

Legion lich 231

Chapter 231 Prototype

‘Where did I put that thing? It’s been so long since I created it that I don’t know anymore.’ Lukas thought. There were dozens of chests of equipment he had crafted but deemed unworthy of displaying on the walls and refused to sell to the order.

‘Come on, attack us or try to run away at once so we can end this. There’s no point wasting time here.’ One of the twins thought, annoyed at Lukas’s stalling to start the attack.

Both had already activated the defenses of the armor they wore hidden under the cloak and were just waiting for the attack. The cloaks hid the aura of power from their armor and even Lukas was only able to dimly guess at their defensive power.

‘I finally found it, but it takes a few minutes to take effect, so it’s better to pretend I’m runesmithing something while I buy time.’ Lukas picked up an item that looked like a remote control and pressed a magic stone as if it were a button before putting it in his pocket.

The twins noticed its strange movement and narrowed their eyes suspiciously, trying to guess what it was but they didn’t recognize the strange object. One of them even used mana vision to try to detect some effect, but everything inside the room had a strong magic aura and almost blinded him.

Lukas moved to the center of the lab, where several magic circles were drawn on the floor, with lines connecting to a divine mithril anvil in the center of the table. An unenchanted mithril spear and ingredients flew onto the anvil and Lukas immediately set to work.

The magic circles activated at a thought by Lukas, filtering the world’s energy until it was in perfect balance. World energy usually had more energy of one element than others depending on the region and Lukas liked to work with them 100% balanced.

He believed that any imbalance in world energy could negatively affect the enchantments he would runesmithing. Lukas set to work once the world’s energy was perfectly balanced, various runes made of mana appearing around him and combining in different sequences.

The twins were stunned to watch Lukas work, even momentarily forgetting their duty. According to their common sense and everything they knew, runes were supposed to be created by gathering the world’s energy into metals, but Lukas was doing the exact opposite and creating them with his own mana.

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‘That parlor trick should leave them gaping for a while and give me the time I need to activate the device.’ Lukas thought as he held back the urge to laugh and controlled the runes made of mana.

He had diluted his own mana to the same level as a first tier mage, but the twins were unable to tell the difference because of the magic circles on the floor. The magic circles contained energy within to prevent explosions from leaving the area of effect and clouded the effects of abilities such as mana vision.

All the twins could see were glowing runes and they didn’t like that one bit.

'I do not like it. Lukas is really a runesmith something, but he's obviously biding his time for something and I can't do anything until he takes the first step.' One of the twins thought irritably and motioned for his brother to step back from him.

He intended to use himself as a first shield for whatever was to come.

"It's finally done!" Lukas yelled impatiently and the controller in his pocket released a strong purple light. "Sorry for the stalling, we can get started now."

Lukas turned to the guards and snapped his fingers, activating the mansion's enchantments and sealing away all energy in the world. Even though the twins were out of their lab, all of the world's energy became inaccessible to the mages.

The twin watchmen were shocked for half a second before their century of training kicked in and they sent out the alert. Normal magic items were unable to work without world energy, but items with teleportation crystals could work purely on mana.

"Because it does not work??" Unfortunately for the guards, Lukas pioneered crystal technology and knew how to interfere with the crystals themselves. Thersec was the creator of communication cubes and communication items, but it was just a spinoff of his work.

"It's thanks to that toy." Lukas took the controller out of his pocket, which continued to glow purple. "This item is capable of interfering with the signal or portals of other teleportation crystals, rendering them unusable. It is a prototype of forced teleportation enchantments."

"I abandoned the project because it's inefficient in terms of energy consumption, but I didn't expect it to be useful now. And Thersec judged me as a hoarder just for hanging on to my creations and refusing to throw them away." Lukas proudly began to explain his creation, but the watchmen would not listen.

The younger twin turned and started running up the stairs to get away, while the older twin charged like a cannonball at Lukas. Without magic, his only weapon would be his own body and the daggers he kept hidden.

"Do you really plan on fighting a runesmith inside your lab? There are less stupid ways to commit suicide, like trying to steal a phoenix's eggs." Lukas sneered and snapped his fingers a second time, the weapons on the walls flying towards Lukas and floating around him.

The weapons on display in his laboratory were not just ornaments or decorations, but his finest masterpieces which he refused to sell and kept for personal use. All weapons moved according to Lukas's thoughts and didn't need to be micromanaged, completely following his will.

All weapons received a spark of their life force, causing the mansion's enchantments to recognize them as a Ripher and allowing them to activate their enchantments.

With a third snap of his fingers, the underground exit closed again and the stairs were filled with a green mist. The guard who fled tried to keep moving forward, but his robe started to melt and he was unable to continue breathing.

His armor was supposed to purify poison passively, but the acidic gas replaced all oxygen and prevented him from breathing. Despite all his power, he was still the human and he needed to breathe to live.

'Thanks to my enhanced body I can keep myself without breathing for almost 10 minutes, but I won't be able to destroy the mansion's reinforced floor without magic and this gas will kill me.' The twin thought, his blue cloak disappearing and exposing the god steel armor he wore underneath.

A blue barrier adhered to his body like a second skin and protected him from the gas, but he saw that he would not be able to resist much against the acidic gas. Somehow, the acid was corroding the barrier personally created by the Water Elder and it wouldn't last more than a few minutes.

He turned around in an instant and started heading back down to the lab, his hope that the lab wasn't affected by the gas and that together with his brother, they could defeat Lukas.

In the lab, the guard was fighting tooth and nail to try to keep up with Lukas' attacks. The weapons floating around Lukas attacked him from different angles and with incredible force.

The different weapons activated their enchantments at random times, making their attacks unpredictable and even more deadly. His divine steel armor and blue barrier blocked everything, but the attacks quickly scraped the barrier's energy and the attacks forced him to stop for a second, leaving him exposed to further attacks.

'If I hadn't previously activated the armor's defensive enchantments, I would have already lost. The water elder hadn't informed us of an item capable of interfering with the signal, but since it's only a prototype, it must be something that no one else knows about.' The guard thought as he dodged an unyielding spear aimed at his chest, only for a mace to hit him in the back of the knee.

Two sabers tried to slash him from behind, and though he managed to block both with his daggers, the spear he'd deflected earlier came back and hit him this time.

Lukas stood at a distance just watching him fight, two shields hovering around him and a wooden staff in his hands for casting spells.

The second twin arrived soon after and the fight was more or less even, at least until Lukas entered the fray. He stayed back and didn't rush to cast his best spells.

Icy lightning rained down on the guards as a tornado of ice blades surrounded the guards. Weapons also intensified their attacks, darting in and out of tornadoes to release their enchantments and exit to avoid retaliation.

'We will lose without a fight if this continues.' The older twin thought and charged into the tornado, running towards Lukas. Its already faded blue barrier weakened further and cracks began to appear across its surface.

His younger brother followed without a second's hesitation, immediately understanding the plan. The eldest was taking most of the damage, so he had the energy to fight.

Chapter 232 Unexpected situation

Defeat was already certain, but if he managed to destroy that damn control, they could send the warning signal and accomplish their mission.

To their surprise, Lukas took a step forward instead of trying to back away.

The older twin's barrier could take no more punishment and disappeared, a hammer hitting him in the side with deft timing and throwing him out of the way, leaving a clear path between the younger and Lukas.

Floating shields moved in front to block the younger one, each releasing a hexagonal barrier that protected Lukas, while the guns were aimed all at once at the younger one.

'It's all or nothing.' The younger twin thought and attacked with the dagger in his left hand using weapon break. The blade was made of magic steel and its explosion was strong enough to break the first, but the second barrier remained intact.

The youngest tried to throw the last dagger to destroy the last barrier, but an axe hit him in the arm and dropped the dagger to the ground, exploding harmlessly.

The youngest didn't give up and punched the barrier with his bare fists until the armor barrier disappeared, dropping to his knees on the ground.

"I surrender. It is useless to continue the fight." He spoke as he glanced at his older brother from the corner of his eye, noticing that he was also kneeling.

"It's a smart decision, but I remember Thersec saying you were going to beat me to an inch of death, so I'll pay you back in kind." Lukas smiled coldly at them and the twins gulped and tried to run away, but the hovering weapons hit them in the back and knocked them to the ground.

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White chains wrapped around their wrists and ankles, preventing them from moving and sealing their cores. The chains have the same enchantments as the shackles in the damned dungeon, preventing mages from drawing mana from their cores.

Lukas took his time beating the twins, taking out all of his frustration at being interrupted and Thersec's cunning to trap him. Whatever he did now, Lukas would still be punished for disobeying Thersec and going out to avenge a bastard.

By the time he was done beating them up, the twins were in black and blue, their bruises covering their entire bodies, their god-steel armor in shreds on the floor.

