

"Normal speech"

'Thought'

(Silent magic)

[Normal magic]

{Change of location, time or POV}

And here we are again, and yes, my ability to write battles has not improved, and I dread what I will write next. To everyone their own, I guess...

As you probably noticed by my absence it has been a very uninspiring 2 months and work is getting harder as we go toward summer. So yeah, sorry for the delay, I guess.

Well, not really anything important to say here, enjoy the chapter!

Beta Reader: Don Orbit (go check out his amazing works!); SirWertsalot (Wow, it's been that long? Kinda felt like a fever dream if I'm gonna be honest.)

Chapter 24: Shaping this warrior's soul

She washed away the blood from her hands and armor before proceeding in cleaning her face, or at least the part not covered by her hair. It was a good thing she had it cut short. Long hair would have just meant more filth on her and a grabbing spot for her opponents.

As she was cleaning herself, she noticed that the leather armor protecting her left arm was falling apart. 'Damn low quality garbage' she grumbled as she proceeded to grab her spear and

cutting the armor off completely, letting it fall on the ground without a care.

She proceeded to adjust her hair so that her hideous side was completely hidden from sight. She almost jumped in surprise as a sound of rushing water came from her right. She turned to see a young girl washing her face next to her.

“Sorry, did I startle you?”

The young girl asked. Her blond locks and green eyes stared at her, reminding the woman so much of herself when younger and still untouched by that filthy curse.

Her heart convulsed in jealousy and hate at the sight of the unblemished fair skin the young one was showing.

“I apologize for my rudeness. My name is Lakyus.”

The young girl, now named Lakyus, continued, offering her a handshake.

“It’s nice to see that I am not the only girl here. I was really getting nervous being around only guys.”

She joked but the older woman’s face remained stone cold and serious as she proceeded to slap the offered hand away.

“Don’t get in my way.”

She coldly said before marching away from the confused young blond girl. ‘I am only here to get noticed by the emperor, get healed and get revenge... there is nothing else here for me’ she reminded herself as she crushed the tiny shard of guilt that built up in her heart.

“I will go forward... until all I hate is dead and gone...”

She whispered as she took a seat on a good spot to observe the following matches in the arena.

{Lakyus' P.O.V.}

After the awkward meeting with the strange woman Lakyus patiently waited for the 1 vs 1 matches to begin. Of course, they were given a couple of hours to recover, but after Satoru visited her, she didn't feel like resting at all.

She was fired up like never before and, even if she didn't know what exactly Satoru did when he put his hand on her shoulder, she was sure that this was his doing.

Normally she would have protested at receiving such an advantage, but Satoru explained to her that she was being targeted on purpose and this only served to balance out the odds. And the fact she noticed nothing, and Satoru had to personally come down made her feel ashamed 'Didn't Renner instruct me in looking into the underground? I was so engrossed into my own world, I neglected to look for any suspicious activity' she reprimanded herself.

But she would do better next time. She was sure of it. But for now, she would limit herself to studying her opponents, the same way they will do with her once her turn comes.

The first and second matches were nothing new. Go Gin simply limited himself to overwhelming his opponent through brute strength, while the other participants didn't really show any particular skill. If Lakyus had to judge them, she would probably say they were on a similar level to the Warrior Troop members.

The third match was indeed interesting. The blue robed participant she noticed earlier was called alongside an axe wielding brute. The blue robed man, who the announcer simply referred to as Blue, didn't wield a sword and limited himself to dodging his opponent's blade for almost a minute before snapping and using the other's confidence to grab his good arm and break it in a single fluid motion, earning an easy victory. 'That is indeed a worrisome opponent, but why do they not wield a weapon?... Could it be, they don't wish to show their cards against weak opponents? That is indeed a cunning strategy. This way their future adversaries cannot prepare a strategy' she thought, fairly impressed by the challenge posed by this mysterious participant.

The fourth and fifth match were nothing worth admiring as she only noticed one Martial Art being used while the actual level of skill shown was quite mediocre in her eyes. Their movements lacked polish and there was too much wasted movements in each strike, something both her teachers taught her to exploit in a battle.

Then it was the other older girl's time to fight. Lakyus looked at her with rapt attention as she moved into the arena, not a single emotion betraying her blank face. The announcer called her Leinas. A noble name if she remembered well, but she didn't know of any famous knight going by that name. 'Well then, show me what you've got, Leinas' She couldn't help but smirk a little.

