

CLEAVER OF SIN

#Chapter 51: Noticeboard - Read CLEAVER OF SIN Chapter 51: Noticeboard

Chapter 51: Noticeboard

Three weeks had passed since Asher left the capital and returned to the Wargrave estate. Within this time, Asher's name had spread rapidly among both noble households and commoners alike.

Some claimed he had been pretending to be weak all along and had only unleashed his true abilities at that very moment. Others argued that he was simply that talented from the beginning.

There were even wild rumors saying he had killed a thousand Emovirae on the day of his awakening. Numerous stories and exaggerated rumors started to spread like wildfire, igniting curiosity and awe across different regions.

But within the Wargrave estate, nothing had changed. No one congratulated Asher. No one praised him. No reward was given, not even from Azeron, who had earned thousands of platinum coins through his tenth son.

As a Wargrave, winning was expected. It wasn't something to be rewarded or to be surprised about. Victory, for them, was tradition, an obligation, not an accomplishment.

Still, although the Suns and Moons wouldn't speak of it openly, they had indeed been surprised. After all, the only ones who truly knew the full extent of Asher's capabilities were Azeron, who had watched from a distance, and the instructors at the First Training Ground who had personally witnessed him breeze through each stage of training.

Within these three weeks, Asher had made remarkable progress with every area of his training. He had pushed his body to its absolute limits, increasing his mastery of both lightning and Astra control while also striving to raise his Life Rank.

Day by day, hour by hour, he moved with discipline and purpose. His dedication never wavered.

Tomorrow, Asher would be fighting his first monster within the First Training Ground's Monster Subjugation Training. At this moment, he was currently sparring with Clinton, the weapons instructor, the only one capable of keeping up with Asher at this point in his growth.

Asher no longer wanted to continue holding back just so he could spar with other students and gain combat experience from them. He realized it was far more effective to go directly to the source, Clinton himself.

Whenever he finished digesting the gains from a sparring session and Clinton was unavailable, Asher would approach the other instructors who were often observing from the sidelines and propose a spar. He knew he had much to learn from each of them.

From Harold, he learned how to channel raw power and brute force with extreme precision and efficiency.

From Elowen, he learned movement techniques and the fine details of application.

From Virek, he discovered deeper insight into Astra and its usage, observing the man closely as he used the energy during their spars.

As for the three talented seventeen year olds in the First Training Ground, Asher had made quick work of them with utter ease. If Ryan had appeared helpless in front of him, then these three were even more powerless, mere obstacles rather than challenges.

With a heavy boom, two silhouettes clashed with detonating force, then vanished once more. Their figures flickered across the entire expanse of the First Training Ground.

Only sound echoed in the air, and showers of sparks illuminated their paths as they moved with breathtaking speed and precision.

Their forms tore through the atmosphere, crossing distances in the blink of an eye without even pausing or slowing. Their attacks were consistent, deliberate, and remarkable, each one carrying intent and execution honed through unceasing repetition.

Clinton moved smoothly as he sparred with Asher, his face expressionless and calm. His black eyes followed every one of Asher's movements as if they had been printed and posted on a noticeboard.

He blocked, parried, sidestepped, and countered with seamless and fluid motion, like a master dancer performing to an invisible rhythm.

Throughout the entire three weeks of sparring, Clinton had never once corrected Asher on anything. He simply observed, allowing the boy's talent to guide him.

He could feel Asher's intense gaze, those piercing purple eyes, boring into him with every exchange, as though Asher sought to absorb and devour every fragment of knowledge he possessed.

But Clinton didn't object. He moved without resistance, feeding Asher's curiosity and hunger for skill. Asher learned through observation and instinct, improving with each step and swing.

Clinton couldn't help but smile internally at the progress.

Still, assisting Asher in his growth did not mean they were equals. In fact, throughout many of their spars, Clinton had thrown Asher around like a ragdoll.

He had inflicted numerous injuries on Asher's body. After all, if Asher truly wanted to learn, he had to be willing to pay the price.

Pain, after all, was part of growth. And Asher needed to get used to it.

At this moment, Asher was struggling. His body trembled from exhaustion, sweat dripping down his back and face. His chest rose and fell rhythmically, trying to regulate his breath and maintain balance. His muscles burned. His limbs ached.

But his purple eyes remained calm and unwavering. He didn't frown. He didn't speak. He didn't complain. He simply continued pushing his body to its limits with each passing day, with every rising of the sun.

Suddenly, Asher's gaze snapped upward. From above, a broadsword dropped like a meteor in free fall. But Asher knew better. It wasn't random or uncontrolled.

Exhaustion weighed heavily on his limbs as he tried to defend. Virelass, his weapon, flashed upward, intercepting the attack at the last possible moment.

A violent jolt ran through his body. One of his legs buckled, and he fell to one knee, but he instantly rolled to the side, narrowly dodging the follow up strike.

Clinton gave him no time to rest. His broadsword swung again, the air splitting apart as it roared toward Asher's flank. Asher's footwork saved him, guiding him backward with expert timing, but even then, the attack grazed his side.

A thin line of blood appeared where his skin tore.

Still, neither of them paused. They didn't speak. Their blades did all the talking.

Asher counterattacked this time. Virelass thrust forward in quick, successive bursts of speed, but Clinton parried each one effortlessly, as though dealing with a beginner. His broadsword then streaked toward Asher's chest, stopping just inches away as Asher stood frozen, unable to react further.

"Nice work today," Clinton said, finally breaking the silence as he looked at the small monster in front of him.

"Thank you, sir," Asher replied, barely standing.

He knew he was on the verge of collapsing, he had pushed himself to the brink as always. But he also knew that after a little rest and sleep, he would return to peak condition once again.

"From tomorrow onward, you'll begin your monster subjugation training. I wish you luck, Tenth Sun," Clinton said with a small smile.

"Thank you for your guidance, Instructor."

Asher responded, turning and slowly heading toward the exit.

Every step he took made his body feel like it weighed a thousand pounds, like he was dragging a mountain behind him. But he moved without complaint, without pause.

"Don't you think it's cheating at this point, Tenth Sun?" a voice called out from the side.

Asher didn't need to turn to recognize it. It was Ella, one of the three talented students within the First training ground.

"It's all thanks to the Wargrave bloodline."

Asher replied simply, flashing a smile.

"We'll finally see you in the Monster Subjugation Training. I could offer some tips, if you'd like?"

Another voice chimed in. It was Tom, the second of the trio.

Chapter 52: Limiting

Asher shook his head as he spoke, "No need. I will watch and learn through the instructors' guidance."

Tom smiled at Asher's words but offered no reply. He simply walked beside him calmly. He too had pushed himself to the limits. Having a Sun within the training ground had motivated the three of them more than they expected.

Within the past three weeks, the three talented kids had found themselves gradually drawn to Asher. At first, they kept their distance, he was a Sun, after all.

But after seeing him smile and respond gently and calmly to a few passing conversations, their perception of him shifted. They started to grow closer.

"Who keeps healing all these injuries you accumulate?" the last of the trio asked. "I know the Wargrave Household probably has individuals with healing abilities, but wouldn't the Duke come for Instructor Clinton's head at this point?"

His name was Hito.

Although Hito understood that Wargraves were all about battles, combat, and glory through war, what Asher was currently doing still felt absurd to him.

Asher sparred with Clinton each day, receiving injuries that would take down most others on their level, only to come back the next morning as good as new, ready to fight again.

But this was something Asher had personally requested. He didn't just want to spar with Clinton, he had asked Clinton to intentionally exploit any gaps he noticed in his attack sequences and to inflict injuries when necessary.

Not lethal ones, of course, but injuries sharp enough to serve as reminders. It was how Asher chose to learn: by experiencing pain, memorizing it, and adapting to avoid repeating the same mistake.

He knew that in real combat, an opponent would not let such openings slide.

Besides, according to the information Lyra had shared, the Primarch had already left the Wargrave estate for an unknown location.

