

Unholy Player #Chapter 26: A small favor. - Read Unholy Player Chapter 26: A small favor.

Chapter 26 - A small favor.

After his workout, Adyr returned to his room and allowed himself some well-earned sleep.

When morning came, he broke from his usual routine. He woke Niva early, and together, they prepared and ate breakfast.

Sleep was good for softening the mind, but overindulgence only led to deeper problems. As her brother, it was his responsibility to keep an eye on her, to make sure she didn't slip too far.

Once they were done, he left for school. In this post-apocalyptic world, there were no holidays. As long as one's health allowed, life was meant to be in constant motion. Everyone worked every day.

On the morning transport, Eren's absence was noticeable. But aside from Adyr, no one seemed to care.

When he arrived on campus, he did something he rarely did—he decided to skip his first class. He noticed he'd been breaking his routines more often lately. But in a world that changed by the hour, adapting to that change wasn't something that bothered him.

He crossed to a different part of the university and walked through the corridor until he found who he was looking for.

Selina stood with a few of her admirers, chatting in her usual gentle tone, that soft and almost nurturing expression on her face. Her midnight-purple hair framed her features in a way that made her seem both untouchable and present.

The moment she noticed Adyr, surprise flickered in her eyes. She politely excused herself from the group and approached him quickly.

"I didn't know you had a class over here today," she said with a rare, vulnerable smile—one that came purely from sincerity.

"I don't. I came to see you," Adyr replied. He saw no point in dragging it out with small talk.

"See me?" Selina blinked, caught off guard. Her cheeks colored.

"I need a favor," he said, cutting to the point before her mind could wander further.

This time, Selina didn't just look surprised. She was genuinely stunned. It was always him offering help, not the other way around. This was the first time Adyr had ever come to her with a direct request.

"Just tell me," she said firmly. She wasn't going to let the moment pass.

"My mother works at the city orphanage. Her name is Marielle. A short while ago, she left the city for an expedition. Do you know anything about it?" His voice was low but serious.

Selina thought for a moment. Of course, she knew who Marielle was—there was no way she wouldn't. But she hadn't heard about the expedition.

"I understand. Give me a minute. I'll tell my mother to cancel the expedition," she said, already reaching into her uniform pocket for the privileged-use phone only people like her carried.

Adyr stopped her. "That's not what I want."

He couldn't bring himself to do that. Marielle had been genuinely excited about the trip, convinced it might change lives. Taking that from her would be nothing short of cruel.

He spoke his true intention without delay. "I just want you to keep your ears open. If anything goes wrong, just inform me."

He could've asked Victor, whose father was the Minister of Defense and who had control over the STF. But even Victor wouldn't be able to get past the classified layers of their operations.

Selina, on the other hand, had direct access to Angel Wings Foundation personnel. That made her far more valuable for this.

"Of course. Don't worry," she said, slipping the phone back into her pocket. Her voice was calm, her expression soft, but there was a firm resolve in her eyes.

"Thank you," Adyr said with a faint smile.

"No, thank you," Selina replied, averting her gaze. "After everything you've done for me, just giving me a chance to return even a fraction of it... means a lot."

Adyr said nothing at first. He simply smiled. Then, after a moment, he added, "Actually, there's one more thing."

Selina lifted her head, patiently waiting for what he'd say next.

"Are you considering joining the new third-generation mutant division?" Adyr asked, knowing full well that someone like her would've already heard about it.

He didn't even need to ask if she was playing the game. With his enhanced **[Sense]** stat, it was clear the moment he saw her.

Her movements had become sharper, more precise. Each step she took seemed more effortless than the last. From that alone, he could tell she had received **[Will]** as her stat. Which meant her chosen path was Ignis.

Selina didn't seem surprised by his question. As if it were only natural, she answered, "I haven't decided yet." She looked at him for a moment longer, waiting, clearly curious about his own choice. But she didn't ask directly.

After a pause, Adyr spoke. "There's a guy in my scholarship group. His name is Eren. Do you know him?"

