

## **Few Wives 381**

Chapter 381: Advancement discussion

"Oh, you're all surprised that I called her mother-in-law? Well, if you think about it, she is already my mother-in-law. So why shouldn't I call her that? She herself offered to be called that too so..." Audrey explained herself after realising why everyone suddenly froze.

"That makes sense. So much so, I don't know why we were surprised. Anyway, let's move on to the next matter" Muku replied then changed the topic.

He didn't know how the other girls would respond to what Audrey said. And he didn't want to find out since they could be quite unpredictable at such times. So he would much rather they moved on than linger.

Hopefully, everyone's position will be solidified soon enough so that such situations won't be awkward anymore.

He even suspected that Audrey spoke like that to push the others into action.

She was the craziest wife a man could ever ask for. A wife who's always trying to push her husband towards other women. Sure, it wasn't random women but still...

"What's the next matter? Jade who was willing to help Muku change topics asked.

Unlike the selfless Audrey, she was a bit more selfish.

While she didn't mind having the others join them officially. She wouldn't go out of her way to make it happen. After all, the more people who joined, the less time she'd have with Muku.

It was already hard to find some time to be together with him with all the things that were happening. So she didn't like the idea of shrinking that even more.

She'd be more open to that conversation after everything has settled down and they're back to their steady schedule...

"Glad that you asked. However, isn't it obvious? It's time for y'all to break through the R5 of course! After that, we can organise a new tournament!" Muku replied excitedly.

"No!" All the girls refused in unison.

"What do you mean no? You don't want to rank up?" Muku asked confusedly.

"No, not no to that. But no to the tournament. Let's leave it for now until we've reached the peak as we did before. Why rush it?" Emily replied on behalf of everyone.

They had all just been crushed by Audrey recently. So they wanted nothing to do with Muku's tournaments until the bad taste had left their mouths first.

"Oh... okay. If that's what you want" Muku didn't argue since again, there was nothing he could do if they didn't want to do it.

He had only suggested it because he couldn't wait to see another exciting tournament after the one the girls had. And this time it was going to be one without restrictions. Which meant that this time, no one would have an obvious advantage until it was all over.

Anyway, he could only imagine the epic action for now...

"Now, while you should have all been updated on how to reach R5 the moment you reached the peak. Let me give you a few tips before you start... You know what, let me tell you about the steps one has to go through in the process. The first one is easy enough. Which is obviously reaching the peak. That doesn't even need to be mentioned. After that is discovering your perfect spirit beast.... This can be easy or hard depending on your encounters until now. If you're someone who hasn't been around too much. The process will be longer. However, that shouldn't be a problem for anyone here. In this process, you think of all the beasts... Yes, Jade?" Muku was explaining to the girls what to do when Jade raised her hand.

"Umm, what do beasts have to do with our advancement?" Jade asked the question on everyone's mind.

They had obviously been briefed on the matter by the IA but it didn't explain anything. The way that thing worked was straightforward and rigid. It only pointed you in a direction without saying why. And it wasn't interactive so they couldn't ask why.

For that reason, Muku who had already successfully gone through the process was the only one who could answer their questions.

"Oh, that, yeah, I was also confused at that time. Anyway, you all remember how beasts turn into humanoid creatures when they reach R5 right? Well, apparently, humans do the opposite. But our transformation isn't as thorough as we only create avatars which we control from inside while they literally morph into their new forms. Anyway, as for why that is so, I don't know. It just is. Maybe we'll know eventually. For now, it doesn't really matter, right?" Muku replied to the best of his abilities.

"Oh. Okay," Jade accepted the answer then went silent so that he could continue.

"Now, as I was saying. In this process. You'll think of all the beasts you've encountered. A resonance will occur when you think of the right one. Whatever that beast is, it's the one with the highest affinity with you. Sure, you can choose to use another beast, but your avatar form won't be as strong as it should be. So I advise going with whatever comes up. And on the off chance that nothing resonates with you, you can send out a "request" into the world. This is done by literally requesting a spirit beast then sacrificing some mana to the Heavens and the request will be answered eventually... However, this process can take up to two months so I suggest not doing it for fun because once you try it, even if you encounter your spirit beast or realise what it is. You won't be able to do anything about it until the request is answered..." Muku explained things to the girls.

"Hey! Why are you looking at me while saying that?!" Jade complained because Muku was looking at her while telling them not to randomly try requesting a spirit beast.

Sure, she understood why and was really planning on trying it. But that didn't mean that he could look at her like that!

"Oh, I'm sorry. I wasn't looking at you for that reason. You're just so beautiful I lost myself in your beauty for a moment there" Muku who had long discovered the girls' weakness shamelessly flirted with Jade.

And like he expected, her face instantly flashed red and she covered it with her hands as she shyly peeked through the gap in-between her fingers.

She would have run away if what Muku was saying wasn't important.

And just like that, Jade who was about to explode was disarmed by Muku with little effort.

Seeing this the other girls were horrified. After all, it didn't take a genius to realise that Muku would likely use the same method on them if they found trouble with him.

Just thinking of the embarrassment they'd face after, sent a chill down all their spines.

Internally they all swore to try their best never to find trouble with Muku. Especially in front of the others. He clearly had no shame!...

"Now, where was I? Oh, right, after you've found your spirit animal. The next step is the hardest part. You actually require your mindscape for this. So in a way, developing one's mindscape is also part of reaching R5. Though you can do without. However, doing without is a lot deadlier, harder, wasteful and takes way more time. You'll understand why in a bit... The way one uses their mindscape is by entering it and creating an exact replica of their spirit animal as they saw it. This isn't hard since memories are as clear as when you experienced the event in your mindscape. So you can clearly remember every nook and cranny. The replica is created through mana of course. Well, Beast Aura in Jade's case. Anyway, this process is quite slow for most since their mana control isn't up to par. But everyone here should be able to do it in a week or so. After that, you must recreate it in real life. Which is a lot easier since you'd already have done it on a smaller scale internally... After you've fully created it, the two of you will resonate and you'll naturally float into it and become its core. From then on, you'd have advanced into R5 and can summon or cancel the avatar with a mere thought..." Muku explained.

"Oh, so what you meant by we'll understand was that, a person can skip the prototyping in their mindscape stage and straight up build the avatar in the outside world right? In doing so, they'd require a

lot more mana in correcting it, it will draw a lot of attention and how does it take more time though?" Layla spoke after Muku finished.

"As expected of Layla. You're correct in your words. And as for how it takes more time... Well, that's simple actually. Time moves more slowly in one's mindscape. In fact, you can make it slower and slower the more you familiarise yourself with it. I bet Freya can slow it down to the point of making one hour in her mindscape feel like a year. I can only make it feel like a few months in comparison. You newbies can probably do a few days for now though..." Muku explained.

His explanation pretty much made the minds of everyone present, including Freya who didn't know she could do that explode.

How was such a thing possible?! And why did he take so long to tell them about it?!

Chapter 382: Advancement discussion (Pt 2)

"You're all wondering why I took so long to tell you about it right? Well, there's no real reason actually. I just figured it would be more dramatic to tell you now. And you had way too much stuff to do before anyway... And I did offer to tell Freya about it, but she refused so..." Muku explained himself with a little smile on his face.

"Wait, no, I didn't refuse that! I refused to be told about the ranking process, which I'm only finding out now involves one's mindsc... Oh, so that's how you took it. But you can't blame me for that! You were totally unclear!" Freya defended herself.

Her defence became weak for a second then she realised that Muku intentionally made it vague.

"The technicalities don't matter. What matters is that you technically refused!" Muku refused to back down.

"What do you mean by saying that the technicalities don't matter before hiding behind a technicality?!" Freya exploded in frustration for the first time.

Muku really made her want to punch him. It was fun when he behaved like that with the others and not so fun when it was she who was suffering.

"Hahaha. Emily pay up! I told you that I could get Freya to lose her composure" Muku suddenly laughed while holding out his hand to Emily.

"What? What do you mean? We made no such bet" Emily asked confusedly.

"No. But if I had suggested it, you'd have chosen to stand with Freya right? So let's just take it as if we did make the bet. For that reason, pay up you sore loser!" Muku reasonably explained a completely unreasonable situation.

"What the hell do you mean?! What kind of logic is that?" Emily also lost her cool.

"Haha! Elsa, pay up!..." Muku continued.

"... I honestly wonder what they see in you" However Elsa refused to play along as she replied with a deadpan expression on her face.

"That's enough horsing around. Can we get back to business now?" Layla chimed in before Muku continued down his suspiciously bipolar-like path...

Like how could someone switch between serious and unserious so quickly without being bipolar?

And this wasn't a situation so serious that he had to do that. So, he was either bipolar or just liked messing with peo... Oh wait, it was Muku they were talking about. The jerk, pretty much lived for messing with them.

"Tsk. Fine. What do you want to know?" Muku asked in a completely unwilling voice.

"Right. I want to know what happens to our domains and domain armour when we reach R5" Layla asked a question, completely disregarding Muku's unwilling expression.

"Oh, that. Nothing happens to them like in previous Ranks. They even become stronger, which is quite obvious really. However, unlike before, when you could use your domain and domain armour together.

