

## **Few Wives 341**

Chapter 341: Those are mine!

Somewhere far away from the mansion. The moment Jade's body was purified.

A huge pitch black orb could be seen hovering at the centre of what seemed to be a glass container with many tubes attached to it.

The scene was vaguely familiar to the one with the green Monarch from before.

Just that it looked more bizarre, bigger and deadlier. It was obviously stronger than the green Monarch. And not by just a little bit too.

{Hhm? The connection was broken off? But that should be impossible... Then again, the group has ties to the death of that minion of mine who blocked me from sensing what was going on until the very last moment. Consuming that one would have definitely sped up my recovery by a lot. Well whatever, nothing I can do about it now. And the link shouldn't matter anymore with how close the kill team is to that place... I should tell them to speed up though, just in case something big happens. And I'm curious to know what managed to erase my presence from that filthy hunter offspring who shouldn't exist. One really can't trust a thief}.

The Monarch in its own form thought to itself quietly. Then it sent out a telepathic message to its subordinates to notify them of the change and that they should hurry up.

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Somewhere a few kilometres away from the mansion...

"You all heard His Excellency. Let's speed up. We cannot risk failing this mission after all the losers who failed before us. Especially with an S-class executive present in Mr Smith. We must complete it without his assistance. Anyway, enough talk. Everyone spread around. We should be close now. And I only give you three hours. You'd better find them or heads are rolling to appease His Excellency. And that includes mine!" A blue-haired man who seemed to be the one in charge barked orders to the others.

Since none wanted to lose their heads, they immediately got to work and started spreading around and looking for the group furiously.

They already had descriptions of some of the members by that point. So they at least had an idea of what they were looking for...

And so, the search intensified. The chance of the mansion being found in a few hours was quite high if the Muku's group didn't move.

Unfortunately, they weren't aware that the enemy was already so close to them. So they weren't thinking about moving for the time being.

Muku had just returned, so running away was the last thing they thought about...

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A while later after Muku told Jade that he had a plan...

Muku could be seen walking down the stairs with a smile on his face.

He looked at the others who were still sitting on the couches despite it being almost morning.

He wasn't surprised since Evolvers of their rank could go for months without sleeping and not being affected negatively.

And it's not like they were just staring into empty space as they waited. They were all busy meditating. This was great for improving their understanding of their elements.

One had to know that a person could always get more familiar with their elements. So just because they were talented geniuses didn't mean they would forever be on top without putting work into it.

Iris had also told them about the need to constantly improve their mana along with their strength. So unlike Muku of the past, they didn't neglect any part of their abilities.

Though they suspected that Iris had deliberately told them about the need to constantly improve mana quality after Muku left. As for why she would do such a thing, they didn't know... It couldn't possibly be because Muku spanked her once right?

Anyway, the girls all snapped their eyes open at once the moment they felt Muku's presence. Which they could only do because he let them.

"So... How was the talk?" Audrey asked as Muku took a seat.

"Why did you take so long?" Hope asked as she again latched herself to Muku's arm.

"The talk was... Insightful to say the very least. And quite shocking too. As for why it took so long, I was helping Jade get her bloodline back under control. It was harder than I thought, which is why it took so long. I'm sure you all felt the Beast Aura explosion before I suppressed it. That was her finally gaining control. Unfortunately, I couldn't save the furniture in the room. Everything was destroyed. Including Jade's clothes even. Fortunately, I had those dresses from Mom or the situation would have become very awkward. After that, I had to guard her until she was completely stable. She's currently resting in her room. She'll show you her interesting new form after waking up. And I'm sure her recovery will be quicker if Hope uses her healing magic on her... That's not a problem for you right Hope?" Muku spoke with a straight face as he mixed in truths and lies together to form a rather airtight story.

It was so believable and probable that despite some suspicious parts, the girls seemed to believe it. In fact, the addition of the suspicious parts kind of added to the story's credibility.

If it was too perfect they might have caught onto something.

And as some might have guessed, it was the plan Muku told Jade about.

He used her bloodline mishap to cover up the fact that he had to destroy the blankets along with Jade's destroyed clothes and all possible evidence of what they had done. He literally destroyed every which could be reasonably destroyed just to sell the lie as well as be as thorough as possible.

"Oh, okay. As long as everything works out. And I don't mind using my healing magic on her of course. She's my teammate. We can go right now even" Hope replied positively. She had completely bought into the lie.

After all, she had more than a hundred percent trust in her brother. To her, it was impossible to even imagine that he would ever lie to her. And if he had to lie, it would be for her own good. So yeah, if anyone is more than willing to thoughtlessly fall for Muku's lies, then it's definitely Hope.

Seeing how easily the girl was fooled made Muku feel a bit bad about what he had done actually. He promised himself never to lie to her unless it was absolutely necessary.

In fact, if it were up to him, he wouldn't have lied at all. But he had to respect Jade's choice. He might not be a natural gentleman, but for his girls, he didn't mind being one when they wanted him to be.

The other girls also expressed their understanding. However, there were weird twinkles in Audrey and Emily's eyes.

However, they didn't make their thoughts known as to why that was.

"No, it's okay. You can do it later. For now, you all can go sleep if you want. Jade should also be sleeping. I don't want to disturb her... I'll take first watch. The barrier is still recovering so I guess watchers are necessary until it's fixed" Muku refused to let Hope go immediately.

The signs of what really took place were still apparent on Jade's rosy cheeks and slightly shaking legs.

Most of the girls might miss it, but some might catch on. Especially Audrey who had gone through the same experience. She'll definitely figure things out the moment she sees Jade.

Speaking of which, he was planning on telling her what happened. After all, telling her was different from telling the others. Telling her was safe and necessary since she was a confirmed partner.

Of course, that had to wait until he could get her alone then speak.

"Oh okay. I'll wait then. And the others can go sleep if they want. I'm not tired so I'll stay up with you. You can tell me about your travels in the Beast World. Raya told us a few but her's kinda sounded like she was the MC and you were her dumb pet human she was always saving (Hey! You promised to keep it secret!) So I want to hear it from your perspective" Hope replied as she casually exposed Raya.

"She said it like that did she?" Muku spoke slowly while he looked at Raya menacingly.

The little dragon girl who was sitting on Audrey's lap panicked and buried her face into Audrey's chest.

At least that's what it looked like to the others. But Muku noticed the cunning smile on her face as she did so. She was clearly trying to make Muku jealous.

And it was working.

"Hey! Get off! Those are mine!" Muku shouted angrily as he got up to try and pull Raya off Audrey.

However, Audrey blocked his hand with a slight blush on her cheeks as she thought of what he said..

"Please calm down. She's just a child. Please forgive her. Let's move on. Tell us your side of the story like Hope said. I'm sure none of us feels like sleeping right now. It's almost daylight and sleeping regularly is more of a habit than something necessary these days anyway" Audrey spoke as she tried to change topics.

"Tsk. Fine. But know that I'm only doing it for you. And the brat better watch her mouth or we're going for a hell-level training session" Muku replied as he went back to his seat.

Raya gulped down some saliva when Muku mentioned hell-level training. She almost ran away as she remembered those horrible memories. Fortunately, Audrey saved her.

This gave her an idea. And so, a cunning glow appeared in the scheming child's eyes...

Chapter 342: I can do it too!

She was thinking of only finding trouble with Muku when Audrey is around. That way she will always have a way out.

Even if she's punished, the punishment won't be as tough as it normally would be if they were alone...

Luckily for her Muku didn't notice anything weird with her or she might have gotten in trouble at that very moment.

He wasn't paying attention to their soul-link at the moment so he missed the minute emotions she felt.

If she was feeling something intensely, he would sense it even if he didn't want to. So the link was like an alarm which only went off under significant pressure...

"What's this hell-level training you're talking about anyway?" Audrey asked curiously.

"Oh, nothing much just something which is only possible in my mindscape..." Muku replied nonchalantly.

"Wait! You can access and manipulate your mindscape too now?!" Freya exclaimed in surprise before Audrey could say anything.

Her reaction was understandable though. After all the girl has suffered because of her mindscape in the past. And even though she had gotten over it, and now knew that it was normal for a person to access their mindscape, just that she was an early bloomer... It still slightly affected her due to the undeniable truth that she hadn't yet come across anyone else who could access and manipulate it.

The others had tried to access their mindscapes but had no idea where to start.

There was no teacher and Freya was no help either as she didn't know how she learned how to manipulate hers. It was something she spontaneously learned how to do after all.

Their failure made her feel a bit weird since she knew that they were absolute geniuses. So for them to be unable to do it... It was odd to say the very least.

Sure they had been mostly occupied with other matters, but still... Logic has never been able to stop the brain from worrying if it was determined to worry no matter what...

So yeah, knowing that Muku could do it too now really made her happy beyond reason. It was nowhere near as happy as she was when Muku returned, but it was definitely high in her short list of happy moments...

"What? Did you think you'd forever be the only one who could do it? Well too bad for you, I can do it too now! Hmph!" Muku replied in an exaggeratedly proud tone.

"No, no. That's not it. I'm actually happy that you can do it too now" Freya replied hurriedly and awkwardly to avoid being misunderstood.

"Hehe. You never change do you?" Muku laughed briefly while looking at Freya.

