

(**Warning:** This story contains female muscle, female muscle growth, and graphic sexual content)

Funny how at some point fighting for your life can become 'routine'.

At the risk of jinxing himself, Hugo felt that after the hundredth run-in with aragami the monsters were not as much of a danger to experienced AGEs like himself or any of his friends. Not to discount the threat level the monsters possessed, any misstep could be the difference between life and death. Not to mention the higher class aragami that could pop out would be a serious challenge for God Eaters like them.

But given this was a standard recon mission, Hugo mostly took it like a nature walk.

Of course, 'nature' in this instance meant a landscape filled with lapidated ruins and ruined patches of land where the Ash Storms had passed by. But it beat the dull greys of the home base.

The winds rushing through his hair, his jacket gently billowing, the feeling of his greatsword cutting through aragami like a hot knife through butter. It was as exhilarating as it was relaxing. Perhaps because this was his purpose, to fight monsters. Knowing you can die the next day makes life all the sweeter.

Fighting aragami in the heat of the moment was fun. And while usually Hugo would be concerned by the people they could potentially rescue, mission parameters stated there was no human activity around this area.

Seeing the vast expanse of arid ground, the rucks that jutted out the ground, some of them glowing with energy, pointed to that truly being the case. This area wasn't fit for human habitation, but the ruins of houses he spotted scattered around the region indicated that had been the case once.

Aragami had taken so much from them, and then the Ash Storms made even communication extremely difficult. Hence their mission to scout ahead and establish a network for their shorter-range radio signals. With the Ash Storm having devastated long-range networks, relying on a shorter relay system was one of the steps required to go around creating a whole new network.

Impaling a quadruped aragami with his greatsword, he then let the sword impaled on the ground as the God Arc did its job of severing the Oracle Cells and effectively killing the monster. He reached into his jacket and pulled out his communicator, checking the signal he found they were about to enter a dead zone.

“Hmm, I’d say we can head a couple of miles north to find a good spot for the next relay point” He called out to his friend and partner, removing the sword from the ground and cleaning it with a single swipe in the air. Hugo looked further up the hill to spot Luca engaged with a few aragami still.

There was something mesmerizing about how the platinum blonde fought. Wielding that monstrosity of a God Arc always looked cumbersome to him, which said a lot considering God Arcs were enormous weapons in the first place. But the Heavy Moon type took the cake with its size and intrinsic design.

And yet Luca wielded it so masterfully.

She moved around in a blitz of speed, darting from foe to foe swinging the oversized crescent blade like it weighed nothing in a display of masterful control. Her form was nimble yet strong, lean, and athletic limbs were highlighted by the lack of sleeves, the form-fitting fatigues pants, and the *very* skintight bodysuit.

When Luca switched her God Arc to its axe form, lifting it overhead, Hugo was once more reminded that his companion was a *woman* as shown by the decently sized breasts covered almost too perfectly by her bodysuit.

He cleared his throat, looking away embarrassed for a moment. After pretty much growing up together, Hugo wasn’t used to seeing Luca *that* way.

Even if her unyielding will and masterful battle prowess were very... alluring to him.

A single swing of the weapon and three aragami surrounding her ended up in pieces.

“You done?” He called out.

Luca turned to face him, one steely grey eye looking at him while the other remained hidden by a long bang of hair. She curtly nodded, “Yeah”

"Like I said, we should head out a few miles north. See if we can find a better spot" He said as the two walked closer.

"Sounds sensible" Luca commented without any objection to the plan. She was always succinct with her words, but one shouldn't mistake her silent ponderous nature for stoicism or lack of interest. She was reserved like that.

The two continued moving once all hostiles had been cleared, Hugo looked up the map on his communicator and hummed in thought. "Once we set up more relays, we should be able to get a clearer hold of Old Fort Fenrir's East Branch"

"They should still be operating, yeah?" Luca asked.

"Hopefully. Haven't gotten a courier in some time" Communications being utterly *wrecked* by the damn Ash Storms limited their capacity to send and receive messages.

"It's still quite a ways from here" The blonde mused. "Are there any shelters to spend the night?"

"There should be some abandoned forts on the way, still standing. If not, we'll have to camp inside ruins"

"Not a problem," His friend said, and that was the end of it.

Their trek continued without much issue, they remained alert while traversing through the unknown territory, keeping an eye out for aragami that might jump them. The terrain remained much of the same, uprooted chunks of earth, glowing crystals, ruins scattered around that stood to testament to a time when mankind led a happier more peaceful existence.

By the amount of houses (he assumed these were houses) spread across the area Hugo assumed this place must have been a town or a village perhaps. It wasn't the ruined urban jungle of the cities where grey and dilapidated skyscrapers dotted the landscape, where broken concrete spread as far as the eye could see.

No, this place felt more... humble. The buildings were small. They stood evenly apart at a distance, with fallen and breaking fences separating them. Even the aridness of the ground wasn't completely prevalent as he could see patches of green grass growing tall in the yards. And trees, there were a good number of trees here.

The houses looked large enough to accommodate a few people each. It was hard to believe sometimes but ruins didn't just spring up from the ground, people had *lived* there once. There was a time when these places were *homes*, where people laughed and led their simple ordinary lives.

It made him wonder if these houses could have people living in them one day. If humans could one day reclaim enough of the world to make it so.

Heh, it also briefly made him wonder if it'd be possible for God Eaters like them to actually lay down their arms and just... retire. He never heard of a God Eater who died of old age, they were made to fight for all their lives.

His gaze shifted to Luca, who merely kept looking ahead as they kept walking, Hugo didn't know if she was bothered by the same thoughts as he was. Once more Luca gave nothing away.

"Looks like it was a nice place once" He commented, hands shoved inside his pockets.
"Wonder what it's like, to have your own house like these people did"

"Hmm," Luca pursed her lips as she hummed. "An improvement over leaky forts infested with rats

The black-haired young man had to laugh at that. "Tell me about it..." A rat ate his breakfast the other day.

This was nice, spending time with Luca. Even if they were on a mission, he liked finding moments where the two could just... be themselves, beyond their duty, beyond constantly fighting against the aragami. It brought a sense of 'peace' to him when the world slowed down until it was just the two of them alone.

He took comfort in those moments with his friend. And he internally hoped Luca felt the same way.

The peace was not to last, unfortunately.

They spotted movement further down the road. A blurry light blue figure darting from place to place.

They tensed, hands reaching firmly for their weapons. "Contact" He muttered.

"Looks like an Amor," Luca said. "Low priority, but may run away and attract other aragami"

"Take it out quickly then"

Their legs tensed, and with a burst of superhuman speed, they dashed toward the fish-like floating aragami. An Amor was not a threat by itself, it was very low on the threat thresholds when they weren't in packs. In fact, they were known to run away when confronted more often than not.

No matter, they could kill it before it even got a chance to escape. Hugo didn't change his demeanor even as the creature spotted them and jolted. He merely held his greatsword high while Luca shifted her weapon to its axe form, ready to bring it down to the aragami.

Then something strange happened.