You cannot use your Avatar with either of the two. The reason is that it takes everything you have to deploy it. Plus using either against an opponent using an avatar is quite dumb and won't work out for you unless you're a lot stronger than the opponent. Which would defeat the whole purpose of using the roundabout method when you can squash them faster with an avatar" Muku explained clearly.

"Oh okay. I guess that makes sense" Layla replied.

"Yeah. If you were paying attention when I took on my giant form. You'll realise that the form actually originated from my domain armour. It's basically one's domain armour expanding and taking a new form. So, it's impossible to use your domain armour at the same time since you're already using it. I actually think it's already impressive to use one's domain and domain armour at the same time since their origin are almost the same. No wonder it's so hard to do earlier on..." Muku said more on the subject.

"Wait... I just remembered something" Hope suddenly spoke with a somewhat confused expression on her face.

"Yes?" Muku signalled her to continue.

"You said that an avatar looks like a person's spirit beast right? Then why does yours look like your armour?" Hope asked.

And with that question, the others remembered that it really was so. They had seen Muku's avatar quite a few times over the last month. And it really looked exactly like his armour. It was just as creepy and scary-looking.

"Oh, that. It's a funny story actually. My spirit animal is actually a dragon. But when I created the avatar. The weird armour appeared above it and morphed the form to look like it. As for why and how. I have no idea. But I don't dislike it. It looks quite cool and unique. Which is something I'm always willing to accept" Muku replied without a worry in his voice from the weird occurrence.

After all, way too many weird things had happened to him because of the armour. So he figured he might as well embrace it since there was nothing he could do about it.

Like, he literally couldn't free himself from the armour. So freeing his avatar was out of the question for the time being.

Not to mention that the absurd concealment ability was transferred to his avatar as well, so it wasn't all bad.

Sure, a concealed giant was still very much noticeable just from its size alone. But it did make his moves a lot harder to read in battle, which was always a plus.

"Oh, okay. If that's how it is. And I have to say. Your nonchalance really amazes me. I don't know if I'd be so calm when there was such a weird thing on my body which was significantly affecting my life" Hope replied with admiration in her eyes.

To her, only her brother could be so calm in such a situation.

"Well, I wasn't so calm in the beginning. But I realised that not being calm wasn't doing me any good so..." Muku explained with a wry expression on his face.

His younger sister's admiration always caught him off guard. It was like, no matter what he did she would admire. Like he could literally just chill and do nothing and she would find something to admire about that.

"Well, even then. Not many people can so easily let go" Hope continued.

"Okay, okay. That's enough admiration for now. His head is already big enough. I have a question too," Emily interrupted.

They had seen way too many of these admiration sessions between Muku and Hope. And she didn't want to sit through another one.

"Okay. What's your question?" Muku replied.

"Umm. What if my spirit animal is a beast with a different element from mine? Like what if I do the thing and find out it's a whale or something? Would that affect anything?" Emily asked her question.

The others also listened intently, after all, it affected them too.

"Hmm. A very good question. And I'm not sure actually. But from my experience. That shouldn't affect anything. After all, I've only seen Raya who is a light, darkness and space Dragon. Then there's the Earth Dragon which is technically not a real dragon but a dragon nonetheless. Anyway, neither were metal dragons nor did they have the metal element. However, my dragon avatar came out as a metal dragon. So it's safe to assume that the original beast's element doesn't affect yours at all. So even if you get a whale, it would probably be a flame whale when it becomes your avatar. Though I doubt you'd get something which isn't in line with your element to a certain extent..." Muku explained as clearly as he could.

"Oh, okay. Thank you. That really puts me at ease" Emily replied gratefully. A happy smile danced on her face.

Elsa's eyes narrowed a bit as she looked on. She realised that this might be the reason why the others loved Muku. Despite being quite unreliable at times, he was super reliable when it mattered.

That couldn't be the whole reason, but it should be part of it....

"I have a question..." Layla who had another question spoke up.

"Shoot" Muku replied.

"Right. What about people who have two elements? How do their avatars come out? So they get two avatars for each element, do they have two spirit beasts or?" Layla asked.

"My, my. You always ask the deep questions huh? Well, lucky for you. I happen to know the answer to that since I also have two elements. Otherwise, you'd be on your own. Anyway, it's really not an issue. The reason is that one gets one avatar which can switch between the person's elements. And I suspect that if you can manage to combine the elements into one, then your avatar will be much stronger than before. However, I haven't been able to do it yet. It should be easier for you since you have some

experience in that area. In fact, I might need to ask for your help on how to do it if you ever achieve it" Muku replied while sucking up to Layla at the same time.

But he really believed what he was saying. Between the two of them, Layla really had the better chance of successfully combining her elements.

After all, that's exactly what her shadow charged ice was. It was a combination of two elements, which everyone knew.

And honestly, thinking of a giant pitch beast capable of ignoring your defence was quite chilling.

Muku was glad they were on the same side. R5 Layla with her shadow charged ice giant or whatever it will be, wasn't someone he wanted to mess with...

Chapter 383: An interesting conflict

"Oh, okay. Thank you for the clear explanation" Layla thanked Muku.

"No need. It was my pleasure. Now, if anyone has questions anymore. Feel free to ask me" Muku addressed the group.

"Well... It seems no one has any more questions. If that's the case. Feel free to go advance. Oh and, remember that even if you haven't encountered your spirit beast. You can still imagine it from your life experiences or some other clues you might have. For example, let's take Emily. Her element is fire. Her class has the word "phoenix" in it. For that reason, I think it's safe to assume that she should probably try envisioning a phoenix before any other beast. The chance of a phoenix being the one is quite high..." Muku gave the girls one last piece of advice before they went to do their thing.

They were all quite grateful for it. Emily was especially grateful since he had pretty much handed her a quicker advancement process on a silver platter if he was correct. Which he probably was. After all, Muku was seldom wrong... In fact, she couldn't remember a time when he was wrong in such matters.

After that, all the girls left except for Hope. She seemed to have something on her mind that bothered her quite a bit.

"Is something the matter Hope? Do you need help with identifying your spirit beast maybe?" Muku asked softly.

"Ah... No. I think I already know what my spirit beast is. However, I don't know what y'all will think of it if it really is the one. I feel like you'll look at me differently because of what it represents. Or more of, how it's looked at by people" Hope told Muku what was bothering her.

"Oh. So that's what is bothering you? Well, let me give you my take on the matter then... No matter what beast your avatar looks like. It won't change my opinion of you. I mean, it literally is nothing more than a creature which resonates with your power. It has nothing to do with your personality. It doesn't change how you behave in any way. You can take it from me since I've already gone through the process. And even if it did change you in some way. I'd embrace that change. After all, you're my little sister. And I'll love you no matter what. Even if the whole world turns against you, I'll always stand by your side and take it on with you... Though I don't think the world could bear turning on such a cute girl like you" Muku replied as honestly as he could.

His answer was so freaking perfect for dealing with Hope that it made her heart skip a beat.

She was in his arms hugging him too tightly before she knew it.

She stayed like that for a few minutes without saying anything and Muku let her be. The two just enjoyed each other's warmth without saying anything.

"Thank you Big Brother. I really needed that. And I promise you that I'll never put you in a position where you have to go against the world for me. However, if you were ever to go against the world for your own reasons. I'll be right there with you..." Hope spoke softly after the silence.

Muku didn't say anything. He just hugged her tightly as his response. And that was enough for her.

After that, Hope suddenly freed herself from his hug and ran away.

"Wait for me Big Brother. I promise to be the first one to advance and come show you!" Hope shouted as she ran up the stairs without looking back.

"Sure. I'll be waiting... I do wish you had told me about this beast you suspect might be the one though..." Muku spoke in a soft voice with a smile on his face as he watched her go.

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In Hope's room...

"What was that?! Why did my heart skip a beat? And why did that hug feel different to me? It was like I wanted more than the hu.. could what Layla said back then really have some truth to it?... No. It couldn't possibly... There's no way... Argh! Whatever, it doesn't matter right now. Let me advance first. I probably felt weird because I'm too excited about the advancement..." Hope spoke to herself as numerous feelings swirled around in her mind all at once.

After a while, she decided to put it all aside for the time being and focus on what mattered most.

After that, she took a meditative pose on her bed and started the advancement process...

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Back in the lounge...

"Oh look at that... We're almost at the stadium. I wonder what has changed in the last two years..." Muku spoke to himself as he floated out of the mansion.

He decided to live it up in the sky under concealment while he checked the situation with the stadium.

Which wasn't uncalled for after he literally found the place in a terrible situation the two significant times he went there.

The first time was the punk gang. The second time was the Ares subordinate whose name he forgot...

Speaking of Ares, that bastard and petty Monarch was the major reason why he was being so cautious. If it weren't for the ladies he promised to come see again, he'd have rather avoided the place altogether.

After all, of all the opponents he has faced so far, Ares scared him the most. He wasn't the only one who could kill him. But he seemed like the only one willing to go all out to do it.

And that was when they didn't even have a big issue between them. Ares literally wanted to kill him because he refused to be his puppet.

For that reason, it was reasonable to assume that Ares' desire to kill him would increase each time they met and he wasn't able to get what he wanted. Which would mean, he'd be willing to use costly methods that, he, as a Monarch obviously had...

