

LOA Nobody 31

Chapter 31 Nightmare Of A Broken Brain

By the time Rio came in, it was already late evening and after washing up he decided to have dinner early today.

He had called for Amelia but she was busy playing around and would probably eat later when Artemis came to force feed her.

The original Rio might have gone to talk to her but the new Rio, he didn't care.

Though he would probably kill anyone to protect her, just because of that one doubt, that maybe she's Ria. But never in his heart is he ever planning to give Ria's place to someone else if he isn't sure.

Ria for shiva was someone that always supported him. Someone who held him together, someone who kept her family together and that's why after she was gone, everything else was gone too. Her death started a chain of events that destroyed everything he had built. She was irreplaceable to him.

So even if Amelia had the same face and habits as her, he still couldn't bring himself to accept her as his sister. Not until he knows everything.

(who are you? At one thought I just want to be free of my burdens , my mistakes just like when I was in the darkness. While the other part of me is probably trying hard to hold onto those memories.

I have lost everything I cared about in my past life, I don't want to go through the same feelings. And that's why I was happy in the darkness cuz there was no chance of me messing up or feeling anything.)
Rio thought as he walked towards his room after finishing his meal.

—

Artemis didn't show up during Myra's fight with Chiron, so she is probably still busy with solving everything. She did find 3 people who have been lying to everyone for years, she must be blaming herself for everything.

Agnus is probably doing the same. Being the Duke and owner of Shade - it did bring lots of profits but it also required his utmost focus. He couldn't take time off to live with his family. He would have to lead troops in towers, against monsters whom no one has even seen, fight in unknown territories inside dungeons - he's always risking his life outside. And when he did come home this time, just to find that his son nearly died due to his negligence - that's why he's out there. He knows he won't be able to stay here for long, even if he wants to. So he wants to kill every single Evil Scion's members before he has to leave again.

—

Though Rio didn't show it on his face, he was feeling tired. It's been years since he did anything so heartily. Ages since he had to think this much before doing anything. A lazy nobody like him literally had to plan and do stuff that required his utmost attention.

It's just been one day but he had already changed so many things in the story. All 3 traitors in the Blake family who played a role in Rio's downfall had been dealt with. He had stolen the key to the protagonist's sword legacy. He had changed the fate of Asher and damage of the emergence phase 2.

He had made a recipe for a cleansing potion which the world wouldn't have noticed for the next 10 years. He who was supposed to be a villain had planned to even kill the child blessed by Goddess who made the prophecy about him being the devil. All in just one day - since he woke up in this world.

—

As Rio lay on his bed and closed his eyes thinking about how long of a day it has been, hoping for a peaceful sleep.

'Since it's a new world and been so long in the darkness, I shouldn't have those nightmares again.'

But little did he know that his real nightmares were only going to start now.

The memories that he hid so deep in his brain for so long that even he had forgotten them, were out in the open between the cracks of his mind.

And now there was no subconscious fog or a ghost of Riya left, that was stopping them.

As soon as Rio closed his eyes he found himself in the familiar darkness. He took a deep breath, glad that he was here and prepared to sleep, but just then the sound of footsteps started echoing in the darkness and soon he could see a silhouette of someone walking towards him.

[what do we have here]

[look who decided to show up]

Rio heard a voice, an arrogant tone he was all too familiar with, the person whom he hated the most in the world, even more so than himself - Nashi.

Shiva looked at the silhouette. but he couldn't see any facial features. It was made of pure black darkness - like a clone or shadow.

'damn it'

Instead of talking back to Nashi, Rio decided to turn back and leave. He looked around but he couldn't find anything else, so he turned and started walking away.

But his steps came to a halt as the darkness in front of him started morphing into Nashi's shadow. As Rio looked back there was one more of him. and soon enough everywhere he looked there were these shadows standing.

[Did you think you'll be free, if you just ignore us]—5

[SHIVA]

"I'm Rio. Rio Blake."

" Shiva is gone. I'm Rio _ "

[hehehe are you sure]

Rio looked in horror as in front of his eyes, all 5 Nashi turned into smoke and turned into a mirror. Rio saw as his body changed back into his old one. The one where he was Shiva.

[see, it's you right. It's you on the day of her birthday] the reflection from the mirror spoke and walked out. But as soon as his feet touched the murky darkness, he turned back into Nashi.

Shiva couldn't take it anymore and he slapped himself hard- hoping it would be enough to wake him up from whatever the hell this was.

"puchh"

But it wasn't. he was still there. so he slapped himself again but still nothing and then again.

"tachhhh"

[hmm haa haha haahahaha]

Soon there was only the sound of slaps and a crazy laughter echoing in the darkness.

[You cannot escape the past Shiva. you can change everything- your name, your world, your SISTER but you can't change yourself. My dear friend.]

"Shut up, WE are not friends. And don't you dare mention her ever again."

[Or what, what can you do to me now. You're powerless, just like back then]

"It's different. you're just a thought, a memory. I have erased you before, I can forget about you again" - Shiva said in a snarky tone, trying to scare him or maybe just trying to calm himself.

[And yet here we are , chatting just like the old times]

[what did I always tell you Shiva]

[learn to let go, to forget, but as always you didn't listen]

"what are you talking about" - Shiva asked.

[The memories Shiva, the memories. You're not supposed to have them after the darkness. But you held on to them. And now, here we are.]

[I was just a fragment of your imagination back then, but now I'm a part of you, part of your soul and a part of your story]

[Tell me, do you still miss her. what was her name again. Sh_]

Shiva finally couldn't take his chattering and tried to punch his face. but his fist just went through the darkness while the laughter echoed from behind him.

[ha aahahaaha]

"you're not real. you're dead"

[Yes. but you're dead too. Aren't you] this time the voice turned a little playful but just near his ears. Shiva turned back but as soon as that happened, his body was flung back in the air as a punch connected to his face.

Shiva landed on the ground , wiping the blood from his lips and said - "It's different"

[No it isn't. We both killed each other remember.] Nashi's voice came , as Shiva felt a kick to his face and rolled on the ground.

"No, I survived. I lived. I moved on" Shiva said as he tried standing up.

[Congratulations you survived. Now live through the trauma]

One of Nashi's clones came forward and stepped on his head. [Tell me, how did that feel]

[were you happy after killing me]

"You destroyed everything. You deserved to die"

[ohhh is that what you tell yourself these days]

[What I did was a MISTAKE. while what you did was a massacre]

Nashi's voice filled with anger roared in Shiva's ears, as a knife covered in blood appeared in his hands. Shiva looked at his hands covered in blood.He tried to remember anything but his head started hurting and then -

[Tell me which one of us is the monster]

"Shut up" - Shiva said as he dropped the knife on the darkness.

Just for it to appear in Nashi's hand, as he stabbed him in the back.

"Ughhhh" Shiva bent forward and pulled the knife out and threw it far into the darkness, this time with all his strength.

He was taking deep breathes as blood continued leaking from his back. Shiva touched the wound on his back and when he looked at his bloody hand the knife appeared there again.

Shiva dropped the knife and backed away 3-4 steps, horror written all over his face. As a foggy memory appeared in his head.

Watching his pale face, drained of colors all of Nashi's clones started laughing loudly.

[hahaha haha hahaha hahah] ã— 4

[Do you remember now Shiva]

[Even she left you back then]

[What did you used to call her, Queency was it. Now tell me where is your queen]

[haha hahaha] ã— 3

As the crazed laughter echoed in the darkness, with the memories starting to shift in front of his eyes, Shiva held his head and bent down.

"it's not real

" you're not real

" it's just a dream. just a dream

" I just have to wake up. it's a dream"

Shiva started muttering to himself as the voices of different memories started echoing in the darkness , while the clones of Nashi continued laughing at his misery.

[hahaha is that your peace mantra nowadays]

"Ignore him. ignore him. ignore him"

[but you can't. you never can. you see as long as you live, I'll live too.]

[she made sure of it.]

At this point all the noise and crazed laughter of all his clones stopped for a moment and then they all spoke together -

[before you killed her that is] — 4

Shiva was surprised to hear those words, as he held his head as a massive headache started again just like back when he first had Rio's memories.

"Akhhhh"

"what_ are you talking about." - Shiva asked as his voice breaking. Tears were trickling down his eyes but he didn't know the reason for it. The memories he hid so deep were still foggy , so he ignoring the pain he still asked Nashi.

All of his clones started bursting out in laughter again. [hehehe hahaha haaha]

and then all of his clones surrounded him and pushed him down. As the solid darkness beneath his feet turned soft and he fell.

As he kept falling into what seemed like the abyss, Shiva heard the voices of Nashi and his clones - [you'll see soon enough]

[after all it's gonna be a long long night]

[my dear devil]

....

Chapter 32 Reliving Through The Funeral

As Shiva tried hard to look for anything around him while falling down, he saw a light at the bottom and soon was pulled into it.

When he opened his eyes again - he saw himself standing in front of his house.

The sound of crying & wailing of several women could be heard from the inside.

As Shiva steeled himself to go in, he saw the air was heavy with grief as the family and whole neighborhood gathered to pay their last respects. The body of a young girl lay on a simple pyre, surrounded by flowers and incense.

He saw his mother weeping inconsolably, her sobs echoing throughout the village. Her heart was shattered, her soul torn apart. She could not believe that her beloved daughter was gone, taken from her in the prime of her life. She was surrounded by other family members who were trying to console her, but nothing seems to be able to ease her pain.

