

## Legion lich 61

### Chapter 61: Invading the forest

On the edge of Faltra forest, at the same time.

The mage slayer unit entered the forest, fully prepared. They had spent the night in the artificial cave created by Gaius and left just before dawn. They moved quickly and silently, always maintaining formation. #9 had also returned from the city and joined them, as it was clear that the mage unit was dead and the chances of them appearing in the city were zero.

Finn and #3 were on the sides of the formation while #4 and #6 were at the front throwing fire blades that cut through the trees at the same time they burned through it, making regeneration difficult and hopefully causing the spirit to waste energy regenerating them.

Before they advanced 100 meters into the forest, the burnt trees began to regenerate and a cloud of parasitic spores shot through the trees, rushing toward them.

Without exchanging a single word or a second's hesitation, they changed formation. Finn and #2 took the lead, while #3 retreated to the back of the formation. Finn and #2 worked together and conjured a black wind vortex that sucked in all the parasitic spores, clearing the way ahead. Meanwhile, #3 cast a curtain of darkness that weakened and slowed the spores long enough for the mage slayers to advance safely.

Suddenly, the branches of the newly regenerated trees snapped and moved quickly, trying to impale them from the sides of the formation, where apparently there was no one protecting them. The tips of the branches were coated in white light in the shape of a spearhead while the branch elongated abnormally and moved in erratic patterns.

Emilia and #9 moved left and right, blocking the branches. Emilia conjured circular shields of light exactly where the branches would strike, but the branches twisted and changed direction at the last second, just as Emilia had predicted. The shields of light began to spin, revealing themselves to be saws of light, and they accurately cut through all the branches before moving forward and cutting through the trees.

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The #9 on the other hand, released a spray of water from one hand and frost fog from the other. The spray soaked the branches, before they froze in contact with the mist, rendering them useless. The ice stiffened the branches, taking away their mobility, in addition to inhibiting the tree's regeneration.

"Coming from the ground, dodge!" #2 spoke and in the next moment, the floor where the mage slayers were opened up, releasing small geysers of highly pressurized boiling water at them, but they were rationing their mana vision usage, ensuring at least one person was with him active and managed to jump to the side as soon as the ground began to shake.

Gaius waved his hand, creating a layer of stone that partially covered the geysers, focusing them against the rear of the team, more precisely, the cloud of spores that chased them. The geysers wet the spore cloud, making it heavy and causing it to fall harmlessly to the ground, temporarily relieving #3's burden.

As if changing strategy, the trees around the group stopped trying to create branches to impale them and instead fired seeds at them. The seeds grew while they were still in the air, turning into purple flowers and releasing poison into the air.

The mage slayers didn't even bother to block this attack and just activated the enchantment on their masks, neutralizing the poison. They continued at this pace for about an hour, fighting constantly as they went. As time passed, the traps became more and more repetitive, so the mage slayers were able to quicken their pace and reach the center of Faltra's forest.

Even so, by the time they reached the center of the forest, they were already half-core and half-tired. The distance covered was not great, but fighting for a full hour took its toll. They've avoided drinking potions to recover so far because they'd be unable to replenish them, but it would be a bad idea to fight a spirit in bad shape.

"Drink the mana and stamina regeneration potions as we go-" Emilia tried to speak, but the sight as she emerged from the sea of trees left her speechless for a second. According to familiar accounts, in the center of the forest there was a small clearing with a huge willow tree in the middle, which the mage slayers thought was the spirit's physical body.

But there was nothing when they got there. The clearing was completely empty and the huge willow was nowhere to be seen. With a bad feeling, Emilia was about to signal them to temporarily retreat, when the floor of the clearing gave way, swallowing them.

The mage slayers reacted quickly, trying to summon platforms of pure mana beneath their feet, but failed. The light element in the world energy was being absorbed by something deep in the clearing, unbalancing the world energy and making it impossible to use pure mana spells. Emilia also had her light magic sealed and fell helpless.

At the bottom of the crater, stone spikes rose from the ground, ready to impale the falling mage slayers. Gaius pointed his hand at spikes, activating a ring and releasing a wave of orange energy that caused the spikes to crack and explode. #9 also activated a magic ring before hurling it to the bottom of the crater, creating a dome of water that broke their fall.

The mage slayers rose quickly and looked around alertly. They were in some sort of underground cave, but the place was clearly artificial. The cave was approximately 40 meters in diameter and 25 meters deep. The walls were made of stone, with massive roots covering the walls and floor, all connected to a massive cluster of roots in the center of the cave.

The roots were dead and dry, but there was something in the center of the roots glowing with white light. The mage slayers didn't know what was inside the roots, but they felt shivers down their spines seeing the overwhelming amount of energy inside the roots. The mage slayers rushed forward all at once, determined to destroy what was inside the roots before it could get out.

They released their best spells precisely at the visible gaps between the roots as they moved to surround the cluster, but an extremely dense barrier of light appeared, blocking all spells. A pulse of light spread from the cluster, temporarily revitalizing the cave's roots.

The roots on the ground writhed before getting up and trying to wrap themselves around the mage slayers, but they were agile and dodged in time, slashing with their weapons and releasing aura blades, cutting the roots and resuming the offensive, but new roots appeared every second.

“Enough of that!” Finn yelled putting both hands on the floor and releasing pulses of darkness. The first pulse only hissed on contact with the roots, but a second and a third pulse weakened and slowed the roots, a fourth pulse made them wither and fall to the ground helplessly. A fifth pulse turned them to dust so they couldn’t regenerate again, just in case.

Now that the way was clear, the mage slayers resumed the offensive. The attacks rained down on the light barrier, the damage slowly building up causing it to crack. A highly condensed lance of fire hit the top of the barrier, blades of wind whirled at high speed around the barrier like a saw, causing a shower of sparks of light and constant damage.

Ordinary iron daggers imbued with breaking weapons fell on the barrier, causing it to shake constantly. Arrows of light shot sporadically from within the barrier, trying to hit the mage slayers, but they were too few and too slow to hit them. Seeing a large crack and a piece of the barrier fall, #3 saw an opportunity and lunged forward, an enchanted short sword in each hand, generating lightning and fire, respectively.

#3 charged forward, dodging the arrows of light and reaching the barrier in an instant. He stabbed both short swords into the hole in the barrier, but the barrier regenerated at the same instant, trapping both swords.

“Damn it!” #3 tried to twist the swords and pull, but the barrier didn’t move. It began to glow brightly, as if it was about to explode.

“Back off, #3!” Emilia screamed, but she was a second late. The light barrier exploded, engulfing the figure of #3 and casting a blinding light that blinded all of the mage slayers.

## Chapter 62: Treevor

The mage slayers were temporarily blinded as they were keeping their mana vision active, the mana glow and the barrier’s own light hit them doubly. All mage slayers retreated at the same time and used skills to improve recovery speed while also improving hearing, fearing an attack while vulnerable.

Fortunately for them, the enemy had someone closer to deal with, so he paid them no heed. Unfortunately for #3, he was the closest target. #3 had closed his eyes tightly and dropped his short swords just as the barrier began to glow, throwing himself back with all his might.

Still with his eyes closed, he heard something approaching quickly from the front, so he pulled out a reserve weapon, a simple dagger with a slash-enhancing enchantment, and activated the fluidity skill. The skill would allow him to redirect the force of the enemy’s attack and perform a counterattack without losing momentum.

A root hit him hard, but #3 blocked it with the dagger and took a half step to the left, letting the root slide through the dagger and trying to cut it with its own momentum. To his surprise, the dagger did not leave a single scratch on the root, on the contrary, his enchanted dagger had lost its edge by when trying to cut the root, becoming blind.

'What-' #3 thought in shock, but didn't have time to be surprised. Runes lit up at the root, revealing it to be an enchanted item, causing spikes of light to shoot out of the root, attempting to impale #3.

The light spikes were fast and point blank, so all #3 could do was activate the suit's magic dispersion enchantment and hope for the best. The thorns pierced his right arm holding the dagger and the side of his body, but the enchantment's power was reduced, so the thorns didn't go deep.

The root suddenly tensed like a whip and was pulled with tremendous force, dragging #3 with it. Upon being pulled, #3 activated a magic ring, generating a small barrier of darkness around him, trying to surprise whatever was trying to pull him out. He also pressed the button on the collar of his cloak, revealing his presence to his companions. The darkness was ethereal, so the barrier wouldn't physically block the enemy, but it should be enough to at least make them hesitate.

