

# **Unholy Player #Chapter 61: New Language - Read**

## **Unholy Player Chapter 61: New Language**

### **Chapter 61: New Language**

Eren hesitated for a moment, then gave a silent nod and stepped inside.

Adyr closed the door behind him and gestured toward the couch. "Please, sit," he said, then turned to the beverage machine on the table. "Tea or coffee?"

Eren sat down slowly and finally spoke. "I won't have anything, thanks. I came to talk about something." His face was tight with tension, his tone serious, but Adyr could see it—beneath it all, the weight was gone. Like a man who had finally put an old burden to rest.

Without saying anything, Adyr made himself a plain coffee and prepared a tea for Eren anyway. He placed both cups on the table and sat down. "Sure."

Eren stared at the steaming tea in silence, gathering his thoughts.

"Do you know where I'm coming from?"

Adyr took a sip of his coffee but didn't answer. He waited.

Eren didn't keep him waiting long. "From the head of the research department's office."

A subtle smile tugged at the corner of his lips—so small it would go unnoticed by most, but not by Adyr.

"I asked them if I could get approval for my little sister's gene mutation operation. And do you know what they said?"

He picked up the tea and took a sip before continuing.

"They said yes. No questions about my status. No absurd price tags. Nothing. Just a simple yes. Just like that." His voice began to waver near the end, and after another sip, he looked Adyr straight in the eye.

"For years, I tried everything to save her. I begged everyone I met, just for a single operation, just enough to stop her disease. I even forced myself to believe someone as useless as me could make a difference. I worked, pushed myself, got a scholarship to the city's only university. And still, it was always the same."

His voice was trembling now. The weight of all those years bled through every word.

"Always the same answer. You're not eligible. It's against regulations. There's nothing we can do. You're not worthy."

He paused, realizing his emotions were slipping out of control, then took a few more sips of tea.

"I was worth less than nothing... until a few days ago. Until I started playing this game. And suddenly, from nothing, I became a recognized player with official status. The kind of person who can save his sister's life."

He lifted his head and looked directly into Adyr's eyes—the same eyes that had quietly listened without interruption.

There was light in Eren's gaze now. The kind of gratitude that needed no words.

"I have to ask... why did you help me?"

Adyr held his faint smile and answered plainly, "Because you're worth it."

Eren blinked, caught off guard. Then he covered his eyes with one hand and started laughing, loud and unfiltered.

Adyr could see the tears slipping between his fingers.

That laughter carried everything—grief, release, and the peace that came with letting go. He laughed with him, quietly.

After a moment, Eren wiped his face, lifted the tea, and downed it in one go, as if it weren't scalding hot. Then he stood up. His expression returned to something serious, though warmer than before.

"Adyr... my sister is the only thing I have in this world. The only one I cherish."

He bowed his head slightly and continued.

"I don't know your reasons, and I won't ask. But you gave me a life. And in return, I'll be your shield. Your sword. I'll prove I'm worth your help."

"I know," Adyr said with a quiet smile, taking another sip of his coffee.

Eren didn't seem bothered by the detached reply. If anything, it confirmed what he already believed about Adyr.

When Selina first visited the house, Eren had asked her who sent the helmet, and she shared her thoughts on Adyr. Back then, he couldn't understand why someone like her would speak with such admiration about someone like him.

But now, he did.

The man in front of him—good or evil, it was too early to say—but one thing was clear. He wasn't ordinary.

Where Eren had spent years trapped beneath fate, Adyr had toyed with it, holding no more status or power than anyone else.

And that, to Eren, was enough.

Eren reached into his back pocket and pulled out a few crumpled pages, holding them out. "These are logs. Records of everything I've done since I entered the game. I sold part of it for merit, but what's left still has unreported data."

Adyr took the crumpled papers from his hand and gave a simple, quiet "Thank you."

Eren nodded and turned toward the door.

