

# CLEAVER OF SIN

## **#Chapter 61: No proof. No trace. No punishment - Read CLEAVER OF SIN Chapter 61: No proof. No trace. No punishment**

### **Chapter 61: No proof. No trace. No punishment**

Thousands of kilometers away from the Wargrave estate, another massive castle could be seen stretching out across vast meters of land. Its walls stood tall and majestic, towering with defiance as the castle itself seemed to pierce the sky like a challenge to the heavens.

This was the Silvershade Ducal Household Estate.

Roughly six months ago, the Silvershades had suffered immense losses, both financially and reputationally, after they were forced to open their secret family vault and spend their hard-earned coins to pay the Duke of Wargrave.

It had all happened because Duke Rhydion Silvershade had lost a bet, one that he himself had suggested, confident in his success.

Following that costly mistake, the entire household's daily affairs changed. Most noticeably, their meals. The quality and rarity of the food served in the estate dropped by nearly half, causing whispers among the servants and discontent among the family members.

They had been forced to adjust their lifestyle to match their new, tighter budget. But not everyone was happy. In fact, most weren't. Their luxurious existence had been slashed in half as though struck by an invisible spear.

Within a private chamber layered in extreme opulence, Duke Rhydion sat calmly at a grand desk, signing a series of documents in hand. His pen glided smoothly across the pages as he worked in silence.

Despite the events that had unfolded six months prior, his presence remained unshaken, composed and authoritative. Though the Silvershade family's reputation had been dragged through the mud, and they had lost a significant portion of their wealth, Rhydion had chosen to stay secluded in his castle rather than face society.

He held no hatred toward the Wargraves.

He had made the bet. He had taken the risk. He had simply wanted to make quick coin and make the Wargraves suffer a public loss. Instead, he had been the one humiliated.

But it didn't bother him. Not truly. In the end, it was just money, and Rhydion had plenty of that.

As for Ryan, the one who had lost the bet for the family, Rhydion had thrown him into even harsher training. He made it clear that Ryan wouldn't be leaving the training grounds until he met a certain standard, one that Rhydion himself had set.

Suddenly, the quiet of the chamber was broken by a sharp knock on the door.

"Come in," Rhydion's voice echoed, calm and commanding.

The door creaked open, and a butler entered with graceful steps and composed eyes. However, before he could even offer a greeting, Rhydion cut him off with a calm, even tone.

"What is it?" he asked, his eyes still glued to the documents before him as his hand continued to move without pause.

"The Tenth Sun's True Awakening is set to begin in a few days," the butler replied respectfully.

At those words, Rhydion's pen finally paused. His gaze slowly lifted from the parchment, settling on the butler with a quiet intensity, as though he were finally granting the man his full attention.

"And what am I supposed to do with that information?" Rhydion asked, his voice low. "I hope you're not here to suggest I intervene."

"I wouldn't dare suggest anything to the Duke," the butler replied immediately, bowing low with deep respect.

"Then why are you here?" Rhydion asked once again, his patience thinning. He detested unnecessary interruptions, especially while working.

The butler straightened and finally delivered the reason for his presence.

"The Young Master, Ryan, is already moving to intervene."

Rhydion's calm expression shifted into a sharp frown.

"How stupid can that idiot possibly be?" he muttered, voice dropping into something dangerous. "Does he think the Wargraves' reputation is exaggerated? That their name is just empty noise?"

He didn't need further details. He already knew what Ryan was trying to do. Likely sending assassins to strike during the True Awakening, attempting to sneak a wolf into a pen of chickens.

"Tell him I said to do nothing foolish, or I'll personally cut off his arm," Rhydion stated coldly. "And head to whatever guild he placed the order through, cancel it immediately. Remove all traces."

"As you command, Patriarch," the butler replied, bowing once more before quickly exiting the room.

As the door closed behind him, Rhydion let out a long, slow sigh. Ryan wasn't the first to attempt something so foolish.

It was practically tradition.

During the Wargraves' infamous True Awakenings, other noble families, and even the Royal Family at times, would attempt to interfere. Assassins would be sent. Sabotage arranged. All in a desperate effort to eliminate a potential threat before it could fully bloom.

But the Wargraves weren't fools. They were always prepared.

Every assassin who dared to cross their lines was hunted down, their information extracted through blood and agony. A massacre would follow. No matter the size of the assassin guild, they would be wiped out that same day.

And if the order had come from a noble house? That family would join them in the grave.

The Wargraves were merciless, terrifyingly so. They had never once married into other noble families, forging no political bonds. This made them immune to manipulation, unbound by subtle favors or alliances and manipulations.

And when all was said and done? They left no evidence.

No proof. No trace. No punishment.

Rhydion knew that if Azeron Wargrave so much as caught a scent of Silvershade involvement, he and his estate would be leveled within minutes.

They were simply too united, too disciplined, too monstrous to cross.

'I wonder if the boy will survive,' Rhydion thought, his black eyes narrowing with interest.

Then, without another word, his pen began moving once more.

Thousands of kilometers away from the Silvershade estate, deep within the Royal Palace, another man had also received word of Asher's impending True Awakening.

Emperor Zolthemir Lux Vanthelmor.

Normally, no one outside of the Wargrave family paid much attention to these ceremonies. They were internal, private, uninteresting to outsiders.

But this time... they all watched.

Whispers had already begun to spread.

Would he survive?

Or...

Would he finally fall?

## **Chapter 62: Run away**

Asher could be seen lying on his bed, the morning sun casting a warm golden ray through the window. His eyelids flickered as he finally stirred from his sleep. Glancing at the time, he noticed it was already past 12 p.m. in the afternoon.

Asher sat up on the bed, stretching with a satisfied sigh, enjoying every second of it.

'I wonder when last I slept this long,' Asher thought to himself as he jumped down from the bed.

The True Awakening was set to take place tomorrow, and Asher had been granted the privilege of skipping today's training at the First Training Ground to rest and prepare, although he still didn't fully understand what exactly he was preparing for.

But regardless, he had been officially excused for the day. So, Asher simply slept until his body woke up naturally.

Today, he wasn't going to do any rigorous training. Even his personal training was put on hold. Everything could wait until after the True Awakening.

Wasting no time, Asher headed into the bathroom for a quick bath, then changed into fresh clothes. As if she had been waiting for just this moment, Lyra entered his room with a cart in hand.

She quietly placed the food on the table before him. Seeing the variety and quantity of dishes in front of him, Asher raised an eyebrow.

"What's the occasion?" he asked curiously.

Lyra smiled gently as she responded, "Young Master, your True Awakening is tomorrow. I'm simply helping fill your stomach so you can gain all the energy you need."

Asher glanced at her, then narrowed his eyes playfully. "Are you sure you're not just afraid I'll die tomorrow and you're trying to overfeed me with one last meal?"

Lyra chuckled softly and shook her head. "I'm sure that, as the most talented Wargrave to ever exist, you'll come back alive, Young Master." Her tone held absolute confidence, as if the thought of failure never crossed her mind.

Asher didn't know where she got that confidence from. He, the one actually participating in the True Awakening, was more than a little nervous. The probability of death was real. And yet, Lyra seemed completely unfazed.

"We both weren't here since the inception of the Wargrave bloodline. You can't be sure I'm the most talented Wargrave ever birthed," Asher said, turning his attention to the mouth-watering array of dishes.

Lyra said nothing in return. She simply gave a small bow and walked out of the room, taking her place just outside his door.

'Why does this feel no different than the Last Supper from my previous world?' Asher thought, his lips twitching slightly in amusement. Then he dug in.