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To his surprise, a wooden fist the size of his torso and covered in a gauntlet of light burst through the barrier like it was nothing, hitting his chest with precision and crushing him to the ground. #3 spat a mouthful of blood, almost losing consciousness, but the enemy didn't give him time to breathe, burying a second fist in his face, crushing his head like a watermelon.

This all happened in about 7 seconds since the light barrier exploded, showing just how powerful the enemy was.

On the other side of the underground cavern, the magekillers gathered despite being blind, using the locator on the collar of their suits to know each other's position. In this way, they noticed the presence of #3 moving at an absurd speed, before falling to the ground and disappearing.

The magekillers hardened their expressions behind the mask knowing what that meant, but no one stepped forward to try to save him, knowing they would be an easy target if they let their anger get to their heads. They cast their best spells and held them in place, tension building as his eyesight recovered.

"I intended to leave this forest alone, you know? I even let you guys go the first time you invaded me, sending the spore cloud as a warning and to make sure you wouldn't come back, but you came back just a day later, destroying my forest, invading my home and trying to kill me. Before we start fighting, I would like you to tell me what you came here to do. So that I can write on your tombstones the cause of your death." A deep voice spoke to them, its tone making clear the anger he felt.

Emilia was the first to regain her sight, but what she saw made her think she was hallucinating. In the middle of the cave, a 4 meter tall humanoid creature made of wood was standing with the headless body of #3 at its feet. The wood that made up its body resembled full-body armor, if some parts were ignored.

Its arms were a cluster of tightly connected branches, with sharp spikes protruding from its elbows and amber-colored claws protruding from all ten fingers. On his left shoulder was a white flower bud, while on his right shoulder was a huge thorn.

There was an amber gem in the center of the chest, with vein-like lines being visible through the few gaps in the plant armor, connecting the amber gem to all parts of the body, spreading the amber energy and illuminating the armor from within.

From its back, tree branches and thorns came out at random and moved like snakes. Its legs were like tree trunks up to the knee, where they branched into intertwined roots down to the feet, ending in four sharp claws, three in front and one in the heel.

His helmet covered only the right side, the left side revealing a face with delicate, almost feminine features, but Emilia recognized the pointed ear, the most characteristic feature of an elf. The right side of the helmet was detailed as if it were a work of art. His eyes were different colors, with the side covered by the helmet glowing an amber color, the same color as the gem on his chest, while the left side was an emerald green color.

The mage slayers took a few seconds to stare stupidly at the enemy's body, unable to look away. They couldn't identify what the thing in front of them was, no matter how hard they tried, but one thing they were sure of. Whatever it was, it wasn't a spirit.

"We are the white fangs, the mage slayers of the order. We came here after a corpse of a young man and a team of mages we thought got lost around here. If you give us the corpse, we can leave in peace and avoid the conflict." Emilia spoke quickly, lowering her daggers to show that she wasn't hostile, but not letting go of them.

"After attacking me, you say you don't want to be hostile? If I let you out of here you will alert the other humans and they will swarm this forest like a plague of locusts until they kill me. I asked your motives just out of curiosity." The false spirit has spoken.

'Are they after the corpse that turned into undead? I don't know what they want with an undead, but it can't be good. I already intended to kill them to ensure that my presence would not be discovered, but if they plan something unholy with an undead, it is my duty to ensure that they never leave here.' The false spirit thought, its bloodlust starting to build.

Emilia felt the bloodlust increase and raised the daggers, but did not give up the negotiations.

"Wait! We came here on an official mission! Our disappearance will not go unnoticed and the order will send an extermination force into this forest and they will hunt you down. But if you let us go, I swear on my family's name that we won't reveal your presence, and let's just say we didn't find anything." Emilia spoke the truth.

She could swear anything in the name of her family as she cared for them as much as a kidney stone and she could also say whatever she wanted, her mind would be read anyway and the false spirit's presence would be revealed anyway.

Unaware of Emilia's trick, the false spirit used his mystical senses and saw the truth in her words, but that didn't change his mind. Even if she was an honorable person, he couldn't say the same of others with her. The most he could do was offer a prayer for their souls and pray that they would find peace after they died.

“You seem like a good person, it’s a pity you met your end here. At least know the name of the person who killed you. I’m Treevor, descendant of the spirit king!” Treevor screamed, branches crawling over his face and covering the left half of his head, before leaping at the mage slayers.

#### Chapter 63: Treevor

Treevor attacked Emilia, the person he considered the biggest threat. he raised his right fist, trying to kill her in one hit. The branches on the right side of his back came together in his fist, forming a spiraling spear of branches. White runes appeared on the surface, creating a swirling layer of light around the spear like a drill, leaving sparks of light along the way.

To top it off, he activated the spirits boost ability, propelling his own giant body at a speed that should have been impossible. The spirits impulse mixed the amber energy accumulated in his chest with his own mana before pumping it throughout his body, causing an explosion of power and speed throughout his body.

Emilia was barely able to keep up with the Treevor’s movement, activating the boots enchantment and the martial skill of acceleration by pure reflex and threw herself to the side with all her strength, saving her life by a thread. Unfortunately, the companions behind her weren’t so quick to react. #7 and #9 were behind Emilia and were impaled without offering any resistance.

Treevor’s momentum didn’t stop and he slammed into the wall, the spear in his right arm digging into the wall up to his shoulder. The entire cave shook as if an earthquake had happened and only then did the other mage slayers understand what had just happened. The monster in front of them was on a whole different level from them. The only thing left of the #7 and #9 was the lower body, everything else had been pulverized in the attack.

“Disperse and retreat, now!” Emilia screamed urgently, panic clear in her voice. The mage slayers thanked Eishin for Emilia’s order and fanned out to increase the chances that at least one of them would escape. They tried to use the roots in the walls to climb while they cast their best spells against Treevor, trying to slow him down as long as possible.

A shower of densely packed black spikes, a serpent-shaped bolt of lightning, and a ten-foot fireball capable of melting rocks were hurled at Treevor in sequence, but the latter didn’t bother. He removed his right arm from the wall, before the branches that formed the spear became flexible and elongated like a whip. Translucent runes and white runes sparkled on the whip’s surface, activating two enchantments.

The first concentrated mana in the center of the whip and released it when swung around in the form of a shock wave, while the second created a layer of flexible light over the whip. Treevor swung the whip in an arc around him.

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The blow first struck the serpent-shaped lightning bolt, crushing it in a blast of electricity, then released a shock wave against the fireball, causing it to detonate in midair. Lastly, he wrapped himself in a spiral shield, protecting Treevor from the thorns of darkness. The darkness hissed as it made contact with the layer of light in the whip, releasing sparks of light into the air, but it couldn’t get through.

The spells were unable to do any damage to the treevor, but they served their purpose. The mage slayers were almost at the top of the hole, but they encountered a problem. The roots they were leaning on suddenly glowed with white light, before the blade of light shot out of the roots, piercing the mage slayers that were too slow to jump through time.

It was only then that they realized why Treevor hadn't moved. The roots that formed his feet had entered the ground, connecting with the other roots in the ground and walls, sending out pulses of white and amber light, turning the entire hole into a potential weapon.

#2 even tried to create an air platform over his feet and jump out of the hole, but it made him stand out from the rest and made him a target for Treevor. He swung the whip once more, sending a shockwave towards No. 2, causing the latter to hastily conjure up a barrier of wind.

The wind barrier broke easily, but managed to mitigate some of the damage, sending #2 flying with only a few broken bones. #2 smiled at this development, releasing jets of air through his hands to get away even faster, just as Treevor had planned.

He had sent the shock wave upward, but not enough to send #5 flying above the tree line. On trajectory #2, a tree the mage slayers cut down grew in seconds, with finger-sized thorns all over its trunk.

#2 had his eye on Treevor the whole time, so he had his back to the tree. He flew towards her at rocket speed, before hitting her hard. The impact speared the thorns all the way to the stalk, turning it into Swiss cheese, the parts not impaled exploding in a shower of blood from the violence of the impact.

