

Boxxy rolled frantically in order to dodge Erena's tail whip, making the spiky appendage crack the stone floor. It then hopped over a sweeping wave of green flames, followed by ducking under an enraged claw swipe and transitioning into rapid bobbing and weaving motions as it slipped past a hail of razor-sharp ice shards. It then charged straight through the wall of poison mist in front, counting on its Legendary Endurance to fight off the toxin's effects.

Having finally gotten within striking distance of the snake-thing's body, it stuck the large nail-shaped device in its hands into Erena's flank. It drove the thing as deep between her ribs as it would go, but it couldn't get it all the way in there before it had to move away from her counterattack. The self-proclaimed Goddess of Destruction had flesh so dense and solid that it put metals and stones to shame. It was still flesh, however, which meant it was unable to stop the mithril-tipped weapon from piercing her hide. It just needed a good hammer to finish the job.

Which was where Kora stepped in. Or rather flew in, as she had to leap up to Erena's humanoid torso in order to reach the spot her master had 'marked.' The snake-woman saw her coming and twisted her body to avoid the rage-guided demon-missile. Stuck in mid-air with no effective way of dodging or blocking, the hoarder was struck by a sudden tail whip that sent her crashing into the wall on the opposite side of the stone arena. Erena then pulled the mysterious device out of her side and crushed it in her hand as the open wound rapidly closed itself.

The not-a-naga turned her attention back to the shapeshifter in charge and launched another barrage of flames and icicles at it by simply waving her hand in its general direction. Fizzy's thrown Novaspikes then smashed her square in the jaw, both bludgeoning and electrocuting her to disturb her concentration. The dynamo golem herself was flying straight towards her face in her jump-jet-assisted Assault Mode. She drove the two retractable blades that transformation came with deep into Erena's right eye while simultaneously activating Heat Exchange. Her body's significant temperature build up was purged directly into the snake-woman's face, burning her nasal passage in addition to blinding her other eye.

Fizzy was then swatted away with a backhanded swipe as if she were a wasp that had just stung a person. Which was an extremely apt comparison given the fact that Erena's head alone was more than two times taller than the golem's own height. The radiant construct wasn't about to let herself smash into the wall, however, and used the propulsion of her back-mounted turbines to gain control of her body before she smashed into the wall. She had also done her job of temporarily blinding the massive monster, allowing Drea the opportunity she needed to land on her head. The spider demon then extended her scythe blades outwards and rolled down the length of Erena's spiked back like a wheel made of swords.

Jen darted right past the vertically challenged Paladin while she was recovering from being tossed around. The griffin harpy flew in a straight line aimed towards the freshly opened gashes in Erena's back. The snake woman was too busy trying to get Drea off of her to notice her approach, which was precisely what the recently converted Monk had expected. There was no way this pompous monster would be able to ignore a webstalker crawling over her body and

relentlessly clawing away at her scales and skin. It was just the distraction Jen needed in order to execute her plan.

The harpy flipped herself over at the last moment, allowing her to land on Erena's back legs-first. This put her entire momentum into her ridiculously sharp talons, which tore into an open wound on the dubious deity's lower back, right between the crimson spikes growing out of it. Jen's powerful feet then latched onto the spine underneath, which was so large and thick it felt like a century-old tree branch. It would've proven far too much for the hybrid monster to handle if not for the Snatcher's Grip Skill she got at Level 10 of her Harpy Job. The ability greatly amplified the grip strength of her avian feet, which, when combined with her four digit STR Attribute, allowed her legs to perform some truly phenomenal feats.

Such as gripping the would-be-goddess's spine so hard that her vertebrae began to crack under the pressure. Erena naturally tried to pull the harpy off, but her hands couldn't reach that sweet spot. She tried bombarding her with magical projectiles instead, but Jen deflected most of them away with her enchanted staff, and the ones that actually hit her did not do enough damage to force her away. Erena then tried swatting the harpy away with her tail. That also didn't work though, as Jen's Spirit Guardian leapt out of the Monk's body and blocked the strike completely by catching the limb between its spectral hands. Sensing that the snake woman was about to start thrashing around, the harpy activated Dustoff in an effort to finish what she had started. Her wings caught the sudden updraft of air, allowing her to instantly gain enough speed and momentum to quite literally rip a part of Erena's spine from her back.