"It's nothing. This is my path," Asher replied to Hito as they stepped out of the First Training Ground. The sun had already dipped beneath the horizon, casting long shadows over the stony grounds.

"As long as I don't lose a body part or sustain injuries to any vital organs, the family won't interfere," he concluded.

"Even though you're a monster in human skin, just don't collapse out of nowhere," Hito said with a deadpan expression. "I don't want to be jailed under suspicion of murder by association. I'm still young... and still a virgin."

Ella and Tom chuckled at Hito's antics before bidding Asher farewell. "Good night, Tenth Sun," they both said almost in unison, heading toward their respective rooms with Hito trailing after.

Asher watched the trio walk away, a small smile tugging at the corner of his lips. He then turned and began walking in the opposite direction.

After a short walk, he arrived at a place made entirely of stone, a lifeless area where not a single flower or weed dared to grow. Standing in the middle of it, Asher spoke calmly.

"You can bring it now, Lyra."

Within seconds, Lyra's figure materialized before him. But she did not come alone. Beside her stood a beast, trembling uncontrollably.

It was clearly being suppressed by Lyra's overwhelming presence. The beast didn't even dare to growl or flinch; it stood completely frozen, instincts screaming in terror.

Asher walked forward without hesitation. Virelass materialized in his hand, and in one swift motion, he thrust it downward. The rapier pierced clean through the beast's skull and into its brain. The creature didn't even have time to scream.

With a single thought, the Crimson Pact activated. The beast's blood flowed upward, absorbed by Virelass.

Despite the rush of red, Virelass retained its silver hue, almost as if unwilling to stain itself with the blood of such a lowly creature.

Asher's wounds began to heal gradually. His skin knit back together, muscles reconnected, and in just a few moments, every injury was gone, completely restored as though they had never existed.

"Thank you," Asher said as he turned to face Lyra.

"It is my duty, Young Master," Lyra replied with a graceful bow. Then, without needing any instruction, she began cleaning the stone floor, removing the blood and carcass with practiced ease.

This was how Asher healed his injuries each night. He didn't need to rely on healers within the estate. And although Ella, Tom, and Hito had asked, he had no plans of telling them his method.

Asher didn't walk back to his room. This time, he vanished in a flash of silver light, teleporting directly to his room using Position Marker, one of Virelass's known abilities that he rarely utilized.

Upon arriving in his room, his first move was to remove the sweat drenched clothes clinging to his skin like a clingy ex. He quickly showered, changed into fresh clothing, and felt the first waves of comfort roll over his sore muscles.

He sat on his bed, back straight, before eventually allowing himself to drop backward. His body sank into the mattress as he stared at the ceiling in silence, his mind racing with thoughts.

It drifted back to his past life.

There, he hadn't needed to go through any of this. No training, no fighting, no constant pain. All he had to do was wake up, go to class, hang out with friends, and cruise around with Jennifer.

His thoughts shifted to the orphanage where he had grown up. Unlike most children who searched for their biological parents to understand why they were abandoned, Ethan, his past self, had done the opposite.

He had chosen to forget.

They never crossed his mind. How could people he had never met mean anything to him? That Chapter of his life had been closed long ago. Jennifer had encouraged him on several occasions to try and find them, but Ethan remained indifferent.

'I wonder how she is now,' he thought as his purple eyes remained fixed on the ceiling. 'I hope she found someone better than me.'

Even in this moment of reflection, his body did not rest entirely. Asher was still cultivating.

Astra flowed gently through every vein in his body, reinforcing his muscles, bones, and pathways.

Within these past three weeks, Asher had grown frustrated by the need to sit in a lotus position with his eyes closed every time he wanted to cultivate.

The process felt limiting.

After nearly two weeks of trial and error, he had finally succeeded in mastering a method to draw Astra into his body without needing a specific posture. Now, he could cultivate even while walking or resting in bed, as long as he wasn't making any drastic movements.

In this world, everyone who had awakened would passively absorb Astra through their veins, it was how their Astra replenished naturally over time.

However, when they desired to speed up the process, they would actively cultivate by drawing Astra with intent.

'I wonder what tomorrow's monster subjugation will be like,' he thought with a small smile.

Although he had killed several beasts and monsters during his journey to the capital and back, he was curious to see what this specific training would entail.

There was always something new to learn, him fighting a few beast on his journey didn't suddenly make him a battle god or anything.

With that thought lingering in his mind, Asher's lips parted slightly, and he murmured aloud:

"Status."

Chapter 53: Built Different

[Name: Asher Wargrave

Age: Seventeen

Bloodline: The Wargrave Lineage

Physique: Absolute Physique

Titles: [Youngest Heir] [Tenth Sun] [Disgrace of the Wargrave] [Unique Body Holder]

Life Rank: Faintstar

Sub Life Rank: Radiant

Affinity: Lightning

Strength: 58 → 69

Agility: 59 → 70

Vitality: 58 → 59

Perception: 60 → 61]

Asher scanned his system with a smile on his face. Within a month, he had broken through another two minor Life Ranks. But he knew that when he made another breakthrough to the next major Life Rank; Kindlestary, his cultivation speed would significantly slow down.

His strength and agility had both increased by eleven points, while his perception and vitality increased only by a single point.

'Perception and vitality are really hard to increase,' Asher thought to himself.

"It also seems like each minor rank adds five points to my strength and agility,' Asher continued mentally. 'The extra one point comes from breaking the limit of my body. But isn't one point a bit too little?' Asher couldn't help but complain silently.

He sighed and rose from his bed the next second. Lyra was already there with dinner. He wanted to just eat and get back to training.

The Wargrave's True Awakening would be happening in five months, and he couldn't afford to waste any time at all.

After eating, Asher climbed into his bed and dozed off. He had been pushed to his limits during the sparring session earlier, and he needed sleep before he could continue again.

Within these three weeks, Asher's lightning control had shown tremendous results. He could now coat Virelass in lightning just like he did with himself. His lightning could now take various shapes.

This was one of the reasons he was eager to get into the monster subjugation training quickly, so he could test the results of his training from this past month.

The hours slipped by as Asher slept. He woke up by 1 a.m. in the morning and immediately resumed his training. He had five full hours of personal training before the main training session began at 7 a.m.

With Asher's focused look, the sound of thunder echoed once in a while as he trained, his Astra control deepening.

Sweat clung to his skin once again, his muscles tightening as he honed his movements. Hours passed, and Asher prepared to head to the First Training Ground once more.

The drill went on, and soon evening started to arrive, bringing with it the time for monster subjugation.

"Your first time in the monster subjugation training... I wonder how the Tenth Sun will perform," Ella spoke with amusement as she walked beside Asher.

Beside both of them were Hito and Tom, who walked with their hands in their pockets quietly. Walking through a corridor, they arrived at a space larger than the weapons training ground.

Trees rose and spiraled outwards, forming a dome-like shape. A man could be seen sitting mid air as if the air itself suspended him in place. Anthony looked around. He could see former trainees like him; all of them had qualified after the one month weapons training session.

Drake, the monster subjugation instructor, opened his eyes and turned to face them. "It seems we have some new faces with us," he spoke. His voice was calm, but neither firm nor authoritative. It was simply flat.

"I will explain what happens during this training. Just as the name implies, you are here to kill monsters. I won't teach you or guide you. You are to learn through the art of battle and injuries. I will only interfere if any of you are about to die or receive serious injuries. Aside from that, expect nothing more from me," Drake said flatly and lazily.

"You're speechless, right?" Tom's voice came from behind, sounding gentle in Asher's ears.

Asher was indeed speechless. He had expected some form of instructions, but the instructor was throwing them straight into battle and letting them learn through pain.

It was certainly an effective method, but these were still kids. "I shouldn't use Earth's standards for Crymora. People here are built differently,"

Asher reminded himself mentally that everyone here was a superhuman.

From within the trees, a man stepped out and bowed towards Instructor Drake. The man didn't speak and just stood there as if he were awaiting instructions.