"Four dead." Treevor spoke aloud, wanting to cause panic among his enemies. He didn't give them time to think, swinging the whip and sending shockwaves against the mage slayers with their limbs still attached to the walls.

"Shit!" The mage slayers trapped in the walls swore, seeing the attack coming their way. They forcibly pulled their limbs from the blades, causing blood to spurt from the wounds, and leaped to the ground, the shock wave shattering the walls where they stood a second later.

They quickly took superior healing potions, healing their wounds in a matter of seconds, but that did not improve the current situation at all.

'What do I do? If we band together, he might kill us all together, but if we stay apart, we'll die one by one. Our best spells were useless against him and I doubt physical attacks will scratch that armor. To make matters worse, this thing seems to have drained all the light element from the environment, so my magic is sealed and even non-elemental magic has been rendered useless.' Emilia thought, racking her brains trying to think of a solution.

That's when she remembered an item her father had given her the moment he left the family. She had left the Riphas to escape an arranged marriage to a man of a magical lineage allied to generations, to deepen the bonds between the families. Even though she disowned her family, her father still loved her and gave her a magical teleportation item, an insignia with the Ripha symbol, so that she could flee if found herself in a desperate situation.

It was a purple crystal with a symbol of a staff and a sword crossed upside down, the symbol of house Ripha. Emilia carried it all the time as an emergency measure. The crystal could teleport everything within a radius of 2 meters to a few kilometers away.

Emilia reached into her suit's inner pocket and took out a mana potion and the crystal with Ripha insignia, feeding it mana. She would need about 30 seconds to fully charge it, but the question was whether she would be able to survive that long.

"I have a plan, but I need you to buy me time. I'm going to stay still for a while and I need you to protect me." Emilia whispered into the transmitter glued to the inside of the mask, careful that Treevor wouldn't hear her. Once activated, the crystal would constantly drain its mana until full, making it an easy target.

"How much time do you need?" Gaius whispered back, not looking away from Treevor to avoid suspicion.

"28 seconds and counting." Emilia replied.

"We'll be dead before 10." Finn whispered back. Emilia was about to give an answer when Treevor's gaze left #2 and turned to her.

"Falling stars." He muttered, causing the tiny sparks of light scattered through the air to gather to the size of an apple, before being fired with the force of a cannonball towards the mage slayers.

"Swerve!" Emilia screamed, activating an acceleration skill and another to improve her reaction time before hurriedly ducking, dodging a sphere of light aimed at her forehead.

The other mage slayers activated similar martial skills and began to dodge, occasionally casting spells as a counterattack. Treevor didn't stand still either, the roots of his feet pulling out of the ground and running toward #4, the closest target to him.

#### Chapter 64: Escape

"Don't come any closer!" #4 yelled, seeing Treevor running towards him. He fired several fireballs at once while moving as far away as possible.

Treevor swung the whip trying to crush him, but he rolled to the side and dodged. Even so, the shock wave still sent him flying, where Treevor's left fist slammed into his abdomen, sending him crashing back to the ground.

#4 vomited a lot of blood, but didn't lose focus and plunged both daggers into the side of Treevor's wrist. The daggers' enchantments activated, heating the blades until they turned red. The blades sank halfway into his wrist before #4 used the weapon break, causing them to explode inside his wrist.

"You damn human!" Treevor screamed not in pain but in rage, seeing half of his wrist go black from the blast. He jerked his arm back before hitting it again, crushing #4's outer bone and his organs exploding under the pressure.

"How troublesome." Treevor muttered, activating a healing enchantment around his wrist, the blackened wound healing at a speed visible to the naked eye. He looked at the enemies casting spells at his armor in a futile effort, when he noticed that two of them were gone.



“Where did they-” Treevor wondered, before cuts appeared where his ankles should have been, the wound quickly catching fire. Treevor looked back and saw two of the mage slayers behind him with their concealment effect active. His spiritual senses could detect them when he concentrated, but #4 distracted him with the explosion.

#6 and #8 tried to slash again to deepen the wound and take him down, but a pulse of amber energy shot out of the gem in his chest and flowed up to the spikes on his back, before shooting them off like a shotgun blast, destroying everything behind him.

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#6 activated the steel body skill, an upper version of the bronze body, in addition to the suit’s defensive enchantment, but the spikes were physical in nature and charged with energy, so the mana dispersion had almost no effect. #8 was smarter and jumped back from #6, using him as a human shield.

The quills pierced #6’s entire body, making him look like a hedgehog for a moment, before blood seeped from all the wounds and he fell forward like a puppet with its strings cut.

“How much longer, Captain Emilia???” #8 asked desperately, seeing Treevor’s gaze flick to him. He even forgot to speak quietly over the communicator he was so nervous, revealing his plan to the enemy as if he were a beginner.

He focused all of his attention on Treevor and successfully dodged the whip attack and the shock wave afterwards, but failed to react to the attack from behind. One of the spheres of light from the falling stars hit him in the right knee from behind, breaking his knee in a horrible state.

“AHHH!!” #9 screamed in pain as he fell to the ground clutching his knee, but Treevor paid him no attention, lashing out with the whip without even looking, focusing his attention on Emilia. He looked closely at her until he saw a purple crystal in her hand. He immediately recognized that crystal as a teleportation crystal and rushed to stop her before it was too late.

“How much time??” Gaius and Finn placed themselves in front of her, casting a spell together to try to delay Treevor as long as possible. They hadn’t actively participated in the fight so far, wanting to stay close to Emilia to avoid being left behind when the crystal was ready.

The combined spell created a barrier of black rock 10 meters wide and 6 meters high. The earth element made him tough and the darkness dampened the damage of anything that hit him, but it wouldn’t last longer than 3 seconds against Treevor. But 3 seconds was more than enough.

“Almost there!” Emilia yelled back, seeing the crystal almost full.

“No, you won’t run away!!” Treevor yelled from the other side of the wall, his voice clearly shaken. The whip in his right hand reverted to spear form, a layer of whirling light forming around turning it into a drill, before hitting the stone wall.

The spear slammed against the wall with a thud and pierced it a second later, aiming precisely at Emilia’s heart. It only took a second for the crystal to fill, but it looked like she would die before then. As a last desperate effort, she tried to pull the crystal away from her body, to ensure it wouldn’t be damaged and what was left of her allies could survive, but it was an unnecessary effort.

“NO!!!” Gaius yelled, throwing himself in front of the spear. He activated the sword’s enchantment, causing a layer of rock to grow around it, until it resembled a bastard sword, activated the suit’s enchantment, used a defensive ability, and covered himself in stone armor with what little mana he had left, but nothing worked.

The sword was split in half, the stone armor was destroyed soon after. The mana scatter enchantment lessens the power of the light drill, but did nothing to counter the brute force behind the blow. His body was impaled by the wooden spear, but he planted his feet on the ground thanks to the immobile fortress skill, preventing the spear from going any further and reaching Emilia.

The skill increased the hardness of his entire body, but prevented him from moving. “Get us out of here, now!” Gaius screamed, blood leaking from the corners of his lips.

“OK!” Emilia screamed, seeing the purple crystal finally complete. A purple glow spread around him until it formed a perfect purple sphere around him before disappearing, leaving nothing behind. Even the ground was teleported away, forming a symmetrical hole in the ground.

“SHIT!” Now alone in the underground cavern, Treevor screamed in frustration, seeing his enemy manage to flee right under his nose. He kicked the ground in frustration, causing the cavern to shake until his anger passed. The tip of his spear had been cut off, but he could easily regenerate it, so it wasn’t a problem.

“What should I do now? They’re going to report my existence, so I need to get away from here. But where should I go?” Treevor wondered, before sudden tiredness hit him and he felt lethargic. He hurriedly glanced at the gem in his chest and saw that amber energy was leaking out, filling the room with world energy.

The mage slayers hadn’t noticed, but the inside of the amber gem was cracked, and the measures Treevor had taken to seal the leak had broken from the struggle. It was as if a newly operated patient had tried to run a marathon, causing his stitches to reopen.

“No, no, no! Not now!” Treevor began to despair, quickly canceling his transformation. His body knelt on the ground and his eyes lost their luster, before his chest opened and a naked elf stepped out of it. Or rather, something like an elf came out of it.

