

## Legion lich 71

### Chapter 71 Athos vs Finn

Athos jumped between the roofs, not caring if he would be seen by the people below. All he thought about was reaching the motherfucker who killed Khali even a second faster. The hilt of the sword in his right hand was already dented into the shape of his fingers from the force of his grip.

It was then that he saw him. He was wearing a shabby overcoat and was on his back, looking intently at the undead invading the city, but his back totally unprotected. Athos would have mistaken him for some mana user if not for those white boots, the same ones he found in the brothel room.

Athos didn't wait, didn't ask questions, didn't even try to look him in the face. He immediately cast his meteor spear spell, conjuring a 15 meter long spear of black flames and hurling it at Finn. The original spell was only 10 meters long, showing how much stronger Athos had grown in a matter of days. Also, the spell used to cost 3/4 of your mana, but now only 1/3 of your total reserve has been spent.

"Which??" Finn turned around in surprise, feeling a huge amount of mana and heat coming from behind, only for a colossal spear to fly towards him. He dove to the side quickly, trying to summon a mana barrier hastily, but Athos knew the enemy would be agile enough to dodge.

With a snap of his fingers, the spear detonated just a few feet away from Finn, engulfing him in black flames. The mana barrier broke with the shock wave and the black flames scorched his skin while sapping his strength.

Finn activated the boot's enchantment and kicked the ground, propelling himself backwards like a rocket. The house below him exploded, along with the houses next to it. Finn fixed his stance while still in midair and rolled as he fell to the ground, halting his fall and immediately going on guard, daggers in hand as he used mana vision to scan his surroundings for the enemy.

Finn also activated the explosive reflexes ability, causing the blood vessels in his eyes to dilate, improving his visual acuity, peripheral vision and visual reflexes.

A bag containing explosive powder was thrown from above towards him, but Finn only sent an arrow of darkness and hit the bag in midair, causing it to explode harmlessly. Athos took the opportunity, activating the enchantment on the boot he stole from one of the suits and jumping off the building straight into Finn.

Black lightning flowed around his bones, activating the thunder boost mixed skill. Athos broke through the smoke and was in front of Finn in an instant, slashing his sword vertically with all his might, trying to split his head in half. Finn responded by crossing the daggers over his head, and using the Bronze Body skill.

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Athos hit him with absurd force, forcing Finn to kneel on his right knee, but that was it. His body made of bones was light and in the air, Athos could not make full use of his strength. Finn took advantage of that half second of truce to activate the enchantment of both daggers, causing the blades to vibrate at high speed.

Finn cut with his daggers still on his knees, splitting Athos sword in two. He smiled as he prepared to attack, but Athos' attack was not over yet. The broken blade of the sword suddenly turned black and grew again, cutting into Finn's face.

Athos used the mana blade ability to recreate the broken blade and continue the attack, now with nothing to block it. Finn threw his head back at the last second to save himself, but the black blade still sliced through his mask and right eye, leaving a gash across his face from forehead to jaw.

Athos tried to keep pressing, but Finn activated the magic ring on his left hand, creating a small dome of darkness. Athos clicked his tongue, but preferred to back off. The dome of darkness only lasted a few seconds, before Finn canceled the barrier on his own.

His broken mask lay on the floor, while his face was contorted in pure rage. The wound on his face didn't shed a single drop of blood, the skin rotted and the facial muscles atrophied away. His right eye was completely destroyed, just gray flesh where the eye should have been.

"Who the fuck are you??" Finn asked angrily, not even trying to fake calm. The cut on his face throbbed with pain, while the entire right side of his field of vision was blinded. He felt incredibly frustrated and angry.

"Why do you monsters keep showing up and getting in my way?!" Finn screamed in frustration, his remaining eye glowing with rage and mana. He was trying to gauge the nature of Athos, but he looked like a black blur to the mana vision. Finn clicked his tongue and stopped using mana vision, starting to cast spells.

'His magic is stronger than mine, but his casting speed is lower. His physical prowess is also superior to mine, but unlike me, he has a hard time fighting and casting at the same time. He's not a superhuman and he doesn't have his gear. If I want to win, I have to fight at close range.' Athos on the other hand, was analyzing Finn's fighting strength rather than his nature.

Athos continued to feed the broken sword with mana, causing the rest of the blade to rust until it crumbled, leaving only the hilt and energy blade. He lunged again, not wanting to give Finn time to cast. To his surprise, Finn didn't try to use ranged magic, but instead advanced to melee.

"Shadow body!" Finn yelled pointing his right hand forward, causing his shadow to rise and charge towards Athos.

Athos swung the black sword into the shadows' body, slashing in half from the left shoulder to the right waist. The sword's corrupted mana was able to cut through the darkness as if it were physical, thanks to its similar properties.

Finn was surprised at his spell being destroyed in an instant, but continued his attack. He took advantage of the cover created by the shadow body and used an acceleration ability, jumping into Athos' throat just as Athos finished swinging his sword.

Athos managed to dodge it, bending his spine back farther than should have been possible. The ligaments that held her bones together were made of darkness, so her movements didn't have the same limitations a human would have.

Athos took a step back and turned only his upper body 360 degrees, trying to slice Finn's head through his blind spot without losing momentum.

Finn sensed the attack coming a second too late, hurriedly putting his dagger forward to block. He even tried to cut Athos' ribs with the other dagger, but Athos activated the cloak's enchantment, creating a layer of corrupted mana on top of the cloak.

The dagger still sliced through his cloak, severing a few ribs on the left side of his chest, but Athos spat out a flaming breath at point-blank range, forcing him to roll to his side to avoid being burned.

He fired a blade of aura mingled with darkness through the dagger in his right hand, trying to stop Athos from chasing him, but Athos bent down and hurled a bag of black powder between them, creating a smokescreen. Athos broke through the smokescreen, cutting into Finn's left side

"Die!" Finn turned to Athos, easily blocking his sword with a dagger and lassoing one aura blade with the other. The blade accurately hit his neck, easily slicing through his head. Finn stopped his follow-up attack in surprise, sensing something was wrong.

The black skeleton suddenly disappeared, causing the order's now useless cloak to fall to the ground. The real Athos came out of the smoke to Finn's right, five black bolts shooting out of his left hand, one from each finger.

The lightning bolts were the size of a finger, quickly hitting Finn's body. The lightning voltage was weak and only served to stiffen Finn's body, but that was what Athos intended.

Finn released a aura as he crossed the daggers in front of his body rigidly, using his bronze body again.

Athos slashed as fast as he could, aiming not at the body but at his right hand. The blow hit him hard, sending his dagger into the air, along with some of his fingers. Athos followed up the attack with a kick to the chest, conjuring a ball of black fire from his foot and detonating on impact, sending Finn flying into the wall.

"GAHAH!!" Finn slammed into the wall with a strange sound, the air being forced out of his lungs. He hurriedly tried to get up and conjure up a layer of darkness around him, but all he could do was darken the air slightly around his hand.

...That's when he remembered that the spellcasting ring, the item that mage slayers used to access world energy in place of wands, was on his middle finger of his right hand.

Chapter 72 second layer

"For someone so experienced, you were kind of obvious you know? You always cast with your right hand, so it was easy to see where the ring was." Athos spoke for the first time, looking amusedly at Finn. "How about we talk a little?"

"Do you speak?" Finn asked in surprise as he stood up. Until now, he'd assumed that the city was under attack by a necromancer and that the skeleton in front of him was an assassin, but the fact that he could speak meant he was a superior species.

"Yes and you didn't answer my question. How about we talk a little?" Athos asked, trying to sound strong. He didn't have a face, but if he had one, he'd be contorted in pain.

Since the fight began, Athos felt an unease in his core, as if he was reacting to something. As the struggle intensified, the feeling only got worse, as if her core was screaming for something. The sensation only worsened when Athos felt dozens of sparks of life force being absorbed by his bond with Sevenus.

Even his mana started to get a little out of control, forcing Athos to stop fighting and say something as disgusting as talking to the enemy.

‘What has changed since I started fighting? My core hurts, like it’s going to split in half. Maybe I shouldn’t have fought before figuring out how to form a second layer of death? Excess energy can be harmful.’ Athos began to consider the worst possibilities.

“Who sent you here? How did you find me?” Finn asked, stalling for time. He thought that if he bought enough time, Emilia would be able to come here.

“Well, I came willingly to kill you. And what revealed your presence was them.” Athos said before raising his hand, a skeleton bird flying from somewhere and landing on it.

‘If my core was really overloaded, it would have stopped absorbing the energy sent by Sevenus and the mage skeletons, or at least it would have tried to release it in some way, like a constantly active aura of darkness or something. Also, I just feel like my core is about to break, but there’s no sign of any damage.’ Athos continued to think.

