

Few Wives 361

Chapter 361 Training (pt 2)

A few hours later...

The girls were lying on the ground with bruises all over their hands and legs. That was only because Muku made sure to hold back otherwise they would all have black eyes and bruises everywhere on their bodies.

Out of them Jade was the most bruised because of her stubbornness. Even when she knew she was completely beaten, she insisted on continuing, so, Muku had to teach her a lesson.

Anyway, other than that. Everything else was working out fine.

With how they were progressing, he'd introduce something new in a few days. After all, it couldn't all be piled on at once since that would likely overwhelm them.

But of course, that was only if what he added affected the physical body. As for mental?...

"Okay, everyone. That's enough rest for now. It's time to teach you all how to manipulate your mindscape.... As for Freya. You can continue resting and maybe help the others if you can" Muku addressed the girls who had barely rested for twenty minutes.

They wanted to complain, but that was hard to do after Hope healed them and restored their peak physical and mental states... Hope actually hated her abilities at the time.

After all, they were working against her and the others. If only she didn't love her brother so much. Then maybe she would have refused him when he told her to heal everyone...

But oh well, such was life.

They could only suck it up and do as they were told while giving Freya an envious gaze.

Out of everyone present, only Elsa and Jade were excited. The reason for Elsa's excitement was pretty obvious...

And that was finally being able to interact with her Water Fairy.

Sure, the little fairy would come out and help her during battle. But it was also very shy, so in normal times, it wouldn't appear when she summoned it.

It only appears when she's alone... But as someone who's rarely away from her sister since the near-death experience from before, her alone time was very limited.

So yeah, she was more than excited to learn how to manipulate her mindscape. That way she could interact with the fairy without going away from Emily.

One might wonder why she can't just interact with the fairy behind closed doors when Emily is in another room... Well, she tried but Freya happened to glance by through her ability during that time which the fairy sensed and it immediately retreated.

Elsa wasn't fed up with its timid nature though. After all, Iris assured her that all infant fairies start out that way. It's part of their inborn self-preservation abilities.

They actually have to gain a certain level of understanding of the world as well as a certain level of strength before they lose their timidity.

This usually happens after a few decades but that's only when they are alone. When they are bonded to people then the time can be shortened to a few years.

Now with Elsa's help after she can access her mindscape, maybe in a few months the fairy will be ready to confidently interact with the world...

Anyway, everyone understood Elsa's excitement, but few understood Jade's.

Sure, gaining the ability to manipulate one's mindscape was great, but it didn't seem like something Jade would be so excited about.

And that really wasn't the reason. She was excited because after gaining the ability she'll finally be able to learn the full story behind her "dreamy visions"

She noticed the confusion in the eyes of her teammates but said nothing. She decided to wait until she had the full picture before telling them about it.

It wasn't because she feared being rejected like before. After speaking with Muku and Emily, especially Emily who had no link to her whatsoever on the matter... She decided that it was okay to tell everyone about her supposed origins.

However, it had to be confirmed first before she said anything. After all, it was quite mystical and scary.

Anyway, Muku didn't delay as he instructed the girls to get into the iconic meditation pose.

After that...

"Okay, ladies. You are all familiar with the mana pathways in your bodies right? Well, of course you are, you have been interacting with them since the first time you cast a spell. Anyway, you should have also noticed that you can actually "see" the pathways right? And the way you look at them is practically the same way you look at the world with your mana sense. The only difference is that you're looking inside yourselves instead of out. The process is so easy that you learned it without trying and could do it before being able to project your mana sense into the surrounding world. Anyway, what I'm about to tell you right now is the next stage in "seeing" within one's self..." Muku began speaking to the girls who had their eyes closed while paying close attention...

"What I want you to do is to completely ignore your mana pathways as well as your mana cores. Instead, try looking up... I know it's not as easy as I make it seem since it basically goes against what you know. You all just go along with the ride when looking at your mana pathways right? Well, let me tell you about a trick that makes everything easier. As you know, mana pathways also go up into your heads right? Well, that's also where your mindscape is located... Obviously. Anyway, this time, I want you to follow the path from the starting point which is the core and go along until the pathways get to the head. Then I want you to stop your inner sense... Yes, let's call it inner sense. I want you to stop it from

following the pathway like it normally would. It's okay to mess up the first time around. Hell, you can mess up a hundred times. It doesn't matter. Just try to pause it slow it down a bit.... Oh, I almost forgot, the inner sense is separated into four when it leaves the core, so wait until it intersects then slow it down... Which conveniently happens in the head. Let's forget about the next step for now, let's focus on that first and we'll continue once you can do it. I'll give you four hours of practice for now to familiarise yourselves with the process..." Muku gave the orders as clearly as he could.

The girls did as they were told. And like he said, it wasn't as easy as he made it out to be.

This was because, a person's inner sense splits into four when it starts from the mana core. This is because the core is in the lower belly area.

And mana pathways are in both the lower and upper regions of the body. And the only way to cover everything at once is to separate.

This is something people don't consciously do as it was just made that way like breathing.

However, this process won't start on its own. It's something people consciously start then it runs on automatic.

And now, after years of letting it work like that. Muku was telling them to grab control... So of course it would be hard.

"Umm... My inner sense starts from my head..." Freya who participated in the exercise even when she didn't have to suddenly spoke.

"And that's what we're trying to get the others to do. That's actually the first part in gaining control of one's inner sense. I can't help but envy you. I had a difficult time learning how to do it and you just woke up one day and could do it. And that was before mana too. Is this the difference between geniuses and average people?" Muku replied with a little smile on his face.

Freya blushed and covered her face due to his comment. She didn't know what to say. After all, she knew nothing about how she got to where she was.

Anyway, the duo didn't continue speaking as they were afraid of disturbing the others.

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Two hours later...

The girls were still doing their best to gain control, but weren't there yet.

However, from their different expressions, it was obvious that some were having more success than others.

At that point, Jade who was probably having the worst experience had an annoyed look on her face.

Muku didn't dare say anything to her or laugh lest she explode on him. And it kinda felt weird to bully her ruthlessly after what they did.

Especially when he remembered why they did whenever he looked at her. He found himself checking her out more times than he would care to admit.

Fortunately, everyone had their eyes closed or wasn't paying attention to him.

Raya was off somewhere. Probably at the lake again... And Tracy was napping beside Layla. So he was safe for now...

Opposite of Jade, Layla had the calmest expression and radiated a calm confidence like everything was going according to plan.

This made Muku wonder if a person's disposition affected the process... Then again, impatient people like Jade would definitely have a hard time with things that required concentration.

Bang!

"Argh!" Jade screamed out of nowhere after a bang sound.

This of course startled everyone and they looked at her immediately.

"Haha! I'm so smart!" Jade exclaimed loudly in confidence. She completely ignored the people looking at her...

Chapter 362 Savage method?

"Idiot, will you tell us why you disturbed us or do we have to beat it out of you?" Emily spoke annoyedly before even Muku could say anything.

Which was understandable, since Jade's outburst had pretty much erased half of her progress. So if Jade didn't have a very good reason for what she did, then somebody was definitely getting burned that day.

And she was sure the others would help her too. For obvious reasons.

"Oh, right! Sorry about that. I was just basking in my own genius so much that I forgot about you all dummies. Anyway, since I'm quite magnanimous, let me share with you what I have discovered" Jade replied in a way which made it hard for the others not to attack her.

The only thing keeping her safe was their curiosity about what she wanted to say. For her own sake, it better be worth it otherwise even Muku might not be able to save her.

"Let me first tell you about the random thought I had while failing to control my inner sense. I remembered that whenever we're hurt during battle and try to focus on the injury to assess the damage, our inner sense immediately narrows down on that spot without much delay. This had me thinking for a while until I realised that maybe an outside force can affect one's inner sense. That had to be the case. Anyway, I needed proof, and so, I hit myself on the forehead with a Beast Aura fist. Which is what caused the boom sound you all heard. And as expected, it worked. It hurt but it worked. The moment I activated my inner sense. It instantly gathered on the spot. For the split second I tried to control it before you all rudely interrupted me, I felt that it was much easier to control..." Jade explained herself with an arrogant expression on her face.

"..."

"..."

Everyone looked at her silently for a moment without saying anything.

Jade who had closed her eyes was forced to open them again after she couldn't hear the praises she was expecting.

"What's wrong? I just found a quicker method than the one Muku gave us. So why aren't you praising me?" Jade asked confusedly, as a look of dissatisfaction appeared on her face.

"Surely a savage method for a savage..." Layla was the first to comment.

"Layla you jerk! Who are you calling a savage?! Do you want to fight?!" Jade exploded out angrily as she tried to get up.

How could she not be angry when not only was her genius not being appropriated, but she was being called a savage too.

However, an invisible force stopped her from getting up or summoning any energy.

And she immediately snapped her neck sideways to look at Muku. After all, she was more than familiar with the restriction brought on by his Telekinesis.