The lower body, the left side of the upper body was that of an elf, the problem was the right side. The right side of his body had green skin, with brown tree bark covering his forearms, shoulders, and ribs. The right side of his face was green, his right eye had no iris, pupil or eyelid, it looked like an amber ball.

The left side of her hair was as white as snow, while the right side was vine leaves. This was Treevor’s true body. The “titan” he used was just something he controlled when he needed to fight.

“Return to your normal form, quick!” Treevor spoke, causing the plant monster to change shape. Its leg-shaped roots elongated and sank into the ground, spreading throughout the underground. Its arms split into several branches and spread all over the trunk, while its head disappeared. The spines on the back, the flower bud and the amber bud were absorbed and the overall size of the tree increased, until a huge willow tree appeared in the middle of the hole.

As the roots connected with the roots of the other trees and the entire forest in general, the gem's energy stopped leaking, causing Treavor to heave a relieved sigh.

"That should fix it, but I'm back to square one. The crack has reopened, so I won't be able to get out anymore. I'm stuck here, while those bastards definitely came back with reinforcements." Treavor muttered before ducking his head, anger and frustration taking over his mind.

Chapter 65: Decision

A few kilometers away from the center of the forest.

A purple orb appeared 1 meter above the ground, before disappearing, leaving Emilia, Finn and Caio plummeting in midair. They fell to the ground, but Emilia and Finn managed to land on their feet perfectly.

"Blurghh!" Gaius vomited blood, feeling his chest burning. The spearhead was still embedded in his chest, but it was the only thing keeping him alive. The spearhead was more than three inches wide, and the moment it was pulled out, he would spurt blood and organs to death.

His right lung had been punctured and blood was rushing through the cavities and into his left lung, so he was drowning in his own blood. To make matters worse, the spear had small spikes on its surface and one of them was piercing the heart.

"Caio! Hang in there, I'll heal you in a second!" Emilia screamed, seeing the pool of blood forming on the floor beneath him. She immediately cast a diagnostic spell, noting how extensive her wounds were.

Emilia cast an emergency healing spell, healing the open blood vessels to stop the bleeding, before casting the comfort of paradise, numbing the body's pain receptors, making Gaius' expression soften.

"Thank you, dying without pain is much better." Caio spoke as soon as the pain stopped, looking at Emilia's shiny hands. He tried to smile, but a tightness in his chest stopped him. Gaius wasn't in pain, but that didn't mean he was okay.

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"You're not going to die you idiot, at least not today. I'm not going to let you. I'm going to need to remove the twig from your body and even with the severed pain feeling it's still going to be uncomfortable, so grit your teeth." Emilia spoke, and closed her eyes for a few seconds to cast the best healing spell she knew, before reopening and placing her hands on the branch.

She first generated small blades of light and cut all the thorns, healing the wounds after removing them. Then she pulled the branch slowly, taking as much care as possible not to reopen the wounds and heal the ones she couldn't. Caio did his best not to scream, but the sensation of something moving between his insides made him make unpleasant noises.

Even with Emilia's care, the branch was what was putting pressure on and keeping the wounds in place. The moment she removed it, blood and viscera seeped through the hole, reopening most of the wounds. It was then that Emilia cast her best healing spell, massive regeneration, causing the wound to regenerate quickly.

The spell drained the patient and caster of nutrients to heal them, increasing the patient's chances and the burden on the caster. The blood vessels were restored, the destroyed lung regenerated, the bones were rebuilt, but Emilia had to stop the healing before the muscles healed, or Gaius would die from the effort of healing.

He was already pale, but that would be too much for him to bear. Emilia wasn't doing any better either, but she couldn't leave him with her muscles exposed and was racking her brains over what to do when Finn interrupted her.

"Use me if you need to. I'm not injured, so get as many nutrients as you need." Finn said, offering her his right arm. Emilia thanked him and conjured a thread of light connecting Finn and Caio. Now with Finn's nutrients added, Emilia resumed healing, slowly rebuilding the muscle tissue in her chest and back.

She cured the skin just enough so that the flesh below wouldn't be exposed, leaving the rest of the healing for when Caio had more strength. Even with Finn's nutrient injection, he was on the verge of passing out and starving. Emilia was also weak and needed food and a long rest.

Finn was physically better than the others, but he was the most psychologically shaken. He desperately searched for Athos' corpse in the hole, but found no sign of him. It was hard to imagine that there was another being in this forest capable of killing the team of mages, so the only hypothesis he could think of is that Treevor had destroyed the corpse along with the bodies of the mages.

Even though by some miracle the corpse is safe and sound somewhere, Finn had no idea where to look and the massacre of nearly the entire unit would raise questions, questions the elder couldn't cover up without compromising and Finn was sure the elder would rather abandon them than risk the little finger for them.

"Hey, I know we have a lot to think about, but I'm starving and I urgently need a break. Let's go into town for a bite to eat and get a room at an inn, after that we worry about what to do now." Emilia said, too tired to think. She had barely fought, but she was exhausted from the healing.

She looked to Caio for confirmation, only to find he was unconscious. She checked his vitals hastily and breathed a sigh of relief to see that he was only sleeping. "See? Caio agrees with me."

"I agree that we need to regain our strength, but I think it's a bad idea to go to town. It was chaos when I was there and, according to #9, they're still pointing the finger at each other to find a culprit, instead of trying to rebuild the city. I suggest we go to a nearby village." Finn spoke, recalling the report from #9.

According to the report, the city was completely paralyzed. One-fifth of the city's citizens had died and without any power figures to lead them, the people had no unity. Apparently a gang leader was trying to gather people under his wing, but people were dubious about him.

Most of the crazed had turned up in gang territory and areas with more people, as Athos wanted to ensure that the gangs would not interfere with his revenge, while also killing as many people as possible. The overwhelming majority of the population was living in makeshift tents on the streets, as the houses had been invaded and were still covered in blood.

"I disagree with you. The villages must have already been informed about the catastrophe in the city so they will be on guard against strangers. Three unfamiliar faces may go unnoticed in a city of 8000, but

the same cannot be said for a small village. with a few hundred inhabitants, where everyone knows each other.

We can pretend to be homeless people who have lost their homes and spend the night in one of the community shacks, or break in and spend the night in one of the abandoned houses. We can also get food by stealing, although I feel bad stealing from people in that situation, I don't have much choice." She finished before getting up.

"I hadn't thought of that. The city is the best option." Finn said, surprised that she had thought so much, despite being even more tired than he was.

"I know you hadn't thought of that. You're not one of the smartest and you've proven that to me more than once. Now load up Caio and let's go, talking so much has increased my hunger." Emilia said, leaving before she even heard an answer.

Finn just sighed and didn't respond to the barb, picking up Caio body and leaning on his shoulder, taking care not to touch the wound. he followed

"What are we going to do about the uniform and weapons? I doubt they let people carry weapons, even adventurers." Finn asked.

"We're going to storm the city instead of going through the front gate, but we're going to change clothes and hide the equipment somewhere as soon as possible, try to blend in with the city and avoid attracting attention, at least until we decide what to do. " Emilia replied.

"Sounds like a plan to me." Finn agreed and the conversation stopped there. They walked the rest of the way in absolute silence, unaware that the corpse they were looking for was also preparing to invade Faltra City, but in a much more flashy way.

Chapter 66 POV: Sevenus

'Um...does it look like we've arrived?' Sevenus said, looking at the distant village. He was mounted on one of the rock bear skeletons, looking out over the village in the distance. It was early in the morning, so he couldn't approach the village without being discovered, but Sevenus could observe the village from a distance thanks to his vision amplification ability.

The sun had risen an hour ago, but the villagers had already started their activities, like plowing the fields or tending the cattle, so he would have to take even more care to ensure that no one managed to escape. Athos had ordered him to follow the same plan of attack as the green village, but Sevenus decided that some changes were needed to prevent any villagers from escaping.

One of the biggest changes he underwent upon becoming a sub-commander, is that he didn't have to strictly follow Athos' orders. Sevenus was still limited in what he could do, but he could make changes to his plans if he saw fit, unlike the other skeletons who were forced to follow his orders without question.

Overjoyed at the trust his sire placed in him (Unintentionally), Sevenus gave new orders to the monster skeletons, before ordering them to take up position.

'Fufufu, my lord gave me all the skeletons of monsters, his best skeletons, because he had full confidence that I could put them to good use. I must live up to that trust.' Sevenus thought, faithfully believing that Athos trusted him.