Anyway, Muku made his way toward the stadium under his invisibility domain with the nightmare armour on. One can never be too careful when there is the risk of encountering Monarchs...

For that reason, he even had Raya on speed dial ready to be pulled out at any moment.

"Well well, look at this... I guess calling this place "stadium isn't accurate anymore. Calling it a mini fortress is more accurate..." Muku spoke as he looked at the magnificent building in front of him...

In place of the stadium from before, now stood a tall wall with some buildings peeking out from the top.

There were even guards standing on the walls...

From how the barrier was still active. It was easy to assume that the walls and guards weren't meant to guard against beasts. They were to guard against other humans...

"Honestly... There's always something going on with this place. I don't know why I was naive enough to think that I would find no issues here. But hey, maybe they just felt like revamping things and I'm just jumping to conclusio... Nope, I was right" Muku spoke to himself as he got closer.

He was about to rationalise what he was seeing by saying that the women were just paranoid... But as fate would have it. An army of rough-looking men showed up from a distance.

Their auras and evil expressions as they approached clearly signified their bad intentions...

"LISA! COME OUT YOU STUBBORN FOOL!" One of the many men called out after they reached about a kilometre away from the barrier.

"Draco! What does your dog ass want back here?! Was the last loss not good enough for you so you want another one? If that's the case, I promise you that this one will be better for I will make sure it's your last!" A familiar voice was heard from behind the walls.

It wasn't a shouting voice like the first one. And yet it was just as audible to all. That effect was obviously done through magic...

"HAHAHA. TO THINK YOU'D GET SO COCKY AFTER WINNING A FEW TIMES. WELL SORRY TO SAY. BUT THE ONLY BATTLE WHICH MATTERS IS THE LAST ONE. AND I PROMISE YOU. I WILL WIN THE LAST ONE. YOU CAN HOWEVER, MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR GROUP BY SURRENDERING NOW. I PROMISE TO TAKE YOU AS MY WIFE AND TREAT YOU ALL WELL!" The man named Draco shouted back with an arrogant reply.

"And what makes you think you can achieve that when you've failed so many times before?" Lisa asked as calmly as she had been from the start.

To her, fighting Draco was nothing but part of their routine at that point. The idiot had been troubling them almost every month for the last six months.

And he has lost every time. So there was no reason to take him seriously now.

Though she was serious about this being their last battle. She was prepared to go all out and take care of him for good.

After all, these constant battles draw unwanted attention from whatever is close enough to hear. Which was not something they wanted in the apocalypse...

"HEHE. I KNEW YOU WOULD ASK THAT. WELL, IF YOU MUST KNOW. UNLIKE BEFORE, I NOW HAVE A MYSTICAL BEING BEHIND ME! SO IF YOU DON'T GIVE UP NOW. ALL OF YOU WILL DIE!" Draco replied arrogantly again.

Hell, he was getting more and more arrogant the more he spoke.

"Well now. This is quite interesting... I wonder what this mystical being he's talking about is..." Muku who was now sitting on the wall beside Lisa and the ladies spoke to himself.

He was invisible so no one knew he was there. He decided to enjoy the show for the time being...

Chapter 384: Sinful nature...

"We'd rather die than submit to rabble like you. In fact, let me give you some advice as well. We also have our own mythical being. In fact, we have a group of them. They will arrive at any moment from now. So I would leave before that if I were you. No one who interferes with their interests makes it out alive!" Lisa gave her own warning to Draco.

And her voice was even more certain and confident than before...

"Wait? Y'all have your own mythical beings? A group of them even?!" Muku asked in shock and intrigue.

But of course, no one heard him since he was still hidden.

"Umm. Leader... When did we get a group of mythical beings?" A woman behind Lisa asked confusedly.

"What do you mean? Did you forget about the group that saved us? Didn't they say they'd come back? And since we're already this strong... How strong do you think they are now? Especially that leader of theirs..." Lisa replied in a voice that sounded like she was educating an ignorant child.

"Oh, them... But it has been over two years. Is it possible that they forgot about us or they..." The woman didn't back down.

She was certainly grateful for what that group did for them. However, it had been so long that she, and essentially over 90% of the group, had lost faith in them.

At that point. The person they believed in most was Lisa. The lady really turned a new leaf after that sudden change in character from back then.

And she suddenly had some useful insights on how to navigate the apocalypse they couldn't understand how she got them as they had been together since the start.

But since it was the apocalypse and crazy things were happening left and right. They figured that she must have gotten some cleric ability or something.

Even if that wasn't the case, they didn't care. What mattered were the results. Muku's group night has given them life. But it was Lisa who sustained it...

"Sigh. How ignorant of you. Can't you see that we have been able to survive well enough until now without their interference? Maybe they are looking at us right now and deciding whether to interfere or not. After all, we can't understand how beings like them think. So if I were you, I would regain my faith in them lest it leads to your downfall..." Lisa replied fanatically...

"But leader... You're the reason we managed to live up to this po..." The lady tried to reason with Lisa again but Lisa stopped her by raising her hand.

"I can't stop you from looking at things how you want to look at them. And honestly, I'm honoured that you think so highly of me. However, I won't tolerate you trying to undermine our saviours or trying to poison me against them. If you try this again, you'll face severe punishment... And that goes for all of you as well. Understood?" Lisa rebuked the woman seriously and even warned the whole group while she was at it.

"Yes, leader" The ladies all called out at once while bowing.

They could see that Lisa was serious and they'd rather not continue testing their luck with her...

"Good" Lisa spoke with nodding in approval.

"Well now... Who would have thought that the trashy lady from back then would turn into a fanatic?. And we didn't even do much. So why is she acting like we're gods in human skin?! Though I have to say. She really knows what to say. Even if I wasn't planning on saving them before. I'd have to save them now just to save face. It would make no sense for me to watch as someone who believes in me so much die right? Even if this mythical being behind the other party is super strong. It shouldn't be strong enough to keep me from taking everyone here away if I want to, right?" Muku continued speaking to himself while watching the show with keen interest.

He quite liked acting like an all-powerful being above it all. Just looking down on mortal problems like a boss. So fun!...

And he vaguely felt like Lisa's belief in him had some unexplained effect on him. But he couldn't place it, so he ignored it and wrote it off as part of the excitement...

"So what did that idiot scream back anyway?" Lisa asked those who were listening since she wasn't paying attention to Draco while addressing her group.

"He said that whatever beings you have backing you are nothing to the one backing him. And you should tell them to surrender as well..." A lady who was paying attention replied.

"LISA YOU BITCH! HOW DARE YOU IGNORE ME?! IN FACT, THAT'S ENOUGH TALK. I GAVE YOU ENOUGH CHANCES. NOW PREPARE YOUR NECK FOR ME. FOR I'LL BE TAKING YOUR HEAD SOON ENOUGH!" Draco called out angrily.

Then without warning, Draco and all his over four hundred men started changing in front of Lisa's surprised and horrified group.

Their skin grew grey fur. And their hands grew claws. Their eyes turned red in colour. They also grew tails. On top of that, their sizes increased to over four metres tall.

Normally, such a transformation wouldn't be surprising as many people had transformation abilities.

However, to the knowledge of Lisa's group. No one in Draco's group had that ability before. Let alone all of them.

And again, based on their knowledge, one couldn't suddenly gain new abilities as they advanced further in their path.

And the transformation seemed to boost their powers as well.

In Draco's group. There were only two R4s. While in Lisa's group, there was only one which was Lisa herself.

However, Lisa was a MR4 Evolver, while Draco and his partner were only LR4. For that reason, despite having the number advantage. They were always dominated by Lisa.

And it was actually somewhat the same with the rest of their groups.

Lisa's group was half the size of Draco's group. However, their quality was a lot better with most being at the peak of R3 while Draco's group was mostly LR3 or MR3.

For that reason... The over four hundred men were dominated by a group made up mostly of women with numbers slightly above two hundred.

But now... With the transformation. Draco and his partner had not only caught up to Lisa's strength. They had even surpassed her slightly.

And on top of that, the average strength of Draco's group has also surpassed Lisa's group.

The expressions of Lisa and her group instantly changed. They all turned grave.

Even without clashing, or exchanging even a single move. They could tell from their experience that they were going to lose within a few moves if they were lucky.

If they were unlucky. Just the first contact was enough to lose.

"DRACO YOU BASTARD. HOW COULD YOU SELL YOUR SOUL FOR SOME POWER? YOU ARE A DISGRACE TO HUMANITY! HAVE YOU NO BOTTOM LINE?!" For the first time ever, Lisa shouted angrily.

"HAHAHA. HUMANITY? ARE YOU BLIND? HUMANITY HAS LONG LOST! WHO CARES ABOUT LIVING ACCORDING TO THE STANDARDS OF A DEFEATED CIVILIZATION? BESIDES, THIS IS THE MOST HUMAN THING I COULD HAVE DONE. WE'RE KNOWN FOR OUR SINFUL NATURE AFTER ALL! HAHAHA. AND FOR YOU TO EVEN SAY THAT. I CAN TELL THAT YOU HAVE NO BACKING LIKE YOU CLAIMED TO HAVE. IF YOU DID YOU WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT I DIDN'T SELL MY SOUL! I JUST BOUGHT INTO THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD BEFORE IT'S TOO COMMON. IF ANYTHING, I'M A PIONEER! HAHAHA. NOW PREPARE TO DIE! EVERYONE CHARGE! SPARE NO ONE! HAHAHA," Draco shouted back like a mad person.

