

Legion lich 41

Chapter 41:

Debris rained down as the mansion exploded to pieces and people inside were either burned alive or crushed by the wreckage. The merchants who had broken into the mansion were burned alive, while the archers on the roof were flung a block away and slammed hard against the stone floor, dying instantly.

...one of them had the misfortune to fall into an iron railing, impaled to death.

But the one who had the worst fate was the priest. He cast a barrier of light to protect himself, but barrier only protected him from the shock wave, not the heat. The searing heat evaporated all the liquid from his body and charred his skin to black.

He fell to the ground in the mansion's backyard gasping for air, his lungs burning from the hot air. He agonized for some time, before dying of asphyxiation.

"How did this happen?" The captain stared stupidly at the burning mansion. He was completely focused on Athos, so he didn't notice the familiar approaching the manor. From their vantage point, a giant fire spear appeared from the sky seemingly out of nowhere.

"You shouldn't look away in the middle of a fight." Athos spoke looking at the captain. He activated his third magic ring, causing a dome of water to appear around him and expand, flinging the guard's corpse and the captain away. The water suddenly froze, creating a barrier of ice around him, and the captain froze in the middle of the barrier.

Athos knew the barrier wouldn't last long, so he quickly drank a potion of superior healing, while pulling the arrow from his calf and the spear from his shoulder. He poured another potion over the shoulder wound to speed the healing, and grabbed the sword as soon as he regained control of his right arm, piercing the immobilized captain's chest until he reached the heart.

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'My current mana is...15%. A few more basic spells and I'm dry.' Athos thought, analyzing his own situation. He deactivated abilities such as Sensory Field and Cold Mind to save mana, relying on his natural senses to fight.

To make matters worse, the guards were attacking with renewed fury. The baron had sheltered his families inside the manor for security reasons and to ensure that none of them escaped. However, the plan backfired and they ended up dying horribly.

"You bastard!!!"

"My son! You killed my son!!

The guards roared like wild beasts as they surrounded the ice barrier and attacked from all sides. Individually, it would take some time to break the barrier, but the constant attacks had undermined their integrity, and soon they would take revenge on the bastard who killed their families.

“HAHAHA! The feeling of losing someone you love is excruciating, isn’t it? But don’t worry, I’ll make you join them right now!!” In response to the screams of hate, Athos only scoffed. He steadied the cracked and dented shield in front of his body and taunted the guards to attack him.

Consumed by fury and despair, the remaining guards didn’t care about formations and attacked as soon as they managed to break through the barrier.

One of the guards finally broke through the barrier enough to look inside, only to be met by a sword at his throat. The blade pierced his neck until it came out the other side. before twisting, destroying the neck, and leaving the head trapped by a thread of meat.

The guard fell dead to the ground, while his colleagues were surprised by his sudden death, Athos positioned himself in the middle of the dome and took advantage of it. Whenever a hole was made in the dome it would attack, forcing the guards to retreat or lose a limb.

Athos noticed that the cracks had spread all over the barrier and in a few more attacks it would be completely destroyed, so he decided to run away. He began to run with his shield raised, synchronizing his run with the guards’ charge.

One last strike hit the barrier, causing it to shatter in a shower of fragments and a white mist to spread. But before the guard who broke the barrier could rejoice, a red shield came out of the white mist and hit him, throwing him away. Athos didn’t slow down and kept running, trying to flee the scene.

‘The original plan was to use the fire spear against the guards and leave the baron defenseless and kidnap him, but I’ll have to be content with knowing the son of a bitch is dead.’ Athos thought, realizing that it was useless to continue the fight.

The furious guards tried to chase after him, but Athos swung his sword back as he ran without turning, sending a wave of darkness. The guards already knew about this attack and some were able to dodge it in time, but most were hit and suffered a curse of dizziness.

They felt as if they had suddenly become drunk as the world around them spun. The cursed guards fell to the ground and began to vomit, while the few unaffected ones continued their pursuit.

“Great! Now, quick steps!” Athos drained every last drop of mana from his core and activated a speed enhancing skill. Mana flowed from his joints to the sole of his foot, increasing his speed of movement.

‘I need to escape underground. The underground base is out of the question, but I know the sewers like no one else, once down there I-’ Athos started to formulate an escape plan, but the link between him and Falco was suddenly severed, distracting him.

He turned his head back to look, even as his instincts told him to run as fast as he could, and saw the Falco falling from the sky, a jagged rock stuck in its abdomen. In that moment of distraction that he had, a stone spear shot out of the ground where he had just stepped, piercing through his metal boot and his right foot.

The stone spear hit his heel, sending Athos crashing to the ground, his foot bent at an unnatural angle.

“ARGGHHH!” Athos screamed in pain as he gripped his ankle, unable to stand. He looked around but couldn’t find the person responsible.

"I have to admit boy, you really caused a disaster. Since when do word keepers cause genocides?" An unknown voice spoke before two more stone spears appeared and impaled Athos.

The stone spears hit Athos from the front as he lay on the ground, lifting him five feet off the ground. The spears were approximately two inches wide and pierced his left lung and stomach, causing him to drown in his own blood. Athos felt his lungs burn as he struggled to breathe.

A hole in the earth opened up and a man Athos knew came out of it. He was dressed in a green robe with a hood in tatters. He had a youthful face, but he looked incredibly strong, with an oppressive aura coming off his body. Ricley, who should have left town, had suddenly appeared amidst the chaos. Hooded men appeared on the roofs of the buildings, but Athos could not see them as he kept his head down.

He carried a wand in his left hand, while in his right hand, a dying body of a blue-robed mage. The mage was dead.

"I assume you two know each other?" Ricley threw the dying wizard's body to the ground in front of Athos.

Despite all the pain he felt and the position he was in, Athos managed to raise his head enough to look at the face of the mage in front of him. He felt his blood run cold as all his pain became irrelevant for a moment.

Hot tears fell from his eyes as he looked into the face of the man who had taken care of him for the past five years, the only person he still loved in this world and who he considered almost like a father.

Athos wept as he recognized Khali's body.

Chapter 42:

A few minutes ago.

"Shit!" Khali cursed as he saw the base fall on his head. He activated two magic rings, generating two domes of water before freezing them. However, he saw the ice crack quickly as the tunnel's weight pressed down on him.

He quickly summoned the rock worm and had it dig a tunnel and flee. The rock worm dug through the earth as if swimming, until it reached the sewer. Khali jumped out of the hole and looked around. He saw a small group of 10 thugs passed out around, but wasted no time investigating and blasted the ceiling with mana bullets, before jumping out.

'If I was discovered, so was Athos. I have to find him before he gets caught-' His thoughts were cut off when he saw the state of the city. He had destroyed the ground and appeared on top of the slums, but no one cared. Everyone was too busy trying to save their own lives to care about him.

People were running all over the place, while others with red eyes were killing anyone who came into their field of vision. The bandits tried to kill the crazed ones, but the situation was very chaotic and they couldn't organize themselves.

'It will be difficult to find Athos in the midst of this chaos. I need a top view. Find Athos for me.' thought Khali, summoning the night owl and ordering it to fly over the city and find Athos.

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But before she could fly 10 meters, an arrow of fire hit her in the wing, before the flame spread throughout her body.

'From where?' Khali used mana vision to look around and noticed hooded figures on the rooftops. They removed the hood from the robes they wore and deactivated their invisibility. The medallion they all carried on their chests revealed that they were mages of the order of magic.

All of them were second-layer mages and they added up to 10 in all. The mana vision also revealed that all the items they used were magic tools. They looked at Khali in surprise and began to cast their spells.

"He's pretty strong, isn't he? But his items are no big deal." Random Mage 1.

"Is he a wandering mage? Or is he a renegade mage of the order?" Random Mage 2.

"Don't let your guard down, you idiots. He's also casting his spells, and one of you could end up getting killed, so be careful." The leader of the mage group scolded.

The order mages didn't have any spells ready. The plan was to bury him alive, they were here in case he managed to survive, but they got distracted by the chaos of the city and missed the chance for a surprise attack.

