

Few Wives 291

Chapter 291: Guilt?

"Umm, why?" Mrs C who was genuinely confused since she found out that not reading Muku's mind was more fun asked.

She expected him to shout at her for distracting him before. At the very least she thought he would demand compensation for the incident. He was that kind of person after all.

But yet, there he was, giving her a hug. And it was probably the most genuine hug he had ever given her.

" There's no need to act I know you read my mind to find out about my inner turmoil or something like that. Exactly what one would expect from a mother without boundaries..." Muku replied.

He didn't answer her question directly though. However, his words were enough for Mrs C to realise what was happening.

"I... Oh... Umm, that was the last time I read your mind I promise!" Mrs C instantly confessed.

What she was talking about was a very delicate matter actually. It all happened on the day Muku told her about his encounter with the Earth Dragon in the past.

While he spoke stoically at that time. She, who felt that there was something wrong peered into his mind. And what she found surprised her greatly. There was a chaotic storm going on in Muku's mind.

He actually regretted his actions which led to the Earth Dragon's death. As for why, when he literally kills and eats beasts for breakfast, only he knew. She didn't pry any deeper.

Anyway, as a good mother, she obviously wanted to make her child feel better. And how could she do that? Well, obviously she had to bring the beast back to life and have him settle scores with it and move on. There was a point in his Rank-up journey when a clear mind was paramount. So, she wanted him to be in perfect condition for that day.

After all, her biggest desire was for him to reach the peak without any hindrance. She couldn't do anything about his other problems but she could do something about the Earth Dragon issue.

And so she put her plan into motion. The first part was to cancel the initial plan to have him move on to the second floor. He had to take care of his heart demon first...

It was pretty easy to get him on board since he was used to her randomness and unreliability too. This kinda stung her inside that he thought of her like that but such was life...

Anyway, she had achieved the goal she set out to do. She even got thanked for it which was unexpected. But it was a pleasant surprise she accepted wholeheartedly.

"It's okay, there's no need to panic I'm happy you did that" Muku replied as he let go of her and stepped back.

She felt that it was too bad and almost refused to let him go but she held herself back in the end. She didn't want to be seen as a crazy and clingy mother after all.

"Really? Well... I'm glad I could help then. Can you tell me why its death bothered you so much despite everything? It was literally replaying over and over in your head. As you know, I stopped reading your mind. So, I have no idea" Mrs C asked curiously.

"Oh, that. Thank you for respecting my boundaries again. As for the reason why... It's rather embarrassing actually. But, I will tell you since you helped me so much. The reason why it was playing over and over in my head as you said is because I felt that I had wronged it... You see, ever since I soul-linked with Raya I have found myself seeing beasts a little differently from before. Unlike before when they were just walking KP to me, now I see them as entities on the same level as humans"

"Which was a late realisation considering how many were already as sentient as us even before Raya. But I ignored all that, after all, I had no stakes in the game"

"However, after Raya, my eyes were cleared. From then on... Of course, I didn't become a vegetarian or stop killing them, that would be detrimental to me. However, I did stop killing for fun. I only kill when I need to kill. If I don't, I won't"

"Which is like a tribute to my partner. She also doesn't kill randomly. Which has always been her way of life"

"Anyway, for that reason, when that beast was killed because of me, I guess I was struck with as much guilt as one would feel if they got an innocent person killed"

"While I'm also not a saint to humans. I never hurt the innocent. Let's just say my character shifts based on who I'm interacting with. Which I feel is the way to live in the current world as well as the world before the apocalypse. People can't all be treated the same way..."

"Anyway, for that reason, getting the Earth Dragon killed really didn't sit well with me. It felt quite terrible, which was more than what I could say after my first human and beast kills. Those felt like a simple business transaction to me. So there was no need to involve my emotions. So yeah, I'm really grateful for what you did. Hearing those words from it really set me free" Muku practically poured out every lingering emotion left in his heart with his explanation to Mrs C.

She didn't interrupt him or laugh. She just quietly listened like any good mother when their child tells them about their worries.

"Well... Considering that there is nothing in the soul link which makes one see beasts differently, I think you just used Raya as an excuse to live how you had always wanted to. Somewhere along the lines you realised that other than appearance, beasts and humans aren't too different. In fact, beasts might be a little better than humans in some departments like truthfulness. Unlike humans, most beasts won't stab you in the back. If they hate you they will come at you from the front. Unlike that Area fellow who ambushed you before. Anyway, I'm happy for you son. One really should have a balance. You can't be too nice and you also can't be too cruel. It leaves you with room to adapt to whatever situation comes your way. It's how you reach far on the road to the peak and even beyond if you're talented enough" Mrs C replied.

She expressed her pride in how Muku turned out as well as gave him a little motivation. She even indirectly said that she treats beasts the same way. Not as inferiors but equals. They were different from animals after all.

"I'm glad you agreed with me... Though it's quite odd for me to express myself like this..." Muku replied awkwardly. As a manly man, he had never done that, but Mrs C just made him feel safe. He was spewing out everything before he even realised it.

Maybe that was a mother's ability. She can disarm you completely without even doing anything.

"What? No. It wasn't odd. Look at me, son. I said look at me. That's right, no need to be shy... There's no shame in pouring yourself out to your mother. Even if you get a wife... And a few more in the future. You can still come talk to me about things you're too embarrassed to talk to them about. As your mother, I won't judge you at all. I'm always here for you son. I hope you know that" Mrs C poured a little of herself out to make Muku feel better about himself.

And it worked... However, it kinda made him blush. He was literally 21! The way she spoke to him made him feel like he was 12 instead. It even made him blush a little. And so....

"So, since you admitted that that wasn't the real trial. Does that mean I still have to go through the real thing?" Muku switched the topic.

"Well... Let's talk about that after Raya is done with her battle. Don't you want to see her in action? You managed to finish the trial before her this time. Which was quite unexpected" Mrs C went along with what he wanted without making it obvious that she knew what he was doing.

"Oh yeah, Raya. That snake partner of mine. However, can you not say it like I won fairly? We both know that using Force was illegal. It shouldn't have even worked in a mana trial. So you pretty much gave me a cheat I shouldn't have. There's nothing to celebrate about in such a victory" Muku replied in a matter-of-fact tone as he exposed another one of Mrs C's conveniences.

She had set everything up from the start. When he was about to kill the beast before resolving anything, she got involved. When he was losing faith in winning the fight, he realised he could use force.

Which was supposed to also be locked in a mana trial. But hey, there was no way he was going to complain when his a*s was getting burnt off. A win is a win. Though he wouldn't be proud of it.

"Oh... You figured that out too. And here I was hoping you would realise after we've separated with all that's going on. Sigh. Yeah, I let you keep your Force. However, it was supposed to be of little assistance. I didn't know you were so proficient in it to the point that you could retrain and use it so well in such a weak body. You truly are my son! I'm so proud!. However, in the real mana trial. It won't be a thing. So, you better be ready when the time comes" Mrs C confessed.

"Oh, okay. Don't worry. I'll be ready" Muku accepted her confession and the duo then turned to a screen.

On it, Raya could be seen standing in a desert with her eyes closed. Her body was bruised and battered. As for what had happened. Muku didn't know yet.

But the shaking in the sand showed promise of an answer soon enough...

Chapter 292: Raya's battle

A while back...

Unlike Muku who was dropped in a forest-like pocket dimension. Raya found herself in a desert. The desert was so dry that there were literally no plants at all.

Again, unlike Muku, she didn't immediately spot the enemy. However, she had a feeling that she knew what that was.

While she had no psychological issues like Muku. She had a deep impression of

a place which looked like the pocket dimension she was dropped into. And that place was the Beast Forest desert, which she had only seen once.

The same place she and Muku had escaped with tails tucked in between their legs before. It was easy to identify the unseen opponent just from the location alone.

Her nerves instantly tensed. While she had dealt with Earth element opponents before and come out on top. She had never dealt with the kind of opponent coming her way...

While she was still stuck in thought. The ground began shaking. Then...

BOOM!

"SKKKKRRRRR!"

A mad screech sounded after an explosion on the ground Raya was standing on before.

A large sandworm was exposed to the world after the sand cleared. It then looked in the direction of Raya who was now several metres away.

To say it was looking at her would be far-fetched since it didn't have eyes. It was more appropriate to say that it could sense her. As creatures without eyes which lived below ground but hunted things above ground, sandworms had super keen senses. They were among the best in the category.

Anyway, the creature was mad because it had missed Raya whom it had sensed clearly before. With its speed of attack, escaping shouldn't have been so easy for her.

Raya wasn't much quick to act as she studied the huge creature. She was only ten meters and it was around fifty metres long and fifteen metres thick. And this was when a significant part of it was still hidden underground.

So it was safe to say that it could easily swallow Raya whole if it got the chance. And just biting her once with its unknown number of teeth which filled its mouth would probably be enough to end her. No, not probably, it would definitely be enough to do the job.