In fact, Athos had given away the monster skeletons precisely because he didn't have an iota of trust in him, and he gave as much power as he could to make sure he didn't screw it up.

Oblivious to Athos' thoughts, Sevenus ordered the rock bear he was mounted on to advance. The first part of the plan was similar to that of Athos. The skeletons split into two groups each moving towards one of the village gates. They took a long turn, taking care not to be seen by the villagers.

As soon as everyone was in position, the angry Boars and Gray Wolves attacked the front gates, scaring the villagers away. The wolf skeletons climbed on top of the boar skeletons making use of their speed.

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"What are those things??" One of the villagers, a farmer who had gone out to tend the fields shouted, looking in terror at the approaching skeletons. Unlike the green village, the villagers quickly noticed the black skeletons thanks to the sunlight, but the Boars' speed made up for it.

"They're monsters, so run!" Another farmer hurriedly yelled. He didn't recognize the monsters, but the murderous intent they gave off told him everything he needed to know. That they were predators and he was the prey.

He tried to hurriedly run into the forest, in a different direction than the skeletons were advancing, but a feather as sharp as a dagger hit him in the head from above, killing him instantly. The villager beside him didn't understand what happened right away and looked up to the sky, only for a feather to hit him in the right eye and sink into his brain.

Sevenus feared that the villagers outside the village would scatter in time to flee, so he ordered the bladed birds to fly over the village and kill any villagers outside who tried to flee in any direction other than the village.

"Run back to the gates, quick! And watch out for the birds!" The gatekeepers shouted hurriedly, pulling back the villagers who were about to leave and closing the gates as the fleeing villagers returned.

They rang a bell to warn everyone of the danger, but a bell also started to ring at the back gates, making the villagers look at each other in confusion, not knowing where to flee.

"Shit, what do we do??" one of the porters asked, trying to calm the villagers and failing miserably.

"First of all, we have to block the gates! Bring the wagons and put them in front of the gate!" The village chief said as soon as he arrived, ordering the panicked porters. He didn't know what was going on, but people's panic had to be serious.

People were about to follow his orders when a wind strong enough to lift someone hit the gates, knocking them to the ground. Unbeknownst to people, blades of wind had hit the hinges of the gates a second before the gale, cutting them in half. The wind mage was stationed here, to ensure the village was successfully invaded.

“What was this??” the village chief asked, looking in horror at the fallen gates and the skeletons invading the village unhindered.

The wild boars ran along the muddy village road, trampling anyone who was too slow to get out of their way. The wolf skeletons leapt off the boars’ backs as soon as they entered the village and killed all who fell to the ground, before chasing those who fled down paths too narrow for the boars to pass.

Boars were fast in a straight line, but wolves were superior in maneuverability.

On the other side of the village, Sevenus personally led the bears in the attack. The birds had been assigned to the front gates, so there weren’t any watching here, but Sevenus personally burned anyone who fled, so there was no problem.

He also blew up the gate causing the bears to invade without resistance. The villagers ran for their lives, but instead of chasing them, the bears got up on their hind legs and caught the two-faced monkeys clinging to their ribs, flinging them as hard as they could. Now that they were undead, all it took was an order from Athos or a superior to change shape.

The skeletons grew while in the air, dropping to the ground with agility before rushing towards the villagers, cutting off their escape route. Trapped between the three-meter-tall monkeys and rock bears, the villagers were brutally slaughtered, with no chance of resistance.

“You don’t...need to fear...death. Soon you...will join...me...as my...eternal servants.” Sevenus said, looking haughtily down from the rock bear. He mentally ordered the bladed birds to seek out the villagers hiding around the village and kill them, before raising the corpses into the undead one by one.

The new undead connected to him, but his sire should have already received the life force from the reanimated skeletons, so he should already be aware of his success. Athos had tested whether Sevenus could create undead and whether they would be linked to him, but that was before he was named sub-commander. Now, every undead created by Sevenus was linked to him, but they would still recognize Athos as absolute and Sevenus as their leader.

“My lord...you could have...taught me...how to create...the undead en masse.” Sevenus grumbled, as he created the undead. He did the same process as Athos in the green village, gathering all the corpses and supplies, but it would take a long time to heal each of the undead, so he had an idea how to speed up the process

‘These skeletons don’t have any control over their core, but they instinctively know how to release mana through the core.’ Sevenus thought, calling out to a skeleton with a few fingers missing.

‘Circulate as much mana around the body as you can and eat until you’re full.’ Sevenus mentally ordered and the skeleton obeyed. The corrupted non-elemental mana acted in the same way as the darkness, healing the undead. The recovery speed was slower than if a mage was healing, but all skeletons could recover at the same time and saving Sevenus’ mana.

‘With that, I won’t have to waste my mana on this rabble and my lord will definitely be grateful for my discovery. Fufufu, I can’t wait to see him again!’ Sevenus thought, ordering all the skeletons to heal and equip themselves with what they could find before marching again towards the next village.

Sevenus proudly marched ahead, with the monster skeletons close behind and over 300 human skeletons behind them. And in just a few hours, that number would increase again.

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## Chapter 67 Attack plan

Rock village, just before dusk.

Athos was sitting in a chair on the porch of the village chief's house, wiping the blood off his sword. In front of him, over 1000 skeletons were lined up, while only a few were doing equipment maintenance. About 700 of them were human skeletons, while the rest were village cattle.

Athos had successfully invaded the Horn and Rock villages and was taking a break while waiting for Sevenus. Satisfied after testing his command skill in the green village, Athos invaded the horn village using sheer brute force. He simply ordered his skeletons to attack through the front gates while the two skeleton mages attacked from behind and he raged to his heart's content in the center of the village.

He repeated the same process in the rock village and was busy until a few minutes ago healing the newly created undead. The mage skeletons were to his left and right acting as bodyguards, but the truth is that they were almost bursting with a headache after casting magic all day and still having to help Athos heal the undead.

Athos had received a large amount of life force twice, so it was likely that Sevenus was busy healing the skeletons and would soon be here. Even knowing this, Athos was in a foul mood.

"Just a little more...! A little more and I would have made it... just a little more and I would have made it!" Athos yelled in frustration. Even after killing all the people and livestock in both villages, even after receiving the life force from Sevenus' deaths, even after killing every bird and mouse he found in the village, he still hadn't reached the second layer of death.

Its core felt like a black hole, absorbing all the drained life force with no sign of being satisfied. Whenever Athos received life force, he felt as if something was about to happen, as if the last piece of a jigsaw was falling into place, but the sensation disappeared as quickly as it appeared, leaving Athos in anguish and not knowing what to do.

He knew something was missing, but he had no idea how to fix it. He was still getting stronger with the life force received, so the situation wasn't that hopeless.

"I wanted to form a new layer before attacking Faltra, but not everything goes as planned. All I can do is hope that I can resolve it while I fight, or that I can overcome the bottleneck with brute force by absorbing the entire city." It was the conclusion that Athos came to after finishing cleaning his sword.

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Deciding that Sevenus would still take some time to arrive, he was about to train with his sword to pass the time, when he felt the approach of several undead. He could feel the presence and mentally communicate with his undead as long as they were at a certain distance, and he had just felt the approach of Sevenus' army.



“How is he here already? It must have taken him several hours to heal all the skeletons and then recover his mana for another attack. I thought he would only get here tomorrow morning. I just finished it just now, so he was even faster than me.” Athos spoke in shock, standing up to see the undead coming.

The gates were destroyed, so the skeletons marched proudly as if they were a victorious army returning home. In front of them, Sevenus mounted the stone bear and puffed out his chest so much with pride that for a second Athos thought he would burst his lungs from inflating so much, until he remembered that he had none.

“My lord, I have returned...to your side and brought...the skeletons as you...ordered me.” Sevenus got off the bear and knelt in front of him, reporting his success.

“Yes, I can see them. Your speech also seems more articulate and the skeletons seem linked to you, but I’m more curious about how you managed to heal them so fast.” Athos said, ignoring the shiver he felt when he heard him say ‘by your side’.

“I’m glad...you asked. I found out that...skeletons...can heal themselves...just have a...source of nutrients.” Sevenus spoke, his pride almost palpable. He began to explain how he discovered the regeneration potential of black skeletons.