And without waiting for Lisa's response, he charged forward with his group. Lust for both pleasure and slaughter radiated in their eyes as they charged forth.

It was clear that Lisa's group was going to suffer a fate worse than death before they were killed.

Which was why Lisa had refused to join Draco's group the first time he showed up and pretended to be diplomatic.

After all, he was a terrible actor, and it was easy to see through his act and peek at his blacker than black heart.

And even if he was a nice guy, Lisa's group's natural distrust of men wouldn't have allowed them to join Draco.

They were so traumatised by what happened before that the only males they could stomach were Muku and young boys...

"Mr Muku... Please help us or today might be our last day in this world and we won't be able to be your knights as we promised..." Lisa said an almost quiet prayer as she looked at the approaching Draco.

She was resolute enough to end her own life that day if they didn't receive help because that was by far the less painful choice.

The women around her agreed.

For the first time in two years, they believed in Muku again. After all, it was clear that the situation was too much for their leader.

So why not believe in what she believed in?

It might not work, but it was better than losing hope and falling into depression...

"Interesting... They seem to have a beast's essence powering them. I will have to look at that later on. For now, let me help you out since you asked so nicely... But of course, I won't do all the work..." Muku's calm and slightly intrigued voice was heard in the ears of all the women present. Then...

Whoosh!

They felt an invisible energy wash over them then over Draco's group.

Something shocking happened the next moment...

Chapter 385: Last chance...

"Haaaa! Wha... What?!" Draco who was charging forward with his team while shouting maniacally with his team suddenly stopped in his tracks with confusion in his voice.

Which was completely understandable. After all, he felt the power empowering him and his team suddenly disappear without a trace.

That's right, out of nowhere, he and his group were "kicked out" of their beastly transformation.

Without a warning, all the external power in them disappeared and they were left with their original power.

"Master! What's wrong?! Did we do anything wrong? Please bestow upon us your power again. We haven't yet done what we set out to do!" Draco immediately began pleading to the nothingness around him like a madman.

However, his group didn't look at him like a madman. They actually joined him in the begging.

And yet, the response they expected... The response they had received so many times before didn't come.

And panic immediately set in... However could it not when the power they depended on seemingly abandoned them?

"Hehe. Why do you look like you look so constipated now Draco?. Did something happen?" Lisa's condescending voice was heard from above.

That's when Draco and his group finally remembered where they were. They were actually standing just outside the walls of Lisa's base...

"Lisa! What did you do?!" Draco accused Lisa angrily.

He didn't know what she did. But she definitely did something.

After all, their backer had been with them until they reached the walls. So it only made sense to assume that Lisa did something.

Hatred and desire to kill oozed out of Draco's eyes as he looked up at Lisa who was looking down at him with a gloating expression on her face.

"What do you mean by that? What could I possibly do? Did your all-powerful backer ditch you?" Lisa asked gloatingly.

"Woman answer me or prepare to face my wrath. And I promise you. It's not something you can take" Draco hissed at Lisa.

"Oh? Well, show me this wrath of yours then!" Lisa replied seriously as she jumped down.

Her group followed after her. As they jumped... Draco's group who had lost the external power could only step back and make way.

They dared not be rash anymore. After all, they sought out external help because they knew that they were weaker.

"You know Draco. The only reason you have been able to survive this long is that I thought of you as a mere nuisance. However, this latest stunt of yours has me questioning that idea. After all, even trash like you can be dangerous if given enough time. Which I guess is what happened with you. My unwillingness to dirty my hands with your pig blood almost cost us everything. For that reason, I think this time I should properly settle things. I hope you made peace with your maker for you're not leaving here alive. That I promise you" Lisa spoke as she walked forward towards Draco.

Her expression and voice got darker and darker the more she approached.

Fear started building up in Draco's heart as he could tell that Lisa was definitely out for blood this time. And she was willing to do whatever it took to end him.

"Wa...wait Lisa. I'm sorry. You don't need to dirty your hands with trash like me. I promise that if you let me go just this once. You won't ever see me again. I'll go up into the mountains and become a monk. So please, just this once..." Draco spoke while falling to the ground and kowtowing.

His men did the same. Honestly, one has to admit that they were great soldiers though. Like, whatever their leader did, they'd follow along with no questions asked.

And that was without being threatened or anything. They just respected Draco that much... Maybe there was honour among thieves after all...

"Just this once? How many times have I let you go before though?" Lisa asked as she reached Draco and stood a few metres away from him.

"N..no. I promise this is the last time... Die! You dumb bitch! Hahahaha. Did you really think I'd ever beg you for my life? Hahah... What?!"

Draco who was begging for his life suddenly switched his tone and attacked Lisa with Earth spikes which he felt pierce their target.

He immediately began laughing while cursing Lisa.

His men who were forever in sync with him also attacked at the same time. They began laughing with him as well.

However that all ended when they looked up and an unexpected sight met their eyes.

Their attacks had really connected... However, they had connected to weird metal contraptions which looked exactly like their targets.

The real women were still standing on the wall.

But how was that possible?! They could swear they saw Lisa and her group coming down. And their auras were clear as day along with how they looked.

What they didn't know was that they were all under Muku's Telekinesis domain. And under the domain, he could make people see nothing as well as see what he wanted them to see.

Yes, that's right, his domain could project mirage-like images of existing objects according to his will.

If one were uninformed, they might think that it was mind control. But it wasn't. It was just Muku messing with light and whatnot...

"You know. I was actually still considering giving you a last chance. In fact, let's say I gave you your last chance. But what did you do? You proved to me why being kind to your enemies is being ruthless to oneself. Now prepare to die!" Lisa addressed Draco's group one last time then she and her group jumped down for real this time.

And so, a battle ensued between the two sides.

This time Draco didn't try to talk his way out of the situation. After all, even he wasn't that shameless. And he doubted he could talk his way out of this situation anyway...

BOOM! BOOOOM!

Explosions rang out everywhere as the two parties fought.

Domains, domain armours and such clashed left and right. And as expected, Lisa's group which was stronger and driven by emotions to end this rivalry once and for all was winning...

Interestingly enough, Lisa and Draco both had the earth element. However, Lisa's was a black variant which was stronger than Draco's even if they were the same level in strength.

Then there was Draco's partner who had the flame element.

Which honestly, wasn't doing too well against Lisa's earth either. Which was to be expected since the flames weren't intense enough to make quick work of Lisa's earth.

For that reason, Draco and his partner had little hope of defeating Lisa.

The best they could hope for was sticking it out until she was tired then taking advantage of that and finishing her off.

However, with the amount of mana they were burning to keep her at bay. They doubted that she would run out of mana first. Hell, it was more likely that they would run out of mana at the same time or they would run out of it first.

For that reason, they completely gave up on defeating her. They decided on keeping her at bay until a chance to escape presents itself then they would make a break for it.

However, running away from someone who could control the earth was easier said than done.

She could literally turn the earth into a treadmill if she wanted to.

And flying away was out of the question because they didn't know how to.

The battle was really frustrating because they couldn't see a clear way of escape.

This was very different from all the times they had faced Lisa before.

It was clear to them that she really had been holding back before. That was another blow to their confidence, knowing that they were ganging up on her before, giving it their all, and yet she was holding back.

But their will to live was as strong as cockroaches. So even when their hands, legs and ribs were sprained or broken. They kept on fighting with the hope that they would somehow find a way to escape.

Even when they looked around and noticed that their men were dropping like flies. With more than half already dead on the ground. They didn't lose hope for survival.

Surviving long enough to win against Lisa seemed impossible. But surviving long enough for her to get sloppy enough for them to escape seemed doable. And that's what they were betting on...

Soon enough... Well, after more than an hour of intense fighting. Lisa finally got sloppy enough to allow one person to escape.

Both Draco and his partner noticed this. However, the partner hesitated since only one could escape.

On the other hand, Draco took it without delay. He immediately made a break for it...

Then...

Stab!

He suddenly stopped before he had even gotten far. He looked down at his chest and noticed it... A beast bone was lodged deep in his chest. It had completely stabbed through his heart.

At that point death was certain. And instead of panicking, he looked behind him. Before he died, he had to know what happened...

And as expected, Lisa was looking at him with a small smile on her face.

Her right hand was holding Draco's partner's heart. She had quickly made quick work of him as soon as Draco left...

"H...how?" Draco asked.

"A lot simpler than you might expect. I prepared that for you a long time ago. I was just waiting for you to be yourself then pay for it..." Lisa replied calmly.

"Ha..." Draco made an acknowledging and self-deprecating sound before falling to the ground, dead...

Chapter 386: Spikes

Lisa looked at Draco's body in silence for a few seconds before walking away.

It wasn't that she was now attached to him or something. She was just saying goodbye to an unnecessarily troublesome part of her life.