"Calm down Jade. I'm sure Layla didn't mean that. It probably just slipped out. And you're right, your method is quite innovative and smart. So much so that even Layla was caught off guard by it. You can forgive her blindness right? After all, someone of your level of intelligence can't be too petty or it would be an insult to yourself" Muku tried his best to play peacemaker and even sucked up to Jade while at it.

He knew that Jade would easily see through those empty words specifically said to soften her stance. But...

"Well, if you say it that way. I guess I can forgive her this one time. After all, genius was never meant to be understood by everyone" Jade who was weak to compliments even empty ones spoke with a pleased look on her face.

The others all rolled their eyes but did so after making sure that she wasn't looking at them or they would have started another matter.

"Yes. You're correct. On the same note, Layla will be the first one to try your method to show just how sorry she is... Isn't that right Layla?" Muku spoke while looking at Layla.

Layla looked back at him silently for a few seconds with eyes which were saying, "Do I really have to do this?".

Muku looked back at her with a smiling face which said, "Yeah you have to".

Layla grimaced internally but resigned herself to her fate. After all, she had brought it onto herself.

So suffering the consequences was only natural.

She blamed it on her Jade disease otherwise she wouldn't have said anything.

Her Jade disease was so severe that it even inconvenienced her when interacting with Jade, the source, herself....

"Yes, I'll be the first to try it. I'm really sorry" Layla spoke while trying to force an apologetic smile on her face but she couldn't do it.

Fortunately for her Jade didn't feel like making things hard for her that day. And she accepted the half-hearted apology.

However, a cunning smile appeared on her face then...

Whoosh!

Pa!

Jade who had been released by Muku disappeared from the spot and appeared in front of Layla then flicked her on the forehead.

One shouldn't underestimate the attack because it was a flick. After all, Jade was a legit R4 close to the peak. That flick could possibly kill R3s.

So of course Layla felt pain from it. She felt her brain move a bit inside her head. Which made her feel dizzy along with the pain.

However, she didn't lash out at Jade.

She immediately got to work as she activated her inner sense. Despite everything, Layla was still a goal-oriented person, so she understood time and place very well.

It wasn't the time nor the place to fight with Jade. She had better things to do. And that was to successfully gain control of her mindscape...

And so, she worked towards that goal. True to what Jade said, her inner sense really did focus on the spot she was hit. And it was a lot easier to poke and prod as she tried to gain control of it.

Soon she had completely forgotten about the outside world as she completely focused on taking control of her inner sense which was still firmly under the control of her subconscious mind.

The others noticed this and didn't disturb her. They all sat back down in proper positions.

And with a snap of his fingers, Muku's metal clones appeared again.

All the girls closed their eyes at the same time as if it were practised. Then..

Pa! Pa!...

The clones flicked the foreheads of the girls. It was enough to hurt a lot but not enough to cause significant damage. Which was perfect for what they were trying to achieve.

And so, they all soon joined Jade in trying to wrestle away control of their inner sense from their subconsciousness.

"Wow. Was that all practised or did you all do something similar to this before?" Tracy who was amazed by how they acted in sync without speaking asked Muku in a whispering voice.

"No, it's not rehearsed, nor have we ever done anything like it before. What you witnessed there is what we call synergy brought by familiarity. Everyone here is so familiar with each other that a few abstract gestures are enough for everyone to understand what they should do. It was mostly evident in battle before, but I guess now they can even apply it in their daily lives. I'm actually surprised that they could cooperate with me without issues even after two years of separation... Oh, and it's okay to speak in your normal voice. I've isolated them from the surrounding sounds. We wouldn't want Jade to disturb them again. I don't think she would escape their wrath a second time..." Muku replied.

"Oh, okay. I'm quite jealous. But it also gives me peace of mind. It makes me realise that my partner might never have been truly my partner. Since we couldn't do even half of the things your group can do together. I guess I was blinded by my need to have someone to rely on..." Tracy replied sadly.

"Well, I can't say anything about that since I wasn't there. However, I can say that as long as you're with us, you don't have to worry about such things. You're one of us here. And I promise you that you'll soon be incorporated into the system if you participate in battles with us. After all, fighting together is the fastest and easiest way to get to know someone when they aren't trying to hide things from you. But of course, we won't force you to fight. It's entirely up to you" Muku replied calmly and respectfully.

"Hmm. Fight together huh? Let me think about it..." Tracy replied as she retreated into her own thoughts. Probably already thinking about it.

Muku nodded and stopped paying attention to her.

He began looking at the girls again.

That's when he noticed Freya who was just sitting there idly with her usual gentle expression on her face.

Then a sudden idea appeared in his mind...

"Freya..." He called out to the idle girl.

She was immediately startled and almost jumped up from where she was sitting. It was obvious that she had been stuck in her thoughts...

Her face turned crimson on the spot from embarrassment at the way she reacted. But she still replied.

"Y... yes?" Freya replied.

"How would you like to learn how one advances after reaching PR4?" Muku said with a smile on his face.

"?!"

Chapter 363 Muku and Freya...

"I know, it's a little soon since you aren't at the peak yet. I wanted to talk to everyone at once, but that would leave you with nothing to do while they learn to manipulate their mindscapes. So what do you say?" Muku continued.

"...Um, is it possible to continue learning hand-to-hand combat when they are occupied?" Freya asked after thinking about it for a bit.

"Yes... But don't you want to rest your body as well?" Muku replied.

"Well, actually, I've noticed that I'm dead last in hand-to-hand combat. Sure, Emily isn't much better than me but she has an element which can make her a lot better in battle by assisting her movements. So we aren't the same. For that reason, I feel I need to practice for longer just to keep up. I was trying to figure out how to tell you about it actually..." Freya explained herself.

"Oh, okay. If that's what you want, I have no issues with it" Muku replied understandingly.

"Yeah... I am grateful that you allowed me to learn something ahead of time just to keep me involved though" Freya expressed her gratitude to Muku for his thoughtfulness.

It made her feel valued and seen in the team even if she never had a reason to question her position. It was just one of those things girls did... Overthinking about nonexistent problems.

"Well, you are a valuable member of the team. Just as important as the others. So of course I wouldn't want to mistreat you" Muku replied smilingly.

"Even then, thank you... So, if you please. Can you create that clone for me?" Freya requested.

"Clone? Why?" Muku asked confusedly.

"Well... To teach me martial arts..." Freya replied hesitantly, not sure why Muku seemed confused.

She thought about what she said multiple times in her head and there didn't seem to be anything wrong with it. This made her more nervous...

"I know what you mean but why would I create a clone to attend to you when I'm free and can perfectly do it myself?" Muku explained.

"Oh... No no! I couldn't bother you so much! A clone is fine!" Freya finally understood his confusion and she immediately tried to back off.

"Girl you do know that I'm still the one deciding everything and interacting with you when it's a clone right?" Muku asked with a raised eyebrow.

Freya's reaction was just way too exaggerated after all.

"Yeah, but it's still different from your physical body" Freya tried to defend her point.

"Oh is that what you think? Well, whatever, I don't care, I'm going to be teaching you with my real body. In fact, from now on, whenever you and I train, it will be like this. We can use it as our bonding time too since there seems to be some lingering hesitance and reverence in the way you address me. And I will not have that in my team. Here we're all equal..." Muku put his foot down as he walked toward Freya.

The girl lowered her head and tried to step back. However, she bumped into an invisible wall right away.

She immediately closed her eyes and started shaking. From her reaction, one would think that she was a defenceless girl who was about to fall prey to a predator.

Seeing this made Muku freeze for a bit but he ultimately continued advancing. It was something that had to be done.

While Freya will eventually get used to him completely. Which he had already seen many snippets of... He didn't feel like waiting. Besides, he was doing it for training.

Bullying her was just an unexpected treat. Like he said many times before, Freya really was the best target for bullying.

Her natural disposition literally invited bullying. She didn't want it, but that's what it was...

And it's not like it was negative bullying. He was just playing around with his shy and cute teammate that's all... That can't be something bad right?

"Girl am I that scary to you?" Muku asked softly after reaching Freya.

He deliberately came so close to Freya that their faces were touching.

The shy girl felt it and goosebumps covered her whole body.

Her face turned crimson from light pink.

Muku even stepped back as he was afraid that she would faint or something.

"Hey, if you're so unwilling we can do it your way..." Muku spoke from a few metres away from Freya.

"Really?" Freya asked as her eyes snapped open.

"Yes... But you will have to provide the mana I'll use to create the clone along with the mental energy. After all, it's your request right? And it's quite costly." Muku mentioned something Freya didn't expect to hear.

Like who lied in such obvious ways? If the clones were so hard to make and costly, how did he make eight with little effort before?!

"I know you're thinking about how I made some before. But that was part of the planned training. So there was a budget. However, this is your personal request. And I haven't recovered, so you can only pay or we're not doing it..." Muku reasoned with Freya in a way that made her suspect that something was wrong but she couldn't prove it...

