

Legion lich 31

Chapter 31:

She and the other archer climbed into the trees, jumping between the branches to move. They positioned themselves in a spot with a good line of sight to the caravan and watched as the first group made its way towards the bandits.

“What? Attention, the enemies have arrived! Return to your formations, now!” The first to notice the attack was obviously the platoon leader, who quickly ordered his soldiers to prepare.

He was surprised at the moment of the enemy attack, but he didn’t have much time to think.

“What do you mean, an attack? Wasn’t it a hole made by monsters?” One of the soldiers asked confused by the contradictory orders.

The guards had already let their guard down, so they were slow to respond. The bandits, on the other hand, used the cover of the trees until they reached the clearing where they shouted at the top of their lungs to draw the guards’ full attention to them.

“Attack!” Random Bandit1.

“Kill them all!” Random Bandit2.

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The platoon leader quickly assessed the number of enemies and realized they were outnumbered, but he didn’t feel cornered. His platoon had 3 mana users with him included, so victory would be a matter of time, he quickly looked between the enemies looking for the leader and saw a man covered in plate armor and the only mana user among the bandits.

Dave advanced first and in an instant was in front of the nearest guard. He attacked with the mace in his right hand using the critical strike skill.

The mana concentrated in the center of the mace during the swing and exploded out of the weapon on impact, generating a concentrated shock wave. The guard didn’t react in time and the mace hit his helmet squarely.

The helmet cracked on impact and his skull was crushed in an instant. Blood leaked from every orifice in her face, while her eyes bulged out of their sockets from the pressure of her crushed brain.

“ROARR!!!!” Dave concentrated his mana in his throat before roaring, using a second skill, intimidating roar.

The mana was released along with the voice, spreading his aura further than should be possible and paralyzing anyone weaker within the roar’s area of effect.

A second roar was heard, but this one came from behind the guards. The squad leader activated the same ability, the overwhelming auras colliding with each other and canceling out.

The platoon leader leapt over the guards, raising the ax above his head with both hands, and landed on top of Dave, trying to split him in half.

Dave defended himself by raising his shield in his left hand and using a shield strike.

The sound of metal hitting metal echoed through the clearing as the weapons collided. The platoon leader used all his weight on the blow, forcing Dave to drop to one knee, but the knockback effect of the skill sent him flying back.

“Why are you just looking? Attack!” Dave yelled, snapping his men out of their stupor.

The bandits and guards had stopped to watch the fight. The platoon leader was about to shout orders as well, but a wind being cut sound was heard.

An arrow quickly flew towards his head. He jerked his head to the side hastily to dodge, but a second arrow hit him in the left shoulder before exploding in a shower of fragments and blood.

The arrow was imbued with the weapon break skill. The skill concentrated the user’s mana with the metal’s natural mana and blasted it all in a single attack, increasing the destructive power multiple times. The flaw of the skill was that the weapon used was destroyed after the attack and the high cost of mana required to use it.

Most warriors would hesitate to use the skill, but it was a perfect skill for archers who could use disposable arrows.

“Watch out for the archers, keep your shields ready!” The platoon leader held back a cry of pain, feeling a tremendous pain in his left shoulder. The bone fragments mixed with the arrow fragments in a bloody mess. He couldn’t move his left arm, no matter how hard he tried.

Fighting between the two groups started around them, but neither group dared to attack them, as if an invisible barrier was around them.

The fight around them became a mess in an instant, with screams, blood, and guns all over the place. The platoon leader expected at least one of his mana-capable subordinates to show up to help him, but a quick look around the battlefield proved that they were both busy.

Three bandits formed a triangle formation around each of them, keeping them busy while a hooded assassin attacked from behind whenever they got distracted by the simultaneous attacks.

Bloody wounds began to rapidly accumulate through their bodies as they desperately fought for their lives.

“George, team up with me!” One of them screamed desperately using a shield skill to push back one of the bandits, temporarily breaking the formation. The assassin didn’t let the opportunity pass, taking advantage of the gap to plunge a poisoned dagger between his ribs, piercing between the gaps in the side of the armor.

The guard tasted iron in his mouth, but he never stopped running. Until the sound of wind being cut was heard again. An arrow flew swiftly while he was distracted, digging into his neck and exploding in a shower of blood, sending the guard’s head flying.

“Frank!” George screamed as he watched his friend die, fighting fiercely without regard for his own safety, but the situation only worsened for him. A second assassin joined the fight, doubling the damage he took. A dagger plunged into his thigh, a second into his stomach, and a third into his lung.

Blood spurted from the wounds, but George was determined not to die alone. He gripped the hilt that held the dagger in his stomach tightly and used his other hand to stab the sword through the assassin's chest.

He used the sword's weapon break as a form of mockery, causing the sword to shatter inside the assassin's body and half of his torso to explode in a shower of viscera and blood.

George dropped to his knees on the floor, losing all strength. He fell to the side shortly thereafter, drowning in his own blood.

"You motherfuckers...!" The platoon leader cursed watching his subordinates die. The course of the battle quickly changed from there. For every bandit that was killed, two more guards died as well. Sporadic arrows also blew off the guards' heads, adding to casualties. Soldiers who had any leeway tried to flee, only for enemy reinforcements appeared from behind, cutting off the escape route.

"You shouldn't get distracted in the middle of a fight!!" Dave yelled, striking at the mace in a vertical attack. The platoon leader took a hasty step back as the spiked point of the mace scratches his helmet.

Dave took a step forward and brought the mace down using the critical strike. The platoon leader raised his ax in a desperate measure to protect himself, but only avoided a mortal blow. The mace slammed into the ax and continued on with almost no resistance, crushing his right arm and ripping it from his body.

The leader felt blood spurt like a fountain from the stump of his arm, but he used the last of his strength to fight back. He lunged forward, headbutting with all his might.

Dave was thrown backward on impact, falling to the ground with a dent in his helmet, but he did not sustain any serious damage.

'We did it! We've won!' Evylin yelled after blasting the skull of the last guard alive, raising her fist in the air in triumph.

She felt that this would be the first of many victories for her new, united organization and felt a pang of happiness in her heart.

"Eh?" Evylin muttered in confusion and looked down, discovering that the sting she felt was a red-hot blade piercing through her heart.

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Evylin exclaimed in confusion and tried to touch the blade, but Athos didn't give her time to think and twisted the blade before pulling out the sword, shattering the heart and killing her instantly.

"Fuck! Enemy attack!" The second archer cursed loudly as he jumped back and walked away from the unknown enemy quickly, fitting an arrow to his bow and preparing to shoot while still in the air.

Athos hurled his shield at the fleeing archer, trying to stop the enemy from fleeing and reuniting with his companions. The archer crossed his arms still in the air in front of his body, to try to defend themselves. The shield would have crushed his wrists, but at least he would have come out alive.

And that might have worked if Athos hadn't created a blade of wind in the shield, turning it into a circular saw.

The shield spun quickly and sliced off both of his hands, before continuing and decapitate him. The shield slammed against the tree and Athos turned the blade of wind into a small blast of wind, throwing the shield back at him.

Athos caught the shield in midair, locking it into the armguard. "Two less mana users, two to go." Athos jumped from the tree Evlyn was on and charged towards the remaining bandits.

Meanwhile, Dave was shouting orders in the middle of the clearing to his subordinates to stay alert, after they heard the Ranger's warning. The archer's screams were suddenly cut off, indicating that the archer had likely been killed.

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"Stay away from the trees! Use the carriages for cover!" Dave ordered and his subordinates retreated to the carriages.

Suddenly, leather bags were flung over the forest canopy and fell between them. The bags split open as they fell to the ground, releasing dust that quickly turned to black smoke, darkening the clearing.

"Careful with that smoke, it could be poison! cover your faces with cloths!" Dave tore off a piece of his shirt and used it to cover his face, his subordinates quickly copied him.

Thick smoke burned the eyes, forcing the bandits to keep them closed. Panic and unease began to spread among the bandits as soon as they heard the first scream.