Unfortunately, the spectacle she was expecting didn't come. Instead, the match was swift and bloody. The young woman didn't waste time and as soon as the order to begin was given she sprinted toward her opponent impaling him with a single strike and lifting him into the air as the poor warrior was still screaming

in agony before slamming him violently into the ground leaving him there to his fate as the ruthless woman retired once her victory was announced.

‘She is not here to enjoy herself or play around for sure’ was the only thought Lakyus could come up with after the gruesome display.

The following match looked more like children playing knights compared to the previous one, not that she could give it much attention as she was busy warming up for her own match. She was in the middle of some light stretching when she heard the crowd cheer and a winner being announced.

Immediately, anxiety grasped her soul, and she felt a lump in her throat as her stomach clenched. It was true that this wasn't her first time in the arena, but before there were 100 people in there alongside her. Now the full attention of the crowd would be focused on her, and she could not allow Renner, Satoru, Gazef or even Brain, if he was watching, to lose face. Her friend even gifted her with a favor, a royal favor, officially recognizing her as a true knight. She couldn't let her down, no matter the cost.

Her grip around Satoru's gift tightened as she marched toward the entrance with renewed vigor and resolution.

As her and her opponent's names were announced, the crowd exploded into a deafening cheer far louder than before, or maybe that was just her impression.

Her opponent was around his early twenties with platinum hair and a good-looking face. Many maidens would have been grateful to know his name and judging from the many favors he displayed on his armor Lakyus didn't doubt he was already fairly

known around here. Unfortunately, due to her current mental focus, she lost his name when he was announced.

Giving her a slight smirk, the knight, who was her double in size, advanced into the arena saluting his admirers with great enthusiasm and sending kisses toward the many maidens who seemed enamored with him. Lakyus refrained from scoffing at the display 'we are not here for pleasantries; this is a battlefield! Well, if he is so well loved and known I think it will at least be a worthy challenge for me' she guessed as the referee gestured for them to get to their positions.

As Lakyus turned to swiftly get to her spot she felt her left hand being grabbed, she turned to find the young knight kneeling before her as he grasped her hand as if he was asking her to dance with her at a ballroom.

"My fair maiden! I beg of thee to rethink your actions! Your beauty is so great that I could never even think about having to rise arms upon thee! On my honor as a knight, I beg you to desist this madness at once! You have shown your worth and all of the people gathered here have seen a rose with thorns dance on the battlefield, but this is not your place! So, I beg of thee, retire with your honor and beauty intact!"

If it wasn't for the fact that his words were spoken far too loudly to be directed only toward her, Lakyus could have even felt flattered by some of them, but she knew exactly what he was aiming to do. 'He wants to save his face and not be accused of hitting girls, which would make him look bad... and now, if I refuse, I will seem rude and barbaric... Why you little!' she felt her irritation grow inside her as she saw various maidens, noble and not, stare with shining eyes at the gallant knight, but there

was one gaze, far more intense than all of the others combined that was solely focused on her.

Turning her gaze lightly, Lakyus' emerald eyes met Renner's sky-blue ones. Words weren't necessary to convey what that imperious gaze ordered her 'do not worry my Princess, I will kick his ass to the Holy Kingdom and back!'

Who cared if she was labelled as rude? Who cared if she was despised? As long as Renner, Satoru and her teachers believed in her, she will have everything she needs!

In the meantime, the knight, seeing her hesitation proceeded to put a kiss on her gloved hand as it was customary when introducing to a noble maiden.

"My lady, I, Motier Lyx Anvil promise to give you a special tour of the city once I have won this tournament, but please, desist now."

This time Lakyus could not hide her scowl as she abruptly freed herself from the knight grasp and marched away 'this humiliation... I will inflict it back on you one hundred-fold!' she said fuming.

{Renner's P.O.V.}

The young princess clenched her tiny fist. She herself didn't know exactly why seeing Lakyus' humiliation brought such shame and rage to her as well, but the fact it did was bothering her nonetheless. Was it because Lakyus was her friend? Her only friend? Was this how seeing a friend suffer should make her feel? The only thing she was sure about was that, if she had the occasion, she would kill that worthless whoremonger daring to touch her Lakyus.

Her? A strange sentiment of possessiveness showered over the little princess 'Yes, that's right, Lakyus is mine! Only I can touch her and only I can make her do things, she is mine! And mine alone!' that sounded right in her mind. 'And Satoru belongs to me too, but I also belong to him as well' she felt the need to clarify the difference to herself, nonetheless. Emotions were a troubling and chaotic matter after all, and she needed to put hers in order.