"Okay... How do I pay for it then?" Freya replied even though she felt like she'd regret it.

"A decisive lady huh?... I like it! Well, fortunately for you ma'am it's not too expensive. You just have to give me fifty percent of your mana.... And it can only be done through a long kiss.... Don't look at me like that. I don't make the rules. It's really how it goes I promise!" Muku shamelessly laid down his conditions.

"I... I think I'll accept your first proposal please" Freya replied after calming down her racing heart and glancing at Muku's inviting lips a few times.

Honestly, she considered it. But then she remembered that they were in a public space with all their teammates who could wake up at anytime present.

It was just too risky. What if someone woke up just as they began kissing? What if that someone is Jade? And even worse, Emily?... At that point, everyone knew that Emily had a dark side which only woke up when Muku was involved. And they didn't want to wake it up.

After all, they were all aware of that time Jade lost her hair after stealing a kiss from Muku.

And unlike Jade, they didn't have a mysterious bloodline which would restore their hair... That is if Emily only targets the hair...

Anyway, the point was that Freya wasn't that daring.

"Well, that's kind of disappointing, but okay. We'll do that then. Now get ready, we've wasted enough time" Muku replied while all the goofiness from before was replaced by seriousness.

It was then that Freya realised that she had been tricked and it had all been an act.

And she felt slightly betrayed, but it was too late. Now she could only commit to what was.

With that, the two started sparring with Muku guiding Freya on the correct way of doing things.

Tracy who had been looking from the sidelines since the beginning was thoroughly entertained.

She didn't completely understand what was happening or the reactions. But she felt like she was watching something scandalous and it felt great!

She was planning on telling Layla everything later on in hopes of getting an explanation on what was happening.

If Muku knew what she was planning he would probably beg her with everything he had not to do that. After all, who knew how Layla would react? In fact, no matter how she reacted, it would probably not be good for him.

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A few hours later...

Muku woke the girls up from their meditative states. It was time to do something else.

Gaining control of their inner sense wasn't something which could be done in one day so there was no need to give them more time.

At that time Freya was breathing heavily while lying on the ground with torn clothes. This startled the others, but they calmed down after the explanation.

It turned out that she asked Muku to go a bit harder in the training since she operated better under pressure. Which he agreed to and that left her in her current state.

The others didn't pursue the matter anymore after that. As for whether they'd have done the same if they knew that Muku got a bit too excited at some point and began targeting Freya's butt with slaps when she showed openings... We'll never know.

In fact, even some of the cuts on her dress were intentional. He said that it was so that she could physically see where her openings were. But she knew that he was just bullying her.

She felt extremely wronged but was too embarrassed to say anything. And so, she kept quiet about her bruised ego and aching butt until Hope healed her.

Fortunately, she was wearing a dress from Mrs C which could not only turn into a training outfit, but could also regenerate the torn parts until it was as good as new.

And even though he was shamelessly bullying her, he taught her so well that she made at least twice the progress in the session compared to the last one.

What she didn't know was that Muku wasn't spanking her just for the fun of it... Well, it was mostly for the fun of it. But it was also to get closer. He even reminded her how it was technically the second time he did.

Which made Iris curse loudly in her mindscape.

Anyway, it was time to move on to the next thing.... FORCE!

Chapter 364 "Talking" to mom

"So... We're now moving on to the force technique. Most of you should have seen me use it in that shark battle. As for Jade, I'll demonstrate it to you in a bit. However, the technique isn't exactly mine. So I have to ask for the owner's permission before I can teach it to you. Though I don't think they will refuse. But I doubt I'll be able to get through to them since I've been trying to do that for a long time with no success... Anyway, let me try..." Muku addressed the girls then took out his phone.

He immediately scrolled down to the very first number he saved on his phone. That's right, he was going to try to call Mrs C.

As for why he didn't do so before disturbing the girls... Well, he actually did try to call her but the call didn't go through. He was just trying his luck again, and there were other things they could do if the call didn't go through.

If he still couldn't connect to her, then he could only give up on teaching the girls the technique for now. After all, he had noticed that it was very important to Mrs C even if she pretended as if it wasn't.

And he wouldn't want to take advantage of her kindness by forcefully teaching it to the girls without permission. That was a matter of respect, whether she would have agreed or not...

"Hello! You've reached the mobile phone of the one and only greatest mother in all existence. Unfortunately she can't attend to your call right now because she's busy with something very important. However, she did leave a message for you. And that message will start in 3...2...1... You can teach them son, I don't mind. And thanks for asking. I wish I could be talking to you directly right now, but unfortunately I can't. So accept this pre-recorded message as a stand-in. I'll get back to you as soon as I can. Oh and yes, I was looking through time and space when I created this message so I can basically see everything you're doing... I even saw you bullying that innocent girl, you naughty boy! You better take responsibility and marry her! And don't think too much about it, I only looked at that specific day since it's linked to me. Anyway, I gotta go. Momma loves you!... Say it back or you'll be hit by lightning in the next five seconds!" Mrs C's lively voice was heard from the phone.

And as usual she did something absurd like it was nothing. Like who pre-records a voice message for the future while spying on the recipient's future self?!... That's right! Only Mrs C could!. Speaking of which, what the heck was her power?! The lady seemed to be able to do anything... Oh wait, she did admit to being capable of doing almost anything before right?

Well, whatever, that didn't matter for the time being. What mattered was that he had gotten the permission.

"I love you too. Mom" Muku spoke in a hushed voice even though he had isolated himself from the outside world with both a sound proof barrier and a metal barrier.

So, the girls couldn't see or hear him. However he still felt embarrassed. But he trusted his mother to do exactly what she said, so he didn't dare think she was bluffing.

"Hehe. That's a good boy. Hopefully, next time I won't have to threaten you into saying it. Anyway, goodbye for now, I can't talk much longer. It's too hectic here" Mrs C's voice was heard again then the voice note ended.

Muku stood there dazed for a moment as he thought of what could possibly keep his mother busy. While he hadn't seen her full power. Based on the little he saw... He was certain she was definitely one of, if not the most powerful being out there.

So for there to be something which even she struggled with... A sudden image appeared in his head.

It wasn't an image he had seen, but something he had been told about and visualised. That image was a bleeding sky.

That's right, he was thinking about the bleeding sky Jade mentioned.

He felt that if there was anything which could keep his mother busy, then that would be it. However, he didn't know just how accurate he was. After all, in his head, it was just a random guess in the dark.

Anyway, the thoughts on Mrs C made him more determined to get stronger. That way, not only could he keep the girls safe, but he could also assist his mother...

Thinking of that he couldn't help but be surprised. He didn't know when it happened or how, but it seems Mrs C has wormed her way into his heart and took a position equally as important as the girls.

That thought made him chuckle. To think a grown man like him would be melted by a mother's love so easily.

Anyway, it wasn't the time to think about such things. The girls were still waiting for their training. He couldn't let them wait too long or they'll think he exaggerated too much when he said that the training will be brutal.

Sure, they were just starting, so he wasn't too intense. But still, they shouldn't think that it's too easy....

And so, Muku took down the walls and told the girls the good news.

After hearing that he spoke to Mrs C, they started cursing him out for not letting them talk to her too.

After all, they wanted to thank her for the clothes and everything else. Training Muku, being one of the reasons, even if she was doing it for herself as his "instant mother"...

It was only after Muku explained that it was a recorded message he interacted with did they give up. However they were still skeptical. After all, an interactive recorded message sounded absurd....

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A while later...

Everyone calmed down and got ready to begin.

"Okay everyone, your training is going to be a bit different from mine. The reason being that I received the information right into my brain. So I knew exactly what to do and how to do it the moment I comprehended the info. But you on the other hand will be getting the information in a verbal way from me. Meaning that it will take longer for you to grasp everything. But don't worry, you don't have to rush on this one. Even if you grasp everything. It takes a very long time for it to be applicable in battle unless you're a genius so I'm only teaching it to you so that you always have something up your sleeves for emergencies. Even if it's not much in the start. After all, sometimes, that little something is enough to decide one's life and death. Aren't I just the nicest for teaching you this?..." Muku addressed the girls in a casual but informative way.

They weren't strictly teacher and students like before the apocalypse after all.

In fact, he was certain that if he tried his pre-apocalypse teaching techniques on them. The chance of failure was pretty high. After all, they didn't look at him the same way and he didn't look at them the same way. Literally the only exception was Elsa who would probably learn just fine.

Anyway, after that Muku began instructing them on how to perform the technique. He began from the very basics which involved muscle control so that they didn't accidentally blow up their own bodies once they began taking in Force into their bodies.

He was quite familiar with that pain as he had suffered it when he first used the technique. His body wasn't used to it at all. Being in a fight with Scar didn't help either.