His father was sitting on the floor, his head buried in his hands, his red eyes crying out for his daughter. His little brother was weeping uncontrollably, his face twisted in anguish. He saw his big brother who was holding his own sadness, trying his best to console himself and keep himself together for his family, but still from time to time his eyes would get moist and he would clean them.

Everyone who came there was crying, everyone was grieving, everyone except for him.

Shiva stood in the corner, watching as his family wept and wailed for his little sister who had passed away. He felt numb, as if a part of him had died along with her.

He wanted to cry, to join in the chorus of sorrow that filled the air, but the tears wouldn't come. He felt as if he had been drained of all emotion, as if his heart had turned to stone.

He felt like an outsider, a heartless monster who couldn't even shed a tear for his own sister. He could hear the whispers and the mutters of his relatives, calling him heartless and cold. They didn't understand the pain that he was going through, the guilt that was eating him up inside.

As the rituals continued, he was asked to perform certain tasks, such as placing flowers on his sister's body and lighting incense sticks. He did everything so mechanically, as if in a trance, his mind consumed by his sorrow.

As the final rites were performed, Shiva watched as the flames consumed Ria's body, reducing it to ashes. He felt a pang of regret, wishing that he had spent more time with her, that he had told her how much he loved her. Hoping that if he had been there it wouldn't have happened.

The family members took turns to offer their condolences, embracing his father, mother, and brother, and expressing their sympathy for their loss. And yet he could barely bring himself to respond, his grief too overwhelming for him to bear.

After everything Shiva realised that his sister was truly gone, that he will never be able to see her smile again, to hear her voice, to hold her hand.

His family still continued to weep and wail, their voices blending together into a chorus of cries. Shiva looked around the room, at the faces of his family members, all of them united in their grief. Despite his pain, he felt a sense of solidarity, knowing that he is not alone in his suffering.

—

But that was another joke of fate - as after this soon started a game of blame.

There's this line that says -

Shiva had seen the pain of his family, now it was time to face their anger.

—

Shiva found himself standing alone in the middle of his family's house, his head bowed in shame and grief. He could feel the weight of everyone's accusations bearing down on him, crushing him with guilt and anger.

Shiva stood frozen as his father's hand connected with his cheek, the sting reverberating throughout his entire body. His mother's wails pierced the air, filling the room with an overwhelming sense of grief and pain. His brother, though visibly upset, stood silently by their mother's side, trying to console her as best he could.

As Shiva looked around at his family, the weight of his guilt and sorrow bore down on him even more heavily. He had never felt so alone, so helpless, and so responsible for the tragedy that had befallen them all.

—

"Shame on you!" his mother spat at him. "How could you be so heartless? You should have been looking out for your sister, not running around with your friends."

Shiva's anger flared at his mother's words. He loved Ria more than anyone else in the world, and the thought of her death made his heart ache with sorrow. He knew that he was partly responsible for what had happened, but he also knew that he had never intended for anything bad to happen to her.

"I loved her more than anything," he said, his voice choking with tears. "I would never have let anything happen to her if I had known."

"Love isn't enough," his father said bitterly. "You should have been responsible, you should have been watching out for her. And now she's gone because of your carelessness."

Shiva's fists clenched at his sides. He wanted to lash out at his parents, to scream and shout and tell them that they were wrong. But he knew that they were hurting just as much as he was, and that they were looking for someone to blame.

Shiva turned to leave the house, unable to bear the accusations and the pain any longer. But as he stepped outside, he was greeted by the sight of his neighbors, all of them looking at him with anger and contempt.

"Murderer!" one of them shouted and came forward to slap him. "How could you let this happen?"

Shiva's heart sank. He knew that he would never be able to escape the guilt and the shame that he felt. Ria was gone, and he would always feel responsible for her death.

As the days turned into weeks, Shiva retreated into himself, consumed by his grief and his guilt. He knew that he would never be able to make things right, that his sister's death had shattered his family and his everything.

And so he stood alone, his heart heavy with sorrow and his mind consumed by regret. He knew that he had made a terrible mistake, and that he would have to live with the consequences for the rest of his life.

Shiva walked down the street, feeling like a stranger in his own neighborhood. People he had known for years were looking at him with cold eyes, muttering under their breath as he passed by. He could feel their hatred and disgust, their judgmental gazes weighing down on him like a ton of bricks. He wanted to scream at them, to tell them that he was not responsible for Ria's death, that it was an accident, that he would give anything to bring her back.

But he couldn't find the words. He felt numb, hollowed out by grief and guilt. His parents had blamed him, his brother had blamed him, and now it seemed like the whole world was blaming him. He had been thrown out of his own house, left to wander the streets with nothing but his thoughts and his pain.

But this was only the start of the pain and hell that was further awaiting him.

that his life would come crumbling down in pieces, just like a house of cards

Chapter 33 Beginning Of His Nightmares

Shiva stumbled out of his house, his mind consumed by the pain of Ria's loss and the weight of everyone's accusations. He had come home after her death, hoping to find some solace in the familiar surroundings of his childhood home. But instead, he found only anger, bitterness, and blame.

As he walked through the narrow streets of his neighborhood, he could feel the stares of his neighbors burning into his back. He could hear their whispers and their curses, their accusations and their taunts. They all blamed him for his sister's death, and he couldn't bear the weight of their judgment any longer.

—

He stumbled into a dark alleyway, his breath coming in ragged gasps. He could feel the rage building inside him, a burning fire that threatened to consume him entirely. He needed an outlet for his pain, a release for his anger, and he found it in the form of a young man who had been walking in the opposite direction.

The man looked drunk, as he saw Shiva, he said - "Ahh you're the guy from the city huh. The one who got his sister killed. Man what were you __."

His words were cut short as without thinking, Shiva lunged at the man, his fists flying in a wild fury. He beat him half-dead, not even stopping when the man was all bloodied and begged for mercy. All he could think about was his sister, the way she had looked at him with trusting eyes, the way she had smiled at him.

As the adrenaline faded and the rage dissipated, he collapsed to the ground, his body wracked with sobs. He knew that what he had done was wrong, that he had let his anger and his pain control him. He knew that he had only made things worse, that he had added to the weight of his guilt and his regret.

He knew that he would never be the same again, that his sister's death had changed him in ways that he could not even begin to comprehend.

—

He stumbled back to his family's home, hoping to find some measure of forgiveness or understanding. But instead, he found only more blame and more accusations. His parents turned their backs on him, his brothers looked at him with hatred in their eyes. Even his sister's memory seemed to have turned against him, reminding him of his failure and his shortcomings.

Despite his attempts to move on, Shiva remains forever alone, trapped in his own pain and suffering. His family, who are also mourning the loss of their daughter and sister, are unable to provide him with any solace as they too struggle to cope with their grief.

As the sun began to set and the streets grew quiet, Shiva found himself standing alone in a dark alleyway. He leaned against a wall, feeling the cold bricks against his back. He closed his eyes and tried to shut out the world, to block out the voices that had been tormenting him all day.

But then he heard a whisper, a soft voice that seemed to come from nowhere. "Shiva," it said, "look at me."

He opened his eyes and saw a ghostly figure in front of him. It was Ria, her face pale and ethereal. He gasped, unable to believe what he was seeing.

"Ria?" he whispered.

"Yes, it's me," she said. "I'm here to tell you something, Shiva. Something important."

He felt a lump in his throat, his heart pounding in his chest. "What is it?" he asked.

"I forgive you, Shiva," she said. "I know it wasn't your fault. You have to forgive yourself too."

He felt tears streaming down his face, his body shaking with emotion. "I don't know how," he said. "I don't know how to live like this."

"You have to try," she said. "For me, and for yourself. You have to find a way to move on, to make a life for yourself. I love you, Shiva. And I always will."

With those words, Ria's ghostly figure began to fade away, her voice growing fainter and fainter until it was gone. Shiva was left alone in the alleyway, still crying.

—

Shiva's world has been shattered since the loss of Ria. Every day is a struggle as he battles with his own emotions and the constant reminder of her absence.

His life became a constant battle, and he feels as though he is slowly losing the fight. He longs to be reunited with his sister, to hold her hand, and hear her voice once again.

He had started seeing her ghostly figure daily now, he hears her voice, and feels her presence everywhere he goes, making it impossible to escape the grief that consumes him.

He tried to continue living his life, but everything seems to be slipping away from him. Shiva's life has become a living hell, and he sees no escape from his misery.

—

After having one more fight at his home, today Shiva had decided to end it all by taking his own life, only to be stopped by Ria's ghost, who appears before him, crying and begging him to stop.

Shiva: (holding a knife to his wrist) I can't take this pain anymore. I'm sorry Riya, I truly am.

Ria's Ghost: (appearing before him) No, please don't do this. You don't have to be sorry. It wasn't your fault.

Shiva : (in tears) How can you say that? You're gone because of me. I should have protected you, but I failed.

Ria : (gently) No, you didn't fail. You loved me and cared for me. You did everything you could. It was just an accident, and accidents happen.

Shiva : (in disbelief) But how can you forgive me so easily? I caused your death.

Ria: (smiling) Because I love you, and I know you loved me too. You don't have to carry this burden alone. I'm here for you, always.

Shiva : (sobbing) But how can I live with myself? I can't face our family, knowing that I'm the reason you're gone.

Ria - You're not alone, brother. I'm with you, always.

—

As he walked, he heard the sound of crying, of wailing and mourning. He knew that it was for Ria, that some new relative must have come home. But he couldn't bring himself to go back, to face his family and the people who had once been his friends. He felt like an outcast, like he had been banished from the only world he had ever known.