"Ackk! my leg-" The scream was suddenly cut off and only the sound of flesh being cut was heard.

Athos had entered the smoke and was moving hidden among the bandits. He attacked the farthest bandit in the group and slashed his ankles, before jumping on top of him and impaling him.

He kept sneaking around, while slashing at the thugs' knees or heels. He was not immune to smoke and also kept his eyes closed, but he was able to locate himself even without his eyesight.

Athos created a sensory-type ability for situations like this, called a sensory field. Mana flowed to the extremes of the body, such as the skin and hair all over the body, enhancing touch to a superhuman level, allowing him to feel the approach of anything around him, whether magical or physical in nature.

Suddenly, Athos felt something approaching quickly from behind him, as he aimed at his skull, trying to crush it like a watermelon. Athos turned with superhuman reaction time and raised his shield.

The impact was absurdly heavy and made the joints in his left arm crack, but Athos used his weight to his advantage. He stepped to the side, sliding the mace across the shield, and made a follow-up attack almost instantly, trying to slash Dave's throat, aiming at the helmet slit.

Dave bent his head back to dodge it, but Athos' attack wasn't over yet. He used the mana blade skill, causing a blade of pure energy to come out of the sword and increase the attack's range, slashing the right side of Dave's helmet.

Dave backed away a few feet, surprised that his surprise attack was immediately countered. He had used mana vision to find Athos in the smoke and his eyesight was now impaired and he found it difficult to keep his eyes open.

Athos threw the broken shield to the ground and turned, still with his eyes closed, in the direction he felt the enemy and steadied his stance. He ignored the people around him, focused only on the mana user in front of him and the one he felt sneak up behind him. He had used the smoke not only to cover his movements, but also to separate the mana users from the rest of the bandits.

He knew that once the mana users died, the rest would be easy. Athos focused all his attention on the enemies in front of him and behind him, noticing even the smallest movements. He focused beyond what should be humanly possible, but his second cold-minded ability made it possible.

Mana flowed throughout his brain and sped up his thoughts, his mind became focused and the veins in his head bulged, his brain-frying from the overworked.

Athos felt the world around him slow down, but the skill came at a high price. The mana cost was incredibly expensive and the skill couldn't be used for long, or it risked frying its own brain and becoming a vegetable.

along with the sensory field, these abilities were his trump cards and had incredible synergy. After two years of training, Athos was able to divide his focus and maintain three skills at the same time without compromising his performance.

He had used a superior physical booster potion to conserve mana and focus, keeping an ability free for when he needed it.

Dave and the assassin moved at the same time to attack him. Both were using mana vision to locate Athos. He responded by throwing three bottles of viscous acid at Dave and turned to the assassin, confident the acid would do enough damage to kill him.

"AAHHH!" Dave screamed in pain, feeling the metal sizzle and melt against his skin.

The assassin attacked using the multiple cut skill. Mana flowed from one dagger to another as he attacked, increasing the amount of mana spent and attack speed with each strike.

Athos only defended, the multiple slashes pressing him defensively as he backed away waiting for an opening. Small scratches continued to accumulate on his armor until Athos created an opportunity.

Athos pretended to stumble to attract the assassin and the enemy took the bait. The assassin aimed the dagger at his liver, but Athos grabbed his wrist and cut the assassin's arm at the elbow. The assassin used his remaining arm to try to cut his throat, but Athos took a step back, escaping the dagger's reach and slashing his remaining arm in one fluid motion.

Athos swung around so as not to lose momentum and decapitated the assassin in a circular cut. He focused his will around him and realized that more than half of the bandits had fled while he was busy fighting. The other half had gathered in a group, standing with their backs to each other and covering their blind spots.

Dave was thrashing around on the floor. The acid had corroded his helmet and chest, sticking the metal to the flesh. It was only a matter of time before the corrosion killed him.

‘The professor must deal with anyone who runs away, so I just have to focus on killing the bandits that are left here.’ That’s what Athos thought before he started the killing.

He shot wind blade after wind blade through his sword cutting the bandits’ bodies to pieces. arms, heads and torsos flew sporadically within the smokescreen. When he finished, only shredded corpses remained around him.

Athos emerged from the smoke and found Khali waiting for him outside.

“It’s over?” Khali had a huge smile on his face, seeing Athos’ brilliant performance.

‘He has grown at an absurd rate in these two years. He could end up reaching a layer of life in another 4 years of training at this rate.’ It was Khali’s honest assessment.

“It was easy, I could have done it with my eyes closed...” Athos teased him as exhaustion hit him. A terrible headache hit, him making him lose consciousness. blood trickled from his nose, showing that he had overstepped his bounds.

Khali caught him before he could fall to the ground and laid him down gently. “You did very well, Athos. Sleep well, you deserve it.”

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Suddenly, the world darkened, the shadows began to tremble and slowly move towards Athos’ body.

Khali activated the light sealing ring and the world returned to normal. “It’s getting more and more frequent. Soon that ring won’t hold you anymore.” Khali said with a weary sigh.

After Athos passed out, Khali gathered the resource of the three carriages and spent the rest of the day returning the stolen resources to the villages. He kept his identity hidden and identified himself only as an anonymous helper refusing to answer any questions asked by residents.

The village chief was extremely grateful for the unexpected help and stopped the villagers from asking any questions once he realized that his savior preferred to remain anonymous.

The chief was already desperate with lack of food and with winter approaching, they would have starved to death if the cold hadn’t killed them first. Khali made an agreement with the chief of each village to keep a description of the funds received, and the chief readily agreed.

None of the chiefs were stupid and they knew that if they turned out to still have resources, the baron would demand that it be handed over. The chiefs and villagers reached an agreement and decided to hide the funds received, as well as part of the harvest for the next few years. The baron had never demanded more than they could give, so they were not in the habit of hiding their harvest.

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Compared to the villages, the situation in the city was worse than ever. The Baron noticed the delay in the caravan and ordered them to investigate, discovering the corpses of the guards and the bodies of the bandits. Khali had left all the evidence for the baron to find, leaving very little to the investigators' imaginations.

The Baron ground his teeth in anger when he received the news, but there was not much he could do. The gangs have grown too big to be controlled.

"You really can't destroy them?" The Baron spoke in his office, without lifting his head from the report.

"It's not my job to solve your Dravus problems, just keep you alive." Ricley said sitting on the sofa in the office with his feet on the table. He was eating candy without worrying about appearances. Just like Khali and Athos, Ricley and Dravus' relationship also developed. Ricley watched closely as the Baron made failure after failure and lost what little respect he had for him.

He's lost his respectful tone, but Dravus can't do anything about it. The only reason the baron was still alive was because of him.

What Dravus didn't know is that Ricley secretly rooted for the bandits' victory, praying that they would destroy the city enough for the baron to lose his title and his mission to end.

The situation wasn't just bad for the baron. The complete destruction of the strike team destroyed the trusting relationship that formed between the gangs and the criminal organization fell apart before it was formed. They all knew that the baron's forces didn't have the ability to destroy his strike force, so it had to be an inside job.

Mistrust spread among them and each gang returned to their own territory within the city, blocking the streets and dividing the city into 4 parts.

The area where the baron and the rich merchants lived and built their shops, became the "noble" area of the city. The guards' barracks were also located in this area, providing security and stability to the "noble" area.

The former favelas became the territory of the Dedo Podre gang, responsible for drug trafficking in the city. Athos robbed them constantly, causing them great loss of money.

The commercial district where the workshops and shops of the smaller merchants were located became the territory of the red gold gang. They were responsible for the city's smuggling and traded with the black market from other cities.

The residential area has become the territory of the most violent of gangs, the yellow dagger. They were ex-mercenaries who worked in the strongholds beyond the city, on the front lines against the demihuman empire. After a violent battle, most of the members were killed and the gang almost annihilated, so they decided to move to the city 3 years ago.

It was the gang that Evylin worked for, as well as those responsible for the city blockade and the proposed alliance. They planned to unite all the gangs in an alliance and then take control from the inside, but now, all their plans have been ruined.

