

H. Academy 201

Chapter 201 44.3 - Investigation

"Yes."

I opened the call.

<Astron, are you here?>

"Yes."

It was a pointless question, but it seems Senior Amelia was a little restless.

<Just now, two officers from the Local Awakened Security came to us. Sylvie recognized the two.>

"Margareta?"

<Yes, one of them was named Margareta, and the other one was Harlan. According to Sylvie, they were the ones that had taken her out of the basement.>

"Is that so? What did they say?"

<They asked me a bunch of questions about Maya's whereabouts and where she was last seen.>

"I see...."

I nodded my head. If Senior Maya was the one who disappeared, the Academy is bound to take action. After all, she is one of the most important prospects for the future as she is the first-ranked student.

Also, this is certainly not a usual case, with both Sylvie being attempted to kidnapping and Maya disappearing.

'I guess the Academy is already putting pressure on them.'

<Were you able to find anything?>

"Not much. I am still looking around. Did you mention them about me?"

<Well.....>

"So, you did?"

<Yeah.>

Hearing this, I wanted to release a hearty sigh. After all, if they knew that I was wandering alone on my own, they may block me for overstepping my authority, which is something I am certainly doing.

'Well, it might not be that bad.'

No matter what, at some point, Awakened Police and the government are bound to be involved in this situation anyway, and if what I had seen at that time is correct, this time, the demon is pretty strong.

'I will try to progress as much as I can alone.'

<Was it bad?>

"No, it is fine. You did what you were supposed to."

<Then, we are going to look around a little as well. Do you want us to search for something?>

As she mentioned that, I suddenly got an idea.

"I do."

<Please, tell. We will do our best to help you.>

"I need you to delve into the local stories and legends of Western Uxbridge. Dig deep into the city's past, any tales of unusual occurrences, supernatural events, or anything that might provide insights into the origins."

In fact, I really didn't need such information. After all, most of the time, the stories wouldn't be much of a help. However, Amelia and Sylvie need something to calm themselves down and distract themselves.

Sylvie because she had just seen quite a traumatic scene, and Amelia because she feels restless.

<Local stories and legends? What is it for?>

"This doesn't feel like a normal case."

<I see.....>

The sound didn't seem to be convincing, so I played my last card.

"I think it is related to her disappearance."

<.....Understood. We'll start our investigation right away. Anything specific you're looking for?>

"Nothing much. I just want to learn the history of this city. Focus more on the unrecorded tales."

<Got it. We'll contact you as soon as we find something substantial. Take care out there.>

"Thank you, Senior Amelia. Keep me posted."

The call ended, and I turned my attention back to the task at hand.

I hailed a passing cab, and as I settled into the back seat, I retrieved my smartwatch to review the documents the Horde had compiled.

"Sir, where are you going?"

"Elm Avenue."

"Old library?"

"Yes."

"Understood."

The vehicle smoothly navigated the streets, and I delved into the information on the missing individuals.

[Horde Report: Missing Persons – Western Uxbridge]

Emily

Age: 28

Health Situation: Good

Awakened Test Result: Eligible for Hunter

Mana Level: Mid

Daniel Johnson

Age: 24

Health Situation: Excellent

Awakened Test Result: Eligible for Hunter

Mana Level: Mid-High

Olivia Harris

Age: 26

Health Situation: Fair

Awakened Test Result: Eligible for Hunter

Mana Level: Mid-High

Benjamin Rodriguez

Age: 34

Health Situation: Good

Awakened Test Result: Eligible for Hunter

Mana Level: High

Sophia Carter

Age: 27

Health Situation: Excellent

Awakened Test Result: Eligible for Hunter

Mana Level: Mid

'This.'

As I perused the updated information, a new layer of complexity unfolded. The fact that all the missing individuals were not only eligible for Hunter status but also possessed at least mid to high mana showed that the demon didn't target normal humans at all.

Also, this was the sad reality of this world. Not all humans possess the power to become awakened Hunters, but not all awakened people become Hunters.

That was also the reason why Hunters were this valuable.

'Now things are slowly coming together.'

I noted everything at the corner of my head.

CREAK!

"Sir, we are here."

And at that moment, the cab stopped. It seemed we had arrived at our destination.

"Here."

After paying for the cab, I left and reached the next location.

Elm Avenue was a narrow street adorned with aged trees, their branches intertwining to create a canopy that veiled the path below.

Dim streetlights cast long shadows, adding a mysterious aura to the surroundings. It was an old library at the end of the avenue.

The lights were still on.

"Ah....Should we come here later?"

"Hmm~ I would love to."

"Smooch...Next time, then."

This time, the streets were more alive. Many couples and people were walking on the streets.

Navigating through the lively Elm Avenue, I blended into the crowd, my [Shadowborne] trait concealing my presence amidst the bustling activity. The chatter of couples, the laughter of friends, and the occasional footsteps created a symphony that drowned any subtle sounds of my movements.

'Observation needs to be discreet.'

I casually glanced around, keeping my senses heightened without drawing attention. The old library at the end of the avenue stood as a silent witness to the passing of time, its inviting facade contrasting with the ominous air surrounding the recent disappearances.

As I moved through the crowd, my eyes scanned the surroundings for any peculiarities. The dimly lit street made it challenging to spot subtle details, but drawing mana into my eyes to support my vision guided my focus.

As I approached the old library, I instinctively activated [Perceptive Insight], heightening my senses to detect any anomalies.

The library appeared undisturbed, yet I knew better than to rely solely on appearances.

My eyes scoured the area, examining every nook and cranny for signs of struggle or any peculiarities that might unravel the mystery. In the hushed night, even the slightest disturbance could be a crucial clue.

SWISH! A sudden gust of wind rustled the leaves, and my attention shifted to a corner where a dim glow emanated. It was so silent that it wasn't surprising that not many people noticed it.

Moving cautiously, I found faint traces of mana lingering in the air.

'Hmm....'

There, on the ground, I found a small earring. It was a mana artifact, constantly spreading mana into the area.

'This is.....'

I noticed what it was after looking at it a little. It was a cheap artifact that made the skin of the wearer glow a little.

'Did this belong to Olivia?'

Carefully, I pocketed the earring, intending to delve into its properties later.

Looking around, there weren't many signs of struggle around. However, there were still some marks on the ground.

'Especially the blood.'

A drop of blood clogged blood was on the ground; its smell got my attention.

The absence of evident struggle suggested a swifter movement coming from the side of the demon. That meant it got even stronger.

'I even doubt I will be able to find any traces at the next time.'

With a final glance at the surroundings, I decided to explore the interior of the old library.

CREAK!

Pushing open the creaking door, I entered the dimly lit space, greeted by the scent of aging books and the soft whisper of turning pages.

A bespectacled elderly man behind the counter looked up, his eyes squinting at the unexpected visitor.

"Good evening, young one. How may I assist you?"

His voice held the warmth of hospitality, and the dim lighting of the library created an atmosphere of quiet contemplation.

"I'm looking for information, particularly about a young lady named Olivia Harris. Did she frequent this library?"

As I posed the question, the air seemed to change. The elderly librarian's expression shifted, and a hint of sadness clouded his eyes.

"Ah, Olivia... she used to visit often, engrossed in the world of books. It's been a while since I last saw her."

His response carried a weight of melancholy, prompting me to inquire further.

"Do you know anything about her recent activities or if she was here around the time of her disappearance?"

The librarian's gaze became more focused, suspicion evident in his eyes.

"Why do you ask about Olivia? Are you a friend of hers?"

Thinking on my feet, I replied, "I'm her cousin. Her sudden disappearance has left our family, especially Aunt Jane, quite distraught, and I'm trying to gather any information that might help."

The librarian's expression softened at the mention of me being her cousin, his suspicion giving way to empathy.

Of course, the information was true; after all, I had also checked her mother's name before coming here.

"Oh, I see. Terrible news, that is. Olivia was a bright young lady. If there's anything I can do to help, feel free to ask."

"Thank you. It means a lot to our family. Can you recall the last time Olivia visited the library?"

The elderly librarian leaned back, his eyes narrowing as he delved into his memory.

"Let me think... it must have been a week or so before her disappearance. She borrowed a couple of books and mentioned something about reading old literature books. She liked them quite a lot."

Well, what she liked to read wasn't my concern. After all, I was looking for clues.

"I see....But did she mention meeting someone or anything?"

"No, she didn't. She was always a quiet girl, liking to read at the corner."

"Then, did you happen to notice anything unusual or out of the ordinary around the library during that time? Any strange individuals or occurrences?" I inquired, hoping the librarian might have observed something that could aid my investigation.

The elderly man tapped his fingers on the counter, his brow furrowed in concentration. "Well, there was one peculiar thing. A couple of nights before she went missing, I heard some strange noises outside."

My interest was piqued at the mention of strange noises. "Strange noises?"

"Yes. It felt like they were coming from the ground, right beneath my feet. It was as if something was moving down there, but when I checked, there was nothing to be seen."

My curiosity deepened at this unexpected detail. "From the ground? That's quite unusual. Did you notice any disturbances in the soil or anything else out of place?"

He shook his head, his expression troubled. "No, there was nothing visibly wrong. It was more like a sensation than something I could see. Gave me the shivers; it did."

I thanked the librarian for the additional information.

'Underground.....'

Especially the mention of the underground brought some things into my head.

'Let's return, it is getting late.'

It was around the time when I finished obtaining data.

Chapter 202 Chapter 44.4 - Investigation

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As Astron left the library, he immediately returned to the accommodation. It had been hours since he was on the field looking for clues, and he was on his foot from morning to this hour.

After the fight and everything, he was not in his peak condition, so he needed a rest. He took a cab immediately and then went to the hotel they were going to stay at night. Amelia had already arranged it, spending her own money.

-FUSH! As the automatic door opened, Astron stepped into the entrance.

"Ah....You are here."

There, he was welcomed by the two girls waiting at the front door, drinking teas. Amelia and Sylvie looked up as the door opened, their eyes reflecting both concern and relief.

"They must have been anxious."

"Astron!" Sylvie was the first one to come at him. She immediately looked at him from head to toe, seizing his looks. "You are okay?"

"Of course I am."

"....."

Sylvie didn't say anything in his response, but it was evident that he was relieved.

'So, she still can't get over it.'

It made sense for Astron; after all, no normal human could get over such a scene instantly, he thought.

"Were you able to find anything?" Amelia called out, standing up from the couch.

"A little."

"I see.... Come, let's sit first. You must be tired."

The lobby was pretty desolate; only the receptionist was there standing in front of the small computer. And, his attention wasn't on the three youngsters either.

"A little," Astron replied as he followed Amelia's gesture and sat down.

"Do you want a tea?" As the trio settled down, Amelia asked, pointing at the small kettle on the sides.

"I would like."

"Okay."

Sylvie poured a cup of tea to him while also filling hers at the same time. After Amelia waited for a little while for Astron to get comfortable, she finally raised her questions.

"So, what did you find?" Her curiosity and restlessness were evident in her voice. Her eyes were narrowed, but small dark circles had already started appearing underneath them.

"I wasn't able to find much," Astron began, meeting Amelia's expectant gaze. "I focused on revisiting the place where Sylvie and I clashed with the demon followers. It's the only lead we have so far, and I thought there might be something we missed."

He certainly wouldn't be able to mention visiting the places where the other victims had last seen since that would certainly expose his way of obtaining information. Therefore, he could only reveal a little about what he found.

Even though Amelia wasn't a bad person, neither was Sylvie, but that didn't mean they weren't human. As long as one had a mouth, the information they knew was always prone to spreading.

Sylvie flinched a little at the mention of the fight, but she still listened attentively, her eyes searching for any hint of progress. Amelia nodded, encouraging Astron to continue.

"The place was deserted. There were no signs of the demon followers or anything unusual since they were professional. But, as you know, my focus wasn't on them."