'This is bad, very bad. There are too many, I have to find a way to escape... His thought was interrupted by a stone spear trying to impale him. He jumped back to dodge it, only for the ground where he fell to turn to quicksand and his feet to sink in, before hardening again.

"I don't know who you are, but why are you causing all this chaos and senseless deaths?" Rickley asked, stepping out of a hole in the floor.

Balls of fire, bullets of wind, spikes of ice and arrows of light rained down on him, but none of the attacks managed to hit him. Khali used sheer brute force to shatter the stone floor, before freezing the ground and sliding, as if skating. He fired ice spears in response, but the mages didn't even bother to dodge, just activated defensive items and continued to attack him.

"I'm not to blame for all of this. Although I have a vague idea who is responsible." Khali spoke with a cynical smile as he cast a great spell at Rickley.

A blue glow appeared beneath Rickley, before a 10-meter-wide pillar of water appeared and froze him. Rickley panicked slightly and created a barrier of pure mana around him. The barrier began to crack the instant it was formed by the pressure of the pillar, making Rickley have to expend more and more mana to maintain his integrity.

Khali waved his wand and the ice partially melted, water entering the barrier through the cracks before freezing again, preventing the barrier from repairing itself no matter how much energy Rickley poured into the barrier.

“Do something, you idiots!” Ricley shouted to his companions as the ice came closer and closer. He felt his body shiver from the cold and frost began to build up on his clothes.

“See what I said? If an idiot lets his guard down, he might get caught.” The mage leader spoke, hurling fireballs at the khali to try to distract him, but shields of ice blocked the spell.

The mages also cast their spells on him, but Khali slid across the frozen ground, dodging most of them. He had learned the sensory field and cool mind from Athos, so avoiding these monotonous attacks was child’s play for him.

Khali took a bottle from his belt pocket and threw it on the ground in front of the ice pillar, before melting all the pillar. The pillar turned to water at the same instant the bottle shattered against the ground, releasing a lightning storm. Khali didn’t trust the leather bags Athos used and stored the lightning powder Athos created for him in a bottle, as well as his potions.

Ricley was electrocuted, falling to the ground in spasms. Without the constant supply of mana, the barrier quickly broke as Khali again froze the water.

To Khali’s misfortune, a hole opened up in the ground and swallowed Ricley’s unconscious body before closing, preventing the ice from hitting him. Khali saw the earth move and a hole opened up next to the captain and Ricley’s body appeared. One of the light mages stopped attacking him and started healing the unconscious Ricley.

“Tsk!” Khali clicked his tongue, annoyed that he couldn’t break up with him. He snapped his fingers, causing the ice pillar to explode in a shower of shards toward the mages. The mages took no damage, but the roofs they were on broke, causing them to lose their balance and fall to the ground.

A 5-meter fireball was launched in front of him, forcing Khali to conjure an ice shield to protect himself. The fireball exploded against the shield, the shock wave sending Khali flying and crashing into a wooden wall and shattering it.

Half a second later, a shower of spells hit the hut, blasting it to pieces.

“Did we kill him?” one of the mages asked, all his earlier arrogance fading, replaced by pure nervousness.

One of the wizards waved his wand, causing a gust of wind to sweep away the smoke and allowing them to see the rubble.

“Shit, he got away! Find him!” The captain yelled, seeing nothing but a crater where the hut should have been. Khali had more than enough strength to withstand the shock wave, but he preferred to use momentum to temporarily move away from the battlefield and recover.

He used a mana regeneration potion to regain what he lost by creating the ice pillar and an invisibility potion. He used the same concealment combination as Athos while the mages were still looking for him.

The mages used their mana vision to scan their surroundings, but could not detect Khali. He crept in between three mages and created a dozen ice spikes from the ground.

The mages were impaled precisely on Organs vitals, before transforming into ice statues. They didn’t notice the attack until it was too late, dying instantly.

“You son of a bitch!” His companions screamed in anger at their companion’s death and to mask their own fear.

‘If it continues at this rate, I can kill the others and escape from here to help Athos.’ Khali thought about fleeing the scene, but he felt something approaching at high speed towards his back.

Khali turned the moment the object entered his detection field, drawing a short sword from his waist and blocking the attack. A dagger flew straight towards his chest, but Khali managed to block the attack in time.

The dagger was imbued with the ability to shatter the weapon, causing the dagger to explode, shattering the enchanted short sword, and causing a shower of shrapnel to hit Khali.

He looked in the direction the dagger had been thrown and saw a man in a white assassin’s garb, with the medallion of the order of magic. Khali gritted his teeth in anger, recognizing the uniform of the white fangs, the order’s assassin unit.

They were also the ones who murdered his father when he was a child.

Chapter 43:

“I really must be someone important, for the order to send a mage slayer after me.” Khali smiled wryly, sensing the urgency of the situation.

Khali might face the group of rookie mages, but an order mage slayer was in a different league. They were experts in anti-mage techniques, using mixed abilities and magic as well as anti-magic tools, not that he needed anything like that to clean the floor with Khali. But it was also very suspicious that the order had sent someone of that caliber against Khali.

‘Now that I think about it, I didn’t do anything to reveal my identity as a guardian. How did they find me? Khali wondered, but the enemies didn’t give him time to reflect.

“Kill him!” The leader shouted, sending a spear of fire towards him, the other mages quickly following suit. The mage slayer also ran towards him, hurling weapon-breaking daggers.

Khali dodged the spells without turning around thanks to the sensory field while summoning great water bubbles towards the daggers. The daggers lost momentum after passing through the water bubbles and exploded harmlessly against the floor.

Deciding this approach was futile, the mage slayer stopped wasting mana and sped towards Khali. The mages quickly stopped their spells for fear of hitting the mage slayer and focused on support him. Enhancement spells have been released further improving your skills.

‘I can’t let this turn into hand-to-hand combat!’ Khali thought quickly, conjuring spikes of ice across the floor. Unlike Athos who could fight as both vanguard and rearguard, Khali was a pure mage. He had trained his body only to the extent that it would not be killed immediately if an enemy got too close.

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The mage slayer slashed with the dagger three times, sending out blade auras that cut through all the ice spikes. His boots suddenly glowed and he moved so fast that the mages watching thought he had disappeared, before reappearing behind Khali.

“Cum!” Khali screamed in pain, a deep gash protruding from his right shoulder. The mage slayer attack was too fast for his eyes to follow, but not his sensory field. He felt the approach of the dagger to his neck and leaned to the side at the last moment, saving his own life.

The ice under his feet also went slick and the mage slayer slipped a little, so his attack wasn't accurate.

“...You dodged. It's the first time anyone dodged this attack.” The mage slayer spoke for the first time, a little surprised. He had activated the boots enchantment, Lightning Step, in addition to the haste ability itself, a combo that never failed to eliminate a target, at least until now.

The boots enchantment tripled its movement speed for an instant, while the skill increased approximately another 50%. The mage slayer had gotten so fast that even he had trouble keeping up, causing his attack to be telegraphed. Even so, it should be an attack impossible for a mage to detect.

‘He's got good reflexes.’ was the magekiller's thought as he resumed the offensive. The boot enchantment had a cooldown, so he couldn't activate it successively.

Khali took his wand in his left hand and froze the wound, preventing more blood from spurting out. He tried to retreat hastily, but the mages launched explosions and other spells, cutting off his escape routes. In desperation, he tried to make hurriedly a wall of ice between himself and the mage slayer, but it was broken in a single blow.

The mage slayer stretched out his left hand and the magic ring on his hand released a flash of light blinding Khali, but the latter didn't bother, perfectly sensing the enemy's movements.

“Shadow body.” The assassin muttered. Khali's shadow suddenly opened its eyes and took on a three-dimensional shape that rose from the ground. Khali shot shards of ice at the shadow, but they passed through the shadows that make up his body harmlessly. Unlike the light element that needed to become physical to deal damage, darkness was intangible and difficult to block.

The assassin tried to stab him from the front while the shadow's body held him from behind, draining his strength. Khali cursed inwardly, his body refusing to respond as he tried to block the mage slayer. The mage slayer's blade possessed a magically enhanced neurotoxic venom, capable of paralyzing a gray troll, one of the monsters with the highest regenerative capacity and resistance to toxins within two minutes.