"Eren?" Selina furrowed her brows for a second before the name clicked. "Yes. That big guy, right?"

He nodded. "I want you to make sure he gets into the new division."

It was also something he could've asked Victor to handle—probably with better results. But since he was already here, it made sense to take care of it now. And Selina could handle it just fine.

"Sure," she said with a smile.

She didn't care how someone like Eren got his hands on a game helmet or whether he had what it took to survive the game. What mattered was simple—Adyr had asked. And when he did, it carried more weight than a signed contract with the government.

"Thank you," he said again.

"Mhm," Selina replied with a soft smile and a nod.

As soon as Adyr walked away, she pulled out her phone and dialed a saved number.

It rang only once before the call connected. Her tone shifted immediately—calm replaced by tension, warmth by urgency.

"Mom, we need to talk."

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After speaking with Selina and resolving the most urgent concerns, Adyr returned to his classes with a clearer head. The weight that had been pressing down on him all morning had eased, allowing him to move through the rest of his day without distraction.

He intended to tell Niva about it later. Letting her know that their mother's situation was being monitored would help settle her nerves. Just imagining the relief it might bring her made things feel a little lighter for him, too.

The tension at home and the feeling of being at the mercy of forces beyond his control had always worn on him. But now, with things temporarily under control, he could finally push those thoughts aside and turn his full focus back to the game and himself.

Chapter 27 - An offer

A car crept toward a small house, its headlights cutting through a street barely touched by the weak, flickering glow of a few scattered lamps.

The sound of the car drew curious eyes. A few people peeked through their windows, and one or two even stepped outside, quietly inspecting the unfamiliar vehicle. It wasn't often something like this showed up around here, but still, no one dared to approach or ask questions.

The driver's door opened first. A man stepped out quickly and moved to open the rear passenger door.

Out stepped Selina White.

Her hair, tied into a high ponytail, shimmered a striking shade of violet under the night lights. She wore a sharp, professional outfit—something between a government uniform and a business suit—that made her look every bit like a successful executive.

"Is this the place?" She asked the dark-haired assistant who had just exited from the other side.

"Yes, Miss," the woman replied, double-checking her notes before answering with confidence.

"You stay here," Selina said calmly, then began walking toward the house at a steady pace.

Her assistant and driver looked hesitant, but they followed the order, staying alert and prepared for whatever might come.

Selina stopped in front of the door. There was no bell, so she knocked on the door.

After a few long seconds, the door opened. A massive figure wearing a cooking apron stood in the doorway. It was Eren. His deep green eyes locked onto the unexpected visitor with confusion.

"Who are you?" He asked, clearly not recognizing her at first. Then a flicker of realization crossed his face. "Why are you here?"

Selina ignored the lack of manners. She understood. A surprise visitor at this hour would catch anyone off guard.

"Do you have a moment? I came to talk," she said politely. "About the game you've been playing."

Eren's confusion deepened. "You're the one who sent the helmet?"

"No, I wasn't," she answered with the same calmness. "But if you'll invite me in, it would be easier to explain."

He hesitated, suspicious, but eventually stepped aside.

Selina stepped in and, as expected of someone familiar with lower-income households, removed her shoes before entering further.

Her gaze immediately shifted to the center of the tidy, well-kept room, where a medical bed sat surrounded by hospital-grade equipment. Lying there was a frail young girl.

"Is she your sister?" Selina asked softly. She didn't need confirmation. She hadn't researched Eren's life out of respect for Adyr, but from her looks, the way the room was arranged, and the care evident in every detail, it was easy to figure out.

She trusted her instincts and her trained eye for reading a situation. Her observation skills were sharp, and it didn't take much to see how long the girl had been in this condition or how much Eren had sacrificed to care for her. After all, she had learned from the best.

"Yes," Eren said. He was about to tell her not to get any closer, but it was already too late.

"Hello. I'm Selina, a friend of your brother," she said softly, stepping up to the bedside. She met the girl's eyes—green like Eren's, but softer, lighter—and smiled. "You have beautiful eyes."