Its mouth looked like it was designed to bite down on the hardest of defences and destroy them.

Even Raya's peak body might not stand a chance. And she didn't even have that peak physic at the moment as Mrs C had taken it away. So yeah, she was in a very delicate and super dangerous situation. She couldn't avoid any mistakes.

Which was why she didn't hesitate to use her teleportation which took quite an amount of mana to use. Just using it once took five percent of her mana.

That might not seem like much but one had to know that it wasn't an offensive spell. It was just for getting away. And using it twenty times would leave her dried up. Which was simply nonsense!

That meant that in her weakest times when she had less than two percent mana when she needed it the most, she wouldn't be able to use it. And most of her stronger offensive spells took around that amount. So yeah, the spell wasn't cheap.

Then again, it was the space element, with everything included in its workings, that it was kind of understandable that it took so much power.

However, Raya didn't like using it too much. It was more of a strategic element. It was never wise to completely let yourself run out of mana in the Beast Forest. Muku's situation was a perfect example of why that wasn't good. Such a thing could lead to death after winning.

Fortunately for her, she didn't have one element. She was one of the rare bastards who had multiple elements. And she didn't just have multiple elements. She had three super-rare elements.

Those elements being, space, light and darkness.

The dragon's elements made even Muku envious. Her elements made it obvious that she was definitely one of life's main characters. Not to mention her bloodline which buffed those elements and pretty much every other significant quality she had.

If she and Muku were to face off without their bloodline. There is pretty much no chance he could beat her. Maybe with luck, he might be able to. But in a battle of stats. She was his superior by far. A true dragon showing a true dragon's advantages over everyone else.

Anyway, for the trial, she didn't have the support of her physic or bloodline. So, she was relatively weakened. But she was far from defenceless with her three elements.

With that being said, the sadworm didn't linger too long above ground. It expressed its anger and dug back into the ground.

Raya wasn't quick to attack. She wanted to study it first. This wasn't her initial plan but she had to do it after finding something out.

Unlike her who was a LR4, the sandworm was actually MR4! Had Mrs C made a mistake? Weren't they supposed to be the same rank level?!

{No, I haven't made a mistake. Everything is as it should be. I wanted you to have an equal-level battle. But a certain someone said that it wouldn't be a challenge for you. And after looking at your track record, I was convinced. You probably would have won quite easily if you were faced with an equally strong opponent. After all, unlike that son of mine, you kept up with every aspect of your training. While I do wish you had told him about the importance of mana quality, I think it was okay that you didn't. After all, learning the hard way is quite effective for him. Anyway, enough about him. The point is, you, girl, are too outstanding. For that reason. You're gonna be facing a higher rank level opponent. And unlike Muku, your trial actually counts. With that said, good luck, Little one. I believe in you} Mrs C's voice sounded in Raya's head.

Time seemed to have frozen when she spoke, so Raya didn't lose any time. Unlike when she spoke to Muku. She wasn't trying to distract Raya, after all.

As for how she knew what Raya was thinking. She didn't read her mind, she read her eyes instead. It was quite obvious from the look in Raya's eyes what she was thinking. Mrs C had really stopped reading the duo's minds. Maybe she grew a conscience.

"Oh, okay... Thank you for telling me" Raya replied. Her mood which had taken a dive after finding out that her opponent was stronger than her instantly rose. Like most females, she was weak to compliments.

If everything Mrs C said, what she paid the most attention to was when she complimented her. She quite liked being called outstanding, especially by a being of Mrs C's calibre. Hell, she didn't even know what that calibre was, but she knew that it was definitely somewhere at the very peak. Beyond Monarchs.

Anyway, she didn't linger too much on the compliment. She would think about it again later on. She currently had a beast to take care of. She had to prove Mrs C right for trusting her after all. She also didn't think about why Mrs C said Muku's trial didn't count. She'll find that out soon enough..

Not long after she had that thought, the ground beneath her began shaking again.

She couldn't help but roll her eyes at the predictable action by the sandworm. Then again the beast had little to no intelligence, so it was expected that it would do something like that.

Speaking of which, since sandworms didn't have much intelligence, they couldn't deploy domains or use domain armour. However, that didn't make them less dangerous than other beasts. If anything, it made them even more dangerous.

That's because their bodies were countless times stronger than normal beasts. Even dragons at the same level weren't as good as them unless they went through something which enhanced their physics.

This was because the domain armour had naturally merged with their bodies the very moment they reached R4. It was something done by nature. Like how the slow tortoise naturally has a tough shell because it's slow and marine mammals can hold their breath longer than land mammals from birth. It was just how things were.

While this limited them in some ways like focusing their armour on specific spots and some stuff like that, it wasn't too bad as it cost less mana among other advantages.

Then there were their domains. It was turned into a few spells that the worms know by instinct. The spells were all extra strong.

Raya didn't know most of the information mentioned above, but she was about to find out.

From that battle, she never forgot an important life lesson. And that lesson was, just because you're smarter than someone, it didn't mean you were better than them...

WHOOOO! WHOOOO! WHOOOO!....

Raya's eyes widened as she looked around her. She couldn't believe what she was looking at...

Chapter 293: Unfortunate Raya

The calm desert...

"Did it come to life?" Raya spoke to herself as she disappeared from where she was and appeared as far away as possible.

From there she had a little time to see what was going on. The phenomenon was odd to say the very least.

The pocket dimension she was in was at least fifty square kilometres. Five times bigger than the one Muku was in. Which was under some Raya and her opponent was bigger.

Anyway, that wasn't the problem. The problem was how the sand below her began rising and falling like water. It looked like a sand version of a tidal wave. And it was getting worse and worse with more time which passed by. Soon enough Raya won't have anywhere to run.

Then she would be forced to take action. And taking action usually meant attacking the opponent, right? Unfortunately, the sandworm was nowhere to be seen.

"Is it the one behind this? No... That can't be it. What's going on isn't something possible with spells. If it were just the surface which was being controlled, it would be understandable. But this is coming from underground. Such a thing should only be possible with a domain. Even a domain armour can't do it... I'm so confused. What's happening? And as much as I don't want to admit it. This is probably because of that dummy. Does being dumb come with some tricks these days?!" Raya spoke to herself while trying to formulate an attack plan.

She was also trying her best to locate the sandworm with her mana sense. If she could attack it, maybe she would be able to stop what was going on. After all, attacking the caster was a sure way to stop magic attacks. No matter how weird they were.

Unfortunately for Raya, the sandworm which was already super good at hiding was now hidden in the chaotic ground. It was basically impossible to locate it now.

And so, she gave up...

"Well, if you won't come out then I'll strike you where you are.... What the..." Raya was about to unleash one of her strongest spells when she was cut off by the scene in front of her.

Countless small sandworms made out of sand formed from the ground and quickly made their way toward her.

The ground also didn't stop being chaotic. In no time at all the chaos had covered the whole space and Raya had no choice but to float in the air to avoid them.

Of course, she could fly, like Jade said before, as long as your mana control was good enough. Anyone could fly. In fact, Jade had long taught the others how to do it in the past year on the other side.

Anyway, just like the pocket dimension ground and space, the sky was also limited. Raya couldn't go beyond thirty kilometres in the air. It was like she was stuck in a box.

The height was decent, but it wasn't high enough to completely keep her safe from the sand element sandworms(SESs).

The little creatures of mana and sand would shoot out of the group with mouths wide open intending to bite her to death. Most would miss, but some would reach her. Of course, she would easily dodge or destroy them with a light beam, but that wasn't sustainable. They seemed endless while her mana wasn't.

She could go for a while, but she was almost certain that the sandworm could outlast her. No, she was definitely certain, the creature not only had an environmental advantage, it also had a level advantage.

So yeah, Raya definitely didn't want the battle to be too long. Unfortunately for her, the sandworm was still not showing up. Was the creature really brainless like she thought? No... It definitely wasn't much of a thinker, maybe its instincts were so used to the hunt that it instinctively knew how to deal with all kinds of opponents.

She wouldn't have minded what it was doing if there were no SES problem. And just because the SESs were described as small, it didn't mean they were that small. They were only small when compared to the giant sandworm itself. However, when compared to Raya, they were quite big.

They were almost as big as her actually. They were around seven metres wide with a length of around twenty. It was safe to say that if Raya were bitten by something like that, she would suffer a serious injury.

So, she couldn't relax. She had to be constantly on guard against the little creatures. There were so many that she gave up on teleporting and just defended herself in the sky, after all, there was nowhere to run to. So teleportation would just be a waste of mana.

As a beast not used to such a situation, of course she made a few mistakes. They weren't major but they did get her fragile body injured in a few spots.

It was heartbreaking for her to see the scales she was so proud of get injured so easily. It made her appreciate them more in a way.

Anyway, after a few minutes, Raya was practically entranced as she defended herself against the countless mana beasts. No matter how many she destroyed. More would come to take their place.