Lukas poured two high grade potions on the twins and healed all of their wounds, causing them to pass out from the effort of healing. Without receiving nutrients, their bodies were not able to support such extensive healing.

"Huff..." Lukas sighed and chained the twins against the wall to ensure they wouldn't run away even if they regained consciousness somehow.

He let the weapons fall back to their positions on the walls, where the magic steel on the walls would recharge the weapons' enchantments to speed their recovery.

'It's going to take some time to track down the crystal I gave Emilia, so it might be a good idea to reload all my weapons. My masterpieces have the power to face a dragon head-on, but only when they are at full power. They won't recover enough energy for full strength, but any extra energy is welcome.' Lukas thought as he walked towards the seemingly unfinished portal.

It was his first working prototype for a portal, and despite being extremely energy inefficient, it worked flawlessly. Lukas kept records of all of Emilia's crystals and his closest family members in a log of his own, as Thersec would have deleted anything related to Emilia if he remained in the main portal.

Lukas accessed the control panel on the side of the portal and selected one of the runes on the portal, beginning the tracking process. Each teleportation crystal had a unique signature, and mages assigned a specific rune to each crystal's signature.

World energy flowed through the lab and powered the teleportation crystals embedded in the portals. Unlike portals that could track crystals and expend energy only when activating the portals, his prototype would expend energy in both steps.

Lukas felt his hands shake slightly as he shifted his balance from one foot to the other, his expression a mixture of impatience and anger. The seconds felt like hours as he watched Emilia's crystal rune grow brighter and brighter and a light appeared in the center of the portal, slowly increasing in size.

When the mithril arc finally located Emilia's crystal and the portal opened, Lukas' heart jumped and he felt a lump in his throat. The portal started to feel unstable after opening and Lukas remembered his prototype's second malfunction.

Normal crystals teleported the user immediately after being filled with energy, but what few knew was that if energy was continuously injected after the teleportation happened, the purple spheres would be maintained and would continue to connect both locations.

His prototype didn't have that function and Lukas needed to feed his portal with his own mana to stabilize it.

The weapons he had let reload flew to his back again and this time, a suit of armor made of divine steel did the same, opening like an exoskeleton and covering him from head to toe.

His own clothes were enchanted, but they couldn't compare to Ripha armor, the armor that only the Ripha and their chosen servants were capable of wearing.

Lukas advanced through the portal, prepared to attack and kill anything that got in his way.

Shiima city, in the building of a trading company.

Valko the vampire was lying in his room sleeping, waiting for nightfall. It was almost late afternoon, but vampires usually slept until dark, except when they were on missions or there was an emergency. Vampires didn't need to sleep, but they could sleep for pleasure and they usually slept for as long as the sun was up.

The building he was in belonged to a shell trading company and was actually a base for mainland Nytrer spies. All of the employees were spies and nearly half of them were vampires or ghouls, while the other half were humans who came from Sytrer or were born in the city but who became loyal to Sytrer.

This building wasn't their only spy base in the city since Shiima was a big city, but it was the biggest and most important.

Valko's room was in the basement and had bunk beds on either side of the room, with chests for her personal belongings and the teleportation crystal Valko took from the black skeletons was in her personal chest.

All the bunks were full of vampires sleeping and about to wake up because of the hour, so the sudden purple light in the room woke them all up.

"Hmm? What is it?" one of the vampires asked in a panic, looking up at the purple light. The confusion only lasted a few seconds before the vampires recognized the teleportation light, turning into full-blown panic.

"It's a portal! Why is there a portal?!" The same vampire screamed in panic and everyone started running towards the stairs that led to the first floor.

'Is that it?' Valko was among the fugitives and looked at the back for a moment, noticing that the portal was opening just above his chest, where the teleportation crystal he stole was. 'No, it doesn't matter how we were discovered. We have to flee now.'

"We've been discovered, We've been discovered! Destroy everything!" The vampires broke down the door leading to the first floor and yelled at their companions to destroy all the evidence they held.

There were customers in the company currently and they were shocked by the sudden appearance of the undead, but their shock didn't last long. Employees who until a second ago treated them politely turned into two-meter hideous monsters and tore customers to shreds.

"What happened? Why are we abandoning the base?" A human servant holding a bloodied dagger asked, throwing the corpse of the woman he had just killed to the ground.

"A portal is opening in our room and we need to evacuate the place before it finish forming." Valko answered the question and the spies nodded in understanding, going up to the second floor to alert the rest of the team.

A dozen magical weapons smashed through the floor and impaled the vampires and ghouls, pinning their bodies against the first-floor ceiling. The workers on the second floor were startled by the sudden bloody blades appearing on the floor, at least until the weapons released their enchantments.

Explosions of different elements, shockwaves, and aura blades blasted the building, sending debris and corpses all over the block. The first floor ceiling was also destroyed, exposing the vampires to sunlight and burning their skin.

Lukas broke the floor of the first floor and floated in the air looking around in confusion.

When he walked through the portal, he expected to find himself surrounded by thousands of black skeletons ready to kill him, not a basement dark room. He used mana vision to look around to understand where he was, recognizing the mana cores of ordinary people just above his head.

Chapter 233 Prisoners alive

Until suddenly half of these cores turned red black and the other half fell apart, indicating people were dead. It didn't take a genius to guess who the enemy was and he immediately ordered his blades to attack the undead.

Lukas looked out over the city and the citizens running around in a panic, trying to guess where the hell he was. Alarms began to ring throughout the city and a barrier went up, preventing anyone from entering or leaving.

“Argh...Fuck!” Valko screamed in pain, feeling her skin burn in the sun. He crawled under the wreckage to get out of the sun and touched his wand in his pocket, conjuring up a blanket of blood that covered him like.

Valko tried to run, but a hammer hit him in the legs and crushed his right knee, before turning full circle and crushing his left.

Lukas crushed or severed the limbs of ghouls and vampires, keeping them alive just to interrogate them. He knew he was in a human city, but where was a mystery and how his daughter’s crystal ended up among vampires was an even greater mystery.

It landed on Valko’s chest, crushing her ribs until her lungs burst. Valko vomited up a lot of blood and tried to use blood magic to heal herself, but Lukas’ boots got in the way and prevented regeneration.

Destroyed lungs weren’t a fatal wound for a vampire, but it was still incredibly painful for them.

“All of you will come with me. I have many questions to ask.” Lukas got off Valko for a second, only to turn him into ice statue. He did the same to all the undead around him, taking care not to hit any of them in a vital spot.

“Are you okay? Were you hurt?” Lukas asked the human spies mistaking them for innocent citizens.

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“We are fine thanks!” The human spies asked with complicated glances at the undead. which Lukas mistook for fear and confusion.

“It’s not safe here, so go away.” Lukas dismissed the spys, who looked at each other for a second before running away. They knew they couldn’t save their comrades, so they pretended to be victims and fled towards the other hideouts, to warn them of danger and abandon their bases.

“Now that we’re alone, let’s get you somewhere we can talk-” Lukas turned to Valko frozen at his feet, only for a crack to appear in the ice and a spray of blood to fly towards his neck. Blood flew like a spear into the gap between his helmet and breastplate, but the barrier of blue light blocked the attacks.

The spear of blood turned into a red mist that blocked his vision for a second, but Lukas shook off the blood mist with a simple nod.

“No!!” Unfortunately for Lukas, one second was more than enough for Valko. The vampire clotted the blood in his own heart and exploded, committing suicide. Valko knew that any undead captured by the order would suffer terrible torture until they spilled all the information they had, so suicide was the only way to die painlessly and avoid information leaks.

A vampire’s heart was their weak point and the only part of their body they were unable to regenerate. Valko’s body withered, turning from a man into ashes in mere seconds.

The other vampires did the same, while the ghouls unbalanced their cores and let the darkness devour their bodies, much to Lukas' dismay. He hadn't brought any items capable of sealing or paralyzing an undead. then was unable to stop them from committing suicide.

Lukas came here with the intention of fighting an army, not trapping a few undead in a city.

"Shit! All this for nothing." Lukas started cursing in confusion and irritation, unable to understand how Emilia's crystal ended up in the hands of a vampire base in a human city.

"Hey, just stand there! Who are you and why are you causing all this fuss??" a guard asked as he approached, catching Lukas' attention. He belatedly realized that city guards had arrived and slowly surrounded the building.

He noticed that there were adventurers among them as well and mages busy casting their spells if a fight broke out. There were no priests or crusaders, as the church's influence in a market town like Shiima was small.

"I am Lukas Ripha, master of magic of the order of magic, and I am here under orders from Water Elder Thersec to destroy the undead bases in this city." Lukas shouted and displayed a medallion with his family's symbol, causing the mages to stop their spells and respectfully greet him.

His plan clearly backfired, but Lukas wanted to share the blame with Thersec, if only partially.