The way he carried himself had changed—his shoulders were lighter, his spine straighter. It was the posture of a man who no longer carried any regrets.

Right as he reached for the door, Adyr called. "Eren."

He paused and glanced back.

"I don't need a shield or a sword," Adyr said. "Just stay the kind of brother she can rely on."

A brief silence followed.

Eren offered a determined smile, gave a final nod, and closed the door behind him.

Adyr looked down at the notes in his hand. It read like a journal—detailed, precise, and carefully written. As he skimmed through, his eyebrows lifted slightly.

"You're worth more than I thought," he murmured.

Henry had claimed that in Shelter City 9, only a few had registered two paths—and apparently, Eren was one of them.

"Physique and Resilience, huh. He's a beast, inside and out," Adyr said with a quiet chuckle.

Eren hadn't just listed his stats. He had even included his registered talents. It looked like he hadn't kept anything to himself.

At the last page, there was a rough, hand-drawn map of his current location—crude but serviceable. It marked a large kingdom inhabited by various species, most of them with beast-like features. A mixed population, but clearly organized under one rule.

What caught Adyr's attention the most, though, was a messy attempt to transcribe the language spoken in that region. The notes were scattered and hard to follow, but to Adyr, who understood the language fluently, the meaning was clear.

And it wasn't Latin.

## **Chapter 62: Chinese?**

"First Latin, and now Chinese? What kind of world is this?" Adyr's expression hardened.

The handwriting was crude—clearly, Eren had scribbled the logographic symbols from memory. Still, it wasn't so poor that Adyr couldn't recognize it. More importantly, this wasn't modern Chinese. It was Old Chinese, a script few could identify, let alone read.

Fortunately, Adyr was well-versed in it. There had been a time when he deliberately avoided fresh corpses and focused instead on older remains, immersing himself in archaeology for an extended period.

And by the looks of it, he'd need to continue his work in archaeology even in this game world. If ancient languages from his original world were showing up here, there was a real possibility of discovering ruins linked to Earth's lost civilizations, perhaps even uncovering a deeper connection between the two worlds.

Of course, that was something to pursue later. For now, his priority was growth.

Especially since the kingdom Eren had mentioned seemed powerful, and filled with Nether Path practitioners. That meant dangerous territory, both in strength and nature.

After finishing with the journal, Adyr moved to the desk, grabbed a few sheets of paper, and began writing. He spent about an hour filling several pages before placing them somewhere secure and leaving the room.

When he entered the playroom, it was quiet as usual—all the players were inside their capsules, immersed in the game. But Adyr noticed something different. Many of the pods that had been occupied before were now empty. Clearly, a number of players had died in-game and were likely removed from the division.

After returning to his capsule and completing the routine checkup with the doctor and nurse, he reentered the game.

—

When Adyr opened his eyes, he was greeted by a room bathed in sunlight, warm rays slipping through the window and filling the space with gentle heat.

"Looks like they've accepted the danger is over." He tried to sit up and glance around, but as he reached out with his right hand for support, he forgot it was no longer there. His weight shifted, and he nearly slipped off the bed.

"Damn. I need to get used to this." He cursed as he got up and looked around.

This was definitely not the underground shelter. Judging by the modest furnishings and the quiet, it was likely one of the village houses. The room was clean, simple, and silent—an ideal place to rest and recover.

The villagers had probably returned after seeing the alpha wolf's corpse, convinced it was safe enough to leave the shelter.

Just as Adyr was about to step outside and see what was going on, the door opened.

Standing there was Vesha—short in stature, her golden hair tied back in a ponytail, and her ice-blue eyes wide as they met his.

"Hey. Looks like everything's back to normal," Adyr said with a faint smile.

She wore a simple, pale-colored dress like the ones villagers usually wore, but the noble blood in her veins was unmistakable. Even in something so plain, her presence made it look like a ceremonial gown.