It got to a point that it looked like she pretty much forgot about the real sandworm and treated the mana ones as the real enemies. Maybe that's what they were really for... Their purpose could be to lower the opponent's guard for the real sandworm so it can swoop in and finish the job....

"Aha! Found you!"

Pew!!

Raya suddenly exclaimed as she turned around and shot out a light beam behind her. She was expecting to hear a screech or the sound of something solid being hit but there was nothing. The beam just passed through the sand without hitting anything significant.

Raya was confused as she thought she had sensed the sandworm behind her. That's when something even more odd happened, she could sense the sandworm... everywhere??

From all sides, the ground, the sky, everywhere! It was almost like she was in the belly of the beast or something. It was something one would usually feel when they are in a domain. Which was odd in the current situation since she was certain she wasn't in a domain.

And again, Raya was confused by what was going on. The sandworm's means were just too weird!. It didn't conform to common sense at all. Even worse was how a sandstorm suddenly appeared when she was trying to look around closely since her mana sense was practically useless now.

The storm got so back she had to protect her eyes with mana, but that didn't help much with visibility. She couldn't see beyond a few centimetres in front of her. And she had the best sight in Muku's group. Even better than Jade, yet that's all she could see.

Even worse was how she couldn't see the SESs anymore. And they seemed to have been powered by the storm. Their speed was even quicker. She would manage to react in time and dodge dangerous attacks but her body was hurt quite a bit during the process. Just being grazed by them and the sand was enough to hurt her now...

Seeing that the situation was developing in an undesirable direction, she made up her mind. It was time to make her move.

"Domain armour:Dark.... Destruction!" Raya who has been holding herself back for her plan made her move.

Her pure white body which had been turned red by blood suddenly turned pitch black... Well, it was still white, just that a black domain armour was now covering it.

She didn't stop there, she then released one of her strongest spells she calls destruction.

A black orb appeared around her and exploded in the very moment it appeared. It erased all the sand it passed by with nothing getting left behind. The spell cleared out ten kilometres of sand in every direction. It left Raya floating in the middle of empty space. As she looked around her seriously.

That's right, unlike Layla, Raya's darkness element has offensive capabilities outside the shadow realm or domain. Then again, it only made sense, the darkness element was a corrosive force with countless capabilities. Layla's Shadow element was a specialised variant of the darkness element.

The two worked differently despite their somewhat similar appearance and origin. Raya's darkness was offence-oriented while Layla's Shadow was evasive.

Anyway, that didn't matter for the time being. Raya wasn't happy despite the feat she had accomplished. After all, her plan was ruined.

He wanted to draw the beast out by pretending to be weak but it didn't work. She felt that it was a good plan since randomly attacking could just waste her mana without results.

So she thought that the dumb beast would think it was winning by smelling her blood and sensing her distress. Unfortunately, things didn't go according to plan. Who would have thought that Raya wouldn't be able to fool a supposedly dumb beast despite the intelligence she was so proud of?

In her defence, Raya was misinformed. She had been thinking of normal beasts when she made her plan. She assumed that since the worm couldn't see, it had a good sense of smell which would tell it when an enemy was significantly hurt.

Unfortunately for her, the beast couldn't smell anything at all, it operated on aura.

The problem was that despite everything, Raya's aura was as strong as ever. She kept it well hidden, however, it wouldn't fool the sandworm with its keen mana senses.

Raya really had been quite unfortunate that day.

Even worse was how the area she had cleared up was getting filled up quickly.

What did she have to do to make it show up?!

Chapter 294: Beast Mode returns!

As one might guess. As a R4, Raya could easily use an AOE spell which could cover the whole space. It was just fifty kilometres after all.

However, such attacks cost quite a lot of mana and weren't too effective on opponents with strong defence. The reason for this was simple, when energy is spread, it will obviously not be as effective as when it's compressed, especially on hard targets.

For that reason, Raya used a minor AOE attack. It covered a significant length of space and was also small enough to be really strong if it landed. Especially under the buff of her DA.

Unfortunately, the sandworm was out of range. Which made the attack useless.

Raya felt that she might have to unleash her domain if she wanted to locate the beast. Even if it won't be able to do any significant damage, it should be enough to expose the sandworm at least.

After that, she would figure out what to do next. Though she didn't have much faith in it, after all, the soil in the domain was similar to that in the outskirts of the Beast World. It was reinforced with mana. So, even the strongest of attacks she can release won't be able to dig too deep underground. If she's able to reach three kilometres like the ED was able to before, it would be counted as a win.

But that would be too far-fetched as the ED had to combine a focused attack and her domain armour to achieve that. There was also the inclusion of her domain the second time around. Which Raya couldn't do yet.

In fact, if Muku's achievements in the Force Technique weren't super high. He wouldn't have been able to do what he did, which was capturing the energy and using it against the beast.

Anyway, as Raya was debating whether to use her domain or not when the returns weren't guaranteed, she was enveloped by sand again.

And another round of dodge-the-SESs began. The damn things were as feisty as ever.

The situation made Raya wonder if what Mrs C said was true. Could she really win the fight? Sure, she liked being praised, but that was only when she could get the job done, which didn't look like it from how things were progressing.

She was basically getting owned. If her physic was stripped she might have hardened her heart and charged into the ground. After all, she was quite steady physically. In fact, she was as strong as some MR4s physically. So she believed in herself in that category.

With that said, she finally made up her mind. She couldn't be logical with an illogical beast. She was going to go crazy and unleash everything she had randomly and hoped something sticks. If it doesn't work, then she can just give up. After all, she was fighting a higher-level beast, losing was completely understandable.

There was no shame in it at all. In fact, lasting that long when one of her most important weapons(her physic) was stripped away was already good enough.

Just then...

SKKKKRRRR!

A familiar screech rang out. The sandworm has made its appearance again! Raya immediately focused on the ground below her ready to receive it. Which was instinctual since she couldn't tell where the sound was coming from.

The sand had messed with her sight and the generated wind and sound were messing with her hearing.

For that, she used logic to guess where the beast would appear from. She was ready and prepared to meet it with an attack head-on. She wanted to blow up its head or at least take out a few teeth for the trouble it has caused her.

But unfortunately... Yeah, the poor Dragon's streak of misfortune continued.

The sandworm didn't emerge from below as expected, it actually came from above.

She only realised what was happening because of the darkening of the area above her. It was already dark from the countless sharp grains of sand, but it got even worse suddenly.

Fortunately, her brain was quick enough to realise what was happening before it was too late. She immediately reacted as she tried to get out of the way.

Of course, her space element came back into play. However, the sandworm still managed to graze her body before she completely disappeared.

As someone frugal with her mana, she had cancelled her domain armour just before disappearing. After all, it costs an arm and a leg to use. So, if she could pause it briefly, she would. Who knew if that little saved energy would be the game-changer at a later point in battle?

Unfortunately, again, her nature worked against her. Just that little graze from the armoured worm was strong enough to completely destroy her weakened scales.

It left a significant wound on her body. She instantly reactivated her Domain Armour when she appeared on the other side. This stopped blood from rushing out of the wound.

But that wasn't all. She has finally reached her limit. The sandworm has done enough.

She no longer cared about having a plan. It was time to let the beast inside a beast out. It was time to go Beast Mode!

For the first time since that time, she fought against Fake Raya. Raya let herself go....

"ROOOOOOOR!!!"

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

With a loud draconic roar which covered the whole space, Raya exploded.

Crazily enough, for the first time ever. She managed to use two of her domains at the same time. She was coincidentally floating at the centre of the pocket dimension when the two domains exploded out.

Twenty-five kilometres were submerged in pure darkness, and all the sand was destroyed. A few top layers were destroyed on the ground. The chaos was ended instantly.

On the other side, everything was bathed in pure white light... Then it was burned into nothingness.

Darkness consumed and light burned. The sandworm which was still in the air riding the sand found itself getting corroded by the darkness as that's the side it was on.

It immediately began a quick plunge to the ground after all the sand was destroyed.

However, Raya didn't let it fall peacefully, as the beast was still falling from the sky, she gathered energy in her mouth and...

ROOOOOOOOOOAR!

An ethereal black energy beam appeared from the ground and shot towards the sandworm. She ruthlessly shot at its head. Her plan or instinct rather, was to end the fight in one blow.

BOOOOOOOM!

The attack landed dead centre. And it wasn't just a normal attack, no, it was an attack made out of space-rending space-element energy.

Even beasts with the strongest of defences might have to think twice before taking such an attack head-on.

Unfortunately, the sandworm didn't think. Not that it had a choice in the matter anyway.

However, it did have instincts. And those instincts made it turn away its head at the last moment. It couldn't avoid the attack, but it could preserve its life.

The black and white energy cleared up soon after and the dust from the sandworm also cleared up.

