

Hunter Academy: Revenge of the Weakest

Chapter 16: Chapter 3.5 - Arcadia Hunter Academy

"Sigh.... I am tired...." I mumbled to myself. I had been training non-stop in the presence of the robotic golems for a while.

Time seemed to blur as I engaged in a relentless battle, pushing my physical and mental limits.

Minutes turned into hours as I pushed myself further. I faced wave after wave of robotic opponents, adapting and evolving with each encounter. My mana control improved with every swing of the dagger, the crimson moon-imbued energy becoming more refined and potent.

But eventually, my body could no longer keep up with the demands of the intense training. Fatigue settled in, weighing down my every movement. It was a sign that I had reached my limit for now.

The only thing left for me was to return to my room. After all, no matter how much I wanted to train, I also needed to rest my body.

With that thought, I started walking to my room. The sun had already reached its peak, showcasing that the busiest time of the day had come. The academy grounds were filled with students' talks.

'How noisy.' I never was a morning person; after all, I preferred staying up at night. Adding that, my muscles were sore, and my mind was buzzing with the exhilaration of the training session; my mood was slightly bad.

After reaching my room, I immediately saw a bunch of packets there. 'Ho... The delivery is sure fast.' I thought.

The materials I ordered were nothing fancy. There were three different herbs to be used for brewing an elixir named 'Aetherside Elixir.'

Even though the name was fancy, its effects were actually pretty simple. Imbued with the elixir, the individual experiences a harmonious symphony within their biology. It increased the efficiency of one's training in three ways.

'Neural pathway strengthening' enhances the ability to swiftly acquire new skills and tactics, while 'cellular resonance enhancement' allows for more efficient absorption and utilization of mana, fueling their training endeavors. Simultaneously, 'regenerative

acceleration' accelerates tissue repair, reducing downtime and enabling more frequent and intense training sessions.

In a way, it was basically one of the best elixirs that was there for the sake of training. But, there was one downside to it. It was the fact that your muscles and your head would hurt quite a lot after the training reached its end. Since its effects reach the cellular level, the pain would also reach....

Then, we have the second brew. A brew to increase the recovery efficiency. "Renewal Draught." This brew would help one's body to recover at a rapid speed, as Cellular rejuvenation is accelerated, allowing for swift healing of wounds and injuries. The elixir's mana-infused properties harmonize with the individual's mana flow, stimulating a deep sense of vitality and renewal. Energy conservation mechanisms are amplified, allowing the body to efficiently allocate resources for regeneration and repair.

In a way, these two brews were what I needed. As I grabbed the herbs, I started smashing all of them while extracting their essences.

Then, the only thing left for me to grab was the juice of Mock Rye that I brought from the student cafeteria.

As one of the best Academies in the world, the meals inside the academy were heavily tended towards the efficiency of one's improvement. Therefore, in a way, they were actually a type of elixir on their own.

And the juice I had grabbed was something that I would use in this potion, and it was something pretty expensive. Now, the only thing that was left for me was heating the Mock Rye juice and mixing the potions, then drinking them.

After consuming the elixir, a surge of energy coursed through my body. But along with the energy came an intense sensation of pain.

"Kurgh-"

It felt as if every muscle and fiber within me was being stretched and tested to its limit. The regenerative properties of the Renewal Draught intensified the sensation, amplifying the discomfort.

"Grrr....."

I gritted my teeth, enduring the pain as the elixirs worked their magic. Beads of sweat formed on my forehead as I felt the rejuvenating effects taking hold. The pain, though excruciating, was a necessary sacrifice for the accelerated healing and regeneration that would follow.

With each passing moment, the pain gradually subsided, giving way to a deep sense of renewal and vitality. The elixirs' potency began to stabilize within me, allowing me to regain control over my body and mind.

"Huff... Huffff..."

Knowing this process was going to be my routine for a while, I stood up. Even though it was very effective, relying on elixirs for recovery was not something I would be able to do for a long time. 'I can use them for at most two weeks.' I thought, remembering the game.

If you keep relying on potions for such cases, your natural recovery skills will regress, resulting in negative effects in the long run.

"But, I feel like my body is refreshed..." With that thought, I left my room as I once again made my way towards the training grounds while grabbing my equipment....

With my equipment in hand, I made my way back to the training grounds; however, on the way, I needed to buy something for today's night.

Reaching the entrance of the academy's shop for students, I pushed open the glass door and stepped inside. The shop was brightly lit, with sleek white display cases showcasing an array of magical items. The sound of soft electronic music played in the background, creating a pleasant ambiance.

Then immediately started looking for the items that I would need.

'Holy Radiance Scroll and a Thunderstrike Orb'

As I saw the two commonly used lower-tier items, I looked at their prices.

Holy Radiance Scroll: 250 Valer

Thunderstrike Orb: 200 Valer

Seeing the two materials that would cost me my remaining fortune, I knew it was my last shot. But, after all, it was a very important thing for me.

I called over a shop attendant, a friendly young mage dressed in the academy's official uniform. "Excuse me, I would like to purchase the Holy Radiance Scroll and Thunderstrike Orb, please."

The shop attendant nodded with a smile and reached for the items, carefully retrieving them from the display case.

After a moment, the shop attendant presented the items to me in a stylish bag with the academy's emblem embossed on it. "Thank you for your purchase," she said, her voice filled with genuine enthusiasm. "I hope these items aid you in your magical endeavors."