"Did you notice something unusual?" Amelia asked.

"I did."

At his words, Amelia got slightly agitated. "Wha-" She raised her voice but stopped as she saw Astron's raised hand.

"Calm down."

"....Right." Realizing that she was a little too excited, she stopped herself. "So, what was it?"

"First, I found landing marks on the roofs. It must have been Senior Maya since, according to what you described, she was flying."

"That's right. She fled using wind magic."

"And, after confirming that it was Senior Maya, I followed her tracks. After she landed, she didn't leave much trace, but as I followed, I reached the exact location where Sylvie and I fought with the demon followers."

"She went to there?"

"Yes. I am pretty sure our fight was the reason why she suddenly flew away."

"Then....."

"Of course, I hadn't encountered her. But the weird thing wasn't her coming to this place. There were traces of clashing and claw marks around the whole place."

"Claw?"

"Claw. I am sure of it. Those marks belong to a monster or something non-human. There were also signs of clashing there."

Astron didn't mention how his blood was licked or other things. But, even then, what he said was enough to make Amelia understand a little.

"So, you are saying she was attacked by that when she arrived there?"

"That's right," Astron affirmed, his gaze steady. "It seems like she wasn't alone in that place. I sensed remnants of demonic energy, but whatever attacked her left distinctive marks. It wasn't just a normal fight; it was something else."

Amelia's brows furrowed in concern. "But Maya is so strong. Who or what could have done that to her?"

Astron shook his head. "I can't say for sure. Whatever it was, it left marks of unnatural strength. Senior Maya might be powerful, but this adversary wasn't an ordinary foe. I could sense that it was something beyond the usual things we would see."

"I see....." Amelia lowered her head. If this foe was strong enough to take over Maya, that meant they were no match for it either.

After all, Amelia might also be a Senior, but she herself knew the disparity between her and Maya in terms of combat strength. Maya was overwhelmingly stronger than her counterparts, and she could even fight third-graders on her own.

Astron also noticed that she was down and decided to change the topic.

"So, were you two able to find anything related to the past?" Astron inquired, shifting the focus from the dire situation at hand.

Amelia looked up, trying to shake off the worry clouding her expression. "Yes, we did our best. Sylvie, why don't you tell Astron what we found?"

Sylvie nodded, her weariness momentarily forgotten as she began, "We went around the town and asked the locals about any legends or unusual tales related to Western Uxbridge. Most of them were quite hospitable after they learned we were students from Arcadia Hunter Academy. Surprisingly, we got quite a few interesting responses."

Astron leaned forward, curious about what they had discovered. "What did you learn?"

Sylvie took a breath, "The town has a history of supernatural occurrences. Do you remember what Miss Jones said to us at that time?"

"The possibility of mana already being here even before the day of Nexus Convergence?"

"That's right."

"How are the two related?"

"Well, many of the locals said their ancestors had told a series of ritualistic events that happened many years ago. Rumors spoke of a cult practicing dark arts, attempting to summon an entity."

"Okay, but what does it relate to Nexus Convergence."

"Well, they said most of those records were remnants of this town, and the calendars used belonged to an old empire."

"The calendars belonging to the old empire?"

"Yes. Even the alphabet belongs to them."

09:42

"I see...."

Astron nodded his head. It wasn't that uncommon for cities to hold old history since most of the new cities were actually founded over the old ones, restoring the old cities.

As Astron absorbed the historical context Sylvie provided, she delved into a specific tale. "There's a particularly eerie story that caught our attention. It's about an old count who ruled over this town centuries ago. According to the locals, one day, this count underwent a drastic transformation."

Astron's interest piqued. "Transformation?"

"Yes. The tale goes that the count, seemingly overnight, changed into a completely different person. He became violent and unpredictable. One day, without any apparent reason, he assaulted his own servants, and in a frenzy, he feasted on their blood."

Astron's expression shifted, a mix of curiosity he was showing for the first time. "Feasted on their blood?"

Sylvie nodded solemnly. "It's a disturbing part of the tale. The count's actions became so heinous that the entire city turned against him. In an attempt to escape the wrath of the townspeople, the count retreated into the tunnels beneath the city. Legend has it that he used his own blood to block the entrances, sealing himself inside."

'Tunnels.'

At the mention of the tunnels, Astron's eyes widened a little, but neither Sylvie nor Amelia saw that.

"After that, the tale becomes shrouded in mystery. No one heard from the count again. It's as if he vanished entirely. The townspeople, fearing the dark events surrounding the count, avoided the tunnels, considering them cursed. And over time, the tale became a cautionary legend, passed down through generations."

Astron nodded, masking the emotions he was feeling. "It's a dark history, indeed."

Sylvie also nodded his head. "I know they are nothing but stories, but it is certainly scarier than usual."

"This was the reason why we came to this city, wasn't it?"

"Yeah."

As the conversation settled, Astron decided it was time to take his leave. He stifled a yawn, rubbing his eyes. "I appreciate your efforts, both of you. You've done well gathering this information. I think I need some rest; it's been a long day."

Even if he had said that his eyes were actually shining in contrast to what he said.

Amelia smiled, "We should rest as well. It had been a hectic day. Sylvie must also be tired."

"I-I am...."

"Just rest."

".....Okay."

Just like that, the group each went to their own rooms after Astron got his key from Amelia.

Top of Form

The moment I entered my room, I immediately sat on the bed and started weaving together the fragments of information I had gathered.

The haunting tale of the old count, the concealed tunnels beneath the city, and the unnerving accounts shared by the librarian – each piece etched itself in my mind.

'She said the count feasted in the servant's blood.'

The mention of feasting in the blood was the first trigger. Since that moment, I remembered how my blood was licked. But, the second trigger was the mention of tunnels underground.

'If this is really the case, then that explains how the demon was able to move around the city freely without ever getting caught.'

After all, there wasn't a specified location where the demon was captured.

'A demon sealed underground... If that was the case, maybe it was recovering its strength at the start...'

「 Those bastards call themselves Elegance of Night, but the only thing I can see is primitiveness and barbarism. They use their disgusting blood magic to capture every other human, like livestock, and turn them into their underlings. 」

09:43

Leaning back in my bed, I gazed at the ceiling, allowing the thoughts to dance and twirl in my mind. The connection between Senior Maya's disappearance and the city's ominous past seemed more than mere coincidence. The demon I pursued might be intricately linked to the count.

'And targeting Awakened individuals makes perfect sense.'

With this revelation, my earlier observations clicked into place. The demon deliberately chose Awakened humans. It could also navigate the city's shadows using the concealed tunnels, staying elusive and feeding on its chosen prey.

'The count used his own blood to seal the entrances...Usage of his own blood...Using blood... Something is familiar with that.'

I started exploring my memories from the game, referring to such a thing.

「Those fanged bastards. You are not different from them. 」

Then, a small line made me remember where this was familiar. A scene that would happen at very later stages of the game.

'Fanged bastards.'

「Just like them, you are also looking for my kin. Both of you want our blood and hunt us like we are animals. 」

As I remembered those words of a certain villain, everything started getting into the picture.

「Those bastards call themselves Elegance of Night, but the only thing I can see is primitiveness and barbarism. They use their disgusting blood magic to capture every other human, like livestock, and turn them into their underlings. 」

As those words came into my mind, naturally, the enemy I was facing with.

'A vampire.'

My finals are approaching. The moment they end, I will send it and will post two chapters a day. Also, hope you liked recent chapters. What do you think about them? Were you able to get the feeling of investigating, or were they bad? Please comment on them.

Darkness_Enjoyer

Chapter 203 Chapter 44.5 - Investigation [Interlude]

203 Chapter 44.5 - Investigation [Interlude]

"Cough-!"

When she felt her consciousness returning, this was the first reaction she gave.

The strangled sound escaped her throat, echoing through the oppressive darkness that seemed to smother everything. Pain surged from every inch of her body, a relentless assault that left her gasping for breath.

'I can't move.'

She was ensnared, bound by unseen forces that rendered her limbs useless. Every attempt to break free was met with the harsh reality of her restrained state.

'Disgusting .'

The air in the dimly lit space carried a thick, musty scent, wrapping around her senses like a suffocating shroud.

The only audible rhythm was the distant, haunting drip that resonated through the confines of her disoriented consciousness.

With a slow blink, her eyes opened to a world veiled in muted shadows. Stone walls, unforgiving and cold, loomed around her, their rough-hewn surfaces a testament to the bleakness of her surroundings.

"Burghk-!"

Pain, disorientation, and a profound sense of wrongness enveloped her. It was an alien experience, a stark departure from the familiar contours of her life. Each labored breath filled her lungs with the damp, stagnant air that clung to the subterranean space.

As her vision adjusted to the feeble light, a revelation unfolded—the metallic glint of unseen restraints, the dim glow of a distant candle, and the disquieting shapes of cages that hinted at the presence of others trapped in this place.

'Others?'

Then she realized even in this darkness, she was able to see the silhouettes all around herself. If her thoughts weren't disoriented, she would have noticed it far sooner. But, alas, this wasn't the case right now.

However, even under such conditions, she was one of the most talented people in the group of the most talented individuals in the academy, and that was for a reason.

A logical mind kicked into gear, attempting to make sense of the situation despite the fog of pain and confusion.

Where was she? What situation had led her to this ominous place? She braced herself against the pain, endeavoring to clear her thoughts and discern the reality of her position.

Her mind, which was like a turbulent sea, gradually settled as she fought to recall the events leading to her current state.

'That's right. I went there because I sensed there was a demonic energy.'

As she recollected everything slowly, she remembered what she had seen when she reached there. A humanoid thing was licking the blood on the ground.

It was an utterly disgusting sight, but what was more disgusting was the aura that humanoid thing was reeking. She, who was one of the most sensitive people towards mana, immediately felt that, and the need to attack followed.

'Then, there was a fight.'

Images of a struggle flickered, a chaotic ballet of movements and clashes. The creature, with an otherworldly speed that defied comprehension, had become a blur, attacking with a ferocity that left her defenseless.

'That thing was so out of the world that it was the first time I had encountered something like that.'

The realization settled in her mind, a sober acknowledgment of the extraordinary threat she had faced. The creature had moved with a speed that surpassed her ability to perceive and react, leaving her vulnerable to its predatory assault.

She was always proud of her dynamic vision. Even though she was not a close combatant, others always praised her perceptivity in the fights.

But she wasn't able to see the moments of that creature, which meant it was over her league way too much.

And, not to brag, if that creature was able to overpower someone like her this easily, that meant it was a danger to the whole world.

As she surveyed her dim surroundings, the cold reality settled in. The stone walls, the metallic restraints, and the faint glow of distant candles painted a bleak picture.

The immediate threat was not the world outside; it was the captivity she found herself in. In this confined space, she lacked the luxury to worry about the broader dangers the creature might pose.

'But, I can't worry about the world right now.'

As she surveyed her dim surroundings, the cold reality settled in. The stone walls, the metallic restraints, and the faint glow of distant candles painted a bleak picture. The immediate threat was not the world outside; it was the captivity she found herself in.

In this confined space, she lacked the luxury to worry about the broader dangers the creature might pose.

TAK!

The sound pierced the air, a disconcerting echo in the oppressive darkness. Her senses heightened, and her gaze flickered towards the source of the noise. Out of the shadows emerged a figure, not the grotesque creature she had fought before, but something far more elegant and humane.

'What?'

It was a vampire, something she had never seen in her life before, let alone many humans had seen.

As the vampire revealed itself, a silhouette that moved with the fluidity of a dancer. Gone were the nightmarish features; instead, an unsettling grace emanated from this being.

Crimson eyes, sharp and piercing, locked onto hers. His appearance was striking, but she knew it as a deceptive allure that masked the predatory nature beneath. After all, she herself witnessed how grotesque it looked.

