

# **Unholy Player #Chapter 51: Like a Hawk - Read Unholy Player Chapter 51: Like a Hawk**

## **Chapter 51: Like a Hawk**

As the wolves searched the area with agitated movements, they soon split into smaller groups under the direction of their alpha and scattered into the forest.

"I'm lucky their sense of smell isn't that sharp," Adyr muttered with a smirk as he watched the wolves divide into pairs and head off in different directions.

He had noticed this trait during his observations the day before. Unlike ordinary wolves, they didn't mark their territory with urine. Instead, they relied solely on visual claw markings.

His theory had been confirmed during the slaughter in the cave. The cave's natural ventilation should have helped carry his scent deeper inside, making it even easier for the wolves to detect him—if their sense of smell had been sharp. Yet despite that, the usually alert and territorial creatures hadn't noticed him until he stepped into view.

He still didn't know what kind of evolutionary shift had dulled their sense of smell, but it worked in his favor. Had these wolves retained the olfactory strength of normal ones—said to be a hundred times more sensitive than a human's—and combined it with their enhanced power, the hunt would've been far more difficult.

After mentally noting the direction each wolf had taken, Adyr climbed down from the tree and began tracking the pair that had headed toward the most isolated area.

From the beginning, he had never intended to face the entire pack. To defeat a predator pack, one had to think like a predator—and Adyr possessed an exceptional talent for that kind of empathy.

After tracking them for a while, the pair of wolves reached a small pond beneath a sunlit waterfall. Clearly, the hunt followed by pursuing Adyr had worn them down—they had stopped for a drink. That worked in his favor.

As the wolves took turns drinking and keeping watch, Adyr moved behind a tree and quietly unfolded his wings.

The rest had eased most of the muscle strain, and he estimated he could stay airborne for at least a minute. Given the maneuver he had in mind, it would probably drop to thirty seconds—but that was all he needed.

He gave his wings two light flaps to test them, then pulled a length of rope from his leather pouch and formed a loop at one end.

Focusing back on the wolves, he began his approach—silent, hidden.

It wasn't just their sense of smell that was dulled. Their awareness in general seemed impaired. Combined with Adyr's practiced stealth, they didn't notice him until he was almost on top of them.

From behind a large rock, he waited for the right moment. Then, wings flaring, he surged forward, ignoring the wolf on guard and charging straight for the one drinking.

Their instincts kicked in too late. The drinking wolf hesitated just a second longer than the other. It was enough.

Adyr hurled the rope, the loop catching the wolf's neck. With a sharp flap of his wings, he shot upward, the wolf now dragging behind him.

*Make it ten seconds*, he corrected himself mid-flight, gritting his teeth as the wolf thrashed violently, its weight pulling against the rope.

It was heavy and struggling hard as it began to choke against the tightening noose.

Using every second before his wings gave out, Adyr reached a thick branch nearby and perched quickly, tying off the rope around it before his strength failed.

"Huhf... That was fun," he muttered with a grin, watching the wolf writhe midair while the other stood below under the tree, snarling and baring its teeth.

For a moment, with his wings spread and prey hanging below, he felt like a hawk—or something more.

The sensation was unfamiliar. And he liked it.

The wolf hanging from the rope gradually slowed its movements, its body weakening as it began to lose consciousness from lack of air. Meanwhile, the other one paced anxiously around the base of the tree, but its build made climbing impossible.

Adyr had already retracted his wings into his back and begun to rest, conserving energy as he prepared for the fight ahead.

With his **[Physique]**

stat now at 20, he could probably handle both wolves—but only if he went all out. And even then, winning without injury seemed unlikely.

Unlike the two pregnant wolves in the cave, these two were in full fighting condition, exhaustion or not.

When he had rested enough, Adyr reached into his belt pouch and pulled out a kitchen knife. Without hesitation, he hurled it at the wolf circling below.

The wolf's reflexes were sharp—far too sharp. It dodged with ease, fluid and precise.

But Adyr didn't stop there. He kept throwing, emptying the pouch of every knife and fork he had scavenged. The wolf evaded each one effortlessly, its movements practiced and instinctive. But the barrage served its true purpose—it was never meant to kill.

It was a distraction.

During the assault, a notification appeared, recognizing his throwing talent. Adyr ignored it, keeping his full attention on the fight.

The moment the last fork left his hand, he leapt from the branch, shield in hand, descending fast.

The wolf had just sidestepped the final throw and hadn't expected a direct assault. It reacted too late. By the time Adyr landed, he was already braced, shield raised.

The wolf lunged, jaws snapping. Adyr met the attack head-on, blocking it with the reinforced edge of his small shield. Its fangs clamped down hard on the metal, grinding with force, as if biting into solid wood.

With the wolf's mouth occupied, Adyr struck.

His right hand swung the short sword toward its exposed side, but the wolf twisted with surprising speed and avoided the blade by a breath.

Adyr didn't hesitate. He stepped in, forcing the wolf back with the shield, keeping its jaws busy as he pressed the attack. Slash after slash, each strike aimed at the smallest opening.

He had the edge in strength—barely—and just enough speed to keep up. The wolf was faster and more agile, but Adyr's relentless pressure gave it no room to breathe. Every time it tried to retreat, he was already there, shield-first, closing the distance.

Then it happened.

The wolf backed into a tree, its escape cut off.

Adyr didn't miss the opening. He rammed the shield forward, pinning the beast by the snout, locking its movement. With a final, calculated thrust, he drove the short sword into its throat.

The wolf convulsed once. Then went still.

## Chapter 52: Stunning the Researchers

Adyr pried open the skull of the blood-soaked wolf with the cold precision of a butcher and retrieved the crystal, also receiving a talent recognition for his butchering skill, which he ignored for now. Then he brought down the wolf, still hanging from the tree, and repeated the process.

This time, he didn't use the energy crystals immediately. Instead, he sent them directly to his Sanctuary.

After a short rest and checking his mental timer, seeing he still had time, he set off after another group of wolves.

It didn't take long before he locked onto his next target and brought down two more using the same strategy. Again, he stored the crystals in his Sanctuary without using them.

As the sky darkened, Adyr dragged the bodies of the four slain wolves back to the village and into the underground shelter.

When he returned safe and sound, the villagers—especially Vesha—welcomed him with visible relief. Upon seeing the wolf corpses dragged behind him, their skulls stripped clean, they reacted with a mix of shock and gratitude, thanking him earnestly.

If anyone among them still harbored doubts about Adyr, they vanished completely after this.

Vesha had yet to tell them he was a practitioner, but some villagers had begun to suspect it. No ordinary man could fight and hunt like he did.

"Are you okay?" Vesha approached quietly as Adyr prepared to lie down and log out, her voice soft, her eyes uncertain.

"Yes, I am. Why?" Adyr replied with a faint smile, eyes already closing.

She hesitated for a moment before speaking. "You look different."