"Leader... Why did you go through the trouble of using a bone instead of an earth spike?" A woman asked as they walked back to the fortress.

She didn't understand why Lisa added extra steps when they weren't necessary.

"Simple actually. Draco was an Earth element Evolver like me. For that reason, he's super sensitive to the earth element more than anything else. So there was a high chance that he would have dodged the attack if I had attacked him that way. And that could have led to his escape if he used the spell I suspect he was about to use..." Lisa explained clearly without being annoyed.

This really showed how much she had changed from back then. The old her would have probably cursed the woman for asking her pointless questions like that before telling her to figure it out herself.

"Is the spell the legendary earth escape?" The woman continued.

"Yes. While one can easily get overwhelmed with the dense earth elements underground and maybe die... Trying it at least gave him a chance to live... Anyway, that's enough questions for now. We must go and thank our saviour..." Lisa replied, then brought the conversation to a close as they reached the fortress.

They then quietly entered through the gate then climbed up the wall.

Sure, they could jump up. But it seemed disrespectful. So they chose to walk instead.

Of course, if Muku knew about this. He'd curse at them for wasting time because they thought that it would be disrespectful.

He actually thought that they were doing it the long way round for their own sake. As for what the reason for that was, he didn't know nor care. He had time to wait after all.

Soon enough Lisa and her group reached the place where they heard Muku from before.

They still couldn't see him because he hadn't exposed himself. For that reason, they could only awkwardly surround the area and bow...

"Thank you for your much-needed help once again My Liege. We don't know what we would have done without you" Lisa spoke as they bowed.

Her tone and posture showed utmost respect. Even the women who were sceptical of Muku's capabilities before the battle were now as reverent as Lisa.

It will always be a fact of life that results speak louder than words. And that's what had happened that day.

Muku had shown results before. But they had expired after Lisa showed more results. But now, Muku showed results way beyond anything Lisa would be able to show for a long time.

And this time they were certain that he would always be beyond their comprehension. So completely submitting to him was no problem at all. It was simply exchanging loyalty for protection.

Sure, they might have to fight some minor battles here and there. And maybe do some chores. But that was okay as long as they were protected from serious threats like now.

The world was getting more and more dangerous. So looking for a giant tree to shield you from all the heat wasn't bad...

"It's cool. And can you not call me that? It's so cringe. Anyway, let's continue this talk later. We've got a guest. And he doesn't look too happy..." Muku's voice was heard again.

And again, they still couldn't see anything. The women wanted to ask why he wasn't revealing himself or whether he was even present. But they decided against it.

It was best to let him do whatever he wanted to do. After all, they were piggybacking on his power. They weren't familiar enough with him to randomly ask questions as they did with Lisa...

"WHO DARES GET IN MY WAY? COME OUT RAT! OR DO YOU ONLY KNOW HOW TO HIDE IN THE SHADOWS?" A loud and angry voice shouting in the beast language was heard soon after Muku said that they had guests.

"Bold of you to say that when you were also hiding in the shadows until you were forced out..." Muku's voice was heard loudly in reply.

It was calm unlike the other party. Honestly, the way things were progressing, it kind of seemed like Lisa and Draco's script was being recreated with different actors...

Another difference was the language. That's right. Muku was also using the beast language. Which was something that surprised the women quite a bit.

They became even more reverent. After all, none of them knew how to speak it, even a little bit. And they were under the impression that no human could do it either. And yet, there Muku was speaking it fluently.

"WELL, I'M OUT NOW. WHY DON'T YOU SHOW YOURSELF! OR YOU ONLY KNOW HOW TO SPEAK?" The voice sounded again as a humanoid creature floated over from a distance.

It was a four-metre-tall werewolf-like creature. Just that it had spikes running down its spine and on its elbows. Its canines also extended out of its mouth.

"What do you mean by that? I'm also out aren't I?" Muku's voice was heard once again. But this time it sent chills down the spines of everyone present.

After all, he was now floating behind the Werewolf-like creature. And his voice had morphed into something creepy.

What made it even scarier was how he was now visible to everyone present. Which meant that they could all see his nightmare form.

Before, when he spoke, his face was uncovered. So his voice was clear. But now? He was completely covered by the armour.

Like always, the appearance scared every human who laid eyes on it for the first time.

Slash!

The werewolf slashed back at Muku in panic.

But of course, the slash was met by nothing but thin air.

The werewolf didn't stop there though. Like any smart creature when met with an unexpected and weird situation... It made a break for it!

No one present looked down on it for making such a move.

After all, if they weren't frozen in fear. They might have done the same.

But then again, they had heard Muku's voice in their ears one last time before the scary creature appeared. And it said "Don't run".

So even if they weren't frozen, they might not have run. Yeah, it was still a "might not" because Muku's form really was scary.

And it wasn't just the appearance. There was just something about it, which induced fear. Like even if one didn't see the scary face. Just the back was enough for them to feel fear.

Muku has long noticed this effect. But he could barely manipulate it at a basic level. So trying to look into that was beyond his means for the time being...

Anyway, the werewolf was only able to get a few metres away before it paused.

It wasn't that it wanted to pause. But it was forced to a halt by an unknown force which completely wrapped around its body.

"What's this?! Who are you? Why are you doing this to me? I have never wronged you before" The werewolf began speaking whatever came to mind as it tried struggling out of the invisible binds.

"What's your name?" Muku asked its name without caring about its questions.

He just appeared a metre away from it then asked. His appearance almost gave it a heart attack.

"I am Spikes" The werewolf replied as it feigned calming down while trying to assess the situation.

"Spikes huh? I don't know why I expected anything better. Anyway Spikes, I wouldn't try to transform if I were you. You'd be instantly squashed into mincemeat by the force around you since your body isn't strong enough to break through it..." Muku spoke calmly in his creepy voice.

"Ye... Yes. Can you please tell me your name please? I would be honoured to know who your esteemed self is so that I know how to properly treat you..." Spikes who had given up on taking on his true form after the warning asked as he tried to think of another plan.

"Me? I'm nobody special really. Just a rando named Nightmare..." Muku replied nonchalantly as his glowing grey hollow eyes studied Spikes.

"I don't think I've ever heard of that name before..." Spikes spoke in a low voice as he wasn't sure if it would offend the other party.

After all, there were assholes out there who got pissed off when someone didn't recognise them. It was almost like they thought that the whole world revolved around them... Then again, they probably did think that.

"Oh, well I'm not surprised. But you might know a friend of mine..." Muku replied in an unoffended tone.

"Yeah, maybe. Who is this friend if I may ask?" Spikes humoured Muku even though he highly doubted that he knew the friend he was talking about.

After all, there were way too many beasts out there. There were literally billions upon billions if not trillions of beasts just in the Beast World. And the beasts in the Human World were also in the billions.

Sure, stronger ones weren't so common. But still...

"His name is Scar... Do you know him?" Muku asked calmly. Even he wasn't optimistic as someone who had been to the Beast World.

"WHAT DID YOU SAY?!" Spikes shouted as his yellow eyes instantly turned red. Anger and hatred instantly consumed him...

Chapter 387: Believers?

"Hmmm... It appears you do know him" Muku spoke as calmly as ever.

Completely uncaring about Spikes' sudden explosion.

But then again. At that point, Muku was at the peak of R5 after some lucky encounters over the last month.

He had had so many encounters with R5s that he even wondered if something was drawing them over to that area.

After all, he had encountered over two hundred. Which he didn't even know was possible when they were still technically the strongest on the planet.

Like, shouldn't experts be rarer than that? Though he wasn't complaining since he got to reach the peak a lot sooner than expected. Which was a good thing considering what was about to come...

Anyway, his PR5 strength was the reason Muku didn't put Spikes in his eyes no matter what. After all, Spikes was only a MR5.

Hell, even if Spikes was PR5. Muku still wouldn't think much of him. After all, with all his means. He could easily oneshot a PR5 if it didn't know what to expect.

Which was always the case since Muku's abilities were beyond uncommon. They were unheard of.

Like who knew there was someone who could erase your arm out of existence without you feeling anything?

Then, when he tells you about it and you start panicking, he sends an undetectable force your way which will make your head explode upon impact... So yeah, PR5s weren't an issue for Muku let alone weaker ones...

"Know him? That bastard is the reason I'm in this pathetic state. The reason I'm not standing in front of you as a Rank 6 Beast. The reason trash as you dare look down upon me! It's all that bastard's fault!..." Spikes poured his heart out in pain.

Muku could clearly sense the indignation, feeling of betrayal, hatred, anger and a bunch of other negative emotions...

"Oh? Were you two friends before? I never took him for a friend-backstabber..." Muku asked calmly again.

"Friend? I'd never be friends with that trash even if he were the last beast in the world. We were never friends. We were always enemies. Or rather, I was his punching bag in human terms. But even then, we fought fairly even if I lost every time. But then one day. I had a lucky encounter which propelled me to the peak of R5 and beyond. In no time I was at the peak of Pseudo-R6 and ready to break through. In fact, it was during my breakthrough that he showed up and dealt me a serious blow. The blow messed up the delicate process and instead of advancing, I regressed into this pitiful state you see right now. Even worse was how I was almost done advancing too..." Spikes explained everything even though no one actually asked him to.