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“An undead with a will of its own? That’s just a fairy tale, unless a necromancer has failed to put a leash on you.” Finn mocked him, until he realized something. “Wait, did you say you came here to kill me? Why?”

“Well, anyone would want revenge on the man who killed them, wouldn’t they? But don’t be too upset, I came here to kill the whole town, you’re just a bonus.” Athos said this as casually as someone refusing dessert before the main course.

“Revenge? I don’t even know who you are!” Finn screamed, almost resuming the offensive, but the throbbing pain in his face and hand reminded him that the enemy wasn’t someone he could take lightly, let alone with one hand, one eye, and his lost magic. He needed Emilia.

“Well, I don’t remember all the people I’ve killed either, so I won’t judge you for not remembering me. But you know, I never forgot one of my targets, even after I killed them. The captain of the guard, the priest, the baron, Ricley, the wizards of the order, or you. I would never forget you.” Athos pronounced each name as if he were spitting them out.

Just mentioning their names was enough to reopen wounds that never closed in her mind, causing her bones to shake with rage and the black light in her eyes to deepen. As if reacting to her thoughts, the pain in her core increased.

It now pulsed rhythmically like a heart, sending ever stronger pulses of dark mana through his bones before being reabsorbed into the core. The process filled his bones with power, making Athos feel as if something was crawling inside his bones, trying to break free.

'Okay, the trigger for this change was my anger. Should I feel more angry to progress? No, if I feel angrier than I already am, I'm just a mindless beast. I still lack something. Athos thought, realizing that the pain in his core was lessening as the strength in his body only increased.

"One of my targets? I've never killed-" Finn yelled, but then he realized something. He didn't know most of the people mentioned by Athos, but how did the skeleton know the mages of the order? Finn felt a shiver down his spine as he slowly looked at the black skeleton in front of him.

A corpse with a late awakening of affinity, something seen only in books. The disappearance of the mage unit, without a trace. An incredibly powerful monster in the forest, but one that had no involvement with the corpse. And now an army of the undead invading the city for revenge, and a skeleton assassin with the cloak of order.

"Is you?" Finn asked just to confirm, certain of his answer.

"That's right. I crawled back out of the mud just to kill you, but simply killing you would be too impersonal for my taste and I don't need to buy any more time either." Athos spoke, finally understanding what he needed to do.

Athos extracted as much mana as possible from the core in one go, creating a discharge of power throughout his body, before pressing it all back into the core, holding just enough energy to move his body. He kept repeating the process in the same rhythm as the core's pulsation, until it happened.

The mana extracted from its core was just a part of all the energy its core had and every time it was sent back to the core it put pressure on the remaining energy, making it more condensed with each cycle. Then, all the life force that Athos gathered in life and after death, seeped inside the core itself and sealed the condensed mana, forming its second layer of death.

Normally, this process would happen gradually as Athos fights and recovers, his core would slowly condense mana and build up life force, but thanks to his abilities as an undead, Athos has advanced the force.

"What the fuck are you saying?" Unaware of Athos' inner change, Finn called out to him suspiciously.

"It's quite simple actually. You agreed to talk to me because you wanted to buy time, didn't you? I did the same." Athos said, before a burst of darkness left his body and clung to his bones. The mass of darkness crept over his bones, healing his ribs and any damaged bones without consuming his strength, before starting to lighten to a pale gray.

The gray matter resembled skin in texture, but it was dry and withered, clinging tightly to his bones like a withered mummy. Athos was surprised by this sudden change, but the mass of darkness did not weigh him down or hinder his movements, so he pretended not to be surprised and continued talking.

"I hated playing the chatty villain who tells his whole plan only to die in the end, but it was worth it." Athos said, activating the thunder boost ability, quickly noticing the difference. Its core drew energy from both layers and blended them together, doubling their potency. Athos ran to Finn, punching him in the face with all his might to test out his new body.

“Wha-” Finn was surprised by Athos’s sudden speed boost, but managed to dodge Athos’ charge thanks to the explosive reflexes skill still active, turning his head at the last second. He even managed to sever Athos’ right arm as he retreated, leaving a deep gash on his forearm.

Finn tried to attack once more, but Athos spat flaming breath at him, forcing him to retreat. The flames were faster and hotter than the one before, scorching his coat as he rolled over. Finn launched an aura blade at Athos, but the latter conjured a barrier of corrupted mana, blocking the attack.

‘My physical strength and magic have improved remarkably. Our physical abilities are now similar, although I am slightly stronger, while he is slightly faster than me. He can’t use magic now that he’s out of the ring, so I won’t be able to compare our magic.’ Athos thought, analyzing his own strength.

The gray ‘skin’ on his right arm returned to a mass of darkness and healed the cut on his body, before returning to normal. Once again no nutrients were consumed for healing, but now that Athos looked closer, the skin on his arm was thinner.

‘Maybe this skin is like a magic organ? Store nutrients and heal me when I’m injured? Athos thought as he continued the attack.

Athos swung his hand in an arc, releasing a blade of corrupted mana towards Finn’s chest. Finn ducked quickly before running towards him, activating his own acceleration ability. He tried to stab Athos in the ribs, but the latter re-cast his corrupted mana sword, blocking the attack.

#### Chapter 73 The outcome of the fight

Finn activated several abilities at once, elevating his physical abilities beyond what his body was capable of handling for a short period of time, causing his muscles to come dangerously close to rip with every move he made. Finn gambled everything on the slim chance of killing Athos quickly, or at least seriously injuring him and fleeing to where Emilia was.

They exchanged blows continuously, Finn advancing further and further, taking advantage of his superior speed to pressure him. Athos remained on the defensive, occasionally attacking while retreating one step at a time.

The dagger was clearly more powerful than his sword, cutting through slivers of mana with each switch, but Athos continually injected more mana and regenerated it. Finn took advantage of an opening in Athos’ guard, piercing the dagger in the middle of his right hand and twisting it before pulling hard, breaking the hand and sending all of his fingers except his thumb flying.

“You took my right hand, you can’t complain if I cut yours off.” Finn said mockingly, trying to provoke Athos. He took a big step forward, slashing with the dagger in one sweeping motion, at the same time releasing an aura blade.

Athos jumped back as he conjured a gale from his left hand, taking advantage of the lightness of his body and propelling himself to the right, out of Finn’s reach. Finn was still more experienced than he was in combat and there was no reason to continue risking hand-to-hand combat.

“You will not run away!” Finn chased him across the floor to make sure Athos didn’t stray too far. Without the conjuration ring, he would be helpless if Athos walked away and attacked him purely with magic.

“Lightning connection!” Athos screamed still in the air, pointing his broken right hand at Finn. Black bolts gathered in the palm of his hand, but he didn’t fire them right away. Finn stopped his run midway, keeping some distance from Athos so he could dodge the attack as soon as it was launched.

...a big mistake.

“GAHAAA?!” Finn screamed in pain and surprise, feeling the electricity burn through his entire body. What Finn didn’t realize is that Athos moved deliberately, knowing that Finn would chase him. Just behind Finn, Athos’ severed fingers still cling tightly to the corrupted mana sword.

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The lightning connection spell consisted of two parts, one cast into your hand and the other on the opposite side of the target. Athos’ palm was charged with a positive charge, while the other hand would be charged with a negative charge. Both rays would attract each other, hitting the target in the middle.

When Athos cast the lightning connection, he used his mana body trait to alter the sword, changing the world’s mana to pure wind element before firing at his unprotected back. He shouted out the spell’s name deliberately to draw Finn’s attention to himself.

Athos used his willpower to keep the bolt trapped in his palm, until the bolt hit him from behind. Just then he released the bolt, hitting Finn a second time and knocking him to the ground and causing him to roll several times before coming to a stop, black smoke billowing from his body. His skin was charred and the organs underneath weren’t in the best shape.

His blood evaporated, his muscles burned from the lightning’s high voltage, and his organs rotted into darkness. To add insult to injury, the effect of activating multiple abilities simultaneously wore off and his body took the hit.

The ligaments in the joints of his legs tore, the muscle tissue in his arms tore, his ribs broke puncturing his internal organs, and the blood vessels in his eyes burst, leaving him completely blind.

Finn was on the verge of death, agonizing in silence as his vocal cords were torn, but Athos showed no mercy. He watched silently as Finn agonized and only approached when the shadows of the death vision showed Athos that Finn was dead.

The vision of death revealed to Athos how close one was to dying, or how weakened one was in the form of shadows across the body. Athos could see shadows accumulating in people’s wounds, or in cases like Caio’s, it revealed how weakened he was.

For some reason, the skill didn’t work on people without mana like villagers, but it would be very useful against powerful enemies he would face in the future. Athos suspected that with enough training, the vision of death would not only reveal wounds, but vulnerable points on enemies.