She had noticed the changes in his appearance, especially his eyes. What had once been a dark brown now looked even deeper, almost bottomless. And most notably, the Dawn Raven was no longer around.

She added, "Did you perhaps complete your first evolution?" Her tone couldn't hide the excitement behind the question.

Adyr chuckled. "Yes."

Vesha paused, then whispered, "I see."

Aside from the calm smile on her face, there was a trace of reverence in her expression.

The man she had come to admire over the past few days had now become a true practitioner—someone beyond the ordinary. It didn't just make her happy. It brought her peace.

She stood in silence for a moment, watching his logged-out body. His face was still, almost serene, as if untouched by the weight of the world he carried. A faint smile crossed her lips. She lowered her head and whispered, "Rest well, My Lord."

Serve. Obey. Sacrifice.

As royalty, the doctrine of the Astra Church had shaped her from childhood, carved into her like scripture on stone.

She had spent her whole life waiting for the moment she could finally live by those words.

Now, that moment had come—and with it, a chance for her kingdom to gain a new powerhouse, one that might save it from its predicament.

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"You..."

As Adyr rose from the game pod, both the doctor and nurse instinctively took a step back, their eyes fixed on him.

"Me?" Adyr feigned surprise, fully aware they had noticed the subtle changes in his appearance.

It was only natural. These two monitored every physical detail of his body daily. Of course, they would notice.

"You look... a bit different compared to this morning," said Dr. Eliot Vance, studying him closely. "Would you mind explaining the change and allowing us a quick check before you go?" His tone was polite, though clearly tinged with excitement.

Adyr suppressed a laugh, placing a hand on his chin as if deep in thought. "I think it's because I went through an evolution," he said calmly.

"Evolution? You completed your first evolution?" The doctor's eyes widened as he turned toward Nurse Mira, giving her a subtle signal to start recording.

"Can you explain it in detail? What kind of spark did you evolve with? What changes have you noticed? What did you feel during the process?" The questions spilled out one after another, his enthusiasm barely contained.

Thanks to other players, they had already gathered some meaningful information about evolution. But Adyr was the first one they had encountered who had actually undergone it. And for someone like Dr. Vance, a devoted researcher, the opportunity to study a live subject was more valuable than his reputation.

This wasn't just about mutated genes—this was evolution at a revolutionary level.

After seeing the contemplative, undecided look on Adyr's face, the doctor quickly added, "Don't worry. I promise you'll receive more than fair merit for any information you provide."

He was afraid Adyr might want to keep everything to himself. And if that was the case, there was nothing he could do to make him talk.

"Well, it's not like I want to keep it a secret," Adyr said, making it clear he was willing to cooperate.

There was no real reason to hide it anyway. Even if not today, in a few days, other players who had completed their evolution would start to appear, and the information he had now would lose its value overnight, just like a scam coin crashing on the market.

The only real question was how much he was willing to reveal.

After some thought, he decided to hold back a few details. Most importantly, he didn't mention the wings growing from his back that he could summon at will.

Without going into anything related to his personal strength or future advantages, he gave them a general overview of the evolution process and the system changes that followed. He specifically mentioned the Sanctuary.

"Wow... I really can bring physical objects into this world," Adyr said, looking at the purple crystal in his hand with genuine surprise.

The doctors, however, weren't just surprised—they were staring at him like they'd lost their minds. Cross-world item transfer had so far been nothing more than a distant theory within the research department. And now, that theory had just unfolded before their eyes.

"Can... can you wait a little longer?" Dr. Eliot asked, swallowing hard. This was far beyond anything he could process on his own.

He turned to Mira and said quickly, "Get someone with proper authority from the research department—" He stopped, reconsidered, and then corrected himself. "No, get the entire research team. Notify the lead coordinator immediately. Now."

### **Chapter 53: Niva's Concern**

After speaking with a swarm of lab-coated researchers and sharing only as much detail as he deemed necessary, Adyr returned to his room.

When he checked his wrist device and profile, the merit he was supposed to receive from the conversation hadn't yet been processed. But something new had appeared in the system.

The merit and power rankings have been updated.

He quickly opened the merit list and saw *J.T. Ripper* at the top with 86 points. Selina White followed in second place, listed under her real name, with 41 points. Third was an unfamiliar name with 32 merits. The rest of the list continued with similarly small gaps.

In the power rankings, however, his own name was nowhere to be seen.

Victor, using the alias MasterBates, held the top position. He was followed by the same unknown name from the merit list, then Selina White, and—to Adyr's surprise—Eren in fourth place.

Although Eren was naturally strong, he had entered the game as a pureblood, not a mutant. This meant his placement was entirely the result of his progress in the game and how much he had improved his corresponding stats.

Of course, the rankings were still new, and many players like Adyr likely hadn't registered their powers yet—some perhaps hiding them deliberately. Still, it offered a clear glimpse of how the future rankings might take shape.

He then turned on the computer at the desk and gave the forum a quick glance. Players were still speaking casually, careful not to share real information.

Next, he opened the shop section, where items could be bought and sold using merit points.

Everything imaginable was listed—from basic daily care kits and necessities to brand-new cars and even houses in the city's high-end districts.

It was clear the government had provided players with every possible incentive, just to motivate them to earn more merit.

After a brief search, Adyr found what he was looking for.

He clicked into a new section displaying weapons and tactical gear.

"Wow, isn't this a bit much?" Adyr muttered, frowning at the 450-merit price tag on a full-body tactical suit. But the reason for the high cost was obvious—it was the same advanced uniform currently used by the STF, made with top-tier modern tech.

The fact that even this kind of equipment was being sold for merit points showed just how far the government was planning to give them.

He browsed through more affordable gear—tactical outfits made from durable fabrics and reinforced with Kevlar plating over vital areas. Eventually, he found a full set, including boots and gloves, that caught his interest for 18 merits and added it to his cart.

This purchase mattered. In the other world, he didn't even have proper clothing or shoes. But now, thanks to the Sanctuary feature, he no longer had to walk around in rags.

He moved on to the weapons section.

Everything was there—from hand grenades to rocket launchers. There was even a tactical armored vehicle. He browsed with mild curiosity and let out a laugh when he realized there were no tanks or anything similar.

He picked up two titanium-based combat knives for 10 merits each. Then added a small oval shield for 8 merit, which could be strapped to the back to double as spine protection. He also bought a set of twenty small throwing knives for 12 merit, along with several meters of reinforced wire and a long climbing rope, all intended for traps or survival use.

After some thought, he also added a few grenades to his cart, spending another 10 merits, thinking about how much he enjoyed explosions and how they looked like art to him.

When he checked his remaining balance, he had 18 merits left. He sighed. "I thought I had a lot more."

Only now did he realize how quickly merit points could vanish.

Still, most of what he'd bought was far beyond the reach of an ordinary citizen.

He briefly considered buying a handgun for 20 merit, but ultimately decided against it. It was expensive, and after his encounter with the wolves—creatures fast enough to dodge bullets—he doubted a pistol would offer more distraction value than a throwing knife.