"Yes? Huh?" Freya was confused.

"I mean, you're still so awkward, timid, and super easy to bully. Honestly, I'm surprised you weren't kidnapped before the apocalypse because you totally fit the kidnap-victim model" Muku spoke freely as every word cut deep into Freya's soul.

"Ah! Please stop. I'll try myself to improve" Freya begged him to stop as she covered her face in shame.

"Haha. Nuh I was just joking, you don't need to change. At least the change shouldn't be inspired by what someone says. And besides, you've changed plenty already. I mean, while you're still everything I said, you're more vocal and open now. Which I say is all you need for now. So don't think about it too much. Anyway, how's Iris?" Muku explained himself to Freya.

"I'm fine. I didn't think you'd actually remember me... What do you want?" Iris replied as she took over Freya's body. It seems the girl had been overwhelmed by Muku's words so she abandoned her body.

"Whatever do you mean? You're a valuable ally. So of course I'd ask about you. Do I need a reason for such a thing?" Muku replied while avoiding eye contact with Iris.

"Spit it out" Iris spoke seriously as she refused to be fooled.

"Fine. There might be some stuff from the past I wanted to ask you... But that's only because you kept on asking about it. Originally I was just asking about your well-being" Muku replied.

All the girls rolled their eyes and his obvious lie. Like who couldn't tell that he wouldn't have bothered with Iris if he didn't have something he wanted to know. Did he think that the plant fairy was stupid?

"...I hate you. But fine, I'm curious to know what you want to ask. So I'll entertain you this once" Iris looked at Muku without saying anything for a moment before replying.

She had believed for a moment that he cared about her. But it seems her instincts were right... But why would she care whether he cared or not... Was she somehow getting influenced by Freya's instincts?

Yes, that had to be it. The girl's absurd level of mindscape manipulation could probably do such a thing even without her actively doing anything...

Iris couldn't let things be as they were if that was the case. If she did that, she might soon join the long list of girls simping for Muku.

A fairy longing for a human mate's affection?... Simply preposterous! It had to be stopped!...

"Thank you for humouring me, but not now. We'll talk later" Muku replied as he dismissed the matter.

"Whatever" Iris replied as she made herself comfortable on the seat.

"So big brother. Are you going to teach us how to access and manipulate our mindscapes too?" Hope asked.

She and the others understood that the matter Muku wanted to talk to Iris about was private. So they didn't ask.

They were curious and wondered what the matter he couldn't tell them was. But they were all well-mannered girls. So even if they were curious, they couldn't bring themselves to ask.

And they trusted Muku enough not to pry. If it was something they should know, they were certain he would tell them about it eventually.

"Sure. But you do know that learning everything is going to be tough right? From fighting, to the force technique and now this. You'd better prepare because once we start, there's no quitting. Even if it hurts like hell" Muku replied in a slightly eerie tone.

"Gulp... So it's okay to skip it if I choose not to start at all?" The timid and lazy Hope who didn't like doing anything too troublesome asked Muku warily.

"Nope", Muku gave a simple answer with a bright smile on his face.

"Oh come on brother. You can't back me into a wall this much! This is the second time today too!" Hope complained as she tried to pinch Muku's arm to show her defiance.

Unfortunately for her, Muku tensed his skin so she couldn't pinch him even if she used all her strength. Which she wouldn't even try for fear of hurting him. So yeah, she was completely cooked...

"Fine. If that's what you want. I'll go easy on you. You're my cute little sister after all. If never wish to trouble you" Muku replied as he playfully pinched Hope's cheeks.

"Hehe. Really?" Hope replied happily.

She knew her brother wouldn't be too serious with her.

"Yes. Sure. Just beat Raya in a fight and you've got yourself a deal" Muku spoke.

"... What?! But isn't she R5 like you? Brother this is not fair? You're bullying me! How could you!" Hope complained after a moment of silence as she lightly hit Muku.

Emily's, Layla's and Chloe's lips twitched as they looked at the interaction between Muku and Hope. Sometimes it really looked like they were a couple who were brazenly flirting in front of them. And this was one of those times.

Such times made them wonder if they should also apply for a sister position. After all, Hope was clearly getting more action with Muku than they were.

They all looked at Audrey who was smiling peacefully with envy. The lady had already sealed the deal so she could leave worry-free knowing that she would get her chance to do more than what Hope was doing with Muku and it was guaranteed. Unlike them...

One had to wonder what they would think, feel or do if they knew that Jade had also sealed the deal and joined Audrey on the worry-free life list...

At the very least, Emily would flip out.

Freya was still in her mindscape not paying attention to what was going on outside, so she didn't think anything of the situation.

Elsa and Iris just looked on with keen interest in their eyes. To them, what was happening was pretty much a live reality show which they could watch up close and personal. With participatory rights too.

It was every gossip girl's dream!

"Don't worry... She will match your strength. So there's no need to worry about the fight being unfair. And how can you say I'm treating you unfairly? If anything, I'm favouring you since the others don't even have a choice" Muku replied as Hope continued hitting him and complaining.

"...Oh. okay. I guess that makes sense. Fine. I'll fight her. But she better not use too much strength or I won't speak to you anymore" Hope replied after thinking a bit.

"Great. We'll do it... Hmm?" Muku was replying to Hope when he paused and looked in a certain direction.

Raya who was playing with Audrey also paused and did the same...

Chapter 343: Smith and Jim

"What's wrong?" Audrey asked confusedly.

She and the other girls couldn't sense anything. But it was clear from Muku and Raya's actions that something had definitely happened.

"There's some human activity around the shark's corpse. More and more people are gathering around it like they are calling each other over. There seems to be a fairly strong person there as well..." Muku replied.

"Okay, you can go ahead and check. We'll wait here with Raya" Audrey replied understandingly.

If there was someone Muku categorised as strong. Then that person had to be R5 at least. So if they accompany him, they would only hold him back.

So it was better to let him go alone. It sucked and they wanted to accompany him, but it would be impractical for the time being.

"Okay. I'll go see what's up. If they can be reasoned with, I'll be back before long... And Emily, can you please prepare me some of the best meat you have here? I miss your cooking" Muku spoke as he got up.

Hope didn't make things hard for him this time as she understood the seriousness of the matter.

"Way ahead of you. I'm already preparing something right now... I'll tell you about it when you return. Go take care of business already" Emily replied with a smile on her face.

"Sure. See y'all soon" Muku replied then disappeared.

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A few kilometres away from the mansion...

"So what do you think boss? That is obviously the body of a R5 beast. And it was killed recently too..." A random soldier in red attire addressed the blond-haired leader.

They stood some distance away from the corpse since even its lingering mana was quite difficult for them to withstand with their R4 or less, strength.

"Hmm. I'm not sure. Let's wait for Mr Smith's conclusion. He's the one who found it and is examining it after all. I doubt it has anything to do with those weaklings we're after though. The intel says that none of them is even PR4. If they are involved, they were probably the meal of this thing or whatever killed it..." The leader replied.

"Hmm. That makes sense. I hope he's done soon so that we can leave. I don't want to be here if the killer decides to come back..." The soldier replied fearfully.

"Tsk. What are you afraid of you wimp? We have Mr Smith here. If that thing does come back, it will just walk into its own death. After all, there's no way it would be unscathed after fighting this creature" Another soldier butted in disdainfully.

"You idiot! Don't you ever use your brain? Do you think we'd survive if Mr Smith fought that thing too close to us?" The first soldier replied in a disgusted tone as if looking at the idiot teammate of his made him want to vomit.

"That's enough you two! Get back into your position before I break your legs... But he's right though. We wouldn't want to be here if Mr Smith had to fight a similar rank beast even if it's wounded" The leader interjected to diffuse the situation before it got too serious.

The soldiers did as they were told quietly. Of course, the soldier the leader supported was happy while the one he didn't felt salty...

"Look! Mr Smith is coming back!" A random soldier shouted from the crowd.

Honestly, while these people were called soldiers by the organisation. They lacked the discipline soldiers had. This was obvious in actions like randomly talking to their superiors and shouting.

Anyway, the organisation only cared about results. So it didn't mind if they behaved however they wanted in normal situations as long as it didn't affect them...

"Mr Smith! Welcome back, sir. Do you have any orders for us?" The leader asked after saluting when Mr Smith landed in front of him.

"Why not just ask what you want to ask Jim? You're my best friend. You know I don't care about protocol..." Mr Smith who was a man dressed in a black tuxedo and had his short black hair combed neatly spoke to the leader named Jim with a smile on his face.

"No Mr Smith. We're at work right now. Our off-work relationship doesn't matter" Jim refused to budge.

"Tsk. That dutiful personality of yours really annoys me sometimes you know? Would it kill you to be free with me like you're with your subordinates? I mean, I'm literally your best friend you bastard!" Mr Smith completely broke character as he began cursing Jim out loudly.

The soldiers could feel the frustration in his voice. However, none dared say anything lest their leader punish them for insubordination.

And they had long gotten used to the weird exchange between the two highest-level officers in their group.

"..." Jim refused to say anything more.

"Tsk. Fine. Whatever! Be that way. Just know that you're treating me after this mission as compensation for this emotional damage" Mr Smith spoke as he grabbed Jim and pulled him closer then began ruffling his hair like an older brother. This was obviously done to make Jim break, but it didn't work.