Athos walked over to Finn’s corpse looking triumphant, the skin on his face stretching into a devilish grin. He placed his hand on Finn’s chest and stole mana until his core filled up again. This would lessen his power when he was turned into a skeleton, but Athos did not intend to keep him for long.

Athos turned him into an undead after regaining his mana so easily that he was surprised. Finn’s affinity for darkness facilitated the process, turning him into an undead in record time. Finn’s skeleton had not

suffered serious damage except for the fingers of his right hand which Athos quickly put in place and healed.

The black skeleton stood up, only for Athos to punch him in the face and knock him down again.

“Sorry, it was reflex. Follow me, we have to get out of here.” Athos said not at all sorry for what he had done. He climbed onto a roof before starting to run towards the town square, Finn quickly following.

‘Sevenus, how is it going on your side? I’m done here.’ Athos asked through the mind link. He felt the life force building up repeatedly as he fought Finn, but he didn’t have time to catch up on the situation.

‘!! My lord, have you won? As expected, these mage slayers are nothing close to their greatness!’ Sevenus sent it back, his voice showing just how fascinated he was.

‘Report, now. How are things on your side?’ Athos cut him off quickly, before Sevenus could flatter him further.

‘The battle is going well. The guards tried to resist at first, but they were quickly killed thanks to the alchemical items you provided me. The citizens despaired after seeing the guards who were supposed to protect them turning into undead and ran to the west gate, where the mage skeletons and the other half of the undead were waiting for them.’ Sevenus said, his flattering tone fading as he spoke seriously.

‘And then?’ Athos said arriving at the town square and finding only blood and debris everywhere. In the distance, he could see thousands of undead attacking the citizens. People were desperately fighting for their lives, but the undead were relentless. Whenever a group of citizens started to organize, they would hurl themselves at them and detonate their own cores, killing over a dozen and clearing the way for more skeletons to attack.

‘The battle is going well. I’m saving my mana to fight the mage slayers, but the mage skeleton are emptying their cores against the fleeing population and have already killed a few hundred.’ Sevenus replied.

‘And the mage slayer? Hasn’t shown up yet?’ Athos asked suspiciously. The worst case scenario for him would be for the mage slayer to flee without a fight and leave his companions to die. This would alert the country and put a target on its back sooner than planned, thwarting its plans.

‘I am also worried, my lord. If the mage slayer was going to fight, he would have revealed himself long ago. After all, the more time passes, the stronger our army becomes and the less chance it has of surviving. I’m afraid he’s decided to run away. I took the liberty of ordering the skeleton birds to guard the wall, but they still haven’t seen anything.’ Sevenus reported worriedly.

Sevenus had been ordered to deal with the mage slayer and in his head, if the enemy fled it would be considered his fault regardless of the results he got in battle. Sevenus shuddered at the thought of failing, but what terrified him was the thought of Athos’ anger being directed at him.

Athos pondered for some time, before remembering Gaius and the situation he was in. ‘Maybe he didn’t run away. Perhaps he went to rescue a wounded comrade.’

‘Sevenus, send the killer skeleton to meet me at the place where I killed him, I have a plan in mind. I think I know where the enemy is.’ Athos mentally ordered.



'As you command!' Sevenus replied, unable to contain his enthusiasm. If Athos took on the task of killing the mage slayer himself, he would not have to take any blame in case of failure.

'You come too. The battle is already guaranteed, there's no reason for you to just stand there and watch' Athos said, making the glow in Sevenus' orbits go out.

'Come on, we have to kill the last of you.'" Athos said to Finn, making the last one tremble for a few seconds. He looked like he was struggling desperately, but it was a futile effort. The black chain that bound his mind made him feel like a drowning person on the verge of reaching the surface, giving false hope that he would be able to free himself if he kept trying.

It was a cruel trap, coiling and squeezing the victims' minds, just like a snake trapping its prey.

## Chapter 74 Desperate battle

'This city is going to be destroyed,' was Emilia's honest thought as she watched the front lines turn into the undead. The undead advanced on the living, slaughtering them like fleeing animals.

People panicked and started to flee desperately, but there were too many people in the square, so they ran over each other as they fled towards the gates, making the fallen easy targets for the undead. The captain of the guard repeatedly ordered the people to calmly evacuate while the remaining guards protected the rear, but it was a futile effort.

As a last-ditch effort, he personally led the guards to stop the undead long enough for the people to flee, but that was a mistake. The citizens rushed to the gate and opened it, only for a blast of black fire to incinerate them alive.

The flames spread around the gate, burning all the people nearby and forcing those farther back to avoid being burned. The undead invaded at that moment, killing all the people in agony on the ground after being burned.

The mage skeletons had taken the bells and gates, but they did not immediately invade. They followed the orders received and only killed the guards on patrol so as not to be discovered. The other half of the army was also waiting outside the gate, rushing in as soon as the mage gave the signal.

Monster skeletons were in the lead, with large animal skeletons close behind. Their job was to clear a path through the crowd, allowing the human skeletons to kill them easily.

The skeleton of the wind attribute mage did not get involved in the fight, being responsible for casting the create undead en masse whenever possible, increasing their own numbers and closing the distance with the town's population.

The populace didn't stand still, anyone with fighting experience or anyone they wanted to protect fought as hard as they could, using anything they could find as a weapon to clear a path through the undead for the others to pass. They teamed up against the skeletons, using their numerical advantage to kill them.

Several skeletons were destroyed, most notably the cattle that advanced first, but they simply detonated the cores themselves once they had taken enough damage, scattering a black fog and bone

shards, killing everyone around them. The mage skeleton took advantage of the darkness released by the explosion, lifting the corpses at no additional cost.

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Caught between two undead armies, it was only a matter of time before all the citizens were killed. Emilia knew this, so she remained hidden among the people, biting her lip in frustration until it bled. She was surrounded by screams of pain and fear, but she didn't step forward to help. At the same time, his body refused to just abandon all these people and run away.

'These people are going to die, if I step forward I'll just join them. The best I can do is help Gaius and meet Finn so we can run away together. Communication with him has been lost and hasn't returned so far, so he must be struggling with something. I have to go before it's too late.' Emilia said, but her body refused to obey her.

Emilia was looking at a terrified family just a few feet away from her, a man she assumed was the father struggling with a piece of wood against a skeleton carrying a hoe. The father was an overweight middle-aged man, the kind of person who never struggled in his entire life, but stood firmly in front of the family despite his knees shaking and the look of dread on his face. Behind him, a middle-aged woman was hugging two children, looking worriedly at her husband.

The father hit the undead with the piece of wood and fractured his shoulder, but the skeleton ignored the damage and hit the man's knee with the hoe, causing him to fall to the ground while holding his leg, screaming in pain. The family called out to the father, but the skeleton lunged at them, deciding that the father would no longer be an obstacle.

...or at least he tried, but the father clung tightly to his leg. determined not to let him get close to his family. The undead raised the hoe and hit him in the right rib, making his father scream in pain, but his grip remained firm. The undead raised the hoe again, but his arm was cut off at the shoulder and his arm fell to the ground helplessly.

The skeleton tried to turn around to locate the enemy, but its head was also severed, falling helplessly to the ground. The family looked at the skeleton in confusion, before running to the father.

'The situation will not change and they will still die, but I could not bear to let them die in front of me.' Emilia thought after killing the undead. She conjured two small blades of light in her hand and rendered them invisible before accurately shooting them at the skeleton's shoulder and neck. It was a useless act, the family would die anyway and Emilia knew it, but her body moved before she knew it.

'I have to get ahead and run away.' Emilia thought, using an invisibility spell on herself as she blended her presence with her surroundings, quickly fleeing the scene. She jumped across the rooftops and ran as fast as she could.

...If she had stayed a few more seconds, she would have witnessed the consequences of her choices. The black light in the undead's orbit didn't go out and when he realized he couldn't circulate mana to heal himself, he detonated his own core, just as he was ordered. Emilia thought that decapitation would be enough to destroy the skeletons, but they could still live for several hours even with the head separated from the body.

His body exploded, swamping the family and those close to him in a curtain of darkness that devoured them alive and bone shards that pierced them. The skeleton mage quickly noticed them and turned them into undead, making Emilia's effort a futile act. No, if Emilia hadn't intervened, the family would have been beaten to death rather than a quick death, so maybe her actions had some use.

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Emilia ran quickly, reaching the favelas in less than two minutes. She looked around, noting that not all the undead were attacking in the town square. Sevenus had separated two groups of undead as soon as he arrived in the city and ordered them to kill the people who weren't in the square.

Athos and Sevenus weren't stupid, neither of them believed that all the people would be conveniently gathered in the central square, so this was a necessary measure to ensure that no one survived.

