

~ Day 66 ~

Awkwardly scanning the different appearances of the figures, all being varying versions of me, I couldn't help but get the chills from just how uncanny the situation was. With some slight hesitation, I approached the first of the eight 'me's. He wasn't much different from how I already looked, however, he was a bit taller and his skin almost looked to have various segments with black straight lines running through to demarcate the outlines.

It reminded me of the same skin-like carapace that I had when I was an Azde, however, it just seemed a lot more skin-like. Seeing that the me's gaze was expectantly gazing down on me, I tentatively spoke.

"Um, hello?" - Me

"Hello to you too, old me." - ???

"Old me? What do you mean?" - Me

"I'm the new and improved version of you, old me, meaning that I'm new me." - ???

"-Uh... Fuck this is beginning to hurt my head." - Me

"Don't worry, I remember how slow I used to be. It gets better with age." - ???

"Hey, asshole! Don't shit-talk yourself." - Me

"I suppose you've got a point. -Anyways, so are you like going to pick me now or what? I ain't got all day." - ???

"What do you mean? First of all, who the fuck are you really. Are you some kind of future me?" - Me

"Well, yes, but no." - ???

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" - Me

"I'm a possible projection of your future down this path, however, I'm anything but accurate. None of us are." - ???

He gestured to the other figures.

"Then why did you say that you're busy, aren't you're just an illusion?" - Me

"(Gasp) Hurtful! Just because I'm an apparition, that doesn't mean I don't have feelings!" - ???

"Do you?" - Me

"-Ah... well... no. But it's the thought that counts!" - ???

"Argh, my brain is hurting. This is really too much 'me'." - Me

Rubbing my temples in annoyance, I caught in the corner of my eyes the shit-eating grin plastered on the me's face.

"You're really are just like me... huh." - Me

"I sure damn am. Just as a projection, but still." - ???

"Alright alright, can you please explain all of this to me? I still feel somewhat at a loss to the true purpose of this advancement path stuff." - Me

I said as I gestured to all the silhouettes and figures around us.

"Okay. Every single figure here, silhouette or not, are different projections of us walking down different paths. The ones that are silhouettes are the combination and singular paths that you forsook when you picked the combination of vitality and magic power." - ???

Gesturing to the eight other 'me's that weren't silhouettes, he locked gazes with me.

"These are the choices available, each a combination path of vitality and magic power." - ???

"Are these the only combination paths that exist for any who chooses vitality and magic power?" - Me

"Nope, we eight are personalized options. We became available because of your personality, powers, achievements, and so on." - ???

"Guessed as much. Then what path do you represent?" - Me

"I represent the path of the Undaunted." - ???

"And can you tell what that entails exactly? I'm not one for shooting in the dark about such choices. Well, at least not anymore..." - Me

"No, I can't tell you, but I can show you." - ???

Confusion was written over my face when I heard that, but I didn't move when the me who represented the path of the Undaunted lifted a finger and pushed it to my forehead. All of a sudden, a stream of energy surged into my head, and I suddenly found myself not in the serene spirit realm but in what looked like a large and spacious forest clearing.

However, this was no ordinary forest, by any means. The trees were massive behemoths towering into the skies, with crowns of leaves that glinted imperiously in the sunlight of the twin suns hanging high above. Instead of the usual greenery and lush vegetation you would expect with most other forests, this one looked all too alien as different vibrant colors of shimmering blues and enchanting shades of rose that painted the whole environment as an untainted magical paradise.

The beauty of it all utterly captured my attention, to the point I didn't even notice the figure of the me who represented the path of the Undaunted standing right next to me. It was first when he suddenly spoke, I was pulled from my reverie.

"So? You've hunted me for all this time and finally found me, aren't you going to get on with it? I mean, I don't got all day." - The Undaunted

I wasn't sure, but I felt I noticed him winking teasingly at me with the last comment, but most of my attention was now drawn to the five figures in the distance. They were all seemingly humanoid creatures of varying races. Two I guessed to be human, another two who I speculated were elves by the pointed ears and stellar appearances, and the last figure was that of what I guessed to be a bonafide dwarf, his short stature and mighty white beard very much pointing that direction.

Although the revelation of seeing new races was intriguing, I couldn't even get to appreciate it as I almost felt strangled by the potent auras bellowing out from them. I wasn't stupid enough to not realize this was some kind of illusion or image projection, and that I was still in the spirit realm as I could use none of my powers, but I was kind of miffed that I couldn't use

my **Appraisal** on these horrifyingly powerful people to see just what level of power they had achieved.

The auras they radiated were easily beyond my comprehension, and I knew for a fact that if I were to face any one of these, I would be killed in an instant. They all wore equipment that screamed prestige and quality. The humans were both sword-wielders, one a man, the other a woman.

The man wielded what seemed to be an ordinary two-hander, but when you looked closer at it, it seemed to almost cut your eyes by simply how sharp the edge was. The woman instead of having a wieldy weapon like a two-hander, had an overly ornamented shortsword. Other than their peculiar weapons, the woman wore what seemed to be jet-black leather armor with inlaid metal plating while the man wore heavy metal armor.

In contrast with the heavy-duty of the humans were the slim-fitting green and golden light-armor that the elves wore. They were both female and sported similarly large longbows with quivers of silver arrows at their hips.

The last figure, and actually the most opposing one with his aura flaring like an indomitable mountain with a will as firm as steel. The dwarf was outfitted in golden and silver thick metal armor that covered him from head to toe, only his magnificent beard and stocky face being visible. The intricate carvings and master workmanship of his armor clearly indicating the sheer awe-inspiring quality of it.