Khali lost control of the body, but the assassin didn't stop. He plunged both daggers into Khali's thighs, causing Khali to fall to the ground. He stepped on his left hand and took out his wand, ensuring he couldn't use magic. Lastly, he pierced the back of the neck with the dagger, killing him.

“I guess conjuring you was overkill after all.” The assassin muttered to himself, looking at the shadow body. He wave the hand and the spell disappeared.

“Is he dead, sir?” One of the mages approached, asking respectfully. He didn't know why a mage slayer was here, but the moment he appeared, all authority passed to him automatically. The rank of mage

slayers was far higher than low-ranking mages like them and the order is very strict when it comes to hierarchies.

“Yes. My orders were to eliminate the target.” The magekiller spoke looking between the mages.

“Which of you is the leader of this group?”

“It’s me, sir.” The leader stepped forward, saluting him respectfully.

“What is your mission in this city?” the mage slayer asked.

“The mage responsible for guarding the border reported the state of the city, so we were ordered to help restore order to the city, but my familiar, a terrestrial mole, smelled rock worms so we decided to investigate and discovered an underground base. under the city sewers. We informed the order and they ordered us to investigate and eliminate the cause.” The leader made a full report.

“Intelligence captured some members of the word keepers and after interrogating them, they discovered that some of them were gathering in a nearby village for the extraction of an infiltrator and his apprentice from this town. Members of my unit are already on their way to the village and I was sent here to eliminate both the infiltrator and the apprentice.” The mage slayer said.

“That man had an rock worm as a familiar, but I saw no sign of the apprentice.” Ricley reported, waking up after being completely healed.

At that moment, they heard an explosion in the distance and saw flames start to rise in the noble area.

“I think I know where to look for it.” The mage slayer spoke, before turning to the leader. “Take this man and kill the apprentice. You should be able to do at least that much, shouldn’t you? I’ll follow you just in case, but I must keep my hidden presence.”

“Yes sir!” The group leader said, before turning to his subordinates and starting shouting orders. Ricley carried Khali’s body and sank into the earth, while the others moved across the rooftops and provided cover if the apprentice was stronger than expected.

They let their guard down and suffered casualties for Khali, but they wouldn’t make the same mistake again.

“I came here prepared for a battle, but you were already finished when I arrived. What a disappointment.” Ricley said in a mocking tone.

“You... son of a bitch.” Athos spoke with difficulty. He tried to absorb world energy quickly, but Ricley stopped him.

“No, you won’t cast magic!” Ricley yelled, mistaking Athos’ natural ability to absorb energy for a spell. He placed his hand on Athos’ back and pushed him down, causing the spears to sink even further.

“GAHHHH!!” Athos screamed in pain, the blood pooling below him. If the bleeding didn’t stop, Athos would die in a few minutes.

“Your fucking master almost killed me today you know?? And to make matters worse, he embarrassed me not just in front of the unit leader, but in front of the mage slayer!! Do you know what this will do to my career?” Ricley took hold of Athos’ head and lifted it, bringing his face close to his.

Athos glared at Ricley with hatred, but that was all he could do in this situation. He tried to ignore the wounds and gather the energy of the world, but Ricley stopped him once again.

Chapter 44:

“You’re not using a wand. Do you use a ring or pendant to cast?” Ricley asked, taking all of his magic items, including the light sealing ring.

“The only ring... that I... put my finger on... was your mother’s!!” Athos screamed, spitting blood in Ricley’s face.

“You son of a bitch!” Riley screamed red with rage. He raised his fist, but someone stopped him.

“Don’t you dare attack him again. Don’t you know how valuable his body is?” The mage slayer was holding his arm, glaring at him. Ricley couldn’t see his face behind the white mask, but his murderous gaze was enough to terrify him.

“Sorry, sir!” Ricley, didn’t know what he’d done wrong, but he apologized anyway. All the mages were shocked by the mage slayer actions, but no one dared to interfere.

“Mr. Ricley? Who are they, your companions?” one of the surviving guards asked, looking around at the mages. The guards had stopped in confusion and just watched the interaction, but one of them finally mustered up the courage to ask.

The mage slayer looked at the wounded guards and the sheer number of dead and realized it would be a headache to deal with. He felt the urge to simply kill everyone here to silence them, but he held back.

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“We are members of the order of magic. This man is a mage wanted for using dark arts. We came here to capture him and bring him to justice.” The mage slayer lied. He had no idea who Athos was, but noticed that he drew world energy without using any magic items. That could only mean one thing.

‘He possesses a body of mana. I must take him alive at all costs. It was your thought. The mana body trait was highly coveted in the order. One absolute rule that all members above a certain level knew was that: If someone with a mana body was discovered, the order should be reported immediately and captured at all costs.

“Our mission has just changed. Remove the earth thorns and make sure he gets the cure. We’ll take him alive.” The mage slayer whispered to Khali.

“Wait! This man destroyed our city! He should be executed immediately!” The guard yelled angrily and his companions agreed with him.

“I’m sorry, but I have orders to take you into custody. Stay away, I won’t repeat myself.” The mage slayer slightly released his aura, causing the guards to drop to their knees to the ground in one fell swoop.

Even though the aura wasn't directed at him, Ricley still broke a cold sweat feeling the difference in power between them. He hastily undid the stone thorns and softened the ground so that Athos would not be injured.

"Cough cough!" Athos coughed up blood as he held the wounds. Ricley approached him and clicked his tongue at the wounds. He removed all of his armor and helmet, revealing his face, causing people to be amazed at how young he looked.

"Hi, heal this guy quickly!" Ricley yelled at the light-using mage.

The mage slayer watched silently as the mage knelt beside Athos and healed him, making sure no one approached. After approximately 15 minutes, the mage lifted his face and wiped away the sweat, before turning around and smiling.

"I finished healing him. The wounds were extensive, so he must be weak, but I managed." The mage smiled brightly looking at the mage slayer, as if expecting to be praised.

"Good job. Now arrest him before he- no!" The mage slayer screamed, but it was too late.

"EH?" The mage exclaimed confused. His field of vision began to spin several times before coming to a stop, slamming hard against the stone floor. He saw his own decapitated body still on his knees and the man he had just healed behind him.

The darkness of the night seemed to converge on his body, while his surroundings were obscured by darkness. His vision began to fail and the last thing he saw was the man-shaped mass of darkness roar, gripping his headless body.

The darkness in Athos' body was kept sealed for a long time. His body had a high affinity for darkness as well as fire, but the sealing ring of light prevented him from awakening. An elemental affinity wasn't just a matter of compatibility, it was something much bigger.

When the life force matured enough and began to attract world energy to form the mana core, it would absorb energy until it was completely filled, but certain elements would be absorbed in greater amounts than others, causing an imbalance in the core.

The life force would act as a filter, allowing only equal amounts of all elements to be absorbed into the body, but excess elemental energy would still remain in the body and be slowly absorbed, creating an affinity. The more energy was absorbed, the greater the elemental affinity.

Athos went beyond that. His life force absorbed energy and expelled it through his body several times before stabilizing, further increasing the elemental energy. It was because of this that elemental magic could be used. The elemental energy in his body allowed Athos to attract a specific element of the world's energy and mix it with his own mana to manipulate it. Meanwhile, skills like controlling fire that he used before learning magic was inefficient as it purely relied on the core itself.

As the body developed, it would continue to absorb energy unevenly, and the excess would flow into the body, increasing the amount of elemental energy, power, and control over the respective element's spells. In the case of Athos, fire and wind.

The same should apply to darkness, but because of Khali, the darkness grew trapped and only manifested in the form of shadows flickering when Athos was inattentive, or his room turned darker than usual while he was sleeping.

Out of his shackles, the darkness energized the weakened Athos as if he had been given an adrenaline pump, allowing Athos to rip the mage's head off with his bare hands.

"ROARRRRRR!" Athos roared like a maddened beast, his entire body smeared with darkness. Even so, the mages around him felt not fear, but anger. The late elemental awakening was an event they only heard stories about, but they could see with mana vision that the core of Athos was empty. The mage who was killed had been taken by surprise, but that would not happen again.

