursing itself in its head. Why was it worried about this ant anyway?

So what if he had a little fight in him? That wasn't a reason to worry. In fact, it was something to rejoice in. After all, his weak resistance only made the situation more enjoyable for it.

Such thoughts swirled in the CSK's heads it kept on hammering away. Its arrogance kept on increasing the more it hit Muku.

That was until it reached over a hundred hits and he was still standing. A dark look unlike any before had appeared on its face by that point.

That was because the ant who should have fallen a long time ago was still standing. Even after taking over a hundred of its strongest hits. The ground below them had long been destroyed.

In fact, its repeated attacks had actually created a huge crater around them. They were duking it out in a large hole by that point. And it kept on getting deeper and deeper the more the battle proceeded.

Muku's clothes were turned into rags by the intense force. His chest had turned red from all the blood he had spat out.

And yet, he was still standing and blocking all the attacks. He hadn't taken another shot at the CSK after the initial one. He focused on blocking attacks instead. Though, it wasn't like he had any chances to fight back with the rate at which the attacks were coming.

At that point, he almost looked as pale as a ghost. However, a few things stood out which annoyed the CSK a lot.

Firstly, he had long stopped vomiting blood. It stopped around fifty hits from the CSK. It seemed he was warding off all its attacks without getting injured at all.

Secondly, unlike before. He seemed a lot more relaxed in his blocks. Thirdly, the light in his eyes was getting more and more intense. His battle intent which hadn't appeared up to that point was slowly showing its head.

That's right, he was finally getting into battle mode. He was starting to enjoy it.

The more that look appeared in his eyes. The more uneasy the CSK felt. Its attacks got more and more intense until they couldn't get any more intense.

It pushed itself to the limit. Yet, Muku was still blocking everything easily enough.

Which really sucked since it was certain that if he failed to block just one of its attacks he would die on the spot.

Something Muku also knew. And it made his remaining blood boil. It roused his adrenaline that had been too scared to act before.

A mad smile soon appeared on his face. It was the look of a battle maniac. The look Mrs C had been hoping to see since the beginning.

After all, for certain kinds of people. It was only when they were in that state that they were at their best. It was something Muku had in common with Jade. However, unlike her, he couldn't easily get into the state.

Which was why Mrs C pushed him so much with the seemingly impossible to beat enemy. Especially after multiple days of intense battle.

And her plan was an overwhelming success. Muku could already perfectly block the CSK's attacks from the moment he partially entered the state.

Which was after taking fifty or so of its attacks. He was advancing his new technique at an astonishing rate thanks to it.

Suddenly, when the CSK was about to give Muku another hit to block like before. He avoided it instead. He got under the big hand to avoid it. Which left him standing at its side. Then...

BOOM!

He slapped its side with seemingly little force. Yet the result was the four-metre-tall CSK getting blown into the distance.

Boom!

It slammed hard into the side of the large hole they had created. Muku who had followed after it was soon upon it again.

Before it could collect itself. As well as get used to the pain it felt. Another slap landed on its back. And it was smashed hard into the ground.

Boom!

Another loud boom followed immediately after. However, it wasn't related to Muku. The CSK had endured the pain and instantly took off in flight.

It needed time to regroup. Time Muku wasn't giving it on the ground. So, it flew into the air he had no access to.

Soon it reached around thirty metres into the sky. Then began levitating while holding its back and side area.

Its eyes instantly scanned the ground in search of Muku after reaching a sufficient height.

Yet no matter where it looked. It couldn't find him. Its unease increased again as it began to frantically look all over the place.

"Looking for me I presume" Muku's voice sounded above it.

Chills went down its spine. Before it could even look up, a loud bang sound followed by an even louder boom sound was heard.

Muku had smashed it back to the ground. What it hadn't noticed was that he jumped up the moment it took off. Then grabbed onto its arm bone to give himself a lift up.

When the CSK began levitating. Muku passed it by and went higher up due to momentum.

He had a clear view of its confused and frantic self from above. Of course, he had to add a cool line before beating it down.

However, it wasn't all smiles after beating it down. He was instantly faced with a problem. He currently couldn't fly.

And what happens to anything that can't fly when exposed to gravity? Obviously it falls down... Hard too if it's heavy. And Muku was a grown man. Hell, even a baby would be way too heavy in the situation.

"Ahhhh!" Instantly Muku's god-mode scene ended. He began screaming hysterically as he fell down.

BOOOOOOM!

An explosion almost as intense as the CSK's sounded next to its unmoving body.

Dust went everywhere. It cleared up soon enough though. And a surprising scene was revealed. Muku who was supposed to be a bloody mess on the ground stood straight and looked unharmed instead.