Emilia noticed the group of skeletons wandering near the brothel where Caio should be and accelerated, reaching the roof before them. She broke down one of the windows and used her mana vision to look around, making sure she was alone. She couldn't see the core of an undead, but mana vision still revealed their presence in the form of a black blur.

'Hmm? He is not here?' Emilia thought, not finding anyone inside the brothel. Sensing that something was wrong, Emilia hurriedly ran to Caio's room, not finding anyone inside. The only things left were a pool of fresh blood on the bed and a hole in the wall that led to another room.

Emilia felt the world around her freeze. She walked slowly to the bed, smelling a pungent smell of iron coming from the bed. Hot tears flowed from her eyes as she recalled some of the moments she spent with Caio.

"Caio—" She touched the bed lightly, but the hairs on the back of her neck suddenly stood on end, feeling a large amount of mana approaching. Emilia quickly activated the enchantment on her boots and conjured a shield of light on her right arm, before placing it in front of her body and jumping through the nearest window.

A second after she jumped out the window, a ball of black fire 10 meters in diameter hit the building, sending the whole place flying. Emilia stood up quickly, raising her shield to block the debris flying towards her and used her mana vision to look around.

On one of the roofs near the brothel, three black blots in human form were standing, looking up at the building. Emilia looked at them intently, surprised at what she saw. A knight in black armor was on the left, holding a round shield in his left hand and a greatsword in his right hand, while the skeleton on the right was dressed in normal clothes and an overcoat completely torn over the bones and a dagger in each hand.

The skeleton in the center appeared to be the leader of the group. He wore the order's enchanted green robe, the robe worn by novices, while holding a wand in his right hand. He looked arrogantly at Emilia, as if she were an inferior being.

Emilia knew she had found the mastermind behind this attack.

Chapter 75 Battle against Emilia

'It's her?' Athos mentally asked Finn's skeleton, just to confirm. There was no way an ordinary person, even an adventurer or mage could dodge such an attack without warning. Only a mage slayer would have the dexterity and nerves of steel to dodge it.

Finn's skeleton nodded, his entire body shaking as he continued to resist. Normally, the fear of disappearing would have made him stop resisting and made him a spectator of his own body, but the anger at being killed and the concern for Emilia motivated him to resist.

He wanted Emilia to kill the skeleton in front of him, or at least run away and report its existence to the order. Finn hoped that once the skeleton died, he'd get his freedom back or at least he could die for real, rather than become a bony bastard's slave.

"Well, if we've already confirmed the target, there's no point in standing here talking and giving her time to cast her spells. Follow the plan and attack." Athos ordered, making Finn jump off the roof and run to Emilia. He was the vanguard of this fight, while Sevenus cast magic to stop Emilia's movements.

Finn advanced quickly, using his superior speed to attack first. He conjured dozens of arrows of darkness and launched them at Emilia, at the same time shooting dark aura blades through the daggers. Unlike wands used by mages, the mage slayer's spellcasting rings were magic items and would be destroyed after one use, so Athos ordered Finn to use his best spell at once.

"That spell...are you Finn?" Emilia asked in surprise. She fired blades of aura mixed with the light element of the daggers themselves, while advancing covered by a shield of light. Arrows of darkness were cast from her front and sides to ensure she would be hit no matter where she fled, but as she advanced, only a third of the spell hit her barrier.

The barrier of light around her cracked and wheezed as the arrows hit it, but it didn't break.

Emilia arrived in front of Finn, quickly attacking with daggers covered in light. Finn tried to defend himself, but her attacks were agile and fluid and exploited every breach in his guard. A cut on his left forearm, another on his right thigh bone, a punctured rib.

The damage quickly built up in his body. To make matters worse, the light burned into the wounds and purified the darkness that moved in his bones, weakening him with every blow. Wanting to back away to avoid further damage, Finn blocked the next blow using his weapon break skill, blasting his own dagger against Emilia's.

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"Kuh!" Emilia let out a pained noise, feeling her hand being cut by the pieces of the daggers. Finn's bony hand was also damaged, but he didn't care, using his free hand to launch a black aura blade at it.

Emilia jumped to dodge it, while kicking Finn's chest with both feet and propelling herself away. Emilia also activated the boost ability on both feet, causing her to fly away while pushing Finn to the ground with his ribs cracked.

Emilia somersaulted in the air and tried to fall to the ground, but the earth opened and a stone spear tried to impale her. She hurriedly conjured a platform of light from under her foot and jumped, but the stone spear still grazed her leg, drawing blood and flesh. She used a simple light spell just to stop the bleeding.

Emilia fell to the ground and got up, only for Athos to appear behind her and swing his sword at her neck. The black armor was still watching the fight from a distance, but that was just a decoy. It was a spell called stone guardian, a spell Sevenus cast as a distraction.

Athos had concealed his presence and had been hiding from the start, waiting for a breach. He slashed with all his might, aiming precisely at the back of the neck, where it was supposed to be a blind spot.

Even so, his sword only hit a shield of light conjured at the back of his neck, causing the bones in his arm to shake from the impact. Emilia didn't miss the gap, holding her remaining dagger upside down, before turning around and trying to stab the dagger into Athos' face.

Athos reacted to his absurd speed thanks to his cold mind ability and threw his head back, but the dagger still left a deep cut just below his eyes. His gray skin writhed around his face like worms, the light burning through the darkness that formed the skin.

Emilia conjured a dagger of light with her free hand and tried to attack him, but Athos cast his heat wave spell, trying to gain distance. The spell was true to its name, sending a wave of heat 20 feet in all directions. A barrier of light would be useless against the heat, so Emilia just jumped away while clucking her tongue in anger.

A stone spear rose from the ground once more, but Emilia didn't fall for the same trick twice. She fired an aura blade that cut the stone spear in two, before running towards Sevenus, the annoying mage who was hampering her movements.

'Stop her!' Athos ordered Finn through the mindlink, causing him to jump in Emilia's path. He was circulating mana through the bones the entire time, improving his physical ability and passively healing himself, but he was far from having recovered all of his injuries.

He tried to block Emilia's path, but she activated an acceleration ability and charged at him, breaking his guard with a dagger swipe and piercing his sternum with the dagger of light, before jumping and stomping on his skull to propel herself towards him up.

"Die your nuisance!" Emilia screamed, arriving in front of Sevenus in an instant as she crossed the daggers in front of the body, trying to quickly decapitate him. She activated the slash skill on the enchanted steel dagger while using an aura blade on the dagger of light.

The stone armor stepped forward and raised its shield, ready to block the attack. Despite its weight, Sevenus could control it with mana and make it float slightly, making its movements much more agile than its appearance would suggest. The crosscut successfully cut through the stone shield, but the knight threw the sword aside and grabbed Emilia in a bear hug, before jumping off the roof.

"Shit!" Emilia cursed loudly, realizing that she had fallen into such a stupid trap. Her left arm was trapped, but she used her right arm to plunge the dagger into the crevice of the stone helmet and twisted before pulling with all her might. The helmet was broken, revealing that the interior was hollow.

Emilia gave up on freeing herself and hurriedly conjured a thin layer of light around her own body to break her fall. Even so, the moment she hit the stone floor, the thin layer of light shattered into pieces, the weight of the stone armor crushing her bones and knocking all the air out of her lungs.

Emilia tried to quickly push the stone armor away, but a strange noise came out of the armor. She peered into the hollowed-out armor and saw a half-open bag with torn sacks, releasing colored powders that quickly began to glow.

Tssssss

Boommmmmmm!

A burst of flames, lightning and orange energy engulfed Emilia, destroying the nearest houses and sending Sevenus and Finn, the closest to Emilia, flying away. Athos was relatively far away, but he still had to stab his sword into the ground to hold his ground. The bag inside the stone armor had alchemical powders of different elements, absurdly increasing its destructive power.

The orange energy caused the ground to give way, knocking the nearest store to the explosion in the sewers. When the heat had subsided enough to bear, Athos approached the hole and tried to look down, but all he saw was wreckage.

Sevenus and Finn joined him a few seconds later, coming back after being blown up. Sevenus' condition was relatively good as he had used an earth spell to turn the ground to mud, but Finn was in a deplorable state. He hit a stone wall of a nearby building, breaking countless bones in the process.

His right leg was missing from the knee down, while his pelvis was split in half. All of the ribs on the left side were broken, while his left arm had been ripped off and Finn was carrying it in his other hand. He was crawling over to Athos, but the latter didn't give him a second glance, fully focused on using death vision to search the hole.

But no matter how much he searched, the lingering energy of the blast blinded his senses.

"My lord... I avoided asking... but what is that... on your body?" Sevenus asked curious about his skin.

"I have no idea. I'll investigate as soon as things settle down, but let's focus on the kill for now." Athos answered honestly. There were many mysteries about his new species and he still didn't have time to investigate.