Mira tensed at first, unused to strangers. But the warmth in Selina's voice and the calm in her expression quickly put her at ease. The unexpected compliment made her eyes brighten, and a faint smile appeared on her lips.

Seeing his sister smile made Eren exhale quietly, the tension in his shoulders fading just slightly. "You said you're here about the game, right?"

He wasn't entirely surprised. He had expected someone to come eventually. What surprised him was who it was. He'd imagined a stiff government official in a black suit—not someone like her.

He had already figured out the game wasn't normal.

The helmet had arrived without warning, in an unmarked package. At first, he had ignored it. Between his responsibilities and his sister's condition, he simply didn't have time.

But one day, curiosity won out. He tried it.

As he played—and more importantly, as his stats increased—he started noticing physical changes in the real world. That alone told him everything he needed to know.

He hated himself for this. If he had known the game truly had the power to trigger genetic mutations, he would have given it to his sister instead. But it was too late. The helmet had already synced with his brain patterns, so she couldn't use it anymore.

Later, he tried to buy another game helmet, but aside from the price being far beyond his reach, production and sales had already been completely shut down.

"Yes," Selina said, still watching Mira gently before turning back to him. "I came to make you an offer."

"An offer?" Eren asked, his voice hardening.

"I'm assuming you've figured out the game's connection to genetic mutation," Selina said.

When Eren gave a small nod, she continued. "In a few days, the government will be launching an active defense and assault unit made up of third-generation mutants. As you can guess, third-generation refers to those who've played the game and survived—and continue to play. I want to invite you to join this unit." She met his eyes as she finished.

Seeing a flicker of hesitation, she quickly added, "Every member of the division will be granted official status by the state. Enough for them and their families to be eligible for approvals of genetic mutations."

Hearing this, Eren's eyes widened in disbelief. Whatever hesitation he had vanished in an instant. This was a chance he would give his life for.

After leaving the house, Selina stood outside for a while, silent and still.

So this was his reason, she thought, recalling the brightness in Mira's eyes—light filled with quiet sorrow.

She had never openly questioned Adyr's motives, but the reason he chose to help this person lingered at the back of her mind. Now that she had seen it for herself, the truth sank in quietly, and she could only exhale, as if releasing a weight she didn't know she was carrying.

It reminded her of how Adyr had first entered her life. How he had helped her kill the monster that wore the face of her father.

"A man who holds life and death in his hands. So casually, so easily," Selina whispered, lifting her gaze to the sky.

Above, the moonlight glowed faintly, trapped behind thick, motionless clouds. Selina couldn't help but wonder to herself, *Is it possible to kill the dark clouds to free the moonlight?*

She didn't dwell on the answer. Instead, a bright smile spread across her face.

Because she already knew.

Those clouds had already died once. And when they did, they set her free.

Chapter 28 - Evolution

After coming back home, Adyr and Niva shared a quiet, heartfelt dinner as brother and sister. During the meal, he told her about his conversation with Selina and the promise she had made.

Niva seemed visibly relieved after hearing it. Strangely enough, Selina's words seemed to bring her more comfort than anything the STF could offer.

Once dinner and the usual chores were out of the way, Adyr returned to his room, unplugged the game helmet, and logged in.

"What are you doing?" When Adyr opened his eyes, he saw Vesha's face close to his, her large, icy-blue eyes staring straight at him.

"You've been sleeping for a long time," she said, pulling back slightly to give him space. Her expression looked genuinely concerned. "Is something wrong?"

Adyr wasn't surprised. Based on his experience, time in the game moved at the same pace as the real world. Since he only spent about three hours per day inside the game, Vesha must have thought he was sleeping the other twenty-one.

"I'm fine. Just... busy in the other world," Adyr replied with a small chuckle. Out of the corner of his eye, he checked on the Dawn Raven, still resting silently in the corner.

"The other world?" Vesha repeated, clearly startled. She didn't understand what he meant.

"Just kidding," he said quickly, seeing her reaction. "It's a curse. Makes me tired, so I sleep all day." He figured this lie would be easier to believe than the truth.