Nodding my head, I made my way toward the training grounds once again. After all, today was going to prove very important.....

Reaching the training grounds, the familiar atmosphere greeted me as I stepped into the open space, filled with the sounds of clashing weapons and the shouts of determined hunters.

I scanned the area, searching for an available spot to resume my training. Since I had already exhausted my tries for today's combat training, I could only practice my techniques against the dummies, which was essentially not preferable.

But still, the training grounds were bustling with activity; students engaged in various forms of combat, honing their skills and pushing their limits. Finally, I spotted a vacant section towards the corner, away from the main crowd. It was a small, secluded space that offered privacy and focus. Without hesitation, I walked towards it, preparing myself for another round of intense training.

In a way, actually, I knew quite a lot of arts that were out there which were a lot higher grades than this one.

But there was a reason why I am not getting them right now. It is because I want to strengthen my basics.

Even though there are other unique and higher-grade combat arts that one could find in the game, most of the time, knowing the general arts of the weapon you need to use would actually increase your comprehension skills of the related arts.

Thus, it was a general rule for the players to first finish comprehending common grade arts. Since, in a way, basics were actually one of the most important things when it came to such things.

Just like that, I started training with my daggers as I slashed and slashed while remembering the techniques of the common dagger style. The general dagger style had four types of techniques, or standings, whatever you want to call.

'First technique. Whispering Thorn.' A stand that emphasizes finesse and precision.

'Second technique. Shadowblade.' A stand that mostly combines agility and stealth elements.

'Third technique. Piercing Gale.' A stand that emphasizes speed and momentum, utilizing quick and powerful thrusts with a dagger.

'Final Technique. Serpent's Dance.' This technique focuses on fluidity and evasion, utilizing agile and unpredictable movements with the dagger. The Serpent's Dance technique involves swift and twisting motions, mimicking the slithering movements of a snake, combining three styles into one.

All of them had their own types of strengths. But in the end, they were basics one needed to master.

Just like that, I again started my training. After all, training my body like this also increased my body parameters, which I would like to improve.

"I feel like I improved quite well...." I thought to myself as I looked into the training dummy that I had been slashing for a while.

My control over my mana was also slowly getting better and better, even though I felt like the strength of my enhancements was not that strong.

After the training session at noon, I grabbed a meal for myself, then came to the training grounds once again and started training. This would be today's last training since tomorrow I was planning to get myself a bow and test my marksmanship.

'I feel like either the medium material is not strong, or my mana is not suited for constant enhancements.' I thought. Today was to determine my trait [Lunar Enigma] since, as the name implied, it was an enigma for me.

'Then, let's stop for now.' Just as I thought about that, I felt three people's presence around me.

"Ah... The fish is here too...." I mumbled....

-----A/N-----

Hope you liked the chapter.

You can check my discord if you want. You will be able to see the illustrations here and engage in a conversation with me if I am available.

Chapter 17: Chapter 4.1 - Nights are dangerous

As I sensed the familiar presence of the three people, my heart started beating fast, thanks to the muscle memory that was engraved on Astron.

However, now I was different. Different from my past. Different from that time, I will no longer stay still and watch anyone torment me.

'It is payback time.'

I mumbled as I pretended not to notice their presence in any case. After all, I needed them for today's job...

With that thought, I left the training grounds. It was already reaching nighttime when I had left the training grounds, so most of the place was pretty much empty by now.

The roads were the same.

However, I knew they wouldn't make their appearance just yet because they couldn't afford to get caught by the cameras. After all, if you don't have a backing stronger than the academy, you couldn't afford to do such things in broad daylight.

But that also meant they needed to follow me for now, which served my purpose in the end.

Arcadia Hunter Academy had a pretty vast land to offer students, and it also contained quite a full forest where students would become one with nature.

I walked with purpose, leaving subtle signs and trails to entice their curiosity. Twigs snapped under my feet, creating an eerie ambiance that echoed through the trees.

"Do you hear that?" one of them whispered, his voice laced with unease.

"It's just the wind; what can happen to us inside the academy?" another replied.

I could hear their whispers growing louder as they followed my lead, their overconfidence fueling their steps.

As we ventured deeper, the forest closed in around us, creating an atmosphere of suspense and uncertainty. Shadows danced through the dense foliage, casting an otherworldly aura over our surroundings.

The rustling leaves seemed to whisper secrets and warnings, but they were oblivious to the impending danger. After all, nobody would expect what is going to happen right here now....

Finally, we arrived at a secluded clearing, where a hush fell upon the forest.

"Hahaha, look who we have here," a mocking voice echoed through the dimly lit forest imbued with nothing. I turned my attention toward the source, only to find myself surrounded by three figures.

'Ah.... Yeah, it was these guys....' I thought to myself as I saw the faces of the three. Two men and one woman.... The ones that tormented me.

The leader of the group, Dylan Miller, a burly brute with a sneer on his face, stepped forward. "What's a weakling like you doing there, huh? Do you think the training will make you stronger, huh? You little lowest rank."

It was a simple and cliched line that you could see everywhere. However, hearing this made my blood boil because I remembered the things Astron suffered, both from Astron's perspective and from the watcher's perspective.

Even though that guy before me was someone that made my life hard, he was actually not someone strong or anything. No, actually, he only ranked 2000th inside the academy.

The girl standing behind the two men, Sophia Lawson, urged them on, her voice dripping with a seductive tone. "Oh, come on, boys. Don't let him off that easily. Show him what it means to be at the bottom of the ranks."