The church and its surroundings were the only places that remained neutral in this situation. The baron tried countless times to bring the priest to his side, but the priest refused each time. The gangs could not allow the only form of healing in the entire city to be in the hands of the baron and every time the baron went to church to negotiate, the priest would wake up the next morning with the head of one of the nuns at the head of his bed.

Athos woke up 16 hours later, on the same hill as before. He was having an absurd headache. Athos tried to get up, but a sudden dizziness hit him, causing him to fall to the ground vomiting.

“Blerghh! This is worse than a hangover.” Athos said. He’d stolen booze once just to try it out, discovering he had absolutely no resistance to alcohol.

“Good morning, Athos. You’re not the first face I’d like to see when I wake up either, but don’t you think it’s a little too much?” Khali asked irritably, his shirt stained with vomit.

“I was just happy to see you.” Athos smiled weakly before sitting in a lotus position and taking a deep breath, regenerating his mana quickly and circulating it through his body, increasing his recovery speed.

After 5 minutes, the headache was gone and Athos returned to peak state.

“Have you improved yet? I’ll never stop envying that skill.” Khali had gone out to clean up the vomit, but returned before Athos opened his eyes. Despite his words, there was no trace of envy in his voice, just pride.

“How did I do on my first mission?” Athos asked puffing out his chest, expecting praise.

“You did well, Athos. You let some of them get away, but this mission was way above your level and minor mistakes were to be expected.” Khali patted him on the head, congratulating him.

“I appreciate it professor, but I’d rather you pay your bet than get patted on the head, if you don’t mind.” Athos reached for the sword he saw leaning against a nearby rock with a greedy grin.

“Haah, take it.” Khali snorted at Athos and gave permission. Athos jumped on the sword and drew it from its scabbard, admiring the weapon.

It was a 1 meter long, double-edged sword with a silver blade. Yellow and black runes gleamed on the blade as Athos flowed mana through it. The guard had silver details and the handle was padded with leather.

“She’s amazing. What does she do?” That was all Athos said.

“Sure it is, it was meant to be MINE after all.” Khali complained before explaining. “The sword has wind and darkness enchantments. The first makes the sword vibrate at high speed, enhancing the sword’s edge, and the second shoots an aura of darkness when you swing it. The aura of darkness causes a random curse on the enemy.”

“It’s really amazing.” Athos started testing immediately, shooting wave after wave of darkness across the clearing. He was so happy with the new weapon that he only stopped firing when he ran out of mana and everything around him was dead.

He turned and saw Khali's reproachful gaze and shrugged. "The spirits will fix it, so no problem."

Anyway, I have news for you. I originally wanted to wait for you to be 14 before doing this, but your performance has convinced me that you're ready." Khali began his speech in a serious voice.

Sensing the seriousness in his voice, Athos stopped playing and concentrated on him.

"I believe it's about time you had your own familiar."

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"Really?" Athos gaped at the sudden good news. He dropped his new sword and jumped to embrace Khali.

"You are the best, teacher!" Athos hugged him as tightly as he could.

"Okay, okay, now let go of me before you break my spine." Despite his seemingly hasty decision, Khali had a reason to hurry.

"If you continue at this rate, Athos may awaken the darkness while I am gone. He needs something or someone to keep him in check. A pet monster can help you regain some of the humanity he lost. It was Khali's thought.

Khali noticed that Athos was indifferent to people and wouldn't even blink when he saw a massacre, but he cared for him as if they were family, to the point of making potions to take care of his health, even without him asking.

"When can we go?" Athos had released him before he knew it and was pulling him by the arm towards the forest.

"We can go as soon as I teach you the binding spell to form a pact with a monster and make it your familiar." Khali smiled at his excitement. Athos nodded, and sat on a nearby rock, waiting for instructions.

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Khali was used to his attitude, so he didn't mind. "The binding spell is a non-elemental spell used to link two living beings. The spell creates a bond between two beings, forcing the weakest into submission. When used, both beings temporarily lose their mana signature, and the one with the greater amount of mana and the strongest willpower prevails. You are still young, so I recommend a docile monster."

The spell was as simple as it was cruel. After incapacitating a monster, Athos would send a stream of mana mixed with world energy into the monster's core, and it would naturally release mana as a form of defense to try to drive it back. Both users' mana would mix with the world's energy, until their energy signatures became one, forming a link between the two cores.

After that, it would be a tug of war of willpower between him and the monster. The more mana he had in the core, the more similar to his original energy signature the link would be and the more willpower he could exert.

When one of them ran out of mana, or lost the will to fight, the core would disintegrate and the life force would be absorbed by the victor and could be summoned at will.

“The monster’s body is absorbed and transforms into a form of energy other than mana, called life force. Our life force is what forms the layer of life and our energy signature, forming our core. It is also the life force that defines how long each person can live. That’s why our life expectancy increases with each layer of life formed.” Khali finished his explanation.

“Then it must be easy to subdue a monster.” Athos said excitedly.

“It’s not as simple as it sounds. Monsters may not be very smart, but their willpower and survival instinct is extraordinary. Many mages and monster tamers have tried to arrogantly tame monsters, only to become their puppets.

You must seriously injure the monster or make it tired before using the binding spell. All the willpower in the world is useless without mana and all the mana in the world is useless without the will to guide it.” Khali warned him seriously, fearing that Athos might make an irreversible mistake.

“Is it possible to free yourself from the binding spell?” Athos began to find the idea of having a family member less and less attractive.

“The only way to free someone enslaved by the binding spell is to kill the dominant. Because of this, in some countries this spell is also called a slave spell.” Khali said seriously, before smiling and comforting him. “But don’t worry, even if you fail, I’ll kill the monster and set you free.”

“Is it possible to use this spell on other people?” Athos asked, curious to know the spell’s limits.

“It’s impossible to use the spell on beings of the same species as you.” Khali cut him off when he noticed an evil glint in Athos’ eyes.

“How many familiars can I create using this spell?” Athos asked.

“Um...I think I get it. But if they don’t have a core, aren’t they kind of useless?” Athos asked confused by the usefulness of a familiar.

“Think of a familiar as a second body that serves you. They don’t have a mana core of their own, but they can draw mana from your core to use racial abilities that would be impossible for humans to use.”

Athos spent some time thinking about the details he heard and what kind of monster he wanted.

“A suggestion, Athos. You are a warrior and a mage, not a tamer, so you need to constantly use mana to fight. When you choose a monster, choose for its utility, not its strength.” Khali said.

“Professor, how did you choose your monsters?”

“I only have an affinity for water, so I chose monsters with abilities I might need, like rock worms that are able to create underground tunnels.” Khali summoned three monsters, one for each layer of his core. Three lights of different colors were summoned and took the form of a rock worm, a night owl and a brown jackal.

The rock worm was eight feet long and brown-skinned, with a circular mouth with three rows of teeth at either end. The night owl was 35 centimeters tall with white feathers with black spots on the tips. The brown jackal was the only one Athos didn't understand why he was there. It was such an ordinary monster that he didn't even bother to take a second look.

"The rock worm you already know, but this is your first time with the night owl and the brown jackal. The night owl has an affinity for light and can make things invisible. The jackal is just an ordinary monster, but it has an excellent sense of smell and sense of danger.

"Think carefully before turning a monster into a familiar, because once the bond is formed, it can only be undone with your death. Even if the familiar dies, it will still regenerate after a while." Khali warned him. After explaining the spell's effects and dangers, he began teaching how to cast it.

"Okay, I understand everything I need to know about the spell. I'll postpone the decision until tomorrow. For now, I'll stop by the guild and get a bestiary on the monsters around town. There must be some useful monsters for me in this forest." Athos got up and started walking towards the city.

"Very well, there is no reason to rush the decision." Khali agreed with him.

Athos spent the entire next day studying the bestiary he had obtained from the guild. It got to the point where he missed daily training, something he hadn't done in two years of training. Unfortunately for him, the monsters around him were all damage dealers, there was almost no diversity in the species.