In terms of cost versus effectiveness, it wasn't worth the investment.



There were other weapons that looked useful, even valuable, but they were well beyond his current merit range.

He briefly considered selling the crystals in his possession for merit, but he couldn't accurately determine their current value, and he might need them soon. So he decided against it.

After confirming the items in his cart and seeing the merit points deducted, he shut down the computer, put on his new uniform, and set out for home.

The items he purchased would be delivered and placed in his room while he was gone, so there was no need to wait around and waste time.

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When he got home, Niva was in the kitchen, and the smell of food had filled the house.

"I'm home," Adyr called out, slipping off his shoes and stepping inside.

"Welcome back! Go wash up and wait at the table, dinner's almost ready," Niva called back from the kitchen.

"Got it," Adyr said, heading upstairs to change and take care of a few things before coming down.

When he returned, the table was already set. Compared to the plain meals they'd had recently, tonight's dinner actually looked like it had some real meat in it. She must've done the monthly shopping.

*I've got a thousand credits sitting in my account. I should probably give her some,* he thought as he looked over the food.

Since his own expenses now ran on merit points, he hadn't touched his government paycheck. Considering their monthly household income was usually just 700 credits, an extra 1,000 would be enough to upgrade their lifestyle—at the very least, they could start eating better.

*Still, I need to tell her about the new job.*

With Marielle gone, he didn't want to stress Niva out even more—but hiding it wasn't really an option. Especially not now. After his recent evolution, his appearance had changed just enough that Niva, of all people, would notice.

And she did.

"Who are you, and what have you done with my brother?" Niva blurted out, freezing mid-step with two steaming plates in her hands, eyes wide with disbelief.

"What?" Adyr raised a brow, genuinely caught off guard. He hadn't expected that kind of reaction. He stepped forward, took the plates from her before she could drop them, and calmly set them on the table.

She squinted at him, studying his face with exaggerated suspicion. Then she crossed her arms.

"Seriously, what the hell? Since when does my brother have better skin than I? What are you using?"

Adyr blinked, unsure whether to laugh or lie. Apparently, her concern was less about mutation and more about skincare.

## **Chapter 54: Testing the New Gear**

"So let me get this straight. The game you were playing isn't actually a game, but another world. You mutated your genes by playing it, got a government job, and now you're making a thousand credits a month?" Niva asked casually, sipping her soup.

"Pretty much," Adyr replied, tossing a few pickles into his mouth.

"What about university?" She asked, wincing as the hot soup burned her tongue. She blew on her spoon before taking another try.

"Still enrolled on paper, but I don't have to attend classes anymore," Adyr said, glancing at her from the corner of his eye.

Something about her behavior felt off. She was acting like everything he'd said was completely normal, reacting with the bare minimum while calmly eating her dinner.

He was starting to wonder if Marielle's long absence had finally gotten to her—maybe the loneliness was starting to mess with her head.

"Is it dangerous?" Niva asked, this time looking him straight in the eyes.

"No. My job is basically just to keep playing the game. Even if I die in there, nothing happens to my actual body," Adyr said, feeling a hint of relief. At least now she was asking something that sounded like her.

"Then it's good," Niva said with a smile, continuing to eat.

"You're not surprised?" Adyr couldn't help but wonder.

Niva paused, raised an eyebrow, and said, "I mean... you've always been crazy smart. And when I think about you hanging out with someone like Victor, with a dad like Henry Bates, and dating Selina White, who everyone basically treats like royalty, it weirdly makes sense. Honestly, I figured you were some kind of secret agent or something. This actually sounds more believable."

Adyr chuckled. Hearing it from her made it all sound less dramatic somehow. Still, that wasn't the part that truly concerned him.

"I mean the new world," he said, correcting himself. "Doesn't that part shock you?"

Niva pressed her lips together, then shrugged. "Yeah... The whole 'game is actually a portal to another world' thing is pretty wild. Feels like something straight out of a fiction novel."

*Looks like she's been reading way too many webnovels lately,* Adyr thought, eyeing her strangely.

Even the concept of a game leading to another world didn't seem to faze her much.

Still, it worked in his favor. The fact that his sister was such a nerd, with a warped sense of what's normal, made it easier for her to accept the situation without much resistance.

"They're also giving me a new status. The kind that lets me take on a surname for all of us," he added. "So if you and Marielle want, you'll be able to use the genetic mutation process too."

Niva glanced at her brother's smooth skin for a moment, then grinned. "When?"

"Well, first I need to collect a hundred merits to buy the status," Adyr said, remembering it from the shop list while browsing military gear.

"Alright, there's no rush. We can wait for Mom to come back first. I'm pretty sure she'll love the idea of looking a few years younger," Niva laughed.

—

When morning came, with nothing left to hide from his sister, Adyr dressed in a simple pair of jeans and sneakers, threw on a black T-shirt and a long-sleeved jacket, and left the house. He also didn't bother to wear a mask or goggles anymore.

At the headquarters, the receptionist informed him that the division's name had been finalized. It was now officially called PTF. (Player Task Force)

Adyr didn't understand why they were so adamant about keeping the word "player" in the title. He didn't think much of it and headed to his room.

Since he had requested direct delivery, all the packages had already arrived. They were stacked on the desk in various sizes.

He started with a long black box that clearly contained his tactical knives.

Inside, two long blades were laid side by side in a velvet lining.

He picked one up and inspected it. Although they were referred to as knives, they resembled short katanas in shape. Given that katanas didn't exist in this world, it made sense that they had been categorized under tactical knives instead.

The blades were metallic, double-edged, and measured fifty-five centimeters. The handles were wrapped in a black leather grip, designed to prevent slipping and resist sweat.

Compared to the standard blades he was used to, these were longer, which suited the kinds of opponents he was now expected to face. His previous fight with the wolves had already proven that short swords worked well in close combat.

"I think I need to visit the skill training floor and learn a few sword techniques," Adyr muttered.

The box also included a harness that allowed the blades to be worn in a cross formation across the back. He found the design practical.

He held both blades and ran a few practice swings. They were light and perfectly balanced.

Inside a wider box, he found a small, black heater-style shield. It had a secure inner grip and magnetic mounts designed to latch onto the back of his uniform when not in use.

From a larger box, he retrieved the uniform and tried it on.

It was a full black tactical operations suit, complete with boots and fingerless gloves. The fit was exact, almost as if it had been tailored for him.

He had specifically chosen a jacket-style top so he could take it off easily when using his wings.

He strapped the blades to his back, mounted the shield over them in a position that kept it accessible, and then loaded grenades, throwing knives, and a thin wire into their designated slots on his belt. A rope was secured to the back of the belt, hanging down without getting in the way.

He stepped in front of the full-length mirror and took a look at himself.

"Looks like something out of a special ops movie," he said with a smirk, striking a casual pose.