"Daniel. Whisper," Drake's voice came as he remained floating midair. The trainee named Daniel stepped forward when his name was called.

The man bowing behind Drake vanished. Within seconds, he reappeared, with a Whisper-ranked beast beside him.

Asher simply watched from the side, deep in thought. 'It seems names are called out, and then the rank of the beast is revealed.'

It didn't seem like Daniel's first rodeo as he moved backward, a bow in hand as he nocked arrows at the monster. The beast, a snake, slithered out of the way, easily dodging the arrow as it instantly rushed toward Daniel.

But Daniel didn't panic. The arrow seemed to change trajectory mid air as it streaked back toward the snake once more. Its tail flickered with a sharp burst of sound and power, instantly shattering the arrow from behind.

As the snake reached Daniel, it launched itself, its mouth opening with a wicked hiss as its fangs extended outward, threatening to sink into Daniel's neck.

Daniel's body reacted instantly, moving in harmony with the balance and movement training taught in Elowen's course. With a hard expression on his face and his muscles tensed, Daniel twisted out of the way.

His hand flashed backward as he grabbed an arrow from his quiver. Without hesitation, he lashed out.

The arrow sank into the snake's eye. The sound of flesh tearing echoed, followed by a sharp hissing noise as the monster thrashed in pain and rage. But it was all useless. Daniel was already on one of the nearby trees, three arrows flying out in rapid succession.

With precise aim, the arrows connected with the snake's head and its remaining eye, instantly killing it.

Daniel wiped the imaginary sweat from his forehead before returning to his original position calmly. The man appeared once more, then vanished with the snake's carcass, leaving no trace behind.

Chapter 54: Belly

Asher watched quietly, waiting for his name to be called. He noticed that Drake seemed to have a way of identifying people's fighting capabilities without even knowing their Life Rank.

But Asher wasn't surprised by this revelation; people possessing extreme battle senses existed in almost every novel and anime he had read or watched back on Earth.

Or in Drake's case, it might be a unique ability. Still, Asher couldn't help but wonder how many abilities the man possessed. The instructor could also fly, after all. From what Asher had read, no known Life Rank allowed for flight in this world.

Anyone defying gravity either had it as a unique ability or it was an advanced application of their existing powers or bloodline.

Asher shook his head, deciding to stop thinking about what kind of ability the instructor might possess.

'He also seems to match trainees against monsters that can cover their weaknesses,'

Asher thought as he continued watching the unfolding events.

Take Daniel, for example, he was an archer. Archers were usually considered vulnerable once enemies closed the distance, and Drake had precisely used a monster that could do just that against him.

Snakes were slippery, fast, and reactive.

They could easily dodge arrows, close in quickly, and also see through most hiding methods with their natural thermal vision.

"Ella. Echo," Drake announced suddenly.

Ella smiled and responded, "I hope you're ready for a show, Tenth Sun," she said sweetly as she walked forward with that same smile gracing her lips.

"I hope you don't get tossed around," Asher couldn't help but reply, a smirk tugging at his lips.

As one of the strongest within the First Training Ground, Ella was paired against an Echo ranked monster. Echo-ranked beasts generally possessed abilities, but not all Echo ranked monsters were on the same level. Some were simply faster, stronger, and had more dangerous or practical abilities than others.

But the people of Crymora didn't see the need to classify these monsters any further. Just like how people could be on the same major Life Rank but possess different minor ranks, the same principle applied to monsters and beasts, they might share a classification but vary greatly in actual strength.

Ella stood calmly, her posture relaxed but confident as she waited for her opponent. Soon, her adversary arrived, a black and red bear standing over two meters tall, with blood-red eyes that looked as though they had long since sunk into madness.

But Ella didn't even blink. Her expression shifted. That soft smile disappeared the moment she stepped forward. In the Monster Subjugation Training, there were no restrictions.

Everyone was allowed to battle using everything they had. There were no starting signals, no countdowns, and certainly no time to prepare, just like on any real battlefield.

"RRRROOOOAAARRR!"

The wild bear roared with full force, its voice rumbling through the area like a shockwave, but Ella wasn't here to enjoy its concert. Without a word, she vanished from her location.

In the blink of an eye, she appeared near the bear. Her fist shot out toward the bear's head like a launched cannon.

The beast was caught off guard. Most humans allowed it to roar to its heart's content before battle truly began, but this female didn't follow those rules.

Seeing the incoming fist, the bear reacted. Its fur extended outward, morphing into sharp spikes that threatened to tear through Ella's incoming punch like spears.

Ella's eyes instantly squinted. She knew she couldn't stop her attack mid motion, it would create an opening the beast could exploit. With nothing but a thought, the water element bloomed around her.

A swirling circular platform formed just in time, stopping her fist from connecting directly and being shredded.

The bear didn't waste any time. Its paw lashed out with explosive force, slicing through the air. The wind tore apart in its wake as the bear's claws came down toward Ella's entire body.

But her expression didn't even shift. Her body moved fluidly, her fist shooting out again and meeting the paw head-on. A thunderous boom rang out as their attacks collided. The ground beneath their feet cracked and buckled under the pressure.

Ella's sharp eyes noticed the bear's fur beginning to move again. She reacted instantly, her form blurring as she darted backward, narrowly avoiding another barrage of fur spikes.

The bear entered a frenzy, unleashing a furious storm of spikes. Ella went on the defensive, weaving between each projectile with remarkable footwork.

Behind her, anything the spikes touched was obliterated instantly. Trees were torn through like paper, and debris scattered in all directions.

But Ella didn't panic. She knew the bear didn't have infinite fur to shoot. All she had to do was remain calm and keep dodging.

She had the speed and the stamina to outlast the beast's wild assault. And just as she had predicted, the barrage ended within seconds.

Still, she didn't rush in. She raised a hand slowly, her eyes locked on the beast. Water swirled midair and then surged forward, forming a swirling cocoon that enveloped the bear's head. It was deprived of oxygen almost instantly.

The bear flailed. Its paws reached up, desperately trying to tear the water away from its face, its body shaking violently as it panicked. But Ella wasn't done. She wouldn't leave such an opening unpunished.

Astra burst beneath her feet, launching her forward like a bolt of lightning. In a single breath, she stood before the bear again.

Her fist clenched tightly as she channeled Astra into it. Without hesitation, she struck, punching forward like a rocket launched with all its might.

The air itself recoiled under the force of her punch. A loud bam echoed, followed by a sickening sound of flesh ripping apart. The bear's belly exploded outward like a ruptured drum.

The force of the punch shot straight through the beast's body, blowing out its back and tearing open a massive hole as if it had been struck by a missile. Blood, entrails, and gore splashed across Ella's body, but she didn't react, not even a blink.

The bear's lifeless body fell with a heavy thud, its blood pooling beneath it, dyeing the ground red. Ella turned calmly and walked back to her position without a word, as though nothing had happened.

Chapter 55: Mass

Asher looked at Ella, who used her water ability to wash away the blood on her body and clothes, leaving her completely soaked.

"If I didn't know you, I would have thought you had a grudge against that bear. Tearing open a huge hole like that is insane," Tom couldn't help but comment, still stunned by her brutal finish.

"Well, what can I say? I just need a stronger Echo ranked beast," Ella spoke confidently, wringing out her sleeve as water dripped from her hair and chin.

"Why don't you go fight a Veil-ranked beast, then?" Hito asked from the side, his tone flat but teasing.

"I will, when the instructor agrees," Ella replied with a smirk. Deep down, though, she knew she couldn't win against a Veil ranked beast. The bear she had just fought was on the lowest end of the Echo ranked spectrum.

"Your hand to hand combat never ceases to amaze me. Many women with the ability to control water would just focus entirely on that,"

Asher remarked from the side, genuinely impressed.

"I'm different from everyone else. Outside of those broken bloodline abilities, I'm sure I stand somewhere at the top," Ella boasted, her words laced with a charming smile and confidence that shimmered in her eyes.