## Chapter 76 Caio and Emilia's Past

The city sewer, amidst the wreckage.

A part of the stones began to shake before moving to the side, revealing Emilia's burned body. She spat the dirt into her mouth as she tried and failed to get up. In his right hand, two rings glowed with magical power. Its silver surface cracked from the excess energy that flowed into it, quickly losing its luster and the enchantment fading.

Emilia had poured almost all of her mana into the two rings on her right hand in a desperate attempt to survive. The first was a magic ring capable of forming a dome of light, something common for any mage.

The earthquake dust in the explosion made the ground brittle and the shock wave pushed the dome of light like a wrecking ball against the ground. Inside the small dome, Emilia's body slammed against the walls of light quickly, but she managed to conjure a pillow over her head, avoiding a concussion and fainting spell that would have been fatal in that situation.

But she was forced to scream in pain as the heat from the flames hit her unprotected body with full force, causing her flesh to boil and her skin to burn. Emilia was unable to breathe, her lungs boiling from the hot air, hurriedly activating the second ring. The ring had a continuous healing enchantment, which healed all the damage Emilia had suffered the moment it was made, but did nothing to assuage the pain of being burned alive.

Emilia was trapped inside the dome of light while being burned alive without stopping. Those were the most harrowing minutes of her life, but she managed to survive. In her desperation, Emilia fed the rings more power than they were able to handle, overwhelming their enchantments and rendering them useless.

The tiny dome of light around her disappeared as did the healing, but the heat was no longer intense enough to kill, just enough to make severe burns all over her skin. Debris fell over her body and buried her alive, but her enhanced body was able to withstand the weight crushing her.

Emilia poured what little mana she had into her arms, gritting her teeth at the pain of moving her body. Her hands bled and her skin melted into her flesh as she pushed the rocks away from her body, the skin sticking to the wreckage like glue, ripping pieces of skin every time she pushed a rock.

For a few minutes, Emilia just breathed hard, filling her burned lungs until they almost couldn't function with the cool night air. The skin of her eyelids had melted against her eyes, so it was impossible for her to see, but Emilia could hear the sound of footsteps coming from somewhere.

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Emilia didn't try to resist. She was too weak even to think coherently. The continuous healing drained all of her strength, to the point where even if she weren't killed, she would have died within minutes of multiple organ failure. All she's done so far is delay the inevitable and prolong her own death.

A blade pierced her heart, killing her quickly. Compared to all the pain she was feeling, that quick death could be considered an act of mercy.

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Amidst the wreckage of the sewer, Caio's skeleton silently looked at Emilia's body that he had just killed. He was crying with pain inside, fighting with all his strength against the chains that bound him, but it was in vain. He killed with his bare hands the only person he loved in this world.

Caio was an orphan who grew up to the age of 12 in the port city of Fryar in Belaster country. He was a slave to a group of pirates who constantly attacked the merchant ships that crossed the Caprio and Adula continents, causing a headache for the ruler of the port city.

In one of their attacks, they mistakenly attacked a ship of the order of magic, where Lukas Ripha, the head of the Ripha family and Emilia's father, was. The ship he was on was a magical tool he had created and was returning after testing his firepower against sea monsters. Obviously, the pirates were annihilated against its destructive power.

The pirate ship was destroyed by the magic ship's initial bombardment and the few surviving pirates were captured by the magic ship's crew. Lukas killed all the pirates who couldn't use mana and forced the few who could to hold a wand while circulating mana through their bodies.

If they had any talent for magic, their bodies would absorb the world energy the wand drew and strengthened beyond their limits. Most pirates failed to improve beyond their limits, being considered useless and killed on the spot. All were killed except Caio.

He was spared thanks to his magical talent and taken in by Lukas, but his status as a slave did not change. No, your treatment can be said to have gotten worse since he was taken. The pirates didn't mistreat him and all he had to do was clean the ship, cook meals and help carry the stolen goods from the ship to their base.

He ate the same food he cooked for the pirates, so he never went hungry. Caio was also free to do whatever he wanted when he wasn't working. He even received a promise to join the pirates as a member instead of a slave when they realized he had awakened their core.

Life as a Rípha slave was hell in comparison. He wasn't given food, just disgusting nutritional bombs with everything his body needed. He lived in an isolated village God only knows where, along with other slave children and teenagers with a talent for magic.

They woke up before sunrise and practiced magic for their respective elements until noon, where they would receive nutritional bombs and stamina potions. The training in the afternoon was purely physical. They would fight each other, the instructors or captured monsters. They would continue fighting under the supervision of mages until nightfall.

Caio spent approximately 7 years in this hell, when he was finally considered ready and finally allowed to leave the village. After all this torture, the only thing that awaited him when he left was to become the servant of Lukas' youngest daughter, Emilia. She was just 13 when they were introduced and her first impression was terrible.

She was a tomboy who didn't pay attention to the rules and whenever she ran away, it was Caio who was punished. But despite everything, he ended up enjoying her free spirit. She was the only person who treated him like a human, rather than a slave.

Her father wanted her to be a mage or a rune smith like most of the family, but Emilia always preferred to fight and soon her talent in combat became clear.

At the age of 14, Emilia defeated the eldest of her brothers and the future heir of the Rípha in a simulated combat. He was a 22 year old man named Hardin Rípha and his defeat at the hands of Emilia was an embarrassment to him and a shock to his family. He was a talented runesmith and not adept at combat, but losing against a child was still humiliating for him.

To make matters worse, his brothers used this against him, lowering his status within the family. This turned shame into rancor and made him want to get rid of Emilia. He arranged for an acquaintance of an allied family to meet Emilia and quickly become interested in her.

He happily reported the ally's love interest to his father, who immediately consulted with the Allied family and arranged the marriage. Lukas consulted everyone involved except Emilia. She was informed only when everything was ready. Emilia tried to rebel and cancel the wedding, but it was an effort in vain.



Canceling the wedding would ruin the relationship between the families, so Emilia was forced to leave the family in order not to tarnish the Ripha's name. At that time, Caio thought he would never see her again, but Lukas freed him and allowed him to follow her, on the condition that he protect Emilia.

Lukas was born and raised a noble, so arranged marriages were common practice for him. At no time did he think he was doing anything wrong in getting an arranged marriage to a prestigious family, but he understood his daughter's desire for freedom. His only regret was having to watch her go without being able to help her at all. How she was running away in 'secret' would be suspicious if she received any parting gifts. The most he could do was give a teleportation crystal with the family symbol, something common for any Ripha to carry.

That was over 20 years ago.

'It's no use thinking about it.' Caio thought, coming out of his memories and looking sadly at Emilia's body. She was the only family he had and now he had to kill her with his bare hands. It weighed heavily on his mind and he screamed with rage inside, but his body remained unperturbed.

Caio shouted his hatred towards Athos, ignoring the sensation of losing consciousness. He watched in horror as his own body looted Emilia's corpse as if it were loot and then dragged her corpse out of the sewers where that hateful skeleton was waiting.

#### Chapter 77 Last resistance

Athos rushed to assist in the battle near the gate, but it was not necessary. Most of the people were already dead when he arrived, corpses piling up on the floor. The skeleton mages created undead until they ran out of mana, but corpses kept piling up in the streets.

The total number of survivors was only 1000 people, showing the absurd number of deaths in less than 2 hours. Some people despaired and committed suicide to avoid being brutally killed by the undead. There were still people who weren't in the central square at the time of the attack and were fighting for their lives all over the city, but that wouldn't last long.

'Divide a part of your forces and kill the people scattered around the city.' Athos ordered, causing half of the undead to ignore the humans and scatter across the city. Athos hoped this would be enough, but the number of undead being destroyed has not diminished.

The 200 skeletons sent to the slums were destroyed and the skeleton birds alerted him to an armed group running towards the east gates where the undead had initially invaded. Athos had only left a few guards, so if the group of survivors managed to reach the gates, there was little Athos could do to stop them.

...Of course, if they could reach the gates.

With impeccable timing, Caio appeared behind him, carrying Emilia's body in his arms. He gently placed the corpse at his feet, staring at the body as he walked away.

Athos placed his hand on her body and tried to turn her into a skeleton, but met unexpected resistance. The light energy that formed their affinity withstood the darkness, forcing Athos to expend far more mana than was necessary. It was a challenge, but a very welcome challenge.

'Someone as strong as that woman is worth the challenge.' That's what Athos thought, pouring more and more mana into her corpse. The remaining light was strong, but not strong enough to withstand Athos' continued injection of mana. The skeleton was successfully transformed and jumped to its feet, before being forced to kneel in front of you. She seemed to want to say something, but Athos paid no attention to that.

"There's a group of fugitives trying to escape through the gates. Kill them." Athos ordered in an authoritative tone. Emilia's skeleton nodded before running to the gates. He was curious about what happened to his affinity for light, but wasting his spellcasting ring just to satisfy his curiosity was a stupid idea.