"Fine sir. I'll treat you. But that's only if you let me go right now" Jim replied as he let Mr Smith ruffle his hair. It wasn't the first time. So he was completely unmoved.

"Hehe. Great! Anyway, now let me tell you about what I found out from the beast corpse... The way it died is odd to say the very least. I couldn't sense any other mana apart from its own. I couldn't even sense any other form of energy for that matter. Which should be impossible considering how mangled its body is. The core was literally ripped out of the chest. Something I'd like to think cannot be done without mana buffs..." Mr Smith spoke a little more seriously than before as he got into official business.

"So why do you think we should do air?" Jim asked seriously.

"I think you should go after that pretty girl back at the headquarters before someone else snatches her away" Mr Smith replied seriously.

His words almost made Jim explode in anger. Like wtf was the bastard saying at such a serious time?! And in front of the soldiers too. Was he trying to ruin his reputation?

Well, that didn't matter. This bastard Smith won't ever get a reaction from him no matter what he does!

"Ha! Almost had you there huh?... On a serious note, tell the men to retreat from the corpse and keep on looking. Whatever did this is too eerie and definitely not something we want to mess with. Staying here any longer is no different from risking our lives if the creature decides to come back for the meat" Mr Smith replied seriously this time after a little joke.

What the soldiers didn't know was that he was mixing in serious information and jokes to keep the soldiers calm. He felt that if he straight-up said it seriously, some might panic too much.

After all, what he revealed should be impossible. A brutal and traceless killer? That was definitely nightmare fuel.

But because of how he presented it, the soldiers didn't think about it too much.

All except Jim who knew that something had to be wrong since Smith was being a little extra with his actions even if he did things along those lines before...

Of course, he played along and ordered the soldiers to retreat from the area.

They then continued their search after circumventing the corpse without touching it... Well, except for when Mr Smith was examining it. But he didn't take anything either.

All this happened under Muku's watchful gaze from a tree top close by.

He was back in his nightmare armour. So of course his presence was completely nonexistent. And after spending so much time in the beast world. Even his gaze was traceless.

He had learned the mysterious art of being able to look at a target with zero intention. His gaze was no different from the one a harmless animal gives a human.

Such a gaze wasn't something even an Evolver's evolved sixth sense could sense.

And so, he was able to see the heartwarming interaction between the two friends as well as the hidden meanings.

And honestly, he was impressed by how they could communicate by saying anything like that. There were no real hints at all apart from acting a little extra...

Muku was only able to notice what was going on due to Smith's slightly off body movements.

Anyway, their interaction almost made him want to leave them alone. And he would have done so too... If they didn't end up going in the direction of the mansion.

He could rush back and fly it away. But why should he do that when the other side was obviously the aggressor in the situation?

Sure, he didn't mind letting them go if they missed them... But it seems their clash was unavoidable.

He couldn't help but feel a little excitement as he realised that he was likely about to have his first ever R5 fight with a human.

With those thoughts swirling in his head. Muku disappeared from his spot.

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Somewhere close to the mansion...

"So you're really not going to talk to me properly until we're off duty?" Mr Smith went back to troubling Jim again.

"Yeah, Jim! Talk to the man! Do you want him to cry?!" A voice sounded behind Smith who was facing the rest of the soldiers.

"Yeah! Jim. Do you want me to..." Mr Smith instinctively agreed with the voice.

However, he quickly realised that there shouldn't be anyone behind him. And he also couldn't sense anyone behind him.

A cold chill went down his spine as he slowly turned around...

Chapter 344: Choice...

The chill intensified when he saw the "person" who had spoken behind him.

For a moment he was petrified in fear. And he wasn't the only one. All the men were scared stiff.

Their response was even worse than the shark when it saw Muku's nightmare armour for the first time.

Which was understandable since nightmares were a human thing. And with all the supernatural history, tales and such, humans had. Seeing the armour which looked like a demon that escaped hell, their reaction was only understandable.

And with everything which was happening in the world, who's to say that demons didn't exist?

"What? Is there something on my face?" Muku asked as he touched his scary face.

Unlike before, he didn't tone down his voice from sounding creepy when he had the armour on.

"Haaa! Dieeeee!" Smith screamed as he aimed his hands at Muku.

Countless large and thorny vines came out and charged forward.

Everything happened in just a few seconds. And with how close Muku was, he should have been caught up in the attack right?

"Everyone get back!" Smith shouted as he looked around the vines.

He hoped that he had gotten the creature. But reason dictated otherwise. His vines gave him a mental image of everything they touch or destroy... And from that, he realised that he likely missed as all the images he got were either of the ground or the surrounding plants.

He had fought quite a few R5 beasts in his time, and even sparred with a few R5s from the organisation. However, he was certain that none of those opponents would have been able to escape unscathed when he attacked so suddenly with the opponent so close. And that made him really nervous.

He feared for his team the most. If that demon wanted to kill them, they wouldn't be able to see it coming. Hell, even he wouldn't have seen it coming if it had attacked when it arrived since he wasn't expecting something like that...

"No. No. Nobody is going anywhere until we come to an agreement..." The familiar creepy voice rang out again.

This time it originated from the sky.

BOOOM!

An unimaginable pressure crushed down on him and his team. They all fell face down without any resistance at all.

For him, it was a matter of being caught off guard, but the others were just powerless. They would have ended like that even if they were told to prepare.

"Now that I have gotten your attention. What say you we talk Mr Smith?" The demon(Muku) addressed Smith as he was about to use all his strength to resist the pressure.

The pressure also disappeared at that moment, which allowed him to get up with ease.

"Okay, let's talk. What do you want demon?" Smith asked while looking up at the "demon".

"Demon? No no, Mr Smith. I would much rather be called Nightmare. Don't you think I'm more real that way?" Muku replied in an amused but creepy voice.

"Whatever, Nightmare. What do you want?" Smith asked stiffly and nervously.

He could tell that the other party didn't see him as an opponent. This made him uncertain whether he should attack or not. After all, he couldn't sense even a hint of life from the other party, let alone a mana signature.

"Hehe. What if I said your soul?" Muku asked teasingly.

"I don't make deals with demons, nightmares or whatever you are" Smith replied resolutely.

Even if he was afraid and unsure, he wouldn't show too much weakness lest the other party disregard him even more.

"But haven't you already sold your soul to that random Monarch you know nothing about Mr Smith? Hell, I bet you killed a lot of innocents due to that contract... Honestly, this is why I hate humans. Such hypocrites" Muku replied annoyedly.

"Be that as it may. I won't sell out to you. As for the things I did before, they had to be done. I regret nothing" Smith replied.

"Hmm, really now? Even if I were to kill your soldiers one by one until you agreed?" Muku continued...

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!...

BOOOOOM!

Just as Muku finished speaking, countless vines charged at him from all directions. However, like before, none hit him.

This time it was even worse since they all exploded after reaching five meters away from him. He didn't even move.

This would have shocked the soldiers if their faces weren't planted into the ground. It wasn't every day that the attacks of a R5 Evolver like Smith were shrugged off so easily.

"Relax Smith. I was just joking. Anyway, all I want from you is for you and your crew to turn back right now and go continue what you're doing somewhere else. There's something here which isn't for the

eyes of random people like you. You understand right? Before you say anything, think about it because it's your only chance as I won't ask twice. And the moment you say no, if that's what you decide to go with. I will start killing you all. And there's hardly anything you can do to stop me. You seem like a smart man. So I'm sure you'll make the right choice" Muku spoke seriously for the first time since arriving.

He decided to leave the choice up to Smith. At first, he wanted to fight the guy. But he soon realised that Smith wasn't a "pure" R5. There was something wrong with his mana. Just like Chloe's father back then. They might be stronger than the lower ranks, but they were nothing in front of those in the same ranks.

And Muku didn't feel like fighting a fake R5 for his face human R5 fight.

As for how Smith would bring more people next time if he let him go... That didn't matter anymore since the tracker on Jade was no more.

He quite appreciated the friendship between Smith and Jim, for that reason he decided to give them a chance.

"I..." Smith was about to voice his choice when he paused. He was undecided on what to say.

From the little exchange he had with the other party, if it could even be called that. He quickly realised that he might not be a match for them. So he couldn't be as thoughtless as he normally would be with his choices.

He couldn't rely on his strength like before.

After all, it was certain that the other party was R5 at least. While he had fought R5s before. It was either in sparring matches or in teams of at least five against one R5 beast... So yeah, the situation needed to be considered properly before making a decision.

After all, the people they were looking for were probably not there anyway. If they were related to the creature in front of him, then they wouldn't have been so hellbent on running away.

At the very least, the information would have reached the headquarters at least. Or everyone would have been killed off before reporting anything...

But the Monarch wouldn't let him off just because he made reasonable deductions without proof. Hell, they were ordered not to return with proper results anyway. So he was basically stuck between a rock and a hard place.

It was like he had to choose between dying now and dying later.

"Oh? Is it hard to make a choice? Let's do this then..." Muku spoke from the air then...

Snap!

He snapped his fingers and the soldiers were released from the pressure.

The move was reminiscent of what Mrs C liked to do. It was obviously unnecessary but he did it just to be dramatic. Like mother like son, it seemed...