But Asher didn't reply. He simply smiled softly to himself. He knew better than to underestimate the world. There was always someone stronger, someone more talented, someone hidden away.

Who knew what talents the Dukes were sheltering? Who knew what monsters the other Empires had yet to reveal?

Although Asher would love to declare himself the most talented of all, it was better to kill off any form of pride or arrogance before it rose too high.

There could be people far better than him. Worse, there could be other transmigrators or reincarnated individuals with systems, cheats, or blessings from mysterious entities.

"I want to see what the Tenth Sun is capable of,"

Hito spoke, his eyes narrowed, lost in thought as he looked toward the arena.

"He'll probably go last. The best are always saved for last," Tom replied casually, resting his hands behind his head.

Their conversation continued as more trainees stepped up to face monsters. Many were just one misstep away from death, and a number of them had to be saved by Drake before disaster struck.

Serious injuries were handed out like snacks. The man who brought the beasts always healed them afterward with calm precision, returning them to their feet. Not everyone was like Ella, capable of blowing up their opponent with a single fist.

Of course, Asher saw a few promising trainees in the mix, but for now, they were still too unrefined, too green. He couldn't wait to face the real prodigies, the overpowered children of Dukes and royals. Not weaklings like Ryan.

He wondered how strong individuals like Vaelric and Vaelra Lux Vanthelmor were. After all, they were the royal prince and princess of the Empire.

Children like that would have been trained since the moment of their birth. Not just in battle, but in strategy, elemental theory, and ancient knowledge.

Asher couldn't help but smile at the thought of facing them.

'I'm turning into a battle maniac every single day. This bloodline is really a problem,' Asher thought.

Whenever he found himself enjoying the thrill of battle, he would always blame the Wargrave bloodline. But deep down, he knew the truth, his love for fighting had nothing to do with genetics.

Bloodlines awakened abilities, they didn't influence behavior or desire.

"Tom. Echo," Drake's voice echoed again, this time from above, as he floated lazily in the sky without so much as a flap or gesture.

Tom didn't say a word. He simply stepped forward, a huge hammer resting across his shoulder. He looked ready to break down anything in his path with sheer, crushing force.

In front of him stood a feline predator. Its body was sleek, covered in black fur that shimmered faintly under the light. Its tail swayed behind it like a whip, eyes narrowed as it locked onto Tom with a predator's gaze.

'Matching him against a speed type monster since he's a strength type,' Asher thought silently as he observed the pairing.

The monster didn't wait, it pounced forward like a flash of death. Its claws were already just meters away from Tom's face, its movement silent and deadly.

But Tom had predicted this. Felines always behaved like this, stealthy, fast, and aggressive.

The moment his name was called, Tom had already channeled Astra into his feet. In a sudden burst of motion, his figure blurred.

The monster's claws sliced through an afterimage that lingered where Tom had stood. He was already beside the feline beast, his hammer crashing down from the side with terrifying force.

But the feline turned into a blur itself and vanished into a gust of wind. Its tail streaked through the air, aiming to slam into the back of Tom's skull.

But Tom was ready. His hand snapped out. He caught the tail mid swing, dragging it backward with raw power. With his hammer raised in the other hand, he swung with devastating intent.

But the feline predator wasn't just fast, it was clever. Instead of defending or dodging, it attacked. Its claws shimmered under the light as it shot them straight for Tom's throat.

It went for mutual destruction.

Tom had no choice but to let go and dodge. It was his throat, after all. With a rapid body shift, he bent backward, his spine arching in an impossible angle, his back nearly parallel with the earth beneath him. The feline's claws swiped past where his throat should have been.

If that attack had landed, he would have died instantly. No healer could fix a torn-open throat like that.

As the feline landed on all fours, it instantly vanished. Tom frowned, narrowing his eyes as he realized he had lost visual contact with the beast.

'Invisibility. That's its ability,' he realized instantly.

But Tom wouldn't wait to be ambushed. He raised his hammer and activated his own ability.

Tom's ability allowed him to increase the mass of anything he touched, yet to him, the weight remained the same.

He raised the hammer with both hands to the sky. Its form remained unchanged, but its mass increased exponentially. What had once been manageable in weight now carried the density of a collapsing star, but to Tom, it still felt light.

That was what made him terrifying.

He could make a pencil weigh tons. And while it would feel feather-light in his hand, once it struck someone, the result would be catastrophic.

Tom's hammer came down with explosive intensity. The entire forest quaked. A ravine formed underneath the sheer pressure. Gusts of wind tore through the trees, toppling them like twigs in a storm.

Since he couldn't locate the invisible feline, he decided to simply destroy everything.

And just as he had predicted, the feline reappeared. His destructive attack had disrupted its invisibility. Without hesitation, Tom hurled his hammer at the beast.

The feline vanished again, streaking sideways in a burst of speed, but that was part of Tom's plan.

He couldn't keep up with it in speed, so he would force it into predictable movements.

As the feline dodged, Tom was already there, waiting.

The weight of his fist had already shifted.

His punch connected with the feline's skull.

With a thunderous blast, blood and bone exploded across the ground. The creature's head was forcefully exploded to bits, and the forest fell silent once more.

The battlefield smelled of death, raw power, and iron.

Chapter 56: Suicide Squad

Tom cast a brief glance at the lifeless feline predator before strolling over to retrieve his hammer. With a faint smile tugging at his blood-streaked face, he turned to the group, his posture relaxed, confident.

He needed no reminder, Tom was fully aware of the sheer danger his ability posed. Its versatility and overwhelming power left little room for doubt. In terms of raw, unadulterated strength, he had already accepted that he reigned supreme.

As always, the man appeared without warning, silently collecting the carcass before vanishing just as swiftly as he had come.

"I must admit, your abilities are quite devastating," Asher remarked, unable to hold back his thoughts. He could already envision the scale of destruction Tom could unleash, toppling an entire empire, should he ever decide to.

"I'm well aware. No need to remind me," Tom replied with a smirk, his tone tinged with undeniable arrogance.

Ella, standing off to the side, rolled her eyes.

"Why the arrogance? Someone with superior speed could end you before you even get the chance to activate that flashy power."

As she spoke, her water swirled gently around Tom, washing the blood from his body in smooth, controlled waves.

The monster subjugation training pressed on, and soon, it was Hito's turn.

"Hito. Echo," Drake's voice rang out once more from above, calm but lazy.

Hito said nothing. He merely stepped forward, his expression unreadable. As expected, the enigmatic man appeared again, but this time, he was not alone.

Five monsters accompanied him, but one stood out in particular. Towering over two meters tall while balanced on its powerful hind limbs, it resembled an insectoid predator. More precisely, it was a monstrous praying mantis, though any resemblance to its natural counterpart ended there.

Its forelimbs had evolved into wicked, curved scythes, perfect for slicing through flesh. Its mandibles were sharp, serrated, and clearly built for rending meat rather than chewing leaves.

Translucent wings stretched menacingly from its back, and its long, thin antennae extended outward, subtly twitching as if tasting the air for blood.

Without a moment's pause, the monstrous praying mantis, if they could even be called that, lunged forward with blinding speed, their movements defying the expectations set by their towering forms.

But in that same instant, four identical figures materialized beside the real Hito, perfectly synchronized copies. Without hesitation, all five drew their twin short swords in unison, their silhouettes blurring as they launched themselves into the fray.

Steel clashed with chitin in a violent, chaotic symphony. The sharp clang of blades striking hardened limbs reverberated across the forest, the sound sharp enough to rattle the eardrums of nearly everyone present.

This was Hito's ability, clone creation. Each clone he summoned mirrored his own physical capabilities, possessing the same strength and speed as the original. However, they could not, in turn, replicate themselves.

What made this power even more complex was its reflective nature. Any physical state Hito was in at the moment of creation, whether injured, fatigued, or whole, was exactly mirrored in his clones. If he were missing a limb, so were they.

This unique limitation did little to diminish the overwhelming potential of his skill. It rendered Hito a one-man army, a warrior who could multiply himself on command, each duplicate as deadly as the source.