'I was surprised for a second, but the situation remains the same. Just cast ranged magic and-' The mage slayer's thoughts were interrupted by Athos's next actions.

Normally something like this would be impossible, but Athos did it anyway. The mana within the mage's body had his mana signature, but upon his death, the life force undid along with the energy signature, causing the mana inside the corpse to revert to world energy.

Darkness had the ability to absorb energy and along with the mana body trait, allowed Athos to steal world energy from corpses. It was a little-known skill that mages with a mana body and an affinity for darkness possessed.

Athos did not do this consciously, he knew that darkness could drain the body, but mana was new to him. He was just trying to absorb the world energy around him while draining the corpse, but the darkness created a path with the body and devoured the now unowned energy.

To add insult to injury, the mage was in the second layer of life while Athos was still in the first, so the energy diluted as it was absorbed, filling his core completely.

Athos stood up, but before he could do anything, an aura blade was hurled at him, slashing his throat with precision. The darkness around his body cushioned the damage, preventing his head from being severed, but the cut was still horrible.

He fell backward, holding his throat with both hands as he tried to stop the bleeding, but to no avail.

Chapter 45:

"Who was the idiot that did this??" The mage slayer asked furiously, looking at the guards. One of the guards had fallen to the ground, after spending all his mana on an aura blade. "I'll deal with you later. Is there anyone else who knows how to heal? We need to heal him before it's too late or we're dead!"

"There is no one else who has an affinity for light, but we all carry superior healing potions with us." The leader of the mages said, rushing to Athos' side. He didn't know why the boy was so important, but he didn't question it. He tried to touch it, but the darkness around Athos wouldn't allow it.

The leader poured a potion on his neck, but the liquid sizzled upon contact with the darkness, before disappearing, unable to cure him. The darkness around his body was part of him, but it responded to his subconscious and Athos was unable to control it currently. It was as if Athos had developed a new limb and had no idea how to control it.

The darkness responded to the intense and agony that Athos felt and gathered around his neck as if to protect him. She corroded the potion and didn't let anything come in contact with his body.

"Shit, shit, the potion doesn't work!" The mage leader spoke, looking at the mass of darkness gathering at his neck. He tried to use non-elemental magic around his hands and close to his neck, but the darkness drove him away.

"I already realized, so hold him. He's going to die before non-elemental magic lets you touch him." Said the mage slayer, kneeling beside Athos. He held a potion in his left hand and used the ring in his right hand to accumulate a large amount of darkness. The surrounding mages created mana chains to bind Athos' body, while the guards just stared at the fallen body, praying that justice would be done and Athos died, but not daring to interfere any further.

He placed his right hand on Athos' throat without fear, as Athos slammed himself to the ground. The darkness on both sides struggled, trying to devour each other, but the mage-slayer side won by a wide margin. He was already in the fourth layer of life and had complete control over the darkness.

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He used his other hand to pour potion into the open wound, but the wound was healing much slower than usual. Darkness was coursing through both the body and the outside and was resisting the potion's healing.

"Stop resisting you idiot! You'll die if you don't let me heal you, got it?!" The mage slayer spoke hastily, looking into Athos' eyes. Athos' face was already white and he was already almost unconscious. He had stopped fighting, and that was a bad sign. His body went limp, while his eyes lost their luster and the potion stopped working.

He was dead. The bleeding in her neck had already stopped and the wound was still open. The darkness around his neck disappeared and spread through his body as his core began to unravel.

"Tsk! Shit!" The mage slayer began to swear, seeing the lifeless body of Athos. Things had gotten too complicated for him now. They looked at the mage slayer in confusion, but no one dared to speak to him, fearing that such anger would be directed at them.

'What do I do now? If they find out that I let someone with a body of mana die right in front of me, at the very least I'll be kicked out of the order.' The mage slayer racked his brains thinking of a way out of this situation.

'Should I get rid of the body? No, the order reads the minds of all mage slayers after they finish a quest. If they find out I destroyed a mana body, I'll be lucky if they just execute me. At worst, I could be accused of treason over it and my entire family executed.

The mage slayer sighed. "I have no other choice. I'll call in every favor I can, as well as prepare to be demoted and go back to being an assassin's apprentice. It's better than being kicked out.

Having made his decision, he turned to the surrounding mages: "Listen to what I have to say. We have a huge problem on our hands, but if we act right, we can fix it."

The mages around him were confused by his attitude, but as they listened, their expressions started to get paler and paler. When the mage slayer finished explaining, they were in a panic.

“Hi, I didn’t know this kid was special. They can’t judge me for something I didn’t know!” Rickey yelled.

“You know as well as I do that the order won’t mind small details like that. They’re almost certain to execute you and show their heads like traitors.” The mage slayer said.

Rickey started pulling out her own hair in frustration. He knew how benevolent the order was to those who succeeded, just as he also knew how cruel they were to those they considered failures.

“No need to panic just yet. A live mana body would be excellent, but a dead one is also good. Their bodies are extremely valuable as research material and I know someone who would be interested in them. One of the 7 elders of the council, the elder Louis Zahara, is an avid researcher determined to unlock the secret behind Mana’s body and may be willing to cover up our mistake if we bring the preserved corpse to him.” The mage slayer spoke, hope returning to his eyes.

He knew that if the dark elder had the chance to get his hands on the corpse of a mana body, he would be more than happy to hide the entire mission and secure the body just for himself.

The 7 elders of magic were the most powerful mages of the order. Each of them was represented by an element of magic and held all the authority of the order. If the mage slayer’s words are true, the elder may be willing to save them. But there was a problem.

“How are we going to talk to the elder? He would never accept an audience with rabble mages like us.” One of the mages spoke, still desperate.

“The mage slayer was founded a hundred years ago by him. We have our own means of contacting him, in addition to official means.” The mage slayer said confidently.

“I see, this might work!” The mages said, excited again.

“But I’m going to need you to do me a favor. A full-scale investigation will be done in this city after this incident. I’m going to need to go back to my unit and report that I killed both the teacher and the apprentice. Instead, we need to maintain my presence in this city.” unknown and the boy’s corpse intact, until I finish negotiating with the elder.” The mage slayer looked at the guards as he spoke.

The guards felt an ominous shiver, but before they could do anything, the mage slayer shadow expanded until it touched all their shadows. Their bodies were restrained, before tentacles of shadows emerged from the ground and clung to their bodies, draining their energy until they became parched mummies.

“That’s...” The mage leader looked at the mummified corpses with regret, but quickly shut up.

“I’m sorry for them, but no one can know of my involvement. Let’s put all the blame for this incident on the other mage, while we hide the boy and sell him to the elder. Does everyone understand?” The mage slayer spoke, and everyone around them nodded.

“Fine. I’m leaving now.” The mage slayer said goodbye, handing a headphone-like magic item to the leader. “Wear it all the time. It’s a one-way communication magic item, I’ll use it to give you instructions after negotiating with the elder.”

The leader picked up the receiver and waved it to his ear. "We're going to hide somewhere in the woods until you get in touch."

"Okay, until next time."

Chapter 46:

Rock Village, a few hours later.

It was still the middle of the night, but the mage slayer was running as fast as he could towards the meeting point with the members of his unit, wanting to reach his leader and the direct communication device that only she had. He pretended he was helping the idiot mages, just because he desperately needed their help.

He had lied to them. In fact, if it was discovered that the apprentice had a mana body and had died in front of him, he would be the one to take responsibility for it. Running away to save one's own skin wasn't an option either.

He could run for his life and avoid execution, but his family would have to suffer the sentence instead.

As he ran towards the village, he racked his brains trying to figure out a way to steal the communication device, but there was only one way to do it. Your field leader was two tiers above him, and she always carried the device with her. She never let her guard down in front of the unit, but he would have a chance if they were alone.

'I have no choice. There's only one way to achieve this.' The mage slayer thought, hardening his resolve. He arrived on the outskirts of the village and jumped over the wooden wall, expecting to see the village partially destroyed by the battle between mages and their unit, but saw no sign of a struggle after entering the village.