This girl was the reason why they targeted me. After all, I had rejected her confession at the beginning, thinking I didn't deserve to have such things in my life. But, looking at everything from the outside, I knew her petty pride was hurt, and she was the one that was toying with these guys, making me a target.

With a calm voice, I responded, "I have just as much right to train as anyone else. If you have a problem, take it up with the academy, not me." But I actually knew that would not make them stop. After all, this is who they were; with a little bit of backing, they would think they could do whatever they wanted....

My body was tired, but I knew the confrontation was not avoidable.

The leader laughed, his cronies joining in. "Listen to this little rat. Thinks he's tough, huh? Well, we'll see about that."

The moment I heard this, I knew the attack was about to come.

'He will come with a right swing.' I thought, remembering the past times I have observed from the necklace.

/SWOOSH/

Before I should have reacted normally, the leader lunged at me, aiming to deliver a powerful blow. But I was prepared. With a swift sidestep, I evaded his attack, using his momentum against him.

/THUD/

I retaliated with a quick strike to his exposed side, causing him to wince in pain. Using weapons inside the academy was strictly forbidden; thus, I didn't draw my dagger.

"Kurgh-"

But, my attack was aimed at his acupuncture point, making him feel an immense amount of pain, and lose his control.

/THUD/ /THUD/

But I didn't stop there as I continued to punch him in his face, throwing a bunch of rapid strikes.

Each blow landed with a resounding impact, causing him to stagger back.

"Huh?" The other two were surprised seeing the bastard lying on the ground, not doing anything.

/SWOOSH/

"YOU BASTARD!"

Then, the other man, Mason, lunged at me from behind, attempting to catch me off guard. With a quick spin, I deflected his attack, redirecting his momentum into the wall with a loud thud.

/THUD/

However, just at that moment, I saw the girl's eyes shining for a second. She was using her mana, her skill.

Then, my movements became slippery as I felt my consciousness staggering.

'This girl is using a type of mind skill on me.' I thought. This was what made this group able to bully me.

"Fuck.... You just had to do it, didn't cha?"

As the sound of knuckles cracking came before me, I saw the leader coming on top of me. At that point, I knew there was only one thing I could do.

/STAB/

Stabbing myself with my leg, I inflicted pain upon myself. It hurt, but at the same time, my consciousness came back.

"It seems last time the lesson was not enough."

Dylan, his face twisted with sadistic delight, tapped into his mana reserves. A surge of energy enveloped his body, augmenting his speed and power. It was his innate trait, the one that let him increase his strength with his mana. It was a pretty common trait for most people to possess.

/SWOOSH/

With a swift motion, he closed the distance between us, his fist connecting with my side.

/THUD/

I tried to block it, but my strength was not enough. The impact sent a shockwave of pain through my body, causing me to stagger back.

My vision blurred, and the taste of blood filled my mouth.

I knew his strength and body movements were faster than mine normally. Since he was basically a fist-type fighter, he could also easily overpower me when it came to such fights.

With each passing moment, my opponent's movements became more fluid and precise. He effortlessly dodged my attacks and countered with devastating strikes. My body, battered and bruised, struggled to keep up with the intensity of the battle.

A place I knew from the game....

Dylan, his sadistic grin widening, jeered, "What's the matter, weakling? Can't handle a real fight?"

And a punch came to my face, injuring me.

The crimson feeling over my thoughts intensified, as I felt like my thoughts were turning into a different way.

Sophia, her normally seductive but now demonic tone laced with malice, chimed in, "You're nothing but a pathetic loser. No wonder you're ranked dead last."

Mason, struggling to regain his composure, growled, "This is what you get for defying us, Natusalune. You should have learned your place."

"You're pathetic," Sophia sneered, her voice dripping with contempt. "You'll never be anything more than a weakling."

/SPIT/

As those words left her mouth, she spat on me.

The crimson color intensified more.

Dylan smirked, a cruel glint in his eyes. "You thought you could stand up to us? How amusing."

Mason, his voice dripping with superiority, added, "Don't ever forget your place, Natusalune. We're always watching."

Dylan, Sophia, and Mason, their voices filled with arrogant satisfaction, turned to leave, confident in their victory. The pain surged through my body, but a defiant smile formed on my lips.

"Heh..." I chuckled, the sound carrying a hint of defiance that caught their attention. Their steps faltered, and they turned back, confusion evident on their faces.

"What's so funny?" Dylan sneered, his eyes narrowing.

"Man.... My switch is getting flipped...." At that moment, I could no longer contain the crimson thoughts overlapping inside me.... After all, I didn't need to since they had already set the stage for me.

Since the spilled blood of mine on the ground had already attracted the monster underneath....

-----A/N-----

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Chapter 18: Chapter 4.2 - Nights are Dangerous

When you play RPG games, especially a type that has a vast world, what is the reason you start over with a new game-plus option?

There are vast amounts of reasons for that. But one thing would stand out.

The hidden elements you have missed while trying to get used to the game at the start.

You would want to obtain those hidden elements and make yourself strong.

And Legacy of Shadows: The Hunter's Destiny has done that very well, executing everything that a player would want from the game.

How did they do that? Pretty simple.

By adding hidden bosses who would also appear later in the game in the beginning. By adding the option for the veteran players to confront them while also making it hidden enough not to disturb the new players' experience.

And one of them was inside the academy.