Speaking of Scar, he was glad he didn't meet the beast in his time in the Beast World. After all, he had arrogantly said that he would win their next battle like he won the first one.

But he knew that he wasn't the beast's match yet. Their strength will likely only intersect when he reaches R6 if not beyond.

Anyway, back to what matters. Muku continued teaching the girls how to properly control their muscles.

And surprisingly... Or expectedly rather, Audrey got it on the first try.

This was obviously because of her class. There was probably no other human who knew as much about the internal body of a human as she did. And that's because her blood element power allows her to "see" everything in the body of anyone she corrupts with her mana.

And while she would have preferred not to be like that. It was unavoidable with all their encounters with Tactoa.

Anyway, since blood was basically everywhere in the human body, including muscles. She was well versed in muscle control.

Which helped her immensely in controlling her own muscles after looking into her own body with her blood element.

The others could only look on enviously. And that included Muku. After all, he and the others could only feel things out as they went which usually involved some level of pain. However Audrey didn't have to do all that.

Freya finally understood what the others felt when she effortlessly used her mindscape while they couldn't.

The feeling was quite stifling. But she kinda liked it for whatever reason. Maybe because now she wasn't the only one who had it easy in some aspect....

Chapter 365 What's next?

Close to a month later...

Muku's clones could be seen fighting with the girls.

Surprisingly, unlike before, the battle seemed to be almost matched. It was like three girls were all veterans in battle instead of people who only learnt for a month.

This miraculous effect could be easily explained though. It wasn't that they were super talented in fighting. Well, some of them were.

But more than that, what mattered most was their evolved bodies. The thing about R4 bodies is that they are countless times better than normal people's bodies.

And so, for that reason. Things which would take normal people many years to learn, they could learn in a month as proven here.

The other reason they could keep up with Muku's clones was because his consciousness was literally split into nine parts which were all working at once.

Eight were training with the girls and one was keeping everything else in order.

Honestly, if it wasn't for his mindscape making his mind extremely flexible and capable of doing so many things at once... He would have crushed like an overwhelmed computer a long time ago.

However, even then, he was far from being able to operate like he normally would.

He was slower in both thoughts and reactions. And this allowed the girls to keep up with his clones.

If it was him at one hundred percent. They wouldn't be able to even touch his shadow. Even if they knew all the techniques and knew how to execute them correctly. After all, experience matters... Quite a lot too.

Anyway, despite being able to keep up for a while, the girls eventually lost... Like all of them.

Which was stifling since they understood that they were fighting a severely nerfed version of Muku in literally every way.

However, they didn't linger on it too long. After all, their leader has always been outstanding. So their loss was to be expected... Even if they wished he'd be more gentlemanly by letting them win.

"Hmm. Great improvement everyone. If you keep on getting better at this pace I'm sure you'll be as good as me soon" Muku complimented the girls after restoring his fragmented consciousness.

"How soon?" Jade asked with narrowed eyes.

"Umm... Not too long just.... Around five years" Muku replied in a dodgy tone while avoiding eye contact with the girls.

"Tsk" Jade clicked her tongue but did say anything.

As much as she wanted to disagree. She knew that he was telling the truth. After all, they couldn't even defeat his clones which had their strength calibrated to match theirs physically.

On top of that, the clones had trash reaction speed. Yet, they still won based on experience alone.

"Come on now. Five years isn't too bad. I literally started learning martial arts when I was nine and only stopped when I started teaching. Which means it took me like nine years. And before you say that y'all should be way faster than that. Well, you're right, you've long surpassed the me from back then. However, the current me has gone way beyond that. That's why I complimented you. You beat nine years of work in less than a month after all. And that was with other things getting in the way" Muku explained.

Hearing his explanation, the girls finally felt good about themselves. They had misunderstood him before as they thought they hadn't even reached his level from back then.

"Anyway. Enough of that. Today we aren't going to train The Force Technique or your mindscapes like before. We're doing something else. Anyone want to take a guess?" Muku asked the girls.

"Umm, are you going to teach us another secret technic?" Jade replied without bothering to think about it deeply.

The others refrained from saying anything before properly thinking about it.

And they thought even harder after Muku simply shook his head to Jade's answer.

This was because that thought had crossed their minds too... But of course they would never admit that they thought the same thing as Jade. After all, it was long established that Jade was a muscle brain.

She was smart, but a muscle brain nonetheless. A title distinguished ladies like them didn't want to be associated with... Cough.... Cough.

Anyway, it took close to a minute of thought before someone finally said something...

"After thinking about deeply, I remembered that we've all reached the PR4. So the only thing which remains to be done is building our avatar in preparation for the breakthrough to R5? Is that the next thing?" Layla asked.

"As expected of Layla. However, you're incorrect... The first part of your answer is correct though. What we're doing next is a result of you all reaching PR4. But it has nothing to do with advancing..." Muku replied smilingly.

"Uh! Is it fighting?! Are we fighting?!" Jade exclaimed excitedly.

Her brooding from being incorrect was completely gone. Her eyes glowed with happiness and desire.

It had been so long since she had a real battle that she was practically starving.

After all, she had those berserk episodes before Muku came and those weren't fun. After he came, she was stuck in training. Which sucked too.

What sucked the most was how all the kills she had made to reach the peak were too easy and practically spoon-fed to her.

Muku would lock the beast in place then she or the others would kill it where it stood.

She once begged him to let her fight the beasts fairly. However he ruthlessly refused with the excuse that they didn't have time for such things.

Which she understood with the impending World Evolution, so she backed off. Though it wasn't like she could rebel against him anyway.

After all, with their current strength difference, he was like a god to her...

She had literally seen him oneshot kill a few R5s in the past month. While she could barely breathe in front of those things.

So yeah, his words were law... Now more than ever.

And that was why she was so excited to the point of seeming a bit like a crazy person.

"Yes... You're correct. We're finally having that gauntlet we spoke about. Oh and Mana or Beast Aura are off the table for this one. Any other means is okay though..." Muku replied with words that made Jade almost burst with happiness.

However, the others especially Hope and Emily weren't too happy.

After all, if they could use mana, their elements would give them quite an advantage even if the other party was expecting it.

After all, fire will still burn you even if you're expecting it, as poison will also poison you.

Hope was even more disappointed than Emily though. After all, she had a new ability she wanted to show off to Muku. Something she had kept a secret from the others up to the point.

Something which would reaffirm her position as the group's most dangerous member... Maybe not strongest, but definitely most dangerous.

Anyway, the others were mostly okay with it despite some slight hesitance. After all, they should be fine as long as their opponent isn't Jade or Audrey... The two with much stronger bodies than theirs.

"Wait... Gauntlet?" Layla caught something the others didn't.

"That's right. It's not going to be one versus one fight like before. I thought we should switch it up a bit. So we're having a gauntlet instead. Which is when one person stands in the ring and gets challenged by the others one by one. If they can beat everyone, then they win, if they can't, then whoever beat them will take their place until everyone has had a turn. Now we just have to decide who will go first..." Muku replied with an excited glint in his eyes.

The girls didn't even register his excitement since it had long been established that he liked seeing them fight for whatever reason. It was probably something perverted, so they'd rather not know and just pretend like they didn't notice.

"Not it!" Layla who was usually the most confident in her abilities was surprisingly the first one to back out from being the runner of the gauntlet.

Which was understandable. After all, the first person's chances of winning were extremely low.

She who is an established winning-junkie would never put herself in a position like that.

Especially when there were two monsters like her mother and Jade.

She had a trump card... But the problem with that was that the others also had it... So it wasn't a trump card in the group.

The others all took a step back as they didn't want to be first either.

Well, all of them but Jade... And unsurprisingly, Audrey.

The two monsters of the team.

They immediately looked at each other with little smiles on their faces as sparks flew in-between them.

"Well... It seems we've got two volunteers to start us off. At least this way the others won't say that they didn't have a fair chance when they get beat up by one of these two right? After all, they'd face that person after this battle" Muku excitedly commented.

"Hey!" Multiple girls shouted angrily at the same time.

Which was understandable, after all, Muku was openly looking down on them.

If they weren't certain he'd beat them all up easily, they'd charge at him and fight it out!...

Chapter 366 Calm before the storm...

"So, when are we going to start?" Jade asked as she looked away from Audrey.

"Tomorrow morning... You all can take the rest of the day off and relax while preparing for tomorrow. That way no one can hide behind not being in their peak states when they lose" Muku replied.

The girls who understood that he was just trying to get a reaction out of them didn't react this time.

Most of them went back to the mansion to do their individual activities.

And as expected, Jade went down from the platform to look for beasts to fight... She was probably the only one in the group who relaxed through an intense battle...

Only Muku and Audrey were left on the platform. The others, including Hope left.

While Hope had long given up on being in first place, she felt that second place or third was still achievable. So she unwillingly left her brother's side to prepare.

.....

"So... How confident are you in winning?" Muku asked Audrey as the two just sat on their chairs while admiring the sky and the greenery below.