He walked out of the room, into the cool night air, feeling the weight of his grief and his guilt pressing down on him, as he slept on the roadside, looking up at the dark sky.

—

Shiva: (holding a knife to his wrist) I can't take this pain anymore. I'm sorry, sis, but I have to go.

Ria: (appearing before him) No, please don't do this. You don't have to be sorry. It wasn't your fault.

Shiva: (in tears) How can you say that? You're gone because of me. I should have protected you, but I failed.

Ria: (suddenly changing her tone) Failed? You did more than just fail you idiot, you killed me! You're the reason I'm not here anymore. You're a failure and a coward.

Shiva - (in shock and pain) What are you saying? You're supposed to comfort me, not hurt me more.

Ria: (laughing maliciously) Comfort you? You don't deserve comfort. You deserve to die, just like I did. You're pathetic, and I hate you.

(Shiva watched as Ria's face and body turned all bloody, her head wounded badly)

Shiva: (crying) No, this can't be happening. You're not Ria, she wouldn't say these things.

Ria : (screaming) Yes, I am your sister! And I hate you! Die! Die! Die!

Shiva : (sobbing and shaking) - You're not real. you're not real.

Ria : (disappearing) I'll always be real, and I'll always hate you.

(Shiva wakes up, sweating and crying)

Shiva : It was just a nightmare. She didn't mean those things. She loved me.

(Shiva hugs a picture frame of Ria, crying)

"You would never hate me, right Ria."

Father: (sobbing) How could you let this happen, Shiva? Ria was your responsibility.

Mother: (wailing) My poor Ria! She was just a child! And now she's gone because of you!

Vikram: (angrily) You didn't care about her at all, did you? You were too busy with your own life to protect her.

Neighbor 1: (tauntingly) Shame on you, Shiva! You call yourself a brother, but you leave her all alone.

Neighbor 2: (disgustedly) You're a heartless monster. You should be ashamed of yourself.

(Shiva just stands there silently, his head down in shame)

Father: (angrily) Answer us, Shiva! Why did you let Ria die?

Mother: (sobbing) We trusted you to take care of her, and you failed us!

Vikram: (shouting) Say something, damn it! You owe us an explanation!

(Shiva finally looks up, tears in his eyes)

Shiva: (barely audible) I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Neighbor 1: (sarcastically) Oh, look, he's sorry now. That makes everything better.

Neighbor 2: (coldly) Sorry doesn't bring Ria back, you bastard.

Father: (sadly) Ria's blood is on your hands.

(Shiva looks at his hands covered in blood as with a jolt of shock, he wakes up)

Father: "How could you let this happen, Shiva? You were supposed to take care of her!"

Mother: "She was just a child, Shiva! How could you be so careless?"

Vikram: "You're a disgrace, Shiva. You were responsible for her and you failed. You don't deserve to be part of this family anymore."

Father: "We trusted you with our daughter's life, and you let us down. You're no son of mine!"

Mother: "I curse the day you were born, Shiva! You brought nothing but misery to this family!"

Vikram: "You better not show your face around here again, Shiva. You're dead to us now."

—

Ria's ghostly figure looked at Shiva with tears in her eyes. "Don't listen to them," she said softly. "it's not real."

"and you are." Shiva said with a defeated smile on his face.

"It wasn't your fault." Ria said as she hugged him.

Shiva shook his head in disbelief. "How can you say that?" he replied, his voice cracking. "You're gone because of me."

Ria's ghostly figure put her hand on his shoulder. "You couldn't have known what would happen," she said. "It was just an accident."

Shiva's tears fell down his face as he looked at his sister. "I miss you so much," he said, his voice barely above a whisper.

"I know," Ria's ghostly figure said. "But you have to be strong. You have to live your life for me. Don't let their blaming and anger consume you."

Shiva nodded slowly, wiping away his tears. "I'll try," he said, his voice still filled with pain. "But it's so hard."

Ria's ghostly figure smiled sadly. "I know," she said. "But I'll always be with you. Whenever you need me, just close your eyes and I'll be there."

Shiva wakes up in the middle of the night, sweating and shaking from another nightmare of Ria's ghost haunting him. Her voice echoes in his head, blaming him for her death and telling him that he should have done more to save her. He can't escape her presence even in his dreams.

As he tries to calm down, he hears the wailing cries of his mother and father in the next room. He knows they are blaming him for Riya's death too. His brother's voice also echoes in his mind, accusing him of not taking care of Ria.

Feeling hopeless and alone, Shiva cries himself to sleep, only to wake up the next day to the same nightmare.

—

These recurring haunting nightmares were the reasons Shiva left his house, after the 32 days of mourning rituals*¹ were completed and never returned.

He didn't want to live in that house and be reminded of her every moment. He didn't want to watch the faces of the people he loved, filled with anger and hatred towards him - so he ignored them.

His family too didn't stop him and let him go. Maybe they didn't know he'll never truly return or maybe they too didn't want to see his face and be reminded of her again.

—

When Shiva left his village, and his family behind, he thought at least there was still someone who'll be there for him. someone who knows the truth, someone who will understand him and support him, just to be further broken & disappointed - that she left him too.

But those are his nightmares for another time.

So with this his nightmare on the first day of Arcadia ends. Let's wake him up now. shall we...

- In Indian culture many mourn their loved one's death for 32 days continuously so there souls can rest in peace.

Chapter 34 Setting Plans In Motion

Rio who was trapped in his nightmares reliving the nightmares, he thought that he forgot. The 32 days he spent trapped in his body going through every moment of that pain again.

It was just as that clone of Nashi said, the nightmares he was having now were actually memories playing in front of him again, just like the time when he first died or when he saw Rio's memories, But the difference now was he could actually feel stuff again. So instead of watching a movie, he was living in it.

There was a 50-50 chance of it happening with either Rio's memories or Shiva's. It was his bad luck that he got the sad side of stick.

—

Myra who stayed in the next room all night as per Artemis's order, came to call Rio for breakfast.

Knock - Knock

After knocking on the gate a few times, and when she didn't get any answer. Myra used her token to open the door.

[As same as the servant quarters, every room where Duke's family stays had many powerful arrays placed on them. To stop any assassin or other people from entering without permission. So without the token with a certain mana signature no one could open it. Breaking these arrays or bypassing them without attracting any attention is just a fool's dream.]

When Myra came inside she saw Rio still asleep on his bed covered in blankets. She went ahead and opened the window curtains and then pulled his blanket but Rio still didn't had any reaction.

Myra gently shook Rio's shoulder, trying to wake him up. As he stirred, she noticed that he was drenched in sweat and tears stained his cheeks. She hesitated for a moment, unsure of how to approach the situation.

"Rio, wake up." she said softly, gently shaking his shoulder.

Suddenly bolted upright, Rio's eyes wide open with fear and anger. He swung his arm wildly, nearly hitting Myra in the process.

"Leave me the fuck alone" He barked.

Startled but quick on her feet, Myra jumped back and raised her hands defensively. "Rio, it's me." she said calmly, hoping to snap him out of his nightmare.

Rio blinked rapidly, looking around the room as if unsure of what was happening. "What... what's going on?" he muttered, his voice hoarse.

"You were having a nightmare" Myra said, trying to keep her tone as gentle as possible.

Rio slowly began to calm down, his breathing returning to normal. He looked up at Myra, his eyes still lost.

Rio took a deep breath and nodded, rubbing his eyes with the heel of his hand. "Sorry, I didn't mean to... thank you," he said, his voice still shaky.

Myra nodded back, relieved that he was finally coming back to reality. "Of course. Shall I help you get ready? It's almost time for breakfast."

"No, I'll be fine. Inform mother & Amy that I'll be having my breakfast in the room today." said Rio, hoping to get some time alone.

Myra looked at him and nodded her head. "Ok. I will be outside, so if you need anything call me." With that Myra bowed and turned back to leave.

Rio lay back on the bed as he watched Myra leave. He looked at the ceiling and thought - 'what the hell was that. It looked like I was back on earth'

'is this some kind of aftereffects as that guy said'

'But what can I do now.'

Rio closed his eyes and the scene of her funeral started playing in his head again. He opened them again and with a loud sigh, thought -

'so much for starting fresh in a new world.'

—

Rio got up from his bed and walked towards the bathroom, no maids or servants were assigned anywhere near him aside from Myra. So he had to do all his little chores himself unless he wanted to have Myra take a peek. A 30 year old guy getting help for bathing by a 20 year old girl - that would be embarrassing.

A small chuckle came to his lips at the funny thought. But his face still had that coldness to it.

—

After a quick shower, Rio had a light breakfast. Which somehow wasn't as tasty as yesterday's, but that is to be expected since Chiron is in prison, probably having the time of his life.

'Well looks like, Blake's need a new chef. There was someone good at cooking in the plot _ Should I get her to work for us.'

'Nah, I should probably take care of my nightmares and Noah first'

'Both are the problems which would annoy me everyday if not solved early'

'And my best bet, to fix both of them together, is probably the awakening and the world system'

'If I take care of Noah, I can avoid events resulting in my certain villainous doom & after awakening, even if the system doesn't help with my brain, if I'm strong enough I won't need to sleep daily thus reducing these nightmares.'

'not the permanent solutions but the best I got'

With his thoughts about future actions planned out he looked at Myra, who was clearing out the plates and dishes from the table.

"Have you gathered all the ingredients from the list?" Rio said.