Hidden deep within the academy grounds, there lurked a formidable primordial demon known only as the "Mistwraith." Though actually, no one in the academy knew about this demon's existence, let alone its identity.

Nobody would know about this beast since it would not appear by normal means until some special conditions were fulfilled. After all, the demon was normally sleeping in a dormant condition.

However, as the game progressed, we would stumble upon the recordings of this demon as we would the information about it.

The Mistwraith, an ancient and elusive demon, possessed the ability to blend seamlessly with its surroundings, making it virtually undetectable. Its appearance was shrouded in mystery, as it was said to be a massive, shadowy entity with piercing glowing eyes lurking within the dense fog that blanketed the area, always seeking to improve its strength by sucking the essence of strong.

However, it was long said that the demon of shadows had disappeared from the demon realm, as no one had ever heard about him before. But its legend never stopped. After all, they knew the demon would return back.

The normal time for this beast to appear was when the academy was attacked by intruders and when the forest was filled with the blood of humans since the blood of humans would be the condition to awaken the beast, and normally before that event, no blood would be spilled inside the forest.

At least by normal means.

But that was different for those who knew how this demon awakened since it was a task that only required some people to bait others.

One both needed to use mana on this place and also needed to drop some blood. More importantly, one needed to have at least three people in the vicinity.

Just like how it happened here.

"Heh..." As I chuckled, their steps faltered, and they turned back, confusion evident on their faces.

"What's so funny?"

"Man.... My switch is getting flipped...." At that moment, I could no longer contain the crimson thoughts overlapping inside me.... After all, I didn't need to since they had already set the stage for me.

/SWOOSH/ /GROWL/

As the mist thickened around the clearing, a low growl rumbled through the air.

/CRUMBLE/ /CRUMBLE/

The ground beneath their feet trembled, and a sinister presence enveloped the space. Dylan, Mason, and Sophia froze, their eyes widening in terror as the shadows danced and writhed around them.

Dylan stuttered, his voice trembling, "Wha-what is this? What's happening?"

Mason, panic evident in his voice, shouted, "We need to get out of here! It's not safe!"

Sophia, her confidence shattered, whimpered, "This wasn't supposed to happen. We were just having some fun."

Their voice stuttered as fear was evident in their eyes. In the end, regardless of their rank or behavior, they were both students and awakeners of the Arcadia Academy. So, they were able to sense the danger upcoming them.

'Ah.... That's right.... Show me more of your despair.... Give me more....' As my eyes captured the expression of despair and fear on their faces, I couldn't help but widen my smile.

The crimson thoughts had already overlapped my eyes as the world was dyed the color of blood.

And soon, the demon that I had been waiting for made its appearance.

The mist twisted and coalesced, forming the monstrous figure.

Standing at an imposing height, it was the creature of pure darkness and malevolence. Its form was a swirling mass of ethereal mist, shifting and undulating as if alive. Its eyes, glowing with an eerie luminescence, pierced through the darkness, revealing a hunger that could not be quenched.

His hunger was now directed to the three, as he instinctually knew which ones were the strongest out of the four here.

/SWOOSH/

With lightning speed, the Mistwraith lunged at its prey. Its elongated claws, sharp as daggers, tore through the air, leaving behind trails of mist in its wake. The bullies had no chance to react as the Mistwraith's relentless assault began.

/SPLURT/

"NO! DON'T COME CLOSER NO!" Dylan tried to widen the distance as he augmented his body with his mana.

'It is no use.'

But it was no use, as the demon was fast.

"NOOOOOOOO! IT HURTS! NOOOOOOOO!"

Dylan's screams echoed through the forest as the Mistwraith's vice-like grip tightened around him. The creature's touch sapped his strength, draining him of life force with each passing moment. Mason and Sophia, paralyzed with fear, could only watch as their leader's life force was devoured.

/SWOOSH/ /SWISH/

Mason, paralyzed with terror, attempted to flee, but the Mistwraith's shadowy tendrils snaked around his limbs, constricting his movements. His screams mingled with Dylan's, forming a chorus of anguish.

/SPLURT/

'Ahh.... How beautiful.... How beautiful to feel your screams....' I felt my body pumping dopamine onto my body as well as adrenaline. My heart was beating fast from the excitement alone.

"HELP ME! PLEASE! ANYONE!" Mason's voice pleaded desperately, but there was no salvation to be found.

With a swift motion, the Mistwraith's elongated claws pierced through Mason's chest, extracting his essence in a macabre display of power. His agonized cries turned into a final, choked gasp before silence claimed him.

Sophia, tears streaming down her face, fell to her knees, her voice a desperate wail. "No! Please! Spare me!" But the Mistwraith paid no heed to her pleas. The once again looked beautiful girl who had a mocking appearance on her face was no longer to be seen.

The face that remained here was the ugly face of humans one would show on the verge of fear and death.

The demon's misty form intertwined with hers, suffocating her and draining her strength. The forest was filled with her harrowing screams, a symphony of terror that pierced the darkness.

"NO! NO! NOOOOOOOO!" Sophia's cries reached a crescendo before abruptly falling silent. Her lifeless body crumpled to the forest floor, her eyes wide with a terror that would haunt the dreams of those who witnessed it.

/THUD/

As the dead body was dropped to the ground, the demon turned its piercing gaze toward me. Its eyes held a strange mix of curiosity and recognition as if it sensed something within me.