"Hmm... Very much confident I'd say. But then again, one can't be too sure with those girls. Who knows what they will pull out? Honestly, I'm kinda happy that they can't use mana. If they could, winning would probably be out of the situation in this type of battle for whoever started the fight" Audrey replied calmly.

She then took a sip of the homemade orange juice they had... Which tasted way better than before the apocalypse since everything including fruits was made better by mana.

Honestly, the more they lived in the apocalypse, the more it felt like normal life with just slightly different problems... Yeah, that's right, in the eyes of the strong, beasts weren't really a big problem after a while.

Especially now with Muku around... The dude could oneshot the current strongest beasts on the planet after all.

Sure, there were probably some who could fight him on equal grounds and some a lot stronger... But they had Raya too on top of Muku. So, even if they couldn't win, they would probably be able to survive anything easily enough if they joined hands.

There was still their fusion form which they had only used once when they were much weaker. Sure, there was outside help back then, which made them rival Pseudo R6s.

But now, with their current strength combined, they could probably reach that strength level and could take on any threat.

Anyway, the point is, the group was living a rather lax life for the most part which allowed them to look into things like fruit gathering and such...

"That's great because I'm placing my bets on you winning the entire thing. And yeah, you're right, a battle involving mana will be rather chaotic... Which gives me an idea for the battle before everyone advances to R6. No that's going to be some chaotic stuff! I can barely wait" Muku replied.

His excitement increased more and more the more he spoke as crazy ideas formed in his mind.

"While I'm conflicted and honoured, wouldn't it make more sense to place your bet on Jade? After all, the girl is literally the perfect specimen for this kind of thing. Not to mention that she's now a level stronger than me physically, due to her bloodline... And why are you so obsessed with battles?!" Audrey replied.

"Well, I can't deny that. However, Jade can be quite excitable. Especially when it comes to battles. Which is okay when dealing with beasts since most of them are like her anyway. However, you're different. Even if you're one of the good ones, all humans are quite cunning in battle and will capitalise on every opportunity given. And besides, you're as much of a beast as she is in physical conflict even if she's stronger. So yeah, you're my choice... As for why I'm obsessed with battles... Well, I don't know, I just am. I was a big UFC and Wrestling fan before the apocalypse, so that might have played a part. And it's not like this is solely for my entertainment, it also deepens team bonds while giving everyone involved experience like I mentioned long ago..." Muku replied and took a sip of his own drink.

He had to admit that he was glad the girls thought of this idea... Interestingly enough, it was actually Elsa who thought of it when the others just thought of the watermelon-size oranges as just that.

And she was also the one who made the orange juice with her water element which made it taste even better.... If civilisation were ever restored and they were short on money, they could easily piggyback off Elsa's orange juice creation to climb up in society and even become rich with it.

That's how impressed it was... Though the chances of civilisation being restored were quite small.

Especially with the forever-intensifying threat from the beasts. If the beasts had stopped at R3 lower, maybe humans would have had a chance to eventually claim everything back.

However, R4s and beyond, were just as smart if not smarter than humans, so yeah, any plans to reclaim the planet were highly unlikely to succeed.

And usually in such scenarios, the strongest humans, who are probably Muku's group would be the pioneers of such a task.

Whoever, literally none of them had such thoughts. Like, being the rulers of the whole planet was up for grabs but they didn't give a damn. They weren't going by the script at all!

But hey, maybe there was someone or someones out there trying to reclaim the world. Maybe one day they would cross paths with Muku's group.

As for what would happen then, it would all depend on the other party's actions.

After all, Muku wasn't above destroying humanity's hope if it got in his way.

I mean, humans weren't some noble race which deserved saving anyway. They were literally knowingly killing the planet before the apocalypse.

Which fortunately was completely fixed by the first wave of mana.

Like all nuclear energy and other harmful substances humans created were destroyed by mana before they could even make sense of what was happening. Just like how guns and such immediately stopped working... It was almost like mana specifically targeted the dumb race...

"Oh, so that's how you see things? Well, let me remind you that Jade has surprised us many times before. Who knows what she'll do now? So don't blame me too much if I lose... As for the fighting thing, your answer was more innocent than I thought. I thought you just had a fetish for seeing beautiful girls fighting" Audrey replied with a teasing smile on her face.

"Mmm, good point. But I'll stick to you. And how dare you suspect me of such a thing! It's not a fetish to like seeing beautiful girls fight, many men like it. It's just how we're wired okay!" Muku defended himself passionately with no shame at all.

"Sigh. I'll never understand men" Audrey gave up.

"You know other men?" Muku replied as his expression darkened.

"Oh my! Hahahahaha. What was that?! Hahaha," Audrey who didn't expect the sudden and unwarranted burst of jealousy from Muku was immediately brought to laughter.

"It was a joke! I just remembered it from somewhere. Anyway, I'll also never understand women, so we're the same" Muku defended himself.

"Oh, so you also know other women?" Audrey replied in an amused tone.

"Oh come on! I'm literally the only man I'm our group!" Muku replied in exasperation.

"Yeah well, they are all technically still girls and I'm the only woman you should know. Hmph!" Audrey switched things up as she began being the unreasonable one.

The two's banter went on like that as they enjoyed each other's company.

They couldn't be happier than they were in that moment. After all, literally everything was perfect. Everyone was together and was all healthy.

However, despite the happiness, they didn't forget about the impending World Evolution. They knew very well that they were currently living in the calm before the storm.

But that was even more reason to be happy now when they still could be. It was also a way of calming down their nerves.

After all, none of them knew what to expect when the time came. And who knew when they'd be able to just relax and laugh like now.

So yeah, the process was necessary.

In fact, the two even planned a banquet after the gauntlet to just enjoy each other's company with the rest of the team.

It would double down as a celebration of Muku's return which they hadn't celebrated yet since they immediately started training after dealing with various agent matters...

...

Somewhere many kilometres away from Muku's group.

Chris and Scarlett could be seen standing behind a man in a black robe facing away from them.

"So, what have you decided brother?" The man spoke without turning back.

"Well, I have lost my whole team and my position in Tactoa which is now after my life. And you're my blood brother so... Yeah, I'll help you conquer the world" Chris replied seriously as one of his hands squeezed Scarlett's hand a bit as he thought about his fallen brothers.

"Great! Now we only need our sister and the whole family will be back together. Where did you say she was again?" The man replied as he turned around to look at Chris...

Chapter 367 Klaus

"Well, at the time she was East from here. I don't know about now" Chris replied.

"Oh, okay. I guess tomorrow we're setting off for the East. Even if the chance of finding her slim, it's the only lead we have right now" The man spoke.

"Yeah, but it seems way too flimsy..." Chris commented.

"Umm, well, it wouldn't have been necessary if somebody didn't leave her behind..." The man retorted.

"She was with a team that's probably stronger than yours combined even though you have over a hundred members. And I was on the run from Tactoa. Do you think it would make sense to take her along in such a situation? Plus why are you talking down to me? I'm still your big brother you know?" Chris exclaimed annoyedly.

"I know you probably made the right decision, but you know how humans are. Even when I understand why you did what you did, I still blame you. Don't take it personally... As for being the big brother... I say the stronger one is the bigger brother. After all, we're twins, even if you did come out first" The man replied arrogantly.

"Klaus, you know that being the leader of a team of over a hundred R4s doesn't make you stronger than me, right?" Chris replied tiredly to his arrogant twin brother.

"Man, you know me well enough. Do you think I'm talking about their power? In fact, why don't we have a battle to test each other's strength right now? We can go outside and settle it. The winner will be the leader from now on" Klaus replied as his battle aura rose...

If Muku's group was present, they'd immediately understand where Jade got her personality. After all, even before she had access to Beast Aura or her bloodline, she was always quick to resort to violence. Hell, she would have probably been the school bully if Emily wasn't there to keep her in check and she didn't look down on almost everyone to the point they were practically invisible to her.

"Sigh. Even after the apocalypse you're still like that. But you know what, I'll entertain you one more time. And like all the times before, you'll lose. But there's no need for you to give up your spot as the leader. I don't mind leading a small team but a big group sounds like more trouble than it's worth. And you're the one with the ambition to rule the world. So it wouldn't make sense for me to be the leader..." Chris replied dismissively.

However, his battle intent rose to match his brother who now looked almost nothing like him. Which was still odd since they were once identical. Though Klaus's body wasn't as scrawny as Chris' back then.

Their faces were identical though. Now, Chris's hair was blonde but Klaus's was as black as ever. Chris's eyes were blue but Klaus's were closed from start to finish, so Chris didn't know if they were still the same or had changed like his own.

And there was a scar on Klaus's face which made him look quite manly.

And their auras. Chris' aura was calm, collected and reliable while Klaus's was wild and dangerous.

Scarlett who was standing beside Chris couldn't help but blush a bit as she looked at Klaus.