It was clear to see that the beast had been looking for someone to complain to all this while... It was such a human thing to do that Muku couldn't help but be amused. But he didn't disrupt him. He was curious to hear how it ended since it had already started...

"So... You're saying that your enemy prevented you from gaining more strength than him? The kind of strength which would have allowed you to kill him whenever you felt like it?... I don't know. Maybe I'm dumb. But I don't see the problem with that. Hell, you'd have done the same if the roles were reversed right?" Muku tried to reason with Spikes with a few questions.

"... Tsk. You really are his friend. You even reason the same way... And let me tell you this like I told him. I don't care about the reasoning. All that I care about is my suffering. No level of reasoning can change that. For that reason, I hate him. I will forever hate him. And now I also hate you. Maybe I wouldn't have hated him so much if he had killed me after. But he dared say that I'm not worthy enough to be killed by him with my weak strength. The nerve of the bastard who did this to me to say such a thing..." Spikes replied with a voice dripping with hatred for both Scar and Muku.

"Oh.. he said that huh?.. Hehe. Hahahahaha. Bars! Bars! I tell you. What a cool line! As expected of my friend! As expected of the one who almost beat me! Hahaha," Muku began laughing hysterically while praising Scar.

He completely ignored Scar whose expression was darkening more and more as Muku continued laughing.

"Wait... Did you say you beat him?" Spikes was about to explode when he realised something.

Muku indirectly said he beat Scar...

"Yes? Is something wrong with that?" Muku asked.

"Haha. Hahahaha. That bastard actually lost? Hahahaha. Yes! Finally! I wish I could see his face when he lost! He always thought that he was unbeatable. Hahaha. I can die peacefully now... My Lord. Is there anything you want from this humble one? I'm willing to assist you in any way I can as a thank you for putting that trash in his place" Spikes completely changed his tune after hearing that Scar was defeated by Muku.

"Well... What an unexpected result. But hey! I'm not complaining. If you're offering then I don't mind receiving... All I want to know from you is how you managed to lend some of your power to those idiots from before. That's something I've never seen before. So I'm quite intrigued. Honestly, this makes things easier for both of us because I was planning on torturing you until you spoke up. And I promise you, the process would be quite brutal..." Muku replied in his creepy voice.

However, at this point, it didn't sound as creepy due to his tone of speech...

"O...oh. Then I'm glad I spoke up. As for what you want to know. The reason why you've never heard or seen it before is quite simple. It's an ability one gets after reaching R6. I lucked out and got it despite failing at the end. Anyway, it allows one to share a little of their power with their believers through their blood essence. If I had successfully advanced. Just a drop of my blood essence would be enough to tether hundreds of "believers" to me. But since I failed and can barely use the ability. I needed more than half of it for the group you had wiped out. And with how slow the recovery process is. It will probably take me a few years to completely heal. Oh, even though I'm sure you've realised it already from what I said... R5s can't do it. So don't try it before reaching R6" Spikes was unexpectedly super generous with his explanation.

"Oh? How interesting. However, what's the point? Wouldn't it be quicker for you to take care of whatever business you want to take care of instead of sending "believers" who are a lot weaker than you?" Muku asked curiously.

"Yes. For the most part. Believers are useless when strength is needed. But that's not their main use. From my understanding through the research I did. Believers are very important in advancing from R6 to the mysterious R7. They are so important that most R6s keep their believers a secret from everyone. Which is why most don't even know that they exist. Anyway, I also heard that advancing from R6 to R7 isn't as strict as before where one has to reach the peak then the pseudo-stage before advancing. I heard that even LR6s can advance to R7 with enough believers. Sure they would be weaker than other

R7s who advanced further before breaking through. But they would still be way stronger than R6s. Which isn't a bad deal if you ask me..." Spikes was again very generous with his reply.

"Wow. How insightful. And let me guess. You thought that you might as well try breaking through to R7 because you can collect believers? After all, that's the deciding factor right?" Muku asked with keen interest in his voice.

"Yes... That's right" Spikes didn't try to hide it since it was obvious.

Plus he had been truthful up to that point. So he might as well continue being truthful.

High rank beings could easily tell when they are being lied to after all.

At the very least, when they were allowed to scan the one speaking they couldn't be lied to. And that's exactly what was happening with Muku and Spikes.

Muku was scanning Spikes' every move and Spikes could only allow it because not allowing it might lead to death.

"I didn't know beasts gambled as much as humans... I mean, do you even know what happens during the process of advancing to R7? What I mean is, do you know how the energy or whatever you get from believers is used? At the very least you must know that right?" Muku asked curiously.

"... I don't. But I'm willing to risk it. It's either that or being forever unable to take my revenge. I'd rather die trying to achieve it than forever live in shame..." Spikes replied resolutely.

"Oh. Okay. But didn't you say you could die peacefully now that you know that Scar lost a fight?" Muku asked amusedly.

"I...ah... That was a figure of speech. You know, I've been studying humans for a while and I guess I might have picked up a few things from them without knowing..." Spikes replied with some embarrassment in his voice.

"Hmm. Makes sense. It's human nature to speak bullshit you don't plan on backing up after all... Unfortunately. It's not up to you this time..." Muku spoke calmly.

"What do you mean, My Lord?" Spikes asked while feeling like something bad was about to happen...

"What I mean is... You're about to die" Muku replied calmly.

Chapter 388: Honourable death?

Spikes' eyes widened to the max. Then he began struggling with all his might as soon as Muku's words registered in his mind.

"Don't worry. There's no need to panic. You provided me with valuable information. For that reason. I'll give you a fighting chance. Hell, you can even. Try running away if you want... And I promise not to use mana in my pursuit. How does that sound?" Muku spoke in a calming voice.

"Really?" Spikes asked sceptically.

He didn't think Muku was such a nice person. And if he really didn't use mana. Wasn't that the same as just letting Spikes live without admitting it?

"Of course. My word is my creed" Muku replied reassuringly.

As he spoke. The invisible binds around Spikes were released.

"Thank you..." Spikes spoke then...

**BOOOOM!**

The sound barrier was broken as Spikes made his escape. Like hell he would try to kill Muku with the chance he was given. It was clearly better to escape now than come back for revenge later.

Of course, he was coming back for revenge. It was a must after how Muku treated him. Like a harmless little toy. And he was also Scar's friend. So of course he had to die!

The revenge would have to be far into the future because of the setback. His blood essence needed to recover first. Then he'd need to recruit new Believers. Then attempt to break through to R7.

If all that works out. He'd then come back for revenge. And it would all take many years. Who knows if his new strength would be good enough to win after such a long time?

But hey, it wasn't like he had a better option. And honestly, Muku ruined him just as much if not more than Scar did.

Which was another reason the detestable him, had to die.

And from the looks of things. Spikes really might be able to escape...

Just when the happiness of making it out was starting to set in. His vision started getting darker and darker until...

He felt it!

Just before he completely lost his sight. He looked down. His eyes widened instantly.

Which was understandable after noticing a gaping hole where his heart used to be.

With his last strength. He looked back at Muku. He was almost blind at that point but there was one thing which was still as clear as day to him. And that was Muku's hollow grey eyes.

They were literally the only thing he could see at that point. And they looked... Majestic!

It was almost like he was being looked down upon by creation itself. Or rather, the light of destruction as creation reclaimed what belonged to it...

Oddly enough, he had no regrets as he died. It was almost like he had the most honourable death. Like dying to those eyes was the most natural thing to do. And with that, Spikes' unfortunate life came to an end...

His werewolf body began changing forms on the spot. It grew until it was an eighty-metre-tall wolf-like creature. Which was understandable from his werewolf-like humanoid form from before.

And yet, the hole's size wasn't minimised by his increased size. It actually grew in size to match the exact volume it took on his smaller figure.

"Hmm... I guess this means that there are no Monarchs around right? After all, my erasing gaze wouldn't work if there were any. I just hope Spikes doesn't hold a grudge against me in the afterlife for using it. I mean, it's not mana after all. Though I guess maybe mana would have been a nicer and way more survivable power. Oh well..." Muku spoke to himself as he flew toward Spikes' corpse.

That's right, he has used his erasing gaze to end the troubled beast.

Was it unfair? No, not at all. As he said, he only swore off mana. So everything else was fair game!

As for even considering letting Spikes go after the valuable information he gave him... Hell no!

He could tell that Spikes was the vengeful type. After all, the beast was even betting with its life for a chance at revenge. So there was no way Muku, whose motto in life was "ending all possible threats" would let him go.

So Spikes' death was set in stone from the moment he was captured.

Hell, there might have been a chance at life if he had kept quiet about most of the things that he revealed. But death was certain after he spoke too much.

Anyone with half a brain would figure out that there was real danger in Spikes' plan if it worked out...

In fact, let's say he wasn't disrupted and his plan worked before reaching R7 was even an option for everyone else. Wouldn't that lead to a real-world-ending apocalypse?

One can look at it this way. The current Muku was strong enough to destroy the old planet in a few attacks. Which means a R6 would be able to do it in one.

Of course, the current world was bigger and stronger. But that didn't change how destructive each stage was to the surroundings. They might be able to destroy the planet... But they can certainly destroy those on it quite easily if the gap in between is big enough.