Before long, he was done. Lyra came in and cleared the dishes swiftly. Asher rose to his feet, intending to use the day to explore the Wargrave estate and possibly meet some Moons. After all, he had never met any of his sisters.

But just as he opened the door, he found Zarek already standing outside, hand raised mid-knock.

'Even with my Omni Perception, I still can't sense this man. How strong can a butler possibly be?' Asher thought as he looked at Zarek.

If his eyes weren't directly on the man, he would have bypassed his Omni Perception entirely, as if he didn't exist.

'But considering he's the Primarch's right-hand man, I suppose this level of skill is necessary,' Asher reasoned.

"Tenth Sun, is there something on my face?" Zarek asked casually as Asher stared at him.

"What can I help you with, Zarek?" Asher asked, ignoring the question.

"The Primarch demands your presence," Zarek replied before turning on his heel and walking forward.

Asher followed without question, and soon enough, he found himself standing in front of the Primarch.

"I greet the Primarch," Asher said as he bowed respectfully.

"Life must be really easy for you, to sleep until this time," Azeroth remarked, shifting his sharp golden gaze to Asher.

Asher remained silent for a brief second, thinking to himself, Is he seriously complaining that I woke up late?

"No, Primarch," Asher replied evenly. "I simply trained into the night since I wouldn't be training today. I wanted to ensure I'd be in optimal condition for the True Awakening."

His voice was calm, his hands clasped behind his back. He stood straight, posture perfect, like a well-trained soldier.

"About the Awakening... Do you know what it entails?" Azeroth asked, still observing him closely.

Asher's purple eyes met the Primarch's golden ones without blinking or faltering.

'Is he finally going to brief me about the True Awakening?' He thought, a spark of hope lighting up within him.

"No, Patriarch," Asher answered respectfully.

"Then you'll find out during the True Awakening," Azeroth stated simply.

The brief flicker of joy Asher had felt was instantly extinguished, though his expression remained neutral.

He said nothing, merely waiting silently for Azeroth to continue.

"I have a mission for you," Azeroth added calmly.

My first mission? Asher thought with growing interest.

He had heard whispers about the infamous Wargrave missions, but never really paid them much attention, they had always felt distant, like a far-off milestone.

Still, he knew one thing: every mission came with a reward.

"Your mission," Azeron said, eyes never leaving his, "is to come back alive. This is your first mission as a Wargrave."

Before Asher could even form a response, Azeron continued with finality, "You are dismissed."

Asher bowed once again and stepped out of the room. As expected, Lyra was already waiting.

Without a word, he walked off in a random direction, deep in thought.

He couldn't understand the Primarch.

His first official family mission was to survive? That felt redundant. He was already planning on surviving, mission or not.

Though he was nervous, Asher had almost no doubt that he would return alive. After all, he had marked his room as a teleportation location over five months ago.

If he ever found himself in genuine danger during the True Awakening, he could simply run away, regardless of how far he was from the Wargrave estate.

It was a trump card no one aside Lyra knew he had,.

## **Chapter 63: You Wish**

As Asher stepped out of the room, Azeron sighed. The mission was just an excuse to give his son a reward, a way to compensate for his own inability to save him because of the constraints of his position.

As Azeron remained deep in thought, the door opened, and a man standing at over eight feet in height stepped in with a calm smile.

The First Sun, Malrik Wargrave.

Azeron had already sensed his presence long before he arrived. "Has the prodigal son finally remembered his father?" Azeron spoke, his tone dry, as Malrik simply sat down with composure.

"Father, I'm almost thirty already. I don't have to come see you every time I return home," Malrik replied, still wearing that same carefree smile.

Azeron snorted. "Hmph. And which parent wouldn't want to see their children's faces when they come back from work? Your siblings came to greet me, but you," his eyes narrowed, "you acted like I didn't exist, even though we returned on the same day, and before everyone else at that."

Indeed, although both Malrik and Azeron had come back on the same day, Malrik hadn't visited him even once, and they had been back for seven days now.

"Why don't you come greet me then? Don't I deserve at least that much?" Malrik countered with a snort of his own, raising an eyebrow.

"When you become the Primarch, then I will," Azeron responded with a smirk tugging at the corners of his lips.

"Father, you have zero scheming ability. If you want me to become the Primarch so soon, you should try thinking harder," Malrik replied, amused.

"Hoo... Just because you started scheming your way into noble politics, you now think you can talk back to me, huh?" Azeron said sharply. As if reacting to his mood, Ender, the ever-watchful spectral spear, appeared instantly beside him, humming with energy, ready to strike at a moment's notice.

"Father, can't you just put away the spear? I'm just here as a son to visit his lovely father," Malrik replied, clearly having no intention of indulging Ender and his crazed battle appetite.

"Hmph. I have no son like you. You're adopted. I'll be returning you to your real parents soon," Azeron joked without missing a beat, and Ender vanished with a disappointed hum as the hope for battle faded away.

Malrik didn't reply. He was used to his father's antics, this was the side of the man he hid behind his iron mask, a side rarely shown to others.

Malrik calmly brought out a bottle of alcohol from his space ring, along with two glass cups, and poured it for the both of them.

"How is the youngest?" Malrik asked as he took a sip.

"Where did you get this alcohol? I've never tasted anything like it before," Azeron asked as he stared curiously at the bottle, rolling it slightly in his hand.

"I simply employed someone whose talent is brewing any drink better than most people," Malrik replied, unbothered that Azeron hadn't answered the question he asked about Asher.

"Be sure to send some of this alcohol my way then," Azeron said as he gulped the entire cup at once like it was a shot, then poured himself another without hesitation.

Then a smile appeared on his face as he began to speak, "As for your brother, he simply inherited all my talent."



"I thought I was the one you said inherited all your talents?" Malrik said with a smirk, amused.

"You wish," Azeron shot back with a grunt, then began recounting everything Asher had done, right from the very beginning when he had awakened until now. Azeron listed and explained all of Asher's achievements down to the smallest detail, not missing a single one.

Since Malrik wasn't present during any of it, he had no idea. He had only heard of Asher defeating someone named Ryan, but when he searched his memory, he couldn't even remember who Ryan was. So, he classified him as another irrelevant character.

Malrik simply nodded and didn't interrupt, letting Azeron continue speaking... and boasting.

"If Asher is about to die tomorrow, would you intervene?" Malrik suddenly asked.

"I wouldn't," Azeron answered immediately, not wasting even a second to think.

"Why?" Malrik asked again, clearly surprised. He had expected his father to say yes. He knew just how deeply Azeron cared for Asher, how far the man was willing to go.

Hearing him say no caught him off guard.

"Why should I.... when I know you will," Azeron replied with a knowing smile.

Malrik paused, his entire train of thought seemed to halt for a second as he finally understood the meaning behind his father's answer.

"Has Father started using his brain, or am I just that predictable these days?" Malrik murmured under his breath, though Azeron could hear him loud and clear.

"If I couldn't use my brain, how could I have gotten over half of Silvershade's yearly earnings? That's something even you can't pull off," Azeron snorted in response.

But Malrik didn't reply. He believed the man was simply lucky and had played an unknown card at the right time.

"I don't think the youngest will need to be saved tomorrow," Malrik said with a smile forming on his lips.

"And why do you think so?" Azeron asked with a calm tone as he poured himself another glass of alcohol, curious about the reasoning.

"Because... he is special," Malrik replied, his gaze distant, his thoughts clearly drifting somewhere far from the room they sat in.