Myra looked at Rio and was surprised to see the calm look he had now, totally opposite of the vulnerable side he showed when he first woke up an hour ago.

'I wonder what kind of dream he had' she thought but didn't find it important enough to question, knowing he won't tell anything to her even if she asked.

"Yes, but are you sure about the recipe. Even master was worried after learning about the ingredients. There are some books which are known for having some false or half information, maybe we can _."

Myra was voicing her worries.

But Rio just shook his head and cut her off - "You guys can try all you want once I'm done with it. And as for the information being a lie, you don't have to worry about it."

[As translation of singular books depended on luck & opportunities - the person who did it, will always be the first one to get the rewards, if he chose to use that knowledge. If that book turned out to be a trap or contained half truths, then that's their luck too. It's all a risky move but people still do it, cause no one can ignore the allure of a great gift that transcends common sense.]

"As you wish young master" Myra said. It was only her job to warn him. Besides with the treasures Duke house has, there would still be no life threatening risk for Rio even if he ate all that directly without making a potion.

"And Myra, go to the Belmont family. I need you to buy me a slave of theirs. Her name should be Megan Levette. She has short red hairs and should be around the age of 18-20." Rio spoke, this time in a much more serious tone, and watched as Myra's face had a surprised look and eyes which were probably scrutinizing him, hoping to ask for a reason. And before she could ask, Rio continued - "And you don't have to worry, I'll talk to Mother about it. So you should just make the preparations."

Myra still with her doubting gaze looked at Rio and when she noticed he had no intention of continuing or explaining anything else, she just nodded and said - "Fine, I'll send a letter."

But Rio shook his head and said in an authoritative tone, no longer acting as her friend or student but as the future heir of this house - "Maybe you didn't hear clearly what I said Myra. I want YOU to personally go there and bring her to me. I don't care how you do it, but I need it done as soon as possible."

Myra who for the first time saw him acting like this was surprised, but as a trained shadow , just nodded her head.

After saying this Rio stood up and started walking out. He needed to explain all this to Artemis and talk about his awakening, he also needed to get permission to visit the prison.

It was time to free his shadow and let her be of some use.

'Fuck my luck for being this shitty.' he thought as he kicked the floor.

Chapter 35 Lying Through His Teeth

When Rio reached Artemis, she was standing outside the training grounds, watching over Amelia's physical training. Asher was training her today or more like playing tag with her, as they were just running in circles for now.

Artemis looked at Rio and said - "Are you feeling fine now."

"Yeah, don't worry. It was just a nightmare." Rio reassured.

Artemis nodded her head, while saying - "Don't stress too much, once your body is perfectly fine, the effects of the curse will all vanish. Till then just take proper rest."

"Okay." Rio replied, while busy watching as Amelia was now laying on the ground, huffing loudly while Asher was standing a little far from her acting to be tired. Rio smiled a little when he saw Amelia suddenly stand up and jump to catch Asher off guard, only to fall face first on the ground.

Artemis too looked at the scene, said without turning her head - "Myra said you're planning on taking the potion first. Any reason why you're feeling confident about it."

"The book had detailed information about the potion recipe and it's effects. It's a completed research journal, so don't worry." Rio said while looking at Artemis trying to see what she was thinking, only to be stumped cause he couldn't read any expression on her face.

Artemis finally turned her head and looked at Rio, and this time asked in a much serious tone, while looking at Rio's face Unblinkingly - "Myra also said you're planning to get a slave from Belmonts."

Artemis watched as Rio's face turned serious at that mention and gone was the playfulness from before, she then continued - "You do know that even if we don't fight within ourselves. The other Duke's families are our competitors, Plus your father doesn't like slavery, you sure about your decisions."

Rio took a deep breath, knowing all his future plans depended on this moment. if he couldn't convince Artemis, then there's only one option left for him and that is to act as a seer.

'I really don't want to take that route. Though it would benefit me at the beginning but as the plot progresses and I change stuff, my seer card will turn useless.'

Rio opened his eyes and said in a serious tone - "She is Esme's sister, mother."

Rio watched as Artemis had her eyes widened, a surprised look for a second and then her eyes started turning red in anger.

'So she already knows about Esme. Fuck'

Artemis was surprised cause just yesterday she figured about Esme being a vampire spy, who was using a bloodline suppressor artifact to conceal her vampire traits. Artemis thought that Rio was doing this cause he was emotionally attached to her or maybe it was one of Esme's schemes to ruin the relationship between 2 Duke houses.

Rio already expecting what Artemis was thinking, continued saying - "I already knew about her secret mother."

If Artemis was surprised at learning that there were spies planted in her house then now she was shocked that her own son who knew about it, had hidden the fact. "How and since when?" - she asked, her tone a little bit colder now.

Rio without avoiding her eye contact said - "It's been a long time." Rio watched as Artemis clenched her fists in anger but before she could ask anything else, he took the charge for the conversation and continued - "She's not the enemy mother. At least not now. She was also the one who told me about Beric and Chiron, and in return I promised to help her in freeing her sister. "

Artemis took a deep breath to calm down as she thought about everything that I said and any possible motive for Esme in helping us catching the traitors. When she couldn't figure that out, she asked the other question - "You still haven't explained how you knew about her being a vampire and why you decided to keep that information to yourself."

"I had signed a contract for secrecy, mother. Before you ask, it's not with Esme , and I can't tell you anything else about this. Not till my awakening atleast." Rio said.

"You didn't agree on becoming an avatar of some God, did you?" Artemis asked in a high pitched tone. She forgot all about previous problems, this one took all priorities, if her son is tricked into being an avatar of some random God - the effects it could have on his future would be unimaginable.

—

*** [Becoming an ǵ—ǵ~ǵ—ǵ~ǵ—ǵ—ǵ meant being selected as a chosen one of any God. Now this is good news, as you can get the full legacy and all of the powers of that God. But it also brings you trouble too, as that God's sole successor - his followers, his friends and his enemies will all take notice of you. And getting thrown in that mess while not having the strength to protect yourself, would only lead to certain death.

-- Though losing an avatar would affect the God too, as they'll lose one of their power for forever, which their avatar was most proficient in. But some Gods still trick people just to entertain themselves.

-- One God can only have one avatar at a time. but Blessings can be given to anyone, anytime without any restrictions but the avatar/chosen one needs the approval of both parties.]

—

Rio held her hand and said in a calm tone - "Of course not mother. It was only about me not sharing their identity till my awakening, nothing else. Don't worry."

Hearing his words Artemis calmed down, as the worst results that she expected didn't happen, but still a God who hides his/her identity, was a big red flag in her eyes. She got lost in her thoughts as lots of questions started rising up -

'Is it a fallen God or some evil one?'

'why would they sign a contract with a kid?'

'when did this even happen, why didn't she know'

'and what kind of God watches when their contractee is cursed & dying'

'should I ask her for help. her magic is practically a loophole for secrecy contracts'

When the last thought crossed Artemis's mind, she finally calmed down. It looked like she had found the perfect solution and in a way she had. But Rio didn't know anything, so he was relaxed seeing Artemis. If he did he'd be cursing his luck for N'th time today.

After all, Artemis planned to ask for help from someone who was the avatar of greek goddess Psyche, her sister - the queen of Schilla - Athena von Schott, Also known as seer of soul.

—

As Artemis had figured out a way to learn the secret identity of this God or whoever it is, she had calmed down. About Rio's request for helping Esme's sister, since Esme did help them in catching the traitors and all she asked in return was freeing a slave, she agreed too. But Rio's next words surprised her again.

"I also want you to release Esme from prison, mother." he said.

Artemis glared at him and asked - "Why?"

"Because she's not the one who cursed me." said Rio.

"Even if she didn't, I won't allow her to stay anywhere near my children. And that's the end of it." Artemis said in a stern tone, clearly stating her final terms.

"That's _ fine. At least she'll be alive." Rio sounded disappointed like he reluctantly agreed since he had no other choice. While in his heart he was jumping happily that he finally did it.

Artemis smiled and pulled his ear - "Don't try to act smart with me kid."

Rio whose head turned 45° sideways as Artemis rolled his ear, said trying hard to act just like how original Rio used to in these situations - "Ahh ouch ouch mother it hurts."

"Say this is what you wanted right." replied Artemis pushing his hand away with mana.

"I don't know what you're talking about." Rio said as he looked the other way, trying to whistle but all he did was blow air.

"Don't forget I'm your mother my dear Rio. and you are still a 10 year old kid." said Artemis as she let go of his ear, which was now deep red in color.

'She really does like to tease & torture her kids huhh' - Rio thought as he massaged his ear which was stinging in little pain now.

"Hmmm should I share what you used to do when you were my age. Aunt Athena was a little too happy to tell me all about your secret adventures, when she visited us last time." Rio said in a smug smile, after all he knew all too well what kind of character this villain's mother had. It was only after she married into Blake Family that her personality changed a little, otherwise she was practically a soaring trouble magnet.

Artemis coughed and avoided the look, while thinking about teaching her sister a lesson on not spilling her secrets to her son.

—

Far away from Damascus, in the capital city Haven, an enchantingly beautiful lady who was currently playing with a little girl, had a shiver run down her spine as she looked towards the North direction, confused by this sudden instinct to hide. As for just confirming her doubts, she heard a sweet voice in her head which said - "It was nice knowing you human. we'll meet each other soon."

The lady pouted in response as she thought - 'Damn Psyche, you better save me if something happens. I'm your favorite girl right.' Which earned a soft chuckle from the voice as a response and nothing else.