"Yes, the villagers are cleaning up and trying to adjust to their normal lives again," Vesha said, but her gaze drifted to Adyr's missing arm. It seemed the village wasn't the only thing left incomplete.

Adyr caught her glance and raised his half-arm with a laugh. "Don't worry about this. I got Dawn Raven's innate talent. If I eat something fresh, I can regenerate it."

Vesha flinched slightly at his words, memories flashing behind her eyes. But instead of disgust or fear, her expression softened into relief.

"I figured as much. Wait here," she said and hurried out the door.

Adyr stayed as instructed, curiosity tugging at him as he watched the village through the window, after first putting on his tactical uniform and equipping himself with all the gear laid out on the nearby table.

Within minutes, Vesha returned with a few village women, each carrying a small cage. Inside were rabbits, squirrels, chickens—small animals, all alive.

"Thanks for the help. Just leave them here," Vesha told the women.

They obeyed silently, glancing at Adyr with a mix of curiosity and quiet gratitude before setting the cages down and closing the door behind them.

"Will these be enough? Or should we look for something larger, like a sheep?" Vesha asked. After a brief pause, she added, "Though... most of the livestock were torn apart by the wolves. If we need something bigger, it'll take time. We'd have to search the neighboring villages."

Adyr chuckled at her thoughtfulness. As he looked over the animals in the cages, slightly surprised that every one of them was familiar to him, he realized Vesha had already anticipated his needs. She had considered the kind of talent he might have gained from the Dawn Raven and made preparations while he was still unconscious. She was clearly sharper than she let on.

"This should be enough. Thank you," Adyr said as he stepped toward one of the cages.

As a Dawn Human, he instinctively knew this amount would suffice.

He opened the cage, pulled out a chicken, and reached for a throwing knife at his belt, only to stop halfway.

*Fuck. I forgot again. I don't have a hand.* He clenched his jaw, irritated at his own forgetfulness.

"Let me help," Vesha said, stepping in quickly. She drew a knife from his belt and glanced at the white-feathered chicken in his hand.

"It's okay. You can leave. I can handle the rest," Adyr said, noticing the hesitation on her face.

What he was about to do probably wasn't something she'd want to witness.

But Vesha stood firm. "No, let me help." She repeated it with quiet determination, fully aware of what was coming. She had already chosen Adyr as the one she would serve. If she started second-guessing herself now, on the very first day, she knew she wouldn't be able to fulfill that role properly.

She took the chicken from his hands and stared at it for a full second before bringing the knife to its skin and carefully slicing off a patch.

As the chicken thrashed in her grip, Vesha's face turned pale, and her body began to tremble. Still, she was determined to finish what she started.

"Is this enough?" She whispered, her voice shaking and nearly drained of strength.

"Yes, thank you," Adyr said with a sigh, then took the struggling chicken and sank his teeth into the spot she had exposed.

## **Chapter 63: Heading to the Kingdom**

*Serve. Obey. Sacrifice.*

Vesha repeated the words silently to herself, drawing strength from them as she brought the knife down on the squirrel in her hands. When the creature bit her finger in a final burst of pain and panic, she winced, but didn't stop. She didn't let the pain shake her focus. Her resolve held firm.

These three Sacred Decrees of the Astra Church weren't hollow slogans crafted to brainwash the faithful. They were reflections of the core traits that defined every true Astra Path practitioner.

Vesha's thoughts drifted to the first time she met Adyr.

He hadn't just saved her from that prison and the horde of skeletons. He had also cooked her meals, tended her wounds, and stayed by her side until she recovered.

**Serve.** The first of the Church's decrees.

Later, while escorting her back, they came across a struggling village. Without hesitation, Adyr had answered the unspoken plea of the villagers and faced the wolves head-on.

**Obey.** The second decree.

And in that fight, he had put his life on the line, ultimately losing his arm.

**Sacrifice.**

The third decree.