"Enough talk about my last son. What about you? How are you feeling? Do you need your father's help to handle some people?" Azeron asked with mock concern.

"Well, everything's good on my end. I'm just waiting for a few key pieces to fall into place before I wipe out all the Emovirae in Fallen Heaven," Malrik replied as he swirled the alcohol in his glass, eyes sharp.

"Can I come?" Azeron asked, a slight eagerness in his voice, clearly wanting a piece of the action.

"Nope. It would no longer be fun for me if we had to share preys," Malrik replied calmly.

Azeron chuckled and nodded. His first son had always handled things on his own.

'When will I ever get the chance to help this brat with anything in this life?' Azeron wondered, a heavy sigh forming silently in his thoughts.

The discussion between father and son continued well into the evening as they waited for the next day to arrive.

But they weren't the only ones waiting.

Every Wargrave was for it.

## **Chapter 64: Second Moon**

Asher walked around the Wargrave estate without a particular direction in mind. He remembered the first time he had left his room after his transmigration, the sheer amount of opulence he had seen had been overwhelming.

He remembered seeing the knights as they trained, although even now, he still couldn't keep up with their speed, no matter how hard he tried.

Lyra walked behind him with steady, composed steps. Unlike Asher, she wasn't really bothered or anxious. She knew her Young Master well, perhaps better than most. She knew he could easily escape during the True Awakening if he wished; she had seen him teleport to his room numerous times over the past five months.

Although she didn't really know how strong Asher had become now, she had no doubt that he would return to her... to the Wargrave estate.

As Asher walked, just about to cut a corner, his Omni Perception instantly sensed someone in that direction. His footsteps paused for a split second before he continued. As he turned the corner, he saw her, one of his siblings. One he had never met before.

She stood over six feet in height, with flowing green hair and deep black eyes. Her body was the very epitome of a bombshell. She had a slim, curved waist that seemed to connect her upper and lower frame with utter perfection, exuding the kind of beauty that couldn't be ignored.

The lighting of the hallway seemed to bounce off her skin in a soft illumination, enhancing her appearance as though the Wargrave Bloodline itself had taken its time sculpting her beauty. She was, after all, the first daughter of the current Primarch.

A belt hung snugly around her waist, with various types of daggers fastened to it, each one gleaming faintly. Within Asher's Omni Perception, he could sense several more daggers carefully hidden all over her body, daggers most people wouldn't even notice unless they looked very closely.

She wore a sleek black top that stopped just above her belly button, paired with matching black trousers and gloves. She moved with extremely silent steps, almost as though the floor beneath her didn't register her presence at all.

The Second Moon: Wuthenya Wargrave.

Asher's distinct purple eyes met her black ones. He could see the signature, expressionless look that the Wargrave family was known for. But, the moment Wuthenya saw Asher, she smiled and spoke before he could even open his mouth.

"If it isn't the youngest genius," Wuthenya said teasingly.

"Good afternoon, Sister Wuthenya," Asher replied politely, although he didn't quite know how to talk to her. After his failed awakening, he had basically been ignored from the very beginning.

Although he was still being ignored and only spoken to when physically encountered, it was still...

"Hoo... would you look at that? Radiant Kindlestar in only six months. It seems the youngest really is a genius," Wuthenya teased again, her tone light but with a hint of genuine interest.

Asher's face shifted subtly into one of mild surprise, as though he couldn't believe someone had seen through his Life Rank. Asher wasn't so naive as to think that just because most people could easily hide their Life Rank meant others didn't have special ways of seeing through it.

"It's expected of a Wargrave, Sister Wuthenya," Asher calmly replied. Without realizing it, the two of them had begun walking in the same direction, even though they had been heading in opposite ones just moments before.

"Meh... No need to be so modest. Even Father and Big Bro, who are both tagged as monsters, didn't reach Radiant Kindlestar in just half a year."

Wuthenya's tone was casual, but Asher could sense the pride in her words.

Asher didn't know what to say, so he simply smiled instead of replying. Deep down, however, he was a bit confused.

From what he could recall, he had never met Wuthenya personally, maybe once or twice when he was around five years old, but certainly not in recent times. Yet, Wuthenya spoke to him as though they had known each other for years.

Asher couldn't help but wonder if there was a gap in his memories.

Although Asher didn't look at her directly, his Omni Perception allowed him to get a clear view of her, the way she walked, the tone of her voice, the grace of her body.

It was no wonder people looked at her with a mixture of admiration and desire... and why Malrik had killed all of them in her name, under the justification of 'Big Bro.'

"Stop staring, Ash," Wuthenya said as she walked, already shortening his name.

'How did she know? Such perception...' Asher thought, inwardly impressed.

"I wasn't staring," Asher replied smoothly. "I was just thinking about how strong you are."

"Hooo... You want to spar with Big Sis to find out?" Wuthenya asked, almost as if she were excited by the idea.

But Asher had no intention of getting wrecked just a day before his True Awakening. "Maybe another time, Sister Wuthenya," he responded simply.

Lyra remained a few steps behind, never speaking, never making her presence known. She simply faded into the background, yet she was always present, always alert, ready to act if her Young Master needed her.

Within a few minutes, Wuthenya and Asher arrived at Asher's room. Stopping at the door, Wuthenya turned to him and said, "Don't die, Ash. After all, we've never lost a sibling to the True Awakening."

Before Asher could even give a reply, she vanished before his very eyes.

'What happened to walking? Can everyone just stop disappearing like that?' Asher thought with a sigh.

Malrik had done the same thing when they had first met, disappearing in the exact same way. Asher didn't believe they were using teleportation. He simply believed their speed was just that ridiculous.

Shaking his head with a soft sigh, Asher opened his door and stepped inside. 'Ash isn't a bad name... Has a nice ring to it. Maybe this family isn't as bad as I've been thinking it is,' he mused.

He had met the First Sun and the Second Moon, both of whom seemed like great people. Only the Ninth Sun had been different, but Asher couldn't care less about that.

"Lyra," Asher called out.

The door opened as Lyra stepped in without hesitation. "I'll be going to bed at exactly 7 p.m. today. Prepare dinner before then," Asher instructed.

Lyra simply nodded and then left, as silently as she had entered.

Although Asher had no intention of training today, he wasn't just going to lie around doing nothing either. He would at least stretch his body and keep himself active.

And with that, he began, sit-ups, push-ups, high planks, then transitioned into calisthenics to maintain fluidity and balance.

Hours passed as evening slowly approached. Sweat dripped from various parts of his body. His muscles felt alive, limber, and ready to move. Asher hadn't pushed himself to the brink, as this wasn't meant to be a training session.

After a quick bath, he changed into his nightclothes, then sat down and ate the food Lyra had brought him.

At exactly 7 p.m., he was already in bed, staring at the ceiling. 'Tomorrow, it will begin,' Asher thought, then closed his eyes.

And with that, the dream world consumed him whole.

## **Chapter 65: Arrow**

As Asher slept soundly, a cold gust of wind brushed against his skin, rousing a faint shiver. He shifted slightly, hands reaching to adjust the duvet and pull it tighter around him, yet, midway through the motion, he froze.

In the next breath, he sprang to his feet, his senses flaring as his eyes snapped open.

His surroundings bled into his vision, gradually sharpening. The moon hung high in the sky, casting its silvery glow across the landscape below.

Trees, grass, and endless stretches of greenery extended for kilometres, cloaked in a creeping darkness that blanketed the earth, only barely pierced by the moonlight's pale touch.