The village was small, with several dozen simple wooden houses and corrals, with a few shops close to the center. The village had approximately 300 to 400 people, a medium-sized village.

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The mage slayer pressed one of the buttons on the collar of his cloak, revealing his location to his companions, and waited for them to make contact. Approximately 30 seconds later, he received an answer from his teammates. The button on the collar of the cloak acted as a compass, indicating the direction of your allies and their approximate distance.

'Approximately 500 meters south.' The mage slayer thought, before climbing up a tree to get a better view of the village. 'By the distance, it should be roughly in the barn.'

The mage slayer jumped out of the tree and ran toward the barn, being careful not to reveal his presence, just in case. He climbed onto the roofs, being careful not to make any noise, and tried to peer inside.

"Do not move." A female voice was heard from behind, before a blade was aimed at her throat. Before he knew it, his left arm was immobilized behind his back.

"...The darkness that swallows the light." The mage slayer was not surprised or panicked despite the situation and calmly said the security code.

"You took longer than expected, Finn. Is there a problem?" The female voice spoke in a sweeter tone, but it still held him arrested. The mage slayer, or Finn, felt the woman move even closer until their bodies touched. She leaned her body on his back, while resting her face on his shoulder.

"Captain, if you've already confirmed my identity, I'd like you to release me. I have to report on my mission." Finn spoke hastily but didn't move a muscle. He knew the captain's temper better than anyone and knew that things would only get complicated if he resisted.

"Call me Emilia, not captain. If you do, I might consider letting you go." To captain spoke, applying a little more force to his arm.

"Emilia, can you let me go, please? If we take longer than that, the others might get suspicious and find us in this situation. Besides, some villagers might see us out here." Finn spoke in exasperation.

"Okay. You should have talked like that from the start. And you don't have to worry about the villagers. We spread sleeping drugs all over the village and all the villagers are sleeping now. It was really a pain to break into a house by house to drug them." She complained as she released him, before jumping through the barn window.

"Haah...this is exhausting." Finn sighed before following her. He was already used to the captain Emilia's eccentricity, so he don't paid attention.

After entering the barn, he looked around and saw all the members of the unit, as well as a few people tied up with chains in one of the corners. The captured word keepers, or at least the ones left over.

"How was the mission, #1?" A unit member approached him, codename #3 while asking in high spirits. Unit members didn't know each other's names and recognized each other by numbers, except for at captain, who insisted on breaking the rules and calling each other by name whenever they were alone.

"A disaster, but I managed to complete it somehow. And how was it with you guys? I expected the village to be a pile of rubble now, but it's intact." Finn replied, giving a vague answer..

"Everything went as expected. We ambushed them before they reached the village and they didn't last long. There were 12 guardians and we captured half of them alive. I say it was a great success." The 3rd grinned, but Finn didn't notice because of the white mask.

"Enough of the small talk, we're still on a mission! Everyone, gather here. #1, report the mission." Captain Emilia caught everyone's attention, putting her frivolous attitude aside and speaking in a serious tone. Unit members stopped what they were doing and gathered around her.

"Yes, captain!" Finn nodded and explained the entire disaster that had taken place in the city, from the chaos of the crazed, the death of the power figures in the city, to the group of order mages, except for the presence of Athos. He successfully eliminated the guardians' undercover mage and his apprentice, but the situation in the city was tragic.

“...Is this all true?” Captain Emilia asked, frowning. A case of mass hysteria and genocide would attract the attention of the entire nation. It is likely that their presence in the village will be discovered as well, putting the entire operation at risk.

Officially, the order was supposed to support the guardians. If it were discovered that the White Fangs, an organization under the order’s control, had attacked the guardians, there would be major repercussions. If the guardians used this to their advantage, they could even blame the incident on the order, causing great damage to the order’s image and destroying the relationship between the country and the order.

Emilia realized the numerous repercussions that this incident could cause and concluded that it was beyond what she could handle. “I understand. Thanks for the report #1. I’ll inform headquarters and they’ll decide what to do. Rest for now.” She dismissed the team as she walked away from the team.

Finn tried to follow her, but the team quickly surrounded him, before peppering him with questions.

“#1, you really are a lucky guy. The order will investigate the situation personally and you will likely receive a generous bonus for reporting this.” #2 spoke with envy as Finn paled.

“Is it true that the whole town was killing itself?” #4 asked, brimming with curiosity.

“More importantly, was the guy you killed strong? I had been excited to kill the guardians, but they were disappointing.” #5 spoke, a little annoyed.

One by one, every member of his unit asked questions about him, preventing Finn from following him. Finn clicked his tongue in frustration, but looking out of the corner of his eye, he noticed Emilia reaching for a bracelet with a purple crystal hidden under her left glove as she walked away. He tried to follow her with his eyes, but she was gone and out of sight before he could confirm that it was the communication item.

The captains of White Fang units were instructed to report any serious matters directly to the elder, before reporting the order. They were originally his private assassins before they joined the order when Louis became an elder, but their loyalty belonged to him alone.

‘This bracelet is probably the item I need.’ thought Finn.

30 minutes later.

After answering all of his companions’ questions, Finn spent the rest of the time lying on top of a makeshift bed of hay, going over the plan in his mind. He would be a despicable man if the plan worked, but a dead man if it failed.

There was no room for failure or second chances. If he failed now, he would be accused not only of losing a body of mana, but also of withholding crucial information and getting in the way of the investigation. He had removed the mask and was holding it in front of his face, wondering if this would be the last time he would wear it.

“Guys, listen here, I spoke to the barracks and they gave us new instructions.” Emilia spoke, after finishing talking to the elder.

Chapter 47:

“Our orders have now changed. Kill all prisoners and destroy their bodies as well as their magic items.” Emilia spoke, before a chorus of grumbles was heard. Typically, magic items would be sent to the order to be studied and then returned to whoever took them. The only exception is when the mission is to recover a lost item, but in such cases, a cash bonus would be given.

“Damn it, I wanted to take that enchanted cloak for myself!” No. 6 complained loudly.

“I understand how you feel. I already had my eye on a flaming sword.” No. 2 whimpered as he looked at the sword at his waist.

“Come on, you don’t have to cry that much. We’re all going to get a nice bonus to make up for the losses, so it’s not too bad.” Emilia tried to lift the spirits. “We are going to spend the rest of the night in the village and leave at dawn. Try to rest and get some sleep after killing and destroying the bodies.”

“Yes, yes, we already understand.” The unit members spoke in low spirits, but carried out their orders anyway. They approached the gagged guardians with weapons in hand, as if they were going to slaughter animals.

“Hmmm, hmm!” The imprisoned guardians tried to say something, but the mage slayers paid no attention. They raised their heads and slit their throats, beheading them alive. Not a single drop of blood was spilled, the daggers had an enchantment of darkness and the wounds rotted the moment they were made. The guardians gasped for a few agonizing seconds before dying.

“No. 1, no. 3, now it’s up to you.” The 2nd spoke as he and the other members collected all the magic items. They flowed mana through the items without activating their effects, quickly overwhelming them. The magical energy had nowhere to go and destroyed the items inside, turning them to dust.

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Finn and the 3rd, the only ones with the unit’s dark affinity, hurled waves of darkness at the corpses, destroying them to dust. The 3rd also used a magic item to dig a hole and bury all the dust, before plugging the hole again. After confirming that all evidence was destroyed, Emilia left the barn.

“Well, there’s still a few hours until dawn, so I’m going to get some sleep. What are you going to do number one?” #3 asked while yawning.

“I’ll ask the captain Emilia out.” Finn replied dryly, his expression hardening. He walked towards the captain with heavy steps, as if he was walking towards a battlefield, not paying attention to the stunned No. 3.

“...EH?” That was all #3 could say, after hearing such an absurd statement. He thought Finn was just teasing him, but seeing his determined expression, the expression of a man preparing for his own death, he felt a deep respect welling up in his chest.

He also saw Finn drink a potion he assumed was a stamina potion and then gargle a dark green paste, presumably to improve his breath.

“No, it takes at least the determination to face death to hit on the captain Emilia. #1 knows that too and he went after it anyway. He’s a true warrior, no, a hero.” The #3 nodded as he looked at Finn’s back,

which looked more manly in his eyes, before turning around and spreading the news among the unit members, betting on how many bones captain Emilia would break after rejecting him.