"Ah! It seems that the girl ignored my son's chivalrous proposal! Humph, as expected of a barbaric Re-Estize's noble."

Her internal musings were interrupted by a noble loudly scoffing at her knight. For a moment she thought Gazef was about to say something, but he seemed to be able to refrain himself from falling for the trap.

"And what kind of Kingdom let's noble girls wield a sword at such an age, I-"

The noble rambling was interrupted by the Emperor himself.

"Minister Anvil, I think that will be enough."

The gelid tone of Jircniv put an end to the whole tirade.

"Humph, at least this will make easy coins. I actually betted 100 on my son in this match."

The minister changed the subject as other nobles and ministers shared their own bets and how much they won or lost in the previous matches. 'Betting is probably the only reason why these events still happen from time to time... you need to make the economy move, I guess' Renner thought as she continued to stare intensely at her chosen knight down there in the arena.

“Did you bet as well Sir Satoru?”

One of the nobles asked and suddenly her attention was partially shifted again toward her beloved.

“Umu, indeed. I bet 40 on Lakyus for this round.”

The deep and calming voice of the magic caster admitted.

“Humph, didn’t want to waste gold on the girl did you. Well, you will still lose 40 gold coins nonetheless.”

Said Minister Anvil with a smug look on his face. To say the man was starting to get on Renner’s nerves would be an understatement.

“I apologize, were we speaking about gold coins? I thought heads of the Empire such as yourself would not still be trifling with those trinkets; it seems I was wrong, my apologizes. I was meaning to say that I betted 40 platinum coins on Lakyus.”

If Renner didn’t master the art of masking her emotions, she had no doubt she would have started laughing at the face the minister made after Satoru, not so subtly, insulted him using only his own arrogance against him. Said minister unfortunately didn’t seem to share her sentiment as he became as red as a tomato due to shame and rage, but a single glance from Jircniv seemed to be enough to silence him again.

“It is about to begin.”

Said Gazef as Renner’s attention returned to the arena below. ‘Whoever rigged this tournament must not have been so bright. Not only was Lakyus heavily targeted, but she was put against a known and good knight on the very first match... could this be

any more obvious?' the blond princess mused as the referee announced the beginning of the match before quickly leaving the arena.

The two warriors took their stances, not that Renner had the knowledge to judge who had the best one, but the boy's one seemed rather fancy instead of precise like Lakys'. The princess glanced at Gazef to see if his expression could tell her something, but the Warrior Captain seemed far too focused for him to express any judgment.

The two opponents still didn't seem to want to make the first move even after almost a minute had passed. Then the knight spoke, though the princess could not hear his words over the cheering and shouting crowd. But no matter what he said, it seemed like Lakys didn't take it well at all judging by her furious glare and sudden rush toward him.

Renner's eyes widened as her handmaiden seemed to become a blur in her vision, closing the distance between her and her opponent in nothing more than a second. Even the noble herself seemed to be surprised by her sudden boost in speed as she hesitated before striking the young man. Unfortunately, that instant of hesitation was barely enough for Motier to move his blade and try to block the strike. To the surprise of the whole arena, the knight's sword was sent flying away from his hands by the swing of Lakys' blade.

Again, the young noble girl seemed to be surprised by her own strength and, instead of striking her opponent down, allowed him to dash toward his weapon and grasp it again with both his hands this time.

“Umu, it was just a light stats buff. Does it really make so much of a difference?”

She heard the voice of Satoru whisper to no one. She internally smiled; of course, this was all Satoru’s doing. He may have overdone it a little, but that gave her just the right occasion to push her dominance on this new field.

“Ah! So finally, she started getting serious, I wondered why she was toying during the first round. Still, she is just warming up and her opponent is already losing his head... and here I thought the Empire’s knights were the mightiest of the continent...”

She said with her most surprised and innocent voice, lightly kicking Gazef’s foot; the Warrior Captain seemed to grasp her intent.

“It was my suggestion that young Lady Lakyus would handicap herself during the first round so that she may still struggle in what would have surely been too easy of a challenge for her.”

The sound of glass cracking could be heard as minister Anvil heard their conversation. The man stood up and stumbled toward the balustrade.

“MOTIER! END THIS RIGHT NOW!”

He bellowed to his son who may as well have not heard him since he was busy trying to block the unstoppable assault of a ruthless Lakyus who seemed to dance around the pretty boy, forcing him toward the border of the arena.