A gentle white fog clung to the air, drifting silently between trees and along the ground. It moved with an eerie grace, occasionally stirred and carried by the breath of the night wind.

'Where am I?' Asher wondered, his mind spinning. He had gone to bed at exactly 7 p.m., yet now, he stood here, in an unfamiliar place.

He had no memory of being moved, no recollection of when or how it had happened.

'The True Awakening.'

He didn't need to guess. He already understood. No assassin could have infiltrated the Wargrave estate, not while the entire family was present.

And even if some assassin with an overpowered ability had managed to slip through their defenses, they wouldn't have wasted time relocating him. They would have killed him where he lay, not left him in the middle of a forest.

'Zarek... or someone else?' Asher mused, eyes narrowing. Zarek had always managed to bypass his Omni Perception, an ability that functioned even while he slept.

But that didn't necessarily mean Zarek was the only one capable of slipping past it. Perhaps others could as well, and simply never cared to bother.

'System. What time is it?' Asher asked silently.

[Ding]

[12:02 AM]

Asher frowned.

That wasn't quite right. He was convinced the Wargrave estate had initiated the True Awakening precisely at midnight.

'Two minutes difference... does that mean I'm only two minutes away from the estate?' he speculated, but quickly dismissed the idea.

With individuals like the First Sun and Second Moon, whose speed defied comprehension, distance became meaningless. Who could say how many kilometres they could cross in the span of a single breath?

'System, where am I?' Asher asked inwardly.

[Ding]

[The System is not a map, and therefore cannot determine your location. The System is already doing more than enough functioning as your personal alarm and clock]

Asher read the notification without the slightest hint of surprise. From the moment he had woken until now, not even a full minute had passed, his thought process operated at such a rapid pace.

Asher's hands moved instinctively over his body, searching, hoping, for something. A clue, a sign, anything his family might have left behind.

His fingers brushed against his pocket, and he felt the unmistakable texture of parchment. Retrieving it at once, he unfolded and read the brief message:

***Survive until sunrise, or return on your own before then, if you can.***

No guidance. No aid. Just a challenge masked as a test. Sunrise, which typically broke around 6:30 a.m., was now his silent deadline.

'System, set an alarm for 6:30 a.m.' Asher commanded mentally.

[Ding]

[Affirmative, Host]

[Alarm set]

With no time to waste, Asher vanished in an instant, his form a blur as he shot up the nearest tree, feet gliding effortlessly along its trunk before disappearing into the dense canopy above.

He concealed himself among the thick branches and leaves, the perfect vantage point from which to observe and prepare.

The trees here towered high, each one standing no less than four metres tall, as though reaching greedily for the sky itself.

The moment he read the word 'Survive', Asher knew something wasn't right. He couldn't say what it was, but he felt it. Something was coming.

Hidden among the foliage, he stilled himself. His breathing slowed. His heartbeat steadied. His presence faded into the night, yet every muscle in his body remained

coiled, taut with readiness. He was a phantom in the trees, poised to strike or vanish at the first sign of danger.

Asher's senses flared, something had entered the edge of his Omni Perception. He didn't hesitate. There was no time to think, only to act.

Virelass flashed into existence in his hand, its edge gleaming with lethal purpose. In the same instant, Asher turned, his body already in motion. With one swift, fluid strike, the blade streaked forward, and a head was severed cleanly from its body.

A spray of green blood arced through the air as a massive, three-meter-long serpent collapsed lifelessly across the branches.

Asher didn't linger.

He launched himself forward, leaping from one tree to the next, gliding between branches and shadows like a creature born of the forest.

Only once he had put distance between himself and the kill did he settle into another high perch, shrouded once more by leaves and silence.

Then, he vanished again into stillness, watching, waiting.

He was certain the scent of blood from the slain serpent would draw more monsters to the area. But Asher hadn't come to fight, his only goal was to survive until sunrise.

Though he possessed the means to teleport back to the safety of his room and end it all, he refrained. Something deeper compelled him, the desire to witness the True Awakening for himself.

With Virelass hovering silently behind him, Asher lowered into a crouch, his presence dissolving into the bark and shadows of the tree, as though he had become one with the forest itself.

Suddenly, a long, slender projectile sliced through the air with a sharp whistle, hurtling toward his position with deadly precision.

'I've been made,' Asher thought. He didn't flinch. In a flash, his rapier flickered into motion, effortlessly deflecting the arrow.

But;

**BOOM**



The air shattered with a thunderous explosion. The arrow detonated on impact, obliterating the tree he had been concealed within. Bark splintered into twigs, and leaves ignited midair, swirling backward under the force of the blast.

The sheer impact hurled Asher through the forest like a torn kite. His body crashed into another tree with bone-rattling force, before plummeting from several meters above.

Yet, like a spectral feline, Asher twisted mid-fall and landed lightly on his feet. Without pause, he shifted into motion as he pushed forward, his senses flaring, eyes scanning the smoke and flame, searching for the one who had fired the arrow.

The acrid scent of burnt flesh clung to him as wisps of smoke curled from his battered frame. Blood trickled from countless wounds that marred his body, while his clothes, face, and hair bore the scorch marks of the explosion, charred, torn, and blackened.

With a single strike, Asher Wargrave, the monster, had been wounded.

## **Chapter 66: Assassins**

Although Asher understood that the True Awakening was a trial of survival, he had no intention of spending the entire duration in retreat. Constantly fleeing for six hours would leave him on the defensive, offering no tactical advantage, a risk far too great to ignore.

With that thought, the moment his feet touched the ground, he propelled himself forward, slicing through the air as his form surged in the direction from which the arrow had been fired.

His eyes narrowed, and his senses sharpened, scanning through the swirling smoke and lingering flames from the explosion.

Though darkness veiled the entire forest, Asher saw everything within his Omni Perception with crystal clarity, each detail illuminated as if under the midday sun. Beyond the bounds of his Omni Perception, his vision subtly adjusted to the shadows, adapting seamlessly to the natural gloom.

Pain flared violently from his wound, a searing explosion across his nerves, but Asher paid it no mind. His focus had narrowed to a singular, all-consuming intent: Kill.

Within the range of his Omni Perception, two figures emerged. One, a nimble archer, was already vaulting toward another tree. The other surged forward, daggers gleaming in hand, closing the distance with deadly intent.

'Assassins,' Asher thought coldly.

As the dagger-wielding assassin lunged forward, his blade snapped toward Asher's eyes, gleaming with murderous intent. But Asher merely sidestepped, effortlessly

slipping past the strike. He didn't retaliate, at least not directly. Instead, his body blurred forward, leaving the assassin behind as he sprinted toward the archer.

A flicker of confusion crossed the assassin's face, its mind barely beginning to register the anomaly.

But it never got the chance to understand.

In a flash of silver, Virelass moved of its own accord, carving through the assassin's neck in a single, fluid stroke.

Another arrow whistled through the air toward Asher, its sound sharp and lethal. This time, he didn't dare to deflect it, instead, he dodged. But in the span of that single moment, time seemed to distort.

His Instinctive Adaptation surged to life.

Lightning crackled violently across his body as purple arcs danced over his skin. In an instant, he vanished, disappearing in a bolt of electricity just as his senses detected the arrow swelling, on the verge of detonation.

A heartbeat later, the explosion ripped through the forest, but Asher was already gone.

He reappeared directly in front of the archer, his fist rocketing forward with the intensity and force of a high-caliber sniper round.

The sudden burst of speed caught the archer off guard, he simply couldn't keep up. Asher's fist crashed into his face with brutal force, snapping his head violently to the side.