These weren't just teachings the Church preached to its followers each day. For Astra Path practitioners, they were a way of life, followed not out of fear or obligation but instinct. No one needed to remind them. The Sacred Decrees were etched into their very being.

And that was why the Church expected its followers to return such selfless kindness with the same level of care and sincerity.

For someone like Vesha, the Three Decrees held deep meaning. If she truly wanted to serve Adyr with genuine devotion, then the only way to repay his help was by living according to those decrees.

Of course, that was how she saw him.

Meanwhile, as Adyr bit into the struggling animal in his hand, the only thing on his mind was regenerating his arm and regaining his strength.

None of his actions so far had anything to do with being an Astra Path practitioner. On the contrary, everything he had done was for his own benefit. But there was no reason Vesha needed to know that.

In this world, especially during the times he was logged out, Adyr needed someone who could both look after his unconscious body and handle whatever needed to be done in his absence. So far, Vesha had fulfilled that role with flawless precision.

As Adyr continued eating the raw flesh, just a few bites were enough to draw the life energy from each small creature into his body. Slowly but steadily, his arm began to return to its original form.

By the time he finished draining the life from the twenty-second animal, he finally stopped.

"Is it done?" Vesha asked, wiping the blood from his face with a damp cloth. Her face was pale, her body trembling, and she looked as if she might collapse at any moment. Yet, somehow, she was still standing.

Adyr opened and closed his right hand, flexed his arm, and replied, "Yes. It's completely healed. Thanks for the help."

Vesha forced a faint smile and nodded. Then, glancing at the mess around them, she said, "I'll clean this up."

She couldn't leave the task to the villagers. Or rather, she couldn't allow them to see this side of Adyr. Maybe they wouldn't mind, as long as their savior's hand was healed, but even so, she wasn't willing to let him be seen like this among common folk.

"I'll help you. Then we can head back to the kingdom," Adyr said, picking up a damp cloth and beginning to wipe the blood from the floor.

He was done with the village. There was no benefit left to gain here. The sooner they left, the better.

Vesha gave a quiet nod. Together, they cleaned up quickly, packed the remains of the animals into a bag, and finished the task without delay.

Just as Vesha reached for the door, Adyr stopped her. "Don't use the front door. We'll leave through the window, quietly."



Vesha cast him a questioning look, but she understood. "Sure," she said quietly.

One glance through the window was enough. The entire village had gathered outside the front door, waiting in anticipation. In the square, preparations for a memorial and a feast were nearly complete, with fires lit, tables arranged, and offerings prepared.

Rather than stay and deal with drawn-out gratitude or ceremony, Adyr had chosen the quiet exit.

Without another word, the two slipped through the window, the bloodstained bag in hand. They moved through the shadows, unseen, until they reached the old mill. Their carriage was still there, waiting like a loyal beast. Moments later, they were gone, vanishing from the village without a single goodbye.

—

The villagers waited long into the evening. When their guests never appeared, a few finally entered the house. But it was empty. No sign of Adyr, no sign of Vesha. Only silence. When they saw the empty space where the carriage had been, they understood.

That night, the village gathered in the square under the stars. Flames flickered in the dark as they cooked the favorite meals of the dead, offering them in quiet remembrance.

With soft chants, they mourned the fallen. With music, verse, and stories, they honored their unseen saviors.

They spoke of Lord Adyr, the one who had faced a Rank 2 Spark alone and won. Of Lady Vesha, who stood beside him with unshaken resolve.

No one knew it at the time, but the words spoken that night, the poems composed, the stories passed from voice to voice would one day echo across the world. What began as whispers in a forgotten village would become legend.

The tale of Lord Adyr's first rise. The beginning of a name that history would never forget.

\*\*\*

As the sun lost its golden glow and faded into shades of light and shadow, the carriage reached the towering walls of the kingdom.

"Ahh, it feels like a dream. I'm finally home," Vesha said with a sigh, gazing at the walls that now looked as if a great disaster had torn through them.