Finally, seeming to have had enough, Motier tried a lunge that did nothing if not giving Lakyus an opening that she used to kick her opponent’s groin, making him fall with a ear piercing scream.

The noble girl placed the point of her blade on his neck as she used her foot to kick Motier's sword away from him.

“THE WINNER IS LAKYUS!”

The referee announced loudly. The crowd both cried out in despair and joy as Lakyus left the arena and a pair of healers rushed toward the downed knight who was still unable to move from the ground.

{Lakyus' P.O.V.}

She sat down in the preparation room alone on a stool as half of the participants still there looked at her as if she was some bizarre creature. But the stare she felt on herself didn't come from any of them; instead, it came from the cloaked warrior known as Blue. His unseen eyes seemed to burn a hole through her very soul.

As she was trying to determine what the strange fellow wanted from her, she felt someone punch her shoulder, making her jump a little.

“Ah sorry, sorry! Sometimes I don't know my own strength. It's nice to see another gal pass her match. We don't want these guys to get too much over themselves, don't we?”

Said a strong and masculine female voice. The noble looked up only to see a giant of a... woman, or at least she would define her so judging by her words and voice. It was no wonder she didn't notice her before. She really looked like a man. Lakyus didn't even remember seeing her fight before, and, judging by the hammer the masculine girl had on her back, she was sure she would have remembered such a display of strength. That left the

young noble with just one option. This giant of a woman fought right before her, meaning, she was her next opponent.

She didn't return the other woman's cocky smile, and the thought that she could treat all of this as nothing more than a game irked Lakyus to no end.

Here she was struggling and doing her best to not dishonor her princess' name, alongside Satoru's, Gazef's and Brain's; and this... this simpleton of a brute was just standing there with a cocky smile looking at her from her height. The voice of Renner slipped into her mind in the form of a whisper 'do not let others look down on you, be prideful of what you are, and if anyone thinks they can push you around, strike back with any means necessary to end them' Her sage princess' words were probably meant for politics, but Lakyus felt like she could apply it to battle as well.

"I wish you good luck."

Coldly replied Lakyus, as she walked away from a seemingly dumbfounded masculine woman.

"Name's Gagaran by the way, little girl!"

She heard the armored woman call out from behind her. Lakyus slowly turned trying to put up the blankest expression she could.

"I am Lady Lakyus, noble knight appointed by the third princess of the Re-Estize Kingdom, Renner Theiere Chardelon Ryle Vaiself, to serve as her champion in this competition."

She formally introduced herself leaving her next opponents to her own thoughts.

On the way out of the room she abstractly bumped into someone. Blue filled her vision as she stepped back only to see the cloaked man pass next to her without even stopping to check if she was alright.

{Satoru's P.O.V.}

The undead magic caster mentally flinched as the crowd roared and the knight below was blown away by the War Troll's strike. He didn't really understand the fascination these people found in the one-sided fights that seemed to be a must of this event.

As the next match was announced, of which he already knew the outcome, Satoru left the VIP room, excusing himself with the pretense of cashing in his bet, or it would be better to say bets.

He waited for a new match to start so that many would be away from the betting table so he would avoid the crowd being there every other time. As the empire's employee saw him approaching, he could not miss to notice the stretched smile on her face. The reason for it was not hard to find. They probably lost a lot of money due to the previous match and, instead, he was one of the biggest winners.

"Welcome back honored sir, do you have your note?"

The employee asked as if in hope of him having lost it. Satoru wordlessly took out the note with his bet and win rate from his inventory before placing it on the counter.

"As the note says, I have won 623.84 platinum coins"

He said, silencing the few people still in the room who immediately turned towards him. The woman behind the counter grimaced and took the note, immediately going into the back. In

a few seconds, shouting could be heard coming from a room not too distant from there. Satoru didn't know if he ever heard anybody shout so many profanities in just one sitting before.

Around two minutes later a man with white hair who seemed to be around his fifties if not sixties came back to the counter followed by the employee from before, his hand shaking around Satoru's note.

"Lord Satoru, I presume?"

He asked, his tone as steady as possible in that situation. The overlord nodded in confirmation.

"We are very sorry for the inconvenience, but our policy does not allow us to bet more than 20 platinum coins per bet. We are ready to compensate you for your win based on our limitations."

The man said in a business-like tone, eliciting Satoru to hum as if he was deep in thought, which was not the case since he doubted they would give him that sum so easily.