But the archer reacted with practiced motion.

This wasn't his first mission. Using the momentum from the blow, he twisted away, creating distance as his fingers moved fluidly, already drawing his bowstring and reaching for another arrow.

But Asher wouldn't give him the chance.

Now that he understood the true danger, those arrows could detonate on command, he moved in again like a phantom. In the blink of an eye, Virelass appeared in his grip as if it had materialized from thin air.

His arm blurred, and in one savage motion, the blade's gleaming edge tore through the archer's throat, clean as a razor slicing paper.

The archer staggered as his world tilted unnaturally. His vision fractured. His clarity faded. A geyser of crimson erupted from his neck, painting the air in red as the last of his strength drained away.

Asher's gaze snapped to the side, his senses already registering movement, monsters drawn by the noise and the scent of fresh blood were closing in.

Virelass responded without delay.

It activated Crimson Pact, and at once, blood surged from the fallen assassins in rippling waves, pulled as though summoned by an unseen force. The crimson tide spiraled through the air before converging on the blade.

Moments later, Asher's wounds began to seal. Flesh knit itself together with supernatural efficiency, charred skin gave way to fresh new layers, and even his scorched hair began to regenerate. The searing pain that had wracked his body dulled, then vanished entirely.

Something stirred within Asher, a subtle, uneasy ripple across his consciousness. This had been his first kill. Even though it was an assassin who had come for his life, the weight of taking a life felt no lighter.

But before that feeling could rise, before it could shape itself into guilt or doubt, Asher crushed it.

There was no room for hesitation in a world like Crymora, especially not during the True Awakening.

With his injuries fully mended, Asher turned to move. He had no intention of engaging the incoming monsters. Not yet. He needed to conserve his energy, every ounce of it would count before the six hours were over.

With his muscles coiled like a compressed spring, Asher was ready to launch forward, until a piercing screech shattered the air above him.

**SCRRAAA!**

His head snapped upward, eyes locking onto a monstrous owl hurtling down from the night sky like a feathered missile.

'Fast.' Asher noted, his thoughts sharp.

But he was faster.

He had no intention of wasting time on a single beast.

Lightning crackled violently along Virelass, its edge humming with raw energy. Thunder rumbled through the forest as Asher raised the blade in a swift, fluid motion.

With a single strike, a blinding arc of purple lightning surged upward, an electrified crescent slash unleashed with lethal intent.

The owl attempted to veer off, wings flapping as it twisted midair to avoid the attack, but it was futile. The lightning slash cleaved through its body cleanly, slicing it in two with surgical precision. The halves spiraled in opposite directions, perfectly symmetrical, as the creature's remains crashed to the forest floor.

Asher didn't pause to admire the clean kill. Without hesitation, he vaulted from the tree canopy, leaping to another branch with fluid movement. The trees hissed with the sound of disturbed snakes, but their aggression was short-lived.

Without Asher so much as lifting a finger, Virelass acted. The blade lashed out on instinct, shredding the serpents mid-strike, their bodies falling in pieces behind him.

Landing silently, Asher crouched low in the shadows of a thick branch, choosing a new vantage point. His breathing slowed, heart rate steadying, and his mind began to churn.

'Was it the family that sent those assassins?' he wondered, his thoughts circling back to the two fallen enemies.

Asher was no fool, his intellect was razor-sharp. With only a handful of clues, he could begin to piece together the larger game at play.

'Is this the True Awakening?' he thought. 'The Wargraves send assassins after their Sun and Moon, forcing them into bloodshed, attrition, and death from an early age. And if they survive... they're forged into something more.'

His eyes narrowed slightly.

'And the assassins won't stop coming. Their only goal is to complete the mission before dawn.'

His conclusion came cold and certain.

'If that's true, then someone is watching, everyone, maybe. The entire Wargrave family could be observing, measuring me. There's no reason for all of them to return for the True Awakening without some deeper purpose behind it.'

As this realization struck, Asher's head subtly turned, his eyes scanning the shadows of the forest as if trying to locate the hidden 'camera' of this era, the unseen eye he was sure was tracking his every move.

But after a moment, he gave up the search.

Finding it wouldn't improve his odds of survival, and it might only make it easier for the next assassin to find him.

Asher's breathing gradually leveled as he focused on recovering the stamina and Astra he had already expended. Though he wasn't anywhere near depletion, he understood the value of maintaining peak condition, especially in a trial where death could arrive without warning.

But even in stillness, his awareness remained razor-sharp, never slipping for a single second. Every rustle, every distant sound was registered and assessed. Rest might be necessary, but vulnerability was never an option.

## **Chapter 67: Futile**

A few seconds passed as Astra surged toward Asher, flooding his Astra veins with radiant energy. He doubted the assassins could track him through the Astra he drew, after all, throughout the forest, countless monsters also absorbed Astra in varying degrees.

In this chaotic symphony of energy, he was merely one among millions, an indistinguishable current in a vast, flowing Astra. The perfect cover.

Amid the stillness, the system's chime broke the silence.

[Ding]

[Illusion Mind Invasion Detected. Mind Shield Activated.]

Asher's breath caught as the notification flickered before him. 'An illusion,' he realized.

Not even a minute had passed since he concealed himself, yet he had already been discovered. Just like before, with the arrow, he had barely hidden for a few seconds before being exposed.

Though the system warned him of the illusion, Asher remained motionless. He didn't react. Instead, he stood still, his body slack, eyes distant, like a man truly caught within the illusion's grasp.

Within moments, another assassin emerged atop the tree. She didn't hesitate, every passing second was an opportunity for her target to shatter the illusion.

Closing the distance in a swift, silent dash, the bracers on her forearms shifted with a faint metallic whisper as twin hidden blades extended downward. Their sleek edges glinted beneath the moon's silver light.

Without pause, she swept her arms in a crossing arc, aiming to sever Asher's throat with a meticulous twin-blade strike.

But before her blades could so much as graze Asher, Virelass materialized in a blur of light and shadow, flashing in a single, merciless movement.

The assassin's breath caught as a searing pain exploded through her arms. Both forearms fell, severed cleanly at the wrist. Blood erupted in twin arcs, painting the air in crimson. Her mouth opened to scream, but before sound could escape, Asher was already behind her.

His hand clamped around her neck like iron. With a sharp, brutal twist, a sickening crack echoed through the stillness of the night, and the light in her eyes vanished into the void.

A faint whistle cut through the air, a sound only sharpened senses could catch. It struck Asher's ears like a warning bell. Within the scope of his Omni Perception, the incoming projectiles revealed themselves: senbon, fine, slender throwing needles.

Their tips shimmered with a dark green sheen. Poison. He didn't need to wonder; he recognized the toxin at a glance.

Without a command, Virelass flashed behind him. Its form twisted mid-air, transforming into a silver streak that danced across the canopy.

***Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding.***

The sound rang out in rapid succession, like a deadly melody echoing through the treetops, as Virelass effortlessly deflected every senbon in a flawless arc.

This was Asher's way of conserving stamina. Trivial threats like this, or even the silent death of the first assassin, were well within Virelass's capabilities. There was no need for him to lift a finger.

Suddenly, Asher's Instinctive Adaptation flared to life. In an instant, his body vanished from the tree branch and reappeared atop another.

But he was too late.

Pain erupted at his heel, sharp and burning. His eyes flicked toward the branch he had just vacated, and there he saw it: a hand retreating into the ground, a blood-stained dagger gripped tightly in its grasp.

Asher's expression darkened.