It wasn't that she now had an interest in Klaus. It was just that in her eyes he looked like Chris wearing cosplay.

Then her thoughts began wondering all over the place as she thought of Chris wearing all kinds of cosplay which made her face flushed...

So yeah, there was no chance of her ever cheating on Chris like those messed up ntr stories. She was madly in love with Chris after all...

"Great! Then I don't have to worry about you conspiring against me to steal the throne when I become king. Anyway, let's not waste anymore time. Let's go deal with it. We have to rest early since tomorrow we're setting off" Klaus spoke as he walked out of the room which was likely made from earth magic from how it looked.

Chris and Scarlett followed behind him...

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Outside in a newly made opening in the forest....

Chris and Klaus stood on opposite sides ready to fight.

Scarlett and the rest were sitting on the sidelines on trees and earth platforms as they looked on.

"So who do you think will win?" One man asked excitedly.

"What kind of question is that? The boss will obviously win. Haven't you seen what he's capable of?" Another replied while rolling his eyes.

"Yeah well, we don't know what the brother is capable of yet. And from what I can sense, their auras are about the same. They are both Pseudo R5s. And I think we shouldn't be biased" The first guy defended himself.

"Bias or not, the leader is a monster different from the rest. He can literally take on twenty people of the same level as him with relative ease. Do you think that's something anyone can do?" The second guy retorted.

"Yeah!"

"Yeah!"...

""The leader is a beast!"...

Multiple voices supported him from all directions.

"I don't deny that. I'm just saying that they are twins, so... You know what, fine. Let's just watch. We'll know who's stronger soon enough anyway..." The first guy gave up on trying to reason with the others.

He saw that trying to reason with fanatics was a waste of time. They'd never listen to reason no matter how clearly he spoke.

And honestly, even though he was trying to be impartial, he also thought that their leader would win. After all, the man really was a monster. He could solo PR4s when he was barely MR4.

And while this Chris fellow didn't seem ordinary and was most likely stronger than him and the others, he was probably still not as good as their leader. After all, their leader's strength wasn't completely natural....

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A distance away from the guys....

"Who do you think will win?" A lady from the group who overheard the argument cautiously asked Scarlett.

"I'd like Chris to win... But I have no idea" Scarlett surprisingly didn't give a biased answer as expected, which surprised everyone close enough to hear.

After all, they all knew that she and Chris were a couple. And if it were them, they would support their partner no matter what.

The lady was actually just looking for a reason to start talking to Scarlett.

But the reply she got left her speechless and she didn't know what to say next.

"Hehe. That surprised you huh? Well, I will admit that I love my man with everything I have and would like him to win. But I'm not blind. I can see that this battle probably favours his brother since there seems to be something extra and mysterious to his power. So, me saying that I'm uncertain is actually favouring Chris..." Scarlett who hadn't had any female friends for a long time didn't mind speaking to the lady.

"Oh, so it's like that. I can't help but be envious of your clear state of mind. I don't know if I would look at things like that. Even if I could see it, I'd probably still refuse to admit it" The lady finally spoke after Scarlett explained a bit more.

This time Scarlett just smiled without saying anything as she looked at the battle about to start.

The lady who understood why Scarlett no longer spoke also looked at the battlefield.

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"Now brother, I'll throw this stone into the air. The battle begins the moment it reaches the ground..."
Klaus spoke.

He didn't wait for Chris to reply as he immediately threw the stone up.

Whether purposefully or not, Klaus threw the stone way too high as it pierced the clouds.

However, that didn't bother Chris who kept his eyes on it until it came down and hit the ground. Then....

BOOOOM!

A blue dome appeared out of nowhere and completely enveloped Klaus. Then without missing a beat, blue spears formed inside and stabbed towards the spot where Klaus was.

Chris's control was so insane that none of the spears would hit a vital point even if all of them hit.

Dust immediately covered the space inside the dome when the spears came into contact with the ground.

When that happened Chris immediately jumped away from where he was standing.

BANG!

The next second, dust rose from that area.

The dust was immediately cleared up by an invisible force.

What was left in the spot was Klaus whose fist was buried deep into the ground. A small crater was created on the spot too.

It seemed he had actually managed to escape from the spot he was in before the dome locked him in.

Which would mean that he had rather insane speed capabilities. So fast that Chris wasn't able to see anything when he avoided the dome. And there weren't any signs on the ground which showed the path he took. Which would definitely be crazy.

That or he could phase through things. Which would be quite interesting and difficult to deal with... And Chris would be screwed.

Or maybe it was another way. Such thoughts swirled inside Chris' head as he looked at his brother. His eyes narrowed as he thought of his next step.

Klaus smiled as he "looked" back at Chris...

Chapter 368 Bro

"How did you do that?" Chris couldn't help but ask.

"Come on now brother. You know better than to think that I'd reply to that..." Klaus replied as he straightened himself.

"Fine. I'll just have to beat the answer out of you then..." Chris spoke and charged forward.

Surprisingly, this time he didn't use his barrier magic. It seemed he wanted to duke it out physically with Klaus like old times.

Though honestly, he was just trying to buy himself time to think about Klaus's power.

Whether Klaus understood what his brother was trying to do, only he knew.

He didn't seem to care about that as he received Chris with his own fists ready to duke it out.

BOOOOM! BOOOOOM!...

Wave after wave flew out as the two brothers exchanged fists. Neither was able to get the advantage though.

They kept on blocking each other's fists with relative ease. Which was probably because they had fought countless times before the apocalypse descended.

And now, even though they were countless times stronger than before and had developed new moves. They knew each other well enough to instantly adopt.

That was until...

BANG!

Boom!

Chris did something unexpected and punched Klaus in the gut hard.

Klaus flew away and smashed into a tree before falling to the ground. A little amount of blood even flew out of his mouth.

This almost surprised everyone present as they expected Klaus to be the one to break the stalemate instead of Chris.

Anyway, they didn't get too much time to think about as Klaus immediately stood up and wiped away the blood from his face.

"As expected of my brother. Your punch really... Well, it packs a punch. I don't even remember the last time I tasted my own blood. You really might have won if I was still the old me. But things have changed. Let me show you why I'm the older brother now..." Klaus spoke calmly, his smile not leaving his face.

Then...

The air around him changed... His body also seemed to become a bit leaner.

And Chris got the illusion that Klaus was gone and a beast has taken his place. And it wasn't just any beast. It was... He couldn't place it, but it was definitely not something common.

But when he scanned Klaus, there was no sign of any energy. No mana, nothing.

Yet he could sense that something was different. Hell, his body was clearly different.

But he didn't ask. He was curious to see what would be different now.

Klaus didn't make him wait long...

Whoosh!

Bang!

BOOM!

Whoosh!

Bang!....

Whoosh!

Bang!

Klaus disappeared.

Then Chris felt a punch getting buried into his gut before he flew away.

After that he hit hard into a tree. It was almost like Klaus was getting petty revenge.

Chris knew his brother enough to not rest after hitting the tree. So he immediately moved out of the way after hitting the tree even though he couldn't sense anything.

And that proved to be the right decision as Klaus's fist destroyed the tree right after Chris got out of the way.

However, that wasn't the end of it. Klaus still caught up with Chris and punched him on the face.

It was at that point that Chris realised that he couldn't win in this kind of battle.

So he deployed his barrier and regrouped behind it.

It was a transparent blue, so he could see outside while inside.

And so, he began looking for Klaus as he breathed heavily while trying to get his breathing under control.

It was a rather odd sight. Like he hadn't done much before he started getting beaten up. So there was no way he could be tired...

But then again, he was punched in the gut and he had been putting his all into trying to react to his brother's attacks.

So, even though he failed, it still took a toll significant enough to make him breathe like that despite not being tired.

"Are you looking for me?" A very ce sounded from above Chris as he was looking for Klaus and failing to find him...

He immediately looked up and saw that it was his Kris.

The disrespectful younger brother was actually seating on Chris' barrier while looking down at him.

"So, it's my win right? I mean, I got you to use your mana in a physical battle" Klaus taunted.

"Tsk. You're the one who used another energy first. Even if I can't sense it. The way your body changed is proof enough" Chris replied defiantly.

"Haha. Would you believe me if I said that I was holding back when we first started fighting? And even crazier is that I'm still holding back..." Klaus replied with a laugh.

"Impossible!" Chris refused as he thought that Klaus was bluffing.

After all, it wasn't beyond his brother's methods to gaslight him.

"Bro, you have no idea what's possible..." Klaus replied seriously this time then...

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

Pwak!

Before Chris could react, Klaus punched his barrier and destroyed it like weak glass with that single punch.

The punch continued until it was an inch away from Chris's utterly and completely shocked face.

It wasn't that it had run out of power. But Klaus had stopped it himself.

This was something Chris understood clearly as the air wave which came after the punch actually managed to cut his cheek a bit.

His willpower to fight instantly vanished.