Her tense expression softened slightly, though she still looked worried. "I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?"

Clearly, curses weren't unheard of in this world, and Vesha had accepted it without question.

"I'll manage. But thanks for asking," Adyr said. Then he added, "Have you eaten?"

He noticed the pot from yesterday's meal was completely empty. He also felt hungry, more than usual. Maybe it was the effect of his increased stats, but the portions he was used to back home no longer felt like enough.

"Sorry," Vesha muttered, lowering her head. She had finished the rest while he was gone, bored and with nothing else to do.

"It's fine. I'll cook something new," Adyr said, laughing at how timid she looked.

She wasn't the same woman he had met back in prison. That confident, self-assured presence had faded. Now she seemed hesitant and unsure of herself, speaking less and carrying herself like a burden.

"If you're feeling up to it, you can help me," Adyr said as he stepped out of the carriage.

"Yes," Vesha answered quickly, following behind. She looked eager to be useful again, clearly tired of lying around all day while Adyr handled everything.

Together, they gathered what they needed, built a small fire, and began preparing the meal.

Noticing that Vesha's energy had started to return, Adyr took the opportunity to ask a few questions that had been on his mind.

"What does practitioner mean?" He asked while peeling a vegetable that looked like a potato, though he wasn't entirely sure what it was. It tasted like one, at least.

Isn't this just a potato? He couldn't help but wonder.

Vesha, who was clumsily peeling something that looked like a cucumber but was oddly blue, blinked at the sudden question.

"You don't know?" She asked, glancing at him. It sounded absurd. A practitioner asking what a practitioner was?

"I'm not too sure. I'm just a beginner, you see. I only became one recently," Adyr said, raising his hands slightly, as if to say, *Don't look at me like that.*

"You're not from the Velari Kingdom, are you?" Vesha narrowed her eyes. Adyr was far taller than anyone she had ever seen, and his clothes and manner of speaking were all different. He probably came from some secluded village hidden in the mountains.

"Yeah," Adyr replied, dodging the details.

Vesha didn't press further. She simply answered, "Practitioner is just what we call entities like you."

Her eyes shifted away as she spoke, but Adyr noticed the flicker in her gaze. There was reverence in it.

"Some races call them Pathfinders. Others say Rule Benders. But the meaning is always the same. They're the only ones born with the ability to use sparks," she explained. At the end of her sentence, she glanced at Adyr and noticed he was quietly peeling his vegetables, showing no reaction. She went on.

"They can also absorb the world's energy into their bodies. Not just to use sparks, but to strengthen themselves—physically and spiritually."

As Adyr listened, he realized the way Vesha described practitioners fit him—and likely the other players as well. He paused for a moment and asked, "How many practitioners are there in your kingdom?"

Vesha stared into the fire for a few seconds, her expression dimming. "There were 11 three years ago," she said quietly. "Now only 4 remain. 7 died over the years while protecting the kingdom. And even 5 of them were in their 3rd-stage evolution."

"From what?" Adyr stopped what he was doing, genuinely curious.

Vesha didn't keep him waiting. "It's a rank 4 Spark. It first appeared near the kingdom's borders three years ago, and since then, it's been attacking every six months."

What the fuck... Adyr cursed inwardly, his eyes instinctively drifting to the harmless-looking Dawn Raven resting nearby.

Is the gap between rank 1 and rank 4 really that massive? He wondered.

To threaten the safety of an entire kingdom—and kill seven of its strongest warriors in the process—that level of power was hard to imagine. Compared to that, his rank 1 raven suddenly felt like a toy.

While Adyr was deep in thought, mentally trying to piece together a power hierarchy, Vesha's voice broke the silence.

"You still haven't completed your first evolution step, right?" This time, it was her turn to ask a question that had clearly been on her mind.

It wasn't hard to tell that Adyr knew almost nothing about what it meant to be a practitioner. No one had taught him anything, and she could see it clearly now.

"No," Adyr replied. He was actually glad she had brought it up without him asking. "Do you know how I'm supposed to do that?"