"Ripha?" The guards and adventurers were confused and didn't recognize the name of a noble family from a neighboring country, but the mages recognized the name of one of their elders and one of the most influential masters of magic today, so they attested to Lukas' identity.

"Can we help you with anything, sir?" Realizing that the armored knight floating in front of him was a big shot and not a threat, the guard changed his tone and spoke respectfully. He had a lot of questions about the level of destruction and the human corpses on the floor, but those questions could be for later.

Undead were enemies of humanity and destroying them took priority.

"No need. I'm done here, so-" Lukas denied the guard's help and was looking for an excuse to escape the city, but a distant explosion interrupted him and caught his attention.

A second explosion went off in a different direction and Lukas decided he needed to find out.

'The timing of these explosions is very suspicious. Perhaps there are undead elsewhere in the city and they destroyed their own bases to erase the evidence when they saw my explosion. Maybe I still have a chance to find out what happened here.' Lukas thought mistakenly.

"You go to the explosion in the south of the city while I go to the east. Try to capture at least one of them alive!" Lukas shouted orders and took off in the direction of the explosion. From the air, Lukas noticed that the blast he was headed for was in the city's slums, while the other was in the residential zone for rich merchants.

"It's going to be difficult to look for the undead if they get mixed up among the slum dwellers, so I need to hurry. The undead in the rich zone will probably escape the guards and mages, but I can't be in two places at once." Lukas muttered and sped up his flight spell even more.

He reached the blast site in less than a minute, finding only the wreckage of what appeared to be a shop and people running around in panic.

Lukas used mana vision to search around, finding only ordinary people and a few a little stronger, but they appeared to be just common thugs. There were several people wearing hoods to hide their faces, but Lukas couldn't go around slaughtering people just on suspicion.

"Sytrer's items of disguise are as annoying as ever. We're going to need to separate the dead from the living so give me a hand, dawnlight." Lukas spoke with the white saber floating at his back, which flashed as if answering him.

Dawnlight was her personal anti-undead weapon, possessing several light attribute enchantments. Its destructive power was weaker than average weapons, but it was the best at dealing with the undead.

The lightsaber began to glow brightly and Lukas grabbed it, swinging it toward the fleeing citizens below. Waves of light spread out with each swing of the saber and reached the citizens a few seconds later.

The light healed the confused humans without damaging a single hair, but a few individuals mixed in the crowd fell to the ground while screaming in pain. Disguise pendants changed the appearance of an undead to an ordinary human and even disguised their cores, but it was just a change of appearance.

The undead still retained their weaknesses to light even in human guise, and the waves of light seared their bodies. Lukas limited the power of dawnlight so as not to turn vampires and ghouls to dust, but the waves of weakened light were still enough to char the skin of the undead.

'I found them.' Lukas thought and his weapons flew at each of them, but this time they hit their necks to break them. Vampires and ghouls would not only die from having their necks broken, but would still cripple them until their bodies naturally healed.

He wasn't fast enough to do it the first time, as the weapons were impaling their bodies at the time.

"Dawnlight, spread light whenever the undead begin to regenerate. I need them alive, not whole." Lukas screamed and flew into the prime area to see if the guards and mages had had any success, but it was obvious they hadn't.

The guards didn't have the means to identify the disguised undead and the mages couldn't just cast random light spells on the city's rich merchants, so the undead escaped the crime scene unnoticed.

Chapter 234 Order branch

Furthermore, very few mages among those sent to the merchants' zone had an affinity for light, so it would be impossible to cover enough area. The church would probably be able to, but there was only one small church in town with a minuscule number of priests and none of them came to investigate what happened at the scene of the explosion.

"Damn it, I won't get anything here without dawnlight, but I can't move it without risking losing the undead I've already captured." Lukas muttered and clicked his tongue in disgust.

"I'm sorry sir, but the undead had already fled by the time we arrived. We found nothing but injured people at the blast site." One of the mages used wind magic so that his voice reached Lukas in the sky and reported the situation.

“Understood. I managed to control the situation in the slums and capture a dozen undead, so it’s not such a big loss. Just try to control the situation here and keep people from panicking.” Lukas transmitted his voice using the same method.

‘Since the situation has reached this point, I will at least get the information I want from these vampires. But first, I need to contact the order and take them to the dungeon of the forgotten.’ He thought as he walked down to the mage.

“Where is the order’s branch in this city? I need to report this to the water elder.” Lukas asked the mage. He had left his communication cube and dimensional ring at home, fearing that Thersec would use it to track and follow him, so he didn’t have any items with teleportation crystals with him.

“It’s in the center of town, sir. It’s a four-story building with the order’s symbol emblazoned on the walls, so it’s impossible to miss. I’ll notify the mages who stayed behind of your presence so there’s someone to meet you at the entrance.” The mage informed him and took a communication pendant to report to the order what was happening at the site of the explosions and the presence of Lukas.

Lukas nodded to the mage and flew towards the center of town, spotting the order’s branch almost immediately. The city center was the commercial zone and almost entirely occupied by different commercial stores

Normally it would be teeming with people, but it was empty thanks to the explosions and the constant emergency alarms going off. A mage wearing a green robe was standing waiting in front of the order’s door and bowed respectfully as Lukas landed in front of him.

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“It is a pleasure to meet you, master of magic Lukas Ripha. I have already been informed of your mission here and we have already prepared an official communication channel with the order’s headquarters. Please follow me inside the building, we must not speak of important matters in public.” The mage spoke nervously, almost biting his tongue, and opened the branch doors for Lukas.

The building was only four stories high, but the branch of the Shiima order was just a place to gather local magic ingredients and do some administrative work, so its modest size was enough.

Every mage or functionary within the order looked curiously at Lukas as he entered, his gleaming armor and magical weapons floating around him catching everyone’s attention.

Despite the attention he was receiving, no one dared to get in their way and approach Lukas, the magical aura that radiated from a single of the weapons on his back was enough to send shivers down anyone’s spine and he had eleven of them floating around him.

“Here you are, sir. We’ve reserved a room so you can have a private conversation, and we’ve prepared a communication cube with the order’s official channels. The room is enchanted so that sound doesn’t leak out the moment the doors close, so feel free to chat as much as you like.” The mage who had led him here spoke as he opened the doors to the room and closed them as Lukas passed.

‘The enchantment to prevent information leakage is real, but I won’t trust that thing.’ Lukas removed the helmet and used mana vision to investigate the room and noticed the simple enchantment. He even

cast a second zone of silence just in case, before picking up the communication cube on a table of his own.

Lukas activated the cube and was greeted by a grumpy mage, at least until the mage realized Lukas' identity and hastily corrected his posture.

"How can I help you, Mr.Lukas?" The mage asked while mentally cursing his carelessness.

"I have undead prisoners I need to interrogate, so I want a ticket to the Forgotten Dungeon." Lukas didn't go into much detail about how he obtained these undead, but the mage didn't ask many questions either, just the sour expression of someone who had to deliver bad news to his higher.

"I'm sorry sir, but as you may know, the portal tower is destroyed and the only form of transportation we currently have is teleportation crystals, but these require the person to have visited the destination beforehand."

"I know how teleportation crystals work. Tell me what the problem is." Lukas didn't like where the conversation was going and he could already guess what the problem was.

"The problem is that you are calling me from the city of Shiima, a city relatively close to the border of the kingdom of Mirkor. Despite being a large city, it is in a remote region and none of the jailers or magicians working in the prison of the forgotten have history of traveling to this city for any reason." The mage informed him as politely as possible, not liking Lukas' expression one bit.

The situation was hardly his fault, but an angry mage usually took out his anger on the first thing he laid eyes on and a master of magic would be even worse.

'So I need someone who has already come to this city and the dungeon of the forgotten to teleportation. I doubt that someone who has business in a city of so little importance to the order would have authorization or reason to enter the dungeon of the forgotten.' Lukas pondered his meager options.

'My time is not infinite either. Thersec will soon contact the guards I defeated and when he notices the lack of communication, he will investigate my lab and find them chained up. He might as well be on the lookout for the news when the mages report the order of what happened here.'

'I need to somehow find someone who has been to the dungeon and this town and has a high level teleportation crystal.' Lukas tried to remember all the countless contacts with influential figures throughout his career to try to find the right person, but the answer was simple.

"I already know! Attendant, I need you to do me a favor. Request the purchase of a high-quality teleportation crystal large enough to transport a dozen people on behalf of House Ripha and have it delivered to my current position as soon as possible." Lukas made a sudden purchase order and confused the mage.

The quality of a teleportation crystal determined how much energy it could absorb and how far it would travel, but it was the size of the crystal that determined the radius of the purple orb. A crystal large enough to hold a dozen people would have to be at least a foot long and would be extremely expensive, but nothing Ripha's fortune couldn't afford.