“This is impressive and explains the undead are famous for devouring people alive, despite not needing food. Good job, Sevenus.” Athos congratulated him.

“OHhh...! I’m happy...to serve you...my lord.” Sevenus said ecstatically.

“How many skeletons did you bring? Did you find any of the mage slayers?” Athos asked, trying to change the subject and snap Sevenus out of his trance.

“I have killed 620...people in the two villages...and 300 skeletons...of livestock animals. I have not found...any sign of the...mage slayers...my lord. I believe they are. ...in the city. Are you sure that... we should continue?” Sevenus asked, fearing for Athos’ safety.

“That’s a little more than 1900 undead. If we add the monster skeletons, we can have 2000 soldiers. The numbers are ok, the problem is their quality. They don’t have any combat experience and they kept their skills and strength of when they were alive. We can take the city if we want, but it’s debatable whether we can kill everyone without letting anyone escape.” Athos spoke, sitting down again and waving Sevenus to do the same.

Sevenus felt his left rib skip a beat and sat down on the other side of the table awkwardly.

“Their equipment is also questionable. Most are armed with hoes and shovels, the rest with kitchen knives or makeshift spears.” Athos spoke, feeling a headache trying to think of a way to corner the city.

Even if they moved at night, it would be impossible to divide the army and encircle the city as it did the villages. They would be seen from miles away and the city would go on alert. If Athos wanted to besiege the city, he would have to kill all the watchmen patrolling the walls who would surely be on alert after his massacre.

“But it’s too much work for one person. If I broke in alone, they’d definitely find me. I still have to watch out for the mage slayers who will definitely be in town. Do you and the skeleton mage have experience with infiltration?” Athos was muttering to himself and turned to ask Sevenus.

“We haven’t received...infiltration training...but if it’s...just a...infiltration skill...we can learn it...in a few hours.” Sevenus said, understanding what Athos wanted.

“Fine, I want you all to learn how to sneak in before dark and then we’re going to storm the city. There are a total of 4 alarm bells around the wall and we need to take over all of them without them discovering us.” Athos said.

“I’m afraid...mages have...difficulty not...being seen. Our magic is...flamboyant...and without it...guards can...alert others first... to kill them all...” Sevenus said embarrassed, angry with himself for not having learned any magic that didn’t draw attention when alive.

“I figured it was like that. That’s why we’re going to have help. We’re going to use the two-faced monkeys and birds with blades to make up for the numbers. The birds won’t be seen at night and the monkeys are used to moving silently in the forest. I’m sure they will be useful.” Athos said, looking at the monster skeletons expectantly.

“I see...while my lord...leads the troops...we will...kill the guards...and open the gates.” Sevenus said, misinterpreting Athos’ plan.

“No, you will lead the troops. I will invade the city and take one of the bells.” Athos spoke, nearly making Sevenus’ jaw drop to the ground.

“Because...?” Sevenus asked in total confusion.

“I’m an alchemist, you know? My professor destroyed our base in this city along with my laboratory, but I kept a small hideout in the slum unbeknownst to him, full of alchemical items. I will retrieve the alchemical items shortly after taking the bells.” Athos explained his role in the plan.

Two weeks before Ricley’s departure from town, Khali had taken Athos to a brothel for his “coming of age ceremony”. Since then, Athos visited the brothel every night with a bag full of stamina potions.

In fact, what Khali thought were stamina potions were actually several different alchemical items disguised as potions. Athos pretended to destroy everything and hid them in the space between the walls of one of the brothel rooms.

...Of course, Athos couldn’t just be breaking into the rooms, so he actually rented one of the rooms and one of the staff at the establishment, but that was just to not arouse suspicion. Yes, just not to arouse suspicion.

He also remembered the mischievous grin plastered on Khali’s face every time he came back with his clothes messed up, but he ignored the memory.

“Anyway, we already have a plan, just put it into action.” Athos looked at Sevenus, who quickly waved back.

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## Chapter 68 Faltra

City of Faltra, on the same day.

Emilia and Finn invaded the city with ease around noon. Emilia used a light spell to make them invisible and they easily jumped over the walls. They were wearing normal clothes and only carried their weapons with them, their costumes and masks were carried by Emilia, while Gaius was carried on his back by Finn.

They left Caio unconscious in a small abandoned building in the favela and searched the city for food, their stomachs rumbling every 5 minutes, demanding what was owed to them. The city was in a deplorable state, as reported by #9.

The main streets were filled with makeshift tents, most of the houses were partially destroyed or stained with blood, making it difficult for people to inhabit them. The corpses had already been removed and piled close to the city walls to prevent the spread of disease and soon a large grave would be created and the corpses buried together.

A large makeshift kitchen was created in the central square, the same square where Agatha was executed years ago, handing out free food to the people. It was organized by the yellow dagger gang in partnership with the municipal guard. The new captain of the guard and the gang leader ceased hostilities after the massacre and began working together to restore the city.

The gang boss was the only power figure in town, despite being a criminal. He distributed large stores of food which he kept secret for emergencies, winning the favor of the people.

In fact, he had stolen from the rich merchants those that Athos had blown up along with the baron's mansion, but the captain of the guard turned a blind eye to this. He planned to confiscate these supplies and distribute them to the people, the gang leader was just faster.

Emilia and Finn wasted no time in line and stole food from the kitchen, before taking it to Caio in the abandoned house. They woke him up and ate until they couldn't take it anymore, before the tension disappeared and exhaustion made them fall asleep, waking only when it was night, their stomachs again begging for food.

"Should I go get something?" Gaius said trying to get up, but his vision blurred and he tripped over his own feet, unable to balance. Gaius wasn't just weak, he was incapacitated. Your body wasn't recovering as it should and wasn't absorbing nutrients from food.

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Unbeknownst to either of them, Caio had been poisoned by Treevor. The wooden spear that pierced his chest was carrying an enzymatic poison, capable of crippling the body's ability to absorb nutrients effectively. It was an emergency measure to ensure that even if his enemies healed in the middle of a fight, they would be unable to continue fighting.

Even if Emilia had cured Caio and made him drink nutrient bombs like a healer would, he would have been unable to absorb the nutrients and would have died from the cure. Caio only survived because Emilia didn't have any nutrient pumps with her and injected the nutrients directly into the body, without the need to digest them.

It was a unique poison created by Treevor, so it was incredibly difficult to detect. Emilia wasn't a true healer, so her diagnostic skills were mediocre at best. She didn't notice the poison, so it was still suppressing Gaius' digestion.

"You should rest now. Your body hasn't recovered yet, so let me and Finn get you something to eat." Emilia said with a kind smile, helping Caio back to bed.

"Sorry and thanks. I'm so weak I don't even remember how we got here. Where are we?" Gaius asked after lying down, trying and failing to recognize the room he was in. He first thought they were in the artificial cave he created, but the room was made of wood and the cave had no furniture.

"You passed out while we were talking, so it's normal. We're in Faltra, in a brothel in the city's slum. The rooms are intact, but there's dried blood and a pungent smell of blood in the hallway. Some of the crazed ones must have invaded this place and slaughtered it." Emilia said, taking a stolen overcoat and getting ready to leave.

"Try to go back to sleep. I'll go get some food while Finn goes find a carriage to get us out of this town, we'll be back in a few minutes." Emilia said before leaving, quickly followed by Finn. Being left alone, he tried to close his eyes and go back to sleep, but his stomach began to growl, causing him to sigh.

"It's going to be a long night."

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Outside the brothel, Finn and Emilia walked in opposite directions, going their separate ways. Emilia walked towards the town square, while Finn headed towards the town's warehouses, to try to steal a carriage. Regardless of what they chose to do next, they would need a way to get around without freezing in the middle of the road.

They were wearing overcoats and doing their best not to draw attention to themselves, using communicators and receivers to communicate.

"Emilia, we need to talk about what to do now." Finn whispered into the communicator as they walked away.

"Not now, Finn. Gaius is still injured and our priority is his recovery. After we get food and he recovers, we can talk about it." Emilia replied, trying to cut him off, but Finn insisted.

"It won't do any good for him to recover, only to be executed at the end! We can't ignore the elephant in the room anymore. If we're not going to say anything, we'd better get in touch with the order and turn ourselves in. If the order judges us we will be executed, but it's still better than making us guinea pigs for the elder of darkness." Finn said, getting to his goal.