With a mask, he figured he would have looked more like a ninja.

## **Chapter 55: The Hunt Continues**

Adyr removed his gear, changed into a clean set of blue pajamas, and slipped on his Crocs. Then, using a small amount of energy, he sent all the equipment back to Dawn Land.

Fortunately, transferring everything in bulk hadn't drained much energy, but when he checked his stat panel and saw it at zero, he couldn't help but frown. He still had four level-2 and ten level-1 energy crystals—enough to regain five energy—but he had a feeling energy would become a persistent concern.

He tapped his bracelet and opened his profile, noticing a new message. The information he had provided about evolution had earned him exactly 102 merit points. With the remaining 18, his total had now reached 120.

"I'll wait before spending it," Adyr thought. He decided to hold off until Marielle returned and he had a chance to explain everything to her.

The merit rankings had also shifted slightly. Despite his recent spending, Adyr still sat at the top with 120 points. The third name on the list caught his eye—Eren, now sitting at 108. The others seemed to have used their points, but Eren hadn't spent anything since yesterday, only added more.

Adyr had a good guess why. A faint smile crossed his lips as he moved on.

He skimmed the forums and found a few new posts. Some users had begun mapping their local areas and were offering the maps for sale to the research team.

Though the maps were small and lacking in detail, they included positions of the sun and moon, as well as seasonal markers—an interesting touch. It was clear these weren't from his region, but from distant parts of the world.

Adyr briefly considered buying one with merit, but changed his mind. He didn't need it yet. Better to wait until the maps offer more detail.

With nothing else to do, he left his room and headed upstairs to the playroom.

When he arrived, Dr. Eliot Vance and Nurse Mira were already there, waiting eagerly. Both stood to greet him as he entered.

After yesterday's events, Eliot looked especially animated—almost childishly excited. The discoveries around genetic mutation and evolutionary mechanics had clearly stirred up the entire department.

After a routine health and condition check, Adyr stepped into the game pod.

"Enjoy the season, Mr. Adyr," Eliot said, smiling. He could hardly imagine what kind of data he might return with next, findings that could push their research even further.

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Adyr opened his eyes in the dimly lit underground shelter. The villagers were already awake, silently waiting for his return.

"Welcome back," Vesha said with a smile as she hurried to his side. She offered him a prepared breakfast and gave a brief report. There wasn't much to tell, but she made sure to cover anything he needed to know.

Her attitude today struck him as oddly formal. It no longer felt like she was the daughter of a noble from the Velari Kingdom. Instead, she acted as if he were the one with status—and she, his personal servant.

*Power equals status in this world,* Adyr thought.

He remembered the sermons preached by the Astra churches. They called on people to serve strength, disguising obedience as virtue. It was a little more than indoctrination.

But that wasn't unusual. In every world, intelligent social creatures had always worshipped power. The only thing that changed was how each society chose to define it.

After spending some time in the shelter, Adyr set out to hunt. But he didn't go after the wolves right away. First, he entered one of the houses and retrieved the gear he had previously stored in Dawn Land.

Fortunately, summoning equipment didn't cost energy—only sending it back did. Once fully equipped, he stepped out and made his way toward the wolves' cave.

"This is interesting," he muttered, observing the entrance from behind a distant tree.

Lying just outside was the alpha, much larger and stronger than the others. It was the first time he'd seen it waiting beyond the cave itself.

After a few minutes, he noticed the cave was empty. The rest of the pack was constantly on the move. Wolves came and went from the forest, each approaching the alpha briefly, like giving a report, before turning and heading straight back out.

It was a behavior Adyr hadn't seen before.

Clearly, losing half the pack in a single day had forced a shift in their instincts. Their behavior had become more cautious, more coordinated.

But that only made things easier for Adyr. Now, he could find them scattered across the forest—isolated, one by one.

Their senses had dulled for whatever reason, which meant the forest was no longer their natural hunting ground. They might still be strong, but with Adyr around, they were no longer the predators here.

Adyr moved through the forest and soon picked up a track—his first prey.

With their numbers reduced, the wolves were no longer moving in pairs. They were alone now, worn down by the deaths of their kin and the pressure from their alpha to hunt for the culprit without rest.

Adyr didn't bother with strategy. He reached over his shoulder and drew both tactical knives with a deliberate motion, then approached the wolf with steady steps.

"You'll be my first target to test these blades," he said, twirling the long knives once in his hands before lunging forward.

The wolf, though exhausted, still had its reflexes. It dodged the stab from Adyr's right blade and barely avoided the left-hand swing, escaping with only a shallow cut.

*I should raise my Will stat before facing the alpha,* Adyr thought mid-fight, already planning ahead.

He didn't give the wolf a chance to counter. With relentless, precise strikes, he drove it back, wearing it down over several minutes until it was pinned. Then, with a quick slash to the throat, he ended it—blood spilling as the body collapsed.

The blades were razor-sharp—just the way he liked them.

As the wolf twitched in its final moments, Adyr wiped his blades clean and slid them back into place.

He then drew a throwing knife from his belt and pried the energy crystal from the wolf's skull.

Before moving on to his next target, he consumed two level-2 crystals from Dawn Land, along with the one he had just harvested, bringing his energy back up to three.

He opened the system log and registered three newly acquired talents.

**[Talent Recognition: "Throwing (Lv1)" confirmed.]**

– Talent has been identified based on consistent use of accurate, mid-range projectile attacks.

**[Talent Recognition: "Butchering (Lv1)" confirmed.]**

– Talent has been identified based on repeated dismantling of carcasses with precision and efficiency.

**[Talent Recognition: "Tactic (Lv1)" confirmed.]**

– Talent has been identified based on demonstrated ability to observe, plan, and exploit behavioral patterns in combat.

- Proceed with registration to the Status Panel?

- Cost: 1 Energy per talent

- Reward: 1 Free Stat Point per talent

Then he allocated his newly gained stat point to **[Will]**. With this boost, the wolves' reflexes would be a little less of a nuisance.

**Chapter 56: Unseen Defeat**

**[Physique]: 20**

**[Will]: 6 → 9**

**[Resilience]: 5**

**[Sense]: 4**

As Adyr checked his stats, he could feel the change in his body. The **[Will]** stat worked its wonders once again. It felt as if every cell in his body had awakened, all urging him to move.

The rustling leaves, the insects crawling on the ground, the drifting clouds above—everything around him seemed to resonate with his motion. He felt as though he was beginning to understand the rhythm behind it all. Even the smallest movement carried intention.

It was like upgrading his brain from Human OS 1.0 to 2.0—a revolutionary shift that delivered maximum efficiency with minimal effort.



He paused for a moment to savor the sensation, then continued his hunt.

This time, he was faster. One by one, he tracked down wolves and took them out.

Unless he launched a surprise attack, the wolves' reflexes still let them dodge his first strike. But the more accustomed he grew to his blades, the more lethal his follow-up became. By the second strike, most couldn't recover.