The order of magic circulated goods across both continents and kept mages in readiness at the order's headquarters to use as couriers. There would definitely be at least one mage who visited Shiima once in their lifetime.

"Sir, we can have your order ready and delivered in a few hours." The attendant found the request strange, but did not question it and began to check if there were mages available for the city of Shiima.

"That's a long time. You have ten minutes." Lukas was against the clock at the moment and couldn't wait hours.

"I understand that you are in a hurry, sir, but understand that it takes time to find a crystal that suits your needs and find a mage who has already visited Shiima City, so please be a little more patient!" The mage blanched at Lukas' absurd demands, but Lukas didn't care.

"Do whatever it takes to get it to me in time. I'll pay extra to make up for the trouble, but get the crystal to me in less than 10 minutes." Lukas tried to reassure the mage, but it was still questionable if the mage would make it in time.

'I'll do my best, sir. The mage sighed as he internally cursed Elbon's injustice that made him heed Lukas' call.

'I hate to abuse my authority like this, but I have no choice.' Lukas apologized internally to the mage as he disconnected the call.

He canceled the silent zone and left the room, greeting the mage who was still waiting outside the meeting room.

Chapter 235 Interrogation

"A courier should be teleporting here in a few minutes, and if I haven't returned by then, take the item he delivers and keep it until I get back." Lukas instructed the standing mage, who nodded in understanding.

"As you wish sir." The mage bowed after receiving his instructions.

Lukas noticed in the corner of his vision an obese, elderly mage approaching while putting on his best smarmy smile. He was probably the head of that branch of the order and wanted to form a connection with someone as powerful as Lukas.

"If you understand your orders, I'm leaving." Lukas said a short goodbye to the mage and bolted out of the building, ignoring the obese elderly man's pleading voice.

He flew again towards Dawnlight, only to find a crowd surrounding the sword and the undead. Dawnlight was constantly releasing light to damage the undead and prevent them from healing, but the people around were taking advantage of the released light to heal themselves.

Several people had been injured in the explosion, or had wounds they got in everyday life, so they took the chance to heal without having to spend money at the church or buy potions. Furthermore, it was the first time they had been able to see the undead so closely, and they watched the dying vampires on the ground with interest.

Dawnlight and didn't care about people taking advantage of the rest of her energy, so she just focused on her task.

"Good job, Dawnlight." Lukas swooped down among the unconscious undead and grabbed the saber. He cast a float spell on the undead and a gust of wind to drive them back to the branch of the order. The people left behind were unhappy with the saber leaving before their wounds were completely healed, but they didn't dare raise their voices to Lukas.

After Lukas returned to order with the undead, it only took 15 minutes for an order delivery man to appear with the crystal he requested.

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The local branch chief tried to talk him out of it during this time, but Lukas ignored all attempts as he silently waited, crushing the undead's necks whenever they began to regenerate.

"Sir, here is the teleportation crystal you requested. The mage who made the purchase also warned the jailers of the Forgotten Dungeon that you will be bringing prisoners, so the defenses will be temporarily down and you should teleport as soon as possible," O deliveryman spoke as he handed him the teleportation crystal.

'I think it's the mage's way of apologizing for taking longer than I ordered. Lucky me.' Lukas thought gratefully and piled the undead around him before feeding the teleportation crystal.

He disappeared into a sphere of purple with a radius of ten feet, reappearing in one of the designated prisoner-holding areas in forgotten dungeon. The room was almost 10 meters high and made entirely of metal, with enchantments enhancing its durability and magic cannons on the walls ready to fire at the slightest sign of a struggle.

Two dozen jailers were waiting for Lukas and once they confirmed there was no problem, they surrounded the undead and shackled them with black manacles, sealing away their magic and racial abilities.

Lukas knew there were even more mages waiting in hiding in case something went wrong or one of the undead tried to fight their way out, but he didn't worry about that.

The undead could still regenerate, but this ability would become a curse in the hands of cruel jailers, who wouldn't have to worry about their victims dying as long as they didn't hit their weak spot.

"I need some information these vampires have. How long do you think it will take to interrogate them?" Lukas approached the jailer who had the best core among them, assuming he would be their leader.

"That will depend on the targets' stamina, sir. Mind-reading magic doesn't work well on the undead, so we're forced to use physical means to get them to cooperate. Luckily, vampires can feel pain like living beings, so I I guarantee our jailers will be very persuasive with them." The man replied as he bowed in a seemingly polite nod, but it was only a way of hiding the cruel smile that unwittingly appeared on his face.

"Haah... there's nothing you can do. Try to be as quick as possible please, I really need the information they have." Lukas sighed in defeat.

"Any specific information we need to gather? It would be very helpful if we knew what to ask." The man asked, interested in what would make a famous master of magic like Lukas personally move.

'If I knew how they got my daughter's teleportation crystal, I wouldn't have brought them here.' Lukas thought.

"These vampires were in possession of a specific item that belonged to my family and I want to know how they obtained it." He really spoke.

"So it's a family matter, rather than an official mission?" The jailer asked as he narrowed his eyes.

"Does it matter to you?" Lukas asked back.

"No. Any reason to torture someone and get away with it is a good reason for me." The jailer started to laugh as if he'd told a joke, but Lukas knew it was true. "Allow me to guide you to the VIP area so you can relax while you wait. The prisoners section might be a little too strong for someone without our peculiar tastes."

"You mean someone with their sanity intact." Lukas spoke sarcastically.

"Exactly." The jailer nodded as if he were being praised. The jailer led Lukas to the end of the room and opened the door, where one of the prisoner sections was located.

The prison was divided into several sections, each species having a unique section to ensure that they would not interact with each other. Different species had different sizes and needs, so each section was unique.

Although the dungeon of the forgotten was a place of torture, they needed to keep their prisoners alive at least as long as they were useful, so some basic necessities were required, much to the chagrin of the jailers.

The section the jailer led Lukas through was the demihumans' section, so all the cells were high, though there was barely room for the demihumans to move.

Lukas peered into the cells as he passed, noticing how precarious the state of the demihumans was. Demihumans were warriors with powerful bodies, but those inside the cells were dying and with thin bodies, malnutrition and lack of exercise destroying their bodies.

Their eyes were lifeless, the cruelty of the jailers was enough to shatter the strong will of the demihumans.

Lukas felt a bitter taste in his mouth as he looked at those demihumans and quickly looked away. He knew these creatures were humanity's enemies, but he still felt disgusted to see them like this.

'Security is as high as ever.' Lukas thought as he watched the patrolling guards, noticing how most wore armor made of adamant, despite the magical metal being extremely rare and expensive in the three kingdoms.

They made it to the end of the section and climbed the stairs for several floors, past other prisoners' sections and the guards' section, arriving in the VIP area.

“Feel free to rest in that room, sir. We’ll let you know as soon as we get any information from the prisoners.” The jailer opened the door to one of the VIP rooms and Lukas walked in,

“An attendant will come in a few minutes and you can speak to him for anything you need.” The jailor spoke as he closed the door behind him and walked away.

Lukas heard the footsteps in the distance and only relaxed when they were so far away that even his enhanced hearing was unable to hear them.

“It’s out of my hands now. All I can do is hope those maniacs succeed and I get my answers before the worst happens.” Lukas muttered.

“Luckily, those vampires looked weak and couldn’t have gotten past even the first barrier of progression, so hopefully their minds will give out quickly. The drugs they administer here should be enough to break any resistance.” Lukas spoke and turned to the weapons around him.

“You can rest around the room. There are no enemies around or anything to fight, so there’s no reason to be alert.” Lukas spoke to the weapons around him, which stopped floating and leaned against the corners of the room.

His mountainbreak ax even conjured a small ball of rock and started playing with dawnlight. The armor also opened and let Lukas out, before joining in the game with the weapons.

‘These guys are really free spirited.’ Lukas thought as an unconscious smile broke out as he saw the weapons he considered his battle buddies interact with each other.

He threw himself onto the sofa and waved his hand towards the liquor cabinet, floating a bottle of whiskey towards him. Lukas downed the entire bottle at once and while enjoying the snacks in the middle of the table.

He spent the next half hour just drinking and eating, watching their weapons interact with each other, when a knock at the door caught his attention.

‘Have you got anything yet? The jailers outdid themselves this time.’ Lukas thought as he used light magic to cure himself of the drink’s effect.

Chapter 236 Revenge fails

“What you want?” He spoke without getting up.

“Mister Lukas, the water elder came to see you.” The attendant outside spoke, causing Lukas to freeze in place. The weapons reacted to their shock and went into alert, pointing their blades towards the door simultaneously.

‘Stay calm and return to your previous positions.’ Lukas ordered mentally and all the weapons returned to rest against the walls.

“Let him in.” Lukas actually spoke, looking coldly towards the door.