"Greetings, my captive," he spoke, his voice carrying a chilling resonance that echoed in the dim chamber. "I hope you find our accommodations to your liking."

It was a shuddering feeling. She remembered how her friends fantasized about vampires and such creatures, but now she was in front of one. The only thing she felt was fright.

The vampire continued, "It has been a while since I was completely awake." His words carried a weight, a sense of ages long past.

She looked at the vampire, the only thing she could discern at the moment. As her eyes traced the contours of his pale white skin, a memory stirred in her—a face she couldn't help but remember.

Her Junior, with his similarly pale complexion, flashed in her mind. He and the vampire looked awfully familiar; the only thing differentiating them was the color of their eyes.

Well, even though suddenly, being reminded of him was weird, it strangely gave her strength.

"I was already bored with the recent food. I guess I should thank our god that he sent me something like this."

Smooth steps brought the vampire closer, and as he mentioned "food," a sudden realization struck her. The nauseous scent that enveloped the chamber, the source of which had eluded her until now, suddenly became clear.

"Ah...I am sorry, I forgot." The vampire mumbled. "I guess you still don't know what I mean by that."

FLICK! The moment the vampire said that, he flicked his hands. The mana surged around her, and it immediately took the form of an orb. It was a spell she knew well, but the mana control itself was too smooth.

SHINE! However, the awe she felt for a second for the smooth control instantly disappeared. The dim chamber burst into an eerie glow, revealing one of the most grotesque scenes she had ever witnessed.

Countless bodies hung from the ceiling, suspended by ropes made from the crimson color of blood.

09:45

Their forms were withered, their expressions frozen in eternal agony, a silent testimony to the horrors they had endured.

Men, women, children, elderly.... countless humans were there....

Her eyes widened in horror as she comprehended the grisly reality. The stench of blood that permeated the air was not just an unpleasant odor; it was the nauseating scent of death and despair.

The victims, drained of their life force, dangled grotesquely in the dimly lit chamber, a macabre display of the vampire's insatiable thirst.

"Burghk!"

Even for an aspiring Hunter like her, this scene was something that was hard to endure. Her already messed up body state made her pour everything she had inside herself to the ground.

The vampire, seemingly unfazed, watched her reaction with a hint of amusement. "Was that too much for you?" he remarked, his tone mocking. "Humans are weak, just as they've always been. Fragile, emotional creatures."

TAP!

He took a step closer, relishing the power he wielded over her in this macabre theater of horror. The dim light cast shadows that danced across his features, highlighting the cruelty etched into his elegant countenance.

CREAK! The hanging bodies swayed gently in the chilling breeze, an eerie chorus of the lives extinguished by the vampire's insatiable hunger.

"Now...."

He extended a hand towards her, his claws grazing her cheeks as if savoring the vulnerability etched on her features.

"You must be wondering why you're still alive," he mused, his voice a silky whisper that sent shivers down her spine. His touch was cold and disgusting. It sent shivers down her spine. "Well, my dear captive, you have a purpose yet to fulfill. A purpose that amuses me."

His grin widened, revealing fangs that gleamed in the dim light. The sight of those elongated teeth, designed for draining the essence of life, sent a wave of disgust through her. The alien features she saw reminded the vampire of the monsters.

"You possess something that makes you valuable, my dear," the vampire continued, his voice a blend of elegance and malice. "Your mana, pure and abundant, is a rare delicacy. That's why I chose you to be my first partner in this world. Amongst the pathetic humans, you are like a gem that could never be encountered unless by luck."

The revelation hung in the air, a heavy truth that settled upon her like a suffocating shroud. The idea of becoming a vampire, a creature that was associated with demons, her enemy, made her shudder.

The vampire licked his lips as his crimson eyes looked at her with desire. But that soon turned to disgust.

"You, in your current state, are nothing but a lowly human," he sneered, his claws gently tracing her jawline. "It disgusts me."

The revulsion swirled within her. The vampire's disdain for humanity was palpable, and that also ignited the innate pride in her heart.

"But fear not," the vampire continued with a wicked grin. "Once the transformation is complete, you will be reborn as a being worthy of standing by my side. A creature superior to these pathetic humans you now share your existence with."

The vampire's wicked grin widened as he spoke, and in the next instant, he revealed a small vial filled with his dark, viscous blood. "Embrace your rebirth, my dear," he cooed, his voice a sinister melody.

Instinctively, she recoiled, pressing her lips tightly together in a desperate attempt to resist the impending transformation.

"Futile." The vampire, however, was not to be deterred. With a swift and forceful motion, he gripped her jaw, his claws biting into her skin, and forced her mouth open.

The vampire's eyes glowed with a dark satisfaction as the arcane properties of his blood began their macabre work. The transformation had started, and she felt the tendrils of his magic intertwining with her very essence, reshaping her into something beyond human.

Hope you liked her POV. Darkness_Enjoyer

Chapter 204 Chapter 45.1 - Preparations for the hunt

204 Chapter 45.1 - Preparations for the hunt

Creatures of the Night.

This phrase actually covers quite a lot of monsters. However, there are certain ones who take pride in such names.

And the fang bastards are one of those.

Vampire.

It's a type of demon breed.

A type of demon breed known for their insatiable thirst for blood, vampires are creatures that have woven themselves into the fabric of countless myths and legends across different cultures.

However, different from what one would think, vampires are not actual demons. They are mutants that had evolved in the process of evolution and differed from their origins.

Unlike other demonic entities, vampires aren't born but created through a process known as "Blood Bonding."

Blood Bonding is a ritualistic exchange of blood between a vampire and a human. The human is bitten and then fed the vampire's blood, initiating a transformative process.

This eldritch fusion results in the creation of a new vampire, forever bound to the one who turned them. The transformed individual gains supernatural abilities and an eternal existence sustained by the consumption of blood.

Vampires possess various characteristics that set them apart from ordinary demons. Their enhanced strength, agility, and heightened senses make them formidable adversaries. They're particularly skilled in stealth, often moving effortlessly in the shadows to surprise their prey.

Vampires are also known for their mesmerizing charm, which can manipulate the minds of humans.

Essentially, this is one of the reasons why they appear this many times in the stories targeted mainly at the female audience. After all, the ones who had spread those stories were the females who had been charmed by them at the start.

However, their most iconic trait is the need for blood to survive. While vampires can consume regular food, it doesn't sustain them; only blood provides the vital life force required for their demonic existence.

The act of feeding involves the vampire biting into the veins or arteries of their victim, extracting the crimson elixir that fuels their supernatural powers.

Sunlight, often considered lethal to vampires in folklore, is a weakness but doesn't necessarily destroy them. Instead, it weakens their abilities and makes them more vulnerable. However, that only applies to the lower-ranking vampires who had not completed their evolution to perfection.

Though many aspects of vampire lore have been romanticized or exaggerated over time, the core essence remains—a demonic being forever entwined with the night, driven by a dark hunger for the life essence of the living.

'This is what was written in the game.'

Whenever a player had discovered a new type of demon or enemy, the information related to them would appear on the folklore tab. And the more you killed such an enemy, the more information you would have revealed about them.

This was the game's reward system for players' hard work.

And I, who had finished the game to almost perfection, obviously killed quite a lot of vampires and hunted them.

Therefore, the moment those memories triggered me, I knew for a fact the enemy I was facing was a vampire. Everything matched their trait, and the usage of blood magic would make the discerning change.

Of course, I also wanted to make sure, so I revisited the old library at night to find the tunnels mentioned so that I could find out if it was really a vampire.

'They are really here.'

And now, here I was in one of those tunnels.

'The traces of blood magic. Undoubtedly, these are the works of a vampire.'

The recent ones were sloppy and instinctual, but there were even traces of the old ones.

'This is no joke.'

What kind of vampire had this one to be so that it could live for this long?

'A Nosferatu at least...'

It was at least around the Nosferatu, and that alone made it impossible to deal with it normally.

'I need to be prepared to the maximum.'

Now that I had confirmed everything that was needed, I immediately got out of the tunnel and reached the surface, returning to my room.

'Let's hope it is not a Higher Vampire.'

Since, if it was, then that would be the end of us.

'And hurry.'

Since, if what I am guessing was correct, Senior Maya was about to be consumed.

Or a fate that was worse than that might be awaiting her.

Amelia opened her eyes in the morning, and the moment she did, the tiredness overwhelmed her immediately.

She hadn't been able to sleep the night before and closed her eyes around 6 A.M., and now she was awake. Of course, as an awakened person who had a supernatural body, it didn't affect her that much, but the mental fatigue was still there.

The room was dimly lit by the soft glow of the morning sun filtering through the curtains. The air was still, and a quiet hush hung over the space. Amelia stretched her arms, trying to shake off the weariness that clung to her like a persistent shadow.

She sat up on the edge of the bed, rubbing her eyes with the heels of her palms. The events of the previous day replayed in her mind, each moment etched with a sense of urgency and mystery. The disappearance of Maya and Astron's findings all created a web of uncertainty.

As she prepared herself for the day, slipping into the routine of getting dressed and ready, a determination flickered in her eyes.

Fatigue might weigh her down, but it wouldn't stop her from searching for answers and finding her friend.

At the very least, she knew this was all she could do to herself at the moment.

After a quick shower that helped wash away some of the fatigue, Amelia left her room, her steps light but purposeful.

"Ah...."

However, she met someone.

"You are awake, too?"

It was Astron who was also leaving her room.

"Good morning, Senior Amelia."

Amelia returned the greeting with a small smile. "How are you feeling? Did you manage to get some rest?"

This guy was also working hard and went to sleep last night, so as his senior, she was obliged to show a greater presence and praise him.

Astron scratched the back of his head, a gesture that hinted at a mix of fatigue and determination. "A bit. Enough to keep going, I guess."

He also seemed to be quite tired.

'He really values Maya.'

She knew from the start that these two didn't have a usual Senior-Junior relationship. She could see the care Maya showed to Astron, and Astron also behaved differently in front of her. He was more docile.

Good to hear. So, where are you off to?" she inquired, curious about Astron's plans for the morning.

Astron hesitated for a moment before responding, "Well, I am going to check something."

Amelia raised an eyebrow, intrigued. "Did you find new information?"

"It's not exactly that," Astron replied cryptically, "but I'm going to meet someone."

Amelia nodded, understanding that Astron had his reasons. "Keep me informed, okay?"

09:46

Astron met her gaze with a determined nod. "I will." With that, he headed toward the exit, leaving Amelia with a sense of anticipation.

But just as he was about to leave, he suddenly turned back. "Did Sylvie wake up?"

Amelia shook her head. "No, she's still resting. The poor thing needed the sleep."

A thoughtful expression crossed Astron's face. "I need to talk to her about something. When she wakes up, could you let me know?"

Amelia nodded in agreement. "Of course. I'll make sure to inform you as soon as she's awake."

With a final nod, Astron continued on his way, leaving Amelia like that.

'What do they want to talk about, I wonder?'

She thought but knew it wasn't her time to probe. Then she returned to her room. It was already quite late and breakfast time, so she returned to her room while ordering breakfast.

As Amelia settled back into her chair, contemplating the day ahead, her phone rang. Glancing at the caller ID, she noticed it was the instructor overseeing the History and Art club. Curious, she answered the call.

"Hello, Instructor," she greeted.

"Good morning, Amelia. I hope you're doing okay," the instructor replied, her tone feeling a bit guilty. After all, she was supposed to be with them when they went on a trip, but she thought the Western Uxbridge would be on the safer side.

What a bad decision this was, but alas, she couldn't do anything about it anymore. "I wanted to check in. You still haven't returned to the academy?"

"Yes, instructor. I am still in the city."

The instructor's tone became more serious. "Amelia, I understand your concern for Maya, but it's time to consider returning. Leave the investigation to the authorities. They're better equipped to handle these situations."