"But weren't you the ones in error for allowing me to bet that much in the first place? It was fine as long as I lost but now that I won you finally inform me of the irregularity?"

Asked Satoru, playing the card of the displeased customer, like many did back in his day as a salaryman. 'it's nice to be on the other side once in a while' he pondered.

"Lord Satoru, we understand the error lies with us and your disappointment is deeply understood from our establishment, but I beg you to understand that if we paid the whole sum it would probably interfere with the other bets in place at the moment... we sincerely apologize for the misconduct on our part,

and I swear to you that there will be harsh consequences for the action taken by our employee.”

The man deeply apologized glancing venomously at the employee behind him who seemed to shrink in fear at her boss’ words.

“I accept your apology, but the fact still remains. You are still indebted to me for more than 300 platinum coins. How do you wish to resolve that?”

Satoru continued to press. It was a common strategy in situations such as this. He knew how most employees were taught to make empty promises to the displeased customers; it would work on most people, but Satoru wasn’t most people. He had more than 10 years of experience at working in the ruthless environment that was the 22nd century’s market, and there was no way such a newbie tactic could deter him from his goal.

“We could organize a retribution program and pay you monthly amounts of 30 platinum coins, or we could open a credit from which you could withdraw every time you wish to bet in the Arena again.”

The man proposed. Unfortunately for him, Satoru was having none of it.

“Those sound like reasonable solutions. Unfortunately, my stay in the Empire is coming to an end in just a few days, so none of those options seem applicable to me.”

Satoru knew he was being difficult but at the same time he could not deny that they were mostly at fault for what happened.

“Ah, excuse me good sirs.”

Both the magic caster and the trouble employee turned to look at the man who spoke. Satoru immediately recognized him as the patron of that war troll, but he couldn't recall his name at all.

"I could not help but hear of your troubles and, if I may be so bold, I would like to propose a solution; my name is Osk and I am a merchant who works very closely with the Arena and I am the current patron of Go Gin, the war troll participating in today's event."

Seeing that Satoru remained silent the employee probably followed his lead even if visibly reluctant in doing so and with blood visibly draining from his face after the man's introduction.

"If it was fine with you Lord Satoru, I would like to buy your credit towards the Arena. You would receive your money back by tomorrow except for a small fee I would take for the service. In exchange, the Arena would slowly pay back their debt to me."

Satoru did know this tactic. Usually employed by Yakuza to intimidate their debtors to pay up. But even with that bad relation in his mind, the undead's cold mind could not deny the effectiveness of that tactic.

"This seems like an applicable proposal to my needs; I hope this will not be a problem?"

Satoru asked the employee who was white as his hair by now. The magic caster took his silence as compliance to his demands.

"Then I hope to see you tomorrow in my establishment Lord Satoru; it is located just outside the Arena."

The merchant said in a delighted tone, like a child waiting for his ice cream to be made, a comparison that largely amused Satoru.

“Is that so? Then why doesn’t an esteemed guest such as yourself join me and a few others in the VIP room of the Arena. I am sure the emperor will not mind hosting a patron of one of the favorite winners of the competition.”

Osk was clearly taken aback from his words and his pleasant smile disappeared, morphing into a serious expression.

“Are you sure that it is fine for a humble merchant such as me to be there?”

He asked, seriously eliciting a hum from Satoru. ‘Jircniv is a head of state basically, but still, to meet a promising merchant who could hold great wealth in a few years is only common sense isn’t it?... it is also the reason I invited him there for in the first place...’ the undead paused just an instant to reevaluate his decision before shrugging it off.

“I do not see why I should not introduce someone who is about to become a business partner of mine. I am sure the emperor won’t mind.”

He said as he led the still hesitant merchant towards the VIP room.

{Lakyus’ P.O.V.}

She looked in admiration as the young woman wielding a lance impaled her opponent, ending his life; while she could not agree with the method, the precision and skill showed by the woman was unreal. No wasted movement could be seen, no hesitation driven by insecurity, no emotion to be used against her. She would indeed be a dangerous opponent once she faced her in the next round, but now she had to focus on the present as she and her opponent were called into the Arena.

The crowd roared and cheered once more as they did on the last match, but this time there was a rhythm to it, something she had to focus on to fully understand. The spectators were shouting something, a single word.

“LAKYUS! LAKYUS! LAKYUS! LAKYUS! LAKYUS! LAKYUS! LAKYUS!
LAKYUS! LAKYUS! LAKYUS!...”