Perhaps most remarkable of all was the nature of their energy. These clones were not tethered to Hito's Astra. Instead, each one manifested with its own reservoir of Astra, identical in volume to Hito's own Astra at the exact moment they were born.

Hito could be seen exchanging rapid strikes with the monstrous praying mantis as they tore through the forest, their movements a blur, ghost-like as they darted between trees and underbrush. Their forms seemed to drift and shimmer, barely discernible to the eye.

The creature's wings beat violently against the wind, propelling it with terrifying speed. There was no pause, no moment of hesitation, only relentless, forward-driving instinct.

One of its scythe-like limbs swept through the air in a deadly arc, aiming straight for Hito's shoulder. But Hito shifted fluidly, his body gliding sideways in a flawless sidestep.

In the same motion, his short sword flicked upward, cutting through the air like a whisper, its tip aimed with surgical precision toward the monster's eye, the attack veiled in a shimmering haze of speed and intent.

But the praying mantis was no mere insect to be underestimated. It was a predator, through and through. Its monstrous form held the speed, reflexes, and instincts of a seasoned killer.

With a sudden gust of power, its wings beat hard against the wind, and its body twisted mid-air at an angle that defied logic, an impossible maneuver for a creature of its size and structure.

In a flash, one of its slender antennae lashed forward like a whip, striking with deadly precision. It slashed across Hito's cheek before he could react, carving a thin, crimson line into his skin. The pain was sharp, but brief.

Both combatants disengaged, landing several meters apart. The forest fell still for a breath. They locked eyes, man and monster, each gauging the other.

The praying mantis' mandibles clicked and clenched with eerie rhythm, almost as if it were mocking him, taunting him with its strange, alien composure.

'Poison.' Hito realized.

He could already feel his senses beginning to dull, the numbness creeping in with each passing second. He knew it wouldn't be long before paralysis set in, before he became easy prey to the monstrous predator before him.

But Hito didn't panic.

Without a moment's hesitation, he launched himself forward, a blur of motion driven by utter calmness. The praying mantis responded in kind, its wings beating furiously as it surged to meet him. They closed the distance like titans on a collision course.

Then, just as they were about to clash,

Hito detonated.

A deafening explosion erupted from his position, unleashing a shockwave that tore through the forest with unrestrained fury.

The earth beneath them ruptured, a massive crater ripping itself open at the point of impact. Trees were uprooted like twigs, flung violently aside. Stones, boulders, and even the air itself screamed under the pressure of the blast, none of it offering the slightest resistance.

As the smoke and haze began to lift, the aftermath of the explosion revealed itself in brutal clarity. Shattered remains of the praying mantis' body were scattered across the battlefield, limbs twisted and torn, its exoskeleton shredded as though it had been sliced apart by invisible blades. The detonation had ripped through it like scissors through parchment.

But Hito himself was nowhere to be seen.

It hadn't been the original.

That Hito had merely been a clone, one that, sensing its imminent demise from the creeping paralysis, chose a final act of calculated destruction. Rather than allow itself to fall, it transformed into a living bomb, sacrificing itself to obliterate the monster in a single, devastating burst.

In Cyrmora, self-detonation was an impossibility for most. No being could simply explode themselves.

But Hito's clones were the exception.

They could ignite themselves with intent, amplifying the force of their destruction through the controlled release of their Astra. And when they did, the result was nothing short of catastrophic.

The remaining praying mantis reeled, caught off guard by the sudden, devastating explosion. But the Hitos did not falter. They had anticipated the detonation, and they wasted no time capitalizing on the chaos.

Their short swords lashed out like lightning bolts, precise and merciless. One of the clones closed the distance in an instant, decapitating his target with a single, fluid strike.

But there was no pause, no celebration, only movement. Without missing a beat, he surged toward the next beast, blades gleaming with intent.

The original Hito, ever calculating, immediately summoned back the detonated clone, restoring it in perfect condition. With renewed numbers, the Hitos swept across the battlefield with ruthless efficiency, cutting down the remaining monsters in a flurry of coordinated strikes.

This was another facet of Hito's deadly brilliance.

Any clone that sustained critical injury was converted into a suicide unit, using the last of its Astra to detonate with overwhelming force. And once the explosion had served its purpose, the original body would simply summon the clone anew, unharmed, fully restored, and ready to fight again.

Chapter 57: Veil

The clones faded away, vanishing like mist, and Hito returned to his original position with calm, unhurried strides. Not a single drop of blood stained his skin, no wounds, no fatigue. He looked untouched, as if he had never stepped into battle at all.

Asher watched him closely, a quiet fascination flickering in his eyes. He had always found clone-based abilities intriguing, versatile, dangerous, and filled with limitless

potential. But Hito's version was something else entirely. Unlike others, his clones had no power restrictions, no diluted strength.

They were perfect replicas.

And that made him terrifying.

With such an ability, Hito could infiltrate both sides of any war, send one clone into the shadows to serve darker forces, while another operated openly in the light. Resources, intelligence, secrets, they would pour in from both sides, converging into one mind.

But beyond espionage, there was the raw destructive power.

If Hito grew strong enough, his suicide bomber clones alone could reduce cities to ash, perhaps even bring an empire to its knees.

"I think you should quit Wargrave and become a terrorist," Asher said casually, glancing at Hito with a half-serious smirk.

Hito's lips twitched ever so slightly. This wasn't the first time he'd heard that suggestion. Others had jokingly, or not so jokingly, said the same thing in the past.

"Think about it," Asher went on, grinning. "No need to join a gang when you are a gang. You could call your crew The Suicide Squad, it practically names itself."

Ella jumped in, amused. "Seriously, how did I not think of this before? You could actually form a gang. And the best part? You don't even have to show up, just send a clone while you relax at home."

But Hito didn't reply.

He stood quietly to the side, arms crossed, his expression unreadable, he had no interest in arguing with those two.

Time slipped by, and the sun began its slow descent beyond the horizon. Evening crept in, casting long shadows across the forest floor and bathing the sky in hues of amber and violet. Yet, no one moved. No one even considered leaving.

After all, the Tenth Sun had yet to take the field.

And they were all waiting for him, Asher.

Even Tom, Hito, and Ella, despite their own remarkable showings, were drawn in by the mystery surrounding him. Each Wargrave descendant was said to awaken an element tied to their bloodline, and while they had all displayed their abilities before, Asher's had remained a secret.

Not once had he revealed it. Not even in passing conversation.

And oddly, none of them had ever thought to ask.

High above, nestled within the crown of a towering tree, three figures watched in silence. Virek, Elowen, and Harold, hidden from the crowd, stood like silent sentinels, their gazes fixed on the clearing below.

"How do you think the Tenth Sun will fare in his first battle?" Elowen asked, a faint smile playing on her lips as she kept her eyes fixed on the clearing below.

Harold folded his arms, his tone thoughtful.

"Hmm... the Tenth Sun is undeniably gifted, so much so that it borders on something unnatural. But this is different. This is a real battle, not theory, not sparring. I expect he'll perform spectacularly, as always, but... there may be a slight hiccup. Even brilliance can stutter in the face of unpredictability."

Virek, whose gaze hadn't once shifted from the pages of the erotic novel he held in hand, chimed in without lifting his eyes.

"I agree. Even though he's absorbed some of our experiences, it's still not the same. Watching and knowing is one thing. Living it is another."

True to his usual disinterest, Virek hadn't spared a glance at any of the trainees during their fights. Not even for Hito, Ella, or Tom, the most noteworthy of the group.

But what none of them knew, what no one watching from the trees or standing around the field could have guessed, was that this wouldn't be Asher's first battle.

For most, the monster subjugation exercise marked their first encounter with a real beast. It was a controlled first taste of danger, blood, and survival.

But not for Asher.

He had faced monsters before. Fought. Killed. Bled.

No one knew simply because Asher had never said a word. He wasn't the type to boast, especially not about slaying a handful of Whisper and Echo ranked beasts. There was no glory in it. No need for attention.