And while he had never seen a R7 or higher. He was certain that the current world, in its enhanced state wasn't strong enough to contain R7 strength.

It might barely take R6. But definitely not R7.

Hell, if an R7 were to appear at the time. It might not need to do anything to destroy the planet. Just existing would be enough.

Such thoughts were backed up by the fact that it was the Guardians who kept the space together when Muku fought that Monarch before getting dragged to the Beast World.

And now that they couldn't interfere anymore... Such situations couldn't be risked anymore...

The encounter wasn't all bad though. In fact, it was a good thing.

It made Muku aware of a lot of things he wasn't aware of before.

It also made him realise that things could go sideways at any moment even without a World Evolution.

This was because there were way too many dangerous beings in the world with dangerous means that could change the situation for the worse.

Hell, it was a realisation he should have had a long time ago. First was Ares and Mest, then the Green Monarch, then Legion and the Mysterious Monarch behind it and now Spikes.

He'd be stupid to think that they were the only ones with the means to ruin the world with...

"Sigh. It seems I still can't relax even with my current strength. I guess I have to reach R6 as soon as possible... As for how to do it however... I think it's about time I talk to Iris. I just hope she doesn't ask for an arm and a leg or I might have to spank the answers out of her. Which would make facing Freya afterwards quite hard. And Iris probably won't cooperate as well as before after that..." Muku spoke to himself while entering Spikes' huge body through the hole he created to look for the core...

Yeah, Spikes' veins were big enough for him to walk through...

And so, since Jade was busy with something. He could only look for the core manually since he still couldn't sense it inside a beast's body despite having gotten stronger...

"Are you gonna eat this?" Raya's hungry voice suddenly sounded behind Muku.

"You know Emily and Jade aren't strong enough to cook R5 meat yet, so why ask? Hell, it's a freaking wolf. I probably wouldn't eat this even if it could be eaten..." Muku replied while rolling his eyes at the glutenous dragon girl.

"Hehe. Then I guess I will help you out and get it out of the way. It's clearly blocking the view. And it might attract unwanted attention" Raya spoke while drooling as she looked at the meat around her.

If Muku wasn't inside the creature, she would have taken her beast form and eaten it.

"Yeah, yeah. Whatever. Just know that this covers the few favours I owe you" Muku replied while walking in deeper.

At that point, looking for the core was a secondary goal. He was now rather intrigued to know how far he could get.

"Bullshit! Like this weak thing is worth so much! You can keep your meat then!" Raya angrily exclaimed.

She couldn't believe Muku's shamelessness. How dare he even suggest such an obviously unfair exchange?!

"Fine, fine. What about three favours?" Muku began negotiating.

"One" Raya replied seriously.

"Two?" Muku tried again.

"I will leave right now and won't want this thing at all. Even for free." Raya threatened.

"Fine, fine. One. Geez! To such an impolite brat. Not only do you curse but you even threaten adults. How the world has really changed" Muku lamented like an old man who missed the good old days.

"Whatever. You aren't looking for the beast core are you?" Raya chose to change the topic and not entertain the shameless fellow.

"Yes?" Do you know where it is?" Muku asked curiously.

Last time he checked. Raya also couldn't detect beast cores in dead beasts.

"Yeah... It's nowhere. You destroyed it with your over-the-top and completely unnecessary attack... Now can you leave? You're dirtying my food." Raya replied nonchalantly.

"What?! How do you know?!" Muku asked surprised.

"I can't detect an inactive core after death. But I can detect it fine before... And I sensed it getting destroyed" Raya said.

"Wtf?! Why are you only saying this now after years of watching me manually look for cores in the Beast World?!" Muku roared.

Chapter 389: Impending ritual

"What kind of question is that? Obviously, because it was fun" Raya replied in a tone that really made Muku's hand itchy.

"Don't you even think about it. I'll be gone before you can even think to restrain me. And then I will go report you to Mama Audrey" Raya who was as connected to Muku as ever quickly spoke the moment she sensed the slight malice from him towards her.

She immediately realised that he was thinking about spanking her. She hadn't experienced it before, but had seen a glimpse of it from Muku's memories when he spanked Iris. From that she decided that she was okay with not ever experiencing it.

"Tsk. Whatever. But why reveal it now then?" Muku backed off after hearing her words.

She was right after all. Their connection meant that she could react instantly to anything he tried to throw her way. And the obvious reaction would be teleporting away because, no matter what he wants to do... It won't land if she isn't there.

So, there was no point in trying then having an angry Audrey on his back. To that lady, Raya was like her toddler. And like all mothers with their toddlers, no matter what she does. She'll fiercely defend her.

To Audrey, it didn't matter that Raya was as smart as any of them when it really came down to it. What mattered was that she had the age and look of a child. So for that reason, Raya was a child who needed to be protected matter what!...

Hell, there was one time in the last month Muku pinched Raya's ear for being naughty. Audrey immediately got involved and gave Muku an earful until he apologised to Raya.

So yeah, he'd rather not mess with Raya if it wasn't necessary...

"Simple. There's no reason to keep it a secret with Jade around. And I can leverage it for some favours when we're away from her..." Raya explained with a matter-of-fact expression on her cute and chubby little face.

"What a black-hearted child..." Muku commented.

"That's just how the world works kid. The sooner you learn, the better your life gets" Raya spoke while puffing up her chest like a wise Sage... At the very least, that's what she thought wise Sages did.

"I knew I should've limited your laptop time" Muku commented while rolling his eyes.

The child was clearly repeating a line from some anime.

"Try it and I'll cut you" Raya fiercely defended her laptop time.

After all, she could choose what to watch there. Unlike with Muku's memories where she only saw what he allowed when he allowed it.

"It's your brain rotting, I guess. Now if you'll excuse me..." Muku replied while turning to leave.

"Hey wait. Before you go. Can you tell me about Believers? I mean, I was listening in when that wolf was speaking. But I felt your mental state get disturbed a bit during the Believers part so I'm curious to know why..." Raya asked something serious before Muku left.

It was quite interesting how she could switch between childish and serious mode so quickly... It also wasn't unlike Muku.

So much so, one might say he influenced Raya. After all, she was mostly dependable at the beginning. So the bratty side was all Muku's handwork even if he didn't want to admit it.

"You caught on to that huh? Should've known. Anyway, it's nothing serious. It's just that, when believers were mentioned. I had this feeling that I had experienced the effect of having them. It was when Lisa and her group were praising me. It actually started with Lisa alone. But I couldn't feel it clearly when it happened. It felt like there was a thin wall in-between me and whatever was causing the feeling. I think that's the wall between R5 and R6. So I won't pursue it until after I advance..." Muku explained.

There was no reason to hold back from the one being who was arguably the closest to him. After all, their souls were linked.

They might quarrel and whatnot, most of the time. But when it counted, they didn't hold back.

"Oh. Okay... This makes me wonder though. Should I go out and look for believers of my own? I mean, from that wolf's words, advancing further without them is impossible..." Raya replied seriously.

"Not a bad idea. But let's wait until after we reach R6. I have a plan that should help you rake in quite a lot if executed correctly. And besides, there's still the impending World Evolution. Better stick together for now" Muku replied.

"Okay. That makes sense. Oh, and speaking of advancements... I think I'm close to my bloodline awakening ritual. Raya casually dropped a bomb.

"What?! Really?! Are you certain?!" Muku reacted exaggeratedly.

Which wasn't too unrealistic if one considered what happened the last time.

The two of them worked together but almost lost their lives even then.

That huge white hand from the sky sent chills down their spines every time they thought about it.

And now, they were about to face something even worse. So of course Muku would be shaken.

So what if they were a lot stronger now compared to then

Then the trial adjusts itself according to one's strength after all. And the way it happens is that, it's so strong that the chance of survival is probably one percent or less.

"I'm very certain. I don't like it either. And I wouldn't joke around with it as well" Raya replied with a serious expression on her face.

"Umm. Can't you take this one on your own? I mean, you're stronger than me right? I totally believe in you too!" Muku asked with a shameless look on his face while trying to shirk responsibility.

"You jerk! How dare you say that after everything we've been through? I'm going to tell Mama Audrey when she wakes up! Hmph!" Raya was instantly angered by Muku's words.

So of course, she didn't hold back in the threats department as she pulled out the biggest threat she had from the start.

"Argh. I was just joking. Why do you have to threaten me at every turn? You know me, I'd never ditch you. And besides, even if I wanted to ditch you. I'd have to ask your teleportation about it first. I was just trying to lighten the mood. We can't be too tense in this kind of thing" Muku backtracked immediately and started the damage control process.

"Really? You really won't try to ditch me?" Raya asked suspiciously.

She found it harder to trust Muku the more she knew him. Which was odd since he had proved his trustworthiness at every turn.

But she just couldn't trust him completely. Which wasn't her fault really. The guy just gave off snaky vibes sometimes.

Plus there were times he refused to help her in battle. Those didn't help either. So what if she was skipping the context of having refused to help him first? What mattered was that he did it.

"Should I swear to the Heavens?" Muku asked jokingly.

"Yes. Do that. Swear to the heavens" Raya immediately accepted the suggestion.