"If I continue at this rate, I'll be forced to hunt an aurora frog. It's one of the few monsters that doesn't rely on physical attack and can alternate between secreting paralyzing poison, acid, or healing liquid, similar to a potion. It can help me with my alchemy. What do you think, captain?" Athos muttered in his room, inside the underground base.

He had reconstructed his face before stuffing it, keeping it as a trophy.

"What did you say? Do you want company? I'm sorry, but it's going to be a while before I bring the others. Be patient, okay?" Athos laughed as he chatted with his stuffed head.

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"Sorry captain, but I want to capture a familiar today, so I have to go." Athos said goodbye to the captain's head and left the room, heading for Khali's room.

Athos tried to greet him, but Khali motioned for him to be silent without turning from the study table. A black cube was on the table projecting a hologram of an elderly lady. She appeared to be in her 60s and wore a red cloak over a uniform Athos did not recognize.

"How is the border situation?" the lady asked in a husky voice.

"No changes from other years. Small raids on strongholds before winter, but only weaklings who were driven out of cities for being weak, sick, or just to decrease the number of mouths to feed." Khali reported.

"And the situation in the city?" The lady wrote down everything he said before asking.

"From bad to worse. The baron is an incompetent and has lost control of most of the city to the gangs. People are dying in the midst of the conflict and nobody does anything. As a member of the Guardians of the Word, I believe we should-" Khali started the speech he had prepared earlier, but the lady interrupted him.

"It's not your job to give your opinion, Mr. Hill, it's to report and answer any questions I ask. Are we clear?" The woman spoke in an icy tone.

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"Yes ma'am. Any more questions?" Khali clenched his fists under the table.

"How is your young apprentice? Has he already learned the basics of non-elemental magic? You know that if after two years he still hasn't learned the basics, you must kill him to keep our secrets, don't you?" the lady asked with a raised eyebrow.

"No need to worry. He's no genius, but he's hardworking and has learned the basics." Khali lied through his teeth.

"Well, update me if anything unexpected happens." The lady didn't wait for an answer and hung up.

"It's good to see you too, Mom." Khali muttered to himself, before punching the wall.

"Are you okay?" Athos asked worriedly when he saw the expression on his face.

"I'm fine, Athos." Khali forced a smile not to worry him. "If you came here, that means you've already made up your mind. So what's it going to be?"

"An aurora frog. It's useful for my alchemy and I've seen some of them in the river that cuts through the forest." Athos said.

"What are we waiting for? Let's find these frogs."

"Fuck, fuck, fuck!" Athos swore aloud in frustration. It had been 6 hours since he and Khali had left town and started looking for the aurora frogs. Far from finding a frog, they hardly encountered any monsters in the forest. The only ones who saw it were hungry monsters who hadn't found food to spend the winter.

"On second thought, winter doesn't start for a week, but the temperature has cooled down. They're probably hibernating now." Khali said.

"You could have said that 5 hours ago and we wouldn't have wasted so much time for nothing!" Athos growled back. He looked up angrily, as he saw something flying in the sky.

"What is that?" Athos pointed to the horizon, where a shadow vaguely resembling a dragon moved among the clouds.

Khali looked up at the sky and was shocked. He quickly picked up the binocular-like item and looked.

"What a fright. It's not a dragon, Athos. It's a pack of hive hawks. They move in packs and fly in the form

of strong monsters, to intimidate enemies. There is only one female per pack and all males are their slaves.

They are a headache. They don't fear death, they coordinate their movements as if they were a single being and don't ask me how, but they all know how to use wind magic."

"Why do you know so much about them?" Athos asked curiously, never taking his eyes off the pack.

"They were considered a pest where I come from. They have a habit of migrating in winter, this pack would be a straggler. From the size of the dragon, it should be a small group, but they'll probably stop in the woods in search of food." Khali said shrugging his shoulders.

"Teacher, how long does it take your rock worm to dig a simple hiding place? I've changed my mind about the familiar. I want one of those hawks." Athos smiled at Khali with a plan in mind.

The queen (female) of the hive hawks flew over the forest, ordering her slaves (males) to hunt down any monsters they encountered. She had red feathers and a crown of feathers on top of her head, measuring 60 centimeters in length; while the males were smaller, measuring 40~45 centimeters.

His pack was hungry, tired and weakened, several of the males still having poorly healing wounds. She had lost a territorial dispute with another female and many males were taken. The only ones left were the ones she spawned or the ones that were too weak and were rejected by the victor.

She ordered the males to hunt for food and small groups of hawks broke away from the flock and scoured the forest. After a few minutes, they came back with corpses of small monsters. They were thin and small, but they were better than nothing.

The males carried the corpses to the middle of the herd, where they were torn apart by dozens of beaks. Suddenly, a rabbit with horn had its belly ripped open by a hawk, revealing a leather pouch inside. The hawk sensed no danger from the pouch and pecked curiously, making a small hole.

Tsssss!

BOOMMMMMMM!

An explosion happened in the middle of the pack, sending feathers and blood everywhere. The queen was startled by the sudden explosion and threw an emergency wind barrier around her, but the explosion was faster. She was mostly unharmed and only had a few burnt feathers, but she panicked, ordering her pack to gather around her and look for any signs of enemies around.

The males searched their surroundings but found nothing but the small animals. Wary of an unseen enemy, the female decided to flee the forest, ordering the remaining males to fly again in the form of a dragon, noticeably smaller than when they entered the forest.

Kaakaa!

Kaa!

They Males who were badly injured or had their wings destroyed, screamed towards the queen further and further away as they crawled along the ground. The queen ignored them, considering them useless.

Some time later the earth began to shake and a rock worm sprang out of the ground. Khali left soon after, followed by Athos.

"Congratulations, your plan worked." Khali spoke, looking at the hive hawks still crawling across the floor.

"I said I had a plan." Athos smiled smugly at him. "You said they have a hive mind. Do you think that might mess up the binding spell?"

"It sure will. Choose one of them and I'll kill the rest." Khali said, a freezing aura concentrated in his palm.

"I agree to kill them, but try to avoid damaging them, I want to preserve the materials. I think I can make some interesting potions with their materials." said Athos.

"Okay" Khali acknowledged his skill as an alchemist and asked no further questions.

Athos walked among the birds until he found one he liked. He wasn't hurt too much, just his right wing was burned, but the vision of life showed he was down to half his mana. He was one of the closest birds to the focus of the blast and had used his mana on a wind barrier to survive.

He was also one of the largest among the males, measuring 38 centimeters in length. "You can kill others, professor."

Khali snapped his fingers, making small icicles appear above the hawks and impale them.

Athos approached the hawk and began to cast the binding spell. A thread of pure mana came out of its core, absorbing world energy until it was the thickness of a finger.

Afterwards, he began to move towards hawk, which only then registered his presence.

Kaa? Kaa!

The hawk began to scream, shooting a wind blade, but the binding spell was faster. He hit the monster in the chest until he reached the core. He hit the monster in the chest until he reached the core. The hawk screamed in pain, feeling the foreign mana penetrate its body and release mana through its body trying to expel it, forming the link.

Suddenly, Athos felt a severe headache. Thoughts that didn't belong to him crept into his mind. They were the hawk's thoughts, but thanks to the link, Athos understood what they meant.

OBEY THE QUEEN! PROTECT THE QUEEN! SERVE THE QUEEN!

Chapter 36:

The monster's will was non-existent, but there was a foreign will that made Athos's mind reel and his body tremble. The hive hawk didn't seem to have a will of its own, or any instinct for self-preservation. He didn't have a mind of his own, he was just controlled by another being.

Something no one knew about hive hawks is that the female does not have the natural ability to mentally control the males. The species has a two-way psychic connection to each other, the problem is that the females use the link to implant thoughts of servitude in the hatchlings while they are still in the eggs, destroying their minds before they fully form.

Their bodies were nothing but an empty shell, as the female gave orders and moved them around like puppets.