They were shouting her name, cheering for her. In that moment, she had no idea if she felt more baffled, prideful, or embarrassed.

“Bah! The crowd seems to love you, little one... all love the story of an underdog I guess... but don't think even for a moment that I will go easy on you to make them happy!”

The giant of a woman, known as Gagaran, said as her hand twitched toward her hammer, strapped on her back.

“Do your worst.”

Lakyus said back, tired of being constantly underestimated due to her age, height or gender. ‘I will show you all, I will become the strongest and I will bring honor to Renner's name!’ the blond noble thought determined to succeed.

As soon as she reached her designated spot, the marquis heiress unsheathed her sword, the golden ribbon of her princess shining under the sun which just passed its zenith and was now moving west.

“THAT'S A PRETTY BLADE YOU HAVE THERE! BUT CAN YOU USE IT AS WELL?!”

The giant woman taunted her without much result as Lakyus remained firm and calm on the spot.

As soon as they were ordered to begin, the woman known as Gagaran charged at her with a roar more resembling an orc than a human. Her hammer came down on Lakyus with unexpected speed for such a heavy weapon, but it was still nothing for the empowered Lakyus who easily sidestepped the attack, immediately taking advantage of the opening created by the woman.

Gagaran's armor may have been sturdy, but even that was not enough to stop her blade as it cut into it with little resistance. Lakyus' opponent immediately jumped away, creating as much distance as she could between them.

"Oi! Oi! That thing is sharp! You could have cut my arm off!"

She said unamused, taking a new, more defensive, stance.

"That was the initial idea... you are a bit too fast for your weight though."

Lakyus taunted in hope of provoking another charge as foolish and careless as the previous one.

"Don't get cocky! You brat!"

And with that the woman charged once more, this time fainting another vertical attack only to curve her trajectory at the last time toward her left, where Lakyus just rolled to dodge. Thanks to her enhanced speed the blond noble immediately used the blunt side of her blade to block the incoming swing.

The loud boom that resounded from the impact was even louder than the cheering crowd and for a moment Lakyus worried about going deaf.

Her blade, of course, managed to block the strike but she could still feel a certain numbness in her hands. This time it was her time to retreat away from the hulking woman.

“What’s wrong brat? Just one strike was enough for you to give up?! Ahahahahahh!”

The woman said, regaining her cocky grin. Lakyus stood up, closed her eyes and took a deep breath to steel and prepare her mind.

“[Flow Acceleration]”

She mumbled as she felt her body tense up, boosting her already boosted speed even more. To the eyes of most, she looked like a golden blur in the Arena as in the span of two seconds she already was behind Gagaran, the edge of her blade reddened by the two slashes she inflicted through the hard armor.

The woman fell forward without exactly knowing what hit her. The only thing stopping her was her hammer. They weren’t fatal blows though, both because Lakyus didn’t want to kill anyone, no matter how annoying they were and because of the armor preventing her blade from cutting deeper.

“Y-you!”

The giant woman grunted as her eyes found Lakyus’ once more.

“Just give up. No matter how tough your armor is, if you can’t touch me, you have already lost.”

Lakyus said, wanting to avoid both injuring her opponent further and spending more of her energy.

To her surprise, the woman didn't say anything, only giving her a small smirk under her pained expression. With a roar Gagaran teared away her own armor, shocking both Lakyus and the crowd as only a few small clothes were left to hide her modesty.

“IS THIS THE GAME YOU WANT TO PLAY?! FINE! LET'S PLAY THEN!
[FLOW ACCELERATION] [BOOSTED STRENGTH]”

Resembling more a rabid beast than a human, the almost naked woman charged Lakyus like an enraged bull, stronger and faster than ever. Both for her lack of weight wearing her down and the Martial Arts she used.

Even while still busy dodging her swings, Lakyus could not help but notice how her light wounds already stopped bleeding 'is she even human?!' she thought in worry as the hammer passed only a few centimeters from her head.

The exchange went on for what seemed like hours to Lakyus. She knew that if one of those strikes hit her, it would be all over. Fortunately, her opponent decided to disregard completely any defenses allowing the blond swordswoman to inflict on her more cheap damage. Most humans by now would have been downed but instead Gagaran didn't seem to relent.