The door opened and Thersec walked in, looking at Lukas with equal coolness. The elder one sat down on a sofa across from Lukas, the atmosphere growing absurdly tense.

"I'll leave you alone. If you need anything, just call." The attendant sensed the tense atmosphere and closed the door to avoid being caught in the crossfire.

"I warned you what would happen if you disobeyed me, and you did it anyway. As if disobedience wasn't enough, you started a ruckus in a human city for no reason and dared to say it was in my name. Have something to say your defense?" Thersec spoke quietly, but the air in the room grew cold with each word he spoke.

"It's not my fault those guards you gave me were so weak. You said they were so powerful and would beat me an inch to death, but it turned out they weren't a big deal." Lukas taunted Thersec and it worked.

The water elder dashed off the couch similar to what Lukas did in the mansion, but with unrivaled speed. He grabbed Lukas by the throat and slammed him against the sofa, careful not to use too much force and make too much noise to alert the attendant outside.

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He had a reputation to uphold and until they were truly alone, he wouldn't do anything with Lukas.

"I think you're starting to get really rebellious. A little discipline should correct that behavior of yours." Thersec's voice was no more than a whisper, but it still contained enough aura to freeze Lukas in place.

"Why don't you take a look around and rethink your words a little? My friends here are a little overprotective, so I recommend you back off a bit." Despite Thersec's aura freezing Lukas in place, the latter wasn't fazed.

All weapons that had been stationary a second ago were now pointed at Thersec, perfectly encircling him. The blades pointed at every joint, ready to slice him to pieces if he moved.

Their blades began to glow as their enchantments became visible on the weapons' surfaces, but Thersec was unfazed by them.

"Do you think these toys are a threat to me?" Thersec scoffed at Lukas's attempt to threaten him, but the latter laughed too.

"A threat to you? No. Even my masterpieces wouldn't be able to kill him, but a single enchantment is enough to destroy this room and make the alarms on the side of the dungeon go off. What would people think of us if we started a fight here?" Lukas countered, attacking the only thing that mattered to Thersec, his image.

"..." Thersec stared at him in silence for some time, before releasing him and throwing himself on the couch behind him.

Lukas silently straightened his clothes and corrected his posture, but his expression was sour despite successfully pushing Thersec away.

'The power difference between us is huge, even if the layer difference between us isn't that huge. Does mana body really make the difference in power between us that big?' Lukas thought in frustration.

He was currently at the sixteenth layer and Thersec was only one layer above him, but the difference in power between them was abysmal. The characteristic of the mana body allowed the core to store much more energy than a normal core and the difference only increased over time.

“So what? You went out to avenge that bastard, but ended up hunting some shitty vampires in a town in the next country. How did that happen?” Thersec asked as he glared at him.

“That’s what I came here to find out. I followed Emilia’s crystal, but I ended up in the vampire hideout. I have no idea how they got their hands on the teleportation crystal, so I brought them here.” Lukas answered honestly.

Now that it had come to this, there was no point in keeping it a secret from Thersec or trying to trick him. The elder was an old fox and would see through their lies easily anyway.

“That’s really intriguing. If I were to guess, I’d say these vampires tried to contact the undead that showed up at the border, but they had already left the fortress by the time they arrived.” Thersec began to scratch his beard as he spoke thoughtfully.

“I don’t know why the skeletons would have left the teleportation crystal behind, but the vampires could have found it among the wreckage and taken it with them.”

“Well, we can only hope the jailers get the answers.” Thersec spoke.

“Wait, what do you mean wait? Are you staying?” Lukas asked confused.

“Obviously. It would be weird to leave before I get answers, so I’ll have to wait here. I’ll wait for news in another room and you’ll leave with me, so don’t even think about trying anything. You’ll be punished as soon as we leave here.” The water elder left the room with those words, leaving Lukas alone again.

Several hours passed before jailers knocked on Lukas’ door with news. As Lukas had thought, vampires easily gave in to torture and vampire-specific drugs, disappointing jailers.

According to the vampires, none of them knew about a specific item belonging to House Ripha and most hadn’t left town in the last few weeks, but one vampire and his ghoulish servant had been ordered by the God Illum to make contact with the black skeletons and failed.

Lukas suspected that Thersec’s theory was correct, but the jailer kept talking and delivered devastating news to him. According to the vampires, Illum had ordered the vampires to return rather than follow the skeletons’ tracks and would leave it for other undead to find in contact with them.

Initially, Lukas only thought that the God Illum would send another undead spy better suited for a long journey into the desert, but the vampires said that the darkwood banshees would take care of it, confusing the jailers.

None of them had heard of an undead called the Banshee or a forest of Darkwood, but according to vampires, they were a species of undead that arose a century or so ago, and created an undead realm and the black forests in the southeast of the continent.

Lukas was incredulous and refused to believe the jailer's words. He knew that there really was a giant forest the size of a kingdom in the southeast of the continent and that the forest only started to form a century ago, but the order assumed it to be a new type of tree that the yggdrasil sprout created to adapt to the desert, not a dead forest.

The undead's miasma was supposed to make it impossible for any plant to grow near them, so the assumption of the order was not without basis.

Even Eirin/Canan were not aware of the banshees, as they only saw the continent of the moon. They had tortured the undead before, but the banshees were recent undead and the overwhelming majority of spies infiltrated the three realms weren't aware of them.

'So there's an undead realm on the continent and none of us knew about it. As if a war against three continents at once wasn't enough enemies.' Lukas thought irritably.

'Luckily, these banshees are on the other side of the continent, so there is little chance of them becoming a threat to humanity for centuries to come. Your only ways to advance would be through the demihuman empire or the sea of trees, but the demihumans are powerful and defeating the sprout of yggdrasil is impossible.' He assessed the enemies, realizing he didn't need to worry about them right away.

'But when this is reported the order will cause an uproar. Up until now, the continent of Caprio has been free from invasion attempts by the Sytrer continent, but that notion has just been proven wrong and the undead have created an entire kingdom right under our noses.'

'I too will be unable to avenge my daughter with so many enemies appearing on our doorstep. Without the teleportation crystal, my only chance for revenge would be an expedition into the savannahs, but that would be madness and no one would approve.' Lukas looked down in dismay, realizing it would be impossible to avenge his daughter.

"Thanks for the good work. I've already taken care of everything I had to do here, so I'm going to meet with the water elder now and leave." Lukas said goodbye to the jailor and left the room, finding Thersec waiting for him outside.

"I'm not going to run away, so let's go and get this over with." Lukas muttered under his breath, but Thersec shook his head.

Chapter 237 Lunar Laboratory

"If you heard the jailor's words, you should know that the situation has changed. Despite my wish, I cannot punish you anymore. You have discovered an imminent threat, so I would look like a madman if I punished you now." Thersec spoke, but his look of distaste made it clear he didn't like the situation one bit.

"Of course, you still attacked two of my personal apprentices, but I'll let it go this time. Since you were kind enough to publicly shout that you were on a mission under my orders, I'll take credit for the discovery and in return, I will forget your disobedience. It's a fair exchange."

"Whatever. Take the glory or whatever. I'm not in the mood for a political fight right now." Lukas barely heard what Thersec said, his mind busy thinking about how to arrange a burial for his daughter.

“Let’s go. We have a lot to resolve and important information to share.” Thersec spoke as he led Lukas to an open area and picked up a teleportation crystal to return to the Ripha mansion.

Just as Lukas thought, the order fell into chaos after learning the truth of the dark forests and the undead that inhabited it. No one had heard of a species of undead called the banshee or what they looked like, but they must have been really powerful to dominate a region the size of a kingdom in just a century.

The ones who were most enraged by this news were Canan and Eirin, who felt they had been deceived until now. They always thought that Illum and Kalesi intended to maintain balance between all races and only attacked the Carian empire to keep humans in check, but it seems they were wrong.

They had never been openly involved in other continents, so the human gods were under the illusion that they didn’t intend to be directly involved and just accumulated power silently..

‘This is very irritating.’ Eirin spoke in Canan’s mind, reading Lukas’ report on the banshees for the umpteenth time. They were currently in their incomplete lunar laboratory, observing Elbon from space.

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Eirin took at least two hours a day to observe the world, mostly to investigate changes on the continent of Doravon. Despite being a Goddess and her senses being extremely sharp, it was still not enough to see details on the surface of the planet, but the movement of large armies of evolved semi-humans was possible.

Eirin knew that a large army was encamped at the edge of the continent and a second wave of warriors had been sent, even though the first wave had not yet reached the continent of Caprio.

The vanguard of the demihumans would be arriving in 10 days and despite the best efforts of the order and the church, many of the coastal territories were still unprotected or not fortified enough to defend against an army of evolved demihumans.

The demihumans weren’t advancing in a straight line, but changing their routes whenever they passed an island, so the order used this to roughly predict where the undead would appear.

