2153 A Cleaner World  
  
After the dinner with the Esteemed Temporary Governor, the dome did not seem orderly and neat to Jest anymore.  
  
Instead, it looked morbid and revolting.  
  
Back there in the opulent room, the amicable tyrant had eagerly explained his unhinged views to the members of Warden's team… rather, he had complained about his hardships to fellow Awakened, not even bothering to check if they shared his delusion.  
  
As if it was a matter of course.  
  
What the Esteemed Temporary Governor believed… in short, it was that only Awakened were real people, and therefore deserved to be treated as such.  
  
With the descent of the Nightmare Spell, humanity was separated into two distinct groups — those who had been chosen by the Spell, and those whom it ignored.  
  
The first group was stronger, faster, and more resilient. Awakened possessed mystical powers, and were given deadly trials to prove their worth. Naturally, it was only to be expected that they would play a greater role in society going forward, and would earn greater privileges as a result.  
  
However, the damn maniac had taken it to a whole other level. He seemed to consider being chosen by the Spell as the will of Heaven, anointing the Awakened as true inheritors of Earth.  
  
Awakened were holy… and therefore, those not chosen by the Spell were wicked. They were mere beasts who walked through their lives asleep, unable of real emotions or rational thought, clumsily imitating human behavior. It was only right to treat them as cattle — or dispose of them if they outlived their use.  
  
At least that was what the Governor believed. It was unclear if his soldiers shared in this demented belief or simply followed his whims because their abuse of the mundane population went unpunished under his rule.  
  
There was indeed order and safety… but it was not because people were united in the task of maintaining the dome. Instead, it was because people were treated as slaves, and anyone who failed to accomplish the tasks given to them by the Awakened were cruelly punished, or outright killed.   
  
Warden's expression was stiff as they walked to their accommodations.  
  
Eventually, he said:  
  
"I… knew it was going to be bad. But I didn't think that it would get this bad, this fast."  
  
Jest looked at him.  
  
"Who's the optimist now, huh?"  
  
Warden just stared back blankly.  
  
Jest sighed.  
  
"Well, it doesn't matter. None of our people is in this dome, anyway — we'll need to cross over to other domes if we want to get to them."  
  
It was not that surprising, really. The Governor did take his views way too far, but he was definitely not the only member of the nascent Awakened supremacy movement. It was only natural that there would be some who saw Awakened as inherently different and innately superior beings when compared to ordinary humans.  
  
It was also not that rare to see people get all kinds of weird ideas about the Nightmare Spell, seeing it as some kind of divine intervention. There were at least a dozen odd cults spreading in NQSC, growing in numbers and developing extremist tendencies at a rapid pace.  
  
And that was just what crazy people did. There were also those who were quite sane, but callously exploited the lunacy of others with malicious intent.  
  
It was a proper mess.  
  
Warden's expression darkened, but he did not say anything else.  
  
…For a while.  
  
In the morning, after they had witnessed more of how atrociously mundane people were treated inside the dome, Warden called out for Jest quietly.  
  
To be fair, by then, even Jest himself was a little pale. He had even left his breakfast untouched, feeling sick to his stomach at the sight of the lavish meal.  
  
That was probably the first time Jest had neglected free food.  
  
Warden looked at him for a while, then said evenly:  
  
"About what you said. That we should just move on to the next dome."  
  
Jest raised an eyebrow.  
  
"Yeah?"  
  
Warden lingered for a moment.  
  
"What if I don't want to?"  
  
He frowned, then added slowly:  
  
"What if I want to start working on that… obvious solution… right now? Won't I need to eliminate competition if I want to become one of the eventual rulers of humanity?"  
  
Jest smiled.  
  
It seemed to him like the order was reversed… what Warden really wanted was for the trash like the Esteemed Temporary Governor to be eliminated, and since no one else was cleaning the streets, he had no choice but to become the garbage disposal specialist himself.  
  
So that his son could grow up in a cleaner world.  
  
Jest shrugged.  
  
"Then, the Esteemed Governor will have to die."  
  
Warden's expression changed, becoming colder and more dangerous than before.  
  
Eventually, he said indifferently:  
  
"We can't kill him without justification, though."  
  
Jest laughed.  
  
"Can't we? Well, leave that to me. If he attacks me first, we'll be justified in defending ourselves, won't we? Ah, but make no mistake. It won't be just the Governor… his people are just as guilty, and they won't be happy to see their own justification disappear. In fact, they'll quickly appoint a new figurehead and continue perpetrating monstrous acts with impunity."  
  
Warden looked at him darkly.  
  
"Haven't we gotten pretty good at killing monsters, though?"  
  
Jest smiled.  
  
"That we did…"  
  
The Warden remained silent for a while, then nodded.  
  
"Then. I'll delegate that part to you."  
  
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Two days later, the interior of the dome was neither orderly nor neat anymore.  
  
Instead, it was a bloodbath.  
  
The Esteemed Temporary Governor was dead. His most loyal warriors were dead, too — the others have either surrendered or ran away.  
  
It was quite a feat, for the small group of Awakened warriors led by Warden to dismantle the entire locаl force despite being outnumbered one to ten. However, numbers did not matter too much against a well-coordinated attack. Especially if it started with a sudden decapitation strike.  
  
Plus, the local Awakened were no match for Warden and his people. After all, those who habitually trampled the weak usually fell apart when facing the strong… and the warriors who had conquered the ancient castle were very strong.   
  
Jest had killed the Governor himself. He incited the poor fool to attack by combining his Awakened and Dormant Abilities, then gutted him right there in the opulent dining room.  
  
It had not been too hard. In fact, it had been rather easy… he usually struggled when fighting abominations, since those were mindless beasts. But humans were intelligence creatures, and extreme anger robbed them of their most dangerous weapon — their intellect.  
  
So, for him, killing humans was both easier and more rewarding.  
  
The Governor was a powerful Awakened, but he succumbed to Jest's knife all the same. As the fool's body hit the floor, Jest did not feel much pride… or much of any kind of emotion, really.  
  
Just the satisfaction of feeling his body becoming stronger.  
  
After that, they swiftly and strategically dealt with the Governor's supporters. Now, there were a few dozen captive soldiers kneeling in the courtyard of the luxurious mansion while they searched it for any stragglers.   
  
That was when they discovered the hidden cellar.  
  
…A few minutes later, Jest came back on weak legs and crouched in the hallway, breathing heavily.  
  
Then, he shuddered and vomited on the luxurious carpet, his eyes trembling slightly.  
  
Warden emerged from the basement a minute оr two later, pale as a ghost.  
  
Both of them remained silent for a while, looking at each other with pale faces.  
  
In the end, Jest was the first one to speak:  
  
"I… I think I understand what you meant. Back there, on the wall of the castle. These people… someone needs to stop them, right?"  
  
Warden took a deep breath.  
  
A few moments later, he said coldly:  
  
"They are not people."  
  
In the end, the captives did not survive the day, either.  
  
Warden did not execute them — instead, he simply handed them to the mundane inhabitants of the dome in restraints.  
  
Perhaps executing them swiftly would have been more merciful.  
  
Observing the bloody spectacle outside the wall, Jest sighed...  
  
It pained him to see all these soul fragments going to waste.