Athos felt sick at the voice in his head and began to vomit. Although the hawk was much weaker than he was, the queen's remaining will was much more powerful than his, balancing the game. Despite magical superiority, Athos found himself slowly at a disadvantage and hated it. His mind began to wander as he searched for anything that might help him.

But the only thing he found was a dormant hatred, slowly staining all his thoughts. The hate burned in his mind whenever he got distracted. The hate that influenced every decision he made. It was hatred that gave Athos strength when he needed it.

Khali was only half right about Athos' mindset. It is true that Athos cared for him, but he did not feel indifferent about the rest of the world. No, he hated everything and everyone. His mind had collapsed these past two years. Athos had constant nightmares and had been driven to the brink of suicide countless times, but the hatred motivated him to continue.

But it made him wonder: What next? What would he do after completing his revenge?

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He felt only an emptiness where his heart was at the thought of it. He was tormented by this for a long time, until he came to a simple conclusion: If I never stop hating, I will never feel empty.

It was the moment when he changed his life goal. He wouldn't stop at the baron and the priest. He intended to keep killing, just so he wouldn't feel empty. It was the moment when Athos Savage died and something took his place.

Athos felt a blow to his head and realized that he had lost his balance and had fallen to the ground. 'How could I be so blind? If my willpower isn't enough, just use the force of hate!' Athos began to laugh maniacally, while daydreaming about how to torture his enemies.

He imagined himself in the middle of the town square, with the city on fire and corpses piling up around him. In front of him were the disfigured bodies of the priest and the baron as he held both their severed heads.

Athos' laughter grew louder, while the queen's remaining will was flooded with bloodthirsty madness, thanks to the bond between the two.

KILL! DESTROY! BURN!

Athos took the advantage, using all his strength to attack the queen's residual will, extinguishing it. The hive hawk froze suddenly, before falling to the ground unconscious. His mind was already destroyed a long time ago and he offered no resistance to Athos' will. Its core began to disintegrate, and its life force

flowed through the link, until it was absorbed and merged with his own. The hawk's body crumbled to dust and was blown away by the wind, scattering through the forest.

The forest was silent, the laughter stopped echoing, while the hatred again fell asleep in his mind.

And Khali watched it all in embarrassment, watching Athos begin to vomit, fall to the ground, and then get up with an evil laugh. "Is this boy schizophrenic by any chance?"

Athos ignored him, focusing instead on his own core, but specifically, on the foreign life force he felt. He could feel the familiar, but there was no noticeable change in his body.

"Try to summon it, Athos. Focus on the familiar's life force and try to separate it from your own." Khali instructed and Athos obeyed.

A beam of red light shot out of its body and took the form of the hive's hawk. It flew over Athos a few times, before landing on its shoulder. The feeling of having a familiar was strange, he had no memories and no will of his own, but he could still reason and understand simple orders.

"It's the first time I've seen a hive hawk as a familiar, what does he do? Is he still able to use magic?" Khali asked curiously.

'Show me what you can do.' Athos sent a mental order to the familiar. The familiar obeyed and Athos felt it draining mana from its core. It was an unpleasant sensation, but he didn't bother, realizing that he could cut off his mana flow at any moment.

His point of view changed and he saw through the familiar's eyes. He ordered the familiar to fly and was able to see the entire forest from above. "I can see through the hawk's eyes. He seems to have a sensory sharing ability."

"That's a good skill, but it's weird that he can't use magic. The hawk's memories disappeared after he became a familiar, so he may have forgotten how to use it. Use a simple wind spell and order him to copy it." Khali said, instructing Athos.

Athos conjured a small bolt of lightning in his palm and asked mentally. 'Can you use magic?'

The familiar did not copy the spell, but Athos sensed from the link between them that he was trying to do something. Athos couldn't resist and suddenly, the spell on his hand disappeared and reappeared on his wings.

"Which?" Khali asked in disbelief. He saw with the mana vision the spell was absorbed by Athos before flowing into the familiar. "Do it again!"

Athos used a fireball spell this time and the familiar once again absorbed the spell before shooting the fireball skyward.

"Can he absorb magic?" Athos asked, excited by the myriad possibilities.

"No, his ability is to transmit his spells. You can cast your spells from a safe place and your familiar can shoot for you. That would explain why all hawks can cast spells. The female would cast her spells safely and the males only would transmit." Khali was shocked and jealous by the discovery.

'Reminder to myself: get a Hawk hive as a familiar once you reach the fourth layer' Khali thought.

'As of today, your name is Falco. It is a pleasure to work with you. Athos mentally spoke to the familiar, stroking its head.

"I really want to brag, but I'm mentally exhausted so I'm going to go back to the hideout, clean myself, and sleep." Athos said yawning.

"Haa, let's go." Khali sighed, tired of being surprised.

3 years later.

Time passed quickly after that. During this time, the Yellow Dagger Gang destroyed and assimilated the Rotten Finger Gang, taking control of half of the city. The red gold gang bowed their heads to the baron, leveling the playing field. They received unofficial permission from the baron to smuggle and the guards began to ignore their actions as long as they didn't exaggerate and the deal between them didn't go public.

Strange murders began to occur throughout the city. People first suspected that the gangs were responsible for this, but casualties began to occur in both groups, confusing investigators.

The baron received a penalty from the country because of the state of the city and his noble title was demoted to baronet. Its territory was reduced and its only current territory was the city of Faltra.

The wizard Ricley rejoiced at the news. The taxes the baron received declined and he was no longer able to maintain the protection contract with the order of magic without collapsing the city for good and he would soon be freed from his torment.

The darkness on Athos threatened to awaken countless times, to the point that Khali made Athos use the ring constantly, with the excuse that it was to help control his murderous urges. Athos knew he was useless at that point, but he used it anyway to please Khali.

But none of that mattered to Athos and Khali, who were wearing the best clothes they had. Khali had paused training since the day before, to ensure that Athos was at his peak for today.

Chapter 37:

"How do you feel, Athos? As of today you are an adult, congratulations." Khali congratulated him, feeling emotional.

"Your mission in this city ends next week, so remind me, why are we dressing up so much?" Compared to Khali, Athos was not at all excited.

Athos had just gotten out of the shower and was still wearing a towel in front of the mirror. He had a birthday today, turning 15 and becoming an adult. He wasn't used to cutting his hair, but his teacher insisted he cut it today, so he relented.

He created a blade of wind in his right hand and began to cut it. Athos began to look at his body in the mirror as he did so, noticing the numerous changes he had undergone. His previously lean but muscular

body was now fully defined. Using nutritional potions and similar alchemical items, he accelerated the body's development.

His muscles were toned, his abs were a six-pack, and he'd recently reached 1.77 meters. His body was covered in small, barely healed scars or scrapes that he didn't bother to treat.

His face wasn't delicate, but it wasn't manly either. He had a handsome face that would be considered above average, but he had a cold, murderous look that kept people from approaching. Her eyes were honey brown, while her hair was a darker shade.

"Tell me, where are we going? I know you want to celebrate my birthday and I promised you we would, but you don't have to be a mystery, you know?" Athos asked.

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"You'll like it, I'm sure. You know my surprises are always good." Khali maintained the suspense as he finished dressing.

Athos looked at him silently, before getting dressed as well.

They came out of hiding together and headed for the slums. The place had changed a lot over time. Previously, the place looked like ruins, but now, Athos could see countless shops open and people were no longer afraid to walk the streets.

"Ridiculous, isn't it? How the gang runs the city better than the baron himself." Khali said in disgust.

"Speaking of the Baron, is that rumor that Ricley was discharged true?" Athos asked curiously.

"Yes, that's true. He's leaving in two weeks. You'll probably get an easy revenge without Ricley to get in the way." Khali spoke. The conversation died and they walked in silence until they reached their destination.

"Well, we're here. Happy birthday Athos!" Khali smirked as he watched Athos' reaction.