The whole thing was a bit of a gambit on Jen's part, but it paid off big time when Erena's massive body fell forward. With her now effectively paralyzed below the waist, the most she could do was scream in anger, pain and frustration while clawing at the ground. She couldn't even crawl because of the tens of meters of limp snake muscle that was now nothing more than dead weight. Jen then made life even more difficult for her by slamming her Ki-infused adamantite staff into Erena's palm with such force that it pierced clean through the limb despite being a blunt weapon. It also lodged itself into the stone floor underneath, effectively immobilizing one of her victim's two arms.

Erena's sorry state wouldn't last long, however, as the crippling injury would probably heal itself in a matter of seconds. Her regenerative ability was so potent that her face had already recovered from Fizzy's attack in mere seconds. Something Xera was about to rectify as she stood before the pinned serpent with a wicked grin on her face.

"Scorching Ray! Fireball! Magma Missile! Inferno!"

The djinn started blasting her target with an unceasing barrage of Pyroclasm Spells. Erena naturally had a good deal of resistance against magic, which was common for monsters above a certain size. However, Xera's Penetration Expertise Skill allowed a portion of her magic damage to ignore such defensive measures. It was the first time in her entire existence that Erena felt her eyeballs boil and pop within her own skull, something she naturally didn't

appreciate. Yet at the same time she was no stranger to pain, allowing her to burst through the flames of Xera's mystical barrage in an attempt to bite her top half clean off.

And in doing so walked right into the djinn's trap.

"Smokey! Now!"

The quadruped Molten Guardian leaped into the serpentine deity's open maw, giving her a solid mouthful of animated lava. Plumes of red flame poured out of Erena's nose and ears as Smokey lodged itself in her throat as best it could, roasting her from the inside out while also making her choke on its body. Kora then landed on the back of her head, slamming her chin against the stone floor with the force of her full weight. The hoarder grinned widely as she started ripping spikes from the snake's head and sticking them back in pointy-end first. The brutal acupuncture didn't do a lot of damage, but it certainly kept Erena too pissed off to notice what Boxy was doing.

The shapeshifter had retrieved another nail-like device from its Storage and had slammed it into the massive monster's back, right into the hole that Jen's spine-ripping grip had opened up. Just like before, it couldn't get the entirety of the meter-long shaft inside. Which was why it rolled out of the way of Fizzy, who acted as the hammer to Boxy's nail and struck the flat metal bit sticking out from behind with all her strength. This not only drove the device fully into the dense flesh, but it also delivered a devastating shock as the mithril construct's DILDO unleashed its payload directly into Erena's insides.

With its tentatively named Dragon Thorn firmly in place, Boxy twisted and pulled out the flat top at the end. This triggered the device's concealed mechanism, causing several short and sharp spikes to jut out of its length, anchoring it to the surrounding flesh as if it was the world's cruelest fish hook. Its twisted inventor then splashed a literal bucket full of healing potion onto the wound, forcing it to close and seal the spiked rod inside Erena's body. She probably couldn't feel it since she was temporarily paralyzed, but it would be a nice little surprise for when she started moving around again.

An event that came sooner than anticipated, as Erena's damaged spine mended itself with a disgustingly loud crack several seconds later. With her nervous system repaired, it was now able to report on the foreign object stuck inside her waist in excruciating detail. The sudden influx of pain was so agonizing that the self-proclaimed Goddess of Destruction screamed loud enough to rupture one's eardrums. She also thrashed around wildly, her powerful muscles fragmenting the Dragon Thorn and only making it worse for her. It looked to be such a mind-numbing ordeal that it made Xera slightly jealous of Erena.

Boxy took this opportunity while the serpent was busy dealing with the foreign object inside her waist to pull back and regroup with the others towards the edge of the enclosed arena.

“Got any bright ideas yet?” Fizzy asked while keeping an eye on the spasming snake. “There’s only so much stalling we can do.”

“I’m still working on it,” the shapeshifter grumbled.

“How about we just keep hitting the bitch until she drops?”

The shapeshifter would’ve liked to agree with Kora’s suggestion, but there was one major problem with that.

“Did you actually deal any damage to her with your last attacks?”

“Uh... not... exactly...”

“What about the rest of you?”

“Nope.”

“Negative.”

“No, Master.”

“Tktktkt...”

As expected, Fizzy, Jen, Xera and Drea were in the same boat as Kora and Boxy. This was the biggest problem with this situation. Though the monster-demon coalition got notified of damage dealt to Erena as per usual during their initial assault, this was no longer the case. Those helpful messages informing the attackers of how much HP their target had lost had ceased altogether once she declared her supposed godhood and reshaped her lair into this oversized tomb. It was as if the thing they were hitting was not a living being, but a soulless meat puppet that had no Status or will of its own. Which, to put it mildly, did not seem plausible.