'looks like one of the kids ratted me out' The lady said in her heart.

"I warned you to keep quiet." the voice said.

The lady looked at the little girl playing alone and thought - 'Should I cancel her birthday celebration.'

—

Artemis cleared her throat and asked - "So what do you plan to do with Esme?"

Rio said - "Her sister is sick, and she promised me some gifts, if we take care of her."

"Gifts which were enough to entice you, my little Rio. Are you getting greedy or is she being generous." Artemis asked in a teasing tone, intrigued to learn what kinds of gifts this vampire promised which could make the heir of a Duchy agree for help.

[Though Rio was a kid, he was taught by the best people in the empire, so his knowledge about the world was far beyond what kids his age should have, plus the genes of 2 geniuses also helped. So no one doubt why Artemis didn't think Rio agreed to help for a lollipop.]

- "Don't worry, I'll share." Rio said while smiling.

Artemis just hummed a little and said - "That aside, it looks like you've been keeping lots of secrets from me Rio. Do you not trust us Or did you grow up too fast."

Now this was a question which stumped Rio, as he had no answer for this. Though he could continue lying like he did till now, but something told him that Artemis won't ignore this.

So he used his trump card, the divine move, an act that he knew would never fail, something which he learned from original Rio's memories. He went ahead and hugged Artemis and planted a kiss on her cheeks, as he said - "I'm always my mama's boy. So just trust me this once, pretty please."

Artemis smile bloomed on her face as she heard those words and said - "Fine."

'Damn so embarrassing' Rio thought as he looked at Artemis's face but a little smile did form on his face as he watched her smile.

Artemis patted his shoulder and said - "But you better explain everything before Rebecca's birthday."

She smiled a little when she saw the shocked look on Rio's face and thought 'that's what you get for trying to act smart with your mother. humph'

With that she left to play with Amelia, who was now hiding behind a tree, peeking every few seconds, holding her laugh as she looked at Asher looking around for her.

—

Rio who was left standing there alone, had a grim look on his face after hearing those words, as he understood the true meaning behind them, he thought - 'dammit. solved one problem and another arises.'

'I could've fooled Artemis by putting all the blame on the goddess who will give her blessing to me during the awakening, but how the hell did I forget about her powers.she'll know everything in just one glance.'

'Fuck'

'Though on a side note, I do wonder what my soul would look like in her eyes.'

'wait , am I getting distracted so easily - damn being a kid sucks'

"I should just go and get my vamp first"

Chapter 36 Getting The Vampire - 1

After getting permission from Artemis, Rio decided to go to prison and meet his shadow. But before that he needed some things which would convince him that he was making the right decision. After getting everything ready he started walking towards the prison.

He didn't see Myra anywhere, so she probably left for Narva city. It would take 2-3 days for her to come back if she's in a hurry and uses the teleportation gates. But if she doesn't want to leave any trail behind then it could take a week.

Why was Rio prepared to believe Esme, who could possibly be the one who cursed him. There are 2 reasons for it - One, cause after Rio thought about the plot carefully again he noticed, Esme plays an important role in the story till the middle sections, and even after getting so much screen time in the plot, there was no information about her ever using cursed mana to curse Rio. Maybe the plot missed it or it was something left out but Rio had decided to take a chance. He still wouldn't believe Esme that's why he looked for the 2nd reason, her sister - Megan Levette or Erza Scarlett.

Just like how Esme was sent to spy on the Blake family, Erza was sent to Duke Belmont's family.

Esme with her talent and power was soon appointed as my shadow, while Erza who lacked both talent and power was placed as a maid. But due to one mishap in the beginning she almost got caught and was punished by the Belmont family, to work as a slave. Her life had been ruined forever, she contacted her clan but the Scarlett clan decided to ignore her, thinking of her as a trash or failed resource.

Esme who learned about this tried to free her but her clan was against it, saying she should just focus on her mission unless she wants her sister killed to further avoid any risks. Esme seeing no choice left decided to continue her mission, hoping to one day free her sister. But fate pulled a joke on her as -

In the novel, Erza died 1 year before the plot officially started due to some ailments, and Esme started blaming everyone else for her death. Erza's death is what pushed Esme into betraying the Blake family and later joining the protagonist camp.

In the plot Esme confessed about her origins and promised to betray her own clan, if the Blake family decided to help her get revenge for her sister. But instead the Blake family did what any other logical sane person would do, they put her in prison, after all how could they trust a traitor and go to war against another Duke family for no reason or profit.

This development didn't sit well with Esme and when she found her chance she ran away. Later she started killing her own clan members who came after her for betraying the clan and when she learned of someone who was fighting against house Belmont, she joined hands with them.

This is how the shadow of the villain joined the protagonist. They made a deal where Leon helped her in getting her sister's revenge against the Belmont family & her own clan, while she helped him in destroying the Blake family. Of course protagonist halo also did its magic and she joined his ever increasing harem.

But as someone wise once said all traitors always end up dead. She too died with Rio's hands, further fueling the flame of the fight between the protagonist and the villain.

—

Now someone who was ready to betray everyone she ever knew and cared for, to just avenge her dead sister, what would she do if I had her sister with me. I have no plans to keep Esme with me forever, she betrayed us once she could do it again.

So Rio just decided to keep her sister hostage until he gets everything he needs done for. She will help him get all the chances which are helpful to him for his awakening and to kill that prophet. She was like a pawn or a minion to be used until he got a better subordinate.

'Awakening hurts like hell, I'm not the usual masochist protagonist happily going through pain for every level up. I mean I did go through hell in just one day after coming here but if I can avoid it, why not do it. Plus those heavenly chances are just waiting to be found by the protagonist, I'll just take them for myself. And that is what my shadow will do.'

'If you can't find someone you can trust, then look for someone you can control' - these were the words Nashi once said to him and it's exactly what he planned to do after waking up from his nightmare.

—

When Rio reached the prison Asher's team of Alphas was already standing guard there. They were all trained professionals and Artemis had already informed them. So Rio didn't have to waste his time going over everything again and went straight towards the light cell where Esme was put in.

[Every prison cell here was made of the toughest of metals and secured with the best of the arrays so no outside mana could enter there, an almost void zone.]

Esme's cell was filled with light , so much so that you couldn't find a single dark corner there. It wasn't the usual light from the sun or from a lamp, but pure dense light mana, which was spreading in every corner with the artifacts placed in every corner. For every vampire light mana is their biggest weakness. That and hunger.

Esme who's been trapped in this prison for the past 2 days had her whole body turned into red. The light mana had burned her everything. Rio stood there for a few seconds and watched as her body squirmed when a new wave of light mana hit her. She looked no different from a deep fried chicken hanging outside a mutton shop in his eyes. Obviously if you ignore the torn black dress and her human features.

Rio signaled the Alpha's and they turned off the light mana supply.

"Put her in the other room, I want to talk about something." - Rio said and turned around to walk in the other room, which at least had a chair to sit on.

'It's gonna be a long discussion, I can't just stand there all this time. Plus if we're both standing what's the difference' Rio thought to himself.

Soon Esme was released from her chains and moved into the other room.

Rio sits in silence, watching Esme as she's chained to the empty chair in front of him. She looks broken and battered, her clothes torn and her skin still raw from the burns.

Rio felt nauseous at the sight, in both his life he had seen a lot of stuff but torture was something he never did or saw. He believed in ending things faster due to his lazy personality. That is if you're not Nashi. That guy _ .

"We'll be outside, young master."

The guard's voice broke out Rio from his thoughts and he nodded his head. He then looked towards Esme and asked.

"Are you okay?"

Esme looks up at him, her eyes full of anger and pain. "What do you think? I have already _" Esme was saying something but stopped talking as she saw it wasn't any other guard or Artemis.

"Rio, what_ what're you doing here."

"I came to see you of course. Why did you do it Esme." He asked.

Esme looked down, not saying anything. What could she say, she had been following Rio every moment for the last 3 years, she could understand how hurt he must have felt after learning about her betrayal.

"Why did you want to kill me Esme. I thought you were my friend, my shadow." Rio asked, his voice hoarse as if he was disappointed and sad.

"I didn't, I had no idea who cursed you Rio. Believe me, it wasn't me." Esme replied hurriedly.

She already knew she would be killed, as chances of her getting out were nothing. She had worked in the Blake family for years, she knew Artemis would never allow her to leave. She just didn't want to die knowing that she failed the only 2 people whom she cared about. Her sister was already abandoned and now being trapped here, she had no chance of ever seeing her. That's why she wanted to apologize to Rio, the only other person whom she cared about. She had been working as his shadow for 3 years now, she watched his every moment, everyday. Even though she knew one day she would be caught and what she was doing was just betraying their trust, she liked her job. She had seen Rio enjoying the childhood she or her sister never had. They were trained from childhood and later sent out to work as a spy, they didn't have a single happy memory. So when she saw Rio or Amelia happily enjoying their lives she hated it. She felt jealous, but as time passed that jealousy turned into attention and then care. Their innocence and playfulness is what helped her, when she thought about her sister.

She even wanted to confess everything and maybe ask their help to free her sister, then they could all live together. But she knew it was just a fantasy, so she kept quiet, Kept watching from the sidelines, until 2 days ago when Rio suddenly fell unconscious and she was put in prison.

When she learned about the curse, she was heartbroken thinking that she failed to protect him too, just like she couldn't protect her sister.