"Don't give in to his pressure sir! We're ready to die for His Excellency! And if we don't, our families will be killed along with us when we return! So please, let us fight this evil being!"

"Yes sir! Please!"

"We're willing to give our lives!"

"Don't be intimidated, sir!"

"We can win together!"

More than a hundred voices shouted at Smith telling him not to give up.

With how confident they sounded, you'd think that they weren't the bunch which had been completely suppressed a few seconds ago.

Though they couldn't be blamed. They all knew that the situation was dire and their lives would likely end that day.

But what could they do? Their families relied on the base. If they didn't die, then their families would die with them when they eventually do die.

Plus they had all done horrible things and knew that karma would catch up eventually. So maybe dying that day wouldn't be too bad after all.

"Eww. You bastards are hell bent on staining my hands with your blood huh?" Muku interjected which silenced all the men as they were overcome by fear again.

Smith was unbothered by everything which was going on as he turned to his best friend for advice.

"Jim. I know you made a vow to yourself that you wouldn't mix business with personal life as to avoid people from thinking that your achievements were influenced by me... And I admire that about you brother. But please, this time I need you. Tell me as my brother, what should I do?" Smith spoke to Jim weakly.

"...Haha. Bruh, what's with that disgustingly weak-looking expression? We all knew a day like this would come. So what are you hesitating about? Isn't the choice obvious?" Jim paused for a moment then replied in a free voice.

He sounded like a completely different person from before. Hearing his reply, Smith smiled brightly and turned to Muku.

"Listen here, creature. I have made my decision. And that's..."

Chapter 345: Fake friend...

"There's no need to say it. I just hope that you don't regret it later" Muku raised his hand to stop Smith from speaking. Then spoke in a disappointing tone.

"Don't be so sure of yourself creature. Don't think that just because you're creepy-looking you'll win this battle. A victor isn't decided until the very end!. Everyone! Attack all at once. Now!" Jim took charge before Smith could respond.

He had already ordered everyone to attack before Smith got the chance to say anything. Hell, even Muku was caught off guard by the man's rush behaviour.

And he seemed quite stable before doing it too. It seemed that the saying that a cornered rat will fight with everything it has was true after all.

"No wait!" Smith called out but it was too late. The others had already attacked with their strongest attacks they could prepare on short notice.

Muku didn't even react. He let the attacks charge at him unhindered until they were a few metres away from him then they all froze mid-air.

"Sigh..." He didn't let out a sound and only let out a sigh then...

Whoosh!

Boom! Boom!...

"Ahh!"

"Ahhhh!"

"My leg!"

"Mine too!"

"My other leg!"

"Bullshit I only hit one leg!"

Multiple explosions rang out followed by cries of pain. Muku even shouted too when he a drama queen tried to pin an injury he didn't cause on him.

Anyway, all the soldiers had been hit by their own attacks which Muku had thrown back at them. At the very least, all of them would have been hit if Smith hadn't been able to protect the majority of them.

Unfortunately, some were too far for his rashly made defensive spell. And so, they were gravely injured by their own attacks. They were too slow and unprepared to block the spells.

The physical fighters couldn't help but make relieved sounds since they couldn't use ranged attacks like the others. Well, they had minor ranged attacks, but those were useless in the situation so they didn't bother using them when the others attacked. So they were spared from the rebound.

"Is it my turn now?" Muku asked without moving in an unbothered tone.

It was like he didn't care that they had practically sneak-attacked him. Well, he really didn't mind actually. Like who would care that ants sneak attacked them?

"Haaaaah!" Smith screamed as countless thorny vines even stronger, quicker and bigger than the ones he used before surged forward.

It was clear that he was finally getting serious about the fight.

At the same time, some thornless vines grabbed all the soldiers and threw them into the distance.

"Sir nooo!"

"Let us fight!"

The soldiers screamed as they got tossed away. None of them was expecting such a move after they had agreed to fight together.

Since they hadn't completely experienced the overwhelming power of a Rank 5 being, they thought that if they fought together, they had a chance.

After all, it was common sense that quantity trumps quality after a certain point. Unfortunately for them, they'd need thousands upon thousands to be able to scratch one R5 with their R3 and R4 strength.

Actually, Jim knew that they wouldn't be able to do anything, but was still willing to fight to the end. He also didn't expect that his usually selfish friend Smith would do such a thing when it counted the most.

Tears formed in his eyes as he got thrown away. He felt that he had betrayed his best friend.

The reason for this was that it wasn't his duty which made him treat Smith like a stranger during work times. It was his own inferiority complex.

The two of them had started out the same. They had made the same sacrifices. They even grew up together. And yet Smith ended up being stronger than him.

He felt envy, powerlessness and even hatred towards Smith.

That's why he stopped treating him like a friend during work hours. Even when he knew that it hurt his friend's feelings, he didn't stop.

That way he could make himself feel better by telling himself that it didn't matter that Smith was better than him since everything he had was through his own hard work.

So even if Smith was stronger and had a higher, position it didn't matter.

He even went a step further and thought that Smith no longer saw him as a true friend and was only keeping him around for clout.

That way Smith would stand out more amongst his peers when compared to Jim who started at the same time as him but couldn't keep up despite having the same opportunities...

Yeah, Jim knew that his thoughts were messed up. But it was the only way he could keep his sanity. The only way he could face his "friend" with a straight face.

And now, with just one move from Smith if choosing to sacrifice himself for him, all of Jim's delusions were shattered and all that was left was the clear image in his head of how much of an a-hole he was.

While Smith had always been a true friend to him, he had stopped being a true friend a long time ago. It was only when Smith asked him for his opinion that he began seeing things a little clearly. Then the sacrifice blew away all the smoke and everything became crystal clear.

"Haaa... Hah!" Jim who was at the very peak of Pseudo-R5 screamed out loud and released as much mana as he could and then...

BOOOOOOOM!

He made the mana explode in the form of a new fire spell he created on the spot. The explosion managed to cancel out the momentum from Smith's throw.

Boom! Boom! Boom!...

And so, in short bursts of intense orange flames, Jim made his way back to Smith's side.

He knew that he couldn't be of much help. But at the very least, he could accompany Smith until the very end as a form of atonement. He had done Smith wrong for too long. So much so he couldn't bear to leave the man alone at such a time.

"What the fuck, Jimmy?! You just wasted all my efforts! You're literally the only one I hoped would make it and yet here you are! Do you think we're going to get another chance now?! God! I'm so angry!" Smith cursed out loudly at Jim, his eyes red with anger.

His emotions were understandable though. After all, who wouldn't be angry if they went all out in saving the person they cared about only for the person to return a few seconds later instead of running away?

"Did you really think that I'd leave you behind and go alone? Ha! How little you think of me. Especially after we already agreed that we're fighting together..." Jim replied calmly.

Slash!... Slash! Slash! Slash!...

Before Smith could speak, the duo heard slashing sounds. The sounds kept increasing until they suddenly stopped. Then...

Bang! Bang!...

All the large plants Smith had created fell to the ground in small pieces. Muku who had been completely surrounded by the vines was again exposed to the duo.

And frustratingly enough, he was floating in the same spot despite all the carnage Smith's vines were seemingly causing.

"No you don't!" Smith shouted out as his body was quickly getting encased by plant matter. It looked like he was turning into a tree.

This went on until he turned into a forty-meter-tall red-eyed treant looking down at Muku.

At this point, Jim was tightly bound by vines behind the treant so that he wouldn't cause any more trouble.

"...What an interesting form... I wonder why it would have looked as if it were natural. Anyway, your bond really touched me. For that reason, let me show you a little bit of the true power a real Rank Five human has before sending you on your way..." Muku addressed the treant then...

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

For the first time ever since he returned to the Blue Planet, he stopped holding back his mana.

The mana intensity alone was stronger than any of Smith's spells.... Then again, plant-type mages seldom had very destructive spells as they were more of crowd control-type mages, so it was understandable.

What made no sense at all was how the mana pressure alone was enough to make cracks appear all over the treant's body as well as freeze it in place. Then...

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The treant's body was quickly overpowered and exploded.

Smith and Jim immediately fell to the ground powerlessly. They couldn't master any mana to resist the pressure.

It seemed that even their mana cores were suppressed completely. This left them no different from normal people apart from their much better physical bodies.

"Cough cough! Imp... impossible! You can't be human! You're lying!" Smith coughed out blood from the backlash of having his transformation undone against his will then exclaimed in disbelief.

"On the contrary my friend... I am very much as human as you... Well, as you were before the corruption..." Muku replied calmly.

The first part was spoken in the nightmare voice while the latter was in his normal voice as his armour peeled off his face.

Both Jim's and Smith's eyes widened as they looked at Muku's human face when he landed in front of them.

They really thought that he was se creature from hell all this time. After all, he was so inhuman in everything he did.

Oh, and he had been using that weird beast language everyone could understand so yeah, their shock was understandable.

"But His Excellency said that humans couldn't step into the R5 realm on their own..." Jim spoke in a shaky and regretful voice as he thought of everything he did in the past for strength...

Chapter 346: Destroyer...