And suddenly his gaze turned slightly different as the carnage erupted from his expression.

/ROAR/ /SWOOSH/

A deafening roar echoed in the forest as the Mistwraith disappeared from its place, reappearing with renewed vigor. Its misty form swirled and twisted, its eyes locked onto me with an intensity that sent a shiver down my spine.

"Now we are all alone..."

But at this point, the smile on my face had already disappeared.

"I will erase your existence, just like I will eradicate your kin."

Because the existence before me was a demon....

The feeling of vengeance in my heart burned....The anger raised as her face came into my eyes.

/SWOOSH/ /SPLURT/

The demon immediately threw its claws into my chest, like he understood my words. A lingering emotion of mocking was in its dark eyes.

"Kurghk-" Blood poured from my mouth as its claws deeply entered my chest while his claws on his other hand slashed my skin.

It hurt.... It fucking hurt so much....But it didn't matter.

'Bingo.'

Because that was my aim from the start.

How do you think a beginner player could defeat such a hidden boss at the start with their stats being low?

It is by exploiting its weakness.

Holy Radiance Scroll was already in my hands the moment the demon had locked its eyes with mine. After all, I was not just watching silently all this time.

/SHINE/

As I dropped the scroll to the round, I infused some of my mana into it, invoking the power of holy light. Brilliant rays of radiance burst forth as the demon's eyes were filled with fear.

"RRROOOOOOAAAAAR!" A heavy deafening sound of screams entered my ears as I felt my eardrums were about to explode.

'This is just the beginning.'

Just as the demon withdrew its claws to get rid of the light shining, I activated the second one-time usage item.

'The Thunderstrike Orb.'

/CRACKLE/

The moment the item was activated, a flash of lightning surged through the demon's body, electricity flowing through its veins.

"RRROOOOOOAAAAARRR!"

And following that, another painful scream entered my ears. At this point, my eardrums were bleeding from the inside, but I paid no heed.

After all, I achieved what I wanted.

The Mistwraith writhed in agony, paralyzed by the surge of thunder mana coursing through its body, while his access to the shadows was prevented by the holy light, making it vulnerable to my attacks.

/SWOOSH/

I seized the opportunity. I gripped my moon-imbued dagger tightly, channeling my mana into its blade. The holy light from the Radiance Scroll illuminated the clearing, casting a divine glow upon the demon's form. With a swift and precise movement, I lunged forward, my blade aimed for the creature's heart.

Even though the wound in my heart hurt, that only fueled the strength of the crimson-colored color on my dagger. The more pain and wounds I had, the stronger this crimson-colored moonlight mana became.

Time seemed to slow as my weapon sliced through the air, the crimson moonlight leaving a trail of ethereal beauty in its wake. The demon's eyes widened in terror, realizing its vulnerability in the face of my counterattack. I felt my strength suddenly arise, different from my strength while fighting with Dylan and others.

"DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE!"

/SLASH/

The blade found its mark, piercing through the Mistwraith's chest with a sickening sound.

"ROOOOOOAAAAR!"

A pained howl erupted from the demon's mouth as its essence began to dissipate, vanishing into the mist that surrounded us.

A wave of relief washed over me as blood dripped from my wounds, mixing with the mist below. I took a step back, panting heavily, the weight of the battle finally settling upon me.

As the adrenaline lost its effect, I could no longer hold my heavy eyelids, as I felt my strength dissipating.

Just like that, I lost consciousness, not feeling the changes that were happening around me at all....

-----A/N-----

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Chapter 19: Chapter 4.3 - Nights are Dangerous

As Astron was lying unconscious, a profound transformation began to unfold in the environment around him.

The mist that had once concealed the presence of the demon now seemed to respond to an unseen force, swirling and dancing with an eerie luminescence.

The shadows grew deeper and more elusive as if they were under the command of an unknown power.

The air crackled with energy, and the trees swayed in an unseen breeze. The ground beneath him seemed to pulse with a newfound life force as if the very essence of the Mistwraith had merged with the surrounding nature.

The once dark and foreboding open field now appeared strangely serene, bathed in a soft, crimson moonlight that emanated from the crimson crescent moon appearing above Astron. It was as if a mysterious aura enveloped the area, casting an otherworldly glow upon everything it touched.

However, as the seconds passed, the shadows that had dissipated around the environment started swirling toward the young boy lying on the ground; with each movement, the pulsating aura changed.

"?? A ? ?? ?? B ?? A ? A ?? ?? A A ? ?? ?? A ?."

The shadows swirled and merged, weaving a tapestry of ancient symbols and intricate patterns upon Astron's unconscious form. Unseen energies surged through him, flowing like a river of power from the depths of the Primordial Demon's essence.

As the transformation reached its peak, the shadows and crimson moonlight dissipated, leaving behind a calm and serene forest. Astron's body gently descended to the ground, his eyes returning to their normal hue, but something had changed within him.

Just like that, the boy lay on the ground, blood still dripping from the wounds on his chest....

Little did he know someone was watching everything unfold....

"What is this?" A young girl exclaimed as she looked at the scene unfolding before her eyes. "What is happening here?"

Because today was the day of the weekend and she had her assignments piled up, she was studying inside the library alone, trying to finish her assignments.

However, while she was studying, she forgot what the time was and how late it was... That was the reason why she took the shortcut inside the forest. She wanted to return to her dorms as fast as possible before the curfew.

But at that moment, she heard a voice coming into the forest. It was a scream....A scream filled with pain.