“Emilia, can I talk to you?” Finn called after her and then followed her to the roof of the village’s watchtower. The village had a single watchtower towards the forest, to spot monsters before they approached the village. Emilia was lying lazily on the roof of the tower, watching the stars.

“Finn? What’s the matter?” Emilia asked curiously, turning to look at him. She wasn’t wearing her mask, so Finn can get a good look at her face. She had short, shoulder-length black hair with a thin nose and delicate features. His eyes were black and slightly droopy.

Her figure was delicate, but Finn knew she could crush skulls like eggs if she got angry. Finn was slightly stunned by her beauty, making Emilia laugh at his expense.

“Why are you still standing there? Sit down.” Despite his sweet words, she held his hand tightly and forced him to sit beside her. She continued to hold his hand as if reassuring him that he wouldn’t run away.

An awkward silence spread as Finn thought about what to say. He wasn’t new to this, but Emilia was a mystery to him. He wasn’t stupid and he knew she was interested in him, but he had no idea why.

“You know, I never understood why you insisted that I call you by name.” Finn spoke after a while. He turned to look her in the eyes, only to find that she was already staring at him with a smile on her face.

“It’s because I like you, Finn. That’s all.” Emilia spoke up, her smile getting a little brighter as her cheeks flushed slightly.

Finn’s eyes widened at how naturally she said that. He opened and closed his mouth several times like a goldfish, but he couldn’t say anything. For a second he forgot what he came here to do and his mind went blank.

“An opening!” She pulled him by the collar closer to her before kissing him. Finn was shocked at her, but he kissed her back soon after. They continued like that for a few more seconds, before Emilia abruptly pulled away and kicked him in the chest, knocking all the air out of his lungs.

She pulled a dagger from her waist, waist and tried to assume a fighting stance, but her body suddenly went limp and she lost her balance, falling off the roof. Finn threw himself off the roof, catching her still falling body and landing safely on the ground.

“Ack!” Finn groaned in pain, feeling a blade in his side. Emilia couldn’t control her body’s limbs, so she put the dagger in front of her body and used the moment when he grabbed it to stab him.

“Trai...tor.” Emilia muttered as she looked at Finn with a grudge, before passing out. Finn felt a bitter sensation at being called a traitor by her, but he put it to the back of his mind, telling himself he had no other choice.

What #3 mistook for a stamina potion and breath-enhancing paste was actually an antidote and the special poison that mage slayers used in their weapons. The plan was to take advantage of Emilia’s feelings to kiss her and knock her unconscious, but she ended up doing it all on her own.

“I’ll get on my knees and beg forgiveness when you wake up, but please sleep for now.” Finn spoke to her, placing her gently on the floor. He took an intermediate healing potion just to treat the wound and took a deep breath to calm himself.

He took off her bracelet and activated it. Seconds passed as the light flashed on the crystal, indicating it was connecting. Finn was getting more and more nervous.

“Why did you call me again, captain Emilia? I thought I made my orders very clear last time.” Louis Zahara’s hologram appeared and spoke in an annoyed tone, not taking his eyes off what he was doing. He was an elderly man, with wrinkles all over his face and completely bald, with a white beard that reached almost to his chest. He wore a cloak as black as night from head to toe, But it wasn’t the elder who caught Finn’s attention..

In the background, Finn could see a blue-eyed white dragon and a red-eyed black dragon, both approximately 15 meters long, attached to white stone tables with their abdomens open.

Black chains chained all the dragons’ limbs while continually draining their mana. Scalpels made of mana cut off certain organs and transplanted them into each other, while the dragons groaned in agony.

Finn felt pressured, even if it was just a hologram. He knew he was nothing but dust to any of those dragons, let alone the man capable of treating them as mere guinea pigs.

“Sir, I apologize for disturbing you, but I have an important matter.” Finn spoke respectfully as he knelt down.

“...who are you and how did you get that bracelet?” Louis turned to him with a sharp look.

“Member of the 457th White Fang Unit #1, Finn Haug. I took this bracelet from Captain Emilia because I needed to contact an elder.” said Finn.

“This is a serious violation of the white fang code, child. I hope this is a really important matter to be worth my time.” Despite his words, he didn’t seem to care much for Finn. He seemed to be more annoyed at the interruption than at the violation of the rules he’d created.

Chapter 48:

“Yes, I’m sure it will be worth it. I’m sure you’ll be interested in the preserved corpse of someone with a mana body.” Finn spoke in a monotone, as if it was no big deal. He heard a loud noise coming from the other side and when he lifted his head to look, he noticed that both dragons were gone and the elder was looking intently at him.

“Explain yourself and you better not hide anything.” The dark elder ordered and Finn promptly obeyed. He spent the next few minutes recounting all the events since he’d split from the unit, to what he’d witnessed in the city of Faltra, without hiding any details.

Finn knew the elder would read his memories when the mission was over, so it would be a stupid idea to hide something.

“Fascinating, fascinating...! A mana body with a late awakening of affinity! That’s the stuff of legends!” The elder exclaimed fanatically. Countless tomes flew around him feathers quickly wrote down all the experiments he planned to do with such a specimen.

“Elder, I’m glad the material is to your liking, but as for my request...?” Finn asked cautiously, not liking the maddened gleam in his eyes at all.

“Your request? No problem. Your mission was to hunt down the word keepers, so there would be no official records anyway. The mind reading will be done by one of my trusted apprentices and with my authority, the matter will be closed.” The elder said as he waved his hand, as if the matter was something trivial to him. The elder opened a map of the region and muttered for some time.

‘Um... he is currently in the country of Mirkor, more precisely, on the border with the semi-human empire. My influence in this region is almost nil and if I make a big move, it’s possible that the other elders will find out and interfere. The last thing I want is those vultures messing with my stuff!’ The elder thought, already considering the corpse of Athos his property.

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“More importantly, I need you to listen to my instructions carefully. You said the body was with a team of rookie mages, right? I’ll send an extraction team to Clastro City to retrieve the body, they should arrive in approximately a week. Have the mages ready by then.”

“Elder, Clastro is two weeks by carriage from Faltra. Even if they left now they wouldn’t arrive in time.” Finn informed him.

“Don’t they have any wind mage capable of casting flying spells on their team? What do magic academies teach these days?” The elder grumbled like an old man before sighing. “I will send them to the city and order them to wait for a week or two until the mages arrive.”

“Understood, elder.” Finn waved at him. They spent the next few minutes working out all the little details before ending the call.

“Oh, one last thing.” Finn was about to hang up when the elder suddenly called out to him. “Is Captain Emilia around?”

“Yes, she is. Why?” Finn asked suspiciously.

“No, it’s convenient for her to be around. Kill her.” The elder spoke in an icy tone.

“What?” Finn stood up abruptly, praying he’d heard him wrong. He glanced out of the corner of his eye at Emilia’s sleeping body and felt a tightness in his chest.

“It’s an obvious result, isn’t it? Regardless of the method you used, she is incompetent enough to be defeated by a subordinate and have an extremely important item stolen from her. That’s more than enough reason to be kicked out of the white fangs. And the order cannot allow its secrets to be exposed. Therefore, she must be killed.” The elder pressured him to kill her.

“With all due respect, elder, I don’t believe she needs to be killed. Captain Emilia has an almost perfect track record in the missions, in addition to being one of the most promising white fang assassins, she also comes from a magical lineage that serves the order of generations. His death will not go unnoticed.” Finn said, trying to convince him to reconsider. He’d heard Emilia complain about her family a few times and knew she was the black sheep of a powerful family.

“Council elections are approaching, aren’t you? If you spare her, you can use that to rally their support. I’m sure she’ll be more useful alive. I beg you to reconsider elder.” Finn bent over as he pleaded, going so far as to lean his forehead on the floor.

“Um...” The elder frowned for a while as he investigated her family. A black book floated up to him, containing the family history of all active white fang assassins. He arrived at her name and widened his eyes recognizing her last name.