"Oh, that thing? Technically it spoke the truth. You and your friend here probably couldn't reach R5 without its assistance. However, many humans and I can do it after enough work... You're confused, right? Well, let me clear that up for you. You see, the moment you let that thing taint your body was the same moment you cut off your path to progress without it. I don't know your class level but it doesn't matter now. In your current state, even a person with a random class has a better chance of advancing alone than you do..." Muku casually dropped a bomb on the duo.

"Impossible! You're lying to us! His Excellency has no reason to trick random people like us! You aren't human! You're a shape-shifting demon!" Jim shouted crazily in denial.

"Hehe. A shape-shifting demon? Now that's a new one. I would have accepted it if it weren't so long and sounded cooler. Anyway, I've told you all I wanted to. Whether you believe it or not, I don't care. Now let me send you on your way... And don't worry, if your Monarch keeps messing with me and my team, eventually, I'll send it to join you in the afterlife. The y'all can have a little chat about life..." Muku was done wasting time with the two randos.

And so...

Whoosh!

Slash!

A blade appeared behind the duo and slashed at their necks before they could even react.

As for why he was so resolute in killing them when he was willing to let them go before, well, he had given them a chance.

Which was something he rarely did due to his policy of getting rid of all enemies. So, since they were so hellbent on dying, he didn't mind sending them on their way. He was sure they weren't good people despite their wholesome interactions anyway.

"Smith... No, Lewis... I'm sorry for the way I treated you" Due to the clean cut and their high ranks, the duo were able to retain their lives for a little while even after getting their necks sliced right through.

Jim took that chance to apologise to his friend before death so that he won't have any regrets in the afterlife. His head fell off his neck the moment he finished speaking and he died with a relieved smile on his face.

Smith whose name was actually Lewis, who had a few more seconds left, looked on in horror...

"NOOOOOOOO! JIMMMY!" Lewis screamed loudly with extreme sadness then his head fell off too and he also died.

"Sigh... Why are they so dramatic? Now I seem like the bad guy here. If this were a movie, I'd probably be hated by many people for this... Well, whatever. Nothing can be done now. They dug their own graves... Now I can go back to the g..." Muku was speaking to himself when...

He noticed faint black smoke coming out of Lewis's headless body. Before he could make sense of the situation, his head rolled back to his body and reattached itself then...

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!

A loud explosion accompanied by thick black smoke occurred at that very moment.

Fortunately, Muku was fast enough to get away or who knows what could have happened...

"Aaaahh!".

"Ahhhhhhhh!"...

Before the smoke could clear up and he could see Lewis's situation, he heard tens of pained screams in the distance.

...

Back at the Tactoa headquarters in the Monarch orb's lair...

"Hehe. Seems things are about to get really interesting. Good thing I put in that fail-safe or it would have been another waste of good soldiers. Now let's see if those bastards can get away from my experiment. The Destroyer... Even I don't know what it's capable of. Hehe. Hahahahaha...." The Monarch orb laughed to itself evilly in its lair...

...

Back on the battle scene...

"Tsk. This is why I don't like killing humans. It's rarely just a simple act of killing them and moving on. Sigh. What's this now?" Muku complained to himself while looking at the black smoke from more than a kilometre away.

He didn't know what was happening plus the smoke gave him a very dangerous feeling. So of course he dared not stick too close.

He just looked on as he tried to under what was going on. He soon realised that the screams from before were probably from the soldiers Lewis had sent away before.

Black smoke was coming from that direction and making the smoke from Lewis more intense.

The situation reminded him of the time the green Monarch sucked the life force out of the people who had been affected by its power to strengthen itself.

From how the smoke was getting more and more intense. He figured that, a similar situation was also happening then.

But... Lewis Smith wasn't a Monarch was he? Also, didn't he die in front of him too when his head was cut off?

"Damn it! Just returned and had to fight a shark monster, then Jade's concerning visions, followed by Tactoa agents and now an undead grudge monster? I mean, I can't see anything yet, but it's obvious where this is going... If it wasn't for the great sex, I would have sought the author out for an explanation..." Muku cursed to himself as he looked on.

Of course, he wasn't just looking on like an idiot. He was preparing some of his strongest attacks at the same time. If it wasn't for that, he would have long begun attacking the smoke.

After all, he wasn't a DB character who waited for his enemy to power up... Sure, he loved the anime but that part was just impractical...

Anyway, he also called Raya over to back him up in case things became too much to handle.

It wasn't that he didn't have confidence in himself, but one needed to be as cautious as possible when dealing with an unknown situation...

And so, the two opponents gathered their strength while looking at each other. Muku couldn't see the other party, but he felt their hate-filled gaze focused on him.

His face was again covered by the nightmare armour and in between it and his body, Mithril was slowly being formed.

The Force Technique was great and all, but the damage it caused was somewhat on the blunt side. What he needed was the penetrative damage factor brought by Mithril energy.

If that weird sword didn't take too long to create. He would have gone with that, but he was uncertain of the time he had until the fight began. So if he couldn't spare too much focus or he could die before he knew what happened... And that wasn't an exaggeration because the threat level he felt from the black smoke was enough to threaten his life already.

What made it worse was how it was still climbing higher as more and more black smoke gathered from a distance.

Soon enough, no more smoke came in. The smoke began swirling around in one place until a black tornado was formed.

However, the tornado didn't charge forward. It swirled around in the same place until a suction force appeared at the bottom and all the smoke was sucked in...

"Oh my..." Muku spoke two words then trailed off.

His eyes widened behind the creepy helmet.

As someone who had seen his own look in the mirror. He never thought that one day he would actually see a being even creepier looking than he was. But that day proved him wrong.

The saying was true. There was always someone better... Though in this case, it would be someone creepier.

Obsidian black skin. Two hollow eyes with tiny red glowing lights at the centre. A somewhat round face. With no neck in sight. A mouth so large that the other facial features looked like they had been shrunk. There was no nose at all. Or ears. Pitch black razor razor-sharp teeth. Bald head. Black spikes all over its broad back. Long lanky arms which reached the ground. Sharp claws digging into the ground. Spikes at the elbows. Somewhat short legs with sharp long nails at the end. A mysterious red vertical line going from the chest to the waist. Standing around ninety metres tall. And faint black smoke getting emitted from the body...

That was the creepy creature Muku was looking at.

BOOOOOOM!

BANG!

A sudden intense pressure pressed down on Muku the moment the creature looked him in the eyes.

He was caught off guard to the point that he was smashed to the ground by the pressure.

"Haaaaaah!" Muku screamed the moment he reached the ground.

His body began growing instantly until he was a bit over a hundred meters tall. It was more than ten metres taller than the creature.

Gigantification was one of the key abilities humans got from reaching R5. It was basically the opposite of the compact forms that beasts got.

However, Muku's gigantification was a bit different from the others which would be revealed in what way, soon enough.

However, even in the physically, more imposing form, Muku didn't feel like he was at an advantage.

The creature in front of him gave him way more pressure than the shark beast.

He wasn't sure who would win this time. And that made him really nervous.

Whoosh!

Bang

"AHHHHHHHH!"

Muku screamed in agony as his huge left hand fell to the ground...

Chapter 347: Legion...

"Hehe shh shh shh shh!" The creature which was now standing behind Muku let out a creepy laugh even creepier than Muku's nightmare armour voice.

BOOOOOOOM!

BOOOOOOOM!

BANG!

Muku jumped up into the air to create some distance from the creature.

Unfortunately, it didn't let him as it jumped up after him.

However, he had been expecting something of the sort, so the creature's claw hit a thick metal wall he had created around himself before hitting him.

And by that time he was ready.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Multiple thick, ten-metre spears emerged from the wall and stabbed at the creature.

Bang! Bang! Bang!...

Unfortunately, none hit as the spikes on the beast's back grew like vines and met the spears before they could reach it.

Surprisingly enough the vines won... Then again, they were extremely corrosive like the rest of the creature's body.

Which was why it had managed to cut off Muku's hand so easily when he lost concentration for a split second. So of course the metal spears got destroyed by the creature's vines.

It wasn't using mana at all. Its energy was something different, something sinister. If he had to guess, he would say that it was Monarch energy or a mutated variant of it.

Considering the creature's origins, such a thing was quite possible.

Anyway, Muku knew that the chances of something like that happening were high. So he took that chance to create some more distance.

Fortunately for him, it didn't seem like the creature could fly as it began to fall to the ground. Either that or it just didn't know how yet.

Anyway, its plunge didn't stop it from attacking. Its vines kept on following Muku and trying their best to stabilise him. It was almost like they could grow infinitely.

Muku who was running low on Force could only defend with his metal element as he retreated further and further away.

Hile hadn't created too much Mithril, so he couldn't waste it. If he were to use it, he had to be sure that it would work. And with the speed the creature had shown so far, it was clear that it would probably dodge the attack.

So he had to weaken it a lot before using his trump card. On top of that, his severed arm hurt a lot... Well, it was obviously the stump which hurt and bit the arm on the ground...

Muku had never felt so pressured in a battle since his battle with that Earth Dragon. And that was a long time ago. So the experience felt a bit new and disorienting.

He had gotten used to always being the bully in his battles. But it seemed that streak had been broken that day. And it had been done in less than a minute which seemed way longer due to their quick movements.

Grab!

Whoosh!

BOOOOOOOOM!

After flying a long distance away Muku took the little time he had before the vines caught up to grab the creature with his Telekinesis and throw it a distance away.