There were a few human cities on the invasion route, but a lot of land was unpopulated areas and entire fortresses would have to be built from scratch to defend themselves.

‘I am also angry, but it was our own negligence that allowed them to settle on the Caprio continent.’ Canan responded as he controlled cinder blocks laced with divine mithril, rebuilding his moon base.

A mithril archway inlaid with teleportation crystals was right behind him, a purple portal permanently open while tons of concrete mixed with divine mithril.

Canan had built his own portal in his under-construction lunar laboratory. Lukas had shared the secret of portal technology some time ago and all the elders were working to build their own portal network, but Canan was the first to succeed.

A crystal arch was built in the royal palace and another on the moon, but Canan had plans to build one in every major city in his empire.

Rather than create another tower of portals and risk being destroyed and losing everything again, they built the portals separately to minimize their losses if any portals were destroyed.

Each crystal arc could keep a limited amount of records from other crystals, but the empire could keep that information separately and easily solve the problem.

‘What’s worse is that at the moment, there’s not much we can do to deal with the problem. Our empires cannot move until the war is over and seeing how many soldiers these demihumans have, the war should take at least half a century.’ Eirin spoke in frustration and Canan nodded.

‘I know. The Darkwood is also at the opposite end of the continent, so getting to them is almost impossible. Do you think Illum ordered them to start their invasion there to avoid our interference or was it just coincidence?’ Canan asked doubtfully.

‘Our master is calculist, but I doubt he ordered something like that. It’s most likely that the Banshees spawned naturally in this region and he just sent support to help them.’ Eirin answered and she was right.

Illum had sent reinforcements and resources through Kalesi, as Selena refused any help from the yggdrasil.

‘Do you think they are in cahoots with the yggdrasil sprout? You know, how Kalesi and Illum allied. That would explain how a forest was able to grow so quickly.’ Eirin spoke bitterly as she thought of her enemies joining forces, but Canan disagreed.

‘Your theory isn’t bad, but I doubt it. Take a closer look at the forest and you will see that there is a land line separating the Darkwood and the sea of trees. If we focus our senses to the maximum, you will notice that they seem to be in conflict with each other.’ Canan responded and temporarily stopped what he was doing to prove his point.

He looked towards the continent of Caprio and conjured human-sized lenses of light over each other and pointed towards the border between the sea of trees and darkwood. The lenses acted like a magnifying glass and magnified the image, allowing them to get a better look at the planet’s surface.

It wasn’t enough to see details, but they could at least make out things on the ground. They noticed that small skirmishes were taking place, so they watched for a while to try to get some detail on the enemies.

Canan easily spotted the zombified beasts coming out of the darkwood, but there was no sign of the banshees, whatever they were supposed to look like. Transparent demihumans were among the beasts and for a second Canan thought they were banshees, but he recognized them soon after as Phantoms.

‘Maybe they didn’t show up now. If banshees ruled the darkwood, they wouldn’t get involved in small battles and let their servants fight in their stead.’ Eirin spoke into his mind half-disappointed.

They watched as elves came out of the forest and cast spells from a distance to try and stop the zombies and phantoms. It was a common strategy to use magic against demihumans and zombies to reduce their numbers, so neither of them found the elves’ tactic odd.

‘Hmm? Why are there elves on the side of the undead?’ Eirin drew Canan’s attention to the Darkwoods, where elves astride zombified beasts emerged from the forest’s edge. The Evergreen Elves clearly panicked at the sight of their enemies and started to cast magic even faster, but quickly stopped.

The Evergreen Elves began to fall to the ground as they writhed in pain and the zombified beasts quickly caught up with them, tearing the Elves to pieces. The fight ended so suddenly that Canan and Eirin didn’t even have time to react.

‘What the hell was that?’ Eirin asked in shock, but Canan was just as confused as she was.

‘No idea, but the elves must be the undead we’ve heard about and responsible for this. These banshees seem to be the type that retain the same appearance as they did in life and possess strange powers that we haven’t been able to detect from a distance. Anything else you want to add?’ Canan summarized the meager information they could obtain.

‘There’s not much we can find out from here. Try to view the black forest from above and get some detail.’ Eirin spoke and Canan moved the lens to the top of the forest, but it was in vain. There was a strange fog that covered Darkwood and the most they could see was a dark castle and some buildings in the middle of the forest, but even those had fog around and it was impossible to distinguish any detail.

They had already tried to spy on the continents the first time they visited the moon a few months ago and they knew that it was impossible to spy on the black forest as well as the Nytrer continent.

‘This fog looks similar to what Illum uses to blanket the Nytrer continent, but it looks fainter for some reason. Do you think this is Illum’s job too?’ Canan spoke.

‘This is impossible and you know it. Leviathan’s Mist is very powerful and cannot be diluted or altered. I believe that fog is something that the forest itself emits naturally.’ Eirin replied before changing the subject. ‘Let’s leave the subject of banshees aside for now. What about Eishin? Did he make any movements while I was sleeping?’

Chapter 238 Ascension plans

Sometimes Canan or Eirin would slip into an unconscious state to allow the other some privacy and needed to catch up on what happened while they were sleeping.

‘Not yet. I tried to contact him in every way, but Eishin refused them all. I don’t know what he’s planning, I just hope he doesn’t try to do something himself or reveal many of the hidden cards he’s been preparing for the future war. I hate to admit it, but the information we have on Nytrer is limited to what we get from the few undead we captured or the outdated knowledge of the time we lived there.’ Kanan replied.

‘Illum and Kalesi are definitely gathering more and more strength as we speak and we both know that we are weaker than them, the only reason we are still alive is that a battle between all of us would destroy the world that is still recovering.’ Canan kept talking despondently and Eirin tried to cheer him up.

‘I know and we are also doing everything possible to strengthen ourselves and humanity as a whole, so don’t get discouraged and let’s keep moving forward with our heads held high.’ Eirin spoke to cheer him up, and Canan undid the light lenses and turned to resume construction on his lunar lab.

'This place is also an important weapon for the future, so let's do our best.' Canan spoke with renewed humor and worked at an even faster pace than before.

In the city of El Dorado, almost five kilometers underground.

There was an underground chamber nearly 500 meters long and 100 meters high, its walls, ceiling, and floor made entirely of stone and giant roots. The roots radiated a strong white light, the light element shining on its surface and perfectly illuminating the underground chamber.

A spirit made of light amber energy was chained by white chains in the middle of the chamber, trapped in an egg-shaped cocoon with a white liquid filling its interior. Moans of suffering sometimes involuntarily escaped the spirit's mouth, its pain echoing through the empty chamber.

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The spirit's body was covered in cracks and it felt like it could break at any moment, but the white chains held its body together and prevented it from collapsing.

An angel was standing in front of the cocoon, coldly watching the spirit. Its body had no features and it was impossible to distinguish whether it was male or female. The angel wore a white and gold toga, but the biggest feature that set him apart from the other angels were his wings.

Unlike ordinary angels who had only two wings or the four-winged cherubim, he was a six-winged seraph, one of the seven archangels of Eishin. They were the most elite among the angels, most of them were descendants of Eishin or the greatest champions that appeared in the history of mankind.

Most of the seraphim were the leaders of the angelic armies, but some had different and equally important jobs, such as guarding this underground chamber.

There was no entrance to the underground chamber, its walls and ceiling almost completely sealed off, just a few holes the size of a drop of water.

Suddenly, the angel looked away from the injured spirit and looked up at the ceiling, before kneeling down on the floor. Small beams of light passed through the holes in the ceiling the size of a drop of water, slowly transforming into the shape of a man.

"It's an honor to see you again, master. What brings you here?" The seraph spoke from his kneeling position.

"I'm just here to check the progress of your work, Samael." Eishin spoke while looking with disgust at the suffering spirit. His body told him to step forward and deliver the final blow to the dying spirit, but his reason stopped him.

"As ordered, I accelerated the conversion of world energy into holy world energy, but this caused the yggdrasil spirit great pain. The shock might end up doing even more damage to its already injured spirit, although the currents of holy mana do not allow it to he collapses, no matter how much he suffers." The seraph replied as he looked at the spirit moaning in anguish, but Eishin didn't care.

“The state of the spirit doesn’t matter. The only reason it’s still alive is that it still has some use to me, otherwise I would have killed it already.” Eishin spoke with disgust. The yggdrasil spirit was one of the eldest sons of Illum and an old enemy of Eishin, who was killed thousands of years ago, or so the people alive at the time believed.

The truth was, he had destroyed most of the yggdrasil tree and left only deeper roots intact, allowing the spirit to remain alive for a while longer. The spirit’s core had been damaged and the spirit would have slowly died that way, but Eishin used holy magic and its unique properties to keep it alive and imprisoned it underground, keeping it on the brink of death for millennia.