During the long days away from home, especially while trapped in that cave, she had often seen nightmares of death and believed that would be her grave. Now, standing here, alive and safe, filled her with quiet relief.

While Vesha embraced her own sense of peace, Adyr kept his eyes on the approaching walls, his expression calm.

*Was all this really the work of a Rank 4 Spark?* He couldn't help but wonder.

The walls looked too tall for any person or beast to climb, and their construction was solid, built from thick stone blocks.

Yet now, most of that sturdy barrier had been reduced to rubble. It made him wonder what kind of force was capable of breaking something so durable.

He may have managed to catch a Rank 2 Spark, but now, witnessing the aftermath of a Rank 4's power, he realized just how small he still was in this world, especially when he remembered how close he had come to dying.

As the carriage neared the towering gates of the kingdom, two guards noticed its approach. They didn't recognize the tall man inside, but the crest on the carriage and the presence of Lady Vesha at the front were unmistakable. The moment they saw her, they stood at attention and allowed the carriage to pass without question.

Adyr observed the exchange with quiet interest. Being a noble's daughter was one thing, but the guards seemed to know her personally. That meant she wasn't just some quiet figure in the background—she had a presence here. A reputation. At least enough to be recognized on sight.

"Is there an inn nearby? I need to sleep soon," Adyr said as he guided the carriage through the city streets. Though it was evening, the roads were still lined with vendors packing up their stalls, many of whom paused to glance at the passing carriage with mild curiosity and recognition.

"Why an inn? You can stay at my father's mansion. I'm sure he'll be very welcoming," Vesha replied, surprised.

She wasn't wrong. The moment her father—or anyone of importance in the capital—learned that Adyr was an Astra Path practitioner, there wouldn't be a door closed to him, nor a meal denied.

"I don't want you to mention who I am. Not yet. I want somewhere quiet for now. I will find you later," Adyr said, his voice calm, eyes still on the road.

He didn't want to step into the spotlight before understanding how things worked in this city. Observation came first.

Hearing the resolve in his tone, Vesha said nothing more. She simply gave him directions to a discreet and well-kept inn she trusted.

A short while later, Adyr handed her the reins and accepted a handful of gold and silver coins. Then, without a word, he slipped from the carriage, pulled a hood over his head, and quietly disappeared into the heart of the kingdom.

## **Chapter 64: Long live Lady Vesha!**

As Adyr wandered the streets in search of the inn, he noticed something strange. Despite the damage to the outer walls, none of the buildings inside the city bore any signs of destruction. In fact, most of the people he saw, while carrying a faint sense of gloom, appeared to be going about their lives without major disruption.

That brought his thoughts to the practitioners tasked with defending the city.

According to Vesha, only four remained after the last attack by the Spark. One was at Rank 4, two at Rank 3, and the last at Rank 2. She had spoken with particular excitement about the Rank 4 practitioner, describing in detail how she had shielded the entire city and how, thanks to her power, not a single civilian in the capital had been harmed so far.

*Strong enough to protect the people, but not strong enough to defeat the Spark.* That was the conclusion Adyr drew.

The fact that only four out of so many practitioners had survived in years, with the rest killed by a single Spark, made the imbalance of power painfully clear.

Not too long after, Adyr finally found the inn, situated along a busy street. It was a four-story building made of well-maintained timber, its structure reminiscent of old western architecture. Despite the traditional design, it looked refined and expensive.

As he stepped through the open door, the noise inside washed over him. One side of the inn was filled with people eating, drinking, and chatting at scattered tables and chairs. On the other side was a bar that also served as a reception counter.

The moment Adyr entered, every gaze in the room shifted to him. His height alone made him an uncommon sight. He ignored the stares and walked calmly toward the man behind the counter—a bald, lean-skinned figure polishing a glass.

Adyr looked down at the man, standing just a few centimeters taller than Vesha. "I want a room. I'll pay upfront for seven nights."