Raya who had regained control wasn't quick to move on to the next step. She didn't dare leave her beast mode on, after all, she didn't have much mana left. And using Beast Mode at such a time would be suicidal as it doesn't care about self-preservation. Ending the enemy at all costs was all that mattered to it.

This is why she didn't like it despite the good results she couldn't obtain normally. Fortunately, she managed to stop it this time. Last time it didn't stop until the opponent was a corpse. Which was what scared her off. The little dragon liked being in control of her actions. So, even when she has Muku as backup in the Beast Forest, she dared not use it.

What if she ended up attacking him too?

(A/N: The mode was like Broly's Legendary Saiyan state. Anyone and everyone in front of him was a target)

Anyway, the sandworm didn't move for a while. Which gave her the illusion that she might have done it and the beast was dead. Unfortunately, that thought didn't last too long.

The beast got up as soon as she thought it, almost like it was waiting for her to think that before getting up... What an a**hole, thought.

On the bright side, the creature was now missing a part of its head. It had been cleanly destroyed by the breath attack.

She didn't even know how the thing was still alive despite that.

SKKKKRRRR!

It even screeched!

"Tsk. This thing really likes giving me a hard time, huh?" The weary Raya complained.

And it was around this time that Muku appeared on the other side and began observing the battle.

He has clearly missed the most epic part. Hopefully, Mrs C will be kind enough to show it to him...

Though if he had seen it, he probably would have dissed Raya by asking why a beast needed a beast mode. Like wtf, how much of a trash would one have to be to need that?

Like a human needing a human mode. Even if it was cool, Muku would still throw shade. Like any good friend would do.

Chapter 295: I will avenge you!

"I'm not sure how to feel about this..." Raya spoke to herself softly.

The sandworm was clearly close to the end of its road. However, she was also mostly out of mana.

And without her physic, duking it out was pretty much out of the question. No, it was definitely out of the question.

It was like wanting to hit a cracked rock with an egg. The rock would still win, easily too.

So, Raya was out of options. She still had a little mana left, but it was only good for one more decent attack or a few weak ones. So, she had to use it wisely or it would end terribly for her.

Which would be a shame after coming so long. The loss wouldn't be a letdown just to her, but it would also be a letdown to Mrs C. After all, the lady said she believed in her. As for whoever talked Mrs C into organising the trial, she didn't care too much. She was a little curious but not too much. If the entity cared not to appear in front of her, she wouldn't care either.

Anyway, the sandworm didn't delay any longer. It seemed to have gone into rage mode after the injury. Which was understandable as it had literally lost a part of its head.

It was so enraged that it didn't dive into the sand like it usually would. Then again, diving into the sand with such an injury was basically asking to make it worse and possibly die because of it.

Its instincts always worked with self-preservation at their core. So maybe that's why it just charged forward instead of diving into the ground first like it normally would.

It opened its slightly disfigured mouth as wide as it could. It was clear it wanted to finish Raya in one gulp. It could sense her weakness from her dwindling aura. It was clear that she was at the end of her road.

And it also wanted to go recuperate. So the battle couldn't be dragged on any longer. A sentiment Raya resonated with.

With that said the sandworm quickly slithered its way toward Raya. It was upon her in a few seconds from the many metres away it had been. Who knew that it would be so fast even above ground?

Speaking of which, the ground had actually lost a few layers thanks to Raya's domain attack. Close to two kilometres of soil had been destroyed. Which was quite impressive since it was done by an AOE attack. It had levelled the whole plane equally.

After all, the Earth Dragon's concentrated and buffed attack had only managed to reach three kilometres.

Sure it wasn't specifically targeting the soil and that extra kilometre wasn't easily achieved, but still, Raya's show of strength was outstanding.

If she had carried out a concentrated attack she probably would have reached that level too.

In fact, her breath attack could have reached that if it hadn't spent most of its energy breaking through the sandworm's defence.

Although the spot it hit looked cleanly cut, it had taken quite a significant amount of effort to carry it out.

Anyway, Raya was laser-focused on the sandworm from the moment it steered, so, she was prepared for anything that it was going to throw at her.

Since the dumb beast was coming at her head-on then she was going to stake it all on one counterattack. She slowly opened her mouth as her remaining mana gathered in it.

That's right, she was going to end it with one more breath attack. However, this time it wasn't a space element beam. It was something else, something pure but dangerous. Something which could end it all instantly.

Pure white light had formed an orb in her mouth. She was locked and loaded...

The very instant the beast reached one metre away from her. Raya let it go. All the energy she had left in her body was released at once...

"ROOOOOOAR!" A beam of pure white light accompanied the loud roar and charged deep into the sandworm's readily opened mouth.

It was nowhere near as strong as what she could release at full power but it was effective enough to...

BOOOOM!

The energy which got trapped in the sandworm's body by its hard exterior it could not breach exploded within the beast.

As we all know, one can have the strongest defence in the world, but it's only in cultivation worlds in which their internal organs are as strong as the exterior.

Unfortunately for the sandworm, it wasn't in a cultivation world. It was in an apocalyptic world where such things were rare if not nonexistent. This meant it was screwed. This was proven by how it slumped to the ground immediately after the internal explosion.

The creature which has terrorised Raya for a significant amount of time was... Dead. There was no coming back from such a hit.

It seemed that while Raya had more misfortune between the two from the get-go. It was the sandworm which was more unfortunate in the end. It's crazy how life worked...

Raya slumped to the ground right after the beast. Though unlike it, which had died, she slumped down due to exhaustion.

"Despite everything, that was quite disappointing. I expected more from that thing..." Raya spoke tiredly however, it was easy to sense the joy in her voice.

She disappeared from the pocket dimension spoon after that. Obviously, because of Mrs C, there was no need to delay after all.

.....

Back in room zero.

"Congratulations Little One, I knew you could do it" Mrs C congratulations Raya with a motherly smile on her face.

"Hehe. Thank you" Raya replied while laughing sheepishly.

"Don't feel too proud of yourself brat. She told me that she locked away some of the beast's skills. So you didn't actually beat it at its strongest. It wasn't as cool as you think it is" Muku, the shade thrower struck.

His words salty as they could be. Was he jealous that his mother was completing someone else or did he just like ruining Raya's mood?... It was probably a combination of both. And seeing Raya's darkened expression made it all seem worthwhile. He even wished he could go back and redo it but he'd use even more ruthless words.

Raya has had fun at his expense quite a feeling times and he was only returning the favour. So it wasn't anything bad really. She should have kept her mouth shut back then if she didn't want to face his revenge.

Muku was quite the petty person after all. Especially when dealing with those close to him. Which was like the opposite of how he should be doing things but that was his. He liked to settle scores, and settle them he does.

Of course, all this was known to Raya. She knew that he would get his revenge one day. But she never thought the day would come so soon. After all, she was Raya, the practically perfect dragon who always came out on top.

Unfortunately coming out on top wasn't enough to save her this time.

"You will regret this..." Raya replied in a voice laced with poison.

How dare he take his revenge at her happiest moment? She could have stomached it if it were another time, but not currently. Not when her idol Mrs C was involved. How dare he embarrass her like that?

Sure, Mrs C knew everything already as she was the one who sealed some of the beast's abilities. However she hadn't said it, and everything was okay like that. Muku had ruined everything. And that meant war! She was going to make him regret it!

"Oh come on! You literally started it. You've been stabbing me for more than a year. I've only stabbed you once and yet you're already gunning for my life. I didn't know that even female dragons partook in

the double-standards movement. Is it something all females do no matter the species? If so, maybe I shouldn't kill male beasts from now on. Those heroes are already doing enough by surviving you and still showing up for work like nothing is wrong. With the way they attack to kill with so much ruthlessness, you'd think there's nothing wrong. But to think they are suffering so much. Then again, it's probably because they are going through a lot that they are so ruthless. I should have known. I should have seen the pain in their eyes. Those poor souls. To all the male beasts I've killed. I'm sorry, I didn't know. Please, brothers, forgive me! I'll do better from now on! I'll avenge you all!" Muku started out decently enough but then he went on and on until Mrs C and Raya were both speechless.

There was one thought in both their minds and that was... {What a drama queen!}

To think Muku was even more dramatic than them. And he even shed a little tear at the end seemingly overwhelmed with emotion. The scene made them think that Muku made the wrong career choice before the apocalypse, he should have been an actor instead of a teacher. He was clearly a natural-born actor!

His level of exaggeration was over nine thousand. He went from expressing his disbelief in how hypocritical Raya was to pretty much forging a brotherhood with all the male beasts he had killed and promised to avenge them. What kind of switch was that? Was he going to kill himself in this act of revenge? After all, he was the killer...

"...Are you done?" Raya asked with a deadpan expression on her face after a moment of silence.

"Tsk. I will not be done until all of you are gone!" Muku replied resolutely like a soldier ready to die for his cause.