Amelia took a deep breath before responding, her determination evident in her voice. "I appreciate your concern, Instructor, but I can't leave. Maya is our friend, and I can't just abandon her. We need to find her, and I won't rest until we do."

The instructor sighed on the other end. "Amelia, I really understand your loyalty to your friend, but this situation is getting complicated. It's not safe for students to be involved in these matters."

"I know it's risky, but we can't just stand by."

The instructor seemed torn between understanding and worry. "Amelia, the academy cares about all of you. Your safety is our priority. Please reconsider and return."

Amelia remained resolute. "I can't leave Maya alone in this situation. I'll stay until we find her. We'll be cautious, I promise."

The instructor sighed again, realizing that persuading Amelia might be challenging. "Amelia, I can't force you, but I hope you'll consider the consequences of your decision. The same goes for the other three students with you. Make sure to notify them about this as well."Top of Form

With those words, the call ended, leaving Amelia with a heavy heart.

She knew why the academy was doing this, and what she was doing was nothing logical. But at the end of the day, knowing things and being able to remove her feelings were two different things.

RING!

As she was thinking to herself, her doorbell rang.

"Senior Amelia, it is me. Sylvie."

It was her other Junior. She immediately went to the door and opened it. There, she saw the girl with disheveled blue hair and dark circles under her eyes.

Amelia's eyes softened at the sight of Sylvie. "Sylvie, come in." She could see the exhaustion on Sylvie's face, and it mirrored the weariness she felt herself.

Sylvie entered, and Amelia gently closed the door behind her. "Are you okay?" Amelia asked with genuine concern.

Sylvie nodded weakly. "I... I'm trying to be."

"Sit down. Let's talk," Amelia suggested, guiding Sylvie toward the small table in the room. She knew well for a fact what kind of things this girl experienced. "Did you get any sleep?"

Sylvie hesitated for a moment before answering. "A little. It's been a rough night."

Amelia nodded in understanding. "I can imagine. I didn't sleep much, either. But we need to eat something. It might help."

"Okay."

As Sylvie accepted, she ordered another plate of breakfast service from the hotel site and sat at the table.

"Where is Astron?" Sylvie asked her eyes wandering around the room.

"He went out just now."

"He went out?"

"Yeah, he said he was going to meet someone."

"....."

"He also said he needed to talk with you alone, so call him when you feel better."

At the mention of his needing to talk to her, Sylvie's expression seemingly brightened, and that change didn't miss Amelia's eyes.

'I see.'

She nodded inwardly as a pleasant smile spread on her face.

However, that smile soon turned into worry.....

Hope you liked the two chapters. I will try to post two of them, whenever such POV switches happen.

Chapter 205 Chapter 45.2 - Preparations for the Hunt

205 Chapter 45.2 - Preparations for the Hunt

The moment I knew the enemy I was facing was a vampire, I immediately ordered a bunch of materials to come tomorrow.

However, some of the materials had a longer transfer time; thus, I needed to buy them manually. Though even if Western Uxbridge was mostly an academy city, there were still some gates appearing around the place. Thus, there was a branch of the Hunter Association as well as store streets for Hunters.

I made my way to the Hunter Association's store street first.

'Maybe I am the only one in this world who can efficiently hunt a vampire.'

The game's information system was quite twisted when it came to hunting harder foes. Since the information was limited and closed. However, no matter what type of game it is, there are always people who get overly obsessed with details, and to satisfy such those, the developers always put some pieces of details about the monsters in random places.

And that was also the case for the Vampires. There was one specific Vampire boss in the game that was compulsory to kill, but there were many others on the map that you could kill as a side boss.

However, if they had one specific trait, that would be how hard it was to deal with them, especially if they were higher vampires since those were almost unbeatable, even for high-level players.

After all, they had countless different abilities. They could disassemble their bodies and become formless. They could suck the player's blood to regenerate. They could open a blood realm... They could call familiars or subordinates... They could use materialized blood or even dark magic.....

They could basically do everything. In terms of basic capabilities, a higher vampire was on par with the demon lord itself, basically.

However, of course, encountering a higher vampire was almost impossible right now since there are only two of them left in this world.

At least, that was what the game told us, and I am also betting on that possibility.

In any case, there is a reason why Vampires are not ruling the demon realm with such distinct powers. It is a fact that they have several more weaknesses compared to a demon.

And that knowledge is well-spread in the demon realm. After all, the current demon lord is the one who killed one of the three remaining higher vampires and captured the throne.

And now, this information is what I am going to use to hunt the vampire. This was one of the deepest information in the game.

'Anti-vampire oil.'

The sunlight illuminated the rows of specialized shops catering to the needs of hunters.

Each establishment held a unique array of items, from enchanted weapons to rare herbs and potions. I wasted no time navigating the labyrinthine streets; my focus was set on acquiring the materials essential for my encounter with the Vampire.

First on my list were herbs with potent magical properties.

Silverleaf Fern

Wraithroot Blossom

Nightshade Essence

These were crucial for creating a concoction that would interfere with the vampire's blood, disrupting its capabilities.

'To create the Grievous Wound effect.'

It was crucially important to disturb the healing as well as the magic of the Vampire, and this potion was just going to do that.

The first material has the properties of Silver, which is one of the biggest counters for Vampires. When Silver is mixed in their blood, it causes a small reaction, making the blood unable to be manipulated.

The second one has the ability to penetrate the mana barriers of monsters. Of course, if used alone, it won't be enough to penetrate vampires, but combined with Silverleaf Fern, it becomes effective against it.

The last Essence is the bridge that mixes the two while preserving their individual qualities.

The weakness of the vampire is how weak they are when their blood is disturbed, and it is not necessarily hard either.

As the city slowly stirred awake, I ventured into alchemy stores, carefully selecting each herb and ensuring their prime condition for maximum efficacy.

"These will be 500 Valer."

Surprisingly, the items here were a lot cheaper than in Arcadia City. It was expected that the prices would increase since it was a capital, but this was still too much.

"Thank you."

After buying all of those, I sought out more potions, especially mana recovery potions. After all, this time, things were going to be a lot harder than they had been before.

RING!

Just as I was buying everything, my smartwatch rang at that time.

[Your cargo has arrived and is ready to be taken. Please receive it from the city center.]

It was a message showing that my cargo had arrived.

"Just in time."

With the mixture ready, the only thing I needed was my cargo.

Upon reaching the city center, I located the designated area for cargo pickup. A small crate containing the materials I had ordered was neatly placed there, ready for retrieval.

The cargo included special potions that would seal wounds immediately, even if not fully healed. This was a crucial asset for facing a formidable adversary like the vampire.

After all, one of the biggest strengths of the vampire is the ability to draw blood from the enemy. While you are facing such a demon, you need to be well aware of the wounds you have received and make sure you are not letting your blood be used.

This was what this potion aimed to do.

And the other thing it contained was the special garlic-mixed gas bombs. Even though it is regarded as a myth that vampires are weak against garlic, it is actually a truth. Of course, it wasn't that

detrimental like the stories told, but the garlic had the ability to mess with the vampire's senses, making them susceptible in combat.

With the cargo in my new spatial bracelet, I made my way back to my room. The city was gradually awakening, and the streets were becoming more lively. People went about their daily routines, unaware of the imminent threat lurking in the shadows.

'Even if it wasn't Senior Maya, an awakened vampire is truly dangerous.'

If such a demon was left alone and allowed to evolve as it wished, it would become a formidable enemy.

From my findings, it was easy to conclude that the vampire had just recently awakened and still wasn't in its fully powered state. Therefore, this was probably one of the rarest chances to nip it in the bud. -WROOM!

As the automatic door opened, I immediately headed to my own room. Inside, I began the process of preparing for the impending combat.

The room, though small, served as my operational base, and every item had its designated place.

The cargo from the city center was safely stored in my spatial bracelet, easily accessible when needed. I laid out the essential materials on the table, organizing them for quick deployment.

And then, I immediately started preparing the mixture I was going to use against the vampire. Igniting the heater, I started the process. It wasn't going to take too long anyway.

Of course, creating something that was from the game was a little hard since, most of the time, the player would be unaware of how the potion/oil was created.

However, if you had listened to your character closely while playing, you would actually be well aware of how it was made.

'First, add the mineralized water and boil it with 2 grams of salt.'

The process went like that, and after playing with the mixture for a whole hour, I finished it.

'Good.'

Looking at the color and the texture, it seemed I got the correct result.

Everything was almost ready. I only needed to wait for the Anti-vampire potion to cool down, and then I would be able to apply it to my weapons.

'Now, one last thing.'

KNOCK!

Just as I thought about that, I heard the knocking voice coming from the door.

"Astron, are you there?"

It was Sylvie.

"Please wait a second."

"Okay."

I didn't want her to see what I was doing inside. After all, I also needed her cooperation with me at this moment.

Releasing a sigh inside, I decided not to waste any more time but also readied myself. I knew what kind of state Sylvie was in, and her mentality was very important to me.

09:07

I quickly went to the small washbasin in the corner and washed my hands, ensuring there was no trace of the concoctions on my skin. Satisfied that I had cleaned up properly, I opened the door.

"Ah..."

She was waiting in front of the door. The bags underneath her eyes and her being out of balance suggested that she was sleepless. The smell of coffee and the lack of focus also showed the effects of the caffeine were slowly wearing down.

Her not being able to sleep was something I had already expected, so I didn't put much thought into it.

"Senior Amelia said you wanted to talk to me. Is there something you need?" She asked, her eyes looking around curiously.

"Yes, that's right. There is something I need for you to do."

"What is it?"

"Let's talk in private. Is it okay if we use your room?" The thing I will request from her mustn't be seen by other people, and it is really important. But, since we can't use my room, using hers is a must.

Sylvie blinked, her cheeks flushing slightly. "Uh, sure, we can use my room. What do you need?"

Well, it was something that could be misunderstood, so I didn't blame her for that.

As we entered Sylvie's room and closed the door, Sylvie looked at me nervously with her eyes. I could see her shaking a little as well.

'.....This girl....'

It was evident that she was pushing herself. The events of yesterday must have been haunting her still.

'Sigh....'

Releasing a sigh inside, I decided not to waste any more time but also readied myself. I knew what kind of state Sylvie was in, and her mentality was very important to me.

She became like this because of my own actions, so it was also my responsibility to fix her mentality. Also, whenever I look at her, for some reason, I feel a little suffocated by her innocence, which always reminds me of the past time.

It is the feeling of protecting the smile, so I decided to hit two birds with one stone right now.

"Sylvie, do you know how to use your powers?"

Chapter 206 Chapter 45.3 - Preparations for the Hunt

206 Chapter 45.3 - Preparations for the Hunt

"Let's talk in private. Is it okay if we use your room?" The moment those words left Astron's, Sylvie's mind immediately wandered off around everywhere, and she couldn't think for a second.

'He wants to use my room? What is he planning to do?'

She asked herself. But as she looked at the emotions he had, she noticed there was nothing impure.

Thus, she accepted it. Even if she knew that there weren't any impure thoughts in his head, the events of the previous night were affecting her, so she felt a little fear as the bloody scene appeared in front of her.

But contrary to what she thought, what he said was too different.

"Sylvie, do you know how to use your powers?"

'My powers?'

As Astron asked it, she looked at him surprised.

'Does he know?'

Her newly awakened trait, [First Lord's Authority]. She knew it was very important.

"W-what do you mean?"

Astron noticed Sylvie's surprise but continued, "Sylvie, I noticed something different about you during the fight. Your healing ability is unlike anything I've ever seen. It's powerful, almost miraculous."

Sylvie's eyes widened slightly as she understood how calm Astron was, and there were no impurities in his feelings once again. "R-really?"

Not many people knew that, but she was weak to praise, especially from people whose feelings were important to her.

"Really." Astron nodded his head, his eyes resolute.

"T-thank you."

"But." Astron didn't stop. "Most healers don't have only healing abilities," Astron explained gently. "Their powers are often diverse, and they are considered supports. You must know it very well."