The man gave him a sideways glance, then took note of the strange black uniform he wore. His tone remained neutral as he replied, "You must be new around here."

"Yes," Adyr answered, waiting patiently to see where this was going.

"Seven days is too long," the man said flatly. "My advice? Stay for two and leave the city." He inspected the glass in his hand a little longer, as if making sure it was spotless, then set it down and picked up another.

"Why?" Adyr asked, noting the man's detached attitude.

This time, the man looked up and met his eyes with a more serious expression.

"Because in a few days, the city's going to be under attack. This place may not be safe. Stay two nights and don't risk your life for nothing."

Adyr knew exactly what the man was referring to. The Spark that attacked every six months was due to strike again in just a few days. What caught his attention wasn't the warning itself, but the man's attitude. He spoke of it as if it were nothing unusual, just another routine threat, offering a simple caution to a guest.

"Still, I'll pay for seven nights. If I have to leave early, you can keep the rest," Adyr said, placing a gold coin on the counter.

The man looked at the coin, sighed, and took it. "Looks like you're someone with money. Don't come asking for it back later," he said, handing over twenty-three silver coins as change.

One hundred silver equaled one gold, which meant the man had taken seventy-seven silver for the full stay. A fair amount for the best inn in the capital.

"I also want your best meat dish and strongest drink. You can keep the change," Adyr added, pushing the coins back toward him before turning away and finding an empty table to sit at.

While sitting at an empty table, Adyr could still feel the weight of the stares. No one even tried to hide it.

One of them, lifting his mug with a booming laugh, called out to him. "Hey, guest! Welcome to our Velari Kingdom. You're the tallest man I've ever seen."

There was no malice in the man's voice, no hidden intent. He sounded like someone genuinely looking to make a friend.

"The village I come from is known for its tall men," Adyr replied with a chuckle, playing along without disturbing the mood.

That lighthearted exchange quickly spread. The nearby tables joined in, and soon, everyone was trying to talk to him, ask questions, or simply share a drink.

Most of them looked like they had already had their fair share of alcohol, but despite that, their behavior was unusually warm and welcoming. Still, Adyr wasn't surprised. After observing both Vesha and the villagers earlier, he had already come to understand.

The Velari race was generally kind-hearted and warm. Guided by the Astra Path and their faith in the god Astrael, their culture leaned toward compassion and goodness. It made sense now, seeing it in practice.

If anything, it was the men who came across as overly friendly, sometimes a bit too talkative. The women, on the other hand, kept more distance, watching him with reserved curiosity. But Adyr didn't mind. He blended in easily and matched their pace without effort.

While he continued chatting and blending in with the crowd, the door of the inn suddenly burst open with a loud thud, and a man rushed in, shouting, "Good news, good news! Lady Vesha has returned safe and sound!"

The entire inn erupted into cheers. In an instant, the atmosphere shifted into celebration.

*So she really is someone beloved by the people*, Adyr thought, joining the chorus and shouting along with the crowd, adding his voice to the chants of "Long live Lady Vesha!"

"Did she manage to uncover the mystery behind the missing villagers and the skeleton sightings at night?" The bartender asked excitedly, stepping out from behind the counter to join the gathering.

The question brought a sudden silence over the room. The messenger's expression dimmed, and he responded with hesitation, "I don't think so. She returned without her guards, and she was even driving the carriage herself. Most likely..."

He trailed off, unwilling to finish the sentence.

But after a pause, his brow furrowed with curiosity. "Though according to the gate guards, she wasn't alone. They said a tall stranger entered the city with her. No one knows who he is."

As he finished, his gaze shifted across the room, landing directly on the tall figure not far from him. Slowly, others turned to look, and before long, every eye in the inn was once again fixed on Adyr.

Realizing his anonymity had likely come to an end, Adyr burst into laughter, raised his mug high, and shouted,

"Long live Lady Vesha!"