There were a few explanations Boxy could think of. One possibility was that she was under the influence of an effect similar to the Conceal Vitality enchantment, which deprived one’s attacker of information regarding damage dealt. However, if it were something that simple, then the shapeshifter’s Eyes of the Dead God would not have failed to discern her name and HP. One other option was that she had somehow swapped her real self out for some kind of animated construct without anyone noticing, but Boxy found it hard to believe this was the case. Not only was Erena’s body way too big and heavy for that to happen, but subtlety was clearly not her strong point.

The last and most likely alternative was that she possessed an immortal body like Ambrosia. The elder dryad’s physical manifestation had literally infinite HP as long as her tree remained intact, so hitting her would never yield a damage notification. Meaning that it was this altered environment that was to blame for her apparently bottomless vitality. With that in mind, Boxy

had a certain idea when it saw Erena claw at her own midriff in an attempt to get the Dragon Thorn out.

“What’s the plan, boss?”

Kora’s question sounded quite eager, and for good reason. All of Boxy’s familiars were quite familiar with the look in their master’s yellow eyes. It was no longer the scrutinizing gaze that sized up one’s opponent, but a predatory glare that was trying to discern the best way to gobble up one’s meal.

“We start with a Horkensaft Shuffle.”

However, neither the demons nor the religious monsters expected it to say such a thing. They all looked at the massive thrashing snake-thing with eyes full of doubt and disbelief. The ‘technique’ Boxy was referring to was unlikely to work on something that stupidly big and heavy. Not to mention they didn’t see how it would help their situation. Nevertheless, if that methodical murderer had called for a flashy move like that, then it must have had bloody good reason to do so.

“Just let me take the lead.”

The Sandman-shaped monster stepped forward, gripping its Voidcaller staff with both hands while carefully watching its target. Erena, who had seemingly forgotten about the intruders in her lair, had only just finished scooping the Dragon Thorn fragments out of her body. She had to gouge out a considerable amount of flesh around her abdominal area to do so, but she probably wasn’t bothered by a bit of self-mutilation. She really should have been, though.

“Remulus Secare!”

After all, if not for that, then the divine version of Boxy’s Reality Slash Spell might not have been potent enough to cleave through her waist so completely. Her humanoid and serpentine parts fell to the ground independently, forcing Erena to land on her hands while screaming with rage rather than pain. That too proved to be a bad decision, as it allowed Boxy to chuck a certain Artifact right into her open maw. It was a magical gemstone about the size and shape of a large chicken egg, teal in color but fading to white near the thinner end.

The item in question bore the tongue-in-cheek name of ‘World Enlarger.’ It was obviously not nearly powerful enough to affect the entirety of Terrania, but it certainly seemed that way from Erena’s perspective when she started shrinking. Within seconds her titanic stature had been reduced until she was no more than a hundred and thirty centimeters tall, just as the Artifact’s gnomish creator had intended. Immensely disoriented by her new perspective, Erena could do nothing as Kora, who was now twice as tall as her, ran up and punted her as if she were a mere kickball.

“You’re up, bird-brain!”

The harpy the hoarder called out to was more than ready to play her part, as she intercepted Erena in mid-air with a spinning heel-kick that sent her flying straight down. Fizzy was there to catch her with an upswing of her hammer that directed her trajectory back up. She flew past a leaping Drea, who not only cut her as deep as she could, but also wrapped a rope of maximum strength spider thread around her neck. Unfortunately Erena's upper body mass hadn't changed despite her smaller stature, so the webstalker lacked the ridiculous brute strength required to affect her momentum enough to keep her from smacking into the ceiling.

Hence why Drea passed the other end of the silken rope to Kora, who had no difficulty swinging the self-proclaimed deity around like a flail. She slammed Erena into the floor so hard that the snake-thing actually bounced back up. Fizzy's large-fisted Charger Mode smacked her on the rebound while moving at high speeds, sending her flying parallel to the ground, right towards Jen. The Monk gathered her strength and sharpened her focus, hitting Erena in the jaw with a perfectly executed rising knee strike. It was honestly a miracle her mangled head was still attached despite the surreal way the entirety of her considerable momentum had been reduced to zero, leaving her momentarily floating in place.