And the rumors? There were none. The Wargrave Knights were trained to keep their mouths shut. Discipline ran in their blood, silence ingrained into their bones. If any of them had seen what Asher had done, they took it to their graves, or at least, kept it buried deep within their oaths.

So while others watched with curiosity, expecting a prodigy's first taste of battle...

Asher was merely returning to something he already knew.

Then, Drake's voice lazily echoed from above.

"Asher. Veil."

The words struck like a lightning bolt across the training grounds.

For a moment, silence reigned.

Eyes widened. Breaths hitched. Even the most confident trainees felt their hearts falter.

'Veil?'

The thought rippled through the crowd like a wave of disbelief.

The difference between Echo and Veil wasn't a simple step, it was a chasm. Like the gap between night and day, between stone and steel. Every rank leap in monster classification was massive, each one marking a fundamental shift in power, ferocity, and danger.

Most had expected Asher to be tested against an Echo-ranked monster at its peak, challenging, sure, but survivable.

But this?

A Veil ranked beast?

'Was he really that strong?' they couldn't help but have such thoughts

Asher didn't speak.

He stepped forward in silence, his movements unhurried, yet precise, each stride calm, deliberate, and filled with an almost unnatural stillness.

In a subtle flash, Virelass materialized in his hand, its silver blade humming faintly. His eyes sharpened, senses elevating to their peak, he was ready.

Then, the man appeared once again. But this time, he brought with him two monsters.

Orcs.

Their skin was a deep, mossy green, stretched tightly over towering frames that stood nearly eight feet tall. Veins bulged across their arms and chests, their muscle mass

exaggerated to grotesque proportions. Each one gripped a massive, metallic club lined with vicious, rusted spikes, more of a slab of death than a weapon.

As the man vanished into thin air, so did hesitation.

The orcs moved.

Their speed was absurd, completely betraying their size. In the blink of an eye, they were already beside Asher, one to his left, the other to his right, their clubs raised high, descending like executioner's blades toward his skull.

There was no time to think.

Only to act.

But Asher was already in motion.

The instant the orcs struck, his body darted backward with fluid motion. A thunderous boom followed as the spiked clubs slammed into the ground, the earth trembling violently before caving in beneath the impact.

Yet Asher didn't just evade, he countered.

Virelass flashed forward in a sharp arc, aimed directly at the first orc's Achilles tendon, a calculated strike meant to cripple. But the orc reacted with surprising speed, lifting its leg mid-swing and launching a brutal kick toward Asher's head.

The massive foot entered Asher's Omni Perception, his mind registering every muscle shift, every subtle twitch. With a seamless twist of his body, his center of gravity shifted, and Virelass moved in harmony, its flat side rising just in time to absorb the incoming blow.

A colossal force crashed against him.

Asher's arms steadied against the impact, and though the rapier had lessened the force, the sheer power of the orc's kick sent him skidding backward. His boots carved deep trenches into the ground, earth and dust flaring behind him as he regained control.

Before Asher could so much as catch his breath, the second orc was already upon him, its massive spiked club arcing toward his temple with terrifying speed, ready to turn his skull into pulp.

Asher reacted instantly.

Virelass cleaved through the air like a streak of silver, meeting the incoming blow head-on.

The collision was thunderous.

Steel met steel in a deafening metallic scream, the clash sending out a blinding shower of sparks. The sheer force of impact detonated the air around them, triggering a shockwave so violent it uprooted trees and blasted the earth backward in a sweeping, chaotic arc.

In the haze of smoke and dust, their figures blurred into silhouettes, locked in a brutal dance of speed and power. Again and again, they collided with earth-shaking force, their movements too fast for trained eyes of the trainees to follow.

Tremors rippled through the ground with every step, every strike, every impact. The orcs moved with deadly intensity, their enormous frames doing nothing to hinder their blinding momentum.

They weren't just brutes, they were monsters in perfect form.

Raw power. Blistering speed. And an instinct for violence that made them terrifying foes.

They had it all.

But so did Asher.

Chapter 58: Bolt

Attacks rained down on Asher from every direction, left, right, above, below. The air screamed with each strike, deafening in its fury. Every movement carried crushing weight, each swing capable of shattering bone and earth alike.

Yet Asher moved like water flowing through chaos.

His rapier and hand had become a phantom, flickering with impossible speed, deflecting, parrying, blocking in rapid succession. Each motion was precise, economical, and instinctive, as though his body operated on a rhythm no one else could hear.

Despite the overwhelming barrage, his eyes remained calm. Focused.

His chest rose and fell in steady rhythm, his breathing controlled, unshaken by the violence around him.

He searched for openings in the endless assault, and when he found even the smallest gap, he struck. Virelass would dart out like a serpent's fang, sharp, swift, lethal.

But every time, the orcs met him.

Their defenses snapped into place with uncanny timing, as if they could see his attacks before he even moved. Their reactions weren't just fast, they were instinctual, predictive.

The soil tore beneath their feet as they pushed forward, two forces colliding at speeds that blurred the eye. Dust and grit spiraled in their wake, but Asher's focus never wavered.

His gaze locked with one of the orcs, and in that split second, a smile curved at the corner of his lips.

Then, everything changed.

His rhythm shifted, fluid turned sharp, defense became offense. Without warning, Asher surged forward, Virelass flashing toward the orc's neck with blistering speed and ruthless efficiency.

The orc faltered, caught off guard.

But instincts honed by years of bloodshed, caging, and survival surged to life. It stepped back in a blur, moving to evade the fatal stroke.

Almost.

Just as Virelass was about to whistle harmlessly past where the neck had been, Asher twisted his wrist. The blade curved mid-air, a seamless, unnatural adjustment, as if it flowed like a living thing.

Virelass descended.

And tore.

With a sound like ripping canvas, the blade bit through the orc's chest in a clean, savage arc, carving downward in a perfect line.

A spray of thick, green blood exploded into the air, painting the grass beneath them a darker shade of battle.

Before Asher could follow up, the second orc was already upon him.

The spiked club tore through the air, entering his Omni Perception like a crashing wave. He saw it, read it, but it was too close, too fast. There was no time to dodge. No space to shift.

Too late.

Then it came.

Lightning.

A burst of pure brilliance, violet and violent, erupted around him. A crackle split the air, sharp and deafening, like the roar of the heavens tearing open.

And Asher vanished.

In his place, only a bolt of purple lightning streaked across the battlefield, searing a jagged path through the air. The ground where he had stood erupted from the shock of raw elemental energy, scorched and cracked in a perfect line behind him.

The orc's club slammed into nothing but air, the force of its missed strike toppling a tree in the distance.

Asher reappeared behind the first orc, its chest wound already beginning to mend, the creature's natural regeneration swiftly taking hold. In a blur of motion, Asher's rapier sprang to life, its blade flickering toward the orc's neck with blinding lethality.

Before the beast could so much as flinch, Virelass carved cleanly through its throat, like a heated blade slicing through softened wax. A geyser of green blood burst upward, splattering across Asher's hair in a vivid spray.

The severed head tumbled to the earth, rolling like a discarded stone, moments before the orc's massive frame collapsed with a resounding thud.

The second orc bellowed in a frenzy as it witnessed its companion's brutal demise.

ROOOAAARRRR!

A deafening sound wave surged from its throat, tearing through the air toward Asher's position, threatening to obliterate him into nothing but mangled flesh.

But Asher responded in an instant.

Virelass rose skyward, its blade catching the light, then, like a conductor of wrathful divinity, it drew upon the storm. Veins of purple lightning crackled along its length, thunder snarling in its wake.

With a motion both forceful and elegant, Asher brought the rapier down in a sweeping arc, a devastating crescent of pure, baleful lightning carved through the air, howling with ruinous power.

With a storm's thunderous roar, the lightning collided with the onrushing sound wave, erupting in every direction with the fury and madness of unrestrained destruction.