However, the ground around him was destroyed even more than the ground around the CSK's body.

"Hehe, it's good to have a mother. Such an amazing technique" Muku spoke while getting out of the little hole he had created.

"Hey, you! Are you going to lie around all day? Stop pretending, get up already. I'm not gonna give you time to rest. Just like you did to me at you bastard!" Muku spoke while looking at the CSK.

"Tsk. You've got me there human. I guess I took you too lightly before. And for that, I apologise. It's time I take you as a real threat" The CSK surprisingly replied as it stood up. It spoke that weird language everyone could understand without knowing it.

Though Muku could actually speak it too now. It was a perk of making a soul link with Raya.

"Woah! What?! You can speak?!... Well, then again, most beasts should be able to speak from R3. I just thought you were one of those dummies who couldn't like the boar" Muku replied in an exaggerated tone.

He wasn't scared by the CSK's words at all. Their standing in the battle was about equal to his. So what if it spoke big words? He was still going to beat it up!

"Hehe. You have got jokes, huh? Well, I have got jokes of my own. I think you will be interested in this one. It's a little joke and it goes like... I have figured you out! Hahaha. Isn't that just the funniest thing you have ever heard?. Oh and since you're wondering why I didn't speak before. Well, you weren't worthy enough to hear me speak. Now you're barely worthy. You can think of it as a little gift before I end you. Hahaha. That's another good joke don't you think" The CSK replied.

Its words made the smile on Muku's face instantly disappear.

"What do you mean?" Muku asked with a grave expression on his face.

"FORCE!" The CSK shouted in response.

Muku's already pale expression turned paler...

Chapter 240: Figured out

"The legendary technique FORCE!..." The CSK spoke again. This time it made it even more obvious that it knew what it was talking about.

"To think you would have access to such a legendary technique... Then again, considering the monster behind you. I guess it's understandable. It's also because of that blasted technique that I am here!" The CSK continued. It had gotten rather chatty.

It seemed completely unbothered by its injuries from before. Along with the new ones which were reflected by the trail of blood coming out of its mouth. Without a doubt, Muku had done significant damage to its internal organs.

However, it ignored all that. Its focus was on other things...

For whatever reason, it spoke with such hate when it mentioned the technique. From its words, it was pretty easy to guess that it had somehow suffered due to the technique.

"What do you know about FORCE?" Muku asked. He was immediately surprised by how he put emphasis on the technique's name. It was quite mystical.

That's when he realised that the CSK wasn't just being dramatic with the way it said it. It was just how things were. He guessed Mrs C probably had something to do with that. He could pretty clearly picture her giggling like a child every time they said the technique's name.

"Oh, I know quite a bit actually. However, all that doesn't matter. All that matters is that I also know that you've barely scratched the surface. Which means... If I don't give you FORCE. You won't be able to use it. With that said, DIE!" The CSK exploded forward the moment it finished speaking.

However, it seemed to have returned to its old methods of silently attacking. That didn't make things easier for Muku despite the lessened impact of the coming attacks.

In fact, his expression turned grave. The tides which were finally in his favour were about to change again.

It seemed he had to ration his remaining FORCE if he wanted to win this one. He hardened his expression as he got ready to receive the CSK's attacks.

Speaking of FORCE, it was a really mystical technique. Which anyone could clearly see from how it helped Muku turn things around when it looked like he was facing certain defeat.

The way it worked in the initial stages, which Muku barely reached was... It took the "force" from an enemy's attacks and then used it as a deadly weapon against them. Which was why Muku just had to tap the CSK for big hits. He was actually hitting it with its own concentrated force.

The force is contained in the user's body by circulating it in the bloodstream. It was a really hard thing to do. In fact, during the blocking round with the CSK. It was actually his own failure to contain the power properly which hurt him the most. He had been successfully expelling the excess force out of his body after all.

If he had just focused on blocking without collecting "force" he would have pretty much come out uninjured. However, that would leave him with no way to battle against the CSK. He would only be its punching bag. Which would suck. So, he took the risk of destroying his body and collected some force.

Fortunately for him, he got into the zone. This helped him comprehend how to properly collect "force" without getting injured.

Which gave him the great experience of beating up the CSK soon after. He has never been so satisfied about giving a beast a beating before.

Unfortunately, the stubborn creature just didn't know when to give up! It just kept on going a step ahead of him no matter how many steps forward he took.

Fortunately, things weren't completely bad this time. He could still salvage a win.

If only he were at the second stage of "Force Manipulation". At that stage, he would be able to do something called "Force Amplification".