Kora piled it on by leaping on top of her and body-slamming 'snake-tits' into the ground. She then rolled off of her just as Xera's Volcano Spell caused the underlying rock to explode violently, sending Erena airborne once again. The djinn then hit her with an amped-up Scorching Ray that burned off most of her skin and one of her arms. Drea zipped past her on a web line in the next instant, slicing Erena's charred body open once again before Fizzy flew up and smacked her back down. She landed face-first into one of Boxy's high-yield landmines, followed closely by the shapeshifter grabbing her with a pair of tentacles shaped like massive monstrous eels and flinging her to the side.

This was where the so-called Horkensaft Shuffle came to an abrupt end. Not because one of Boxy's minions failed to intercept the battered and disoriented 'goddess' and keep the game going. And indeed, as violent as it was, 'game' was the best way to describe what had just transpired. Though the 'ball' would certainly have suffered immense damage while she was being bounced around, that was not the goal of this particular Shuffle. The whole thing was nothing but a diversion to keep Erena hurting and disoriented while Boxy finished its preparations.

And not a moment too soon, as the World Enlarger's effects were already starting to wear off. Thankfully reverting back to her full size was a far more gradual process than the initial shrinkage. This was important, as it meant the half-a-goddess was still small enough to fit through the swirling pink portal that Boxy had tossed her through.

[window]You have entered the Undead Apocalypse instant dungeon.[/window]

When Erena was finally able to get her bearings, she found herself in a ruined village, human judging by the architecture of the few houses and buildings that hadn't collapsed yet. Smoke and screams filled the air, the sky was dyed the color of blood and carrion birds circled overhead while cawing ominously. The place also had a distinct stench of death and rot that,

oddly enough, seemed strangely nostalgic to Erena. She just couldn't remember why it seemed so familiar.

THUK

"Gah!"

She didn't exactly have the opportunity to dig into her millenia old memories either, as an arrow made of ice lodged itself in her shoulder like a barbed needle.

[window]You have pierced your target with an arrow. Target HP -517.[/window]

"Yup, that did it."

Having finally received some proper feedback on its attack, Boxyx wasted no time in sharing the good news with its five cohorts, who were all too eager to start round three of the fight. Erena, on the other hand, was only just now realizing how badly she had screwed up. Her adversaries had proven too skillful to be caught up in her attacks, so she had decided to let them tire themselves out while crashing against her undying body. Then, when the time was right, she would return the suffering and agony she had received a thousandfold. Not even those wretched demons and their stubborn little souls would be able to resist getting obliterated.

However, the self-proclaimed Goddess of Destruction had underestimated the adaptability and resourcefulness of one Boxyx T. Morningwood. Otherwise she would not have had most of her body ripped apart then have the leftovers get chunked into this bizarre space. The latter was far more troubling than the former, as it separated her from the source of her power just as Boxyx had theorized. Not only that, but with her crippled body returning to its original size, she could no longer fit through the person-sized portal beyond the party of monsters and demons in front of her.

Having been robbed of her lower half, one of her arms and her home turf advantage, Erena behaved like any other cornered monster would. She lashed out, striking with a degree of ferocity far beyond what she had displayed earlier. The half-a-woman no longer had the luxury of playing the waiting game, and was actively expending what energy and life force she had left in a desperate attempt to crush her enemies. Not even her missing body parts seemed to impede her in this state as she ran wild, wielding chaotic magics with thought and force of will alone.

That said, there was only so much she could accomplish in this last stand. She couldn't get a clean hit on anyone in Boxyx's group before, and none of them were green enough to get caught off guard by her violent surge. Even if she somehow managed to injure one of her adversaries it would ultimately amount to nothing as Fizzy's healing magic would follow within seconds. Erena's only hope was to eliminate someone in one hit, but that was practically impossible. The monstrous half of Boxyx's group had far too many ways to mitigate and absorb damage while the demons could distribute HP loss among them through their Soul Link.

Her attackers, on the other hand, laid into her with all they had. Jen and Kora unleashed a combined beatdown from above and below that tossed their much larger opponent around so much it was almost as if she was a hot air balloon. Drea's excessively sharp claws and scythes peeled back her skin and scales, allowing Xera's magic to burn her so thoroughly that Erena felt like her bones were on fire. And with Boxy and Fizzy unleashing a combination of physical and elemental attacks on top of all that, the once proud 'Goddess of Destruction' was rapidly turning into a living encyclopedia on the subject of wounds.