Even with all those boosts, Lakyus began to feel tired both physically and mentally. In a desperate attempt to stop the unrelenting woman, she lunged with her blade which only resulted in a struggle between hammer and sword. Both opponents didn't want to let go though and continued to push against each other until Gagaran's hammer snapped in two and Lakyus fell forward face down.

But even disarmed, the giant woman did not accept defeat and instead used her superior strength to tackle down the rising Lakyus, forcing the smaller girl on the ground.

'I must get it!' was the only thought in Lakyus mind as she stretched her hand toward her blade that slipped from her grasp when the hulking woman pushed her down. But just before she could touch her blade, she felt the tight grasp around her wear off and she immediately used the moment to crawl away from under the larger woman.

It didn't take her long to understand what happened once she stood up. Her opponent passed out, probably from both sustaining so many wounds and straining her mind beyond what was considered wise to maintain her Martial Arts.

With the crowd still cheering she recovered her sword and walked away, limping a bit as she felt some bruises created all over her body.

As she reached the gate, many employees came running out to recover her opponent and everything left in the arena.

{Satoru's P.O.V.}

As the semifinals approached, Satoru could not help but feel a tiny bit of excitement inside him. This whole thing reminded him so much about the good old days, when Yggdrasil still held tournaments, if not for the fact that the competitors were significantly weaker than the average Yggdrasil player.

"Gazef, will Lakyus be all right after that bi-brute tackled her?"

The sweet voice of Renner asked from her spot next to the emperor. An innocent question, for anyone who wasn't Satoru.

By now he could easily recognize the small signs on her face indicating her true feelings. The inferior lip she now slightly perked was a sign of her clenching her teeth, and the slightly too fast twitching of her golden eyebrow signified her irritation at what was presented before her.

‘Well, she and Lakyus are friends after all. I would be pretty upset if something like that happened to Pero or Buku, or anyone from Ainz Ooal Gown’ he pondered as at the same time Gazef assured the third princess about her friend’s safety.

“I am sure Lakyus will be fine. She is incredibly strong and talented. There is no way something like that could put her down.”

Joined Arche who stayed mostly silent for the whole tournament ‘maybe she just doesn’t enjoy blood and violence. She seems more like the scholar type’ judged Satoru based on the last weeks spent mostly alongside the young caster.

Before Satoru had the time to give the blond child his own assurance the next match was announced, a match he idly awaited if he had to be honest.

‘I wonder if he is going to use it this time around? Why else would he have asked me for it otherwise?’ the undead wondered as his eyeless stare focused on the blue cloaked man who swiftly went for his spot, opposite the giant war troll known as Go Gin.

“What do you think Sir Osk? Do you have faith in your champion’s prowess?”

Asked the masked magic caster, curious to know what type of man sat next to him. The nervous looking merchant waited a few seconds before giving his answer.

“Go Gin is wary of him, and I feel like I should follow his instinct due to my own lack of experience in such evaluations.”

A good answer in Satoru’s book. It showed this man was no bigot fool like many he met back in Re-Estize.

‘Now, why don’t you show me what that toy can do in the right hands?’ rhetorically asked the magic caster to the man hiding under that cloak.

{Lakyus’ P.O.V.}

She was still nursing her own bruises when the first semifinal began. Luckily, she didn’t have any broken bone or serious injury that would hinder her ability to give her all in her next match. The final was a very different matter though, if she would even get there in the first place.

She only passed this turn thanks to Satoru after all. If it wasn’t for his spells, she doubted she would have resisted or been able to defend at all against that giant woman.

She still shuddered at the idea of being pinned down to the ground like that. She never felt more powerless than that before. Facing that woman in hand-to-hand combat was like an ant trying to climb a mountain. ‘is this how master Brain felt after his battle with Satoru?’ she wondered before shaking that thought away. It wasn’t the same, Brain come out of that match an empty shell of a man. What she felt was just fear.

‘I don’t want to see your face ever again’ those were the last words her blue haired teacher told her after their heated discussion. They were painful. She never felt such an ache like that in her heart before. She tried to find him and apologize but what was said was said. ‘I was being a brat again...’ she thought

as anguish started to build up once more before she slapped herself. 'Focus! If you want to make it up to him, you must show all you learned and win this!' her determination flowed in once more as she focused on the battle before her. 'If I want to beat Go Gin I must play everything I have on speed and use the few openings in his armor to disable his junctures and force him to the ground. The legs would be the perfect spot to target. Looking at his previous matches, he doesn't seem to regard his own safety that much, preferring to simply overpower his opponent' she analyzed as she waited for the referee to start the match.