He said, his purple eyes boring through Sylvie's shining green eyes. "That's right," Sylvie replied, as this was her own profession.

"Besides healing, they may possess the ability to enchant weapons, strengthen allies, or provide various buffs. It's a wide range of skills that complement and enhance their team." Astron approached Sylvie while talking.

Sylvie flinched a little but didn't back down, as she didn't sense any threat from him.

"So far, you have used your healing and buff skills on me. But there is something else I need you to do right now." Grabbing her cold, tender hand with his right hand, he had put it on his left hand, where five purple rings were being worn.

'Hick.'

Sylvie flinched a little at his touch, goosebumps appearing on her skin. But it wasn't because she felt bad. Her heart started beating faster than it had ever been with his touch.

As the tip of her fingers touched the rings, Astron continued. "Sylvie, I need you to enchant these rings with your mana," Astron said, his voice a soft whisper that echoed in the quiet room.

Sylvie's mind was a whirlwind of emotions. She understood the task, but the proximity and the intensity of the moment left her momentarily breathless.

She could feel the warmth of Astron's hand, and her own mana responded to the unspoken connection.

And the word 'need' especially awoke something inside her, as she felt one of the same emotions last time.

'If I can be any help to him.....'

"I-I can do that," she stammered, her cheeks slightly flushed. With a deep breath, she focused on the rings, channeling her mana into them. The rings glowed with a soft, holy light as her enchantment took effect.

She had never done enchantment before, and neither did she know how to do so. But she only followed her instincts and poured her all into doing what she was asked.

As her mana intertwined with the rings, Sylvie felt an unexpected weight being lifted from her shoulders. The realization that she could contribute more than she thought filled her with a sense of accomplishment.

'I'm not just a healer. I can do more.'

Slowly, as she continued working and putting all her concentration into what she was doing, she felt like the world around her stopped moving. At that moment, only she and Astron remained.

All her worries, the memories that had been haunting her, slowly disappeared. The events of yesterday, the cold-blooded murderer filled with hatred, the bloody scene, Mason's screams, Astron's tattered body filled with wounds...Everything slowly became a background detail as she simply focused on using her powers.

She felt like she was born to do this.

The idea of being a valuable asset to the people, especially to him, made her heart swell with newfound confidence.

For the first time, she felt a sense of empowerment, and the fear that had lingered from the previous night began to dissipate.

As the enchantment neared completion, Sylvie felt a surge of energy, and the black rings began to emit a warm, golden glow—the holy light intertwined with her mana, creating a mesmerizing display of magical prowess.

Reality slowly seeped back in, and Sylvie blinked, realizing that the once-stopped world was now in motion again. The rings, now transformed, emitted a gentle radiance that reflected in Astron's eyes.

'I did it. I actually did it.'

In that intimate moment, Sylvie became aware that she was still holding Astron's hand with her two hands. A faint blush tinted her cheeks as embarrassment washed over her.

'Oh no, I should let go.'

The desire to withdraw her hands rose quickly, but a lingering desire to hold him a little longer lingered in her heart.

'Why do I want to hold on? This wasn't part of the enchantment process.'

Unsure of her own feelings, she hesitated for a moment. Yet, an unexpected sense of comfort and relaxation had settled over her when she held Astron's hand.

'I'll just keep it for a little longer.'

Despite it not being part of the enchantment, Sylvie gently retained her grip on Astron's hand. She couldn't ignore the warmth and solace she felt, and, for now, that seemed more important than the protocol.

'For some reason, if I let him go right now, I feel like he will do something dangerous.'

From the moment [First Lord's Authority] appeared, her instinct never disappointed her, and now it was screaming at her to hold him. She inwardly knew why he sought this enchantment. She wasn't dumb, though she might be naïve.

'He is going for Senior Maya.'

She knew where he was going to go.

"Sylvie."

The sound of her name rolling off Astron's lips resonated in the room, and Sylvie couldn't help but feel a strange warmth at the way he said it.

'Why does hearing my name from him feel so... comforting?'

"Yes?" she responded, looking up at him with a mix of curiosity and anticipation.

"You should let it go," Astron said, pointing at his hand with his burrows.

"Ah...." Realizing she had been holding his hand for too long for him to notice, she became embarrassed. But she also didn't want to let go.

"No."

For the first time, she refused to do something.

"What?"

And the expression on his face was worthy of note. As if he was not expecting her actually to refuse....For the first time in a while, she saw him getting surprised.

Sylvie hesitated for a moment but found the courage to speak her mind. "Are you going to do something dangerous?" she asked, her eyes searching his for answers.

Astron didn't respond immediately. Instead, he met her gaze with an intensity that spoke volumes. The silence lingered, and in that unspoken moment, Sylvie found her answer.

'He is.'

The realization settled in, and a mixture of concern and determination welled up within her. Sylvie tightened her grip on Astron's hand as if conveying a silent promise that she would stand by him.

"I won't let go," she declared, her voice firm.

"Really?"

Astron's voice held a complex blend of surprise, gratitude, and something else Sylvie couldn't quite place. But she knew one thing: she wasn't going to be able to keep him here.

"....Wait...."

Just as he was about to take his hand back, she mumbled as she channeled her mana, this time directly to him.

'Before, I was always useless.'

Just as Astron was about to retract his hand, Sylvie mumbled, her eyes focused on his.

'This time, I will put everything.'

In that moment, she felt a surge of determination, and without fully understanding how to channel her powers, she let her mana flow directly into him.

A soft, warm light enveloped Astron, emanating from Sylvie's unintentional but heartfelt act. It was an instinctual response, a blessing that came from the depths of her being.

Astron's eyes widened in surprise, both at the unexpected enchantment and at the genuine care and goodwill he sensed in Sylvie's touch.

"Y-you...." He even stuttered, caught off-guard by the strength coursing through his veins.

She couldn't help but smile at his flustered state.

"Giggle...."

And she giggled, feeling like she had seen a lot of firsts today coming from him. His flustered face and surprised eyes were a strange combination, and she made sure to engrave it into her head.

Though that feeling faded immediately since swiftly regaining his composure, Astron stood up.

"Ah...."

A slight emptiness filled both her hand and her heart. His warm hand was gone.

PAT! 'Hmm?'

But at that moment, she felt something warm on her head.

09:08

'What?'

Turning her eyes, she saw Astron.

He put his hand on Sylvie's head, a gesture both comforting and approving. "You did well," he said, a rare warmth in his eyes.

After that, without lingering, Astron made his way to the door, leaving Sylvie alone with her thoughts.

As Astron left, Sylvie couldn't help but feel a sudden rush of embarrassment. The warmth of his approval still lingered in her thoughts, and her face flushed with the realization of what had transpired.

'What just happened? Did I really do that?' she questioned herself, her thoughts racing.

Her fingers tentatively touched her cheeks, now tinged with a rosy hue. 'I've never felt this way before.'

Quickly, as if seeking refuge, she buried her face in the softness of her pillow, muffling a surprised giggle. 'This is so strange, but...nice.'

The events of the day played like a vivid reel in her mind—the unexpected intimacy, the enchantment, and the newfound connection with Astron. 'Is this how it feels to be close to someone?'

'It was a lot to process,' she acknowledged. The pillow became a comforting shield against the whirlwind of emotions she was experiencing. 'I never thought today would turn out like this.'

Deep within her, there was a subtle joy, a feeling that she couldn't entirely comprehend.

'Something has changed, and I'm not sure what it is. But, it wasn't bad.'

KNOCK!

At that moment, she felt someone knocking on her door. She made her way to the door, as she already knew who it was.

"Sylvie."

Opening the door, she faced Senior Amelia.

"Senior Amelia."

"Have you seen Astron?" Amelia asked. But she knew Astron didn't want others to know where he went, so she decided to lie.

"No. I haven't, after he left the room."

It was an innocent lie.

Chapter 207 Chapter 46.1 - Hunting the Hunter

207 Chapter 46.1 - Hunting the Hunter

"Wow."

The moment I left Sylvie's room, I couldn't help but mumble at myself.

"Did she just use [Blessing]?"

There was a reason why Sylvie was regarded as the Saintess in the future. Her abilities were that overpowered.

But, to think she would be using one of her strongest abilities right now....It made sense and no sense at the same time. After all, in the game, for her to be able to use this ability, the player would need to progress in her story quite a lot while also increasing her abilities.

Therefore, I was surprised when I felt the strength coursing through my veins. The increase in my strengths wasn't even comparable to how it felt when she was using buffs on me.

I was also surprised by how assertive she was, contrary to her personality. It also seemed like she understood what I was about to do.

'Well, I kind of expected it.'

Sylvie may be naïve, but she is not dumb. So, it made sense that she understood what I was about to do the moment I requested her to enchant my weapon.

I knew for a fact that Sylvie liked when people praised her or when people depended on her. Her past trauma made her develop an inferiority complex towards other people, just like how the original Astron developed. Therefore, I didn't want her to suffocate like how Astron did.

She also has the talent and power to achieve that anyway. She just needs a little push and encouragement, which would normally come from the player or Ethan. However, right now, such a thing is not possible.

"Let's not think about it any longer."

Right now, my first priority was hunting the vampire, so I knew I didn't have the time to spend leisurely.

Returning to my room, I immediately set to work. The cooled anti-vampire mixture had reached the perfect consistency for application. I carefully dipped each weapon—my daggers, arrows, and the specially ordered bullets—ensuring the substance coated them evenly.

As the concoction adhered to the weapons, a faint, silvery sheen enveloped them. It was a reassuring sight, knowing that I had a countermeasure against the vampire's blood magic.

'Now, for the final touch.' I drew my mana a little and covered all of the weapons with it, but this time, rather than keeping it, I put the mana inside. This made the substance basically intertwine with every corner of the weapons.

I put everything I was going to need onto my belt and readied the potions as well.

'Everything is ready now.'

I checked the clock on my watch and saw it was still quite early noon.

'Good.'

It hadn't been that long since the vampire had captured Maya, and if my intuition was correct, she was still alive.

'Status.'

I called my stats.

Name: Astron Natusalune

?Occupation: Weapon Master (level 1)

?Talent Limit: 6

?Passives:

- Vengeful Bane

?Attributes:

Variable Attributes:

- Strength: 2.80 (3.90)

- Dexterity: 3.45 (52)

- Agility: 3.76 (5.6)
- Constitution: 2.75 (3.85)
- Intuition: 3.95 (6.0)
- Magical Power: 4.2 (6.6)
- Mana Capacity: 3.13 (4.9)

Looking at the parameters, I couldn't help but marvel at Sylvie's power and how broken it was.

'This is insane.'

All my attributes almost increased % by 50, depending on how talented I was at that said attribute. This was something that would take at least a month for me to achieve, but now it was different.

Sylvie's [Blessing] ignored everything logically and gave me this increase. After all, it made sense since the Saintess didn't come from a logical mind but from something called 'faith.'

'Now, I shouldn't let her down, should I?'

And, now that she had shown such faith in me, there was no way I was going to let her down.

Entering the tunnels once more, a newfound strength coursed through my veins, courtesy of Sylvie's potent blessing. The enhanced attributes reflected a significant boost in my overall capabilities. On the way, I also made myself familiar with this strength as well, since it was going to be detrimental.

'She really did go all out with that [Blessing].'

With each step, I moved with heightened agility, and my intuition seemed sharper and more attuned to the surroundings.

The combination of Sylvie's blessing and my increased mana capacity allowed me to conceal my presence more effectively, erasing any traces of my existence as I ventured deeper into the underground labyrinth.

'This should make a significant difference.'

The tunnels, dimly lit and seemingly endless, harbored a mysterious atmosphere. My senses, now heightened, detected faint traces of mana lingering in the air that I wasn't able to feel before.

And that mana was something I was pretty familiar with since that same mana had once entered me.