If he hadn't said anything about ditching her, she would have been fine. But he just had to say it. And now she couldn't relax unless she had a guarantee.

"Little Ms. I think you're forgetting something. If you die. I will lose fifty percent of my abilities permanently. And I won't be able to fight for a few months after that... So yeah, do you think I'm in a position to leave you alone? Just losing one percent of one's power in the current world is problematic enough. Let alone fifty and being unable to fight at all" Muku reminded Raya of something she seemed to have forgotten.

"Oh yeah. Right! I had forgotten about that. Hehe. You really are stuck with me. And I with you... Looking back now. Maybe I should have helped you out a little more in the Beast World" Raya replied with a calmer voice as she thought of the things she did in the Beast World.

More of, things she didn't do. Which included not helping Muku, not helping Muku and not helping Muku until the very last moment.

In her defence, it was because of their bet. But still, she shouldn't have been so dedicated considering what was at stake.

"Now you realise that. Anyway, if we're done here. I'm leaving. This sight got old quickly. Plus I have to talk to Lisa's group who are still waiting for me..." Muku said to Raya as he turned to leave for a second time.

This time, there was nothing she could say to make him stay. If she wanted to talk. It would be done outside.

"Oh yeah. Almost forgot where we were. You really should leave. Your stench is messing up my food. I think I gotta wash it after this" Raya shooed Muku away.

"Tsk. You forget quite a bit for a R5 child. If this continues, people might think that you're secretly a grandma. And didn't you say that because of the soul-link, I smell like you, to you? So what do you mean by stench?!" Muku replied as he paused.

He was not one to leave without getting the last laugh after all.

"Yeah well, you leaving your stench here means I'd feel like I'm eating myself when I smell it while eating. Would you have the appetite to eat in such a situation?" Raya replied disdainfully.

"Okay. I'm going" Muku gave up.

He couldn't argue with that logic after all.

Chapter 390: Punishment

Back on the fortress wall...

"Do you still doubt him?" Lisa asked the women behind her as soon as they could speak after Muku was out of sight.

"No ma'am!" All the women called out.

"But are we sure he won't take care of us next? I mean, that look... He kinda looks like a demon now..." One of the women asked.

The others quietly supported her. After all, Muku's new look was rather scary. And one would instantly assume that he was evil. At the very least, he didn't look like the good guy.

"You really think too highly of yourself huh? Do you think that we require so much effort on his part if he wanted to kill us? You've seen what he's capable of. That creature he took care of could have wiped us out without any resistance. And he killed it as easily as it would have killed us. In fact, Draco's group was enough to take care of us with their new power. But he helped us. So, please answer me this... What gives you the gall to think that he needs to scheme against us?" Lisa replied calmly at first.

However, her voice, expression and aura got darker and darker the more she spoke.

By the end of it. She was crushing the woman who asked with her aura. The woman wasn't dead, but she was pressed hard onto the ground unable to move.

"L... leader. I.. I'm sorry. I won't "qu...estion him again. Pl...ease. have mer...cy" The woman begged for mercy as she lay on the ground.

"Yes, leader! Please spare her just this once!" Another woman chimed in.

And just like that, the rest also spoke up. They didn't try to challenge Lisa. They just begged her to forgive the woman just once.

"Haha. At least you all have solidarity... However, I recall saying something along the lines of, 'Anyone who dares speak up against him will be punished.' So I don't know what you mean by forgive her this once when I forgave her and the rest of you once already. I fear that if I don't punish her. Then she will never learn and just think that her leader is too nice to do anything. But hey, if you want to take the punishment in her place or want to take me out so there doesn't have to be a punishment... You're free to step up" Lisa replied ruthlessly.

This time she wasn't going to step down. Like she said, if she kept on being understanding. They really would undermine her more and more.

Plus she wasn't doing it for herself but for them. As someone from a parallel timeline. She knew what Muku was capable of.

Sure, things were going differently in this timeline. And she was certain that he wasn't the monster from that timeline. But still, that didn't mean he was weaker.

Hell, even if he wasn't that strong yet. He was definitely stronger than them but a lot. And that's all that mattered.

And she knew how ruthless he could be in the current timeline from the memory when "the old Lisa" was mean to Freya and almost lost her life for it.

So yeah, she decided to be completely dedicated to him and hoped that the women under her would do the same.

She had tried the soft approach. But it seemed she had been too soft and they no longer took her seriously.

They might not even realise that they were no longer taking her seriously. But that's exactly what was happening.

Otherwise, there was no reason they would forget a warning she gave them that very day. Even if a lot happened, their doubt was somewhat warranted.

But as Lisa said, they really thought too highly of themselves. This was probably a result of all the wins they had under their belt due to Lisa.

So, as the one who gave them their subconscious arrogance. She had to consciously cut it down before it landed them in real trouble.

The last thing she wanted was them saying something to Muku which would make him abandon them. Which would likely be a death sentence somewhere down the line.

Or even worse, he got so mad he took them out himself on the spot.

Honestly, he wasn't her main worry when it came to wiping them out. She was more worried about the girls behind him.

She had long noticed that he barely cared what people cared about him. So he wouldn't react too negatively to what the women said.

However, the women behind him all had a quiet obsession for him hidden deep in their eyes.

So, they are more likely to get pissed off if someone undermines him.

Sure, most of them wouldn't massacre people just for that. But that green-haired girl with weird energy might do it.

There was also the cold beauty with ice magic. She seemed capable of it if she was pushed far enough.

Even if they didn't go as far as to commit murder. They'd definitely break a few bones and possibly break off legs and arms...

So yeah, Lisa had to get her group in line no matter what. It was a matter of life and death.

"..." After hearing Lisa's words. None of the women said anything nor stepped up.

They were a close-knit group. But not close enough to go against the leader for someone else's mistake. Besides, whoever stood up would likely get beaten up even worse than the original sinner.

After all, stepping up to face your leader was the ultimate disrespect. And a serious punishment for it was only natural...

"...So your solidarity only goes so far, huh? I don't know whether I should praise you for being smart or be disappointed because you're not willing to go all out for a comrade. Anyway, step back as I punish this one..." Lisa spoke after a moment of silence as she studied the women who all had their heads down.

None dared look her in the eyes...

She didn't bother with them anymore as she lifted her hand up in the air. A big black rock hand formed behind the woman she wanted to punish who was now elevated into the air a bit by a rock platform.

Her posture made her butt stick out towards the palm... So it was obvious what the punishment was.

"Oh my! How brutal!... But it's kinda smart. Maybe I should use this on Jade next time... Nuh, it's too ruthless..." Muku who was long back but invisible commented to himself as he looked on.

He even considered stealing the move. But remembered that it would mean he wouldn't be able to feel that soft butt during the process. So he gave up on the idea.

Of course, he wouldn't admit that. So he hid behind a "kind" reason instead. Which was, "it was too ruthless" even though the power and size could be controlled as much as a real palm's power could be controlled...

Whoosh!

Pah!

"Argh!"

Pah!

"Argh!" ....

And so, the punishment began. The woman was hit ten times and she screamed in pain every time.

Unlike when Muku spans Jade with hidden intentions. Lisa was strictly doing it for the punishment. So there wasn't a mixture of pain and pleasure, just pain...

Whoosh!

"Okay, that's enough... I'm sure she's learned whatever you wanted her to learn" Muku's voice sounded beside Lisa when she was about to continue.

The black palm crumbled to dust as he spoke. He also finally cancelled the invisibility.

The armour had been turned into normal-looking clothes. So the women weren't scared stiff again...

"Yes sir" Lisa wasn't angered by his interference.

In fact, she was glad. After all, she didn't know when she was going to stop if left alone.

"Someone take her to rest..." Muku nodded to Lisa and then gave orders to the women.

If he had done that before they witnessed the punishment. They might have first sorted out Lisa's go-ahead, but Lisa had made it clear that he was above her. For that reason, they quickly did as Muku told them without delay.

Lisa nodded in approval behind Muku. This is exactly what she wanted to achieve.

It might not exactly feel good to be under someone. But in the current world. If you weren't strong enough, then it was unavoidable.

Hell, it was the same in the old world. Just that, unlike "money strength" from back then, "true strength" was on top now.

So basically, the women were now Muku's employees and their pay was protection from threats they couldn't handle.

Speaking of which. Lisa was quite excited at the moment. She remembered the promise Muku had made to her.

That he would take them as his knights if they proved to be strong enough. And there was no better proof than winning the battle against a force twice their size.

So, there was no way he would ditch them again. Hell, she was even willing to do whatever it took to be accepted this time.

Even if she had to use her body... Though she doubted that would work considering the goddess-level beauties surrounding Muku.

She herself wasn't a slough. But she was slightly inferior to them. So... Anyway, that was a last resort anyway.

As for why she was willing to go so far.... Well, she could just feel it. The world was at the cusp of another change.

And this change was definitely going to be more vicious than the ones before. So, for her sake as well as her comrades. They needed Muku badly.

She was actually starting to get worried by how he hadn't appeared for over two years actually.

But fortunately, her faith paid off and he appeared when he was needed most...

"Now, Lisa, right? Let's go inside and chat..." Muku turned around and addressed Lisa with a little smile on his face.