And following those screams, goosebumps filled her body as she flinched. Her element of light was screaming at her that there was someone that was her natural enemy.

A bunch of screams and a feeling of danger.

She felt fear; her body was shaking....

But, instead of backing away, she rather chose to follow the light in her heart.

'They might need my help!' That was what she thought.

However, the moment she got there, the scene she encountered made her stop.... It made her freeze on top of the place she was standing...

"What in the world is this?" It was a creature she had never seen.

Inside an open field in the forest, a gruesome scene was unfolding before the young girl's eyes.

"Dylan Miller?" She muttered the name of the young bulky man trying to escape. After all, he was a famous figure known as being a bully.

However, the thing she had seen before her eyes made her want to puke. The monster stabbed the young man with its claws, and in a matter of seconds, the body that was bulky turned into nothing but an empty shell...

Following his fate were two other bullies.

"Sophia Lawson and Mason...." The two people she never liked. Because they were the ones that tormented him...

The more she witnessed the scene, the more gruesome it became. She wanted to escape, but at that moment, the killing intent being spread from the monster was enough to freeze her movements....

However, in the midst of that gruesome scene, she saw a pair of purple eyes shining under the darkness of midnight....

"Astron?" As she mumbled his name, her heart became more clenched... Since she knew how weak he was....

'He is smiling?' But, as the shadows moved away only for a second to change their shape, the moonlight shone upon the boy revealing a crazed smile....

A smile that came from the boy that had never shown any expression in classes....

It was at that moment everything changed.

The monster turned its attention to him.

'NO!' She wanted to move, but she couldn't. Inside her heart, she also knew she would never be any help... After all, she was just a healer.... Inside her inexperienced and fear-filled head never once passed the thought of calling for help.

The monster attacked, trying to stab him in his chest just as it did with others.

'Don't die...!' She wished for his well-being.

But, things were different....

"Now we are all alone..."

Since the coldest voice she had in her life echoed inside her head.

"I will erase your existence, just like I will eradicate your kin."

It was a voice filled with hatred. The purple eyes were glaring at the monster's very being...

It was at that moment something weird happened. First, a light shone upon the environment making the monster squirm in pain.

Then it was the lightning entering the body of the monster.

And finally, it was the crimson dagger that had stabbed the demon over and over again.

"DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE!"

As the voice filled with hatred and anger echoed, the dagger stabbed the monster's chest over and over again...

Until the monster lost its life....

As the last breath of the monster escaped its twisted form, a profound silence descended upon the open field.

The young girl stood there, her heart pounding, her mind struggling to comprehend the scene that had just unfolded before her eyes.

Before she lay the lifeless bodies of the bullies who had tormented Astron, their once imposing figures now reduced to mere shells.

And standing amidst the aftermath was Astron, the boy she had known as timid and weak, now wearing an expression of fierce determination and madness. His purple eyes, once so unassuming, were now filled with a crazed glint that sent a chill down her spine.

"What... what just happened?" she whispered, her voice trembling. She couldn't believe what she had witnessed – the weak and quiet boy had somehow become a force to be reckoned with, taking down the terrifying monster with seemingly unnatural strength and power.

As the crimson moonlight slowly faded, the environment around Astron began to change once more.

The swirling shadows and eerie luminescence that had enveloped the scene vanished, leaving behind a sense of calm that contrasted starkly with the chaos that had just unfolded.

The girl couldn't shake off the feeling that she was witnessing something ancient and powerful, something beyond her understanding. The symbols and patterns that had swirled around Astron's form were like nothing she had ever seen before, evoking an eerie sense of familiarity mixed with an unknown presence.

A soft breeze rustled the leaves of the surrounding trees, and the air felt charged with energy.

The crimson moonlight that had bathed the clearing had vanished, leaving only the soft glow of the crescent moon above.

As Astron's body gently settled on the ground, the girl approached him cautiously, unsure of what to expect.

She was torn between the desire to help him and the fear of what he had become. She reached out a trembling hand, hesitating for a moment before placing it on his forehead.

To her surprise, his skin felt burning....

'Ah... He is still wounded.....' She thought, immediately realizing he was burning up.

Then, in her mind instantly passed the thought of helping him. Her hand shone bright yellow and a mixture of green as her mana moved, activating her Trait.

In the dimly lit moonlight, the girl who had shining blonde hair and captivating green eyes healed the boy lying on the ground as the wounds slowly closed....

Even though the scars were still there, at least she was able to close the wounds.

'I need to look for other wounds.' She immediately realized how bad the situation of Astron was and knew she needed to look for every other possible wound.

"GASP!"

But the moment she lifted his shirt, the picture she saw made her gasp. A pale white body that looked weak.... It was filled with scars... Be it burn marks, cut marks, bruises... They were all the proof of abuse....

'Just what did you have to go through?' Her eyes teared.... In the end, she was a girl with a warm heart....

Her hand traced the skin of the unconscious boy as she looked for the wounds she could heal.

"Thank goodness there aren't any other wounds...." She mumbled in relief. But at the same time, she knew her skills might not be enough to cover the wounds in his chest; after all, the monster was huge and strong.

'I need to bring him over to the academy,' She thought.

The young girl carefully supported Astron's limp form as they made their way back through the forest. She couldn't help but glance back at the lifeless bodies of the bullies and the now-vanished monster, still trying to process what had unfolded before her eyes.