Vesha shrugged slightly. "Only a practitioner can truly know when it's time," she said. "But what I do know is that for each evolution step, you have to merge with a spark of the appropriate rank. Since this would be your first step, you need to bond with a rank 1 spark to complete it."

She paused before continuing. "But there's something important you should know. With each evolution, you inherit one physical trait and one passive innate talent from the spark you merge with. That's why choosing the right one is important."

Everything Vesha shared was common knowledge in her kingdom—these were the kinds of things regularly mentioned in church sermons when she attended with her family. Beyond that, most of what she knew about practitioners came from books.

After taking it all in, Adyr glanced over at the Dawn Raven resting quietly beside him and asked, "What would happen if I evolved with that one?"

It was a question he was really curious about.

Chapter 29 - New division

Vesha looked at the creature. She thought for a moment before answering, "I'm not completely sure, but judging by its physical traits, you'd probably gain its wings. "

Adyr also examined the Dawn Raven. If he had to name its most striking physical trait, it would be the bright, eye-catching white feathers.

What if I gain those feathers? Wouldn't that just make me a chicken? He thought, mildly amused.

Vesha continued, "As for the innate talent..."

She paused, a faint tremble running through her as the memory of the Raven turning her guard into a skeleton flashed in her mind. The trauma was still there, buried but not forgotten.

Her voice shook slightly as she continued. "From what I understand, its power seems tied to life energy... or something like that. If you inherited this ability, it would probably let you control life force in some way. But it wouldn't be strong enough to raise the dead like it did. The power you receive would be diluted. Maybe just enough to heal yourself or others."

"Is that so?"

Adyr looked somewhat pleased with the answer. Gaining wings and a healing ability didn't sound like a bad deal. Dawn Raven didn't seem like such a bad choice for his evolution after all.

He asked a few more questions, but Vesha advised him not to rush the decision. She suggested waiting until they reached the Kingdom, where he could speak with other practitioners first.

Even a rank 1 spark wasn't easy to catch, she explained. But with some luck, a practitioner in the Kingdom might have one they'd be willing to part with.

With this, Adyr learned another crucial piece of information. Sparks weren't just essential for evolution—they could also be captured and used even after evolving. Practitioners were able to wield their powers directly.

That meant, just as Vesha had said, other practitioners likely had additional sparks in their possession, ones they actively used in combat or daily life.

While preparing the meal and later as they ate, Adyr kept the conversation going with Vesha, slipping in questions between casual remarks. By the time they were done, he had learned a great deal and gained a clearer picture of this world, at least through her eyes.

Afterwards, Vesha went back to the carriage to rest. Adyr wandered through the forest for a while, hoping to stumble upon something useful or worth noting, but when he found nothing of value, he returned as well.

He was completely done with this place and wanted to take the carriage and head back to the Kingdom, but his current situation didn't allow for it.

From what he had learned, the return trip would take about half a day without rest. However, Adyr's time in the game was limited. If they set off and the game helmet's battery died mid-journey, his body would lose consciousness, and Vesha still wasn't well enough to drive the carriage on her own.

On top of that, the road ahead might be more dangerous than where they were now. There was always a chance they could be attacked while he was offline.

That left him with two possible options. Either Vesha would recover enough to handle the carriage alone, which still carried the risk of bandits or wild beasts, or Adyr had to find a solution to extend his in-game time.

"Looks like it's time to talk to Victor," Adyr muttered to himself as he climbed into the carriage and logged out.

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The next day, Adyr skipped his first class again and stepped into a phone booth on campus, willing to pay one credit per minute to dial Victor's number. He could've called from home, but the landline charged twice as much, and given his financial situation, he couldn't afford that kind of waste.

That last delivery fee, forty-five credits, still lingered like a fresh wound.

The call connected and rang a few times. Just as Adyr was about to hang up, thinking Victor was busy, the line picked up.

"Who are you?" Victor's voice came through, sharp and suspicious.

"Call this number back," Adyr said, then hung up without reacting to Victor's confused, "Wait, who are you?"