Trees were torn asunder in an instant, their leaves scorched to ash. Stones blackened and split where the lightning kissed them. The lingering resonance of the sonic blast struck with brutal force, rattling the bones of all nearby and threatening to rupture their eardrums.

Smoke veiled the battlefield in a choking shroud, swallowing the chaos in a suffocating gloom.

Then, without warning, a violent gust burst outward, dispersing the smoke in a single breath, as the orc swung its massive club with raw power, parting the haze like a god of war unveiling its wrath.

With another guttural roar, the orc surged forward, its speed and strength magnified to terrifying extremes. It had entered its berserker state.

In the blink of an eye, it closed the distance between them, and its colossal club came crashing down from above with the weight and judgment of an angry god.

But it was futile.

In its frenzy, the orc had traded clarity for raw power. Speed and strength surged through its veins, but its judgment was lost to madness.

And in that madness, Asher found his advantage.

He slipped through the orc's wild, uncoordinated strikes as effortlessly as a dragon's breath swallows a fireball. Lightning crackled along Virelass and danced across Asher's form, wrapping him in a storm of purple arcs. With a swift sidestep, he evaded the club's downward crash, and in that same motion, Virelass carved through the orc's kneecap.

The creature collapsed to one knee with a howl of feral rage, its club swinging blindly in retaliation, but Asher had already vanished, leaving behind a crackling bolt of lightning.

He reappeared beside the beast, his rapier a blur as it thrust cleanly through the orc's shoulder. Another flicker, another flash, Asher was behind it.

One final stroke.

Virelass cleaved through the orc's neck with deadly ease, severing its head in a seamless arc.

The berserker's fury died with it. Whatever power had driven its rampage faded instantly. The massive body collapsed in a lifeless heap, and Asher, without sparing it a second glance, turned and walked away, the storm humming quietly around him.

Everyone stood frozen, their expressions painted with disbelief, as if reality itself had just been twisted before their eyes. Asher had dismantled two Veil-ranked monsters as though they were nothing more than bothersome flies.

They had witnessed the ease with which he moved, graceful, measured, and untouchable. He wasn't panting. He didn't break a sweat. Not a scratch marked his body.

He was... serene.

'Was that really his first battle?'

The question echoed quietly in their minds, unspoken but mutual. Every time they thought they had grasped the extent of who he was, Asher revealed something even more unimaginable.

And now, he had unveiled his element: lightning. But not just any lightning. Purple lightning, vibrant and violent, the same shade that shimmered in his hair and eyes. A perfect, terrifying harmony.

Green blood splattered across his frame, and somehow, it only made him look more divine, like a god of war stepping down from the heavens.

They had seen it. He had split a sound wave. A full-force, deafening shockwave hurled by a berserk orc, and he had cut through it like it was air.

'Isn't this too much?' Ella couldn't help but wonder, her thoughts ringing with disbelief.

She knew the truth: a single strike from a Veil-ranked orc was more than enough to cripple her. Orcs were monsters of raw muscle and brute strength. But these weren't just orcs. They were Veil ranked. A different breed entirely.

They had expected a fight. They had hoped for it. But what they saw... they couldn't comprehend.

Asher felt their stares, but said nothing. Alongside Tom, Hito, and Ella, he stepped calmly out of the First Training Ground.

"Can you stop looking at me like that? I'm not some peacock flaunting its feathers." he finally muttered, a hint of exasperation in his voice.

"It can't be helped," Ella replied, her tone half-serious. "I'm just wondering... are all Suns and Moons like you? If they are..." Her voice trailed off, unfinished.

Asher shook his head, offering nothing more.

"See you tomorrow. Goodnight." And with that, he turned and walked away, disappearing toward his room.

Chapter 59: At Once

Five months had passed since Asher's first time in the monster subjugation training ground. Since that initial experience, he had made a truly miraculous amount of progress, something that left many speechless when they heard of his current level.

He had successfully broken through into the next Life Rank; the Radiant Kindlestar Rank. Although the rate at which he could cultivate and strengthen his Astra veins had decreased slightly compared to before, it didn't bother Asher in the slightest.

He was already progressing at a rate that was considered inhuman, especially in a place where others hardly made any noticeable advancement even after months or years.

At this moment, Asher was leaving the First Training Ground after completing the day's training. He still fought Veil ranked monsters and beasts, but they were far more powerful and aggressive than the first orcs he had fought.

However, this difference mattered not to his blade. He still cut everything down without hesitation, like it was nothing more than dried grass in the path of a sharp scythe.

As he walked alongside his friends, Tom spoke from the side with a curious tone, "Tenth Sun, do you know what the True Awakening is about?"

It was common knowledge within the entire Empire, if not the entire known world, that the Wargrave Household always held its own unique awakening ritual, which they called the True Awakening. So, Asher wasn't particularly surprised that Tom, or even the rest of his friends, knew something about it.

But the truth was, it wasn't anything like the typical awakening that occurred when the Astra veins were activated during the main and original ceremony. This was different.

Asher simply shook his head and responded.

"I don't, but I think I'll be briefed about it before it begins."

And indeed, he didn't know the exact details of the True Awakening, but based on what he had gathered from both Lyra's vague words and his own analysis, Asher had come to a tentative conclusion: it most likely involved a life-or-death battle, one that no one could interrupt.

"Your True Awakening is going to be held next week already. Shouldn't you be doing everything you can to find out more about it? After all, even the smallest bit of information could prove useful," Ella asked, her voice tinged with a hint of concern.

Although she knew Asher, the Tenth Sun, was a complete monster in combat, something with the name 'True Awakening' and being a ritual of the Wargrave Household shouldn't be taken lightly or underestimated.

"Why are you suddenly getting all worried? Don't tell me you've fallen in love with me,"

Asher said with a slight smile, teasing her playfully.

"I was never worried about you," Ella scoffed.

"Besides, if anyone's falling for anyone, it's you. Just become the Primarch already and stop trying to trick me into making a confession that isn't even real."

Asher chuckled lightly as they continued walking. His gaze slowly rose to the sky, which was dyed a beautiful orange hue as the sun began to dip below the horizon, painting the world in soft twilight.

He wouldn't lie to himself and say he wasn't nervous. He was, deep down, Asher felt a twinge of dread. The True Awakening was something he could potentially die in, and no one would step in to save him.

He had once visited the library in an attempt to uncover any hidden information about the True Awakening, but he found nothing. No records, no books, not even rumors worth believing.

So, in his frustration, he asked the Great Elder, the Librarian, who had simply told him that three Wargraves had already died during their True Awakenings, and the Household hadn't lifted a finger to save them and that was during his own time, not to talk of the ones he was unaware of.

The True Awakening was a place where he would be forced to fight to survive without any intervention, even if he were on the verge of death. During his first battle against the wolves on his journey to the Royal Party, Lyra and the Wargrave Knights had been there, ready to intervene if necessary.

Even during his monster subjugation training, Drake had been around, watching closely to ensure that there would be no fatal or crippling injuries.

But next week, that safety net would be gone.

The orange glow of the sky above seemed to mirror his unease, reflecting off his body as if it sympathized with him. It was almost like the sky was mourning the possible fall of a genius... a monster.

"I could always send a clone to secretly help you, though," Hito said casually, wearing a calm smile.

"You do know you'd be executed on the spot if the Suns and Moons heard what you just said, right?" Ella commented from the side, her voice slightly sharp.

Hito simply shrugged. "Then I'll just send another clone."

Ella shook her head in exasperation and gave up arguing. Hito's clones were exact copies of him. Even if someone used an ability to inspect them, it would still show that each one was the real body.

The only way to differentiate a clone from the real Hito was by forcefully asking the version in front of you to create another clone, and even then, some weren't certain.

Besides, no one truly knew if this particular restriction would continue as Hito grew stronger. No one knew whether his clones' inability to make more clones was due to his ability limitations or simply because he had yet to gain better control over his ability.

"Later, guys," Asher said as he turned and walked away. After walking a short distance, he vanished from sight, instantly reappearing in his room.