He knew it, the earth below his feet was the blind spot of his Omni Perception. It couldn't penetrate beneath the surface. Although he'd sensed the dagger's hilt just as it broke through the soil, the reaction window had been too narrow. Dodging without injury had been impossible.

The strike had been accurate, aimed at his achilles tendon, a calculated attempt to cripple his movement.

But it was futile.

Even before the blood had time to trail down his skin, the wound closed in an instant, sealing shut as if it had never been there. His foot, whole once more.

Virelass, his soul-bound weapon, didn't need to be in hand to heal him. It mended his wounds from anywhere, its will intertwined with his own.

Asher dropped from the tree in a fluid motion. The moment his feet touched the ground, he felt it, the sudden emergence of heat. What had been a calm, eerie air turned blistering in an instant... and then it spiked violently.

His purple eyes snapped toward the source.

A roaring wave of fire surged toward him, devouring everything in its path.

But Asher didn't flinch.

He didn't wait for the inferno to reach him, instead, he charged toward it.

Just as his body launched forward, purple lightning crackled to life around him, encasing his entire frame in a violent lightning storm. Without hesitation, he plunged headfirst into the oncoming blaze, no fear, no pause, only motion.

The searing heat crashed against his skin, but he felt nothing. The lightning cloaking his body repelled the flames, shielding him as he tore through the inferno with unrelenting force.

He burst from the other side, steam trailing behind him as the lightning veil dissipated.

His gaze, those vivid purple eyes, locked onto the assassin standing just ahead, frozen in disbelief. The man hadn't expected him to charge through the fire. The shock on his face said it all.

But Asher wasn't here to marvel at his reaction.

Lightning arced across his arm, dancing wildly across his skin as he closed the distance in a heartbeat.

Then — a wet, ripping sound.

Asher's hand punched clean through the assassin's chest. Flesh gave way like molten butter, sizzling and parting around the crackling energy. His arm erupted out of the man's back, fist clenched around a still-beating heart.

The air split again with sharp whistles as more needles tore toward him. From all directions, arrows followed, raining down in unison. They converged upon him like a collapsing dome, each projectile seeking to pierce and tear, as if to reduce him to a ragged heap riddled with holes.

Feeling the threat swarm in, Asher's hand tightened.

The heart in his grasp was crushed into pulp.

Without hesitation, he seized the lifeless assassin by the collar and hurled the body toward one of the incoming volleys. The corpse spun midair, intercepting a needle with a dull thud as the deadly storm closed in.

Without the slightest hesitation, Asher dropped into a stance. Virelass vanished from wherever it had been, only to reappear instantly in his grasp, drawn to him like a loyal phantom.

Purple lightning bloomed.

Astra surged through his veins, igniting his body and rapier in radiant arcs of violent energy. The air trembled around him.

The assassins, sensing what was coming, leapt backward in instinctive panic, desperate to escape the surge they could feel gathering.

But it was far too late.

In a single, fluid motion, Asher spun, executing a full 360-degree slash with his rapier.

Thunder exploded.

The air ruptured with an ear-splitting boom as a massive ring of purple lightning, shaped like a spinning blade, erupted outward in a storming wave of destruction.

The wave consumed everything.

Arrows and needles disintegrated midair, reduced to nothing within the blinding surge. Trees were cleaved apart like twigs, the ground erupted with concussive force, and lightning danced wildly, tearing, coiling, devouring everything in its path.



The assassins didn't stand a chance. The moment the wave reached them, they were engulfed. Screams were snatched away by the roaring storm, their bodies charred and shredded before they could finish turning to run.

The scent of scorched flesh filled the air.

Where once there had been coordinated killers and towering trees, now only smoldering corpses and broken earth remained, littered across a battlefield baptized in lightning.

Asher stood upon the destruction like he was a god, as purple lightning ran through his form, his rapier in hand, his purple eyes glowing under the moonlight, his purple hair dancing to the rhythm of his own destruction.

## **Chapter 68: Missing Limb**

Within the Wargrave estate, in a particular hall, chairs stretched out as every member of the family gathered to watch the Tenth Sun's True Awakening.

The True Awakening was a ceremony where the Wargraves revealed the true nature of the world to their descendants just six months after their initial awakening. They were thrown into a battlefield at an unknown time and told to survive while the rest of the family watched from afar.

During the True Awakening, many Wargraves had died. The Wargraves watched them perish without moving a finger to save anyone due to family tradition and law.

And it was the same here. If Asher Wargrave was about to fall, 'no one' would make a move to save him from not overcoming his reality.

Within the hall, not a single aura dared to flare or fold the air in the presence of the Primarch. On a table in front of everyone, a blue orb could be seen resting as it shone brightly. Various heads-up displays popped up in front of everyone gathered.

They all watched Asher instantly jump to his feet and retrieve the parchment from his pocket just a second after waking up. They saw him scale a tree immediately after that and hide, and then they saw him tank an explosion from an arrow.

They had expected him to make a run for it the moment he jumped down from the tree, after all, the parchment said 'survive.' But no, he had taken a different route by attacking instead. This singular decision earned a lot of approval from all the Wargraves.

This was their way of combat, they never ran or hid. Although in this moment, one could hide, set up ambushes, and lay traps due to the situation, they still loved how the Tenth Sun handled things.

Although they were Wargraves, it didn't mean they were all muscles and no brains all the time. They were all muscles and no brains only when the situation required it, and this situation required some brains.

They watched him cleave an owl into perfect, symmetrical halves with just a swing of his rapier.

They watched as Virelass moved without her master, instantly decapitating the first dagger assassin, then wiping out various snake monsters, deflecting throwing needles coated in poison, single-handedly holding her own against some assassins while also healing her master.

If Asher wasn't such a genius, Virelass would have been the star of the show. She must have waited for this very moment, to fight for her master.

At this moment, some Wargraves already had soft smiles on their faces as they watched Asher.

This was the Wargrave way.

No panic.No questions.No hesitation.

Just pure action. Just pure massacre. Just pure bloodbath.

The three Great Elders sat in calm silence, their gazes locked onto the display in front of them.

The Librarian, named Morthen Wargrave, who was the first Great Elder Asher had ever met, spoke:

"It seems the Tenth Sun has been hiding quite deeply." He loved the way Asher moved, and a smile appeared on his face.

"Indeed. We didn't pay attention to him due to awakening on his third try, and he turns out to be a bigger monster," Cazmir Wargrave, the second Great Elder, added.

"It also seems the Tenth Sun has inherited Lily's talent for the rapier," Belmira Wargrave, the third Great Elder, added from the side.

Many of those in the room nodded. They couldn't deny Asher's talent; they simply hadn't paid any attention to him because of his third awakening. Besides, the Suns and Moons only started receiving real attention from other family members when they survived the True Awakening.

"At least now we know the ability of his rapier, but I wonder if he could heal other people with it besides himself," an Elder spoke calmly as she stared at the screen, watching Asher's achilles tendon mend like it was nothing.

The Elder was named Damaris Wargrave, the Primarch's sister.

Everyone within the room nodded, as healing abilities were always welcomed anywhere. And if it was something that could heal others, not just the wielder, even better.

"The rapier also seems to protect the youngest against illusion," Wuthenya Wargrave spoke with a smile, her legs crossed over the other, her black eyes fixed on her brother, who battled for his life.

"But not only that, maybe it could also protect him from other types of mind abilities and skills, and not just illusions," Malrik Wargrave added from the side. He too had a smile on his face.

"Or it could mean he indeed fell for the illusion, but the rapier didn't, and it protected him. The rapier interfering might be what broke the illusion," another Elder named Sarion Wargrave added from the side as he analyzed.