The warehouse in front of him was guarded by bandits, but it was simple for him to break in. He blended his presence with his surroundings and leapt across the roofs of buildings, arriving at the warehouse and peering inside. Finn clicked his tongue, seeing only boxes piled up with no carriages.

"I know it's pointless to stall, but we don't have much choice. We only have two choices: surrender or flee. And I don't intend to live my entire life running from an invisible enemy." Emilia said arriving at the town square. She slipped through the crowd and guards, making her way easily into the kitchen.

The kitchen was located inside a bar near the square and only distribution took place in the square itself. Emilia packed enough food for the three of them before putting it all in a bag and leaving, without anyone noticing her.

"I know we're screwed and I plan on turning myself in too. I just wanted a chance to stop, talk and apologize for what I did to you." Finn said, his voice getting lower the more he spoke. He was hopping from roof to roof as he talked, checking the interior for carriages.

"I found." Finn said, finally finding the place where they hid the carriages. There were bandits everywhere so he couldn't approach without being discovered, but there were at least a few dozen carriages here. The gang leader had gathered all the carriages in one place after stealing them.

"I don't need your apologies." Emilia's tone was incredibly cold compared to his.

"I know it's not the right time, but I don't want to die knowing that you hate me-" Finn tried to convince them, but Emilia cut him off.

"Shut up." Emilia started looking at the people around her, acting strangely. People started running for no apparent reason, as if they were running from an invisible enemy.

"I know you're angry, but-"

"Shut up at once!" She yelled into the communicator, making Finn finally stop talking. She sharpened her hearing and tried to catch the screams around her.

"...coming from the gate..." Citizen random 1.

"...Have they already invaded??" Random citizen 2.

"...the undead are coming!!" Random citizen 3.

"Living Dead?" Emilia wondered in disbelief. It made no sense for any undead to appear in this city.

"What are you talking about? What do you mean undead?" Finn asked on the other end of the communicator, having heard Emilia's murmur.

"Finn, can you see the gate from your position?" Emilia asked, jumping on one of the buildings to get a better view of the situation. She looked towards the gate and saw the gates wide open and a lot of black stuff invading.

She couldn't identify what it was through the darkness of the night, but she already knew the answer.

"Emilia, the city is under attack! There are black skeletons invading en masse!" Finn was closer to the gates and he could see the black skeletons, but he didn't recognize them. He didn't know of any completely black undead species.

"I've already figured that out! Let's meet up with Gaius quickly before-" Emilia yelled into the communicator, but he suddenly went silent. At the same time, an explosion of black flames happened near the warehouses.

Chapter 69 First death

Outside the walls, a few minutes before the mage slayers wake up.

After the mage skeletons learned to hide their presence, Athos ordered Sevenus to lead the troops, before departing along with the mage skeletons, two-faced apes, and bird skeletons such as pigeons and sparrows. These were birds that Athos had hunted when he was trying to gather as much life force as possible.

They split as they approached the city, releasing a tiny amount of darkness that obscured their bodies. Along with the darkness of the night, it made their figures imperceptible to untrained eyes.

‘All in position?’ Athos asked mentally. He was responsible for the north bell, while the skeleton wizards for the other three. He could still mentally communicate with the mage in the east and west, but the south was out of reach. However, Athos had realized that the skeletons could mentally communicate with each other thanks to Sevenus, so he created a kind of wireless phone to maintain communication.

The skeletons in the east and west relayed his question south, then relayed the message back to him. Athos still had no control over the minds of the mage skeletons, so he had to keep the questions a yes or no to ensure they would be able to answer.

He had also positioned mice at regular intervals to use them as message relays, keeping in touch with Sevenus and the army miles away.

After a few seconds, Athos received a positive response from the mage skeletons and ordered them to start the plan. The apes used the small deformations in the stone wall to climb, while Athos created platforms of corrupted mana to jump on, before clinging to the wall to avoid being seen.

The bird skeletons were flying over the wall around the bells, so he knew the position of the guards even without seeing them. The bells were protected in watchtowers attached to the top of the wall, to ensure a wider view and notice potential threats.

‘Two guards around the bell, two on either side of the wall corridor and two more guards, one watching the sky and the other watching the inside of the city. They seem to be on guard against another crazed attack. There are 8 guards in total.’ Athos thought, casting two spells. The first spell created a layer of air that blocked the passage of wind, preventing sound from passing through.

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The second quickly burned the oxygen out of the air, making the guards around the bell feel dizzy and gasping for air. The guards hurried out of the watchtower through the nearest exit for air, just as Athos wanted.

‘Attack from the left, I attack from the right.’ Athos mentally ordered, causing the monkeys to jump to the walls. The monkeys grew quickly, knocking the guards to the ground with their superior physical prowess, before strangling them to ensure they made no noise.

Athos also jumped, surprising the guards and releasing a knee-high black bolt, electrocuting the guards and causing them to drop like flies. The stone wall rose to waist height on either side, so its spell wouldn’t be visible as long as it didn’t glow.

Athos pierced their eyes with bony fingers all the way to the brain, painfully killing them just for fun. He quickly raised them like the undead, before going to the monkeys and doing the same. His black core greedily absorbed the life force, but there was no other change.

Athos was left waiting and in less than 30 seconds, the life force was sent to him three more times. Only then did Athos make contact with the other Skeleton Mages, confirming that they were successful and no enemies were alerted.

‘Sevenus, start the attack.’ Athos relayed the message through the rats, receiving confirmation a few seconds later. In the distance, he could see a black shadow approaching across the pastures, as if a swarm of black ants were approaching, before slowly splitting in two, each heading towards one of the gates.

“Alright. One of the mage’s skeletons will come to help, work together to attack the gates.” Athos ordered before jumping off the wall onto the roof of a nearby house. He used stealth and moved from roof to roof, being careful not to be seen.

He jumped across the rooftops until he was on the roof of the milf brothel. Athos was about to break in through one of the windows when he noticed the front door opening and two hooded people coming out. Athos assumed it was only the homeless occupying the place and paid no attention to them.

Athos broke open one of the windows and entered, looking around to make sure no one was around. He was in one of the brothel rooms, right next to his target. He slowly opened the door and peered out into the hallway, ensuring there was no one there. Athos was not hasty, scanning every room for anyone.

‘There’s someone in this one.’ Athos thought, using the vision of death inside the rooms, until he found one with a shadow. It was the biggest shadow Athos had ever seen, fully covering the person’s body, making Athos think for a second that the person on the other side was already dead.

He opened the door silently, seeing a thin man lying on the bed, breathing hard. Athos was about to kill him, when he saw a set of white suits hanging in a closet, making him stop in his steps, anger welling up in his mind.

It was him. Or at least one of them. Athos didn’t know why he was so dying, but he wouldn’t let the opportunity to kill one of his enemies pass him by.

His presence still undisturbed, Athos stood in front of the head of the bed and covered Caio’s mouth with his left hand, before using the bony fingers of his right hand to stab the throat and eyes in quick succession. He used the pierce skill on his fingertips, making them as sharp as spears.

Caio awoke with the pain, screaming like a pig being slaughtered and tried to get up, but Athos’ grip was firm. He accurately punctured the windpipe, causing the blood to enter the respiratory tract so that Caio would drown in his own blood. At the same time, he pierced his fragile eyes, blinding him and turning his brain to a bloody pulp.

Caio struggled for some time before dying, not even seeing his killer’s face. Athos waited for a few seconds before releasing him, making sure he was dead. The sight of death revealed to him that shadows had accumulated in his throat and eyes when Athos stabbed him, but were now spread evenly across his body.

Athos was beginning to suspect the nature of the shadow, but this was not the time to think about it. He quickly raised his skeleton like an undead, desiring his information, just like a mighty servant.

The corpse took longer than usual to transform, most likely from the corpse's strength. The black skeleton rose from the bed and only then could Athos confirm the strength him. The skeleton had four layers of death, making it easily the strongest skeleton in your army.

"Where are your companions? Especially the one sent to hunt the guardian in this city." Athos asked wasting no time.

The skeleton looked confused, but quickly turned to him, before moving to the window with stiff movements and pointing towards the square and towards the warehouses.