"Cough. Cough. While this conversation is interesting and all. I think it's about time we moved on don't you think? Let's start by giving Raya her reward as a way to motivate Muku for his trial" Mrs C interjected before Raya could reply.

Hearing her words, Raya's eyes glowed with happiness then she looked at Muku with the most evil gaze she could master.

Muku felt a chill seeing the gaze. What the hell was she thinking?!

Chapter 296: No winning against women!

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Muku asked Raya nervously.

"... Umm, ma'am, can I ask for something specific for my reward? I promise it won't be over the top" Raya didn't reply to Muku's question.

She just stared at him briefly before directing her gaze to Mrs C and addressing her.

"Well, it's your reward so I guess it's fine... So, what is it that you want?" Mrs C agreed immediately.

She had no reason to refuse. From the way Raya was looking at Muku, she could tell that it was probably going to be something Muku would hate. But that didn't matter to her. As long as it wasn't over the top, she didn't mind fulfilling the wish at Muku's expense.

Did it make her a terrible mother? Nooo! She was being the very mother Muku asked for. One who wouldn't protect him too much. So if anything, he was to blame for whatever might happen. She was innocent!

"Great! What I want is to make whatever trial Muku is going to face twice as hard!" Raya didn't delay any further as she excitedly expressed her wish.

"OMG! You little snake!" Muku cursed Raya instantly before Mrs C could say anything.

The brat was definitely plotting his death! He had participated in Mrs C's trials twice and he barely made it out both times. And that was only because Mrs C gave him the mysterious Force Technique. If not for that, he would have definitely died both times.

And Raya wanted to make those kinds of trials twice as hard?! That was clearly an indirect way of sentencing him to death. If that's how it was going to be, then he would rather not participate at all. Screw the possible rewards! Who cared about rewards when they were dead?!

Even if he somehow manages to survive through some miracle. It would definitely be after a hellish experience. And he would rather die than willingly jump into such a situation. He was no masochist!

"Oh? So that's what you want? How interesting, I definitely want to see such a thing... Unfortunately, that can't be done. These trials aren't just for fun or inflicting pain. They are for training and growing. They are designed in a way that there are ways to win. In fact, Muku's first trial was a mistake. He had no way to win that one. Which was why I provided him with a way. Anyway, if we make his planned trial twice as bad, then it would just be pointless torture. Which I cannot do to my son lest he hates and disowns me" Mrs C rejected Raya's request.

She then looked at Muku with puppy-dog eyes. She was clearly expecting to be praised for doing a great job.

However, Muku wasn't fooled. He rolled his eyes and spoke.

"Don't give me that look. We both know you only refused because you don't want to be hated. If that wasn't a possibility, you would have long made the trial harder even without her saying anything" Muku said ruthlessly.

"Wh.. whaaaaat?! How could you say that? Do you really think I'm that kind of person? Do you think I enjoy seeing you getting beaten up to an inch of your life by beasts I pit you against??... Okay, maybe that last line made the whole thing suspicious, but I swear on your life that I only do what I do for your growth" Mrs C responded with a hurt look on her face.

"What the hell?! Why are you swearing with my life?! Swear with yours damn it! You sneaky Old lady!" Muku cursed angrily.

How dare she swear with his life when she was clearly lying?! Sure, what she said was true as he gained significant benefits from the trials. But that wasn't the whole truth. Even if the trials weren't so hard, he probably would still improve by a lot.

She just enjoyed seeing him struggle, which was why she made them so hard. So for her to have the gall to say such a thing, was insane.

"What?! Old lady?? How dare you say that to a young lady like me? What part looks old to me? I'm just a few million years old okay! That's practically nothing compared to some beings out there. I'm just a baby in fact! The gall to call me old, such a disrespectful child. Hmph! I don't want to talk to you anymore" Mrs C replied with an outraged look on her face.

She finished her self-defence with a pout as she looked away from Muku. It was her way of showing that she was serious about not talking to Muku.

Raya just looked on with smiling eyes. While she didn't get what she wanted, which was sad. She still managed to make Muku shoot himself in the leg by getting on Mrs C's bad side.

She didn't have any fantasies of making Mrs C hate Muku for real since she was certain that such a thing was impossible. She didn't know why she thought that, but she just did. And she didn't want it anyway.

What happened was enough for her. It should be enough to make Mrs C make things a little harder for Muku. For whatever reason, Mrs C's personality was somewhat like Muku's. They both had petty tendencies. Mrs C hadn't done anything too significant which made it seem that she was petty but Raya had seen signs in some instances.

Anyway, this way, she would still get a reward and make Muku's life a little harder. That was the best outcome. It was like having your cake and eating it too.

"A few million years? That's young to you? You know what, fine. Sure, you're young. Can we move on with the trial? Time is ticking by and I would like to get the suffering over with. Can you tell me what the next trial is before sending me in? I want to mentally prepare" Muku who was feeling quite bold that day didn't apologise but pushed to move on with their day.

"Hehe. You want to move on with the trials do you? Okay, let's do that then. Oh and don't worry, the next trial is quite easy actually. There isn't even going to be any fighting involved. So there's no need to mentally prepare. And you can go right now" Mrs C replied menacingly and before Muku could say anything, he was gone. She had sent him into the trial ground.

The moment he realised what was going on, he cursed in his mind and her unprofessionalism. What happened to the doors? Why were they even there? And he didn't even get a heads-up on what he was stepping into. What abilities would he have and so on.

Why was this old lady so petty? Since when was a few million years young? If that was young then was he a recently fertilised egg then?! Argh! With such a personality, maybe a million years was young. After all, if it was old, then there was no way she would be so childish and petty.

Of course, there was no way he would say that out loud unless she made the situation worse for him.

He didn't have time for that. He had to study the pace he was sent to so that he could figure out what trial it was. This time he didn't fall from the sky. He appeared on the ground in a grey dome which blocked his sight from seeing what was outside. He probably had to go through it to begin the trial.

"That's right, the trial will begin the moment you step out of that dome. Oh, and it's too late to be serious now. I already know what you were thinking. And for that reason, not only will you not get any information on the trial, you will also not be able to quit the trial. Which means that there's no giving up this time. If you can't finish then... There's no not finishing it. That's your only option" Mrs C's voice from the sky snapped Muku out of his thoughts.

"What the hell?! I thought you said you won't read my thoughts anymore?!" Muku complained after she finished speaking.

It was quite obvious she had read his mind from her words. After all, just looking at his expression or eyes couldn't have possibly given her such information. The old lady had already broken her promise after just a freaking month! What kind of trash commitment was that?!

"Yeah, so what if I broke my promise and read your mind? I'm just a senile old lady after all. What if I forgot about the promise in my old age?" Mrs C retorted soon after Muku finished cursing her in his mind.

The way she read his mind this time was even more blatant than before. She was clearly trying to piss him off so that he wouldn't be completely focused on the trial which would make things even harder for him. Especially when giving up wasn't an option.

"..." Muku chose not to reply this time. He felt that saying anything might make things worse. He even cleared his mind of all thoughts related to her.

"What? Now you want to stay silent? Well, it's too late. You've already angered me enough. And for your terrible instincts which took so long to activate, I'm taking back the dome" Unfortunately for Muku, even staying silent wasn't enough anymore.

It seemed there was no way to win against women...

The moment Mrs C's last word fell. The dome around him disappeared and...

"Ahhhhhhhhhh!" Muku let out a blood-curdling scream

Chapter 297: Flame trial!

{I'm in hell} That's the only thought Muku had as he felt every cell in his body getting burned.

There was nothing he wanted more than release from the torment. Yet for whatever reason, despite how much he was getting burnt. So much so that he couldn't open his eyes, and he couldn't even scream after a while. He wasn't dying, he could feel that he wasn't even getting hurt.

That's right, it hurt so much he desired the sweet release of death. Yet it wasn't coming. What kind of trial was this? What kind of fire was this?!

"It's actually a flame you're familiar with. Just that it's an advanced version of that. One powered by advanced mana. I'm not going to tell you which flame I'm talking about. You just have to open your eyes and you'll know. Don't worry, the first level won't do anything to you other than cause a little pain..." Mrs C's voice rang out as she gave Muku a little clarity.

Her voice was calmer than before. Maybe seeing him scream in pain softened her petty heart?

However, Muku still felt like cursing at her. What the hell did she mean by, "a little pain"? What was little about the pain he was feeling? It was easily amongst the worst physical pain he had ever felt, and that was saying a lot after all the painful experiences he had been through. (A/N: Some of the pain occurred in the time skips)

Anyway, Muku did as Mrs C said. Despite the pain, he willed himself to open his eyes. He barely opened them before closing them up again at that very moment. The pain was way too much.

He was wondering how the hell those bastards in novels traverse through fiery planes with eyes open with smiles on their faces?! Sure, they had mana or some other energy protecting them which he didn't but still, screw them! That was bull with how bright the flames were. Just the glare was painful enough.