When he found the eighth and final wolf of the day, he didn't go in for the kill.

Instead, he wore it down with precise attacks, injuring it just enough to incapacitate it. Then he tied it up with a rope from his belt and hid it beneath a tree.

With that done, only one target remained—the boss. The alpha wolf.

When he reached the cave, the alpha was still lying outside, basking in the sunlight. It looked calm, almost indifferent to its surroundings.

But Adyr didn't take it for carelessness. This wolf was different—and clearly far stronger. Rushing in wouldn't work this time. He needed a plan.

He rigged the area with thin wire and a few grenades from his bag—precautions in case a retreat became necessary.

The system registered his actions.

**[Talent Recognition: "Trapper (Lv1)" confirmed.]**

Adyr chose to register it. He consumed one of the eight level-2 crystals he'd stored in Dawn Land, gaining 1 energy and earning a free stat point, which he allocated to **[Resilience]**.

It would improve his odds of surviving if things went sideways.

Once preparations were done, he began approaching the alpha.

Just like with the previous alpha, his aim was to strike first and gain the upper hand. Even if the attack didn't land cleanly, acting first could shift the momentum in his favor.

But as he closed the gap, something unexpected happened.

*What the hell?*

His vision suddenly blurred.

There were barely four or five meters between them, but it felt like he had gone nearsighted in an instant. The glare from the sun fractured strangely in his eyes, as if distorted by astigmatism.

Caught off guard, Adyr decided to retreat. But then something else hit him—something worse.

It wasn't just his sight. His hearing, sense of smell—everything was gone. His awareness dulled all at once, and in that disoriented state, he stepped on a dry branch.

*Crack!*

"Oh shit," he muttered, watching as the alpha wolf's ears perked up and its head snapped in his direction.

He turned to flee.

But after just a few steps, a sharp, crushing force slammed into his back, sending him flying into a nearby tree. He hit the trunk hard and crashed to the ground.

Two rough coughs left his throat, and Adyr forced his breathing back into rhythm. Blood pooled at the corners of his lips as he raised his head, blinking through the blur.

"What the fuck is this? Are you a Spark?" He muttered, confused.

Each step the creature took seemed to unravel his senses further. Vision dulled. Sounds faded. Smells vanished. It was as if the world was being turned down around him. And yet, the system gave no warning. No **[Spark Detected]**. No notification. Nothing.

Adyr shoved the thought aside. This wasn't the time to think. He needed to survive.

The wolf crept closer, then suddenly lunged.

Adyr reacted instantly—his arm swung back, ripping the shield from his back just in time to intercept the beast. Metal clanged against teeth. Sparks burst from the impact. The force of it sent tremors through his bones.

The shield held—but just barely.

Three deep gouges ran across its surface, marking where the claws had landed earlier. It was still intact. Still holding.

Until it didn't.

With a guttural snarl, the wolf bit down, clamped its jaws around the shield, and yanked.

The steel tore from Adyr's grasp with a jarring screech. The creature's jaws tightened. With a wet groan of strained metal, the shield crumpled like cheap scrap, folding inward with ease. Then the beast spat it out and pounced again.

But Adyr was ready.

His fingers had already pulled the pin. The grenade in his left hand blinked red.

One second... Half...

He hurled it straight into the wolf's face.

**Boom.**

The explosion lit up the forest. A wave of heat and pressure slammed into him, and his body launched backward, his spine crashing into the trunk of the thick tree. Bark cracked. Air fled his lungs. He dropped to the ground like a ragdoll.

Pain shot through his arms as he shielded himself from the explosion. His right forearm was torn open, skin and cloth shredded to reveal exposed bone. His hand was completely useless.

He clenched his jaw.

The smoke was thick, dust rising in columns. Through it, he squinted, trying to see.

And then he saw it.

"You fucking monster," he whispered. It was the first time Adyr had ever called something else a monster.

The wolf's head emerged from the cloud. Its left side was untouched—having turned away just in time—but the right was a mess. Skin and flesh were gone. Its eye was missing. Only a bloody skull remained.

And yet... it moved without hesitation. It lunged again.

Adyr dove sideways.

**Crash.**

A tree behind him split down the middle as claws tore through it like paper. The creature had missed him by inches.

His ears were ringing. His eyes are still unfocused. The closer the wolf came, the more his senses collapsed. He couldn't even tell which way to run.

But his body moved on instinct.

He pushed himself up and sprinted into the woods. Leaves whipped past his face. Branches clawed at his skin.

Just as he sensed a threat closing in behind him, he turned slightly—just enough to raise what was left of his right arm.

The wolf's jaws locked onto it, crushing bone as if it were paper.

It thrashed him like a rag doll, then flung him through the air. His body flew, crashing into the underbrush. The only reason he escaped was that his arm had been torn off entirely.

He rolled. Coughed. Spat blood. His shoulder was bleeding out fast.

"Fuck... fuck..." he gasped, dragging himself to his feet. No time to stop. No time to think.

He ran.

The further he got, the clearer his senses became. Sounds returned. His vision stabilized. The trees weren't just shapes anymore—they were paths. Escape routes.

Up ahead, he spotted one of his traps—a thin wire stretched between two trees. He ducked under it just in time.

A second later, the wolf lunged again. The wire caught its face but snapped instantly, leaving only a shallow cut.

Still, it bought Adyr a precious second—enough to shrug off his jacket.

He braced himself as his wings unfurled. The moment they reached full span, he flapped hard, trying to lift off. It was his only chance to escape the tank-like beast barreling after him.

But it failed.

Just as he left the ground, a sharp pain tore through his left wing.

The wolf had leapt and bitten into it, crushing the bones with a sickening crunch. Flesh tore as it ripped out a chunk.

Adyr realized the wing was crippled—flight was impossible. So he flapped again, not to ascend, but to boost his speed.

He rushed toward another trap.

This one was different: the wire wasn't anchored to trees but connected to two grenades, each with its timer nearly expired.

Even if it didn't kill the wolf, it just needed to buy enough time.

Thanks to the burst of speed from his wings, Adyr managed to outrun the beast just long enough to lead it into the trap.

**BOOM!**

The explosion hurled Adyr forward.

His wings had absorbed the worst of the blast and were torn apart in the process, but he hoped the wolf, caught at the center, had taken even more damage.

Or at least, that's what he told himself.

He didn't stay to see the outcome. He was in a critical state, bleeding by the second.

Staggering, he made his way to his next destination—not the village, not the underground shelter, but the wolf he had left alive and tied beneath a tree.

After a short walk, he found it. The beast was still there, struggling weakly against the rope.

Adyr approached, swaying with each step.

It had been his final preparation in case something went wrong during the fight with the alpha—and now, he was glad he'd made that choice.

### **Chapter 57: Second Round**

As he knelt beside the wolf, he drew a throwing knife from his belt and drove it into the creature's flesh, slicing through the skin with rough, dragging strokes.