"How many? You can't talk, so count on your fingers." Athos asked, trying to remember if there was anything important in the warehouses, but he couldn't think of anything. The skeleton only raised two fingers, causing Athos to tilt his head in confusion.

"Just two? What happened to the rest?" Athos asked. According to Sevenus, the mage slayer units were made up of ten members, with one captain even stronger than the other members.

The skeleton held up seven fingers this time, before running a thumb across the neck.

"Dead? The entire unit?" The more Athos listened, the more incredulous he became. He thought for a moment that the skeleton was lying to him, until he remembered that skeletons were incapable of that.

The skeleton nodded.

"So where is the guy sent to kill the guardian at in the city?" Athos decided to leave the questioning for later and focus on what mattered: killing the enemy. Everything else could be left for later.

Seeing that the skeleton pointed towards the warehouses, Athos mentally ordered the surrounding bird skeletons to search the area for any suspicious people. The birds didn't even need to look, Finn was jumping between the roofs and the bird skeletons were already keeping an eye on him.

After getting his real-time location, Athos prepared to leave. "An army of the undead will invade this city in a few minutes and I have a special mission for you. I want you to deliver this to the skeleton in charge and then obey his orders." Athos said, breaking through the wall and revealing several sealed bags in the space between the walls.

## Chapter 70 Invasion

The room the mage slayers left Caio was adjacent to the one Athos used to use, so the wall was the same. Caio donned his own mage slayers outfit and took all 5 bags inside the wall, along with the other two outfits.

"I'm going now, be prepared because the attack is going to start any moment now." Athos spoke, picking up some of the alchemical items before jumping out the window in the direction the birds pointed, casting his most destructive spell.

'Sevenus, I managed to eliminate one of the mage slayers in the city, his skeleton will meet you as soon as you invade the city. There are two more, one in the warehouses and one in the town square, all the



others are dead. I want you to cooperate with him and kill what's in the town square, leave what's in the warehouses to me.' Athos sent a message through the rats, receiving a reply a few seconds later.

'As expected of my lord! But are you sure you don't need any help? The two groups of undead are far from your position, but I can order the mage skeleton to help you.' Sevenus sent it back, his fanaticism and adoration clear in his voice. Unlike the physical body, he had no difficulty communicating mentally.

'It's the man who killed my teacher. I don't care about others, but he I will personally kill. This fight is personal.' Athos replied, the anger in his mind being conveyed through the message.

'Then all I can do is my job, my lord. I wish you luck.' Feeling the anger of Athos, Sevenus did not press the matter further and focused on his goal. If he killed the enemy quickly, maybe it would be possible to help him with the excuse that they had already finished. Satisfied with this plan, Sevenus ordered the undead to accelerate towards the city.

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Outside the city, the gatekeepers finally noticed the undead approaching, but it was too late. The gates were already locked for the time and the only guards at the gates were those in a small guardhouse adjacent to the gate, where the guards took people they considered suspicious for an inspection.

They were too busy playing cards to notice the hard-to-see undead in the dark, and since the guards didn't ring the bells, they were completely relaxed. The doormen only noticed the undead because one of them went out to piss and noticed what looked like shadows approaching.

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"Hey, what are those things??" The doorman who noticed the undead emptied his bladder in fear, screaming in panic at the top of his lungs. The undead had already approached a few hundred meters from the city and would reach the gates in less than two minutes.

His companions left after hearing his scream and had similar reactions, only less wet.

"What are the guards doing?? Someone will tell them to ring the bell quickly, we're under attack!!" A sergeant in charge of the gate shouted, causing the men to calm down a bit. One of the porters quickly ran out and opened the inner door of the guardhouse, the one that led to the city, but a sword stabbed him in the belly.

"Wha-" The stabbed doorman tried to say something, but the black skeleton twisted the sword and pulled, sending blood and guts spilling onto the floor. The black skeleton entered looking for its next victim, followed quickly by others.

A small-scale battle began inside the guardhouse. The guard skeletons followed the orders received and threw themselves at the guards, exploiting surprise and shock to press them against the wall. The porters were armed with spears, but they were unsuitable for an enclosed space, so they decided to use the daggers and daggers they carried at their waists.

Even so, the skeletons had the upper hand. The daggers and daggers were too short and the gatekeepers too weak to cut through the bones of skeletons, while their swords cut through the flesh with ease. The guards fell one by one, until only the sergeant was left standing.

He tried to retreat, but the skeletons surrounded him and stabbed him from all sides. The skeletons suffered bone splinters and weapons, with one of them having lost a rib, but that was the full extent of the damage suffered.

They opened the doors leading in and out of the city, before dragging the corpses and their weapons into the city.

Inside the gate, the ape skeletons were massacring a small patrol unit that was near the gate. The patrol consisted of only six men, so the 10+ skeleton apes had an easy time against them.

After killing them, the apes removed the lock on the gate and opened it to the limit, hailing the invading skeleton army. The mage who accompanied them didn't bother to help in the fight, knowing the monkeys would win. Instead, he waved his wand, releasing a wave of darkness that turned the corpses into more undead. He did the same with the corpses that the skeletons in the guardhouse had brought up.

The few people around had already fled, but that didn't matter anymore. An army of over 1000 undead broke through the open gates, running as fast as they could. About 600 undead ran straight down the main street towards the town square, while 200 of them moved north and south, killing as many as they could.

Sevenus was among the skeletons advancing towards the square, taking great care not to be noticed. The citizens desperately fled from the skeletons, but some were too slow to flee and were caught by the undead. Skeletons threw themselves at anyone who got too close, knocking them to the ground before other undead used whatever they could get their hands on to beat them to death. They ignored the bodies as soon as they died and ran to their next victim.

A skeleton wearing the white mage slayer attire came out of one of the alleys as soon as people were out of sight, quickly catching up to Sevenus and handing him several bags of alchemical items.

"Don't join the fight. Wait for an opportunity and kill the enemy magekiller." Sevenus ordered, before picking up the bags and resuming the race. Caio also waved at him before disappearing into the alleys again. Sevenus shared the bags with some skeletons around and ordered them to spread out and toss the items when he asked.

As the skeletons advanced, the bodies disappeared from view of the fleeing survivors and Sevenus and the other skeleton mage caught up with them, quickly turning them into skeletons and increasing their own numbers. They slaughtered the humans on the way, quickly reaching the central square, where they finally met resistance.

The city guard and the bandits of the red dagger gang have joined together to form a barrier to stop the advance of the undead. The guards used wooden crates or whatever they could find as makeshift shields, while the armed bandits behind them would attack the undead when they were stopped.

...Or at least that's what should happen.

'Now.' Sevenus mentally ordered the skeletons to hurl the bags of brown powder across the barrier of guards. The brown dust released a blast of brown energy, causing a small-scale earthquake, just enough to throw the guards off balance and trip them up.

The closest skeletons also fell to the ground, but smaller skeletons advanced in their place, throwing themselves between the gaps in the guards' line of defense and detonating the very core, generating an explosion of darkness and bone shards. The smaller skeletons belonged to the children of the villages that Athos decimated.

Sevenus deemed them too weak to be useful, so he discarded them as suicide soldiers. Blasts of darkness hit the guards and fallen bandits, sapping their strength and rotting wherever they touched. The darkness didn't quickly disappear, obscuring the view of the people in the undead army square.

'Kill them.' Sevenus mentally ordered, starting the massacre. The black skeletons rushed into the curtain of darkness without hesitation, finishing off the already weakened guards. Their energy signatures were similar, so they wouldn't take damage from the darkness.

Sevenus pointed his wand at the curtain of darkness, injecting his own corrupted life force and taking control of it, before accumulating them in the bodies on the ground, casting the spell to raise undead en masse. He used the darkness in the air to save his own mana and get dozens of undead at no additional cost.

Whether it was the terrified citizens in the square, the captain of the guard, or Emilia hiding in the crowd, they all panicked as the curtain of darkness disappeared and the corpses turned to black skeletons.

The hitherto silent skeletons began screaming loudly and ran towards the citizens, killing anyone who came into their field of vision. People began to run desperately, with a few trying to take up arms to fight.

Sevenus was trying to draw as much attention to himself as possible, to ensure that the mage slayer in the square didn't get in the way of his lord's fight.