They were on one of the busiest streets in the favelas. Lamps with tinted glass illuminated the streets with a red light. Women dressed provocatively in front of brothels, trying to get the attention of passing customers.

'If a pet hasn't helped, maybe a woman will. I had to wait until today to put my plan into practice, so I have to make sure everything goes well today.' It was his plan.

"Professor..." Athos turned to Khali, unsure how to react. He had zero experience with women, so this kind of situation was new to him.

"You've come of age, of course we have to celebrate, don't we?" Khali's wicked smile widened, seeing the cold and cruel Athos bewildered. He grabbed him by the shoulder, preventing him from running away. "Today is a special day, so don't worry about money, I'll pay for everything. Just pick a place and have fun."

"You're not going to let me go until do this, are you? Let's get this over with." Athos raised his arms in surrender and began to look around in a bit of embarrassment.

"Not so fast. The first time is special, so you have to do it right. Did you remember to bring the stamina potions?" Khali asked.

"And here I was wondering why you wanted these potions." Athos showed some orange vials in his pocket. "I did."

"Fine! So let's-" Khali was cheering, when a woman called out to him.

"Kal! Is that really you? Have you come to visit me again?" a red-haired woman asked, waving happily at Khali.

"Kal?" Athos repeated, looking at Khali.

"She confused me with someone else." It was the first excuse he thought of.

"Kal, have you come to visit me again? You usually come once a week, but it's only been three days since the last time. Did you miss me?" the red-haired woman asked, hugging Khali's arm between her breasts.

"Sorry my beautiful, but I can't today. I promise I'll be back later." He whispered low to the woman clinging to him as he pulled away, but Athos had improved his hearing and heard everything.

"I swear she mistook me for someone." Khali said after joining Athos and urging him to leave the premises.

"Apparently someone is a frequent customer of the place. As an expert, do you have any recommendations, professor?" Athos teased him, after one in five brothel women stopped to wave at him.

Interestingly, all the women were redheads.

"We are not here to talk about me Athos, today is about you. Have you found one that interests you?" Khali asked hastily, trying to change the subject.

"So-so." Athos spoke, looking to some distant place. Khali followed her gaze and saw a brothel with a specific theme.

"Oh-ho. You really have good taste. I never imagined you to be a man who likes older women." Khali spoke with an understanding nod. Just like Khali said, the brothel Athos was looking at had a milfs theme.

"I...I don't..." Athos stuttered, swallowing hard.

"Come on, no need to be shy." Khali grabbed him by the shoulders and pushed him to the brothel.

"Hello to you two. It's rare to see two such handsome men around here, is this the first time in our establishment?" a woman at the front of the store asked, leading them inside.

"My boy turned 15 today, so I brought him here to become a man. I let him pick the place and he couldn't stop drooling looking at your cleavage, so I thought you might give him a special treat." Khali winked at the woman, laughing at Athos' embarrassment.

"Khali!!" Athos cried out in embarrassment, red as a beet.

"You can leave sir, we will take good care of your son." She understood his intentions and took Athos by the arm, her hand reaching dangerously close to the war zone. She laughed when she noticed his nervousness and how much he struggled to remain stoic. She turned to Khali and asked. "Now, about the kind of service your son wants..."

"Like I said, today is a special day for him. I want him to have full service." Khali smiled, placing a bag full of silver coins on the table. The woman's eyes gleamed with greed, seeing the bag of money on the counter. It was more than the brothel would make in an entire month.

She mentally thanked her friend who switched shifts with her, and allowed her to win this VIP customer. "Girls, we have a VIP here! Come meet him and get the best room!" The woman spoke loudly, drawing the others' attention.

"Ara, ara, who is this cute boy?" Random milf 1.

"What a handsome young man! Is this your first time here? I'll take good care of you~." Random milf 2.

"Did you guys think he was cute? I thought he was pretty strong for someone so young. He's pretty muscular." Random milf 3.

Athos quickly found himself surrounded by women as he was dragged into the best room in the brothel. And Khali stood back and waved at him, as if watching his son go on an excursion.

"Have a good time." was all he said, with a bright smile. 'Well, let's see if that redhead is still free.' That's what he thought as he left the brothel.

Athos was dragged into the bedroom, before being thrown onto the bed.

"I got this client, so I'm going first, if you don't mind." The woman who brought Athos said, as she climbed into his lap. "It's your first time, so leave it all to me."

For the rest of the night, Athos was taught that life wasn't just about training and revenge.

Chapter 38:

2 weeks later. Athos was in the base's training area, sitting in a chair with his eyes closed, fully equipped in black plate armor. In a few hours, the wizard Ricley would be relieved of his bodyguard duty, greatly reducing the baron's security.

Athos was using his familiar to guard the baron's mansion all day. Security at the mansion had been tight since the day before, but Athos knew this was just an attempt to show strength.

The gangs were also ready to attack, just waiting for Ricley to leave town. However, Athos had already made plans to ensure that only he reached the mansion. If everything went according to plan; the priest and guards and gangs would be too busy fighting for their lives to care about the baron.

It was still 3 pm and the Mago's departure was planned for 6 pm, but the tension in Faltra was almost palpable. Every force in the city, visible or not, was sharpening their weapons in preparation for the battle they knew was about to take place.

The population of the city realized the pre-war tension that surrounded the city and most avoided opening shops or going out into the streets, preferring to lock themselves inside their homes.

"How is the situation? Has there been any change?" Khali asked, approaching Athos.

"Nothing yet. The baron is still untouched inside the mansion like a cockroach afraid of the light. All guards are prowling the mansion and no one is allowed to enter. My familiar can't get close without being discovered, so I haven't been able to see any details of the interior of the mansion." Athos replied without opening his eyes, fearing he would miss any change.

.....

"We are abandoning the base and leaving this town as of today. You remember our plan, right? I delayed my departure for your revenge." Khali asked.

"I already know. You will leave town as soon as you confirm that Ricley has also left. In the meantime, I will attack the baron's mansion and then the priest in the church and we will meet in Rocha village where we will meet with his fellow guardians. of word." Athos explained the plan.

"Correct. I've already emptied the base and destroyed any evidence of our stay here. Are you still wearing the ring?" Khali asked worriedly. He knew he couldn't put off awakening his affinity with the dark forever and planned to apologize to Athos about it, after this revenge story was over.

Athos held out his left hand to him without saying anything. There were three rings on his hand and one of them was the sealing ring. The other two were magic items that Khali had gifted Athos (lost in betting).

'Athos is strong, but he often gets carried away by anger. I fear he might make a mistake during the attack, and end up dying. Unfortunately, there's nothing I can do to stop him.' Khali was worried about Athos' safety, but he couldn't get involved. It would be difficult to cover up an ice mage by killing a local noble and word keepers would likely kill him if he involved.

The only thing Khali could do was hope that Athos was as discreet as possible. Unfortunately for him, Athos had planned to involve the entire city in his revenge.

A few hours later, at the baron's mansion.

"Won't you stay for another week? No, at least a few more days? Winter has already started, it would be dangerous if you were caught in a blizzard halfway." Baron Dravus asked, pale as a ghost. He also sensed the tension in the city and knew that the only thing keeping him alive was the presence of the mage.

"As I've been saying for the last few years, nothing would make me happier than walking away from this fucking town and leaving you for dead." Ricley said, oblivious to the disapproving looks of the mansion's housekeeping staff. Compared to the depressed baron, Ricley had a bright smile.

It had been nearly six years since he had been trapped in this hell, and he would finally be freed from his torment. He took all his belongings and stowed them in the carriage, before climbing up and ordering the coachman to leave.

“One last thing, Dravus. I really hope the gang manages to break into the cabin you call the mansion and kill you. They would be far better rulers than an incompetent like you!” Ricley stuck his head out the carriage window and yelled at the top of his lungs, speaking purposefully so any spy around could hear.

The baron gritted his teeth at his insolent attitude, but the carriage pulled away before he could respond. The baron turned and walked back to the mansion, praying to Eishin that he survives another day.