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"Sevenus, how are you in mana?" Athos asked, wanting reassurance that no one could escape. Emilia was incredibly strong, but without a wand, half of her strength would be lost and there was a risk that some humans would manage to escape.

"A little less than... half, my lord." Sevenus replied. He had consumed mana to create undead as soon as he invaded and used a lot of mana in the fight against Emilia, so it was normal for his mana to be low.

"That's enough. I want you to support her and make sure no one runs away." Athos ordered, before turning to the massacre taking place in front of him. The undead that were ordered to scatter across the city also rushed to the gates, so Athos wouldn't have to worry about them.

Darkness quickly gathered in his hand as he walked around the corpses, casting the undead raiser en masse until he ran out of mana. The new skeletons also donated new life force to him, increasing his total reserve and allowing him to cast the spell again like a snowball that only strengthened him.

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"aura blade!" A fully armed warrior screamed, shooting an aura blade from the halberd and decapitating three black skeletons at once. He was the leader of the yellow dagger gang and a former mercenary named Halt Morrow.

He was sleeping in his base in the slums when the attack began, but quickly woke up to the screams and sound of battle, something he was used to and led the bandits next to him to kill the undead. Most of the city's adventurers had left the city, the few that remained worked for him now.

Halt had approximately 30 bandits working for him capable of manipulating mana, so he was easily the biggest fighting force in the city. He himself was a skilled warrior and a charismatic leader, so his subordinates had great confidence in him. As soon as he managed to defeat the first wave of 200 skeletons, he tried to meet with the guards in the center of the city, but one of his scouts who was in the square came running back and warned him of the massacre that was taking place there.

Halt immediately realized that the city was going to fall and gave up on the idea of helping dying people. He realized that the battle was approaching from the west gate and moved to the east gate, where the enemy numbers would be lower. They even rescued a few survivors who were alone when the attack began, their numbers increasing to nearly 100 people by the time they arrived in front of the gates.

"Now keep running and don't look back! There's a fortress beyond the forest, we can get help when we get there! Kill the undead that get in our way." Halt yelled, trying to boost the bandits' morale. He didn't mention the nearby villages, because they were probably already destroyed, or mention the fact that they would have to march for at least a day to reach the fortress.

Only a few guard skeletons were stationed at the gate and they were easily killed by the bandits. They tried to flee through the open gate, but the ground began to shake and rose like a black stone wall that perfectly covered the gate.

"What the fuck??" Random bandit 1.

"Is this magic? Does the enemy have a mage??" Random bandit 2.

"Look for the mage! He must be around here somewhere!" Random bandit 3.

The bandits became alarmed and hurriedly searched the surroundings using mana vision. They already knew that mana vision was useless on the undead, but it was almost instinct for anyone who managed to manipulate mana.

Halt did it differently and slowly retreated behind the bandits, looking intently at the top of the wall and the roof of nearby houses, where the enemy would have a privileged view of them. Unfortunately for him, the attack came from much closer and too fast for him to react.

A dagger hit the back of his neck until the blade came out of his throat. The blade was pulled back as quickly as it had been driven in, causing blood to spurt from both sides as he fell to the ground dead. The bandits around didn't understand what happened to their leader, even after he fell to the ground. They stared in disbelief at the bleeding body on the floor, their brains refusing to believe that their leader and the strongest of them died so easily.

Emilia exploited the bandits' moment of stupefaction to spin around, using the sword's aura dance skill. The skill generated a black aura blade from the dagger that slashed all enemies around it, but didn't stop there. Emilia continued to flow mana without stopping to move, creating a continuous aura blade that followed the dagger's tracks.

She also used an acceleration skill to increase her speed. Emilia moved with grace and agility, faster than any of them could react. All the bandits saw was a blur of black and then the red of their own blood. The ability required her to stop and breathe before continuing the attack, creating a breach that enemies could exploit, but as an undead these limitations did not apply to her.

"Stop that skeleton!" One of the bandits screamed, seeing that half of his companions were already dead on the ground. Bandits carrying shields used the charge ability and tried to stop Emilia's movement, but she jumped on them a second before the shields hit, spinning upside down in midair and decapitating the squires.

She fell to the ground in a crouch, swinging the dagger at her knee and cutting off both of the screaming man's legs. After losing their leader and half of their comrades, the rest of the bandits lost the will to fight and ran for their lives, but Emilia didn't let them get away, attacking them as soon as they showed their backs.

One by one, she pierced their hearts from behind, adding to the desperation of the fleeing bandits. As if to sneer at them, the undead sent by Athos appeared and surrounded the area near the gate, cutting off any hope of escape.

“Haha, we really didn’t stand a chance, did we?” One of the thugs said with a broken laugh, before having his heart pierced by Emilia. After finishing off all the bad guys, Emilia killed all the civilians who had kneeled on the ground while hugging each other, cowering as much as possible to avoid drawing Emilia’s attention.

They screamed in fear seeing the helpless citizens around them being brutally murdered, but Emilia’s murderous aura froze them in place like prey in front of a predator.

‘I’m sorry.’ Emilia thought while crying inside. She saw her own bony face reflected in the eyes of an approximately 7-year-old child, the last person she killed. Her black skull was completely stained with the blood of innocents and she felt disgusted and repulsed by herself for it.

## Chapter 78 Post slaughter

“Ended.” Athos said, seeing the last of the citizens fall dead to the ground right in front of him. For a second he didn’t believe that he had really managed to destroy the entire city, that he was just having a dream, but the pleasant smell of blood in the air and the thousands of corpses strewn at his feet said otherwise.

Even though his total mana kept growing, his mana still dried up before he could turn 1000 corpses into undead. Athos planned to turn all corpses into undead as soon as he regained his mana, increasing his army even more. But now was not the time for that.

“I won! Not you, but me! You who took my mother from me, who forced me to hide like a rat in the sewers, forced me to live below you! You are now my slaves and you are all below me! I hope you have lived happy lives, because I will make the afterlife hell for you!” Athos yelled as he looked at each of the skeletons around him.

He had a lot of grudges in him and now that he had the chance, he planned on spouting all his venom on these people. Athos wanted to break them both physically and psychologically, not because he found it advantageous to make the skeletons as loyal as Sevenus, but because he wanted to see them suffer. Feeling that most skeletons didn’t understand what he was talking about, Athos’ anger grew and he decided to explain who he was.

“Do any of you remember 5 years ago when you all executed a woman because of a fire? Well, I am her son. I killed the captain of the guard as a child, I caused the war between the bandits and guard that destroyed the city and I was the one who drove the whole city crazy days ago. I am the monster you created.” Athos spoke with rancor dripping from his voice, rejoicing at the disbelief in the skeletons.

“You will never see your familiars again, you will be forced to fight until your bones turn to dust and then feel the agony of destroying your own core only to sentence others to the same horrible fate as yours. You will be treated worse than slaves, working tirelessly forever, or until I order you to stop. But believe me, that’s not going to happen.”

Sevenus and Emilia also returned, followed by the bandits' skeletons, so he decided to stop the psychological terror here. Athos pointed to the ground, causing all the surrounding skeletons to kneel with their heads down, in a demonstration of the power and control he had over them. Emilia and Sevenus were unaffected, but followed the lead and knelt in front of him.

"Was there a problem?" Athos asked Sevenus, ignoring Emilia's existence.

"No problem, my lord. I only intervened...just in case, but it was unnecessary." Sevenus tried his best to hide his disappointment, but he was like an open book to Athos. The number of undead linked to him has increased, so his diction has also improved,

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'Shit, why was that woman so strong? I'll be left behind and forgotten with that woman around here!' Sevenus thought in frustration.

"Fine, because I'm going to need her knowledge from now on. I give you command of the human skeletons, except the mage skeletons." Athos said in a pompous tone, placing his right hand on Emilia's skull.

Emilia shivered for a moment, feeling nearly 4,000 chains winding through her mind. Her mind was stronger than Sevenus's, but the number of chains was colossal and destroyed her in an instant. Even the chains that were attached to Sevenus were moved towards her, making him click his tongue in disappointment.

"Tell me your name." Athos ordered, noticing the change in the glow of her orbit. No more anger and fear, but joy and wonder.

"My name is Emilia, master. It is an honor to serve you." She said it almost perfectly, making Athos realize that the number of 'subordinates' was what defined the freedom the skeleton would have. Or else it wouldn't make sense for Emilia to have a better diction than Sevenus, who was a skeleton older.

"I already have my first orders for you. The city has already been destroyed, but there may be people hiding inside buildings or in the city sewers. Find them and kill them all. I also want you to gather anything useful such as food, weapons, tools, various metal items and the corpses scattered all over the city. Also, I want you to prepare all the carriages you find around the city."