Holy mana also slowly seeped into the spirit’s core and purified it, slowly transforming it into a holy spirit. His racial abilities were also changed because of the transformation and Eishin made use of this change.

He used the spirit of yggdrasil to increase the amount of light element in the world energy around his empire, converting it into holy world energy.

“However master, I must warn you once again of the dangers of further accelerating the conversion of world energy into holy energy. We have kept the conversion of world energy to a minimum to give people time to adapt and keep the side effects of excess of light element under control.” Samael spoke with concern for humanity and for the first time Eishin took his eyes off the spirit and turned to him.

But there was no warmth or concern in his gaze, just coldness.

“It doesn’t matter. For millennia we’ve been preparing the citizens of the Carian empire for this, slowly increasing the amount of light in the world’s energy and everything around it. Whether it’s in the air they breathe, the land they walk on, the water they drink, in the food they eat and even the elemental affinity of people’s bodies.” Eishin spoke, revealing the truth behind the “blessing” he shared with the Caria empire.

“All citizens of the empire have an affinity for light thanks to holy Yggdrasil, so if we speed up now the problems shouldn’t be too big. Even if you’re right and I’m wrong, some losses are a risk we have to take if we want to guarantee our rightful place on top of the world.” Eishin’s gaze wandered from Samael to the air behind him, looking to an imaginary future where the human species ascended to something greater and took their rightful place at the top of this world.

“Don’t forget that our ultimate goal is the ascension of the human species as a whole, so a few sacrifices along the way can’t stop us. Got it?” Eishin turned his gaze to Samael, who could only lower his head and nod.

“I would also like to keep the sacred energy conversion slower and lower the risks, but the demihumans recovering their ancient bloodlines has changed the situation. We need enough power to face them and those who try to stop us. The Ascension of our species is essential to this.” Eishin touched Samael’s shoulder as he continued his fanatical speech.

Samael could only sigh bitterly as he waited for his master’s speech to end. Eishin always got that way when he spoke of humanity and its long-held desire to evolve beyond its current limits, forcing any unfortunate angels nearby to listen to his words.

It took nearly half an hour before Eishin calmed down and stopped his rant.

"I've already spent too much time here. I'm leaving now, but keep me updated of any changes in spirit. This bastard is key to our plan and don't let anything bad happen to him." Eishin spoke last as he took his leave, turning into tiny beams of light and coming out through small holes in the ceiling.

Left alone, Samael went back to watching the spirit in silence, but his mind continued to remember his last conversation with Eishin. The fanatical gleam in his eye when talking about humanity rising, the hatred not disguised by just the brief mention of giants, the coldness in treating those he was sworn to protect as sacrifices for the greater good, and the recklessness in ignoring his warnings and the side effects that accelerate the conversion of sacred energy could bring.

'No, I shouldn't doubt my master like that. Thousands of people die every day and ascension will allow even more to be saved. So why is my heart so restless?' Samael thought as he placed his hand on his chest.

His body was made entirely of light and there shouldn't have been anything there, but he still remembered the feeling of a beating heart. Samael swallowed that disquieting feeling, repeating to himself that it was for the good of humanity, but there was no way to distract himself in an underground chamber and soon thoughts of doubt returned to his mind.

Chapter 239 Gold mines

In the extreme north of the desert, in the army of black skeletons commanded by Astrus, Ruy and the basilisk.

The undead army had marched non-stop and reached the end of the savannas, killing everything they found in their path and even diverting at times when they found nests of monsters that could be killed quickly.

Despite not having much magical support, each of the generals had 10,000 skeletons and there were three of them here. Furthermore, unlike the time when they entered the desert and their army was composed mainly of humans, now they were just monsters and demi-humans accustomed to the environment.

Their numbers had grown somewhat since they left, but the generals did not let their guard down and continued to hunt diligently to reduce the loss of skeletons caused by the expansion of the mind web, while at the same time looking for a suitable place to settle.

They had almost reached the mountains when they found a more or less suitable spot. It was entirely by chance, but as they were marching, the earth suddenly began to sink and give way, burying a few hundred skeletons of the vanguard.

The generals feared that an elemental storm was starting and hastily ordered them to retreat, but it ended as quickly as it started. It turned out that it wasn't an elemental storm that caused the ground to cave in, but an underground cavern just below them.

The ceiling was thin and did not support the weight of the skeletons above them. After confirming that the skeletons that fell to the cave were safe, the generals began to investigate the cave, discovering that there were raw ores on the cave floor.

The ores they found were mostly gold nuggets, with a few iron ores mixed in. Feeling that they were literally on top of a gold mine, the generals ordered the dwarves to start digging, discovering that they were right.

Astrus immediately informed Athos of the good news, receiving orders to begin building a fort around the mine and begin a mining operation as soon as possible.

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"You heard the orders guys, let's get to work. Kill everything within a 10 kilometer radius and secure a safe perimeter for construction. We don't have magic metals to create large-scale defensive spells, so traps like trenches will be essential, in addition to a wall obviously." Astrus started giving orders as soon as he received orders from Athos and Ruy just nodded in agreement.

"Hey, why should I take orders from you? I am a superior being and I refuse to obey someone like you!" The basilisk, on the other hand, didn't like the idea of Astrus taking over. He made complaints like this whenever one of the generals tried to issue an order, much to the annoyance of Astrus and Ruy who were unable to understand his words but felt the basilisk's scorn thanks to the mental link connecting them.

The basilisk had behaved in front of Athos and obeyed without any problems until the moment of departure, but as soon as they separated from Athos, it became arrogant and began to despise the two generals as inferiors.

"Be silent, worm. We are obeying your majesty's orders, so do not interfere. Or may I consider your resistance as disloyalty to our master?" Astrus snapped back, shushing the giant serpent. The basilisk didn't understand his words either, but the black chains in his soul did and recognized the basilisk's disobedience, sealing his movements.

After days of marching together and arguing, Astrus and Ruy had figured out how to deal with the irritating basilisk. The giant snake was smart by monster standards, but it was still stupid by human standards and constantly said things that could be misunderstood, so they just needed to point it out to shut up the basilisk.

"Want to take advantage of us starting to settle down and scout the mountains for dwarves? The nearest mountain is only a few hours away, so it might be a good idea to grab an elite unit and try to raid them." Ruy suggested looking at the mountains to the north.

"Let's leave it for later. Forming an elite team would compromise our current defenses and we don't know when we might be attacked. We've risen so high that we're dangerously close to the Mirkor realm. If the realm has already started rebuilding the destroyed fortress, they might want to investigate us, and we're going to be in trouble if they find us." Astrus spoke worriedly, not knowing that the kingdom of Mirkor already had their hands full with the imminent invasion and had not even started reconstruction projects.

"Makes sense. Let's save that for another day then." Ruy nodded in agreement, before heading out to hunt and secure the security perimeter. As a former adventurer, he had no idea what he was supposed to do to build a base and defend it, so he concentrated on what he did best, hunting.

“Looks like the skeletons that marched north found a gold mine. I don’t know how useful gold will be in the future, but having a gold mine is never a bad thing.” Athos muttered after receiving Astrus’ report.

“Gold is an important metal, master. Its natural form is malleable, but if they absorb enough mana from nature or we dwarves use our earth son ability enough on gold, they can evolve into adamant, an alloy of magical metals.” Dwarvin who was next to him replied, surprising Athos.

“Wait, adamant is magic gold? How can such a malleable metal become one of the strongest metals physically?” Athos asked doubtfully, pointing to his own armor in doubt.

“Yes. All magic metal alloys are normal metals that exist in nature and have been refined by the world’s energy. I will teach you about the different types of magic metals when we start our runesmith classes.” Dwarvin explained patiently as he took notes on the projects in front of him.

They were currently in a black stone house built by the dwarves, where the smartest dwarves created the blueprints for the fortress. Currently, the most they were doing was building the bases and fortifying the ground, which was made extremely fragile by Treevor.

They have hardened and compressed the earth until it is as hard as stone thanks to earth magic and the dwarves’ earthborn skill. The dwarves had prepared the ground only 5 kilometers long for now, but the total size of the fortress would be almost 20 kilometers according to the dwarves’ blueprints.

They had more than a few thousand dwarves for manpower, but most had spent all their mana corrupting newly obtained weapons and were out of mana at the time.

Athos had been called in to approve the building plans, and he took the opportunity to talk with Dwarvin about the problem of a shortage of magical metals. The dwarf had finally taken a break from the forge because of his lack of mana but refused to stop working and went over to review the construction blueprints.

But it turned out that there was a very simple solution to the problem. It would be enough for dwarves to use earth son to infuse mana into common metals before starting the runesmith, or even common rocks and stones.