He had no intention of burning credits by the minute—Victor had more than enough money for this kind of thing.

Seconds later, the phone rang. Adyr picked up.

"Hey, who the fuck are you, hanging up on me?" Victor's irritated voice barked through the receiver.

"Relax, it's me. Adyr."

"Adyr? Oh, damn. I thought some hot girl got my number and was trying to hit on me," Victor said, his tone shifting to amused laziness.

"The only thing hitting you would be their boyfriends' punches, Victor," Adyr said with a dry chuckle.

"Adds spice to the fun, if you ask me," Victor laughed, then shifted to a more curious tone. "But you calling me? That's not normal. What's up?"

"It's about the division you mentioned," Adyr replied.

"So you decided to join? Dude, trust me—you won't regret it. The place already looks amazing. Not to brag, but I helped design most of it. Actually, screw it—I am bragging. Haha!" Victor sounded clearly excited.

"Yeah, I can already picture the urinals and sinks shaped like women's asses," Adyr muttered, exhaling slowly.

"Wait... how the hell do you know that?" Victor asked, genuinely caught off guard.

"You know what, don't answer that," Victor cut in quickly, clearly certain that whatever Adyr might say would bruise his ego. "Are you on campus? I can send someone to pick you up, give you a proper look at the place."

Adyr thought it over for a moment. It wasn't a bad offer and definitely better than sitting through another boring class.

"Sure. I'll wait at the bus stop," he said.

Risking his scholarship was a concern, but if it came to that, he'd figure something out.

After hanging up, he made his way to the bus stop. When he arrived, someone was already waiting for him.

"Mr. Adyr?" A large man in a black suit approached. Unlike Adyr, he wasn't wearing a mask or protective goggles.

"Yes, that's me," Adyr replied.

The man gave him a sharp, almost irritated look, sizing him up from head to toe before stepping aside and opening the passenger door of a large black SUV. "Please get in."

Adyr smiled inwardly. The man looked torn between politeness and annoyance. Serving someone like him probably felt like an insult to his pride, but orders were orders.

Without a word, Adyr stepped in and let the man shut the door behind him.

Half an hour passed in silence before the driver finally spoke. "We've arrived."

Adyr glanced out the window. One look at the newly built facility was enough to catch him off guard.

They really went all in on this.

Chapter 30 - Murdering people

Nuclear war was devastating, no doubt about that. But it still led to a few things that ended up being useful to humanity. One of them was how quickly construction methods improved.

People learned to build faster and smarter than ever before, and a clear example of that was standing right in front of Adyr.

It was a skyscraper, standing over 150 meters tall and just as wide as it was high, which made it all the more astonishing. The exterior was clad entirely in matte black, absorbing light rather than reflecting it.

It didn't look like a building. It looked like a massive coffin stretching toward the sky.

Adyr paused for a moment, wondering if a building this massive was really necessary. How many players were they planning to house in there, anyway?

He glanced back, but the suited man clearly had no intention of following. Taking the hint, Adyr turned and made his way toward the entrance alone.

The interior was just as massive as the outside. On the right, a waiting lounge was outfitted with luxury leather seating and even an open buffet—clearly designed to impress.

On the left, a garden stretched out like a small forest, complete with a pond, making Adyr question again who this level of extravagance was supposed to impress.

The place wasn't empty. People were scattered throughout—sitting, walking, talking—but none of them looked ordinary. They tried to appear casual, but Adyr could tell. These weren't regular visitors.

Assuming they were all mutants, he already had a sense of how tight the security was here.

Without turning left or right, he headed straight for the large reception desk ahead. He could feel the stares on him. Measured, cautious, assessing.

When he reached the desk, one of the three women behind it greeted him. She was sharply dressed, with short black hair and brown eyes, her smile polite but thinly veiled with disdain.

"Hello, sir. Can I help you?"

Wow. One of those moments, huh? The face-slap scenes from those webnovels. Adyr smirked inwardly, the whole scenario already playing out in his mind.

"I came to see a friend; his name is Victor," he said flatly, skipping the small talk.