He tried squashing it first, but that took too much mental energy without providing good results. So he didn't waste too much on that.

After all, for the time being, what he needed to do was buy time for himself.

He considered using his soul metal but surprisingly enough, he couldn't sense a soul in the creature's body. All he could sense were negative emotions from anger, hatred, betrayal, envy and so much more. It was like the creature was a walking body of energy driven by negative emotions.

That was both surprising and not, at the same time. The reason was that no living creature should exist without a soul. So its existence was surprising to say the very least. On the other hand, Lewis and the others were all dead, so the creature's soullessness was understandable since souls vanish soon after death unless the being has some special means to preserve their souls like Monarchs.

{Kid! Where are you?!} Muku called out to Raya in his head as he looked at the creature he had thrown away.

He finally got a chance to do so after disrupting its tempo. That's right, he couldn't even spare a thought before. That's how much pressure he was under.

{I'm watching of course. Didn't you say I should wait until you can't handle it? You seem to be doing fine to me} Raya replied nonchalantly like she was just stating the common truth of life.

{Brat I lost a freaking arm and I can't injure the thing at all. I can barely breathe under its assault and you dare say I'm doing fine?! You'd better get into the mix or you'll regret it after this} Muku cursed at Raya with a few threats too.

{Sigh. Fine. Just keep it busy for a bit while I prepare...} Raya replied then went silent.

Muku didn't say anything either as the creature was up again. He wasn't sure what Raya wanted to do, but he trusted her. The little dragon girl was quite unreliable but her power was undeniable.

And so, Muku began throwing the creature all over the place with his Telekinesis. It wasn't doing much damage, but it was enough to keep the creature safely occupied.

Unfortunately, its large size and resistance meant that he couldn't do so for too long. So he hoped that Raya would hurry up with whatever she was doing.

SHOOOOOOOO!

"Whoa!" Muku screamed as he got out of the way.

He was completely caught off guard when the creature suddenly spat black flames at him. But that should have been impossible no matter what. After all, Lewis only had the plant element... But wait... didn't Jimmy have the flame element?

Then that means...

"Impossible!" Muku shouted out as multiple flame-resistant shields he had placed in front of him were getting destroyed easily by the black flames.

He didn't dare take the flames head-on despite his flame resistance. After all, the black flames were obviously not normal.

The fact that he had to do that made him feel like cursing. After all, he had suffered greatly for the resistance. Yet the first chance he got to use it, he had to dodge.

Anyway, the flames weren't why he was shocked, what shocked him was what they suggested. And that was that the creature might be made up of more than just Lewis alone.

Jimmy was also involved in its creation... But if Jimmy was also involved, didn't that mean that the other soldiers were included too?

And if that was the case, wouldn't the creature have more than a hundred abilities?!

But if that was the case, why wasn't it using them all at once? Wait, the way it used its flames seemed to be getting refined the more it used them. So maybe it couldn't use all the abilities from the start and had to figure out how to use them.

All that meant that...

"I have to kill this thing as soon as possible or it might be more of a problem than the damn Monarch which created it..." Muku spoke to himself as the grey light glowing in his eyes got more intense and for the first time since the battle began, he started leaking real bloodlust.

While he wanted to kill it from the start, it was just going through the motions then. Now it was personal, for his and the girls' safety that the creature wasn't allowed to live any longer.

"You're able to instantly melt my metal. But what if I use something with a little more power?" Muku addressed the creature which was still getting thrown all over the place and spitting flames at him every chance it got.

His black armour began peeling off until it was just thin threads twirling around him. What remained on his body was a glowing grey armour which radiated so much energy that the creature paused a bit as it took notice.

Muku had finally finished creating enough Mithril. The Beast had had its turn now it was his chance.

A completely metal arm now hung on his left shoulder in place of his missing arm.

His control over it was just as good as the control he had over his real arm. So other than the arm lacking the sense of touch and feeling of a real arm, it was just as functional, if not better... Pfft, it was a freaking Mithril arm. Of course, it was better.

Just a wave of it would release pure metal essence strong enough to destroy many cities at once.

If he got serious, destroying a country would be easy work.

With that said, Muku didn't intend to destroy cities or countries. All he wanted to destroy was the creature he was looking at...

Whoosh!

Fearlessly, he disappeared. Then...

BOOOOOOOM!

A hard fist landed in the creature's gut and sent it flying into the distance.

The creature didn't stay down though. It immediately got up. However, cracks had appeared on its hard skin which seemed more like a carapace than skin.

Black blood began leaking out. The beast which was about to charge at Muku paused a bit and looked down.

The moment its eyes landed on the cracks the red light intensified in its hollow sockets for a bit.

It then looked up at Muku again then...

Pew!

An intense red laser shot out from its eyes aiming for Muku's head.

Muku was prepared for anything from the creature so he reacted in time and avoided the laser.

"Hmm. So you have lasers too huh Legion? Like that? That's your name from now on... At least until I murder you..." Muku spoke nonchalantly and disappeared again.

He noticed that the cracks on the creature's carapace were speedily recovering. Which made him realise that it likely had a regeneration ability too.

Which sucked but was expected. After all, such bullshit creatures always have that ability.

Anyway, who cared if it could heal? He was going to beat it up faster than it could heal, then we'll see if it can survive...

Chapter 348: Yin and Yang Destruction

Thirty minutes later...

Muku and Legion exchanged blows for half an hour without either party gaining an advantage.

Muku was naive to think that he could punch it nonstop until it died. He would use his Telekinesis to disorient it while punching it.

Unfortunately the bastard was just too tough. And the more they fought, the more its regeneration ability improved.

At the beginning it would take a few seconds for it to recover. However, now it healed almost instantly. Which made it harder for Muku to weaken it to the point of landing a decisive blow like he wanted to.

In fact, he ended up being the one with the more visible damage as some of Legion's attacks landed on him.

Fortunately for him, his Mithril armour was strong enough to resist the black energy. However, it took began giving in after numerous blows hitting the same spot.

It was almost like the mindless creature actually thought things through before it did them. But that couldn't be the case, right?...

"Fuck this! Screw the expenditure! You're going down!" Muku screamed in frustration then created distance between himself and Legion.

He used most of his remaining mental energy to lock the creature in place. Then...

Grey light began gathering in-between his hands which he was holding out. The more grey light he gathered, the more the Mithril armour he was wearing faded.

The reason for this was, he was turning the Mithril into energy form. It was an ability only his Mithril had and his normal metal couldn't do.

Which was understandable considering how unique Mithril in every way possible.

Anyway, soon enough Muku's body was completely exposed when the thin layer of Mithril was all gone from his body.

It was exposed then that it wasn't actually his body which had grown bigger. His body didn't change form at all. It was still the same size.

It was just encased by an energy avatar which looked like Muku. The being was made out of a combination of his metal energy and mental energy. It was somewhat transparent in appearance but looked exactly like Muku.

And Muku was chilling with his eyes closed in its chest area. The reason why his eyes were closed will be explained later on in detail.

For now let's just say the avatar was now his body and his body was the core.

Anyway, after gathering all the energy, Muku didn't delay any longer. He let the energy blast go.

"Ka.... Me.... Haaa.... Mee... Nuh, I'm kidding. Die!" Muku shouted out then released an energy blast which was suspiciously similar to Goku's Kamehameha.

But the colour and movements were different so it totally wasn't the Kamehameha.

Anyway, the blast of destructive Mithril energy quickly made its way toward Legion.

A little smirk appear on Muku's tired looking giant face. From his calculations. The energy blast should be enough to kill the completely bound and defenseless Legion.

He couldn't wait to end things then beat the shit out of Raya for being so unreliable. There was no excuse he was willing to take for how late she was in assisting him. Hell, he didn't assist him at all!

Unfortunately, things didn't always go according to plan no matter how air tight the plan is.

After all, he wasn't omniscient, so he couldn't prepare for everything since he didn't know everything.

With that said, just as the energy blast was about to reach the Legion. Something unexpected and quite creepy happened.

The creature's torso began splitting up in two from the centre... It happened exactly at the spot where the red line passed through.

Muku had been wondering why that was there... Well now he knew why...

The red line signified a horrific-looking vertical mouth with countless teeth inside. The creature literally had nothing but teeth in its torso. There were no internal organs at all.

Well, there was one other thing. And that was a weird black orb about the size of a beast core. However, it didn't give off the aura beast cores gave off at all.

Before Muku could make sense of it. The energy blast reached Legion. However, instead of being blasted into the afterlife. The creature actually absorbed the blast.

All the energy was drawn in by the black orb and completely sucked in until nothing was left.

Just like that, all of Muku's painstakingly created Mithril was gone.

The blow from the realisation was so strong that he lost concentration for a moment. And that broke his Telekinetic hold on Legion.

The creature which was constantly fighting to break free from the start immediately exploded forward with force the moment it was freed.

Countless thick black vines stabbed forward and pierced through Muku's avatar.

It was so quick Muku couldn't escape. Fortunately for him, he still managed to control his real body to dodge the corrosion vines or he would have been done for.

However, getting his avatar destroyed like that caused a huge backlash which made him spit up a mouthful of blood. Not to mention that the avatar feels things, so he felt the pain of being stabbed everywhere then ripped apart.