It was only when Artemis came to ask her questions, did she learn that Rio was saved. So she happily told everything she could to Artemis, she even agreed to use the truth orb* just to make Artemis believe her, but she still didn't trust her.

[Truth orb - An artifact, which when used can detect if a person is lying or speaking the truth. Used during interrogation or torture process. Its limitations are - that it cannot be used without permission.]

(This was also a reason why Artemis agreed to free Esme when Rio asked for jt. As she knew Esme wasn't the one who cursed him, but if not for Rio she would kill her to avoid any future risks)

—

And why should I trust you now. You've been lying to us for years." Rio said.

Esme was glad that she got to see him one last time, as now she could apologize to him directly. But just like Artemis he didn't trust her too, so she just bowed her head, not knowing how to respond. It was then that Rio's next words surprised her.

"Myra went to get your sister." He said.

Esme looked up with disbelieving eyes, as she thought it was Artemis who believed her story and tried to help her.

"Did lady Artemis trust me." She asked hopefully.

"No, she was planning to kill you." Rio said.

"Then _ " Esme couldn't think of anyone who would help her or trust her at this time.

"I asked my mother to free you. And she agreed." Rio said and watched as Esme's mouth was open in shock but she couldn't think what to say, he watched as a smile came to her face and tears were sliding down her eyes, she felt happiness at the thought that maybe her dream would come true soon, but then Rio continued - "But you can't live with us. You have to leave."

Chapter 37 Getting The Vampire - 2

- "But you can't live with us. You have to leave."

Esme had a dejected look hearing his words but listened as Rio continued - "We will take care of your sister, but mother isn't ready to trust you yet."

Esme took a deep breath as she decided to calm down, though she was sad that she'll be alone, but the thought that her sister would be safe and taken care of made her happy. She trusted Rio and knew he had no reason to lie, as the only ones she talked about her sister with was Artemis, and hearing how Myra herself who was Artemis's shadow went to get her sister she believed him.

"You don't have to worry about Erza. I will take care of her." Rio said.

"Why are you helping me? Don't you hate me for lying to you all this time." Esme asked as she couldn't believe why Rio would go and ask Artemis for mercy on her behalf.

"Because I have a sister too. And I love her more than anything in this world , and I would do anything to protect her, so I understand." Rio said as he put his hand on her hands.

A tear slid down her cheeks and fell on his hands. Esme tried to move her hands to stop her tears but the chains tightened around her wrists and a muffled groan escaped her mouth.

"I'm sorry." Esme said as Rio sent the guards who came inside away and told them to not come in until he called for them.

"There is something else you need to know, Esme. Which is the real reason why I helped you." Rio said in a serious tone, and Esme realised that too.

"When I was cursed, I wasn't saved by some blessing or purifying magic." Rio said and Esme was surprised as the only way to solve curses was these two options, unless he _.

As soon as that thought crossed Esme's brain she looked at Rio with wide eyes. And when Rio nodded his head, tears started rolling down her eyes, as she asked - "why? Why would you do that."

Rio leaned back on his chair and said - "Because nothing else was working. The curse placed on me was strangely different from regular ones, so the usual methods didn't work. And when I thought I would die, someone offered to save me, and I agreed. I know it was a trick but I didn't want to die, not yet."

"Does Artemis know about it?" - She asked, as she thought Rio had signed a contract with any trickster God*¹, who are known for tricking others and getting them as their followers.

—

*** [Trickster God - A God whose every action is a trick or prank simply to entertain themselves. They are beings who have lived for eternity and have simply gotten bored with everything, so they do whatever the fuck they want.

- They would trick people in desperate situations to sign weird contracts, they will give out nonsense blessings in life or death battles - whatever it is that can make them smile, is doable for them.

- They aren't part of any faction, as they would destroy themselves if it looked fun.]

—

"No, no one does, except you. I didn't want to make them worried." Rio said, as he shook his head.

"What did they ask for in return." Esme asked as no trickster God would ever do anything for free. She looked at him with pity, as she couldn't imagine what kind of messed up deal the God must have put in return for saving him.

Rio took a deep breath and said - "A life for a life. He wants me to kill someone."

"So you're planning to kill me." Esme asked thinking this was the reason why Rio decided to free her prison and promised to look after her sister.

But Rio's exasperated reaction as he stood up from his chair, shocked her as she heard him say - "Never, I would never do that."

"Then who?" Esme asked as she was now confused.

Rio sat back down and continued - "They had given me a name, Noah Winston. Baron Misha's son, from Harendale city. They want him dead in one month's time. I don't have to tell you about the consequences if he survives right." A small defeated chuckle escaped his lips as he said the last sentence and Esme could already imagine the details.

"What do you want, Rio." Esme asked as she was now confused with all the information that she learned. She felt weak and tired, first the torture then the thought of leaving her sister behind and dying alone, then when she found about her sister being free, she learned about Rio.

'If only I had protected you better. If I had confessed everything sooner. Why does it always happen to me. Why can't I just protect anyone close to me, why? '

The countless thoughts of blaming herself were going inside her head, when she heard his voice, sweet yet pleading - "Will you help me Esme."

She looked at him as his eyes were getting wet but ignoring that, Rio continued saying - "I can't tell anyone about this, and mother won't let me go out alone. Will you help me, just once. I promise I will do everything in my power to cure Erza and take care _ "

Esme tried to stand up but the chains started tightening around her hands and feet and some blood started coming out from her burned skin, but she ignored the pain and asked - "Cure her, Is she ok. What happened to her?"

Rio looked at her in shock and then said in an apologetic tone - "I'm sorry, I thought you knew."

"What happened to her?" She asked again and this time Rio could see her eyes were getting red and soon the chain around her neck started glowing and blood started coming out from her eyes, as she was forced to close her eyes again.

'Man they sure were thorough in holding her. How the heck she escaped from here in the novel, with all these chains and artifacts around her. Sigh I'd be dead if they had this much plot armor.'

Rio shook her head and said - "After she was made a slave, she was sent to work in the mana stone mines. Mother said that due to regular contact with light mana stones and not getting blood for supplements. She had been sick and diagnosed with RATTEN*2."

—

[RATTEN - A disease many vampires get afflicted with when they're exposed with light mana for a long time Or weakness from not getting the blood or curse mana supplement over a long period.

- As time passes it transforms them into undeads who're mindless creatures, solely roaming for hunger and slaughter.

- Ratten simply means rotten, which describes them perfectly. this disease can be cured in early stages but said to be incurable after a long time passes]

—

As Esme heard his words she was shocked scared as she fell down on her seat, tears continued to fall down her face.

Rio looked at her with pity in his eyes as he said - "You don't have to worry Esme. I have already talked to my mother and she agreed to help her, when she learned that you helped me catch the real traitors."

"What're you talking about?" Esme asked as she couldn't understand a word he said.

Rio smiled a little and said - "When I was saved from the curse, THEY told me about the traitors in my house who knew curse magic. I told my mother that you helped me identify them, so in return she might help your sister Erza too. I will make sure of it."

Esme didn't know what to say, she just looked at Rio's face which still had that reassuring kind smile and couldn't believe that even after learning about her years of betrayal and nearly dying he was still thinking about her and her sister. It was then that she remembered that he too had asked for her help but she got too engrossed in her sister's worry that she forgot about him.

She made a firm decision and said - "Thank you Rio. I really am sorry for everything. I didn't want to but , I'm sorry. I will help you. Leave it to me."

Hearing his words Rio's smile widened and he said - "Thank you Esme. Maybe once everything is over we'll all be together again."

"I would like that too." Esme said grateful.

"Once I leave this room they would come to release you, but for safety reasons they will put a mana tracker in your body. I tried to tell them not to but, I hope you understand." Rio said and Esme nodded.

As Rio walked towards the gate but suddenly held his head and bowed down as a muffled groan of pain escaped his mouth. "Ummkhh"

Esme looked at him worriedly surprised by this sudden reaction, but then he turned towards her and said - "THEY said that you should be careful when dealing with Noah. Don't take his lightly as a kid and go easy. He could possibly have protection from some other Gods, so only take action when you're fully sure about it. You will only have one chance if you fail then _ . And they need to see his body as an offering." Rio said and without looking back at Esme who had a surprised face, walked away. As he opened the door he said - "I'm sorry for making you do this Esme."

Esme watched as the door closed behind him and promised herself that she would finish her job as soon as possible to help Rio. She clenched her fists as she thought -

'Even if it's against Gods, I would do everything to protect you and my sister this time. I would never fail anyone, ever again.'

"We will meet again, Rio. This time I will be your shadow as my own wish."

—

While Esme was determined to save Rio from this tricky God's clutches, he was walking towards his room thinking about what to eat during lunch.

'That went better than I expected.'

'Looking at her expressions, I guess I don't have to worry about Noah now.'

'RIP prophet. Live well in some other world.'

Chapter 38 Potions Make Us Stronger - 1

After meeting with Esme, Rio ignored the problem for Noah now. He had sent one A rank vampire, who can fight with a newly limit ranked awakened if she uses her bloodline abilities, just to kill a 10 year old kid, who's not even protected much. To not take any chances, he had even warned Esme to not go easy and be careful.

If some weird luck or halo even kicks in, it shouldn't be this audacious to help him so brazenly, but even if that happens it would change the plotline as then Noah would unknowingly attract the attention of Gods who always keep an eye on Esme or some tricksters who found it fun, So it doesn't matter if she succeeds or fails, the events will change.

'Just to be on the safe side, I even asked for his dead body to confirm everything with my own eyes, so no other God pulls some weird magic later & Noah turns out to be a fake clone or someone else.'