Which is self-explanatory really. He would be able to amplify even little amounts of "force" to something deadly. Unfortunately, that's a stage which takes years to reach. And he had just barely reached the first stage through a life-and-death exchange. With a lot of luck... And plot armour too.

Then there was the Third Stage. The final stage, based on the information he got. Unlike the first and second stages which depend on getting beaten up first. Though to varying degrees. The Third Stage didn't need one to receive a beating first.

One finally gains access to their own force. They can create and amplify their own force. Which would be pretty cool. He could do some amazing things with that.

Though for some reason, he felt like there was a higher stage. Well, whatever, even if there is, it had nothing to do with Muku for the moment. All he needed to worry about was the beast gunning for his life. The one and only CSK.

Anyway, the CSK soon reached Muku. Unlike before, it kept a little more distance from him.

And instead of the heavy hits from before. Which would pretty much be no different from feeding Muku. It attacked with controlled claw attacks. They didn't have too much force behind them. Which would limit would limit the amount of force Muku gets.

It was the glaring weakness of the first stage. If the enemy knows that you're feeding off them. They'll just choose to feed you as little as they can.

That problem would get rectified at Stage Two. However, the user would still be weak to swords and such. If they are bare-handed. They'd lose their lives just as they collect the force. After all, who can tank a blade for force without getting cut down?

Anyway, just because the CSK was using "weaker" attacks. They were still very deadly. After all, its claws were specifically designed by nature to rip prey apart with little effort.

If Muku wasn't boosting his body's natural responses with force. He would have long been skewered to death. He was also glad that the technique came with a "Force Sense". As long as a creature was moving and creating even the littlest of force, he would be able to sense it. Which was what he was doing with the CSK.

He had a feeling that his "hearing sense" and "force sense" were related somehow. He just didn't know how...

With force working behind the scenes, Muku was putting up a good fight against the CSK. It was nowhere near his earlier display where he dominated. However, it seemed somewhat stable.

Though it was slowly going downhill for him. At first, he could dodge all the attacks. However, after a while, claw marks began to appear on his body. Blood began flowing out of him again.

His face got even paler. His vision darkened a little. He also became a little sluggish. Which cost him greatly as the CSK took the chance to slash him deeply on the chest area. If the attack had been a little deeper. He would have definitely lost his life along with the battle.

The near-death experience scared him awake. His movements got a lot sharper after that. However, the sharpness began disappearing soon after. His body was failing him again. It was even more injured than when he was healed up before.

This time the CSK didn't get complacent despite things seemingly going its way. It kept on pressing harder and harder. It had learned its lesson already. Muku wasn't someone to be underestimated no matter what.

After all, the last time it underestimated him. It was knocked out of the sky and broke a wing. Which took flying off the table. Fortunately, Muku hadn't paid attention to it or he would have probably mocked it a long time ago.

{Tsk, why is this taking so long?! I'm gonna die before I have enough force at this point!} Muku thought to himself in frustration as he did his best to dodge the CSK's sharp nails.

He was in a real dilemma. He needed to get hit to get "force". However, every time he got hit moved him closer to defeat. It was a really troublesome situation.

So, he just went with the only thing his dizzy brain could think of. Which was to dodge as many of the attacks as he could while gaining "force" whenever he was hit. It wasn't much of a plan, but it was the best he could think of at the time. So, he went with that.

Soon he thought of a daring plan. Since the CSK wasn't going to give him force. He was going to take it.

Slash!

Bang!

Pwak!

"Argh!" Muku screamed in pain.

What happened was that he deliberately slowed down his movements a bit. Which made the CSK a little excited. So, it subconsciously increased the force in its slash. Which shouldn't have been a problem since only its claws were going to come into contact with Muku right?

Wrong! Just when the claws were about to reach him. Muku actually jumped forward. Which made the claws miss. However, the CSK's giant hand hit his shoulder instead. The strength in it was enough to shatter his hand as well as send him flying some distance away.

Although Muku screamed in pain. A smile appeared on his face immediately after as he got up off the ground.

A confident look appeared in his almost dead eyes again. He looked at the CSK with narrowed eyes.

It stood in place, seemingly not knowing what to do. His crazy act had caught it off guard. He literally could have died there if he had calculated things wrongly. His body was too beat up after all.

"Human, you're crazy. Insane in fact. However, you have my respect" The CSK spoke after collecting itself.

"Hehe. Thanks. You're a sadistic bastard who I wish rots in hell after death. However, you have my respect as well. I think it's time we end this. Don't you agree" Muku replied weakly. However, there was a mad and confident smile on his face. It was a perplexing sight.

This was when Raya returned from her trial. She had arrived just before things came to a close.

Whether it was Muku or the CSK who would win. Only the next chapter would tell...