'This is Senior Maya's mana.'

While she was teaching me how to control mana, she put it inside me, and that was why I was that familiar with that specific feeling.

Following these traces, I navigated the intricate network of passages.

As I advanced through the dimly lit tunnels, the traces of Senior Maya's mana became more pronounced. The familiarity of that energy, once imparted to me during her tutelage on mana control, resonated within my heightened senses.

'I'm getting closer.'

The labyrinthine passages unveiled a disturbing tapestry of blood magic marks etched into the walls. But most of them were especially old. It is so old that it shows how strong the vampire was when it was at its peak for those traces to remain this long.

Twisted symbols and arcane patterns adorned the tunnels, signaling the vampire's presence. It seemed the creature had left its mark, creating a sinister network of enchantments.

'Blood magic.'

Each mark told a story of the vampire's malevolence, a dark tale etched in the very stone of the tunnels. As I followed these traces, my sharpened intuition allowed me to sense the presence of the supernatural wards and traps the vampire had cunningly laid.

'Not going to make it that easy, are you?'

However, when it came to such wards and escaping from them, I had already become quite proficient.

My parkour skills also increased with my parameters. My [Perceptive Insight] and increased [Intuition] enabled me to avoid them with utmost precision.

My journey became a dance, an intricate ballet with the blood magic-infused markings. With each step, I avoided triggering the malevolent enchantments that could have alerted the vampire to my presence.

'Bats.'

I noticed shadowy forms flitting through the air, bats acting as the vampire's eyes and ears. They were his familiar, probably.

The creatures sensed the intrusion, but my [Shadowborne] trait and the protective cloak of [Unknown's Armor] concealed me from their keen senses.

After a series of twists and turns, the claustrophobic tunnels finally opened up into a wide cavern.

THUMP!

The space was vast, the air heavy with a dense, suffocating aura that hinted at the vampire's presence. The demonic energy around me was so dense that my heart started beating so fast. Vengeful Bane was warning me, and I could feel it.

'This....'

Around me was a smell. The smell was so intense that it made me almost puke.

'Is this blood?'

Everything was dark, and not much light was inside, but even then, with my already evolved Night Vision, I was able to see the small silhouettes hanging from the ceiling.

'My heart slowed down, and I calmed myself down.'

As I approached, the scene that appeared before me was grotesque.

The silhouettes hanging from the cavern ceiling were once living beings, now reduced to lifeless husks. Their bodies dangled limply, the stench of death permeating the air, blending with the oppressive aura that hinted at the vampire's malevolence.

These were the missing victims, their faces frozen in expressions of agony, their once vibrant essence drained away by the insatiable thirst of the vampire.

One of them was a familiar face, frozen in an expression of terror—Olivia. The realization hit me like a cold gust of wind, sending shivers down my spine.

'The missing victims...'

The cavern served as a gruesome display of the vampire's heinous acts. It reveled in the macabre, transforming its victims into mere husks, drained of life, left to hang as a testament to its dark reign.

'No, it is not a testament.'

I immediately realized why these corpses hung from the ceiling.

'The vampire is keeping them as blood supplies.'

This was one of the common acts committed by the vampires. They always kept a bunch of blood to spare. I knew this trait of them from the game, after all.

'But, this is good.'

However, this vampire was making a crucial mistake. Most of the higher-ranking ones would keep the backup blood somewhere safe and hidden since this was one of their weaknesses.

'This will be an opportunity.'

Knowing the vampire's penchant for keeping a backup blood supply, I carefully retrieved the vial containing the anti-vampire oil mixture.

Silently, I approached the blood-filled containers, each holding the life essence of the victims.

Dipping my fingers into the concoction, I applied it to the rims of the containers, ensuring that the anti-vampire substance mingled with the stored blood.

The oil, designed to interfere with the vampire's abilities, would introduce a chaotic element to its carefully maintained reserve.

'Now, one thing.'

I immediately climbed to the ceiling, defying the rules of gravity, and started observing everything from there.

His lips curled into a sinister smile as he watched the intricate dance of magic and blood. The satisfaction in his eyes deepened, an ancient being reveling in the fulfillment of a long-awaited desire.

09:09

There, I saw Maya and the vampire.

"Ho? This is quite an interesting thing you have."

Sitting on a chair made from blood, the vampire observed Maya undergoing the transformation. His crimson eyes, tinged with amusement, occasionally flickered toward her as he lounged in a casual manner.

Intrigued by the unfamiliar device on her wrist, the vampire extended his claws, attempting to interact with the smartwatch. However, the technology was beyond his comprehension. The ancient being, accustomed to a world of magic and mysticism, found himself baffled by the intricate functions of this modern artifact.

"What curious trinket is this?" he mused, his claws tapping against the screen with an audible clink.

Frustration briefly creased his brow as he failed to decipher its purpose. The vampire, a relic from a bygone era, was faced with the mystifying wonders of the present age.

"I wonder what happened to the Empire? Is it still here?" The vampire pondered, his gaze shifting from the perplexing box to Maya.

However, no response came from Maya, lost in the tumultuous currents of her transformation. The vampire, momentarily forgotten by the modern world, rose from his blood-made seat. With slow and deliberate steps, he approached the girl undergoing the metamorphosis.

His eyes bore into her form, scrutinizing the arcane process. A sense of anticipation and satisfaction radiated from him. How can't it be? After all this time, he was now able to find a partner to be with.

His lips curled into a sinister smile as he watched the intricate dance of magic and blood. The satisfaction in his eyes deepened, an ancient being reveling in the fulfillment of a long-awaited desire.

"Count Charles is finally back," he proclaimed with a triumphant laugh that echoed through the dim chamber. The sound, a mix of elation and malice, resonated with the walls as if proclaiming the return of a force long absent from the world.

SWOOSH! STAB!

The triumphant laughter lingered in the air, but it was abruptly cut short by a sudden disturbance.

Here it is. My finals are soon; thus, I will be posting stocked chapters for a while.
Darkness_Enjoyer

Chapter 208 Chapter 46.2 - Hunting the Hunter

SWOOSH! STAB!

The triumphant laughter lingered in the air, but it was abruptly cut short by a sudden disturbance.

An arrow materialized in a flash and found its mark on the vampire's shoulder. The atmosphere in the dim chamber shifted from satisfaction to chaos.

"Aghh!" Count Charles howled, his eyes widening with a mix of shock and pain.

The sensation was foreign, a long-forgotten experience for an immortal being. The vampire staggered backward, his hand clutching the arrow embedded in his flesh.

Before Count Charles could fully grasp the situation or recover from the unexpected pain, a second arrow materialized in the shadows. This time, the arrow radiated a faint blue light, contrasting with the darkness that surrounded it.

SWOOSH! STAB!

The arrow struck true, finding its mark with eerie precision. It pierced through the vampire's shoulder, causing him to convulse in pain.

'Huh?'

The vampire was surprised; how could his skin be this easily pierced?

The combination of the initial surprise and the sudden attack left Count Charles vulnerable, his immortal facade shattered by the piercing arrows.

However, the surprising things didn't end there, as the arrow on his shoulder suddenly shone blue.

BOOM!

Following that was an explosion whose force sent Count Charles hurtling backward, crashing into the walls that enclosed the dark chamber.

The impact echoed through the space, and for a moment, it seemed as though the ancient vampire had been incapacitated.

"Grrr....."

However, the resilient nature of vampiric existence manifested itself as Count Charles, despite the explosive force, showed signs of rapid healing.

The wounds caused by the arrows began closing, and the vampire gradually rose from the ground, his crimson eyes ablaze with fury and renewed determination.

Count Charles, having stabilized himself, scanned the dimly lit chamber with his piercing crimson eyes. His vampiric senses heightened as he sought to identify the audacious attacker who had dared to disrupt his triumphant return.

"Who dares to attack me?" he demanded his voice a low, guttural growl that reverberated through the shadows.

The vampire's gaze swept across the chamber, scrutinizing every corner for any trace of the unseen assailant. His predatory instincts were on high alert, but the elusive attacker remained hidden, their presence shrouded in the cloak of darkness.

A sinister smile played on Count Charles's lips as he realized that he was dealing with a foe who excelled in the art of concealment.

"Heh...Like a little rat, you are..."

As Count Charles continued his vigilant search for the hidden attacker, a faint but unmistakable presence of mana drew his attention.

'Above.'

Before he could react, a small, condensed burst of green energy shot forward from above.

SWOOSH! The vampire, attuned to the swift reflexes ingrained in his undead nature, agilely evaded the projectile. A predatory smile lingered on his lips, a blend of amusement and anticipation as he assessed the situation.

"So, you reveal yourself," Count Charles declared, his voice resonating with a mix of arrogance and curiosity. His crimson eyes glowed with an intensified hunger for the thrill of the unexpected.

SWOOSH! Driven by both curiosity and a primal hunger for the thrill of combat, he swiftly dashed towards the point from which the attack had originated.

As Count Charles dashed toward the source of the attack, the elusive assailant continued their strategy of concealment.

Another arrow, charged with a blue light, materialized in the shadows and shot towards the vampire. However, this time, Count Charles, ever perceptive, anticipated the attack.

SWOOSH!

With a swift movement, Count Charles sidestepped the incoming arrow, his immortal instincts, and supernatural speed allowing him to evade the projectile.

The arrow whizzed past him, missing its mark. The vampire's eyes narrowed as he locked onto the subtle traces of mana, tracking the movements of the hidden adversary.

"Heh, not bad," Count Charles remarked with a smirk, his voice carrying a hint of approval.

The assailant, despite their attempts at stealth, had now garnered the vampire's attention. The chamber was filled with an air of anticipation as both the undead lord and the unseen attacker prepared for the next exchange.

In response to Count Charles's evasion, a series of projectiles materialized in the shadows—this time, more numerous and faster.

The vampire's keen senses detected the incoming onslaught, and he moved with a calculated grace, effortlessly dodging each projectile.

SWOOSH! SWOOSH! SWOOSH!

The arrows flew with deadly accuracy, but Count Charles's immortal reflexes allowed him to dance through the barrage unscathed. As the last arrow missed its mark, the chamber fell silent once more, the tension escalating between the ancient vampire and the concealed assailant.

"Well, well," Count Charles mused, his gaze sweeping the darkened space. "You've got some tricks up your sleeve. Let's see how you handle this!"

Even though the guy was getting on his nerves, he was looking down on it. After all, if he wasn't a rat, wouldn't he confront him like a man?

And just as he thought about that, this time, the unknown assailant revealed himself. This time, it was from his back. There, he sensed the concentrated mana ready to attack.

With a deliberate motion, Count Charles unleashed his vampiric abilities. Shadows coiled around him as he blurred into motion, moving faster than the human eye could perceive.

'You rat.'

The vampire's crimson eyes glowed with an otherworldly intensity as he closed the distance between himself and the hidden foe.

SWOOSH! The vampire's movements were a blur, leaving afterimages in the dim chamber. The anticipation of confrontation hung in the air as he neared the source of the hidden threat.

As Count Charles reached the pinpointed location, he struck with lethal precision, his claws aimed to tear through anything in his path. However, to his surprise, his attacks were met with swift and unexpected resistance. Daggers materialized in the shadows, expertly parrying the vampire's assault.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

The clash of steel echoed through the chamber as the unseen assailant skillfully defended against Count Charles's frenzied onslaught.

The vampire's eyes widened in acknowledgment of the adversary's agility and proficiency. However, he wasn't deterred by that mastery.

Deciding to escalate the confrontation, with a silent invocation of his ancient blood magic, he channeled the essence within him to create a set of ethereal spears that hovered menacingly above his head.

The shadowy chamber became illuminated by the crimson glow of the blood-infused spears. Count Charles, eyes ablaze with supernatural power directed the ethereal weapons toward the hidden assailant. The spears descended with deadly precision, seeking to pierce through any defenses.