'Now that that's settled, I should prepare for my awakening'

'and the first step should be to get rid of this weak body and my pathetic control over it. And what better way to do that other than taking potions.'

—

Rio who had achieved his goals kept walking towards the alchemy hall. The route there was something he had watched in Rio's memories.

—

[ğ—”ğ—1ğ—°ğ—μğ—²ğ—°ğ~†ğ—¶ğ—»ğ—”ğ—¿ğ—°ğ—®ğ—±ğ—¶ğ—® - The author of the original book had changed the cliché setting for becoming an alchemist in his book as -

When you talk about alchemy in Arcadia it doesn't mean about creating potions or mixing herbs that only awakened can do with their magical flames dancing over their hands.

It all depends on what kind of herbs you're using, awakened people may have better control over some potent herbs and they may be able to better sense the changing process of mana reaction, but there are many other herbs out there which could substitute them and normal people use them to avoid the complications.

- After all in simple terms, Alchemy is just mixing stuff and waiting for them to react with each other. If you know what the correct recipe is and measurements for the ingredients used and time everything perfectly, even a blind man could create a perfect potion.

-Though any alchemist in Arcadia doesn't have a fixed reputation, but the job pays well. The money they make is immense for any useful successful potion.

- That's why people who couldn't awaken mostly try to become an alchemist, hoping to join the alchemy association. Resourceful people do lots of experiments with different herbs to see if something works. While poor ones become nerds, trying their luck on finding any singular book which had all the details already written and they just have to follow the instructions to a T.

- This is why even though the alchemy association is a big organization which plays a supporting role in the fight against the monsters, it was never made a part of major leagues. Cause unlike other fields where it all depends on someone's hard work & their talent and the time they put in, alchemy has a factor of luck.

Some nobody walking down the street could find or create a world toppling potion, just by following what's written on a piece of paper and have the contributions equal or more than that of the organization's head.]

—

Alchemy hall is the place where the Blake family had hired many known alchemists to try and create new potions or make them better by nullifying their side effects.

As Rio entered the alchemy hall, he was surrounded by a multitude of sights, smells, and sounds. The shelves and tables were lined with jars and bottles of various shapes and sizes, filled with brightly colored liquids, powders, and herbs. The air was thick with the scents of lavender and sage, among other fragrant herbs and flowers which he couldn't even identify. Some of them were useful while others were only used just to keep the pungent smell of failed potions away.

The walls were adorned with intricate symbols and diagrams, each with their own magical properties and meanings. A control panel was attached to every table to maintain the temperature and environmental conditions of that area, suitable for brewing the potions.

The sound of bubbling cauldrons and the clinking of glassware fills the room, adding to the magical ambiance. Books and scrolls were scattered throughout the room, some open and being studied, while others were neatly arranged on shelves. In the center of the hall, a large, ornate scale sits, used for measuring and weighing ingredients precisely.

One group of people was working on one side going through many books & scriptures hoping to learn something new, giving it the vibe of a library. While on the other side people were hovering over their own tables mixing & brewing their potions, making it look like a chemistry lab from earth.

After taking in the sight of this magical marvel, Rio ignored the gawking eyes of people and started walking towards one of the private rooms. There were many of them made with walls lined with metal and magic-resistant materials to contain any accidents and also providing privacy of course.

Some accomplished alchemists were given those rooms, and Rio though a newbie had one special room for himself as he had tuition classes for this too.

This was why Artemis and Myra believed when Rio said he had found a potion recipe singular book and translated it, though if they started to look carefully his lie would've been easily caught, as there was no record of a singular book going missing from the data, but he was lucky as both of them were busy with stuff so they couldn't focus here.

Rio placed his hand on the identification panel, as being an unawakened he couldn't use mana signature tokens cause his body had no mana in it.

The door opened and he watched as the illumination crystals started lighting up the room.

The walls of the hall were covered in intricate symbols and sigils, drawn in silver and gold, pulsating with magic. The designs seem to come alive and shift, reflecting the movements in the room.

Rio started walking towards the table on the side as he could see layers of herbs neatly placed there. They were the ones he had asked Myra to gather and looking at the quantity they were more than enough.

'This is the benefit of having smart people around you. I had just given her a list which was enough to create one potion but with this many herbs I can create that potion 3-4 times, even if I failed in the beginning. Should I be angry that she's doubting me or happy that I won't have to waste my time if I fail once.' Rio thought but then ignored the useless question.

It's too early from it's introduction in the story and even I have no idea how much of an effect it will have on this world at this point, but blame the truck who sent me here for messing with it, I have no other choice.'

'let's get this shit started'

Rio took off his jacket and rolled his sleeves up. It was finally time for him to take his first step towards growing stronger.

—

*** If any of you were wondering why he's roaming alone freely and why he's not scared to experiment with something like poison without any security - it's actually simple, cause he's not alone. As the future heir, he has people who always follow him even if he couldn't see them. And Rio knows they'll act immediately if his life is in any dangerrisk.

Chapter 39 Potions Make Us Stronger - 2

Rio was determined to create the Pura Corpus Potion. It was necessary for him if he wanted to get stronger faster or awaken early and use those opportunities, which he'll steal from the protagonist soon.

The potion's name basically means a pure body. This was the ultimate support for youngsters/kids as it cleansed the body of all impurities, which later increases their chances of successful awakening.

You could imagine how great of an effect it could have, as an overall rate of successful awakening in the human race is around 60%. It sounds a lot but with the constant increase of dangers it wasn't.

Pura Corpus potion was discovered much later in the novel. 2 years after the plot started to be exact, meaning 10 years from now. But Rio didn't have the luxury to wait that long, for that person to make it. So he decided to do it himself.

—

But he had overestimated himself, despite knowing the recipe by heart and having all the necessary ingredients, he had failed 4 times continuously.

Though the first time was only because he couldn't control his hands and it resulted in him not getting the Bezoar grinding process right and the stone wood herb burned itself in a sparkling fire.

Second time he failed due to overheating the potion for a little bit longer and it resulted in Asphodel getting fully burnt and turning gaseous. The smell from that potion had made his whole body numb for an hour and he couldn't feel a thing.

The third time he failed because he couldn't control the Brugmansia herb quantity and it made the potion extra poisonous, resulting in a foggy reaction, and he had to be pulled out by someone to even survive that poisonous fog.

In the fourth time, he made sure to be extra careful with everything. Double checking every step, taking it slow.

'If only I focused more on those chemistry practicals on earth, I wouldn't be making these useless mistakes here.' Rio thought as he wiped his sweat and started working again.

He began the process by grinding the Bezoar (the stone wood herb) into a fine powder. The herb was tough to grind, but he persisted until it was smooth. Next, he took the Asphodel (the soul flower) and carefully removed the petals, placing them in a mortar. He used the pestle to gently crush the petals, releasing their sweet illusory fragrance.

Brugmansia (the Angel's trumpet) was the trickiest to handle. He had to be careful not to touch it directly, as it was highly toxic. Awakeners can just coat their fingers in mana to protect themselves but since Rio couldn't do that, he used one of the gloves type artifacts to pick it up and then placed it in a small jar. He crushed the herb into a fine powder and then carefully mixed it with the other two herbs.

He then added some regular herbs which were known for their calming properties, and others for their healing abilities. He added them all together, mixing them until they formed a smooth paste.

He then added the paste to a pot of dense mana imbued water, stirring it continuously. The potion began to bubble and steam, filling the room with a heady aroma. He kept stirring, careful not to let the potion boil over the light flame. He controlled the temperature with the control panel. (it wasn't as perfect as some awakened can do but it's somewhat accurate)

The potion begins to bubble and glow, and Rio watches it with a keen eye. He knows that this is the critical moment - one misstep and the potion will be ruined. But he's careful, and soon the potion settles into a deep, vibrant blue.

Rio takes a small sip, feeling the warmth spread through his body. He took a deep breath, his hands shaking and then downed the entire vial in one gulp. The liquid was bitter, and he felt a burning sensation in his throat, but he persisted. He closed his eyes and waited for the potion to take effect.

But nothing happened.

Soon a pain hit his brain as he held his head, his eyes were getting heavy and his nostrils started bleeding, one of his hidden guards came and made him drink a healing potion. After some time when Rio felt fine, he wiped the blood stains and looked behind him. He still couldn't see anyone, but he ignored that and looked towards his table, his eyes glaring at his failure.

—

Rio throws the glass vials in frustration, shattering it against the wall of his alchemy room. He could feel the anger and frustration welling up inside of him as he glared at the scattered pieces of glass and the ruined mixture on the floor. He had failed again, for the fourth time in a row.

He slammed his hands on the table and let out a scream of frustration. He had followed the recipe exactly as he remembered, but something was still not quite right.

He had been attempting to create that potion for hours but with no success he was getting impatient now, he began to pace around the room, trying to clear his head and remember the details of the potion recipe.

'What did I miss?'

'Is it some kind of fucking plot armor?'

'Or does my luck and fate of this world interfering again?'

He muttered to himself, blaming fate and the gods for his failures, maybe they didn't want him to succeed, or maybe it was just his bad luck.

—

Taking a deep breath, Rio calms himself down and begins to go over the recipe once more. He carefully measures out the ingredients, making sure everything is exactly as it should be. He went through each step, double checking the measurements and the timing, getting new equipment ready.

"In the auxiliary chapter, the Author had clearly said that the herbs proportion to everything were based on his favorite date, when he first met his wife, which was 12 February."