“Emília Ripha..? Is she one of the Ripha?” The elder muttered, before a hideous smile appeared on his wrinkled face. The Ripha were one of the families that served the current water elder, his greatest political enemy within the order. He was more than willing to let the girl live if he could have such a family owing him a favor.

“Boy, today is your lucky day. I’ll spare the girl and let her get away with a demotion. Tell Captain Emilia to contact me as soon as she wakes up.” The elder spoke after a time of deliberation. “Now stop wasting my time and bring me my dead body. And don’t you dare call me again if you value your life.” The elder threatened him before ending the call, without giving Finn time to respond.

Left alone, Finn began to shake with excitement, before jumping in with a huge smile on his face.

“I did it!!HAHAHA! I really did it!” He continued celebrating for a while as he raised his fists in the air in triumph. “Good thing that old man was an avid researcher, who doesn’t care about rules as long as he gets what he wants.”

Finn continued waving his fists for a while, until Emilia’s sleeping body appeared in his vision, and he felt as if a bucket of cold water had been poured over him. Guilt for hurting her, for betraying her trust, and for tarnishing her career weighed heavily on her conscience, making her victory hollow.

“I’ll let you hit me all you want when you wake up, but I need to finish what I started before I wake you up.” He apologized to her once more before turning around and using the headset to communicate with the mages hiding in the forest.

“Leader, can you hear me? I have successfully negotiated with the elder and he has agreed to cover for us in exchange for the boy’s corpse. Delivery of the corpse will be made to Clastro City in two weeks, so I need you to-” Finn started to explain the plan for the magic item, when he noticed an abnormality.

No matter how much mana he flowed into the communicator, he couldn’t connect the receiver item in the leader’s hands. The communication item was a set of transmitter and receiver, the transmitting side had to feed the item with mana, until it connected with the other party. The greater the distance, the more mana would be needed.

Finn had already fed the item several times more mana than it should have to cover the entire forest and even then, it still hadn’t connected. There were only two explanations for this: the mages had left the forest for whatever reason and were out of reach, or...

“-someone destroyed the item. Something happened to the leader and the other mages.” Finn muttered, having a bad feeling. He kept feeding the communicator until he ran out of mana, but there was no result.

Chapter 49:

Athos felt as if he were sinking into a dark place. He couldn't see or hear anything and all his senses were useless. He was also unable to move, no matter how hard he tried. Athos felt as if he were dreaming and could not wake up.

But even in this desperate situation, Athos did not forget what happened to him. He vividly remembered his body being impaled and the feeling of having his own throat cut. The agony of feeling your lungs burning for air and not being able to breathe. Athos could not forget such pain, even without understanding what happened to him after his consciousness disappeared.

No, he knew what had happened, but he was unable to accept it. His mind, the only thing that still worked, was filled with thoughts of hatred towards his killers and a feeling of emptiness and despair came soon after, as he realized he wouldn't be able to take revenge.

'You sons of bitches, I will kill you with my bare hands, I swear I will kill you. You motherfuckers... I'll kill them. I will kill them. Athos continued to curse them, as if it were a broken record.

His thoughts began to wander and become incoherent, until only hatred was left. Unbeknownst to Athos, the darkness in his body responded to his deepest desire. The darkness remaining in his corpse spread throughout his body as it corrupted the world's energy from the destroyed core.

The light was extinguished as darkness took its place. The previously translucent world energy was painted black as the world energy became unbalanced. The darkness drained all the nutrients from his body and accumulated it where the mana core had previously been, trying to rebuild it.

His body visibly withered as the darkness tried and failed to convert the drained energy into life force and form a new mana core. His muscles withered, his organs rotted and his skin turned to dust. When only a skeleton remained, the darkness gathered enough life force to support the world energy in his body, but it was unbalanced by the lack of light element, forming a layer of death.

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Corrupted world energy flooded the life force, forming a black core. A pulse of darkness shot out of the core and spread through the body. His white bones turned black, while a dark void radiated from his empty sockets. His consciousness, which until now had been wandering, returned to his body.

Athos had returned

A few hours earlier, somewhere underground in the forest of Faltra.

The seven remaining mage team were hiding in the woods, as they guarded Athos' corpse in a makeshift underground hideout built by Ricley, awaiting contact from the mage slayer. The mage order tried to contact the team leader, but he purposely destroyed the communication item itself, keeping only the mage slayer receiver.

He did this to delay the order's information gathering and to have a plausible excuse for not responding. The novice mages were a nervous wreck as they waited impatiently for news.

The team leader assigned tasks to the mages, mainly to keep their minds occupied and keep them from panicking.

“What do you think will happen to us?” A mage asked his companion. He appeared to be in his 20s, but his real age was nearly 40. He was blond with green eyes a thin chin and delicate features.

The two were alone and were ordered to watch over Athos’ corpse and ensure that nothing could reach it.

His body had been preserved in an ice coffin, so it was hard to imagine that anything would happen to him, but the leader would have no peace of mind if there wasn’t someone constantly guarding his trump card.

“Can you stop asking me that every 5 minutes? I know as much as you do, and none of us know anything!” His companion replied angrily, hearing the same question for the umpteenth time. He appeared to be the same age as his companion, only with slightly more striking features. He had long black hair tied in a ponytail and black eyes.

He glanced at the ice coffin before clicking his tongue. “If it weren’t for this shit, we would have left this town by now, instead of rotting underground!”

Frustrated and angry, he got up and walked to the front of the coffin before kicking it, trying to vent. “This is all your fault! Why did you have to have a fucking mana body! It’s your fault that someone like me is stuck here!” He screamed hysterically as he kicked the coffin.

“Hey, what do you think you’re doing? Stop that shit now!” the blond mage asked in a panic, afraid his mate had gone mad. He took him by the shoulders and hurriedly pulled him away from the ice coffin, before checking that the coffin had not suffered any damage.

He sighed in relief to see the coffin had suffered only minor scratches. The ice was matte, so he couldn’t see Athos’ body and notice the changes that were taking place.

The blond mage turned around in annoyance and yelled at him. “Have you lost your mind!? Why did you attack our only chance to get out of this situation??”

“Hahaha... do you really think we’ll survive?” the ponytailed mage asked with a deprecating laugh, as if he’d already given up. He was fragile-minded and easily gave in to pressure.

He stood up and yelled hysterically, “Do you really think that mage slayer shit is going to include us in his deal? He’s just using us to guard the body while he negotiates with the elder! Or worse, he might blame us in order to get away with it, and we’re just saving it as evidence! We should destroy the corpse while we still can!”

“Hi, you’re imagining things! Try to calm down a bit.” The blond mage said trying to calm him down, but to no avail.

“No, we must destroy it now!” The ponytailed mage said frantically, no longer listening to reason. He took his wand from his waist and pointed it at the ice coffin. Flames gathered at the tip of the wand as the mage cast a simple explosion spell.

“Stop it now!” The blond mage tried to stop him, but he didn’t listen and kept building up energy. But before he could shoot the flames, the ice coffin exploded from the inside, sending a shower of ice shards in all directions.

“What was this?” The mages said in unison, looking dumbfounded at the place where the ice coffin was. In its place a black skeleton stood, raising its bony hands in front of its skull, as if surprised by what it saw. He opened and closed his hands a few times as if testing their movements, before lifting his head in their direction.

His eye sockets were empty, but they got the impression he was looking at them. Looking with hate.

“I said we should have destroyed the body!” The ponytailed mage spoke, shooting the accumulated flames. The black skeleton stretched its right arm in front of its body, a black gale gathering in its hand. The wind formed in a spiral that extinguished the flames as they approached.

When the fireball finally reached the black skeleton, it was the size of a fist and didn’t even leave a burn mark on the bones.

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The skeleton snapped its jaws, as if laughing at them.

“Cursed undead!” The blond mage yelled drawing his own wand, but Athos was faster. With a wave of his hand, the black wind gathered and turned into a black hurricane, before being fired at the mages.

The ponytailed mage shot fire arrows at him, but the hurricane swallowed them and threw them back. With no other choice, the blond mage conjured an ice shield to protect them.

“Shit...!” The blond mage complained, feeling the ice shield give in to the pressure of the wind. He turned to his mate and yelled. “The shield will give way, do something!”