Which was understandable really. After all, it was clear that he and his brother were on, two different levels.

If what Klaus said before was true. Then that meant that Klaus was so much stronger than Chris that he could overpower him with simply his physical prowess.

Sure, Chris hadn't used his best abilities yet, but he had used at least 50%. And for his 50% to be treated like air... It only meant that his hundred will likely not be too different.

Klaus was way above him in strength. He didn't know how, but that was the truth...

"I forfeit..." Chris gave up on the battle without hesitation.

He saw no reason to waste both their time on an already lost battle. He'd just be embarrassing himself if he did that.

"As expected of my brother. You always knew when to advance and when to retreat. Something I've always struggled with. Which is why I need you in my team. As my commander, adviser, and most importantly, my brother... Someone who should have been part of me but chose to split away for some

reason. Like couldn't you have left me a little patience when you did that you bastard?!" Klaus who was now standing in front of Chris spoke seriously.

Until he wasn't serious when he began to curse Chris who had almost been moved by his words.

Even worse was how Klaus then took him under his armpit and began ruffling his hair like he would do back then when he won.

He kinda missed those days when he won all the battles due to technique instead of power.

Back then, they both took karate lessons, but Klaus was an extremely slow learner. Which meant that Chris was able to pull ahead and use what he learnt to beat the stronger Klaus.

Now on the other hand, it seemed Klaus had gotten so strong that no matter how technical Chris was, he couldn't win anymore.

And honestly, they sucked. Chris hated it. But there was nothing which could be done.

"Let go you brute! I don't care if you're stronger than me now. I'm still your big brother! And what do you mean I took everything?! We clearly had things equally divided. I took the brains, you to the body. And do you think I was happy with not being able to do ten push-ups when you could do a hundred?!" Chris exploded out angrily as he tried to free himself from Klaus's grip.

The tense battle atmosphere from before was instantly disbursed.

"Haha. As expected of brothers. I wonder who will taste better... Or maybe you two will taste the same?" Suddenly a sinister voice was heard from among the men.

Everyone immediately cleared way and a scrawny man was exposed. He had a creepy smile on his face.

"Scrawny wtf?! Since when did you become a rainbow man?! And even if you are. Everyone here knows that I only like women. And so does my brother. So how dare you say that?! Do you want to die?!" Klaus bellowed angrily.

"Shut up you idiot. I didn't mean it like that! Such a dirty mind. Don't try to push your dirty thoughts onto me... Fuck! So disgusting. This is what I get for talking to a muscle brained fool! Why are you the leader anyway? People like you should be thugs at best. Strength doesn't define a leader after all. The brain does. And yours is clearly rotten you bastard!" The man named Scrawny replied in an even angrier tone than Klaus.

He was clearly angered greatly from the misunderstanding and all the weird looks he was getting because of it.

Now everyone thought he was some perv and fearless rainbow man who wasn't afraid to openly covet the leader and his brother.

Which wasn't true at all! He was as straight as any man present there okay!

It was Klaus who was weird!

"Oh... You didn't mean it like that?... Well, I'm sorry for misunderstanding you then. However, it's both your fault you look like the type. So tell, us, what did you mean then?" Chris asked for clarification.

"Screw you, you dumb bastard! You dare call me ugly?! You know what, whatever. It doesn't matter. What I meant is that you are all surrounded and dying soon. And I am a spy from Tactoa idiots. Now calmly accept your deaths!" Scrawny spoke ruthlessly.

Chapter 369 Show of strength...

"Oh... So you're the spy? I always wonder who it was that kept on leading those Tactoa idiots to us" Klaus finally replied seriously.

"Wait... You knew that there was a spy?!" Scrawny asked surprisingly.

Hell, even the others were surprised, since none of them had suspected there was a spy among them.

After all, they had been through too many things together. They were closer than family at that point. Even if there were more than a hundred of them.

They were so close that everyone was well acquainted with everyone, to the point of knowing their likes, dislikes, and even their birthdays.

For that reason, even though they found it weird that Tactoa kept on finding them, they didn't suspect anyone.

They assumed that Tactoa as a mysterious organisation probably had some mysterious method for tracking people.

Which wasn't untrue actually. Just that their target must be stained with the Monarch's energy for the method to work. Like how Jade was stained before.

Interestingly enough, Chris and Scarlett were tainted by it at the start. But Klaus wiped it out with a mysterious method no one knew...

"Yeah. I mean, it was kinda obvious. But I had no suspects since I thought we were all close enough to tell when someone was acting differently. Which was completely wrong since you managed to escape my notice. I really have to commend you for that. You have no idea how hard it is to fool me. I was so confused that I even suspected my brother and sister-in-law at one point. But then realised that they are the reason we got into conflict with Tactoa in the first place. So, yeah. And don't look at them like that. We would have gotten into conflict with them sooner or later anyway. After all, it's obvious that they also want world domination. And as we all know, there can never be two alpha's on one mountain" Klaus explained.

"Shut up! Damn! I don't have to listen to you yapping anymore. I'm no longer part of your group after all... Tsk, why are they taking so long? I want to see blood!" Scrawny angrily spoke.

And without warning, the Scrawny man began enlarging and gaining muscle.

Soon he took a form familiar to everyone present. A form which he shouldn't have been able to take so soon.

It was a three metre tall pitch black creature with long dagger-like claws on its hands and nothing but a large mouth full of teeth on its face.

Scrawny was no longer scrawny anymore. Now he was the creature he called Devourer.

The transformation he literally had teammates cover him for over ten minutes in battle while he changed into it.

Yet it only took seconds this time.

Which only meant that he was pretending to be slow back then. It was all premeditated. Probably to cost the group some members. And by the looks of it, it worked as many sacrificed themselves while he transformed.

None died but they lost arms and legs. Which took away a significant portion of their abilities...

And the transformation was even bigger than before. Which meant that he also held back in a hat he used.

His aura was actually stronger than Chris's by a significant amount.

Anyway, the creature didn't waste time as it immediately pounced on Klaus who had come closer to it as they spoke.

It hoped to catch him off guard and get him out of the picture.

Which would definitely bring it a lot of merit from Tactoa. After all, Klaus was obviously the most dangerous individual in his group. Not to mention that he was the leader, so taking him out would make the whole group's momentum plummet.

And most importantly, it would bring an end to its mission which had been going on for over a year.

That's right, Scrawny was a spy from the start.

He pretended to be a victim of a beast attack who was saved by someone from Klaus's group.

The person who saved him died under mysterious circumstances months earlier... But looking back now, he was probably taken care of by Scrawny.

But Scrawny was so good at acting that no one suspected him. It was the reason why no one suspected him of anything was that he was a spy from the start. So every action was calculated from the beginning.

And so, while having happy thoughts but completely focused. The devourer slashed at Klaus's neck a lightning speed.

It could already imagine slicing open Klaus's neck and blood spraying all over its face.

Its mouth began watering because of that...

Speaking of which, Scrawny was actually a serial killer before the apocalypse who ate his victims as well. So he was a cannibalistic serial killer.

He probably ate up the man who saved him. Bones and all. After all, his transformation was perfect for such things...

Which was why he made that comment about the two brothers being tasty... He was definitely not a rainbow man... Well, probably. You never know with serial killers.

Grab!

Unfortunately, things didn't go according to plan for the devourer.

Its claw was suddenly grabbed and held back inches away from Klaus's neck.

It tried its best to free itself but the vice-like grip on its hand was too much for it.

It then looked at the hand and wasn't surprised to see that it was Klaus's hand.

However, the hand looked quite different now. Now it was way larger than the rest of his body.

And there was a faint black line on it heading up from the back of his hand to his shoulder.

Which was clear to see since his robe was ripped open on that part.

"Sigh... Just when I was celebrating bot wrecking my hard-to-come-by robe. You just had to make me do it huh?... Well, at the very least, you got me to use some real effort. Which is quite an achievement really. But I don't know if it was worth it though. After all, it's so expensive that you can only pay for it with your life. Which I guess is okay for the last achievement of your life" Klaus spoke slowly while the devourer and everyone else listened quietly.

It wasn't that the devourer didn't want to do anything. But its instincts warned it that if it dared move, then it would die. And so, it stood still since its instincts had never steered it wrong before.

WRIP!

"ROOOOOOOOAR!!!"

Out of nowhere, Klaus ruthlessly ripped off the hand from the transformed man's body. Black blood sprayed out as the devourer roared in pain. Then...

BANG!

BOOOOOM!

Klaus wasn't in the mood to listen to the loud sound. So he punched the creature in the gut. Which knocked the wind out of it... As well as its blood, guts and organs, leaving a hole in their place.

The devourer who hadn't even done anything yet looked up at Klaus in surprise as it was now on its knees.

It knew that Klaus was strong. But it was only now that it understood how strong he was. The man had actually been holding back in front of them all this time!