However, he didn't linger on that too long. That's because he had recognised the flame. It was a flame he was very familiar with. He only needed that split-second look to know it. He didn't even clearly see it. But what he saw was enough. And that was... Gold.

The flames were golden in colour. And the only golden flames he had ever seen belonged to her. That's right, the person he thought of was the one and only Emily. One of the people he missed the most and missed more and more with each day that passed by.

But there was a problem. Emily's flames didn't have such an ability. They either burned you or they didn't. There was no burning you without hurting you. Was that an effect Mrs C added or was it something Emily actually developed after reaching R4?

If she developed it after reaching R4 then wasn't he screwed?! At the very least, if he dared piss her off now wouldn't he be in for a lot of pain without being injured?! That ability was way too sinister! And Emily was such a nice girl, she would never develop a clearly torture-oriented move right?...

Then again, the girl did have a mean streak when pushed too far. She wouldn't torture him for real would she?! That's completely unnecessary! No! She would never! He believed in her

The fear of what Emily might do to him in the future scared him so much that he actually managed to adjust to the pain he was feeling.

He still couldn't open his eyes but his pain tolerance had improved to the point that he could take the current level of pain with relative ease.

Who would have thought that just thinking about Emily would have such an effect? Or maybe he had been mentally preventing himself from adapting to the pain.

Did that mean that Mrs C actually helped him? No. She is the one who set up the trial and well as threw him into it before he was prepared or knew what it was so there was no need to feel grateful. It was the least she could do after everything.

Anyway, he didn't linger in those unproductive thoughts too long. He had a trial to do. And with his stabler state of mind, he was able to feel out his body and know his limits.

While it was obvious that it was a physical trial from how he couldn't use his mana. He still didn't know what he could use.

It was only with his calmer state of mind that he realised that his bloodline power had been stripped away again. He didn't care about that since it had been on the shelf for more than a year anyway. Without mana, his Telekinesis was off the table even if it was technically mental. Though that didn't matter since his mental energy was taken away too.

That was all expected. The real problem came when he realised that he couldn't use the Force Technique as well. Wasn't that too much?! That ability was clearly physical. Why was it stripped away too? He had even saved up a little force from the battle with the Earth Dragon in suspicion that it might come in handy.

But that was all ruined by a simple move from Mrs C. Then again, there were no opponents. So, he would be at the fire's mercy after a little reprieve with no way to combat it.

Only if he had reached the stage he could create and utilise his own force. Then he would have nothing to fear.

But then again, that would be counterproductive. After all, it was obvious that the trial's purpose was to improve his resistance against fire. So if he avoided it, the whole thing would be pointless.

"That's right. This trial's purpose is to improve your resistance against different magical elements. Each element has three levels of intensity. Starting with the fire you're in right now. You will move on to the next element after successfully passing through the three levels of the previous one. Oh, and the place you're in right now isn't even the first level. That's just a prelude to give you an idea of what's to come. Good luck" Mrs C's voice sounded.

It seemed she had mostly let go of the petty feelings as she gave Muku some actual information. She probably could have said more. But what she said was better than before.

At least Muku understood the situation a lot more. Now he could mentally prepare. Sure, he almost had a mental breakdown when she said that the area he was in wasn't even level one.

But there was nothing he could do about it. He dared not even think about complaining lest she make things harder for him somehow.

He didn't want to reverse the improvement in her mood.

With that said, Muku focused on the task at hand.. while there were no enemies to fight. He felt even more pressure than before. After all, the trial was on Floor 2 while the fight was on Floor 1.

Anyone with common sense would easily realise that the elemental resistance was going to be tougher than the CSK fight. That was rather hard to imagine after the gruesome fight Muku had with Scar. But such was life.

Mrs C might love him but she never lets that get in the way of his trials. She was a special and rare type of mother. After all, such qualities weren't usually found in the same mother.

Brutality was usually found in cold and goal-driven mothers, while overly loving mothers spoiled their kids left and right not caring about improving them. Yet Mrs C was both goal-driven and overly loving, a scary combination.

Muku didn't know if he was lucky or unlucky.

With those thoughts going through his mind, Muku walked forward. Since he had gotten used to, "Level 0", he could afford to think of something else while he advanced forward.

Unfortunately, easy mode didn't last long. After walking around fifty meters, he began feeling a change in the heat. After walking twenty more metres, he was certain without a doubt that he was about to step into the first level.

He couldn't help but nervously gulp down some saliva. After all, the heat was already getting unbearable even before he reached the region. His skin was already drying up.

The situation reminded him of his battle with the ED. He was certain that he would have completely forgotten about the ED's flames by the time he finished the trial.

After all, he had the support of his mana, mythril and force to fight off the heat before. One can say that since he now had his physic back, the situation should be the same right?

And the response was, since when was blocking something with a shield and blocking it with your body the same? Even if your body was super sturdy, tanking flames with it would still be excruciating and hurt more than when there's a shield in between. Even if the shield couldn't completely block out the flames.

Not to mention that the golden flames were even hotter than the ED's flames. Which was odd since the ED's flame quality was higher than most. The only possible answers to what had happened were either that Emily had improved her flame's purity back home and Mrs C had copied that or Mrs C herself had improved the quality for the trial.

Either way, Muku was in for a world of pain.

He didn't linger on negative thoughts too long since they wouldn't change anything. If the pain could not be avoided, he might as well get it over with as soon as possible.

With those thoughts in mind, Muku finally stepped onto the first level of the flame trial.

Less than a second later, he jumped back. He couldn't open his eyes but he was certain of one thing. His whole body had been charred and his clothes were gone.

Level One was way worse than he thought! It was like five times worse than Level Zero! What kind of jump in heat was that?!

And it wasn't just heat this time. The flames actually burned him!

Chapter 298: No burn, no gain!

Muku hastily covered his junk after realising that the flames burned. He ignored the pain and focused on protecting his dignity.

{Don't worry about that. I made your clothes fireproof. And even if they weren't, do you think they could prevent me from taking a peek? Of course, I'm not that shameless. And have zero interest in that. Anyway, continue the trial without worry} Mrs C's voice sounded in Muku's head.

Hearing what she had to say he calmed down. There really was nothing he could do if she wanted to see. Fortunately, she didn't seem interested in that anyway. Then again, she was his mother, so of course she wouldn't care.

Anyway, with that matter taken care of. Muku focused on the trial again. This time he didn't jump in. He held out his hand while standing at the edge.

He wanted to see if he would build resistance like Mrs C said. He trusted her of course, but still, it was a painful experience, so he wanted assurance. That was something he could only get from himself.

Anyway, like before, his hand was assaulted by an unimaginably high level of pain. There was nothing he wanted more than to take it back or even cut it off. But he didn't do that.

He let it burn. And burn it did. It was at the moment he was about to lose hope when something happened. He felt a burst of energy in his hand.

The energy wasn't mana, bloodline power, force or any energy he remembered ever using before. However, for whatever reason, it felt familiar. More familiar than mana. Like it had always been there since day one.

And to his surprise, the pain in his hand began to lessen. What was even more surprising was how it was actually healing and returning to normal. That was more than surprising actually, it was scary.

Even his bloodline power didn't have such an abnormal healing factor! What the hell was going on? While the healing wasn't too quick, it was quick enough to notice. And the more he healed, the less he felt the pain in his hand.

Around thirty minutes later. His hand was returned to its pristine state. It looked better than the rest of his body, after all, the rest of him was still charred from before.

The difference was quite exaggerated as the hand even looked rosy. It was like a living hand was attached to a dry corpse.

Anyway, the event made Muku feel that he had definitely come across the energy somewhere before. However, he couldn't pinpoint where exactly that was.

And Mrs C wasn't giving him information on it like she usually would. So, he decided to ignore it for the time being. He'll ask about it after the trial.

That would be better. After all, it would suck to have idle chatter only to be thrown into burning flames soon after that. Idle chatter should be followed by a meal or something.

With that said, Muku jumped into the Flames head-on this time. It was better to get it over with as soon as possible. It was only thirty minutes, he could tank that.

"Ahhhhhhhhh...." An expected scream of pain escaped from Muku's mouth. However, it didn't ring out for too long before it was stifled when he covered his mouth with his hand.

It turns out, screaming in a sea of fire will get your tongue and the inside of your mouth burned too. Who would have thought?

As for why his reaction was so much worse than when it was just a hand getting burned, it was simple actually. There's no way the pain from getting burnt on one part of your body would be anywhere close to that from getting your whole body burnt.

Anyway, one hour into the painful experience Muku realised something... His body was still burning without recovering! Sure, the flame was at a level where it couldn't burn him to death but it hurt like hell.

However since he had already burned for so long, he decided to stick it out. To his horror, it was after another hour that he began to see any improvement in his state. The energy which had been quick to act when he was burning had finally made its appearance two hours later.

He felt like he had been fooled. He had only jumped in because he thought that it would only take thirty minutes for everything to be done.