It was the technique that the dwarves used in the mountains to reduce the cost of materials, only needing to use metals for more complex enchantments, such as the hammer that controlled the enchantments in the first mountain they invaded.

Their enchantments wouldn’t be as powerful as using magical metals, but it was still the best option they had.

The skeletons no longer had anything preventing their departure, but they decided that they would only leave after the construction of the fortress was complete, or at least the initial defenses were in place.

“I’m going to get in the way if I stay here, so I’m leaving now. Let me know when you have some free time so we can start our lessons, Dwarvin.” After approving all the projects for building the base and having all his questions answered, Athos said goodbye to the dwarf and left the small improvised house, looking at the skeletons working outside.

Even without the dwarves to help, the skeletons themselves could still work manually, and mages with an earth affinity helped a lot. Furthermore, the dwarfs themselves were recovering quickly and in a few minutes they would be back at work, thanks to a startling discovery.

The black crystal horns of the crystal horn rhinos were similar to magic stones and the skeletons could use darkness to absorb corrupted world energy from the crystals.

The crystals wouldn't be consumed either and would just lose the energy they stored and slowly recharge their energies. Dwarf skeletons were using the rhinos as backup batteries and absorbing whatever energy they could.

Athos didn't stand still for long watching the skeletons work and went looking for an empty area where he could practice magic. There wasn't much he could do to help with the construction and even if there was, practicing magic was more fun and he couldn't wait to get started.

He had more than a few ideas for spells he intended to create, but it would take time and effort to create them. Athos walked until he almost reached the edge of the camp, finding a battle in progress.

Chapter 240 Practice and training

"What's going on here?" he asked doubtfully, noticing that several demihuman skeletons were fighting each other, but that should be impossible. Skeletons were incapable of harming their peers unless ordered by a superior, but there was no reason for any of their generals to order them to do so.

"This is not a patriarch fight, just training." Vanilla approached Athos and explained the misunderstanding.

"You call this training?" Athos asked as he pointed to the fight between an ogre and orc skeleton. Both were using weapons made of corrupted iron, but they were fighting with all they had, even using their racial abilities.

The ogre wasn't using gigantization as there was still a large amount of light in the world energy and the orc's rage wasn't at its peak for fighting another skeleton, but it was still an extremely violent fight.

"That's how demihumans train, patriarch. Nothing better than real combat to temper the body." Vanilla spoke confidently, making Athos feel nostalgic, although he didn't understand why.

"I understand that well. I was also taught to fight in real combat rather than training." Athos spoke with a nostalgic smile, only for his expression to sink. He was suddenly discouraged and shook his head to rid himself of the depressing thoughts.

'There is no reason to think about the past.' He repeated to himself.

"I'll get some free space somewhere and practice magic, so keep on training." Athos spoke and waved his hand to say goodbye to Vanilla, but an incredibly strong skeleton ogre approached him and stopped his path.

"Who are you?" Athos asked while using death vision, noticing that the skeleton was in the sixth layer of life, immediately recognizing it. "You are the ogre patriarch I killed."

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"I am... the ancient patriarch... of the ogre clan.... I came here... to make a... request." The former ogre patriarch nodded in agreement and spoke as politely as he could, but Athos did not understand a single word.

"He wants to ask something of you, patriarch." Vanilla translated.

'I really need to learn the demi-human language.' Athos thought as he ordered Vanilla to act as a translator temporarily.

"Since when have you been corrupted and what do you want to ask of me?" Athos asked curiously.

"The commander...Treevor...granted me...a few dozen...skeletons...and asked me...many questions." The ex-patriarch spoke, reminding Athos that the skeletons had interrogated the main demihuman leaders, as the spirits were still unconscious.

"And my...request...I would...like to...take...the position...of general...which is...empty...currently...my subordinates...are also...fit...for similar...positions" The ex-patriarch asked and knelt down.

Athos looked doubtfully at the ogre skeleton. before shaking his head in denial. "I've tasked Treevor with choosing the next generals, so you must report to him. You will be part of the expedition's army and must report to him."

'I passed the boring tasks to Treevor so I wouldn't have to do them myself. I don't care who gets the general job since they're leaving anyway and I'll forget about them the second they're out of my sight.' Athos really thought.

"Furthermore, the next leaders will be chosen based on intelligence, rather than just raw power. Of course, strength is still a prerequisite, but we need a leader capable of commanding several soldiers. If you are confident in your intelligence, just talk to Treevor." Athos finished speaking and walked away to finally find a place to practice magic.

"It was a good try to make an honest request, but our patriarch doesn't care about that, just how useful we can be to him. Commander Treevor is a bit more lenient and will likely accept your request, seeing as you're in sixth layer and used to be a patriarch." Vanilla approached the ogre and offered a helping hand.

"How did you...become...a general? You are...weaker...than me...and yet...in...a...higher...position." The ogre patriarch stood up and asked curiously.

"I was lucky. I was rescued by the patriarch when the army was much smaller and I assumed the position of general naturally." Vanilla happily replied. "Even after obtaining new, more powerful undead, our patriarch found it troublesome to keep changing generals."

"But...choosing...more powerful...generals...wouldn't...make...the army...stronger? Isn't...that...the...patriarch's...goal?" The ogre asked as he pondered Vanilla's words, but the latter denied it.

"Actually, the generals don't make much difference. In a regular army, the generals would have to lead the army and pass on orders, but the patriarch himself or the commander can move the army using mind link, so generals' roles are mainly advisors. of the patriarch." Vanilla explained.

“Furthermore, in a large-scale battle like the last time, our personal strength makes little difference. Our power comes from our numbers, and the generals only assume command when we separate ourselves from the patriarch, like the undead who have gone to north.” Vanilla finished speaking and patted the ogre on the arm.

“I think...understood. I’ll talk...to the commander...now.” The ogre thanked Vanilla and left to find Treevor.

‘I shouldn’t have told him that the patriarch didn’t want to personally name the next generals so he wouldn’t have to remember their names. The patriarch forgets most things he doesn’t find interesting and the names of new subordinates are included.’ Vanilla thought as she watched the ogre walk away.

A few hundred meters away, Athos finally found a suitable spot, far enough away that the noise of the demihumans training wouldn’t disturb him, but close enough that he wouldn’t be attacked by monsters.

‘Let’s start with the magic of darkness.’ Athos thought and began to accumulate a small amount of darkness in his palms, before increasing the concentration of darkness a little at a time.

‘My magic is obsolete for my current power level, but dark magic is even worse. I have a few months of practice with the element, while I have almost five years of experience with the other elements.’ Athos thought as he found it difficult to control the growing amount of darkness, but he refused to give in.

Even though his control over magic and his sensitivity to mana had increased, darkness was still an unfamiliar element for Athos. He had already gained better control over darkness after curing several undead and their experiments, but it didn’t even compare to the control he had over the other.

“Luckily, now the darkness literally flows through my veins, so I’m learning to control it much faster than before.” Athos murmured, trying to form the darkness he had gathered and realizing how difficult it was.

The darkness was ethereal and it changed shape easily, but any lapse in concentration and it would become shapeless again. Athos was more or less used to this, since fire and air were similar, but the ratio was completely different.

‘This is a lot harder than it looks. When I practiced dark magic to heal skeletons before, I just had to spread the darkness or focus it in one place, but shaping the darkness is an almost impossible task.’ He thought in frustration as he tried and failed once again to form a perfect sphere of darkness.

Athos felt like reducing the concentration of darkness to make his job easier, but he persevered. The darkness was at a level suitable for his current core and he could feel that he was advancing and the darkness in his hands was less and less volatile, although it still warped from time to time.

After some trial and error, Athos was finally able to maintain a perfect sphere and increased the difficulty, trying to form a cube. He continued making several different shapes and increasing the difficulty with each step.

In less than an hour, Athos was able to form all the shapes he knew, in two hours he started to form simple weapons. In four hours, he was able to create a second weapon and keep it steady.

In eight hours, there were five spheres of perfect darkness around him. It was an incredible feat and progress in record time, but it required Athos's full focus and a single moment of distraction would make it all go away.

'Now comes the hard part.' Athos thought and slowly began to move, stopping whenever the spheres of darkness threatened to warp. He was feeling a severe headache from using magic non-stop for nearly eight hours and would be forced to stop here whether he succeeded or not.

Athos moved slowly, but his full focus was on the spheres of darkness and he didn't notice the uneven ground, stumbling stupidly and wasting all his hard work.

"Shit! So much effort to fail for such a dumb mistake at the end!" Athos exclaimed irritably, but he didn't try to get up, he just spit out the earth that got into his mouth and threw himself on the ground abruptly.

"Don't be so hard on yourself. It was progress that would make even geniuses jealous." Treevor sat beside him as he encouraged him, but Athos was so intent on his task that he didn't notice the skeleton until it said something, squealing like a little girl in fright.