As they reached the outskirts of the forest, the girl noticed a group of academy instructors rushing towards them, drawn by the commotion caused by the battle.

"Student Sylvie, what happened there?"

"Please just help him first."

They were relieved to see Astron alive but unconscious and quickly arranged for medical help to tend to his wounds.

In the infirmary, the girl sat by Astron's bedside, her mind filled with questions and uncertainties. What had happened to him? How had he managed to defeat the formidable monster? And what was the strange power that seemed to have awakened within him?

The instructors were equally baffled by the events that had transpired. They had never heard about the existence of such a monster on the academy grounds, and neither did they expect it.

Following it, the headmaster of the academy arrived to assess the situation personally. She asked the girl about what happened there, and she recounted everything but left the transformation Astron went through.

Since in her heart, an instinct to protect him was awakened, for reasons unknown...

-----A/N-----

Hope you liked the chapter.

Give me power stones, guys. I am participating in WPC, so it helps a lot.

You can check my discord if you want. You will be able to see the illustrations here and engage in a conversation with me if I am available. For now, I haven't posted any illustrations for this novel, but they will come soon after I introduce the characters a little more.

Chapter 20: Chapter 4.4 - Nights are Dangerous

"Astron...."

A dark place... I can't see anything....

"Astron...."

The name reverberated in the void, shrouded in mystery. I felt a pull, an irresistible force drawing me towards an unknown destination. Shadows danced at the edges of his consciousness, teasing me with snippets of forgotten memories.

"Se...th....mo....st...e"

A voice in my head, echoing all around... But the words are bleak....

A smile was there... A smile of a woman... But my eyes can't perceive...

"....ek....e....on.....on...."

The whispers grew louder, the pieces of the puzzle attempting to come together. A vision flashed before me—the glimmering gem of a silver color, bathed in the soft glow of moonlight.

It felt significant, a key to unlocking the secrets that lay dormant within me, but it was unknown to me at the same time....

The knot in my heart grew with each passing time... The suffocating feeling drowned me.

"Ha!"

My eyes shot open as I jolted awake, my heart pounding in my chest.

I gasped for breath, trying to shake off the remnants of the haunting and cryptic dream that clung to my mind. The darkness of the room enveloped me, and for a moment, I struggled to discern reality from the lingering echoes of the dream.

"Hufff..... Hufff.... Hufff...."

My hand instinctively reached for my chest, feeling the rapid beat of my heart as I tried to calm myself.

The vision of the woman's smile and the elusive words whispered in the void haunted me, leaving a sense of unease that I couldn't shake off.

"What was that dream?" I murmured my voice barely a whisper. The fragments of the dream danced at the edges of my memory, teasing me with snippets of forgotten memories.

'It was her, right?' The smile of the woman I missed.... I knew the identity even though it was blurry... After all, there was no way it could be someone other than her....

"Mmm...."

Suddenly I felt a wriggling sensation around my leg, and the voice of humming came.

'What?'

At that moment, my head came back to me as I was able to look around.

My eyes gradually adjusted to the dim light of the room, and as my surroundings came into focus, I realized that I was lying on a comfortable bed with crisp white sheets. The room was spacious, with soft sunlight filtering in through the partially drawn curtains, casting gentle rays across the wooden floor.

The walls were adorned with intricate tapestries depicting scenes from the academy's history, and shelves lined with various healing potions and medical tools stood against one side. The scent of herbs and medicine lingered in the air, creating an atmosphere of calm and healing.

'This is the academy's infirmary for sure.' I thought, seeing the room.

"Grrr....."

But just as I was about to turn my body to the side, I felt a slight sting on my chest. I glanced down at my chest, which was wrapped in bandages.

Which reminded me of the wounds I had sustained during the battle with the Mistwraith.

The events of the last day came to my head not long after. The pain had subsided by now, but I couldn't remember what happened after I lost consciousness.

'But seeing that I am still alive and here, someone must have found me.' I thought and immediately turned my attention to the side, only to see a girl sleeping beside me.

'Who?' At first, it was an unknown girl, but after a second of looking at the girl, I instantly concluded her identity.

'Sylvie Gracewind.'

After all, she was a named character in the game.

As I gazed at Sylvie, memories of the game flooded my mind. In the game, she was the future Saintess, a gentle and caring healer with flowing golden-blonde hair and captivating deep green eyes. Her character was known for her kindness and willingness to help others, and she came from a middle-rated family within the game's lore.

Even though she came from a middle-rated family, she was a girl with ambitions to help people and did her best to make others happy. And thanks to her good nature and rare healing affinity, she was easily able to get a scholarship and enter the Arcadia Hunter Academy.

'If it was her, that makes sense how easily I was able to get treatment this fast.' I knew the wound on my chest was deep, and me losing my consciousness might have been dangerous if no intervention was made.

But I knew the instructors and patrols had already been notified after I activated the light artifact, which would destroy the barrier Mistwraith put on, but still, I assumed I would be grounded for a while, but if Sylvie was there, that made sense if she healed me even though not fully. 'Her healing skills mustn't have reached that ceiling yet.' I thought.

'But there are other important things. If she was there, when did she come? Did she witness everything happening? Did she see how I killed Mistwraith?'

Questions lingered around my mind as Sylvie stirred slightly in her sleep, her eyelashes fluttering.