To say that Muku was disoriented and out of commission was an understatement at this point.

He could barely even keep himself afloat....

Legion quickly took notice of the insect and a little smirk actually appear on its face.

Then it held its large hand below Muku. Then...

Bwah!

It closed it shut with so much force an mini wave formed around the hand.

With that... Muku was dead. Squashed like a mere bug by

At the very least that's what's Legion thought until he opened his hand to see the squashed remains...  
And they weren't there.

"HAAaaAAaaAAaAAH!" For the first time ever since the snicker at the start. Legion made a sound.

And instead of the roar you'd expect from a creature like him. He screamed like a human... Just that the voice was way louder than anything a human could be. On top of that, the pitch and intensity kept on changing which made the creature even more creepy.

At one point you'd hear a grown man and the next you'd hear a delicate woman. This was because the Tactoa team had members from both genders...

"So noisy..." Raya's voice rang out behind Legion.

However, before the creature could react....

"Die"

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Legion was consumed by an explosion made out of black and white energy. Interestingly enough, the explosion created the Yin and Yang sign at the top which Muku completely missed from where he was.

Anyway, to the informed it was obvious that Raya had used a combination of her darkness and light elements to create one ultimate attack.

And it was as destructive as it could be since Legion was hit point blank...

Muku who had been left in the distance by Raya looked on with a tense expression on his face.

He was amazed by Raya's destructive capabilities she rarely showed. But at the same time he couldn't help but wonder if it was enough. After all, Legion was able to tank his strongest attacks to the point of even devouring his strongest move...

He couldn't help but think that it might eat Raya's attack too.

His eyes widened in surprise the moment the explosion cleared up.

Legion was... Completely gone!

Raya's attack had erased the creature out of existence.

Sure it had been so destructive that it rearranged the already ruined battlefield but still... Why did she make it look so easy?!

Was Raya really that much stronger than him?...

The mere thought of that possibly being true made Muku feel like vomiting.

He might not have shown it much, but he was always proud of being the strongest member of their team... However now if he dared claim such a thing he'd seem like an idiot.

Raya literally one-shotted a creature which would have killed him if she didn't save him...

"So easy. Why were you struggling with that thing anyway?" Raya appeared beside Muku and taunted him.

"What took you so long?" Muku asked calmly. Completely disregarding the taunt.

"Tsk. Not even a thank you for saving your life. Anyway, do you think that the move I used can be randomly used? Let me tell you this... That was my ultimate attack which I haven't perfected yet. It's called Yin and Yang destruction. By the time I'm done with it, it will be stronger than my space energy blasts. For now, not only does it take long to prepare, it also ate like 95% of my mana. But why are you complaining anyway? Everything worked out okay in the end right? I destroyed the thing which needed to be destroyed. So why are you so salty?" Raya explained herself then complained.

She felt that Muku's attitude was too much. How could he be so ungrateful when she saved his life and completed the task he failed to do at the same time?

"Sigh... I guess you're right. I'm sorry and thank you..." Muku calmed down a bit and realised that he really was being ungrateful...

"Good. I accept your apology. Now let's go. The others are worried about you..." Raya spoke then grabbed Muku.

The duo then disappeared from the area.

.....

At the centre of the explosion. A several kilometres deep hole was left with nothing but soil in sight.

At the very centre there was a little hole which went deeper like something escaped through it...

But Muku and Raya were long gone. Both of them were mostly spent and Legion's aura was gone so they had no reason to stay at that dangerous area which can easily summon R5s over...

Chapter 349: Cursed?

Outside the mansion...

Muku and Raya suddenly appeared out of empty space.

"Hey! What the hell! We had to make sure that it was dead first!" Muku shouted at Raya as soon as they appeared.

She had acted too quickly before so he couldn't say anything.

"Come on. Both of us were there. There was literally not even the slightest aura from that thing left. So why are you still so moody? In fact, fine. You go inside. I'll go back and check freaking troublesome human" Raya replied as calmly as she could but she whispered the last part when she cursed Muku.

Without waiting for him to reply she was gone.

".... I heard that you damn brat" Muku spoke to himself then turned around to walk into the mansion.

He was mad at Raya for what she said since he also believed Legion was gone. He just wanted to be a hundred percent certain...

Anyway, he didn't get too far through the mansion gates before he saw the girls running to receive him.

The gesture was honestly a waste of energy on their part, but he couldn't help but smile.

He had missed such gestures actually. They made him feel that he was really back home. And that feeling was the best in the world...

....

Back at the battle sight...

"Whoa! I really did some damage here, huh?... Looks like a lake is already forming. Sigh, the things I do for that dumb soul-link" Raya spoke to herself then...

Plop!

She jumped into the huge hole which was already halfway filled with water despite the little time it had been since they left.

The reason for this was that they had exposed an underground river, so there was more than enough water to accomplish such a feat...

And so, Raya began her search for any of Legion's remains. And just as she guessed. There was nothing left...

The little hole from before had long been closed. There was zero evidence of its existence left after the water covered everything up.

Instead of immediately going back. The dragon girl decided to chill in the lake for a bit.

Not only would that make it seem like she was thorough in her search. But it would give a much-needed break from Muku.

Of course, this was after scanning the surroundings and not catching any signatures from R5s.

Even then, she had her teleportation on "speed dial", ready to escape at any moment's notice if a rank 5 beast showed up. She was in no shape to fight at the moment after all...

....

Back at the mansion...

Everyone soon went inside and took their seats.

"So, tell us. How was it? Well, we can guess that it was tough from all the noise we heard, the time it took for you to return and how tired you look. But still, we need details" Audrey spoke first.

"Sure, I'll tell you everything. However, Emily..." Muku replied.

"No need to say anything more. I've gotten you" Emily replied in a random gangster accent then snapped her fingers before pointing at the kitchen like a mafia boss.

".... Sigh..." Elsa looked at her quietly for a moment before rolling her eyes then sighing.

She then got up and headed for the kitchen.

"Umm... What's going on here?" Muku asked curiously.

"Oh, nothing much. We played a game while waiting for you and she lost. So she's just fulfilling the bet's requirement. Which is listening to one of the winner's commands without refusal as long as it's reasonable. And I thought I'd have a little fun with it. Hehe," Emily replied.

"Oh. No wonder you were so eager. Anyway, I'll start while Elsa brings the food..." Muku replied in an understanding voice then began telling the girls about the battle.

There was no need to hold anything back so he told them everything.

From his encounter with Lewis's team, and everything else which happened. Of course, he emphasised how he gave them a chance to leave but they didn't take it. Then how Legion was made. To how he almost lost his life to the creature and Raya had to take care of it.

The part about how he almost died really surprised the girls. It was really rare for such a thing to happen to Muku.

In fact, all the times they knew in which he almost lost his life involved Monarchs or that one backlash from his bloodline... Then again, from what he said and what they knew, it was clear that Legion was the product of a Monarch's hard work. So maybe it was understandable. But still, the fact that Muku almost died just after coming back, unsettled them all. Muku had to take a few minutes to calm them down before they relaxed again.

Elsa brought his meal during the talk and he ate it as he continued. He became more energetic in his speech after the first bite and his eyes glowed with happiness.

This showed how much he had missed Emily's cooking. It was interesting how what she made was way better than what he could make even if it was essentially just roasting meat.

Maybe it was her phoenix flames which made it taste better.

Emily's face glowed in happiness even more than Muku's when she saw how much he enjoyed the meal.

Apparently, she really liked seeing the man she loved enjoying her food... Then again, most girls are like that.

"Well... At least it all worked out in the end" Audrey commented after Muku finished telling them everything.

"Yeah. That's all that matters" Muku seconded her.

"You know, I just realised something. When you were gone. Nothing too major happened. However, on the day you returned, we were attacked by two R5s. And one of them almost killed you too... My conclusion on the matter is that you Mr Muku might be cursed..." Layla suddenly interjected.

"COUGH! COUGH! COUGH! What the heck do you mean I'm cursed? Neither of those creatures was my fault! It's you who attracted both. How am I to blame?! How could you so easily slander me like that?" Muku was caught off guard by Layla's words to the point that he almost choked on the meat he was eating.

However, he didn't take it lying down as he fervently defended himself. How dare she try to pin their horrible luck on him?

He wasn't the one who attracted the Fishman's attention nor the one Tactoa was chasing.

All he did was save the girls from the messes they caused like the proper gentleman he was. Yet there she was saying that it was his fault with a straight face.

If he knew that things were going to end up like this, he would have let the Fishman bite off Layla's hand first before interfering.

Maybe then the shameless girl would know whose fault it was!

"I know we that technically..." Layla wanted to say more.

"Shut up! There are no technicalities involved! Hmph! To think that even you Layla have contracted Jade-disease! In fact, I refuse to take this lying down. I'm going to sleep" Muku interrupted Layla in an exaggeratedly angry voice then rose from his seat before walking away.

The girls gave him odd looks as he walked away without saying anything.

"... If you wanted to sleep you should have just said so... Why make a scene to justify it?" Layla spoke in a low voice as Muku walked up the stairs.

Whether he heard it or not, they didn't know since he didn't even pause or look back.

Hope looked at Muku's receding back for a bit before running after him.

She had delayed because she was unsure if she should follow him given how it seemed like he wanted to be alone so that he could sleep.