"But I've been adding it that way, for 4 times already but why isn't it working? Is something different about it? Does the author's funny logic not work here since it isn't his book, but a real different world now? If that's true then what else has changed? Damn it, if only he was with me I would've __ .

"Wait , with me. HE wasn't with me."

"HE wasn't even in the same country as me."

As Rio thought that, he wanted to laugh at himself for his stupidity. He slapped his head as he started chuckling and said -

"It was such a simple thing, why the hell could I not understand it."

'12 February for him shouldn't be 12/2 like me but 2/12.'

"Damn China for writing their dates backward."

"hahaha"

—

Rio picks up the pieces of glass and throws them away, sweeping the spilled mixture into a pile. He starts over, his hands moving deftly as he mixes the ingredients together, in the new ratio that he figured out just now.

This time, everything seems to fall into place. The mixture started glowing with a warm light. The ingredients reacted perfectly to each other, and the liquid in the flask turned a bright, shimmering gold.

Rio couldn't contain his joy as he laughed and jumped around his table. Finally, after hours of failed attempts and frustrations, he had created the perfect potion.

His face lit up with excitement as he carefully decanted the potion into a glass vial. He couldn't wait to test it out and see what effects it would have.

As he lifted the vial to his lips, he hesitated for a moment. What if it didn't work? But then he took a deep breath and drank the potion down in one gulp.

At first, he felt nothing, but then he began to feel a warm sensation spreading throughout his body. The warmth felt like a gentle wave, washing over him.

The feeling began in his chest, spreading outwards and upwards, as if his heart was expanding and becoming more open. His mind began to clear, the fog of his thoughts lifting and becoming more focused. The weight of guilt and doubt that had been weighing on his soul for so long had lifted a little. His mind became calm, and he felt a sense of peace he hadn't felt ever since he woke up from the darkness.

Soon the warm sensation spread throughout his whole body. It was as if his insides were being cleansed of all impurities, leaving him feeling lighter and more refreshed than he had been in years.

With each passing moment, Rio felt more and more energized, as if a new source of vitality had been unlocked within him. His muscles felt stronger, his reflexes sharper, and his senses heightened.

He opened his eyes, and the world around him seemed different, more vibrant. Colors seemed brighter, sounds clearer, and smells more vivid. The world around him took on a new, almost magical quality, and he felt more connected to everything around him.

He smiled, feeling a sense of joy he had not felt in a long time. The potion had cleansed his body, mind, and soul, and he felt renewed.

He walked around the room barefoot, feeling the smoothness of the floor, the texture of the books on the shelves. He felt a sense of connection with everything around him, as if he was part of something greater.

'Mana , so this is how it feels.'

'Amazing, if only steroids on earth worked this efficiently, there'll be Superman's walking around.'

—

As he calmed down fully, Rio felt a sense of awe wash over him. He realized that this was a transformative experience, one that had changed him on a fundamental level.

Though not like an awakened, his body was perfectly pure now. He might not be able to absorb or store mana in his body like them, but he could feel the mana present in the air and it was just the beginning.

'Soon, I will have all my answers.' He clenched his fists as the face of Ria came to his mind and he determined himself to get stronger as soon as possible.

Chapter 40 Stealing Heavenly Gifts Cuz Why Not

After Rio finished his potion and properly organised his thoughts, he felt satisfied. Pura Corpus didn't make him stronger nor did it break limits for his talent, but it had solidified his foundation, making his future journey easy to start, and for Rio that was enough.

Cause to grow stronger he has a lot of other opportunities waiting for him. 8 years till the plot starts, which simply meant chances which were written in the novel would be just waiting for him to take for 8 years. Though some of them were useless or some would only show up after certain events, but still there was enough stuff for him to take & feel safe.

—

Rio looked towards the herbs left and saw there were still enough left to make 3 more potions. He wanted to go out but decided to make one more potion for Amelia. As he thought - Why would you have her face Amelia?

'In the novel there weren't any character arts posted so I have no idea if it's just a coincidence or something to do with me.'

'I'm kinda missing hearing Ria's voice in my head now.'

Rio was lost in his thoughts as he made the potion. He didn't make any mistakes this time. So he decided to make more, not for anyone else, just to give them to Artemis, so she can do whatever she wants.

'I'm pretty sure, she already knows about its effects. Considering her guards who've been watching me all this time.'

After making those potions, Rio took one with himself and kept the rest on the table and started walking out, while saying - "You can give them to mother for testing."

There was no response in return, as the whole point of them being hidden was that so no one could identify them, even if they were standing in front of you. They were few chosen ones who've been following Blake's for generations and have learned to be in the shadows. They didn't need any credit, as loyalty ran in their blood.

I remember in the novel some of them were used as suicide bombers to blast the Royal Palace in bright daylight and put the blame on Evil's Scion. 'That was a nice idea the author used there.'

"I'm going to my room, call Asher to meet me there." Rio said and walked out, the door closed behind him automatically as the lights went out.

—

Rio walked straight and went to his room, he closed the doors and decided to take a bath.

'well I don't see any black liquid leaking like those cultivation novels but why not'

He stood in front of the mirror, he wasn't narcissistic nor did it matter much how he looked, but he wanted to see the effects of the potion firsthand. It's not everyday you could just eat something and feel renewed/reformed.

There weren't many differences that he could see except his skin looked more cleaner & smoother. His height and body was the same but he felt like he lost some fat.

'I expected more changes but I guess it's all internal stuff huhh.'

The pura corpus was something magical for building a foundation. Now if he awakened, newly awakened him could easily beat someone who went through it before him.

Plus since his body was purer now, the effects of some other potions & pills he would take would be much better on him, as there were no impurities to obstruct their progress.

This was the second reason why Rio was determined to make this potion, after all he knew where he could find many gifts left or buried and knew many recipes for potions, and to use them to their full extent he needed pura corpus.

Since this potion was something so magical you would think it was made for the protagonist. But do you think a protagonist would share something this good with others. Nope, they don't even share anything with anyone, even their own loved ones, so why would he share this with the whole world.

Simple, cause he had no choice.

Leon, our protagonist was the same. He used this potion on himself but never shared it with anyone else. Until he told it to a girl to impress her and she shared it with the whole world. Leon got the full credit for it as she was honest, but he wasn't satisfied with it. So he acted angry saying she broke his trust, and as you could guess the fiasco soon ended when he got the girl too.

'Ukhhh fucking cliché route'

'Though I do wonder what would happen now hehehe'

—

After getting dressed Rio walked out and took out a paper and pen. He started writing all the chances he could remember, it didn't matter if they were for some hero or villain or side character, it didn't matter to him. If he could steal all the heavenly chances then why not. He decided to take everything which were useful for him now and easy to get.

'I can take other stuff later on myself.'

He was busy writing stuff when he heard a knock on the door and heard his voice -

"Young master, it's me Asher."

"Come in" Rio said and watched as Asher came in and bowed after he closed the door.

"Do you need something, young master?"

"Wait for me to finish." Rio said as he continued writing and Asher just stood there silently.

After some time Rio finished writing and passed the paper to Asher.

Asher was surprised as he continued reading through the list, he saw names of pills and potions that were very high grade, some which were lost in history. When he turned the page he was shocked as he saw about techniques and artifacts that were only known to a few and thought to be only rumors. He even saw some stuff that even he who ran a business for artifacts never heard of it.

Along with their names he saw locations where he would have to go to find them , Asher didn't know what to do with all this knowledge.

Artemis had told him that they were to follow Rio's order as he needed Alpha's to get some things, but never had he imagined that what he thought to be some random stuff would turn out to THIS.

—

Asher was lost in his thoughts when he heard Rio's voice - "I need you and your team to go there and get all these items for me."

Asher was thinking about where Rio even got the news about all this when he heard Rio continuing his words - "I don't need to tell you about taking only the people whom you can trust and keep the news to select few. The places written on the second page are secured with some traps and tests, so be extra careful in those areas."

Rio watched as Asher nodded his head and then continued as he stood up and came in front of him - "And the most important thing, be as discreet as you possibly can, make sure no one knows anything about the Blake family. If it's not possible abandon that item but do not take the risk of exposure. DO YOU UNDERSTAND."

"Yes, young master." Asher said as he could somewhat understand what would happen if news leaked about this. But he just thought it was because of some rivalry or competition but Rio was worried only about protagonist and his supporter camp learning this. As most of the stuff he wrote was from their camp.

Rio also gave Asher names about 2-3 bandit groups and one of the hidden gang locations for local criminals in Damascus , whom Alphas were tasked to kill, they were people who would be later used as face slapping tools by Leon to seduce Amelia and somehow Rio hated that.

"You have one month's time to finish everything and come back." Rio said and turned around , but then he remembered something and said - "Ohh, and if Amelia is free now, tell someone to prepare some snacks, we'll have a rest, I'm starved."

Asher nodded his head and put the list in his storage ring and went out, he needed to prepare his team for this mission.

'I wonder if she knows about it.' Asher thought as he walked towards Artemis's study room. He needed her permission to fully utilize Alphas as it would take some time for him to go to all these places and come back. Plus the killings of those people, without Artemis's approval he couldn't do that.

—

Artemis who was currently talking to her sister, discussing her punishment for spilling her secrets while thinking if she should ask her help to learn Rio's secrets, but she also didn't want to invade on her son's privacy, so she decided to give him a chance to explain everything first and cut the call. But that decision changed as soon as Asher came in and handed her the list.

'I should call her again.' She thought.