The wolf thrashed in pain, but Adyr didn't flinch. He leaned down, sank his teeth into the exposed meat, tore off a chunk, and began chewing.

After a few bites, he swallowed. As the fresh flesh slid into his stomach, he felt a surge of revitalizing energy flood his entire body.

The bleeding from his wounds began to slow. The aching in his limbs softened into a soothing numbness.

His body was healing fast.

It was his innate trait from the Dawn Raven. Now part of him as a Dawn Human. The ability to recover by consuming raw, life-filled flesh.

Without lingering on the sensation, Adyr took another bite. Then another. And another.

He ate with urgency, tearing through muscle and sinew before the wolf's life had fully slipped away, converting every bite into raw life energy. With each swallow, the meat vanished from his gut, dissolved into pure vitality, sealing wounds and rebuilding torn flesh.

His wings reformed first, restoring their span and structure. Even his severed arm had begun to regenerate, muscle and bone knitting slowly from the shoulder down.

Only when the wolf took its final breath did Adyr stop.

His wings were fully restored. His body bore no visible injuries, except for his arm, still missing everything below the bicep.

He figured he'd need a few more meals like this to recover it completely.

Just as the thought crossed his mind, a crack echoed from the trees nearby.

Then came the familiar haze—the dulling of his senses.

Without hesitation, Adyr launched himself into the sky.

At that exact moment, the alpha wolf lunged at where he had just stood, missing him by the blink of an eye.

"You damn terminator," Adyr chuckled, watching the wolf's mangled body from above.

Its face, already half gone from before, had now been joined by fresh damage—large sections of flesh and muscle torn from both sides of its abdomen by the last explosion, exposing parts of its ribcage. Its right hind leg looked nearly obliterated, twisted, and shredded beyond use.

And yet, the stubborn beast kept moving, staggering forward like some undead monster.

"Ready for round two?" Adyr grinned, pulling a throwing knife from his belt and launching it toward the wolf.

From the sky, he had the clear advantage—but his body was already worn down, and he couldn't maintain flight for much longer. So he had to finish it fast.

The wolf managed to dodge the knife—barely—but even that motion told Adyr everything he needed.

He noted the delay in its steps, especially the drag from its injured hind leg. That was its weak point.

He drew two more throwing knives.

The first missed as the wolf dodged again, but unable to fully maneuver with its damaged hind leg, the second struck cleanly, burying itself into the side of its skull. It didn't go in deep, but it was enough.

Without pausing, Adyr drew two more knives and hurled them in rapid succession.

The wolf avoided the first, but the second struck the same spot as before, slamming into the embedded blade and driving it deeper—this time into the brain.

The beast staggered.

Then, after a brief, trembling pause, it collapsed.

Adyr hovered a while longer, watching closely. Once he was certain the creature was truly dead, he began to descend slowly, cautiously. But the moment he drew closer, that familiar dulling of his senses returned.

He immediately pulled back and rose higher again.

"You've got to be kidding me... still not dead?"

The wolf looked lifeless, completely still. And yet, the oppressive effect it had on him remained.

He kept his distance, circling above with sharp, measured eyes. After several tense seconds, the reason revealed itself.

From the dead wolf's ear, a black worm roughly the size of two fingers slowly slithered out.

It writhed across the ground, its oily skin gleaming under the sunlight like polished obsidian.

And just then, as if to confirm what had been gnawing at the back of his mind all along, a system message appeared before his eyes.

**[Spark detected]**

**[Name]** Null Maggot

**[Path]** Nether

**[Rank]**

2

**[Ability]** Senses Fade / Flesh Fortify

**Description:** Null Maggots are typically found in areas densely populated with living creatures. On their own, they are weak and defenseless, too small to fight or flee. To survive, they seek out powerful predators and burrow into their brains, embedding themselves deep within the host. From there, they slowly gnaw away at the creature's senses and spirit, feeding off its vitality.

**Ability – Senses Fade / Flesh Fortify:** Null Maggots possess two abilities that ensure their survival and make them truly feared.

Using their first ability, Sense Fade, they dull the target's perception, making it difficult for the victim to notice their presence. This allows the maggot to slip into the body through a soft tissue opening and burrow its way into the brain.

Once embedded, they activate Flesh Fortify, enhancing the host's muscle mass and overall physical attributes. The host becomes significantly more durable, and even those nearby may experience a minor physical boost. This evolution grants the host enough strength to defend both itself and the parasite within.

"Holy... It's really a rank 2 spark," Adyr muttered in disbelief as he landed and cautiously approached the worm. This thing had nearly killed him.

The closer he got, the more his senses dulled. By the time he picked it up, his vision had nearly faded, and his sense of touch was almost entirely gone.

But that didn't matter. In this state, he knew it was harmless—at least as long as it stayed limp and motionless between his fingers.

And sure enough, the system message he'd been waiting for appeared moments later.

**[You have captured a Rank 2 Spark. Begin subduing process?]**

**– Cost:** 100 Energy

Unlike before with the Dawn Raven, this time the system didn't ask whether he wanted to undergo evolution. It asked if he wanted to subdue the spark.



That could mean only one thing: if he subdued it, the spark would be sent to Dawn Land, and he would be able to use its powers as if they were his own.

Of course, he couldn't use the ability that required entering a host and enhancing its body. But Sense Fade was usable, and in battle, it could be a decisive advantage.

The only issue was the energy cost. It was very high. But worth it.

## **Chapter 58: Null Maggot**

"Now what should I do with this?" Adyr muttered, eyeing the Null Maggot. His vision was still blurry, but his thoughts were sharp.

He didn't have enough energy to subdue it yet, but keeping it in his pocket wasn't an option either.

*Can I transfer it to the Dawn Land without subduing it?* The thought crossed his mind after a moment. He doubted it. The Dawn Land existed to hold subdued sparks, after all. Still, it was worth trying.

He set the Maggot down at a safe distance, somewhere its presence wouldn't affect him, then retrieved the energy crystals embedded in the skulls of the two wolves. Strangely, the alpha had two level-2 crystals instead of one—an unexpected but welcome bonus.

With that, he now had ten level-2 crystals and ten level-1s. Without hesitation, he tossed one into his mouth, refilling a single point of energy. Then he picked the Maggot back up and attempted to send it to the Dawn Land.

Focusing, he directed his energy into the spark and watched as a transparent layer of energy wrapped around it. But after a few seconds, the glow receded, fading into nothing. As he suspected, the Dawn Land couldn't accept a spark that hadn't been subdued.

But it wasn't a total failure. The moment his energy wrapped around the Maggot, the sensory pressure it had been emitting vanished—and even when he withdrew his energy, the pressure didn't return. It was as if the spark had been drained of its power.

"This result works too. I can carry it like this," Adyr said, satisfied, and took a closer look now that his senses had fully returned.