SWOOSH! SWOOSH! SWOOSH!

The spears struck, aiming for the concealed figure who continued to move with uncanny speed.

Yet, to Count Charles's surprise, the daggers intercepted the ethereal onslaught, deflecting the spears with remarkable skill.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

The clash reached a new level of intensity as blood magic expertly wielded blades.

However, the vampire's relentless assault began to take its toll on the assailant, forcing them into a defensive stance.

'Heh...In the end, you are also inferior.'

Being the proud creature of the night, he always felt superior to everything around him. This was the same for the bastard before him right now.

Realizing the advantage he had gained, he prepared to unleash a more potent blood magic attack.

The spears, now charged with additional energy, whirled with increasing speed above him. The vampire intended to overwhelm his enemy and bring the conflict to a swift end.

"Now, die."

His cold voice echoed as his spears flew to the assailant, as he himself followed the attack of spears.

But just as the spears were about to hit, the hidden foe, with a sudden and calculated move, dropped a small object to the ground.

PUFF! In an instant, the figure vanished, leaving the ethereal spears striking at empty air.

Perplexed, Count Charles scanned the chamber, trying to discern the whereabouts of his elusive opponent.

However, his heightened senses were abruptly assaulted by a pungent smell, the smell he hated so much that he could kill anyone, even excluding the slightest bit amount of it.

It was the unmistakable scent of garlic.

Before the vampire could fully comprehend the situation, the object dropped by the assailant released a thick plume of smoke.

The smoke, tainted with the overpowering aroma of garlic, enveloped the chamber, causing Count Charles to recoil.

His immortal senses, normally impervious to such mundane deterrents, suddenly betrayed him.

The world around him seemed to spin, and the overwhelming scent of garlic induced a disorienting effect. The vampire stumbled backward, his focus shattered by the unexpected assault.

And, in the midst of the garlic-infused haze, the hidden assailant seized the opportunity. Swift as a shadow, arrows materialized and shot through the smoke, aiming for the vampire's weakened state.

SWOOSH! STAB!

The arrows found their mark, piercing Count Charles's skin with eerie precision.

"AAAARGHK!"

The vampire recoiled in pain, his immortal resilience momentarily compromised by the surprise attack. However, the assailant wasn't satisfied with mere penetration; the arrows themselves emanated a faint blue energy.

BOOM!

Explosions erupted on contact, sending shockwaves through the vampire's undead form. Count Charles howled in agony as the blue energy wreaked havoc on his immortal flesh.

The force of the explosions propelled him further into the smoke-filled chamber, disorienting him even more.

"You inferior being...."

Count Charles, his patience worn thin and fueled by an overwhelming anger, could no longer contain the primal rage within him.

The frustration and humiliation inflicted upon him by the unseen assailant kindled the dormant fury that resided in the depths of his immortal being.

"RAAAAA!"

As the concealed foe prepared for another strike, Count Charles's form began to change. Shadows coiled around him with an intensity unmatched before, and his silhouette elongated and contorted. His once-human features twisted into a nightmarish visage as the transformation escalated.

In a burst of dark energy, Count Charles shed his human guise, revealing his original demon form. Towering and monstrous, he stood with wings unfurled, horns protruding from his forehead, and eyes gleaming with an unholy radiance.

His fangs now were filled with the enchanted energy of demons, coupled with his crimson eyes.

The chamber trembled as the unleashed power of an ancient vampire lord manifested in its true, terrifying form.

The air crackled with dark energy, and the temperature plummeted as the demonic aura enveloped Count Charles.

"Enough of these games," he roared, the voice now a guttural growl that echoed through the chamber. His crimson eyes burned with an otherworldly intensity, reflecting the depth of his wrath.

Chapter 209 Chapter 46.3 - Hunting the Hunter

In front of a foe that is lethal to one, what could be the biggest mistake that one can make?

Though many things could be counted, there is one specific thing that is the most important.

'Keeping your calm.'

A calm mind and coldness bring the best results when a plan is made. Those who operate with their emotions are unstable beings and can never climb the ranks of power.

There was a reason why this count needed to seal himself under the ground. It was because he couldn't control his urges and attacked his servants, revealing to the world that he was an enemy.

If he was able to control himself and utilize the power his position held, he would be one of the most dangerous beings in this world.

But he couldn't.

Therefore, I knew for a fact that this vampire before me wasn't someone who was coolheaded, and I was going to use this to my advantage.

"Enough of these games," the vampire roared, the sound reverberating through the chamber. Its demonic presence was overwhelming, but I focused on the task at hand, maintaining the cold composure that had served me well thus far.

WROOM!

The chamber was charged with an ominous energy as the vampire prepared to unleash a devastating attack.

'It is the AOE attack.'

I could sense the gathering power of its blood magic, an area of effect assault that could easily obliterate anything in its vicinity.

However, I had already calculated the trajectory and timing of the impending attack.

Dash. I activated my skill, feeling the surge of energy propelling through my body.

SWOOSH! As the first surge of dark energy emanated from the vampire, I propelled myself with a swift and calculated movement, evading the oncoming onslaught.

The air crackled with the unleashed power, but I had positioned myself strategically, remaining just outside the range of the impending blood magic.

The vampire's attack surged through the chamber, leaving destruction in its wake. Shadows writhed, and the very air seemed tainted by the malevolent force.

But I, having anticipated the move, emerged unscathed from the area of effect. Of course, now that its attack was missed, it wasn't going to stop.

SWOOSH! CRASH! SWOOSH! CRASH!

This time, following the initial attack, countless different blood spears attacked all around the place, in the direction of where I was staying.

'I guess he can finally sense me fully, now.'

If, at first, he was trying to play with me, now he was more serious, and I knew my stealth wouldn't be enough at this point.

I immediately turned Celestalith to its chakram form and started evading the attacks as best as I could and deflected the remaining ones.

The vampire, fueled by frustration and a newfound determination, unleashed a relentless assault. I could feel the malicious intent behind each spear, a manifestation of the vampire's anger and desire for retribution.

SWOOSH! CRASH! SWOOSH! CRASH!

The air resonated with the clash of Celestalith deflecting the blood spears. Each movement was a calculated dance, a weaving of skill and instinct to avoid the lethal projectiles.

The chakram form of Celestalith proved invaluable, its razor-sharp edges deflecting the incoming attacks with precision.

The vampire, undeterred by the initial evasion, continued its onslaught without giving me a moment's respite. Shadows enveloped the chamber as the demonic being moved with unnatural speed, closing the distance between us instantly.

"Heh, you're not as elusive as you think," the vampire hissed, its voice a guttural growl that echoed through the chaos. The crimson glow of its eyes intensified, revealing an unyielding determination to crush its elusive prey.

SWOOSH!

He immediately dashed to me with an insane amount of speed.

SWOOSH! SWOOSH!

I threw my chakrams to his face, but he deflected all of them with a smooth precision.

"Pointless." He shouted, a smirk playing on his lips.

CLANK!

The sound of our clash echoed in the dim chamber as the vampire's claws met Celestalith's deflection. The force behind the strike sent a jolt through my arms, and I could feel the strain as I fought to hold my ground against the relentless assault.

The reason even this clash was possible was thanks to Sylvie's buff. Of course, I already had a plan in my mind, but after getting buff to my stats, I tempered it a little and went with a less risky approach.

"You're more resilient than I expected," the vampire growled, its eyes narrowing with a mix of frustration and amusement. The crimson glow intensified as it pushed harder, aiming to break through my defenses.

I gritted my teeth, my focus unwavering as I continued to block the vampire's attacks. Each clash sent sparks flying, a chaotic dance of supernatural power and sheer determination.

'Just a little more.'

But I could sense the cracks forming in my defense, the strain of holding back the powerful strikes taking a toll.

'Now.'

As his claws aimed right at my face, I activated my Dash.

SWOOSH! SWOOSH!

I managed to create some distance by swiftly evading, summoning Celestalith back to my hands. The chakrams, now infused with a faint gray glow, awaited my command.

The vampire, unbothered, closed the distance once again with a burst of inhuman speed.

I hurled the chakrams with precision, aiming for vulnerable points, but the vampire deflected them effortlessly.

"Pathetic...To think I had been struggling against a low-born like you."

His cold crimson eyes looked at me with a clear annoyance as the pressure enveloped me. It was his bloodlust, and now that was directed to me.

Celestalith glowed with a faint gray light, signaling the enhanced power it now held. But this time, the vampire had a different plan.

Instead of relying solely on its physical prowess, the vampire began chanting an incantation. Dark energy gathered around its outstretched hand, forming ethereal chains that seemed to materialize from the very shadows themselves.

'He is using it.'

I recognized what he was doing.

[Bind of Lord.] The vampire mumbled as the chains shot forward, wrapping around me with an abnormal force.

My movements were restricted, and I found myself ensnared in the magical binds. The vampire's eyes gleamed with triumph as it closed in, confident in its ability to control the course of our confrontation.

"Your little tricks won't save you now," the vampire sneered, the chains tightening their grip. I struggled against the magical restraint, but it was futile.

With a predatory grace, the vampire approached, claws gleaming ominously.

STAB! The next moment happened in a blur as it drove its claws into my chest. The searing pain was immediate, and I gasped, feeling the otherworldly chill of the vampire's touch.

"Burgk-"

Blood fell to the ground from my mouth as a response.

"How does it feel?" the vampire taunted, a sinister satisfaction in its voice as its claws remained embedded in my chest.

"Kurghk-!"

I grimaced, blood spilling from my mouth in response to the excruciating pain.

As the vampire relished its dominance, turning its claws within my abdomen, I felt a surge of agony coursing through me.

However, it was now too late.

'Now.' -Was too late for him to react, as his claws were embedded in my chest.

SWOOSH! SWOOSH! SWOOSH! Suddenly, countless daggers scattered around the place, once motionless on the ground, came to life, soaring through the air with uncanny speed.

The grey mana trails followed them like ethereal threads, connecting them to the vampire that had just been reveling in its triumph.

"You!"

The vampire's eyes widened in surprise as the daggers closed in, each one guided by the invisible mana threads.

The element of surprise was on my side, and I seized the opportunity to turn the tables. The vampire, momentarily caught off guard, struggled against the sudden onslaught of enchanted daggers.

"Let go of me!"

In a desperate attempt to evade the relentless assault, the vampire attempted to retreat, but I wasn't going to let him go.

'Black Nebula.'

Changing the form of Celestalith to the black one, I immediately activated its energy and directed it to the Vampire.

"Urghk!"

The gravity around him was increased, with his claws piercing my chest. He no longer had the chance to escape from my grasp.

"No escape," I hissed, no longer being able to keep my composure. "Now, it's my turn," I declared, a hint of satisfaction in my voice.

STAB! STAB! STAB! STAB! The ethereal daggers, guided by the invisible threads of grey mana, relentlessly stabbed into the vampire's form. Each strike was precise and calculated, a dance of supernatural blades fueled by the desire for retribution.

STAB! STAB! STAB! STAB!

The vampire howled in pain as the enchanted daggers pierced through its immortal flesh. The blades, imbued with anti-vampire oil, disrupted the usual regenerative properties of the vampire's blood, intensifying the agony.

"AHHHHH!"

The once-proud creature of the night wailed, its cries distorted by the torment inflicted upon it. The chamber, once filled with the vampire's triumphant laughter, now resonated with the anguished screams that tore through the air.

"YOU!"

The vampire's crimson eyes, once ablaze with arrogance and fury, now reflected a profound sense of suffering while being wide open as if he had realized something.

"WHY ARE YOU HERE!"

His eyes looking at me were now filled with horror as if it had seen something it wasn't supposed to be. He shouted and screamed, but the oil was taking its effect.

"Urghk-!"

Of course, I was still injured at the same time. However, it wasn't as fatal as it looked.

'Sylvie's blessing, huh?'