I watched her for a moment, the gentle rise and fall of her chest as she breathed peacefully. It was strange to see her here, in the real world, as a living, breathing person rather than a fictional character in a game. Even though I saw the other characters in the cafeteria and Ethan on the training grounds, it was the first time I was seeing a named character from this close.

Her complexion was fair, with a touch of delicacy that spoke of a sheltered upbringing. Her yellow hair cascaded down her back in loose waves, hinting at a preference for simplicity over extravagance.

However, upon closer inspection, I noticed a few stray strands out of place, revealing a disheveled look that hinted at a lack of concern for her appearance in the face of more pressing concerns. 'It seems she didn't even have the time to pay attention to herself.' I thought, seeing the signs of her makeup messed up.

Her clothes were modest; they displayed subtle signs of wear, indicating a frugal lifestyle or limited means. It was the way of her casual clothing. Yet, her attire was neatly arranged, suggesting a conscientious effort to maintain a respectable appearance despite her circumstances.

Her hands, though roughened by work, bore no callouses, hinting that she was not accustomed to heavy labor but possibly had engaged in more delicate tasks. It was expected, knowing that she was a healer in the game.

'For now, she must not have her weapon yet.' Well, being a healer doesn't mean she didn't need to learn how to defend herself. Contrary, it was the opposite since the healers were the ones with light attributes, making them the target of demons. But for now, she had yet to face the consequences of not learning defense techniques.

But one question remained.

'Why is she here?' I asked myself. After all, I was never close to this girl, even though we were in the same class. 'There are a lot of questions that need to be answered, but there are eyes here.'

I thought, immediately noticing the presence of other people around as well as the small lingering feeling of being watched remain.

'It must be a skill.' I concluded. The feeling was there but I couldn't see any cameras or recording devices inside.

'In any case, let's wait until they show up first. I also need to look at my stats.'

I thought to myself as I called the status window in my head.

?Name: Astron Natusalune

?Occupation: Weapon Master (level 1)

?Talent Limit: 6

?Passives:

- Vengeful Bane

?Attributes:

Variable Attributes:

- Strength: 1.4 --> 1.5

- Dexterity: 2.1 --> 2.1

- Agility: 1.9 --> 2.0

- Constitution: 1.4 --> 1.4

- Intuition: 2.1 --> 2.2

- Magical Power: 2.5 --> 2.6

- Mana Capacity: 1.6 --> 1.8

?Traits:

- Perceptive Insight (Unique)(Unchanging)
- Lunar Enigma (????) (Growth Type) (Stage 0)
- Shadowborne (Legendary) (Growth Type)(Stage 1)

?Arts:

- Basic Dagger Style (Common Grade) - %36
- Basic Nonarmed Combat Style (Common Grade) - %29

?Skills:

- Dash
- Keen Eye

?Body Imprints:

As the panel appeared before me, my attention was immediately drawn to the new section shown beneath.

'Passives section appeared.' (N1)

Passive section....

It was a special section for special buffs that would activate when certain conditions were met. Normally it was hidden since most people would not have such special skills unless they met certain conditions.

'Vengeful Bane.'

As I looked at the name, a description of the passive appeared.

Passive: Vengeful Bane

Description: The passive that allows the User to deal more damage to demons, fueled by his desire for vengeance. With the Vengeful Bane skill, the User's attacks become imbued with a potent energy that pierces through the defenses of demons, inflicting greater harm upon his foes. This skill acts as a manifestation of the User's

determination to seek retribution against those who have wronged him and those he cares for, turning his wrath into a powerful force to be reckoned with.

'I see.... A passive that comes from my very being, huh?'

Considering the contents of the game, it made sense that I had such a skill. After all, Ethan and other leads would also acquire their related passives when the time comes.

However, that was not all the changes there. After all, there was another thing that caught my eye.

'Shadowborne is here as expected.' The reason why I risked my life, almost dying and getting killed by that primordial demon, even though I could wait for the safer route.

It was because of this new trait that I would come upon.

Trait: Shadowborne

Description: The innate trait bestowed by the Mistwraith grants the ability to harness and manipulate shadows with great proficiency. It enhances the user's control over darkness, enabling them to bend and shape shadows to their will.

Stage 1:

Shadow Veil: The user gains the power to blend seamlessly with shadows, becoming nearly invisible in dimly lit environments. This grants them enhanced stealth and the ability to move undetected.

It was a growth type of trait that would unlock more and more skills and specialties as time passed and mastery increased.

In the game, this trait was passed to another demon that was attacking the academy as the Mistwraith was killed. And that demon would be able to escape by using this new trait and blending into shadows. Then, he would later appear as a very formidable opponent and as the successor of one of the primordial demons.

"But no more," I mumbled. After all, it was now in my hands.

I was very tempted to play with the shadows in my hands, but I knew I was being watched. Thus, I decided to put everything down for a second.

My stats also showed quite an increase, especially my strength stat, which was hard to increase increasing by one. 'Pushing myself to limits.'

It was the term that was often used by the natives of this world, but essentially it was true. If one pushed themselves to limits, they would be able to get their rewards by getting stronger until they reached their talent limits.

Closing the status window, I started watching Sylvie sleeping comfortably since I had nothing to do.

/CREAK/

Until the door opened once again....

-----A/N-----

N1: Before, there were a bunch of question marks in the art/trait section, and I was planning to put this 'Vengeful Bone' into there, but later I thought it didn't make sense, so I decided to put them in a new section called Passives. I will edit those chapters later.

Hope you liked the chapter.

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