And yet it was after at least an hour and thirty minutes beyond the expected end that the process began.

He wished he could curse out loudly but that would mean he would have to open his mouth. And there was no way he would ever do that. He wasn't one to apply for extra pain.

And so, he could only scream in his mind as his eyes and mouth remained closed shut. He wished he could close his nose too because it was going through a world of pain with the rest of his body.

His eyes would have been tearing up because of the pain in his nose if they weren't dry. Even the they could, the tears would evaporate the moment they peeked out of the eyelids.

With that said, Muku realised what was happening after the process began. It seemed that the energy worked more slowly when there was more ground to cover. He had assumed that every part had it and it would work on that part alone. But it seemed that it was finite and supplied itself equally in every body part which required attention.

It travelled slowly so it took a while to reach every part of his body. And he felt it seemed to work on a cellular level. So his whole body got itchy as it began its work.

When it was working on his hand there wasn't any itching. Or maybe there was and he only missed it because it wasn't as bad and was overshadowed by the pain.

Anyway, since the process was going to take a long time. Muku chose to sit down and adopt a meditation pose.

It was better to take on the pain while sitting down than standing up. He could also study the changes in his body better.

And so, Muku sat down for around 7 hours as the flames burned him and his body adjusted to them. His resistance steadily increased as he groaned in pain. The groans decreased with every second that passed by until there were none left in the last two hours.

He could feel the pain but he had gotten used to it. It wasn't just his flame resistance which was increasing, his pain resistance was improving beside it.

By the time everything was done, you'd think charred black skin would be covering the improved skin below like how it's said in novels.

However, there was no such thing. Muku's body just looked spotless. Which made sense, like, why would skin which couldn't resist the magical flames leave behind charred remains? It wasn't a normal flame after all. It was a Rank 4 flame too.

So, even if Muku's physical defence was R4. That only worked against physical attacks. It was still weak to energy attacks. It could possibly work against solid spells like Metal, Earth, Ice and so on, but against fire, poison, lightning and such, he was still weak.

There was a difference between magic and physical resistance after all.

Anyway, after everything was done. Muku got up off the ground and advanced. There was no need to delay.

He could even open his eyes a bit now. While they were covered up by his eyelids, the energy worked from inside, so they also got a little improvement from the process. Not as much as the parts directly exposed to the fire, but enough for them to work a little in the flames. He had to squint to the max, but it was better than nothing.

He could finally see his surroundings a little bit. He first looked towards where he was going. And he was met by a rather mesmerising sight. Of course, it was mesmerising in a dangerous way.

He saw flames in an even deeper shade of gold than the ones he was walking through. This definitely signified danger. But he couldn't help but find them beautiful. Like a thorny rose. Everyone knows that roses are dangerous if handled wrongly due to their thorns but they still can't help but appreciate their beauty and be drawn to them.

He then looked behind him and saw flames which had a fainter shade of gold. It was definitely level zero where he began.

He also realised that he was walking in a flaming corridor with golden walls. It looked quite beautiful despite the pain it caused. He couldn't help but wonder if the structure was built to keep the flames in or keep him in.

Well, whatever, knowing that wouldn't change the fact that he had to walk through everything if he wanted to get out. And it wasn't just walking, he had to let himself get burned for hours before he could walk forward.

He could try to speedrun everything, but that would be a death wish because he was sure the resistance from the previous level was factored into the following level. So, speedrunning through was simply asking for death. He would definitely get burned to death if he skipped a level.

With that said, Muku put on his most resolute expression and soldiered on. As they say, No burn, no gain!...

Chapter 299: Dragon-tail soup!

"The second level, huh? I wonder how painful this will be... Well, whatever" Muku spoke to himself and jumped right in.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARGH!" Muku let out a scream louder than he had ever let out before.

With the resistance he had built up from the previous level, he could scream without being burned until he couldn't take it this time.

However, that didn't mean the situation was better. Which was obvious from his scream. The pain had been multiplied again. This time it seemed to be by ten times!

That was too much of a jump. Even worse than before. He had resolved himself not to scream that time but he couldn't stop himself. He found himself screaming before he knew it. The scream was the only thing preventing him from jumping back out.

He had never felt such physical pain before in his life. It was almost driving him insane. Like if it hurt even a tiniest bit more, he would have definitely lost his mind from the pain. It was like Mrs C knew his limits inside out. Hell, she probably did. And he was paying for that.

Even if it would give better results, he wished she had been more lenient. Such inhumane levels of pain weren't something one should experience in a sequence. Especially when the next level is worse than the last. He would definitely rather fight a million beasts.

If Floor 2 was so painful, what about Floor 3? Floor 4 and so on? What about Floor 10!

Of course, those aren't thoughts Muku could entertain at the moment. His mind was completely consumed by pain. It was only after the trial that he would have the time and state of mind to think about it.

.....

Back in Room Zero...

"Umm, ma'am, can you send me for my elemental resistance trial too? That is if it's no bother to you" Raya who was looking at Muku suffering decided to do her own trial too.

The process looked so painful that she figured the more time passed, the less she would be willing to do the trial. So she might as well, get it over with as soon as possible.

"I remember telling you two that you can only have one trial at a time right? Well, lucky for you, that only applies to Muku. So, I guess if you want to go a second time it's fine. I only limited you as well for his sake. But if you can finish before him, I guess it's fine. Your dragon body is naturally better than his human body, so it's possible. As long as you're willing to jump into every level without delay or rest. You should be able to beat him despite his head start. Though, even then, you would have to start at Level

One without the introductory Level Zero. Are you willing to tank the pain?" Mrs C casually exposed her favouritism for Muku in how she arranged the trials.

However, before Raya could feel bad about being held back for Muku's sake, Mrs C offered her what she wanted. Sure, there was a painful price, but she was willing to take it on.

It was better than expressing her dissatisfaction with something which couldn't be changed. And she didn't dare have any negative emotions against her scary idol.

And it made sense to her. The point of having power was being able to do whatever you wanted without having to worry about any punishment or retribution. Whether what you do is good or bad, it would all be up to you to decide.

So, Mrs C's favouring her son was only natural. Raya was sure she would have done the same if she were in Mrs C's shoes. In fact, the trial was probably solely created for Muku and she was just a tag-along.

While Muku thought that his encounter with Mrs C was random. Raya had her suspicions. After all, the way Mrs C acted was suspicious if you looked at it from an outsider's point of view.

Muku thought he was lucky, but Raya thought he was just fulfilling a predetermined fate crafted by his "stepmother". Of course, she was probably not behind what happened to him on the Blue Planet. But their accidental fall into the restricted zone seemed planned.

Muku as a foreigner, didn't completely understand how mystical the zones were. But Raya knew. It wasn't a place you could just fall into. Anyway, that was none of her business, she would just quietly enjoy the benefits as the plot unfolded.

She felt that she knew where it was going, but it was better to just let things unfold as she looked on. Keeping her thoughts to herself as she enjoyed the show....

"I'm willing. Thank you for the chance" Raya replied as she bowed her tiny head a little to show her gratitude.

"Smart girl. Okay, I'll send you in. You'll have ten seconds to mentally prepare before the pain.." Mrs C replied and Raya disappeared immediately after.

"Isn't she just the smartest? At just 5 years old she was able to figure out so much" Fake Raya's ghost appeared soon after Raya disappeared. She turned into the lady from before after speaking.

"Didn't I already say that? And wouldn't he already be suspecting something if not for the mental block deployed by his locked memories?" Mrs C replied while rolling her eyes.

She couldn't help but be confused by how the dragon lady seemed to get cocky whenever Raya was mentioned. She completely forgets her place. Should she cut her tail off and have dragon-tail soup? The tail would grow back after all.

"You know what, I think I left the stove on. We'll talk later" The dragon lady who suddenly felt a chill when Mrs C gave her a side eye made up a random excuse and left the room.

She knew that look in Mrs C's eyes. It never meant anything good for whoever was getting it. So it was better to escape the moment you got it.

"How cautious. I wasn't even going to actually do it. And couldn't she think of a better excuse? She doesn't even have a house let alone a stove! Well, whatever, better she's gone. I can focus on the trial in peace now. I believe in you, son! Momma loves you!" Mrs C spoke to herself and focused on the screen again.

The screen was now divided into two. One part showed Muku and the other showed Raya.

The show was about to get even more interesting for her.

She wondered who was going to have the more exaggerated reaction between the two.

Well, Muku's reactions seemed quite hard to beat. But who knew...

....

Raya's trial...

The little dragon looked around her curiously. She was in a corridor similar to the one Muku was in. The same golden flames surrounded her. The only difference was that the flames stayed a meter away from her in every direction. She also couldn't feel their heat.

However, she knew that it wouldn't be like that in a few seconds. She will be swimming in them just like Muku had been before her. She did wonder if she was going to scream like he did when he was in the first level or was going to be worse. Or maybe she won't scream at all and Muku was just weak or overreacting.