"No, no. I wasn't holding back when we fought together. That was really the strength I had then. However, nobody said that the strength I had yesterday should be the same as that of today right? Let alone after months... So you can die with a clear mind n... Oh, he's already dead" Klaus began explaining himself to the creature after seeing the shock in its reformed eyes as the transformation was coming apart.

It was only after he finished speaking that he paid attention to the creature again and noticed that it had returned back to human form and had died while maintaining its kneeling position.

"Idiot" Chris commented from the side.

Everyone else nodded in agreement. Their leader was really an idiot. Like who preaches to someone they just put a hole through??

"Hey, I heard that!... Anyway, you up there, have you seen enough? If not, you can send someone else to test my power until you're satisfied. I promise to give the next one a chance to throw it a few attacks first" Klaus replied to Chris's words then spoke while looking up at the sky.

It was only then that the others looked up and noticed a person floating way high up in the sky looking down on them.

He was so high that one wouldn't be able to notice him unless they looked directly up... Which wasn't something people normally did without a reason.

Chris and the others were surprised by how Klaus noticed the guy when he hadn't looked up before addressing the man.

The more Chris saw his younger brother's abilities, the more he was impressed and awed.

He had no idea how Klaus had gotten so strong. But he has to admit, he felt like an ant next to the guy.

He felt that Klaus might actually be on the same level as those monster girls he met before... This was how he addressed Jade and the others after spending two months with them.

Maybe he was even stronger even... He couldn't help but imagine what a fight between him and any one of them would look like...

Chapter 370: CK's offer...

"Hmm, to think that an ant like you could actually sense my gaze. I'll have to admit, if it were at your level... You might have been more than I could handle. Unfortunately for you..." A booming voice was heard from the figure above.

It was so loud and deep that it was easy to tell that the figure was very used to being in power. They were probably in power even before the apocalypse.

Snap!

The figure snapped their finger as they slowly descended.

And like a magic trick. Klaus's group was instantly surrounded.

The people who surrounded them were at least twice their number. And they were all of the same rank as them... Not in ability but firepower.

That's right, most of them were fully equipped with laser guns and red suits which protected them from the crushing aura of higher-ranked evolvers.

They also had glasses which gave them the ability to keep up with the movement of PR3s.

That wouldn't do much against R4s, but if they took random shots... Many would get hit and lose their lives.

It was something Klaus's group was very much aware of after prior encounters. So they dared not act rashly.

They decided to wait for the other side to attack before doing anything. That way they would know how to act or react.

Oddly enough, other than surrounding them, the other group didn't do anything else.

"I am out of your league for I am above your rank" the man finished his sentence after reaching the ground.

"Sigh... Why did we have to get the dramatic antagonist? Were they out of serious dudes or something? I mean, since when were mini-bossies so chatty?" Klaus complained to no one in particular.

However, it was obvious that he was mocking the man.

"Haha. You've got jokes huh? Well, fortunately for you, I like you and see potential in your rude and arrogant self. For that reason, I, Crimson King will forgive you and let you live" The man who addressed himself as Crimson King spoke.

Klaus was about to reply with more insults but Chris stopped him.

Klaus was about to insult him too when he noticed the seriousness in Chris's eyes. For that reason, he held himself back and looked at Chris questioningly.

Chris promptly deployed a barrier around the two of them and whispered something in Klaus's ear.

It wasn't that it was some huge secret the others shouldn't know. But it information is surprising enough to make everyone panic.

And that information was Crimson King's (CK) bio.

He wasn't a random nobody from Tactoa like the others. He was a legit R5! One of the few to have reached that level in Tactoa.

A core member from the headquarters with a level above his own.

Which meant that CK was an S rank. A being Chris wouldn't even encounter on normal days.

While CK wasn't one of the ten. He was definitely within the top fifty.

So he wasn't to be messed with. He was way beyond what Klaus's amazing but ultimately R4 strength could defeat.

And that's what Chris was telling Klaus about.

He wasn't telling him to give in, but to play it safe as they tried to figure something out. This was pretty much the opposite of what Klaus was doing and was planning on continuing to do.

Anyway, Chris didn't keep the barrier up after telling Klaus what he wanted to.

Which meant that he didn't give Klaus a chance to say anything. Which he didn't feel was necessary. After all, Klaus wasn't some mad dog despite his usual behaviour.

He was pretty much a male version of Jade. Which meant that he wasn't anywhere near as dumb as he seemed to be most of the time.

For that reason, Chris trusted him to act appropriately. Everyone's lives hung in the balance after all. And Klaus cared about them all too much to do something which would risk their lives... Or so Chris thought.

"Hey! My brother said that you're among the top fifty elites from Tactoa. And I have to say, I'm impressed... Impressed that random trash like you who's nowhere near the top ten dares to be so arrogant! I knew that you were a grunt from the start! Only grunts give themselves such over-the-top names. You're probably overcompensating for something huh? I don't know why my brother told me to be wary of you. Doesn't he know that grunts are only around to advance the stories of main characters like me?" Klaus viciously insulted CK.

His insults were probably even worse than they would have been if Chris hadn't said anything. This made Chris feel like he was being targeted.

That had to be the case after all, Klaus specifically mentioned him while doing literally the opposite of what he said he should do.

The saying that one shouldn't fear god-like enemies but pig-like allies is definitely true.

Who needed enemies when they had a brother and leader like Klaus?

With all that said, Chris was really surprised by what Klaus did.

He knew his brother well enough to know that he's only arrogant when he's sure that he's going to win... Or at the very least, he thinks he's going to win...

Either way, Chris was now sure that Klaus had a plan. But he had no idea what that was. So he could only keep up his guard as he readied himself to react at any moment.

"Good good. You still dare speak out of your behind after you've been warned huh? If it were a lesser man, they would have folded by now. After all, your brother really advised you well. It's quite a shame that he chose to betray us. Otherwise, with his talent and brains, he would have been someone important in the future. Likely even above me in rank. But oh well... Once you leave Tactoa, there's no coming back... Well, unless we find your body interesting after killing you then bring it back for experiments. So he's out of luck" CK addressed Klaus calmly.

"Is there a point to this?" Klaus asked boredly.

However, despite appearances, CK could tell that Klaus was actually quite tense and ready to throw down at any second despite the lazy appearance.

And this made him quite pleased. This made him even more interested in recruiting Klaus.

"I'm getting to it. The point is that I like you and I always get what I want. However, you've disrespected me too many times. So if I let you off without punishment, I'll lose all the respect I've gotten" CK spoke calmly as he grabbed Klaus's shoulder.

"Oh? And what's that punishment?" Klaus replied without even flinching.

"Hehe. It seems now you're starting to see that there's only one way out of this. Anyway, the punishment is something simple and easy... For your initiation into Tactoa. You have to kill those two traitors behind you. That's right, you have to kill your brother and that vixen of his. That's doable right? After all, not only will you get to live... But even the people you gathered will survive. I'm in a generous mood. So I will give you half a minute to think about..." CK spoke with the same calm tone with a hint of arrogance.

"Well, Chris... You should have had enough time to think right? What do you suggest I do? Should I off you and sister-in-law or should we all die together?" Klaus turned to Chris without saying anything to SK.

There was a hint of glee and gloating in his eyes which he was trying to hide as he looked at Chris.

He was practically saying, "See, there's nothing to be thought in this situation. It cannot be saved you fool!", but with his eyes.

"Sigh. Do whatever you want. But if you're going to take me out. Can you spare your sister-in-law at least? She hasn't done anything wrong. Her only sin is following me" Chris replied defeatedly.

He felt so mentally tired that he didn't even react to the clear ridicule in Klaus's eyes. Something impossible on normal days.

"No! If you're to die, then I'll die too! And what do you mean I haven't done anything? I killed as many of their members as you did! And I also lost close companions. So there's no way I could bear to live knowing that my man and companions died for no reason as I ended up back where we started. Brother-in-law, if you have to kill your brother, kill me too. And don't worry, we understand and won't hold it against you" Scarlett instantly refused to go along with what Chris proposed.

She didn't even give Klaus a chance to say anything.

A tear came to Chris's eye before it was obliterated by his mana. He would be lying if he said that he didn't like how she was willing to die with him.

However, it wasn't the time to show weakness.

"Aww... How touching. Klaus... It's Klaus right? Anyway, your time is up. Take them out or you're all dying together" CK made fun of the duo and then reminded Klaus of the decision he had to take.

"Tsk. To think my older brother would become so mushy... My sister-in-law must have cast a spell on you. Tye old you would never die for a girl..." Klaus addressed Chris while completely ignoring CK.

"Hey, boy. Didn't you hear m..." CK spoke angrily as he grabbed Klaus's shoulder who was facing away from him. However, before he could speak...

BOOOOOM!

Klaus turned around and punched him hard in the gut which made him fly away into the distance.

"Did I say you could touch me, Trash?" Klaus spoke coldly.

His goofiness was long gone as he looked in the direction CK flew in...