But then she realised that she was his beloved little sister, so she didn't have to respect his personal space or time!

"Ah!" Hope screamed as something pulled her back.

That something was a crimson thread from Audrey.

"At least let him fall asleep before going. I know you well enough to know that if I let you go now, he won't be able to sleep. However, if he sleeps, you can't care to wake him up..." Audrey explained herself as more threads attached themselves to Hope before lifting her up and bringing her back.

Surprisingly enough, wool-thin blood threads were strong enough to lift a human up.

Anyway, Hope was carefully placed back in her seat before the threads retreated.

"... Fair enough" Hope was unwilling, but she knew that Audrey made sense.

And so, she did as she was told... Not like she could leave without poisoning everyone present first anyway. And it would be too extreme to do such a thing. Plus that would get her punished by Muku, something she never wanted to experience from seeing how much Jade and Raya feared the punishment despite being punished differently.

Which made it obvious that no matter how Muku punished you, it would definitely hurt...

.....

In Jade's room...

Muku lay peacefully on Jade's bed as he thought of all the recent events.

As for why he was in Jade's room... Well, she was in his so. He could have used a guest room but nuh... Jade's room smelled better and felt more right.

The reason he left the girls was that he really was tired and needed to sleep. There was an event he went through before coming through the portal from the beast world, then there was the fishman battle, then there was the Jade "battle" and lastly but not least, the Legion battle.

So yeah, the man was spent...

And so, with many thoughts going through his head. Mostly of his happy time with Jade, the man fell asleep...

Chapter 350: Heart racing situation...

Back at the Tactoa headquarters. Soon after Raya attacked Legion...

"What the heck was that?!" The Monarch orb spoke to itself angrily.

One moment it was observing Muku's demise through Legion's eyes, In the next, all it could see was white and black then nothing at all.

And the connection to Legion was also cut off... Speaking of which, it commended Muku for giving its creature that name after finding out the meaning from one of its subordinates.

The name was fitting for the being. It was even considering adding Muku's consciousness to the creature after his death.

The process would be hard since he wasn't exposed to its power before, but it was willing to do it as a reward for the useful human.

Unfortunately, everything got ruined before things got to that point. Hell it didn't get to control Legion even once before the creature was seemingly destroyed.

And honestly that hurt a lot considering the resources it had put into the project. Plus the plans which had to be scrapped now too.

The worst part was how it didn't even see who did it.

Then there was that weird grey energy Muku displayed, which seemed familiar to it in some way. But it felt like there was a mental block in its mind when it tried to remember it.

Maybe if it had experienced personally, something would have come up. The energy was definitely extraordinary considering how it could fight against its diluted Monarch-level Beast Aura(MBA).

Yes, that's right. The black energy was actually a variant of Beast Aura from the start.

Jade wasn't able to sense it because it was too diluted and obscure in the encounters she had. If she had been around during the Legion fight, she might have discovered it.

Then everything would make sense from how the Monarch energy was able to affect her so much. To the point of forcing a transformation during the glowing Monarch incident.

Interestingly enough, as opposed to the overly diluted Beast Aura from the black slime from before, the glowing green Monarch's Beast Aura was too pure for her to sense what it was.

It wasn't that her senses weren't good enough. But just that she didn't qualify to know such knowledge yet.

And then there was Ares' red "energy"... But that's a story for another day...

Anyway, back to the matter at hand... The diluted MBA was at least as strong as R6 Advanced Mana. So Muku's normal elemental attacks being useless against it was understandable.

It definitely made more sense than the weird grey energy which resisted it.

But everything came back to the assassin who completely overpowered the MBA. Now that was a dangerous being.

The Monarch orb was eager to know who that was but there was no way of knowing. That drove it mad with anger.

Whoever that bastard was, they had ruined everything. Now it didn't know Legion's status. Whether it would survive or not.

The mental link had been mostly severed apart from that. As for whether it would be restored eventually, it didn't know. The only good news was that Legion was still "alive" since there was still a trace of the link.

However, it hated being in its current weakened state. Not only did it have to rely on proxies, but those proxies were failing it.

And unlike the glowing green Monarch, it couldn't emerge anytime soon. There were way more restrictions on it...

"Sigh. Why is everything going wrong recently? Such terrible luck isn't something a Monarch like me should have. This is human-level terrible luck!. At least this group had beings that could fight my creation. But what about the other one?... Have I been too lenient with these ants? It seems it's time I switch things up a little bit..." The Monarch spoke to itself in an annoyed voice in the quiet voice.

Of course, at the same time it was also trying to figure out its next step. As for how that would affect Muku's group, only time will tell...

....

Around 24 hours later from the time Muku went to sleep...

{Hmm? Why do I feel heavy?} Muku thought to himself without moving as soon as he woke up.

He didn't even open his eyes or panic. His time in the Beast World had given him the ability to be completely lucid immediately after waking up.

That way, he would actually accordingly without attracting attention of any beasts that might be close by.

In a forest where there were always a beast on the hunt, it was a really necessary skill. Sure, Raya was there, but that was no reason to slack off, after all, there were times when they set out separately.

Anyway, Muku discreetly scanned the surroundings with his mana sense. Only the most sensitive R5s could sense it.

Anyone lower ranked wouldn't sense anything. Of course R6s and beyond could sense it, but they weren't an immediate problem.

The immediate problem was the sight Muku saw with his mana sense.

He was literally sandwiched between two girls on the huge bag. On one side was Hope, which he kinda expected. On the other side was unexpectedly, Chloe.

Who knew the girl would become so bold!

If that was it, then the situation wouldn't be too bad. But just above his head was Layla sleeping there horizontally.

Then at the bottom, there was Freya who apparently thought to join the party. Something out of character for the girl by a mile, but whatever.

Freya and Layla weren't even the worst case. The worst case was by far Emily who was lying directly on top of Muku like he was a freaking bed!

Like what the hell?! Who does that? The girl not only had her own bed, but even on that very bed, there was still space beside Hope or Chloe.

So what the hell?!

As someone who had been in all kinds of situations, Muku managed to calm down his racing heart within a minute.

Unfortunately, that didn't make the situation any better. After all, the moment he calmed down, he began feeling the soft bodies pressing against him.

Especially Emily's as she was laying on him. His "little brother" was instantly angered and rose up ready to "fight"

He regretted turning the armour into fine cloth before sleeping. Then again, who sleeps in armour at home? So the situation was definitely not his fault.

He only expected to find Hope there and if it had gone like that, then there was no way anything like that would have happened.

And now he was stuck in a terrible situation not knowing how to get out.

The girls were all veterans, so the moment he makes any sudden movement, the chance of someone waking up was high, especially Emily.

He was even actively controlling his breath at that point. After all, even breathing differently could wake the girl up...

He just hoped that his racing heart wouldn't wake her up. While he had managed to calm it down before, there was no way he could do it now...

Only a rainbow man could stay calm in such a situation. Then there was his "sword" which was poking Emily's gut.

He tried repositioning it in a way that it wasn't poking her like that, but... It honestly looked like he was just using her to rub one out...

"You pervert..."

Suddenly a voice which sent a chill down Muku's spine sounded. For the voice belonged to Emily.

It was soft and low, so low that it was barely a whisper. Muku was only able to hear it clearly due to his advanced hearing.

"No..." Muku wanted to defend himself however Emily's soft finger found its way to his lips and stopped him from speaking.

"Shh... Let's not wake the others up. Let's go out and speak..." Emily whispered into his ear again.

And like a pervert he couldn't help but get excited, which made his sword jump up. The unexpected movement startled Emily but she managed to stop herself from jumping up.

{Raya...} Muku spoke in his mind.

{Tsk. You owe me one} Raya replied then...

Whoo!

With a dim light, Emily and Muku disappeared from the bed and replaced by a grumpy looking Raya.

She had been busy relaxing in the new room Audrey gave her when Muku woke up.

She sensed his slightly stressed emotional state so began observing everything with her mana sense.

If she had known that he was going to rope her into the situation, she wouldn't have peeked... The bastard really enjoyed involving her in everything he did. At that point she was considering going on strike... Wait a minute, when did she become Muku's worker?

Damn it! She really needed to have a talk with him. He couldn't keep on treating her like an errand girl or maid. It had to be stopped!

...

In Raya's room...

"Whoa! What just happened?!" Emily exclaimed in surprise.

"Oh, that... It's nothing special. Just Raya's space element. She switched positions with us" Muku replied nonchalantly.

"What?! Why are you saying that like it's a mundane thing?! We just travelled through space!" Emily exclaimed loudly.

She didn't have to keep her voice down anymore since the mansion's rooms were soundproof. So she let her emotions explode.

"Oh... I forgot that I'm the only one in the group who has travelled through portals and Raya's space element. And you weren't around when I used the ability for the first time... Anyway, if you're so shocked and want to know how it works. I don't mind telling you" Muku replied calmly.

"Sigh. Whatever, you can explain it later when everyone is around... For now, I have something more important I want to know" Emily replied in a slightly exasperated tone.

"Oh, okay. What do you want to know?" Muku replied.

"When are you planning on telling me that you slept with Jade?" Emily asked with an innocent expression on her face while looking at Muku dead in the eyes.

"!?"