"If I may ask, why food? Is that useful?" Emilia asked in confusion. They were skeletons, there was no point in them needing to eat.

"It's to have energy to heal them. Broken undead are no use to me and even garbage can be useful depending on the situation." Athos said with a sneer at the skeletons kneeling around. His gaze stopped on Finn and only now did Athos remember that he was still missing his limbs.

"Besides, there are thousands of corpses near the walls. They are preserved thanks to the cold, so I want you to bring them to me too." Athos continued talking as if nothing had happened. The creation of undead relied entirely on the mana spread within the core, so he doubted he would be able to turn corpses that had died more than a day ago into undead, but it was worth a try.

“Understood, master.” Emilia replied, before getting up and ordering the skeletons. She divided them into four groups, each consisting of 1000 skeletons. She also set a leader for each group, discovering that the other undead could also designate subordinates. This would be useful for managing the undead in the future when their numbers increase too much, creating a hierarchy among them.

Caio, the captain of the guard, the leader of Halt’s bandits and one of the strongest bandits working for Halt. Emilia wanted Finn to take over the fourth group, but realizing the contempt that Athos showed him, she avoided naming him leader.

“My lord... shall I help you?” Sevenus asked, not wanting to lose to a rookie. His diction regressed again, so he was feeling anxious.

“There’s not much to do now-” Athos was about to send him away, when he remembered something.

“No, there’s something you can do for me.”

“Just say...and it will be...done.” Sevenus rejoiced at the chance to prove his worth.

“You fought my master before he died, right? I want you to find his body among the corpses that Emilia will bring here. While she doesn’t bring them, I want you to use the remaining mana to restore what you can from the underground base, under the sewers.” Athos spoke, his voice almost cracking at the mention of Khali.

“I understand...my lord.” Noticing a different air around Athos, Sevenus asked no questions about the strangeness of the order and just obeyed.

The skeletons worked quickly from there. The skeletons led by Caio invaded the houses and searched thoroughly, finding a few dozen people hiding. Those led by the captain of the guard descended into the sewers and found only a few bandits who were easily killed.

Halt was responsible for gathering resources across the city, as he knew where most of the useful things were. The common bandit was responsible for the collection of corpses. Sevenus was underground repairing what he could of the base. And as for Athos, he spent all his time regenerating his own mana and raising corpses into skeletons once his core was full.

“As expected, I can’t turn him into a proper undead.” Athos said, looking at the skeleton in front of him. It was one of the corpses of the crazed who died a few days ago. When a person died, their core would break down and spread throughout the body for approximately 1 day.

Athos’ ability to create undead used the residual energy of the corpse to create them, so it was questionable whether or not Athos would be able to create a skeleton from a corpse that had been dead for some time.

“It’s possible, but it’s not really worth it. Since there’s no residual energy, it consumes my mana until it’s full, and the life force spent is not recovered once created. Its strength is no different from other skeletons, so it’s not worth.” It was the conclusion that Athos arrived at. Another important thing that Athos noticed is that the skeleton had no emotions.

There was no fear towards him, anger at being turned into an undead, or respect for him as their master. He was cold and just obeyed his orders, as if he were an artificial being. It was like-

“-As if it didn’t have a soul.” Athos muttered, realizing a shocking truth. Perhaps a person’s soul would remain tethered to the body as long as the residual energy didn’t disperse and his necromancy chained the souls, not the minds of the undead?

## Chapter 79 Goodbye

Athos was a layman when it came to souls and only had abstract knowledge like what the church taught, but maybe it would be a good idea to research souls when he got the chance, maybe it would help him understand more about himself. He was about to do some more experiments when Sevenus interrupted him.

“My lord...I found him.” Sevenus said, carefully carrying a cloth-covered corpse in his arms. With those words, all thoughts and theories fled Athos’ mind as he looked at the covered corpse.

Sevenus placed the body gently on the ground and removed the cloth from his face, revealing it to Athos. It was Khali. His body was dirty and badly bruised, his signature blue robe nowhere to be seen, but it was definitely him. Athos felt his hands tremble for the first time since becoming a skeleton, as he lightly gripped Khali’s hand.

“Did you manage to rebuild any part of the underground base?” Athos asked, his voice a little touched by sadness. He grabbed a bag of personal items that one of the skeleton mages had prepared for him and slung it over his shoulder, before picking up Khali’s body.

“I rebuilt...only one room...my lord.” Sevenus replied.

“That’s enough. Take me there.” Athos spoke.

Sevenus nodded before turning and leaving. He walked down an alley and opened a trapdoor before descending, quickly followed by Athos. The Slimes reacted to his presence, but a pulse of darkness destroyed them all. There was an earth tunnel just below the trapdoor, leading to Athos’ base and former home. They entered the base’s kitchen, where Athos discovered Khali’s complete inability to cook.

“Don’t let anyone down here.” Athos said without looking at Sevenus.

Sevenus bowed to Athos’ back and left. He was dying of curiosity about what Athos would do with the body, but he didn’t dare ask. Athos had never shown any feelings other than hatred and rancor, seeing the sadness in his orbits was something surprising.

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Left alone inside the dark kitchen, Athos covered the floor with the cloth used to cover Khali’s body and laid him down gently. He felt his ribs tighten at the sight of Khali’s face, but he didn’t let himself down. He removed the dirty clothes Khali was wearing and opened the bag prepared by the mages’ skeletons.

From inside the bag, he took a canteen of water and a clean cloth, before dipping it in and starting to clean the dirt from Khali’s body. He gently cleaned the area around the wounds, while using dark magic to restore the body to perfect condition. Athos even consumed his own skin to avoid consuming Khali’s body.

Athos didn't say a word during the entire process, racking his brains to find the right words. When he finished, Khali's body was immaculate, as if he'd just been sleeping. He reached into his bag again, pulled out a blue shirt and cotton pants and leather shoes, and dressed Khali's body. His skin was pale and cool to the touch, but Athos didn't mind that.

"Although it's not my style, blue is your favorite color, isn't it?" Athos gave a wry smile as he spoke to the body. Athos sat on the floor beside the corpse and began to speak whatever was on his mind.

"You know, as I walked down here carrying your body, I tried to think about what I would do now, what I would say to you, and how to say a proper goodbye, but nothing came to mind. I thought about saying a flashy goodbye, releasing blasts of magic across the sky or lining up skeletons for a ceremony, but I gave up on that idea. These people despise me and I despise them too, and I wouldn't forgive myself if our parting was filled with negative feelings.

So I've decided to bury you here, where the two of us have lived alone for the past five years. I know you like flashy things, so I hope you'll forgive me." Athos apologized as he chuckled, before his face twisted into a grimace of sadness. "I miss you teacher."

"You were the only person in the entire world who cared about me, who stood by me when everyone else hunted me like an animal, who was a father to me when I lost mine. You tried in every way to give me back the warmth of a family, not out of interest, but because you wanted me to be happy.

You pretended you wanted to use me, but you never reported my talent for order so you could let me go and live my life as soon as possible. You tried to be my family and mend me, make me human once more, but I was already broken beyond repair." Athos said, drops of condensed darkness falling from his sockets like tears.

"I was too weak to deal with the death of my parents and it gnawed at me inside. I chose to hold on to hate because I didn't have the strength to deal with the pain. And now, look at me. I'm a dead man. and empty inside and out." Athos looked down at his bony hands as he spoke.

As if reacting to his thoughts, the gray skin around his hands turned black again and retracted into his body, revealing his bones.

"But in the end, the person I hate the most is myself, because I'm to blame for all my pain." Athos paused, his jaw quivering in fear of uttering the next words. He was trying to reveal a secret he kept to himself, something even he refused to think about. It was as if there was something stuck in his throat and he needed sheer willpower to get it out.

"Do you mind keeping a secret from me? Taking the secret to the grave?" Athos said as a joke, trying and failing to calm his own mind.

"The day before the 'accident', I spent all night creating explosive dust in my father's lab. He had never let me do it alone or carry something so dangerous with me, but I was confident in my ability and decided to do it myself.

I successfully created the explosive powder and kept it in leather bags in one of the closets. Ever since I was little I always tried first and asked permission later, so I figured it would be fine as long as I apologized later.



When the next day arrived, I woke up too late because of exhaustion and hurriedly dressed before going down to breakfast. I was so excited that day that I ended up wearing the breastplate backwards.” Athos smiled at the memory.

“My dad finished eating first and went to the lab like he always did, but I didn’t want him to fight me for creating explosive dust without his supervision, so I pretended to spill juice on him by accident to get him to change clothes and ran to the lab and I caught all the explosive dust.” Athos said, his tone starting cheerful and growing darker as he spoke.