The receptionist froze for a brief moment at the name, though her smile didn't fade.

"Can I have your name, if possible?" She asked.

"Adyr," he replied, already knowing exactly how this would go.

"Your surname?" Her polite tone dipped slightly.

"No surname. Just Adyr."

The smile finally vanished from her face. "This isn't a place you can just walk into," she said coldly. "Leave."

Wow. That character shift was impressive.

Adyr couldn't help but admire the performance.

"Well, I'm afraid I can't leave. My friend's waiting for me. The least you can do is call him so he can come down and get me," Adyr said, keeping his tone calm and reasonable.

In truth, everything had already started to unravel the moment Victor's driver dropped him off without escorting him inside. And even more so when Victor didn't bother to meet him at the entrance. That small oversight had set the stage for everything that would follow.

Still, Adyr couldn't be too surprised. He knew Victor—careless, laid-back, and completely lacking foresight. The kind of guy who probably assumed Adyr would just stroll in and somehow find him in the middle of a fifty-story fortress.

"If you don't leave now, the only thing I'll be calling is security," the woman said sharply, no longer bothering to hide her disdain.

People get angry too easily. They keep ignoring how easy dying really is. Adyr sighed quietly.

There were two reasons he didn't act on what crossed his mind. One, he didn't want to kill anyone. Two, there were mutant guards around. The second reason was far more convincing.

But there were plenty of ways to kill someone without actually taking their life. And Adyr had finally accepted that being reasonable was a waste of time. It was time to change tactics.

He took a step closer and discreetly studied the woman's eyes.

"What are you—" she began, but Adyr cut her off.

"Mistline or Retinex?"

The moment she heard the names, her body tensed, and she took a small step back. "Stop spitting nonsense," she snapped, but her voice had already lost its firmness.

Adyr smiled. Those were the two most commonly used ocular drugs—and of course, they were illegal.

"Even in this much light, your pupils are still dilated. There's visible color fading, especially in the left eye. So... Mistline, right?" He said, calm and collected, his smile never leaving his face.

Her complexion turned ghostly pale. But Adyr had no intention of letting her off the hook.

"Judging by the discoloration and your eyes' lack of light response... what, three years? Maybe a bit more, huh? Must be hard—fighting addiction," he added, almost as if the last sentence weighed on him too.

"Stop it," the woman said, her voice trembling. She looked like she might collapse at any second.

Adyr noticed the other two receptionists staring at them in shock and turned to address them.

"Oh, you didn't know? Right, of course you didn't. It's an illegal substance, after all. A receptionist—right here, in a facility where order and security are supposed to be at their highest—addicted to a banned drug." He clicked his tongue softly and shook his head, as if disappointed.

The shift was instant. The two receptionists immediately panicked.

In a place like this, even a receptionist position should've gone through strict screening. The only way an addict could've slipped through was with connections. And if there

were connections involved, it wouldn't just be one person facing consequences—the entire department would be wiped out.

Seeing the scene ripen for its final act, Adyr decided to close the curtain with one final performance.

"Don't worry, I'm not blaming you anymore," he said, his voice low and almost sympathetic. "Anger's just one of the side effects. And with how much that drug's ruined your vision, it makes sense you didn't notice the uniform—Shelter City 9's only university. So naturally, you couldn't have known Victor Bates, who goes to the same university, is a friend of mine."

And with the final words, the woman collapsed—her consciousness slipping away as her body hit the floor.

The other two receptionists stood frozen, staring in horror. Not a single step forward. Not a single word. Because they knew exactly what was coming.

An internal investigation would begin immediately, starting with the one who hired her and extending through the entire department. The charges would fall under terrorism-related breaches, since the drugs were known to originate from terrorist groups operating outside the city.

And even if they somehow managed to clear their names by some impossibly narrow margin, the stain would stay. No company would ever hire them again.

Faced with that reality, all they could do was watch in paralyzed silence.

And Adyr watched them in return, smiling.

He had just murdered a dozen people in front of an army of mutants, and somehow, it felt refreshing.