“He left.” Athos opened his eyes as he rose to his feet, fully ready for combat. He used the link with his familiar to absorb it despite the distance and summon it back to his side.

“You know what to do, Falco. Go.” He ordered the familiar who promptly obeyed. It flew up and grabbed a large bag full of small leather bags in the corner of the room with its claws, before flying through one of the base passages towards the surface.

“Are you sure he left?” Khali asked.

“Falco accompanied him until the carriage left town. I’m sure he left.” Athos confirmed. He picked up a second bag of leather bags and put her over his shoulder.

“This is your last chance to back off, after that there will be no turning back. Are you sure you want to continue?” Khali asked for the last time, preparing to flee. Athos had not informed him of the plan, no matter how much he asked. It was something he wanted to do alone, no matter what.

“I made that decision years ago. You know that.” Athos spoke resolutely. He turned to Khali and hugged him. “I’ll see you in the village, Professor.”

“See you soon, Athos.” Khali returned the hug, his voice trembling slightly with emotion. He felt like he was watching a son go to war and there was nothing he could do to stop it.

Athos broke free of the embrace and turned around, before running through the tunnels. He had a mixed expression of hate and determination. He left the underground base and headed towards the sewer, for the first part of his plan. As expected, the sewers were swarming with people. The bandits attacked the guards through the sewer as soon as the carriage left the lord’s mansion, so the battle was already underway.

‘Now for the first part of the plan.’ Athos thought as he drank a potion with a translucent liquid. Athos had created this potion using the night owl’s feathers, creating an invisibility potion. The potion would only make his body invisible, but his non-elemental spell, shared blessing, made the equipment invisible as well. The spell used small threads of mana to share enhancement spells or potion effects to other people or equipment, in exchange for the duration time being reduced.

He also mixed his mana with the environment to erase his presence, and activated the second ring on his left hand making its core invisible even to magical senses. The ability to erase presence was good, but it couldn’t hide someone from the sight of mana. The ring solved that problem.

He created a layer of world energy that enveloped the caster's body, preventing the magical senses from detecting their core or reducing their core's power to an untrained one, depending on the caster's intentions.

Thanks to these three effects, Athos was like a ghost on a battlefield. He moved throughout the sewers and whenever he saw a skirmish or a group of guards or bandits, he would drop a bag containing mana paralyzing powder, the secret recipe his father had invented, and quickly flee the scene.

It was only a matter of time before all the people in the sewer were passed out.

Left behind, Khali watched as Athos walked away. He stayed in the same spot for approximately 10 minutes, before shaking his head and sighing.

"It's no use staying here, I have to go-" Khali spoke, but a male voice came from behind, interrupting him.

"So there was really someone hiding here?" That was all Khali heard, before the entire tunnel collapsed.

Chapter 39:

In the night sky, above the city of Faltra.

Falco flew over the city, the night sky obscuring its body. He carried a pouch in his claws nearly twice his size. Normally, he would be unable to carry something this heavy, but his master had fed him a strengthening potion, so it wasn't a problem.

He looked down, surveying the city and looking for the locations his master had previously ordered. Spotting his first target, he flew to stand above the spot and used his beak to pick up one of the bags and throw them, causing them to burst against the roofs or the ground. A colorless mist began to spread, before all hell broke loose.

"Die!" Random crazed 1.

"Motherfucker!" Random crazed 2.

"Die all of you!" Random crazed 3.

In a matter of seconds, all the people who came into contact with the fog began to turn red eyes, before furiously attacking anyone in front of them. People started killing each other as Falco flew towards the next destination. He flew to all the places where he saw a large number of people gathered and spread the fog, driving people crazy.

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Athos had created this alchemical powder using parts of a monster called a two-faced monkey. He looked like a 1,50-meter white monkey when he was calm, but when he was angry, his size doubled, as well as his physical strength and he would attack anything he saw in front of him, even others of his kind. It was a weak monster on its own, but a headache to deal with when grouped together.

In less than 30 minutes, pandemonium broke out in the city of Faltra. Parents killed their children, children killed their brothers, while the crazed invaded the homes of those still healthy and killed entire families. Flames began to rise throughout the city as bodies piled up everywhere.

The crazed ones ignored the borders imposed by the gangs, while the bandits and guards temporarily stopped their fight and tried desperately to stop their advance. The only place that was not hit was the prime area of the city. Falco had deliberately left this area untouched on his master's orders. Athos wanted the pleasure of terrorizing the Baron.

The guard post was in the prime area and the guards reacted, blocking the streets and barricading them, preventing the maddened from advancing. The situation was temporarily brought under control, but that was not enough to calm the baron's temper. Most of the city's wealthy merchants had gathered outside the gate, seeking protection from the personal guard, but the baron forbade anyone to enter.

He watched in despair from the balcony of his mansion, watching the city burn and hearing the screams of pain despite the distance from the conflict. He felt despair and confusion fill his mind, fear causing his bladder to loosen and he almost pissed himself in his pants. But the worst came later.

BOOOOMM!!!!

An explosion occurred at one of the blockages, sending guards and maddened into the air. The windows of the surrounding houses were shattered by the shock wave, and the earth shook as if an earthquake had struck.

Black smoke rose from the explosion site, while the sounds suddenly stopped. Whether the baron, the guards or the merchants, they all watched in shock as their first line of defense was shattered.

Suddenly, the sound of footsteps was heard through the smoke. Despite the curses, screams of pain and sounds of destruction, the sound of footsteps echoed audibly among the survivors. Two bright red lights appeared through the smoke, and soon a silhouette became visible.

The figure came out of the smoke with slow steps, as if enjoying the show. He was dressed in black plate armor, with red flames shooting out of the slits in the armor every time he moved. In his left hand he carried a red shield with a circular blade on the edge, and in his right hand a silvery sword, stained with so much blood that the blade was almost unrecognizable.

He swung his sword in a simple motion, but it generated a gust of wind that swept away all the smoke and debris from the place, making a clear path between him and the mansion. Like prey in front of a predator, people could only shiver in silence before the black knight for fear that the slightest sound would draw his attention to themselves.

An awkward silence hung over the place, until one of the men in front of the gate couldn't take the pressure any longer and started screaming.

"Open the gate and let me in!! Open this shit up!!" He began to scream desperately as he clung to the gates.

As if the man's cry of despair was a sign, people snapped out of their stupor and began to run wildly towards the gates, running over each other in an attempt to get a second faster.

The black knight also began to walk slowly, each step he took echoing through the place and only serving to increase the panic.

“Stop him!!! Don’t let him near the gates!!!” The baron shouted orders to his personal guards from the second-floor balcony, completely terrified. He ran inside the mansion, going for his hidden trump card.

The personal guard leader who was next to him nodded. He jumped from the second floor balcony and ordered his subordinates. “All guards, in their positions! We can’t allow him to approach the mansion!”

The guards hesitated for a moment, but still followed their orders. Archers climbed onto the roof and positioned themselves, while guards armed with shields came out of the gates, pushing people out of the way. They positioned themselves with shield bearers in front and swordsmen and spearmen behind.

Their numbers added up to more than 50, but they didn’t feel confident.

The merchants took their cue and ran inside the mansion, but the guards weren’t free to worry about them.

All their focus was on the knight who was slowly approaching them. As if sensing that the guards’ preparations were ready, he began to accelerate, his steps slowly turning into a run, until he moved so fast that the guards had trouble keeping up with his movements.

His footsteps left fiery footprints wherever he passed, as the captain measured the growing distance between them.

50 meters-

The archers stretched their bowstrings to the limit, just waiting for their superior’s order.

40 meters-

The knight raised his shield in front of his body, ready to charge. The shield caught fire, while a blade of wind formed on the edge of the shield’s edge before it began to spin at high speed, sucking the flames into a spiral of fire.

30 meters-

“Body of bronze!” The front-line guards yelled in unison, activating the skill in preparation for impact.