“I can’t...can’t...breathe...” The ponytailed mage spoke with difficulty, while holding his throat. He dropped to his knees on the floor as he coughed up blood.

“What happened...?” the blond mage asked, before starting to cough up blood as well. It was then that he realized that the air around him was dark. After the hurricane slammed into the ice shield, it dispersed into a black wind laden with darkness that the mages inhaled, rotting their very lungs.

The blond mage ran out of air quickly and the shield broke a second later, letting the black hurricane hit them full-on, hurling them against the stone wall.

The blond mage fell to the ground after the black hurricane ended, gasping for air. He had activated the cloak’s protection enchantment at the last second to save his life, but that only delayed the inevitable.

Chapter 50:

The cloak’s enchantment formed a non-elemental barrier that shielded his body from the hurricane’s impact, but it didn’t block the darkness laden air. His skin was rotten and much of his vitality had been robbed. The ponytailed mage had done the same, but he hit his head against the wall and fell unconscious.

The blond mage was trying to get a healing potion out of his pocket when he heard the sound of footsteps and weakly lifted his head to look up. The black skeleton arrived in front of its unconscious companion, before lifting its foot and stomping hard on its neck, crushing it.

“You filthy undead...!” The blond mage stood up shakily after drinking a superior healing potion. The darkness drained most of her strength and the healing drained the rest.

He felt exhausted and hungry, but he got up anyway.

“If I’m going to die, I’ll take you with me!” He yelled, raising his left hand above his head and activating two magic rings. The first created a pulse of orange light that spread across the ceiling of the hideout, before the ceiling began to shake and crack, collapsing under their heads.

The second formed a dome of water around it, which quickly froze. Despite his brave words, he wasn’t really willing to die. Against his expectations, the skeleton ignored the collapsing ceiling, and lunged at it.

Black lightning flowed through his bones and he accelerated, reaching the edge of the dome in an instant. The black skeleton crossed the dome of water before it froze and raised its left hand, conjuring black flames into its palm.

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“WHA-” The blond mage yelled in surprise, but the black skeleton quickly sealed his mouth with his hand, turning the flames into a ball of black fire inside his mouth before detonating it, blasting his head to pieces.

The dome froze completely seconds before the cave collapsed, trapping the black skeleton underground.

The mage leader was checking the receiver he received from the mage slayer for the seventh time in the last 15 minutes, when he felt a sudden tremor in the ground.

“An earthquake, in this region?” The leader asked himself confused. As far as he knew, earthquakes were not common in this region. He pushed the matter to the back of his mind, thinking it was just an unusual situation, before abruptly standing up, pale as a ghost. “The corpse!”

He began to run hurriedly, ignoring his confused subordinates. The subordinates around didn’t understand why he suddenly ran, but followed him anyway.

When the leader reached where the underground hideout was, he gasped in terror. A crater had formed within a radius of approximately 20 meters. The leader searched desperately, but found only rocks and downed trees that had fallen into the crater.

“Shit! Ricley, help me dig them up! I don’t see our mates, nor the ice coffin.” The leader yelled, summoning his familiar, an earth mole, while using earth magic to dig.

“O-Okay, got it!” Ricley responded as he helped him. One of the mages created a fireball and left it floating in the air, lighting up the surroundings. The leader and Ricley, the only magic users on earth,

continued digging desperately hoping that the ice coffin or one of the mages guarding the coffin could save the corpse.

The mole emerged from the earth and began to make noise, drawing the wizards' attention. The leader understood his intentions and began to dig around him, finding a barrier of ice.

"It's them! Quick, we have to melt the ice!" The leader yelled as he pointed his wand and started releasing flames to melt the ice. The other fire mage also helped him, while the rest watched anxiously.

When the ice had melted enough for a body to pass through, the leader ordered the fire to stop and tried to look inside, to confirm the state of the mages. He also released a small fireball to light up the dome from within.

"Hi, are you all right?! We'll help you-Cogh!" The leader gasped mid-scream, an arrow of black fire buried in his throat. He tried to throw himself backward, but a bony hand came out of the hole and grabbed him by the neck before twisting, killing him instantly.

The ice exploded, throwing ice shards everywhere. The 4 mages retreated in panic, watching with horror their leader instantly die.

"What the fuck just happened??" one of them asked in panic.

"How am I supposed to know??" Another mage replied.

"Talk less, conjure more!" A female mage yelled, interrupting the argument.

"..." Ricley didn't say anything, but stayed behind the three of them, wanting to use them as meat shields for whatever attacked them. 'I refuse to die like a dog in this shitty little town!' That's what he thought.

A ten-foot black fireball was launched from the hole, quickly flying towards them. The female mage conjured up a barrier of wind to block it, while the other mages hurled spears of fire, stone bullets, and lightning into the hole.

The black fireball destroyed the ground as it advanced, before hitting the wind barrier and detonating, blowing a hole in the wind barrier. A black skeleton leapt through the crack in the barrier, surprising the mages. He had moved along with the fireball to approach the mages undetected. They were above him in numbers, magic items, and even individual strength. His only chance was to separate them and kill them one by one, or catch them off guard like the leader.

He had already noticed in their previous interaction that mages were strong but inexperienced and could only use one spell at a time. Their wands could only draw one stream of mana at a time, and unlike him, they could not change an attack spell to a defensive one, forcing them to rely on their magic items to defend themselves.

The black skeleton raised his hand and activated a magic ring, creating a dome of black water around him, isolating him and the mage. The corrupted mana that fueled the magic ring created a dome of water mixed with darkness. The darkness corroded the ring's magical runes, destroying it from within, and rendering it useless after a single use.

The black water froze as his companions screamed and attacked the dome, but the mage female paid no attention. She backed as far away from the black skeleton as she could while hurling beams from her wand against him. The black skeleton had the same idea, shooting black bolts from its hands.

The rays met in the center of the dome. The mage was in the second layer and the power of her magic reflected that, pushing black lightning slowly backwards. But the darkness within the black rays could absorb the air element in the enemy's radius, increasing their own power and weakening it, forcing the female mage to spend even more mana to maintain the spell.

As if they were hungry snakes, the black rays devoured the energy in the rays, getting closer and closer to the mage.

"No, no, no!" The female mage screamed in horror, seeing the black rays getting closer and closer. The lightning struck her wand and raced throughout her body, before blasting her against the ice wall, into a charred corpse.

The black skeleton wasted no time, seeing the dome being bombarded with spells. The darkness reduced damage taken, but enemy magic would break through in a matter of seconds. He activated a second magic ring, causing a dark orange wave to spread across the floor.

Outside, the mages attacked the dome with their best spells, determined to kill the undead while he was busy with his mate. Suddenly, a small-scale earthquake started knocking them off balance and causing them to fall, breaking their concentration. The earth beneath them sank before darkening, corroding anything it came in contact with.

The mages groaned in pain, feeling their skin sizzle as it made contact with the ground. Ricley was especially powerless, unable to use earth magic. The darkness mixed with the earth and he became unable to use it, reducing his fighting power and cutting off his escape route. One of them created a platform of pure mana and climbed up, the others quickly followed him, avoiding the toxic ground.

A part of the dome melted and the black skeleton leaped out of it, black rays coiling around its arms like snakes. He stretched his hands in front of his ribcage and the beams pooled into a sphere, before firing.

Ricley conjured a non-elemental shield to protect themselves while one of the mages conjured a spear of fire at the black skeleton, but the ball of lightning was faster. The sphere of lightning hit the space between the three of them and exploded, the lightning spreading out and electrifying them. The platform collapsed and they fell to the ground in spasms. The black rays spread darkness throughout their bodies, draining their strength as it paralyzed them.

But the black skeleton was not unharmed. The fire spear was thrown at him, but luckily the mage lost consciousness, causing the spear to explode before reaching him. The black skeleton was thrown and crashed into a tree, chipping the bones in its spine. He quickly got to his feet, feeling no pain from an injury that would normally be crippling for an ordinary human.

The black skeleton ran until it got in front of the mages, before spitting out a jet of black flame, incinerating them alive.