GULP!

I gulped a mana potion and a healing potion at the same time and started feeling the energy returning to me.

The wound on my chest also slowly started healing.

"RAAAA!"

The vampire's scream of agony reverberated through the chamber, a guttural cry that echoed the torment coursing through its tattered form.

'Now, you will use your desperation trick.'

I thought. And just to prove that I was right, the vampire, realizing the futility of enduring the barrage of enchanted daggers, made a desperate decision.

In a swift and calculated motion, the creature transformed into a billowing black mist, dissipating into the shadows to evade my onslaught.

Everything in this world fears death.

This is what I had learned from killing countless monsters.

At first, they attacked, trying to kill. But when they realized they were in front of an enemy, they couldn't beat no matter what, they abandoned their comrades and tried to escape.

It is the natural instinct of any living being.

No matter how prideful they are, once you rip them from their 'mighty shells,' the only thing that remains is the same essence.

And the ones that have the biggest fear are always the ones that act all highest and mightiest.

The mist slithered through the chamber, avoiding the lingering echoes of our recent confrontation. It moved with an almost serpentine grace, drawn towards the concealed sanctuary where the vampire had hidden the life essence of its victims.

I could easily follow where it went since I had already marked him with green tendrils from the start.

In the dimly lit chamber, the vampire reached the morbid display, a place where crimson stains marked the end of countless lives. The bloodthirsty creature, now desperate for rejuvenation, began to feed from the preserved vitae of its previous victims.

"Give me blood, give me blood...."

He probably went into a frenzy like that. After all, a vampire's biggest fear is dying.

"RAAAAAAAA!"

However, little did he know that even the resource he desperately sought was something I had already anticipated.

As his screams echoed in my ears like a lullaby, I stood from where I was and approached the vampire.

"How does it feel to be hunted, the little creature of the night?"

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210 Chapter 47.1 - Her Change

"How does it feel to be hunted, the little creature of the night?" I taunted as I followed the billowing mist through the dimly lit chamber. The vampire's desperate cries had transformed into frenzied pleas for blood, revealing the vulnerability beneath its immortal facade.

SWOOSH!

As I closed the distance, the vampire's form, still shrouded in mist, quivered in response to my words. Its cries turned into an enraged howl, a mixture of fury and fear.

"Shut up! Don't come closer." the vampire roared, its voice echoing with an otherworldly intensity. The creature pushed to the brink of desperation, lost control of itself. In a surge of manic energy, it launched an immediate counterattack.

CREACK!

Countless ethereal blades materialized in the air, guided by the vampire's unrestrained rage. The blades shot towards me with deadly precision, each strike aimed to incapacitate and maim.

"It is futile."

I reacted swiftly, summoning Celestalith to its chakram form. With a series of precise movements, I deflected the oncoming daggers, dancing through the air with a grace that belied the danger of the situation.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

The chamber echoed with the clash of steel as the vampire unleashed its desperate assault. The once-mighty predator now fought with the ferocity of a cornered beast, its attacks fueled by a primal need for survival.

"How? How? How? How? How? How? How? How? How? How? How? How? How?"

The vampire continuously repeated itself as it sent attacks to me.

"How is a mere human like you able to have that power inside you? How dare a mere commoner bastard like you have it!"

The desperation within the vampire intensified as it realized the futility of its attacks while mumbling about something related to power. But at that moment I didn't care about it.

Its blood, disturbed by the enchanted daggers, turned poisonous, adding another layer of torment to its plight.

The once-elegant predator succumbed to a more primal state, driven solely by the instinct to survive.

"This is your true nature, isn't it? Underneath that good-looking elegant face, you are nothing but a beast after all."

"SHUT UP!"

The vampire shouted as he looked at me.

"How dare a lowly human li-

"You keep calling us humans lowly for quite a long time."

I interrupted his speech. The mere words he had spoken irritated me to the core. The fact that such a bastard who turned himself into a demon dared to lecture me about who was the superior one made me want to puke.

The mere existence of a demon in my front made the anger and hatred inside me soar.

'I want to stab him. I want to stab him. I want to stab him. I want to stab him. I want to stab him. I
want to stab him. I want to stab him. I want to stab him. I want to stab him. I want to stab him. I
want to stab him. I want to stab him. I want to stab him. I want to stab him.'

Just like how they did to her, I wanted them to experience the same.

Their loved ones....

I want to massacre them in front of them...

I want them to see how the people they had attached to die in front of their eyes....

I want them to experience despair....

Their dreams....

I want them to be crushed...

The pathetic ambitions they hold...The desires they bore....

I want to crush everything....

I want to erase their existence in the most painful way possible....

'Ah....I am losing control again...'

"I didn't want to do this," the vampire hissed, its voice a guttural growl. "But if I go down, I'll take you with me."

His words had taken me to reality once again.

The demon's face constantly turned ugly as it looked at me. The desperateness on its face brought me the joy I was deprived of.

'Ah....'

I felt a perverse pleasure in seeing the once-proud vampire reduced to such a state of desperation. The more he suffered, the more my own pain seemed to dull. It was a twisted catharsis, a momentary relief from the burdens that had weighed on my shoulders.

'Will you call your pathetic blood realm now?'

Even though I had prepared myself thoroughly, the vampire before me was at most at the Nosferatu rank. Even without Sylvie's blessing, I knew for a fact that nothing much was going to happen.

"You lowborn, now kneel before me."

The vampire, consumed by its survival instinct, summoned the blood realm, enveloping us in its crimson embrace.

The world transformed into a surreal landscape, pulsating with the essence of the creature's life force.

I stood amidst the swirling blood, seemingly trapped in the demonic realm crafted by the vampire's desperation.

TOK!

And the moment the space around us was sealed, suddenly, a sinister laughter started echoing.

"AHAHAHAHAHAH!" The vampire's laughter echoed through the crimson realm, a mad and arrogant cacophony. "You insignificant worm! I'll die, and you'll die with me. But before that, let me show you the futility of your resistance."

With a maniacal gleam in its eyes, the vampire began its pathetic incantation. The blood realm responded to its command, distorting and morphing into grotesque shapes.

PAT! PAT!

A bloodhound, with eyes aflame and fangs dripping with crimson ichor, bounded forward as a creature of dread.

Blood-bats, their wings stained with the essence of the realm, circled overhead with unsettling screeches.

The crimson landscape birthed nightmarish creatures, each more twisted and menacing than the last.

"Your feeble resistance is futile!" the vampire declared, its laughter echoing through the distorted realm. "These familiars shall feast on your despair as I sacrifice my blood to bind them to your demise."

However, as the demon continued to create more and more pathetic familiars, I could no longer hold myself.

The thing that was happening in front of me was why the non-

perfectly evolved vampires were nothing but a small fry in the demon realm.

"It is pathetic."

After all, even though they were the most evolved ones, once you rip that shell, the only thing is a primitive being that has a primitive mind.

The more I looked at the pathetic vampire and the pathetic familiars, the more I felt the desire to stab him.

Celestalith.

I turned the Celestalith into its rifle form.

"Huh?"

The vampire seemed to have forgotten how I had attacked him at the start. It was so pathetic that I even felt regret that I spent this much time just to prepare for this pathetic creature.

Eyes of Hourglass.

I activated my skill as I felt the time slowing down in my eyes. The movements of the monsters became slower and slower.

I felt like the mana consumption wasn't even that high, thanks to Sylvie's [Blessing].

Without wasting a moment, I took aim at the grotesque familiars spawned by the vampire's desperate incantations.

The rifle discharged with a sharp report, sending condensed green mana bullets streaking through the crimson realm.

PAT! PAT! PAT!

Each shot found its mark with unerring accuracy, and with each impact, the familiars were marked with a vibrant green glow.

The creatures writhed in agony as the magical bullets disrupted their blood-soaked forms. The once-menacing monsters now quivered with vulnerability, their disgusting features distorted.

"ROAR!"

However, the attacks weren't able to stop them. Even though the monsters were injured, the vampire supplied more and more blood for them to regenerate.

"You think your feeble attacks can stop them? My blood is their life force, and it is limitless!"

As the vampire gloated, a calm resolve settled within me. I closed my eyes, shutting out the chaotic landscape of the blood realm.

Instead, I focused solely on the vibrant green markings I had placed on the wounded familiars.

Mother Moon's Guidance: Incessant

In a moment of intense concentration, I summoned Celestalith back to its chakram form. As I opened my eyes, the chamber transformed into a frenetic dance of ethereal blades.

Ten chakrams, each infused with the same green-grey mana, whirled through the air with an insane precision.

SWOOSH! SWOOSH! SWOOSH!

The chakrams spun with an otherworldly grace, guided by an unseen force. Each one homed in on the marked familiars with pinpoint precision. The ethereal dance of the chakrams created a mesmerizing display, a deadly ballet under the muted light of the gray moon.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

Each one of them struck their targets, cutting through the air with deadly accuracy. One by one, the marked familiars fell, their twisted forms dissipating into nothingness.

The vampire, now robbed of its grotesque minions, witnessed the unraveling of its last desperate gambit.

"No... this can't be!" the vampire howled, its arrogant demeanor shattered.

"So, this is how it needs to be used."

Gaining enlightenment in the fight. This is how one improves themselves, especially for me.

The blood realm quivered, the crimson landscape trembling as the remnants of the familiars faded away.

CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!

The silvery glow of the chakrams intensified as they returned to my hands, leaving me standing alone in the now-dissipating blood realm.

My eyes, now locked onto the vampire, were cold. I felt a little empty and tranquil at the sight.

Its form has already become pathetic.

'The feeling is gone.'

For some reason, the excitement of killing him was gone. Those feelings were gone. But they were coming back.

TAP! TAP! TAP! TAP!

Slowly, step by, I approached the vampire. With each step, the blood underneath my feet tapped.

And those sounds made me remember that day.

"The ground felt like this at that time as well."

The emotions came back. The suffocating feeling, anger, despair, and hatred.

Then, it was followed by the joy of being able to torture a pathetic vampire in front of me.

My eyes, now ablaze with the returned emotions, locked onto the creature.

"Scream for me," I demanded, my voice cold. It was strange and not at the same time.

I relished in the power I held over this once-mighty being.

The thrill of torture surged within me, a primal need to take out my anger on this symbol of the monstrous forces that had destroyed everything.

My hand, adorned with Celestalith in its chakram form, moved with a fluid grace as I initiated the torment. I cut through the vampire's flesh, leaving deep gashes that oozed with unnatural blood.

The vampire's screams reverberated through the dim chamber, each cry a haunting melody of despair. It begged for mercy, its once-arrogant demeanor shattered by the relentless assault on its tortured form.

"Spare me! Please!" the vampire pleaded, its voice a desperate whimper amid the chaos. The creature, once a symbol of terror, now found itself at the mercy of a vengeful force it couldn't comprehend.

"This is not enough."

But I wasn't satisfied with mere cuts. I summoned the power of the blue moon, casting flames upon the vampire's skin.

"AAAAAAH!"

The unholy fire danced across its form, scorching and blackening its once-pale flesh.

"Scream more."

I didn't know the expression I was making, but I am pretty sure it wasn't something good.

As the vampire writhed in pain, I took it a step further. I summoned the freezing essence of ice psions, encasing the burns in an icy prison.

"IT HURTS! IT HURTS! IT HURTS!"

The rapid shift from fire to frost intensified the suffering, a cruel ballet of elements playing out on the canvas of the vampire's tortured body.

The conflicting sensations of searing heat and numbing cold intertwined, creating a symphony of agony. Inside, I grappled with my own demons, desperately trying to drown them in the vampire's suffering.

"Scream louder!" I shouted, the words laced with a madness that mirrored the chaos within. The cycle of cutting, burning, and freezing continued a relentless onslaught that mirrored the storm within my own tormented soul.

PAT!

Until the blood realm fell to its ruins.....