20 meters-

“Shoot!” The captain shouted and the archers fired arrows at the knight with different skills. Unfortunately for the guards, the spiral created by the fire spiral generated a vacuum of wind that distorted the direction of the arrows, leaving the knight unharmed.

10 meters-

“Maximum Drilling!” The personal guard leader activated the ability from behind the first line, holding a bluish spear, ready to stab the knight as soon as he came into range.

“Hold on tight!” The shield bearers gulped and clutched their shields tightly, seeing what appeared to be a spiraling flame meteor approaching them.

1 meter-

“Meteor Charge!” The knight gave a guttural cry, activating an ability mixed with magic. The flames and spiraling wind blade built up in the center of the shield, causing an explosion upon impact.

An explosion happened just as the shields collided, sending half of the front line flying in the shock wave, along with the spear-wielding guards behind them. Burnt bodies were sent flying before crashing hard against the stone floor, as people screamed in terror as their line of defense was run over without resistance.

The knight didn’t stop immediately and walked a few more meters before turning to see the trail of destruction behind him. He sneered at the fallen guards and the terrified guards still standing.

“Weak. You are all weak-” The knight started to mock them, but a pillar of white light descended from the sky, completely swallowing his figure.

Chapter 40:

People were confused by the sudden appearance of the pillar of light, until they heard a familiar voice.

“See, this is the power of God! This blasphemous knight is nothing before divine grace!” The priest exclaimed to the people gathered in the baron’s mansion, in a magnanimous tone. He appeared on the second floor porch of the mansion with two nuns on either side and the baron following close behind.

Unbeknownst to anyone in the city, the baron and the priest had struck a deal to eliminate the city’s gangs. Eishin’s church had been neglecting the city for a long time, but in the past few years, the amount received from donations from the faithful has decreased, causing dissatisfaction at church headquarters.

This was caused by the great poverty of the population and the embezzlement of the priest’s money. The priest had received a notice from the church to collaborate with the baron in the extermination of criminal gangs or he would be removed from his position.

Desperate at the news, the priest secretly contacted the baron and together they hatched a plan to exterminate the gangs the moment the wizard Ricley left town. Ricley learned of the plan and also collaborated, insulting and mocking the Baron as he said goodbye, increasing the gangs’ confidence.

Unfortunately for them, Athos destroyed all of their plans, forcing the priest to reveal himself, to avoid the complete annihilation of the personal guard. He collaborated with the two nuns who worked for him and cast a spell together to eliminate the knight in a single attack, just in case.

Despite his arrogant tone, he was actually terrified inside of the knight’s strength. He realized that the knight was not only a powerful warrior, but also a skilled mage.

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‘This man was dangerous. If I hadn’t killed him with a preemptive strike, there’s no way of knowing what would have happened-’ The priest gasped in terror as the pillar of light began to disappear.

When the magic ended, the pillar of light began to dim until it disappeared completely, revealing the knight kneeling on his right knee and the shield raised above his head. A second shield made of mana floated above the knight, completely broken. Pieces of the energy shield fell away, before disappearing.

The knight rose, completely unharmed. He lifted his helmet, looking straight into the priest's eyes. The helmet completely hid his face, but the priest could have sworn he saw mockery and disdain coming from him.

He was furious and his pride hurt, but he didn't dare confront him, silently casting the next spell.

Meanwhile, Athos was breathing deeply under his black helmet. So far everything had gone according to plan. The chaos in the city kept the guard and the gangs too busy dealing with the crazed to care what happened to the prime area. He used explosive powder to break down the barricade and put fear into the minds of anyone who saw him. He also used magic to make his entrance more dramatic.

But the priest's attack took him by surprise and he barely managed to react in time. He made a magic barrier at the last second, but he couldn't visualize it properly and wasted a lot of mana.

'The remaining mana is... about 60%. I should be able to block this attack 3 more times before I run out of mana, if I can detect it beforehand.' Athos thought, coming up with a plan to kill the priest. He began to gather a large amount of world energy, while casting one of his strongest spells.

"He's a mage too! Stop him from casting a spell!" The priest shouted, thanks to the mana vision he noticed the knight accumulating world energy.

"Quick stab!" The captain of the guard was the first to recover from the shock, as he tried to stab Athos in the head from behind. When he saw Athos charging at him, his years of combat experience warned him that his subordinate would be unable to stop him and he would be killed, so he rolled to the left at the last second, saving his own life.

The skin on his right arm was slightly burned, but nothing that could diminish his combat prowess.

Athos sensed the attack and sidestepped half a step, the point of the spear brushing his helmet. Athos used mana vision and saw where the mana was weakest on the spear, before activating the sword enchantment and cutting the spear into two pieces.

"Which?" the captain asked confused, looking stupidly at the spearhead. Athos took advantage of his moment of confusion and punched him in the face with the shield, before he could react. The blow hit him hard, the bladed edge going through the helmet and leaving a deep gash on his face, sending his head back.

He was about to finish the captain but was forced to jump to the side. Arrows slammed into the ground before exploding, cracking the stone floor. The guards had recovered from their stupor and were slowly trying to surround him. They kept their distance from each other, afraid of being run over again by another onslaught.

"Constant healing! Holy arrows!" The priest and the nuns with him had also completed their spells. The first cast a white light on all guards that were still alive around Athos, slowly healing their wounds. The second spell cast white arrows around the priest. He didn't fire them right away, but waited for a moment of distraction.

Thanks to the sensory field, Athos could feel his entire surroundings and realized that he was slowly being cornered. The guards attacked him with different skills, but Athos unleashed flames in all directions and the sudden heat kept the guards at bay.

He activated the sword's second enchantment, causing it to release a black aura and made a circular slash, taking advantage of the siege to inflict a curse on everyone around him.

"Ack!" The guards were panicked, hit by blinding curses. The archers fired arrows at him, but Athos seized the opportunity and charged where the siege was thinnest.

He swung his sword twice as he passed, cutting two guards deep. Athos was about to cut a third, when he detected the arrows of light approaching and was forced to defend himself. The archers' arrows came soon after, preventing him from killing the guards while they were blinded.

"Disperse curse!" The priest shouted, making a light shine on all the guards and restoring everyone's sight. 'He should have already finished casting that spell, what is he waiting for?' That's what the priest thought when he saw the great amount of energy that Athos had gathered.

"Tsk!" Athos clicked his tongue, being forced to fight hand to hand. He needed to preserve mana for a big attack. The guards' attacks rained down on him, but Athos activated the bronze body skill and defended almost everyone, confident in his own defense.

Athos managed to attack from time to time, but with each attack he made, he received twice as much. Cuts and scrapes quickly accumulated all over the armor, as his vision slowly turned red, blood dripping from his forehead from a spear wound that nearly went through his skull.

Athos was faster, stronger and better equipped than everyone here, but the numbers outweighed him. To make matters worse, the priest stopped saving mana, casting spell after spell at him. Suddenly, one of the guards jumped up and tried to crush him with a heavy attack, forcing Athos to raise his shield to defend himself.

An arrow he didn't notice in time hit his left calf, knocking him off balance. The heavy blow came soon after, forcing Athos to his knees. He gritted his teeth as he felt the bones in his left arm crack from the impact, but he raised the sword in his right hand and stabbed the guard in the stomach, causing him to vomit blood.

A spear pierced the guard's back and throughed him, hitting Athos in the right shoulder. He was unable to detect the attack because of the guard and could not react in time. The guard captain had recovered from the blow and borrowed a spear from a subordinate and waited for an opportunity to exact revenge.

The captain kept pushing the spear, until the point hit a wall, trapping Athos and the guard's body together.

"HAHAHAHAHA! You're late!" Despite his horrible situation, Athos began to laugh maniacally.

"Stop him!" The priest hurriedly shouted, realizing the spell Athos had been casting so far was about to explode everything around him. The priest threw a shield of light hastily, when all the energy that Athos had accumulated suddenly disappeared.

Kaa!

A beehive Hawk appeared in the sky above the mansion, along with a 10-meter spear of fire that pierced through the mansion before exploding, destroying everything.