In the dwarf's gauntleted hands, he wielded a giant war hammer that was as tall as himself, and almost as wide. I had a hard time believing he could even move outfitted in such heavy equipment with his small stature, but he didn't even seem fazed by it at all. While all these people were domineering and their auras' overwhelming, I couldn't help but feel an eerie premonition when I looked to the me who represented the path of the Undaunted as I couldn't even feel a speck of presence from him. Like he wasn't even there.

The five didn't answer his question, instead just drawing their weapons and adopting aggressive stances. The first to make a move were the elves, knocking arrows and letting loose. I could only stare wide-eyed at the sudden supersonic projectiles ripping through both the air and the sound barrier as they hurdled towards the Undaunted.

However, he didn't move to dodge, simply awaiting the missiles of mind-boggling speeds. One hit the collarbone but glanced up as it didn't take hold of his body. But even though it just ended up glancing off his body, the sudden shockwave that bellowed out told of the sheer power that had been in that shot.

The other arrow that was fired hit centerpoint on his chest, but this one didn't glance off. Instead, it crumbled in on itself, creating a mangled ball of warped metal that bounced off with a terrifying rebound force and shockwave. Newton's third law proving to still be somewhat valid in this world of crazed monsters and magic.

I was unaffected by the ripples in the air that flattened the nearby vegetation and toppled large rocks, proving that I wasn't really present. The one arrow that had glanced off his collarbone, had continued its flight until it created a crater in the side of one of the behemoth trees, causing it to creak loudly as it slowly fell over. The massive weight of the tree made a minor earthquake rumbled the earth beneath our feet.

I could only stand there, mindblown by the otherworldly powers and destructive weaponry on display. I had expected that at some point I would face someone capable of such immense power and that I might even reach that stage at some point, however, seeing it was much more soul-shaking than just imagining it. The true weight of such power first now dawned on me, and I for a moment felt infinitesimally small in comparison, but that only lasted for the blink of an eye as it was almost immediately replaced with an unadulterated lust for exactly such power.

A hunger once more flared deep within my soul, the flames of my will flickering dangerously in my eyes. Small ripples radiated from me, causing the air to shudder, the first sign of me affecting the vision. But I quickly stopped, realizing that I was using my will to effect this imaginary display of the path, and that wasn't the reason why I was being shown this.

Inspecting the still unmoving Undaunted me, I was shocked at the result of the attacks. While I had expected him to have some measure against these attacks as he was unmoving even against these oncoming bolts of destruction, I hadn't expected that not even a single scratch was left on his still very much pristine body.

The elves scowled and began unleashing barrages of arrows. They activated skills left and right, causing widespread destruction, however, he was still unfazed. It was first at that moment, that I realized that I had lost track of the two human sword-wielders. Suddenly appearing at his flank, the Undaunted merely met their blades with his bare hands.

A shockwave, much more extreme than those from the elves' ranged onslaught radiated out in wide arcs, causing the earth beneath be torn up by the aftermath alone. Although the blocking of the two attacks seemed effortless, I saw the lines on his body light up with crimson, like mana flowing through them.

It looked like he was using mana to reinforce his body's defenses, just like how I could with **Onyx Body**.

The dwarf suddenly appeared mid-air, his warhammer poised high in an overhead strike. Like a meteor, the stocky dwarf descended down upon the Undaunted. And for the first time, he moved, changing position and moving his hands to intercept the blow. With an earth-shattering roar, it seemed like an unmovable and indestructible object meeting a meteor falling from the sky.

The explosion and concurrent shockwaves caused a large crater to spread outwards at his feet, destroying the already battle-torn earth. However, the Undaunted was still standing firm. He wasn't unharmed though, the skin of his hands and forearms having cracks spreading out from them. But that wasn't to say that he was the one who ended up worst in the clash.

The dwarf who had been hurled back dozens of meters due to the sudden blocking of his massive strike was groaning on the ground, his hammer shatter and laying in pieces all around him.

I could very easily guess that this path of the Undaunted specialized heavily in defense with vitality and resistances, with magic power supplementing them to reach even greater heights. Also, I couldn't even imagine how high his magical resistance was, probably being to the point where he was basically immune to any magical influence at level power even greater than his own.

But while it was evident that this path specialized in defense, I had begun to think there wasn't really any necessarily offensive capabilities to this path, but that thought was quickly proven wrong as he all of a sudden released his aura that he had been containing for all this time.

He wasn't merely called the Undaunted for his impervious defenses, but his indomitable and world-shaking will. Billowing out from his body, a crushing aura pressed down on all the surroundings. The humans, and the elves, utterly restrained by the aura alone. While I already knew that it was very much possible to physically affect the surroundings with your aura and will alone, but this was a whole new level.

I didn't know just how fierce the aura was as I wasn't physically present in the vision, but it was almost like the gravity had just increased many folds all around. But this wasn't actually the main goal of the aura but just the result of releasing it from its constraints. The sudden avalanche of his aura was channeled into an attack that headed straight towards the prone dwarf.

As if the dwarf's own will was just like that of a village, the Undaunted's will was like that of a tsunami, completely decimating the small village and washing it away from existence. And just like that, he had killed that dwarf and destroyed his soul with the pure conviction of his will. The others didn't last long either, as they were each picked off consecutively.

Appearing back in the spirit realm, the me who represented the path of the Undaunted smirked knowingly at my staggered expression.

It became very clear that this path had become an option because of my impervious resistances and undying will. While it had all just been an illusion, I didn't doubt for a minute that beings of such power existed somewhere in this world, and I was simply mind-boggled by the new perspective I had gained from it all.

What realm of power were they? C-rank? B? or even higher?

I thought I had gotten strong, but in reality, I had barely even started to become strong.

I...

I wanted more.