“But my mom was even more excited than I was for my first adventure and came into the lab to get me. I hurriedly hid the explosive powder in my bag, but I had done too much and couldn’t take everything with me or she would notice my bag. full and find out the truth, so I left a part behind hidden among the potion ingredients.” At that moment, Athos clenched his fist so tightly and the skin on his hands tore and healed continuously.

“My father didn’t have any orders for potions that day and stocks of alchemical items were good, so there was no reason for him to deal with anything dangerous or explosive.” The black tears continued to fall as Athos spoke. “Maybe he discovered the explosive powder and tried to check what it was, or maybe some experiment went wrong and the bag got damaged and exploded, but whatever the case, it was my fault my father died. I was the one who killed him!”

Athos could almost see Khali’s corpse being replaced by his father’s, looking at him with resentment and hatred, blaming him for his death.

“My mother was captured and tortured like a criminal because of me! I had to live like a rat because of me! And you died because of me too! If it weren’t for me, you wouldn’t have delayed your departure from this city and could have escaped that motherfucking mage slayer!” Athos punched the wall hard, creating a cobweb-shaped crack in the wall and a crack in the fist.

“I hate myself and I hate this world for taking everything from me because of a single wrong choice. I know you wanted me to be happy, but that’s impossible now. I’ve become a monster that can’t stop killing and even if I could, I wouldn’t.” Athos knelt in front of Khali and cupped his cheek with his right hand.

“I pray that Eishin’s church is wrong and reincarnation doesn’t exist, so you don’t have to witness what I’m going to do to this world.” Athos finished saying goodbye and left the cave without looking back.

## Chapter 80 Future plans

Outside the base, Sevenus was waiting for him. Sevenus looked at Athos in surprise, sensing that the air around him was different, but he asked no questions.

“Did you hear anything?” Athos asked in a still husky voice. He looked at Sevenus with a look that promised only suffering.

“I didn’t...hear nothing...my lord.” Sevenus shivered at that look, bending his head so as not to look him in the eye. He inwardly sighed in relief at having resisted the urge to eavesdrop on the conversation, or he would have joined the dead again.

"Fine. I want you to take the base down again and make sure the corpse inside is buried and not crushed." At Sevenus' words, Athos' gaze softened.

"Understood...my lord." Sevenus understood Athos' intentions and quickly got to work.

After making sure that Khali's body would not be damaged, Athos climbed the trapdoor back to the surface and returned to creating undead. He didn't say a single word or create any of his crazy hypotheses and theories, he just worked robotically. The sun had been up for some time when it finally finished turning all the fresh corpses into undead.

It was an incredible sight. Athos didn't bother to count, but one of the mage skeletons acted as a secretary and counted each undead created. There were an incredible 5346 skeletons! If the skeletons under Emilia's command and animals and monsters were added, he would have nearly 10,000 undead under his command.

"It's an incredible number." Emilia said after reaching her side. She had delegated her tasks to her subordinates, so she was just supervising them at work. She was wearing her mage slayer attire, an ordinary dagger replacing the dagger lost during the fight with Finn.

"How are the preparations on your side?" Athos asked.

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"The corpses scattered around the city and piled up on the wall have already been delivered to you, master. We found approximately 50 people hiding inside buildings and in the sewers and they are already among the undead. The carriages we found are already lined up on the main street. . Collecting resources is taking a little longer, but in a few more hours, the carriages will be full." Emilia reported proud of her work.

"Anything that is edible should be given to the skeletons. Order them to circulate as much mana through their body as possible and eat until they are satisfied, it should be enough to heal them. This garbage must also recover, it will not be useful to me in that state." Athos spoke, remembering that Finn was still in a deplorable state.

"Understood. But what am I supposed to do with the corpses on the wall? They haven't turned undead, so aren't they useless?"

"Load the carriages with the corpses, I want to do some experiments on them. I'm pretty sure normal necromancers can create undead from rotting corpses, or they'd have to live roaming the battlefields like buzzards looking for carrion." Athos replied, remembering that the dark elder was interested in his body even though it took two weeks to reach the nearest town.

"Understood. Half of the carriages are already filled with metals and miscellaneous items, but we can use the carts to transport the corpses as well. They are easy to build and we have a lot of manpower, but where are we going after we leave the city?" Emilia finally asked the question she was curious about. Depending on the next city he chose to attack, she could provide information and plans on how to invade them.

Unlike small cities like Faltra, large cities like Clastro or Shiima would have small armies belonging to the nobles stationed in the cities, as well as branches of the order of magic with dozens of mages and

hundreds of adventurers. Skeletons might outnumber them, but the power of the cities would still be overwhelming.

"Beyond borders, the semi-human empire." Athos said as if it was no big deal, almost making Emilia's jaw drop to the floor.

"What? But why?" It was all Emilia could say after recovering from the shock.

"It's simple. I will be destroyed if I continue on human territory. Human countries will not stand by and see an undead roaming their territory and will launch all their forces to kill me. I need time to settle down and create strength to face them. Strengths I can obtain by devouring the Demihuman empire." Athos began to explain his plan.

"Demihumans aren't weak, master. They are barbaric and underdeveloped, but they make up for it with brute strength and large numbers. I don't have much information about them, but most of the race are warriors and I can't imagine these fragile skeletons having a chance against them." Emilia gave her honest opinion, concern clear in her voice.

"I know our chances are slim, but I have no other choice. I'd rather face a powerful but stupid race like demihumans than a powerful, cunning and treacherous race like humans." Athos said with a wry smile.

"Think about it, even if I use a genius strategy to attack a human city, all it takes is a mage with a communication device to report what happened and all the information will leak out. The more I fought, the more countries would create countermeasures against me until I was cornered and killed.

Demihumans are different. My teacher taught me that demihumans are divided into several different tribes that war with each other and against other races, so communication between different tribes should be minimal. Humans call them an empire just because they don't care to tell them apart. I also believe that their intelligence gathering is poor compared to humans.

If I can take down a single tribe, I can use them as a spearhead and slowly take over their entire territory. Although this is a plan that should take 100 to 200 years to complete." Athos finished explaining his thoughts and plans for the future. As an immortal undead, he didn't have to worry about time and planned to take the semi-human empire slowly.

"When you talk like that, demihumans seem more pleasant to face. But we have a problem." Emilia said with a serious tone, before explaining what happened inside the forest of Faltra and the meeting with Treevor. She gave a very detailed explanation, mainly of the strength Treevor displayed and made it clear that strength was probably not his full power.

"What do you mean by teleportation? Do you still have this item with you? How does it work?" Athos, on the other hand, was more interested in the concept of teleportation than false spirit. He'd only heard of the concept from Khali, but he had no idea how it worked.

"I do, but I believe the most important thing is to find a route to avoid entering the forest." Emilia replied, taking the crystal with the Rípha symbol and handing it to Athos.

"What are you talking about? We're going to kill him. You said he had an elven body, right? If he has a body, he has a weakness. More importantly, what is the teleportation range of this crystal?" Athos asked, questioning why she made such a stupid suggestion.

"A few kilometers. Wait, what do you mean you plan on killing him?? Even if you throw all the skeletons against Treevor, they'll just be fodder, You know??" Emilia started screaming in confusion, not understanding Athos' thoughts.

"That also means he has a power worth sacrificing 10,000 skeletons, doesn't it? What was his approximate size?" Athos continued asking questions, while ignoring the confused Emilia.

"About four, maybe five meters? But why do you want to know? Want to teleport a bomb right in his face or something?" Emilia tried to deduce his plan. The blast that nearly killed her was powerful for sure, but she doubted it would be enough to kill Treevor.

"No, that would be too risky. Besides, you said yourself his defense was amazing. I doubt the remaining alchemical items will be able to create an explosion strong enough to kill him. To make matters worse, the corrupted mana is likely it will make the teleporter unstable, so it runs the risk of exploding in our face and not even reaching him.

"I have a better idea. Is that garbage already cured? I want him here." Athos gave a sickly smile as he thought of Finn.

"He's still putting the bones in place and regenerating what he's lost, but I can bring him here if you want, master." Emilia replied, ordering Finn to come closer.

Finn's skeleton appeared a few seconds later, his state better than after the explosion, but far from perfect. His left arm was back in place, but his ribs were still broken and his right leg was still missing, so he had to be carried by another skeleton.

"Hi, trash. Cheer up, soon you'll be released from your torment." Athos laughed in his face, before telling him the plan he had thought up. It was risky, suicidal and would require the sacrifice of nearly 4000 undead, but Athos counted on a smile as if he was enjoying himself.

Emilia and Finn listened in shock, but for different reasons. Emilia feared for Athos' safety, while Finn feared being used as a suicide soldier.

"Get everything ready by tomorrow. Let's nip this Treevor in the bud." Athos said, causing all the skeletons to start running around the city to do his bidding.