"That could also be true," Malrik replied with a nod as they dissected everything Asher displayed, down to its lowest form.

As they watched him dive headfirst into a fire wave coming from the side, grins spread across almost every face present. They watched as he coated himself in purple lightning before tearing out the heart of an assassin, then proceeded to unleash a sword attack.

They weren't surprised by his lightning element. Although every Wargrave awakened an element, it wasn't unique to them. Other people had awakened such elements in the family's past, and others in the world also possessed the same elements.

Asher wasn't the only lightning wielder in the world, but just because a group of people had the same element didn't mean they all possessed the same control and pure firepower.

At the center of the room, Azeron sat with calm composure. This wasn't the first time he was watching the True Awakening. He had watched his siblings, the Elders, go through their True Awakening. He had watched his nine children go through the same process, and now he was watching the Tenth Sun do the same.

Although he loved Asher and wanted to protect him, Azeron would never coddle him. He wouldn't stop events like the True Awakening. The Wargraves were beings molded in battle, and he would watch his son be molded and come out on top.

He wasn't worried about Asher losing a limb and being unable to regenerate it. People with healing abilities were already on standby.

Besides, nobody, not a single Wargrave, not Azeron Wargrave, not Malrik Wargrave, who were considered monsters, walked out of the True Awakening without a missing limb.

Missing limbs or body parts like eyes, ears, and others were the norm within the True Awakening.

After all, a fifteen year old child without any real battle experience was thrust into a forest filled with wild, savage beasts and a group of assassins who would stop at nothing to claim his head.

To the Wargraves, survival was never about luck. It was about instinct, strength, decisiveness, and the will to live, even if it meant tearing through blood, limbs, and death itself.

And at this moment, in this hall filled with silence and subtle grins, one thing became clear:

The Tenth Sun was shining far brighter than they ever expected.

And they fucking loved every bit of it.

At the back, Thalric Wargrave sat as he watched in disbelief. He had expected Asher to be nothing but trash, but now, his hope had been dashed once more, just like when he believed Asher would fail his awakening yet again.

But he couldn't speak. After all, he was the weakest within this group of monsters in human skin.

## **Chapter 69: Black Panther**

Asher stood with composed stillness, his gaze sweeping over the devastation he had unleashed. His eyes moved swiftly, examining each fallen assassin ensnared within the radius of his attack. None had survived. Without another glance, he began to turn, he couldn't afford to remain here any longer. He needed to move.

But, the moment his head shifted, a massive claw tore through his vision with terrifying speed. Before thought could intervene, Asher's body responded instinctively, Instinctive Adaptation ignited once more. His spine arched fluidly, bending backward until his body aligned parallel to the earth beneath him.

The wind screamed as the claw cleaved through the space where his head had just been, the deafening rush slamming against Asher's eardrums. He didn't hesitate. Even

before the echo had faded, Astra surged to his feet, and his figure blurred, vanishing from the spot as he widened the distance between himself and whatever had just tried to take his head.

His head snapped forward, eyes locking onto the very spot he had occupied mere seconds ago. His Omni Perception hadn't sensed a thing. If he hadn't turned at that exact moment, hadn't reacted purely on instinct, his skull would have been split open and his brain torn from his body.

It was a sleek, obsidian panther, tall, menacing, and unnaturally still. Its tail swayed with an eerie calm, curling through the air in slow, deliberate motions. Darkness clung to its form like a second skin, as though the very shadows of the forest bent to cradle it. Its jet-black eyes locked onto Asher's glowing purple gaze, an abyss staring into another abyss.

'Veil-ranked,' Asher noted silently. He had spent the last five months battling creatures of that rank. But not all monsters within the same rank were created equal, some stood leagues above their kin. And this one... this panther radiated a quiet supremacy that placed it far beyond a standard Veil rank beast.

Asher's mind raced. 'It bypassed my Omni Perception...' That could only mean one thing, it possessed some form of stealth, or an ability that masked its presence entirely. Coupled with its overwhelming speed and raw physical power, it was a predator built for assassination.

Though his gaze remained locked on the panther, his awareness extended outward, sweeping the surroundings. He didn't believe for a second that the assassins were finished, not simply because a few had fallen.

He had been spotted effortlessly, twice, mere seconds after concealing himself. That wasn't coincidence. Asher had already drawn a grim conclusion, he'd been marked. By what, he couldn't say, but something clung to him, revealing his position to his pursuers like a beacon in the dark.

Asher didn't waste time searching for the source, he already knew. It was the Wargraves. Of course it was. They wouldn't simply allow the Suns and Moons to hide and wait out the six hours; that would defeat the very essence of the True Awakening.

He understood the assassins' next move before they even made it. They would stay hidden, patient and calculating. Attacking now would be foolish. No, far better to let the panther, and whatever other beasts wear him down or kill him outright. If he survived, it would be with drained Astra and shattered stamina.

Asher couldn't deny it, had their roles been reversed, he would've made the same call. It was a flawless strategy.

The black panther, seeing its prey merely staring back, lunged without hesitation. Its form blurred into motion, tail swirling like a ribbon of darkness, guiding its agility, amplifying its speed. Its claws gleamed with pure blackness, a void-like sheen, as they carved through the air, aimed straight for Asher's eyes.

But this time, Omni Perception caught it.

Asher moved with explosive maneuver. Astra surged beneath his feet, launching him forward like a bolt unchained. His muscles coiled, his instincts sharpened, and in his grip, Virelass shimmered with anticipation, as if thirsting for blood once more.

With a thunderous crash, Virelass met claw. Sparks erupted in a brilliant flare, only to be swallowed whole by the surrounding darkness, devoured as if the abyss itself had opened to consume the light.

The soil beneath Asher's feet exploded backward as he launched himself forward, colliding with the panther in a relentless exchange of rapid, razor-precise strikes. Claws and paws came from every direction, but Asher met each one with composed grace, his movements fluid, measured chaos met with calm mastery.

Yet he knew he couldn't afford to drag this out. There were more enemies lurking beyond the treeline, watching. He could feel their eyes like talons in the dark, waiting to strike the moment he faltered.

Crackling lightning surged across his frame, wrapping him in electric fury as he lunged to deliver a decisive blow. But the panther's tail twirled once more, its feline body twisting impossibly as it slipped just beyond his reach, vanishing into the shadows and reestablishing distance between them in a blink.

But Asher had anticipated the retreat. Virelass shimmered in his grip, its sleek form glowing with radiant purple as arcs of lightning danced along its blade. Then, in a blur so smooth it seemed whispered into reality, he thrust forward.

A deafening thunderclap shattered the air.

From the rapier exploded a sundering surge of energy, violent and unrelenting, filling every path the panther could have possibly taken to evade. It was as if the very air was swallowed by the strike, leaving no room to escape.

The forest trembled.

Trees were obliterated, trenches ripped into the earth as the lightning-laced thrust erupted in a frenzy, wild, unforgiving, and on the verge of madness. The attack consumed everything in its path, leaving behind only devastation and the raw scent of scorched life.

Asher panted heavily, each breath ragged as his chest rose and fell in sharp rhythm. He fought to steady himself, but fatigue was setting in fast. His stamina was waning, and his Astra, once a surging tide, had thinned to a shallow stream.

Dragging the battle out would have been a death sentence.

That's why he made the trade, funneling the last of his Astra into a single, devastating burst. It was a calculated gamble. Asher knew firsthand that Veil-ranked beasts couldn't be dispatched easily. A concentrated, wide-range attack had been his best, and perhaps only, chance at survival.