Go Gin's tactic was the same as all his previous battles'. He charged his opponent, his metal club already ready for a strike midway toward his adversary. But this time, instead of trying to block or dodge, the blue cloaked man went on one knee. The club passing just centimeters from his head, before surging forward, grasping the club's handle and trying to twist it away from the war troll's grasp unsuccessfully.

The demi-human immediately used his free hand to try and punch his opponent, but his telegraphed move was easily avoided by the man who proceeded to use his leg to kick the troll's weapon, still trying to send it away from his hands.

Go Gin, seeming enraged by this, used his body to try and squish Blue under him by falling forward, an attack avoided by the cloaked man who used the occasion to roll under the demi-human's legs as he fell face down on the arena.

With Go Gin down at the mercy of his opponent, it would have only seemed natural for Blue to get his weapon out and deliver, if not a killing blow, at least a incapacitating one, but instead the man stood there, waiting for the troll to regain his balance and

stance, much to the bafflement of both Lakyus and the whole Arena.

But Lakyus' bafflement and shock weren't only from the actions she saw being taken before her eyes, but mostly by the fact that she recalled those perfect movements. How could she not? She was subjected to them and the frustration they brought for the last month. And before her brain could process what that meant she jumped in her spot as a loud roar echoed all around her.

“FIGHT ME! FIGHT ME! KILL ME IF YOU CAN! DO ALL YOU WANT! FIGHT! YOU HUMILIATE ME! DISHONOR ME! I STRONG! YOU STRONG! BUT YOU NOT FIGHT! YOU NOT HIT! I NOT TOLARATE THIS!”

The war troll screamed in all his rage and wounded pride, now really resembling the beast many thought demi-humans were. The blue cloaked man didn't seem bothered by that though and just stood there awaiting the troll's next move who, probably enraged even more by the lack of reaction, charged forward once more.

“[STRONG STRIKE]!”

Go Gin cried out activating his Martial Art before slamming his metal club when Blue stood just a second before. The power of the strike created a crater in the arena and the powerful wind created by the strike reached even Lakyus.

But in that instant the young noble couldn't care less since the strike, while missing, still managed to make Blue's hood fall down revealing what was under it.

Blue hair, brown eyes, tanned skin and an unmistakable scowl on his face. Lakyus' mouth opened. The war troll stared, and the

Arena fell silent as Brain Unglaus stood there glaring at everything in his vision.

A.N.

Ohohoh, longest chapter of this story as of now. I couldn't finish the arc in two chapters. Sorry about that. Oh well, the cat is out of the bag. But the question remains, who will win the tournament? Stay tuned for more! Maybe leave a review. I missed those dearly during these 2 months. Oh! And make sure to give a look at my Overlord one-shot "A Tale of Two Halves" if you want! Thanks!

PS: Lakys may seem pretty OP, but I assure you she is not. What she has is a very elite training by the best swordmen in the continent (for all we know), Satoru's support and an unyielding determination.

PPS: Someone asked me for a character sheet of Lakys and Renner and I thought it would be funny to make one, so here it is (none of this is canon though, so do not speculate on these info)

Name: Renner Theiere Chardelon Ryle Vaiself

Title: Demonic Smiling Princess

Job: Third Princess of the Re-Estize Kingdom

Residence: Ro-Lente Castle

Job Level:

Princess (3)

Actress (4)

Genius (5)

Death Follower (5)

Karma: -350 (Meticulously Evil)

Hobby: Following Satoru around and cuddling with him whenever possible.

“The Third Princess, the last in line to the Re-Estize’s throne. Her golden hair and sky-blue eyes make her look like an angel while they hide the true, concealed demon inside. Her life goal is to please and be pleased by the magic caster Satoru. No matter how high the body pile might grow, she will still go forward, until all who stand in her way are dead.”

Name: Lakyus Alvein Dale Aindra

Title: Apprentice of the genius swordsmen

Job: Noble Marquis Heiress

Residence: Royal Capital

Job Level:

Noble (2)

Swordswoman (6)

Blade Master (4)

Martial Artist (2)

Death Follower (2)

Karma: +150 (Self-Proclaimed Righteous)

Hobby: Training, listening to Satoru's tales and hanging out with Renner

"She refuses her noble duties as heiress and instead wishes to travel the world and bring justice to those who are too weak to take it for themselves. Her passion brought many important figures to support her dream of becoming the strongest swordswoman."

Stay safe and have a nice day!