Yet even though it seemed all but inevitable that Erena would fall, she never once thought about backing down. Everyone present within the instant dungeon recognized that this was no longer a fight, but merely an extended funeral procession. The massive snake-woman refused to give up, though. No true monster would ever just lie down and die regardless of how astronomically poor its odds of survival were. Nor would Boxy's side grow complacent just because it seemed that victory was all but assured.

Erena's life finally ran out when Drea lashed her upper body to the ground, allowing a combined effort from Kora, Fizzy and Jen to shatter her skull against the ground. Xera then dropped a Meteor on top of her for good measure, but she was already dead by that point according to the notifications in Boxy's head.

[window]Level up!

Level up!

Congratulations, you are now a Level 85 Warlock! INT +4. MNT +4. END +4.[/window]

"SKRRRAAAAAAHR!"

However, the shapeshifter did not get the chance to savor its victory for long before a deep, powerful roar emanated from within the mass of smoke and flames in front of it. A three meter tall lump of molten rock shaped like an exceptionally muscular human lunged at it, only to be instantly pulverized by a single hit from Jen's staff. The smoldering construct collapsed like a house of cards so quickly that Boxy didn't even get the chance to inspect it with the Skill it 'borrowed' from Mortimer.

The oddities had yet to end, however, as what looked to be a spectral orc rose from the ashes. The red-colored apparition seemed to scream at Boxy in rage, but nobody could actually hear its voice. This instant dungeon was heavy with the Blight, so it wasn't unreasonable to expect Erena to have obtained some sort of undead form, though the fact that it looked nothing like her was... unexpected. Fizzy stood ready to exorcise the wraith either way, though it would appear a certain someone seemed intent on handling things personally.

"I'll take that, if you don't mind."

A bright green light enveloped the crimson ghost as some kind of portal opened up directly above it. A fluffy pink rope, a heavy chain made of bent spoons, a rainbow colored vine and a tentacle made of white sand descended from the hole in space. They wrapped around what was

left of Erena's spirit and started pulling it away. The orc-shaped apparition kicked without legs and screamed without a voice, its face now dyed by the purest form of horror Boxy had ever seen. Its glowing eyes seemed to almost beg its killers to save it, but they had neither the desire nor the ability to prevent it from being swallowed up by the green vortex. The rift then closed shut with a loud 'pop.'

"... Emmett?" Boxy asked aloud.

"Yup, it's me," the Goddess of Change's disembodied voice washed over it.

"Dare I ask what's going on?"

"I don't know, dare you?"

"... Yes, I dare."

"You're sure? Knowledge can be a heavy burden."

"I think we've earned an explanation at least," Fizzy chimed in.

"Yes, I suppose you have," Kristina conceded. "Very well. Those who wish to know are free to stay awhile and listen, those who do not should leave."

Terry's invitation was a bizarre one to be sure, but none of the beings he was speaking to seemed willing to take him up on it, albeit for slightly different reasons. Boxy wanted to know the true nature of the threat it faced today so that it can better deal with it should something like this prop up again. Fizzy, on the other hand, was curious what would lead someone to hate her patron deity with such a passion. Kora, Xera and Drea had a personal interest in this 'Mistress' since it was by her word that one of them nearly faced total oblivion. As for Jen, she was merely eager to hear more of Jerald's words after having spent her entire lifetime being actively ignored by Axel.

"Mmm, I thought as much," said the God of Gambling with a hint of disappointment. "I'm kind of lost where I should start, though."

"How about you tell me what that thing actually was?" Boxy suggested.

"Huh, that's odd," the disembodied voice sounded dubious. "I may have missed most of the evening's proceedings, but the Erena I remember wouldn't have been able to resist blabbing about herself when confronted directly. I doubt several millennia would've changed that."

Boxy couldn't help but feel incredibly nervous at Lucy's attitude. Though Erena did declare herself to be a Goddess of Destruction, it was such a ridiculous notion that both it and its entourage had dismissed it as an empty boast. Even after considering everything that had transpired since then, it still believed that, while powerful, this 'Mistress' was by no means divine

in nature. To even suggest otherwise was more than just heretical - it contradicted everything the shapeshifter knew about Terrania's pantheon.

"What you lot faced tonight was none other than Eren, the God of Destruction."

Yet the big man himself clearly stated otherwise, his tone casual and confident as if he was stating the time of day.

"Or at least what became of him after I whooped his ass into obscurity the last time we met."