"Lyra, bring dinner immediately. I don't have time to waste," Asher ordered. Lyra, who had already been standing quietly by his door, moved instantly to obey.

Asher wanted to make use of every second he had left. He had only one week remaining.

After taking a quick bath, he sat down at the table as Lyra brought in the food and carefully arranged it before him.

"Has anything changed within the Wargrave estate, Lyra?" Asher asked, his tone calm and composed.

Things rarely changed within the estate. The Suns and Moons were almost always away, and even the Great Elders and regular Elders frequently ventured out, often returning with blood staining their robes and weapons.

Hardly anything eventful ever occurred within the household itself. There was no family drama, no infighting, no squabbles, just endless battle and death. Every Wargrave was always out there, busy sending enemies to their graves.

"Yes, Young Master," Lyra replied as she stood behind him in her usual respectful posture.

"Tell me," Asher said gently as he lifted his fork to take a bite.

"The First Sun, Malrik Wargrave, returned a few hours ago. The Primarch also returned this morning after you left for the First Training Ground," Lyra said softly.

Asher remained silent. 'Father and the First Sun...' he thought to himself.

They had both been present during his first awakening six months ago, and now they had returned again. Although Asher hadn't physically seen the Primarch during that ceremony, he had no doubt that the man had been watching him from afar.

"Anything else?" Asher asked.

"Nothing else has changed, Young Master. But from what I know about the other True Awakenings that have taken place during my time here, all the Suns and Moons are expected to return to the estate," Lyra said, her voice steady.

Asher froze. Her words echoed like a thunderclap in his ears. Out of all the Suns and Moons, he had only met two Suns, and not a single Moon.

Even the Elders and Great Elders, he had only ever spoken with the Great Elder, who was the Librarian.

Now, he was expected to meet them all. At once.

Chapter 60: Simple

A few days passed as the day of the True Awakening drew closer and closer. One by one, the Suns and Moons began to return, their presences slowly gathering like looming clouds before a storm.

The last time they had assembled at this level was during Asher's first awakening, the very same one in which he had failed.

Now, however, the tension that filled the entire Wargrave estate was palpable. It hung in the air like a dense fog. Every maid, butler, and knight walked on eggshells, practically quaking in their boots.

After all, meeting all the Wargraves at once was something so rare, so overwhelming, that even veterans of the estate felt unsettled. The Wargraves themselves wore cold, distant, or expressionless looks, faces carved from ice, which only served to deepen the terror in the hearts of those around them.

At this moment, within a silent, dimly lit chamber, Azeron could be seen sitting in deep thought. His head rested gently against his palm, his golden eyes staring blankly up at the ceiling above him. His expression was unreadable, but a certain weight hung around his shoulders, as though invisible chains had bound him in place.

At the side of the room stood Zarek, Azeron's personal butler and long-time right-hand man. He stood with poise and calm, silently observing the man who had long since earned the title of the strongest Wargrave, a man who could topple mountains and tear apart legions with nothing but his spear.

And yet here he was, sighing continuously, mulling over something as though it was far beyond his reach, beyond his power.

Azeron's thoughts, in this moment, were completely focused on Asher. His tenth heir. His tenth child. His Tenth Sun.

His wife, Lily of the Abyss, had entrusted Asher to him as her final, dying wish. She had placed the boy in his hands and asked only one thing: protect him.

And now, here he was, throwing that very son into the fires of the True Awakening, where death loomed like a specter waiting to strike.

Azeron didn't know what to do.

He didn't know what to say. He felt trapped at an impasse between duty and love.

He knew Asher could die during the Awakening process. In fact, Asher wouldn't be the first Wargrave to do so. But at the same time, Asher was a prodigy, a genius who even eclipsed his mother in talent when it came to the rapier.

A rare brilliance that hadn't been seen in any generation.

Azeron's heart was torn. If Asher was about to die... should he intervene?

Should he save his son and honor the final wish of the woman he had loved with all his heart?

Or... should he sit back, bound to his seat by the heavy weight of tradition and legacy, the burden that came with the position of Primarch?

He was bound by invisible, invincible chains.

Which path should he choose?

He sighed once more, the sound deeper this time. His heartbeat thudded louder in his chest, beating faster, harder, nervousness he hadn't felt in decades. He, the mighty

Azeron, had long since forgotten the last time he had heard his own heart beat with such intensity.

Perhaps only when fighting to death against a Sin.

'What should I do?' Azeron thought, his brows furrowing.

Even if he did save Asher, nothing would happen to him. He was the strongest Wargrave for a reason. No one dared question his strength. No one could truly stand against him.

But just because he could... didn't mean he should.

Being Primarch wasn't a title to be thrown around. It came with rules, expectations, and ancient laws. Even he, at the top of the Wargrave hierarchy, couldn't casually break family tradition.

His mind began spinning, thoughts churning like a storm. Contingency plans, escape strategies, if Asher ever fell into true danger, Azeron was already beginning to calculate how best to act without dismantling everything.

From the side of the room, Zarek finally broke the silence.

"Should I intervene when necessary?" he asked, his voice composed, yet thoughtful.

Azeron heard the question but didn't reply immediately. He continued to stare at the ceiling, unmoving. Zarek, patient as always, said nothing more. He simply waited for the reply.

Azeron finally opened his mouth.

"What do you think I should do, Zarek?" he asked, his voice quiet but filled with tension.

"Should I save my son's life... or allow the weight of this crown to keep pressing me down?"

He could confide in Zarek. Of that, he was certain. Zarek had been by his side since the beginning. He knew exactly how heavy the crown of the Primarch was. He had witnessed Azeron's rise. He knew the cost of it.

Crowned the strongest, yet forever bound by rules.

"Azeron," Zarek said gently as he began to speak again. "I believe the answer to that question is, in some way, simple."

Although he used the word 'simple', he understood more than anyone how far from simple it really was.

Azeron's golden gaze finally moved, turning toward Zarek as he continued speaking.

"You simply have to decide what you love more. The crown on your head... or your wife's dying wish."

Zarek's words hit like thunder, reverberating through Azeron's chest.

He frowned. Deep down, he knew Zarek was right. There was no middle path here. He had to choose one or the other. There was no balancing act this time.

But if he were to truly choose, honestly, without fear of consequences, he would choose her. He would honor her.

He had become the Primarch for her sake in the first place. He had fought, bled, and conquered just to be able to hold her hand.

Besides, even if he did step down from the Primarch position for breaking tradition, his First Sun, Malrik, was already powerful enough to take the mantle. The boy was ready.

Azeron could gently retire, step away from it all, and spend the rest of his years fighting to his heart's content without the weight of the throne.

The path was becoming clearer now. If Asher truly fell into grave danger, Azeron would save him. He would step down. Then Malrik would take over.

And if Asher didn't fall into danger... then all was well.

Better to be prepared and not need it, than unprepared when the worst happens.

"But I don't think that's the only option, Azeron,"

Zarek said again, shattering the silence that had once more begun to settle in the room.

Azeron blinked. "What do you mean, Zarek?"

With a faint smile on his face, Zarek replied, "Do you really believe that Malrik would just sit by and let Asher die during this True Awakening?"

Azeron froze.

He hadn't considered that.

Indeed, Malrik wouldn't let Asher die. His First Sun wouldn't allow it. Azeron knew it in his bones, Malrik would intervene.

And if Malrik did interfere, then as Primarch, the power to mete out punishment rested solely on Azeron's shoulders. He could simply assign a light punishment... or even none at all.

'How didn't I think of this earlier?' Azeron thought, a slow smile spreading across his face as clarity dawned.

His heart rate, which had been racing moments ago, began to slow. He was calm again.

"Thank you," Azeron said sincerely, glancing toward Zarek.

Zarek merely nodded, offering no further words. He had no children of his own, but that didn't mean he didn't understand Azeron's pain.

'You better not die, Asher,' Azeron thought, leaning back slightly. 'Though, I must admit... I'm starting to look forward to seeing what you'll do.'