It was encased in a smooth, pitch-black shell that resembled hardened obsidian. It was so dark it looked like light itself couldn't touch it. There were no eyes, limbs, or ridges—just a seamless body, as if it had been forged in a workshop rather than born. It looked less like a living creature and more like a decorative relic made of black iron.

After slipping the Maggot into his pocket, Adyr gathered the throwing knives scattered around the area. Then he headed back into the forest to retrieve the coat he had thrown aside while fleeing—the swords were still strapped to it.

He had spent a lot of merit on these items, and with many already lost, he needed to recover whatever he could. He also considered picking up the shield, now bent and folded in half. For a moment, he thought about having it restored at Headquarters, but then changed his mind.

It had done its job, but it clearly wouldn't hold up against future threats. He would spend more merit later and get something better.

Once everything was in order, he returned to the alpha's body and, using his remaining arm, began dragging it back to the underground shelter.

—

The underground shelter was dimly lit and quiet. Other than the faint noise of a few children playing in the corner, there was hardly a sound. Even the children seemed subdued.

It had been nearly four days since any of them had seen the sun. Enclosed in darkness, with grief pressing down on their chests like a stone, the mood was thick with despair. The loss of loved ones weighed heavily, and the oppressive atmosphere left no one untouched.

While the women sat in silence, the old woman finally broke the stillness.

"Lady Vesha... there's something that's been on my mind. I hope it's not too rude to ask."

Vesha, seated beside her, gave a small smile and turned to face her. "Sure, Grandma."

"The boy..." The old woman hesitated, then continued. "He's a practitioner, isn't he?"

At once, the room shifted. Eyes turned. Even the children stopped what they were doing.

Vesha hadn't told the villagers the truth about Adyr. She'd kept it quiet, knowing that the knowledge would bring them more fear than comfort.

The threat of a rank-4 spark wasn't just local news anymore—nearby villages and even other kingdoms were aware. Everyone knew most of the kingdom's practitioners had died trying to stop it. Only four remained, and all of them were focused on halting that disaster.

If they found out that one of the remaining practitioners had come all the way to a small, insignificant village like this, they wouldn't see it as a sign of hope. They would take it as proof that the rank-4 spark couldn't be stopped and that the kingdom had already given up.

Vesha took a quiet breath. "Yes, He is."

The villagers weren't fools. Even if no one had said it aloud, the truth was clear. A lone boy facing down a wolf pack that had overpowered an entire village of men—there was only one explanation.

Her little secret hadn't lasted long.

"I thought so," the old woman said with a slow nod. Then her voice dropped a little. "So... does that mean the kingdom's a lost cause?"

A new tension swept through the room. Even if the village were saved, even if the wolves were gone, with a rank-4 spark still roaming free, their survival would feel fragile at best.

"No, don't worry," Vesha said gently, taking the old woman's trembling hand in hers. "He's not from the kingdom."

But the woman's hands only trembled harder. Her eyes, wide with fear, locked onto Vesha. "Then who is he?"

Vesha immediately understood her fear and offered a calm reassurance. "He's not from the kingdom, but he's still an Astra path practitioner."

That was the second reason Vesha hadn't mentioned Adyr being a practitioner. She had only confirmed it herself yesterday, after his evolution with the Dawn Raven.

Not all practitioners were the same, especially those on the Nether path, who were often known for their cruelty and bloodstained deeds.

"I see..." the old woman whispered.

The relief in the room was palpable. Shoulders loosened. The old woman's eyes welled with tears, and a few slipped down her cheeks as she spoke again. "Even if we spent the rest of our lives trying," she murmured, "we'd never be able to repay them, would we?"

No one answered. They didn't need to.

Everyone in the room already knew the truth.

Astra path practitioners had only one defining trait: their love for life.

That was why so many had given their lives for the kingdom. Not for honor. Not for reward. But because they believed it was worth it.

That was also why Vesha had suspected Adyr was an Astra path practitioner from the beginning. He had saved her life. He had cared for her for days as she recovered. And after what happened with the Dawn Raven, her doubts vanished completely. She knew practitioners couldn't use sparks that didn't belong to their own path.

While the women spoke, letting out their despair through quiet conversation, a knock echoed through the shelter door.

"This must be him," Vesha said, rising quickly. A few others stood with her and hurried toward the entrance to greet the one they had been desperately waiting for.

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**A/N:** A description of the four paths is included at the end of the Chapter, in case you'd like to refresh your memory.

## **Chapter 59: Dramatic Exit**

The last light of dusk slipped through the gap, illuminating Vesha's face first. She was smiling, relieved, even peaceful.

"Welcome back," she said gently, her voice carrying into the quiet shelter.

But the moment she saw him clearly, her smile faltered. Her eyes widened, and the breath caught in her throat.

Adyr stood before them, calm and silent. His hair, tousled by the wind, was streaked with dust and dried blood. Behind him, the massive corpse of a wolf lay motionless.

"Is that...?" The old woman stepped forward, moving past the others. She was old and wise and didn't need an answer. She knew exactly what it was.

An alpha.

She stared at the corpse in silence. For a brief moment, the pressure in her chest eased. If the alpha was dead, then perhaps everything was finally over.

But her relief was short-lived. Her eyes shifted to something else. Something that should have been there but wasn't.

Then came Vesha's voice, sharp and full of alarm.

"Your arm!"

She rushed forward, panic rising in her expression, stopping only when she reached him.

"It's fine," Adyr said, offering a tired smile. His teeth were still stained with blood. "That was the last one."

He drew in a shallow breath. "Hold me... I need to sleep."

Before Vesha could say anything, his legs gave out and he collapsed into her arms.

—

Adyr's senses returned as he slowly came to inside the gaming pod.

He had spent more time in the game than he intended, especially while gathering his weapons. It was almost dinnertime, so he chose to log out quickly. Still, he couldn't resist adding a bit of drama to his exit.

He hadn't expected much from the scene he left behind, but the idea amused him.

*The hero, after saving an entire village, collapses into the arms of a beautiful woman.* Adyr chuckled at the thought. It was ridiculous—but entertaining.

The same faces greeted him: the doctor and the nurse, both wearing expectant expressions. But this time, Adyr had nothing to offer. He let their disappointment hang in the air and quietly returned to his room.

As he changed into his regular clothes, he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror. Since the evolution, his muscles looked more defined, and according to the doctors' measurements, he had grown two centimeters taller.

That was an interesting improvement. If evolution could increase his height, maybe for the first time in his life, he could actually be considered tall.

His arm appeared completely fine, unlike the state of his avatar in the other world, and there wasn't a single scar on his body. It was almost absurd, as if the near-death battle he had just gone through had been nothing more than a bad joke.

Checking the time, he realized he didn't have much left. He needed to get back before Niva started to worry. Moving quickly, he opened his computer.

From the 120 merits he had, he spent 50 on a slightly sturdier shield than his previous one. He also picked up some wire, a few grenades, and a couple of flashbombs and restocked his throwing knives to replace the gear he had lost in the forest. Once his

inventory was fully replenished, he shut the computer, requested a driver from reception, and headed home.