As the little dragon was entertaining thoughts of doing better than Muku. The invisible barrier around her disappeared. She was instantly assaulted by the heat even before the flames reached her.

The heat was excruciatingly painful, but she felt that she could take it. However, that all changed when the flames got into the mix.

Not only immediately start burning her body with all their might, but the heat which she could handle before increased to a level she couldn't handle and then...

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!" A high-pitched girly scream escaped her dragonic mouth.

It was rather odd since one would expect a dragonic roar. But no! The flames stripped away her dragonic nature and left behind a young girl in pain. Her reaction was even worse than Muku's by a lot.

Her hope of doing better than him was extinguished soon after being formed...

....

Back in room zero...

"It seems he won... You would think that she would do better with her dragonuc body which naturally has a higher pain resistance level than a human's body... But then again, she was thrown directly into the first level and she isn't as used to pain as he is. Being naturally superior has spared her a lot of suffering. So, her loss is understandable. And it might be a valuable experience for future battles..." Mrs C whispered to herself as she looked on as Raya screamed from the flames.

Muku had stopped screaming by that time and had taken a familiar position as he tanked the flames while the mysterious energy built up his resistance.

She estimated that it will be a day before he can move on to the next level since the energy works even more slowly when the flames are more intense.

And there was no fun to be had in seeing a burning man sitting still. She'd rather watch Raya and her more animated reactions.

"Tsk. Sadistic old thing. Torturing my little girl like that. You're lucky I can't beat you otherwise... Hmph!" The dragon lady from before whispered to herself as she poked her head through the wall behind Mrs C.

"Hey. I've been craving dragon-tail soup recently. Do you know where I can acquire a dragon tail by chance?" Mrs C's voice suddenly sounded as she spoke out loud without looking back.

"Eeek!" The dragon lady screamed like a scared rabbit and her head got retracted from the wall. She disappeared again. This time she went as far away from Mrs C as she could.

Even if she knew that Mrs C could easily find her wherever she might hide. But it was still better to try to run away than offer your tail right?...

Chapter 300: Happy now?

Back in the trial ground: Raya's side...

While her reaction was even more exaggerated than Muku's, it didn't last too long. Not because she adapted to the pain quickly. No, it was because the weird energy in her body acted faster than Muku's.

So, after a little while, the pain began decreasing to levels she could tolerate. It still hurt a lot despite that. She didn't open her eyes once throughout the whole process.

Fortunately for her, it took her around half the time it took Muku to gain complete resistance to that level of flames.

This highlighted the advantages of beasts, especially those like Raya, over even the most talented humans like Muku.

It seems even with cheats, there were some things which were just insurmountable. At least for the time being, without their bloodline and any buffs, Raya was way ahead of him.

If Muku was observing her as she did her trial he would have turned green with envy. The difference was just too much. It was like comparing resources between a commoner and a young prince. The commoner was long destined to be crushed by the prince even before the comparison. And there was nothing they could do about it.

With that said, Raya who didn't lose out to Muku in terms of grit didn't linger after she adapted to the flame. She immediately jumped into the next.

Her scream was even worse than before. She screamed to the point she couldn't scream anymore. After that, she just lay on the ground with her huge body looking powerless.

Her eyes were still closed shut. She had seen all she needed to see before stepping onto the floor. So there was no need for her to torture herself by opening her eyes in the burning hell.

Speaking of which. Even without being able to see them. She could tell that her trial flames were even more intense than Muku's. Which was understandable considering their vastly different physical capabilities.

However, she has hoped that they would be the same as that would mean she wouldn't be in too much pain. Unfortunately for her, Mrs C was too thorough in her actions despite the unreliable personality she usually displays. It made Raya wonder whether what they were seeing was the real her or if it was just a mask she had created to make them lower their guards around her sooner.

At the very least, it was the quickest way to get to Muku as he likes transparent people. Sure, he could tell that Mrs C wasn't telling him anything, but he could sense her realness in her actions. Which was all he asked for.

Knowing that made Raya feel even certain about her thoughts. Suddenly as she continued with her trial while stuck in thought as the flames were starting to hurt less... They suddenly increased in intensity which made her scream out again.

It happened for a brief period before going back to normal but it was enough to mess Raya's thoughts up.

And she didn't go back to thinking about the same topic. She felt that it might have been a warning from Mrs C to stop thinking about it. She didn't dare push her luck to test the theory.

Actually, she was half correct, the sudden change in flames was definitely due to Mrs C. But it wasn't a warning or anything like that.

It happened because Mrs C's emotions spiked a bit as she watched Muku step into the final level of the golden flames.

Unlike before, he didn't even flinch despite the pain he felt having been multiplied by another ten. It looked so cool to Mrs C she screamed like a fan girl watching her idol perform. And that's what made the flames spike up in Raya's trial.

So, the poor dragon had suffered wrongly. Of course, she didn't know this, she thought it was a warning and was now singing a random song she remembered from Muku's memories as a way to distract herself. The song went something like, "You're a world away, somewhere in the clouds. In a foreign place. Are you happy now?"

It was Muku's favourite song which ended up being Raya's favourite too due to how many times she came across it. She really hated that he influenced her so much, but there was no going back at that point.

Anyway, if Mrs C had read Raya's mind at that moment she would have definitely been perplexed. After all, of all the things one could do while burning, singing their favourite song in their head was definitely not something expected in the situation.

She'd probably wonder if it was okay to keep crazy Raya next to her precious son.

Fortunately for Raya, such a thing didn't happen...

.....

Muku's side: More than two days after he stepped into the third level.

His eyes suddenly snapped open. Though to him it wasn't sudden. This was because all the pain in his body had disappeared and he couldn't even feel the flames anymore.

After three trials, he could open his eyes without trouble. There was a slight adjustment period but that was it.

However, the flames were so death that he couldn't see beyond them. However, he was so confident in himself and his achievements that he didn't proceed cautiously. After all, there were only three levels before moving on to the next element right?

And since whatever element he was going to face would begin at level zero. He was confident he could tank it. Hell, there wasn't even any damage at level zero. So there was no need to fear, it was just a little pain. And he knew a few things about pain by that point.

Pain was pain after all. Even if the causes were different, it would all feel the same right?

With those cocky thoughts going through his mind. Muku strode forward with all the confidence in the world.

It was a drawback he had, while he was usually cautious, there were times like this when he got really cocky. More often than not, it ended in tears. However, it seemed that Muku didn't learn from his mistakes.

Mrs C just looked on with a little smile on her face. She didn't even blink as she intensely stared at Muku through the screen. It was almost like she was expecting something to happen. And then...

"Ha! Hahahahahaha. Idiot. Hahaha" Mrs C laughed until tears came out of her eyes.

Her eyes didn't leave Muku who was now lying on the ground with his face. Foam was coming out of his mouth as he spasmed like crazy.

The scene was quite odd as there was nothing in the area he was in. It seemed like an empty level to relax on or something. That's what Muku had thought, but it seems he was wrong.

There was nothing relaxing about the level...

....

A few seconds before...

Muku stepped through the flames and was met with an odd sight. Well, it wasn't that there was anything weird going on. It was the lack of something odd going on which was odd.

He found himself standing in a clear area which went on as far as he could see.

It made him wonder if he was going to be doing some stamina training next or something. After all, other than running forward, he couldn't think of anything else which fit the setting.

However, he didn't get to ponder on what was going on too long. This was because he suddenly felt dizzy and before he could even try to shake off the dizziness, he found himself falling to the ground.

What was even worse was that he was falling forward instead of backwards. This meant that his face was going to hit the ground. What was even worse was how he couldn't even move a muscle in his body. So, he could only watch as he fell forward until he kissed the ground hard.

Then everything went dark. His eyes were still open but he couldn't see anything. His head was a mess and he couldn't think clearly.

It was almost like there was an invisible force dispersing all of his thoughts. All he was certain of at that time was that he was in unbearable pain and he couldn't even scream as his mouth was locked up.

If he could look at himself at the moment he would be horrified, this was because his body had deformed all over.

It was almost like his insides and bones were getting liquified... Oh wait, that's exactly what was happening. His internal organs were getting thoroughly wrecked by an invisible energy. And it was wrecking his mind too. What was even worse was how he didn't even know that that's what was going on to him.

He could literally die without knowing what was happening. Without even thinking of resisting. After all, one can't resist when they don't know what's happening.

Of course, if he had mana, maybe he would have been vaguely able to sense something before it was too late. Unfortunately, that wasn't on the table at the moment. So, he was completely losing the battle against whatever was wrecking his body...

....

I'm room zero....

"Whisperless Death... An appropriate name... What a horrifying element! Fortunately, the person who has it loves him more than anything..." Mrs C spoke to herself seriously after laughing.

She couldn't continue laughing while looking at Muku's current state. It was too much for her motherly eyes...