Sweat streamed down his body, mingling with soot, grime, and drying blood. His already scorched clothes clung to him like a second skin, torn and darkened, a testament to the brutal toll of battle.

As Asher leaned against a tree, his senses flared once more, danger. A hand erupted from the bark behind him, dagger in hand, slicing toward his throat with silent accuracy. It was the same assassin who had severed his Achilles tendon before. Asher had suspected he was still lurking nearby, and this moment of perceived weakness was the perfect opportunity to strike.

But Asher was prepared.

Virelass possessed a third ability, Astra Veil, which allowed her to store up to 30% of Asher's total Astra and transfer it to him instantly, without any drawn out channeling process.

This was why Asher hadn't hesitated to expend all of his Astra in the battle against the panther. He had a backup. The very moment he had launched that devastating attack, he had already drawn Virelass's reserve into his Astra veins.

As the blade shot toward his neck, Asher didn't dodge.

He attacked.

Lightning bloomed violently across his body, racing through the tree like a storm let loose. In a single, explosive burst, the entire trunk erupted, splintering apart with a thunderous crack.

But it wasn't only bark that burned.

The assassin's scream was brief, cut off as the scent of scorched flesh filled the air. A heavy thud followed as his charred body crashed to the ground, lifeless.

Asher exhaled and the lightning calamity vanished under the control.



Leaning against the tree had never been a moment of weakness, it was a trap. A calculated lure meant to funnel the assassin into a singular path: the tree itself. With nowhere else to strike from, the assassin had played directly into Asher's hand.

And the plan had worked, flawlessly.

## **Chapter 70: Clap**

Asher remained motionless, his gaze fixed ahead as his breathing gradually steadied. He was fully aware that he was being tracked, and given the number of assassins lurking nearby, it was wiser to confront them now and consider an escape plan afterward.

Besides, with his movements already under surveillance, fleeing would likely prove futile. What he couldn't afford, however, was to be encircled or confined to a single location.

Virelass was already drawing Astra from the atmosphere, steadily replenishing her reserves in preparation for when Asher might require them. Meanwhile, Asher's own Astra was recovering passively.

Though he had discovered a method to absorb Astra without needing to assume a fixed posture, like the traditional lotus position, it didn't grant him the freedom to draw it under any circumstance.

No, the passive intake only functioned during mundane activities such as walking, eating, reading, sitting, or light jogging. Certainly not while engaged in a life-or-death battle.

As Asher waited for the assassins to make their move, he used the brief lull to recover his stamina. Then, he heard it, a sound. A clap.

***Clap. Clap. Clap. Clap. Clap. Clap.***

His gaze shifted toward the source of the noise, and from the darkness, five figures emerged, each wearing a distinct mask that concealed their identity.

The one who had been clapping stepped forward, eyes fixed on Asher. His voice carried a mix of amusement and intrigue.

"I must admit, the Wargrave bloodline truly defies reason. Not even the mediocrity of a third awakening could restrain it."

Asher remained silent. He offered no reply. Though he wasn't into villainous monologues and was the type to end things swiftly through combat, he knew better than



to waste the opportunity, every second of stillness allowed his body to recover just a little more.

"I'd heard rumors," the assassin continued, his tone both mocking and impressed. "They said you defeated the son of Duke Rhydion Silvershade, but I still expected mediocrity. And yet, here you are, cutting down trained assassins as if they were nothing. Truly remarkable."

He took a step closer, voice now laced with quiet arrogance.

"I accepted this contract for the prestige it would bring, after all, slaying a Wargrave would do wonders for my reputation. And you, you've already burned through all your Astra on that panther, and whatever faint remnants remained were spent on the last assassin."

The man drew a blade, its edge glinting faintly in the darkness.

"So, Tenth Sun, Asher Wargrave, do us all a favor and surrender your head before sunrise. After all, this place will be your grave."

Of course, the assassin had no idea that Asher had already replenished thirty percent of his Astra reserves. Without a specialized ability, it was impossible to perceive the quantity of Astra flowing through someone's Astra veins.

Asher remained still, eyes fixed ahead as the assassins prepared to strike. Traditionally, assassins were meant to be silent, ghosts in the dark who struck without warning or presence. But these ones were... arrogant.

'System,' Asher called out mentally, 'how much time has passed?'

[Ding]

[One hour and thirty minutes]

'Five more hours' Asher thought silently, his expression unreadable.

Four assassins surged forward without hesitation, weapons drawn, their movements swift and deadly as they closed in on Asher.

He reacted instantly, his figure blurring as he darted backward, covering several meters in the blink of an eye. But to his frustration, the assassins matched his pace with unnerving ease.

Suddenly, a serpentine shape entered his Omni Perception, slithering through the air with lethal intent. It lunged at his neck like a viper striking from the shadows.

'A whip,' Asher registered at once.

Without hesitation, he raised Virelass to intercept, his hand already in motion. But the whip twisted around the weapon like a living vine, tightening its grip. In the next breath, the assassin yanked viciously, and Virelass was torn from Asher's grasp.

But Asher didn't flinch. There was no time to retrieve his weapon, a heavy axe was already descending toward his head. He had no choice but to retreat.

With a sharp swish, the axe tore through the air and slammed into the ground, carving a jagged trench several meters long in its wake.

Before he could recover, a dagger came sweeping in from the side. Asher reacted instantly, his hand shot out, seizing the assassin's wrist mid-strike. In the same motion, his other hand snapped forward like a bullet, driving upward toward the assassin's chin with brutal force.

But the assassin deftly snapped her head to the side, evading the strike with fluid movement. A second dagger materialized in her other hand, thrusting forward like a fang aimed directly at Asher's gut.

He immediately released her wrist and twisted away, but the assassin was already one step ahead, anticipating his movement. She closed the gap in an instant, twin daggers flashing as they streaked toward his head.

In a brilliant streak of silver, Virelass reappeared in Asher's grip. He raised it to block.

But as the weapons were about to clash, something went wrong.

The daggers passed straight through his rapier, as though it were made of mist, not metal.

And then, with a sickening, flesh-ripping sound, the blade sliced into his chest, tearing through skin and muscle like a lunellum through parchment.

Asher's eyes widened in shock as searing pain erupted through his chest, his nervous system lighting up in a storm of agony. Blood burst from the wound in a crimson spray, painting the air around him.

Before Virelass could even begin to draw blood for its regenerative effect, a sharp, distinct sound tore through the air, twice, from opposing directions.

His body moved before his mind could catch up.

Instinctive Adaptation ignited once more, his reflexes prioritizing the deadliest threat. His arm snapped forward, Virelass raised in a desperate attempt to block.

But his stamina was all but gone. His strength had been drained to the dregs. Even if he pushed his body further using Astra augmentation, it would change nothing, as his enemies could still match his speed effortlessly without doing the same.

The hammer crashed against Virelass with the force of a thunderclap, the sound of shattering air reverberating through the forest. A tremendous shockwave tore through Asher's body, his frame buckling beneath the sheer, monstrous impact.

Inertia seized him instantly, hurling him sideways like a ragdoll. But before he had even crossed a full meter, the second strike landed.

A deafening crack rang out as a whip lashed forward with brutal impact, slamming directly into his already wounded chest. The impact detonated through his torso, launching him backward in a violent arc.

His body collided with trees, ricocheting from one trunk to another like a broken projectile before finally crashing to the ground, his momentum carving a deep trench through the earth as he skidded to a brutal halt.