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"I've decided to choose military engineering as my major," Niva said suddenly as she ate. Her blue eyes looked calm, but beneath the surface, there was a quiet determination.

Adyr paused mid-bite and raised an eyebrow. "Really? You were planning to be a nurse. You can even be a doctor after we get status, you know, right? "

The shift surprised him. He wasn't going to talk her out of it; whatever she chose, he'd support her—but he was curious about what had changed her mind.

"I wanted to be a doctor because of Mom," she said. "I thought I could help children, like she did. But now... I want to help you."

Adyr blinked. "Help me?"

Niva nodded, her gaze steady. "I want to build real gear. Weapons, armor, maybe even drones. Stuff you can actually use over there."

A small smile tugged at the corner of Adyr's mouth. He hadn't expected their conversation yesterday to stay with her, let alone affect her this much.

He had mentioned how primitive everything was in that world. No technology, no tools worth using. He'd joked about the lack of proper clothes, about how most of the weapons were either too bulky or too dull to be useful. Just idle talk to keep the conversation going—but clearly, she'd taken it seriously.

"If that's what you want," he said, picking up another bite. "Honestly, it might be the smartest choice. I had to fight a few wolves today, and I nearly messed it up just because my gear wasn't good enough."

He let out a dry chuckle.

Niva went quiet for a moment, then asked softly, "Did it hurt?"

She already knew the pain felt real in that world. Her brother had told her. And even if the body didn't die here, the idea of him suffering still made her uneasy.

"No, not really. Don't worry," Adyr said. "Just had to deal with a few wolves the villagers asked me to take care of."

He paused, then added with a shrug, "Didn't even look like wolves. More like oversized stray dogs."

He was killing the truth to put his sister at ease. A few small lies wouldn't hurt anyone. After all, he couldn't exactly tell her that one of his arms had been torn off and he had nearly died.

"Is that so?" Niva raised a brow, clearly unconvinced, but didn't push it.

"Then it's settled," she said, her tone brightening. "I'll study military engineering. And who knows—if we're really getting status now, maybe I'll even become a researcher after I graduate."

Adyr laughed and gave his sister an encouraging nod. "That's good. I'm sure you'll be a better researcher than all those stone-faced, white-coated zombies in our research department."

He thought that when the time came, maybe he could pull a few strings for his sister.

## **Chapter 60: Eren's Visit**

When morning came and Adyr arrived at the Player Headquarters, he found himself caught in another brief chat with the receptionists. The women at the front desk seemed to carry the weight of all the building's gossip, always the first to know everything, like professional, sneaky reporters in disguise.

The addicted woman he had pulled back from the edge not long ago was especially good at this. She operated like the head of a secret network, as if she had built her own web of informants. From janitors to technicians, from the tea lady to the security staff—she had access to all of them.

And that worked in Adyr's favor. For a while now, they had become his eyes and ears throughout the building, quietly carrying news back to him.

Yesterday, they had been the ones to casually reveal the name of the new division: Player Task Force (PTF). And today, he could already tell they were whispering about something new. Another rumor.

When he asked, they couldn't help slipping into talk about the latest gossip. According to them, the government was finally preparing to officially announce the formation of the new division to the public.

Of course, the receptionists had no idea what exactly would be revealed or that it involved another world. All they knew was that the building housed third-generation mutants and that the recently released game was somehow acting as a simulation for

training them. But even having that much information made them surprisingly good at what they did.

He also learned that a few reporters had already started circling the building, and according to the receptionists, the City Manager himself had paid a visit the night before. To them, it was a clear sign that a major press conference was on the horizon.

Adyr mentally filed everything away with a quiet grin, then turned and stepped into the elevator.

These bits of information might have seemed small or useless on the surface, but when viewed as part of the bigger picture, they painted a clear warning of the chaos to come. And as he entered his room, he was already thinking about how to use that chaos to his advantage.

The first thing that greeted Adyr in his room was a stack of boxes piled neatly in the corner.

He changed out of his clothes, slipping into a clean tracksuit and his usual Crocs, then walked over and began unpacking the boxes, starting with the shield.

It closely resembled his previous one—a black, heater-type shield designed with magnetic grips so it could latch onto the back of his tactical jacket. The only real differences were its matte finish and the upgraded material. According to the specs he had read, it was supposed to be five times more durable than the last one. That was reassuring, especially considering he had spent 50 merits on it.

Next, he checked the rest of his gear: wire, grenades, and throwing knives, all purchased for another 20 merits. Once he confirmed everything was in place, he powered on his computer and started browsing the forum.

Today, there was new information on the forum that caught Adyr's attention. One post in particular stood out—its title hinted at evolution and some of the abilities that came with it, without going into too much detail. Just enough to spark curiosity and encourage other players to purchase the full information.

The post hadn't been made by a specific player, but by one of the forum's moderators. It was clear that the details Adyr had shared were now being packaged and sold as purchasable knowledge for players. Just another layer of the system designed to push them, encouraging them to earn more merit and spend it within the structure.

At first glance, it looked like they were profiting off Adyr's insights, but that wasn't really the case. For one, the state had no use for merit. Merit was a virtual currency, created exclusively for players, with no value or function outside the system.



More importantly, the entire structure was designed to support players. Every system, every rule, every restriction was there to push them toward growth. Even the information gathered from players was recycled back into the community for their own benefit. That's why Adyr didn't see it as malicious.

The only downside was that, had he shared the information himself and sold it directly to players, he probably would've earned more merit. But that option wasn't available, and for good reason.

Players were allowed to create general discussion threads on the forum, but selling knowledge directly was strictly prohibited. The only legal method was to submit the information to the relevant department, sell it to them first, and then let them distribute it to others. This rule existed to prevent hoarding and inequality.

Players came from vastly different backgrounds. Some were wealthy and powerful, with access to high-end resources. Others, like Adyr, came from nothing—no connections, no money, no influence.

If the elite players were allowed to monopolize information and trade it freely among themselves, those like Adyr would be left behind, crushed under the weight of imbalance. The system was designed to prevent exactly that.

"I wonder how they're dealing with the black market," Adyr thought.

Even with the system's restrictions in place, it was impossible to completely stop players from trading information under the table. It wasn't hard to imagine some of them blackmailing others or forcing them to give up what they knew.

As he considered this, a soft beep came from his door. The digital screen above it flickered on, showing the person waiting outside.

Adyr smiled when he saw who it was.

"Speak of the black market and it shall appear," he muttered, then walked over and opened the door.

Standing before him was a tall, intimidating young man, just over two meters, built like a wall, with a stoic face and dark green eyes fixed on him.

"Eren, why don't you come inside?" Adyr said with a slight smile, inviting his guest in.

He had checked the merit rankings not long ago and noticed Eren had dropped off the list. It wasn't hard to predict he'd show up soon, so his arrival came as no surprise.