## Chapter 65: Vesha's Secret

"So you were attacked by wild wolves, lost your mount, and then Lady Vesha found you on the road and brought you all the way here, huh?" The bartender said, sitting across from Adyr as he scratched his bald, leathery scalp. The entire inn had gone quiet, everyone listening in.

"Yes," Adyr said with a sigh. "I can't thank her enough. She really saved my life." He delivered the lie with convincing sincerity—even convincing himself for a moment.

"That's Lady Vesha for you. So kind. That's just the sort of thing she'd do," someone in the crowd said, wiping tears from the corners of his eyes, the alcohol clearly loosening his tongue and emotions.

It didn't take long for the rest to join in. Almost as if on cue, they all began praising Vesha at once.

Adyr chuckled inwardly, but on the outside, he wore a curious and grateful expression. "Can you tell me more about Lady Vesha? I noticed how much everyone here seems to love her. She must be an amazing person."

The bartender let out a small laugh. "You're right. She must be the kindest soul in the kingdom, second only to the esteemed practitioners."

He paused, then sighed deeply and added, "But also the most unfortunate girl. Poor thing... if only her fate were as beautiful as her heart and face."

At those words, the mood shifted. A quiet sadness settled over the room, the joy from before replaced by something heavier. Adyr noticed the sudden shift in mood and leaned in slightly. "If it's not too personal, would you mind telling me why you said that?"

The bartender shook his head. "No, it's not," he replied, then took a deep breath before continuing. "I remember her childhood well. I used to see her with her family all the time. Everyone around loved her—she was such a warm-hearted girl. Even as a child, she was always helping people, always trying to make them smile."

He paused for a moment, his gaze distant. "But since her mother was killed by robbers outside the city five years ago, she lost most of that smile. And then, just two years after losing her mother, her only brother died in the war against the neighboring kingdom. Not long after that, a Rank 4 Spark began attacking the city walls... and ever since, it's like she's been trying to carry all the weight of those losses herself. Throwing herself into danger, visiting nearby villages, trying to help anyone in need—as if making up for something that was never her fault."

He tipped back his mug and emptied it in one motion. His words had been simple, but the heaviness in them said more than anything else could.

"She wasn't like this before. At least, not to the point of risking her life just to help," someone else added through a choked sob.

But as the words left his mouth, the room went quiet again, and several people turned to give him a sharp look. Realizing he had said something that shouldn't have been voiced, he fell silent, lowering his head.

But Adyr didn't let them brush it aside. "Why? What happened?" he asked calmly.

The crowd fell silent again, the air heavy with something unspoken. It lingered until the bartender finally spoke.

"Well... because she accepted something she shouldn't have. To save us."

Adyr's eyes narrowed. He could see the shift in mood, the weight pressing down on everyone, but he could only guess at the cause. After a moment, he asked the question already forming in his mind.

"Is it a marriage?" Adyr was only guessing.

Vesha had spoken to him about many things, but never this. He had sensed a weight behind her smile, something unspoken she carried alone, though he couldn't tell what it was. So he was simply taking a wild guess, thinking that if this were a drama novel, this would be the plot.

And to his surprise, it turned out to be true.

The bartender's head snapped up in surprise. He sighed deeply and replied, "So you've heard too. Gossip spreads fast around here."

He tossed his mug to the floor and clenched his jaw. "That damned Nether Path practitioner from the neighboring village. Just because he's Rank 4 and claimed he'd help us, he demanded our pride and joy—our light—as payment."

*That's a problem,* Adyr thought as he leaned back in his chair.

Vesha wasn't important to him because of their shared journey. She was because she had already proven her value—her intelligence, resilience, and loyalty. On top of that, she was deeply loved by the people, respected, even revered.

All these traits made her someone Adyr could actually rely on in this world, especially when he wasn't around. And now, losing someone like her would only complicate things.

After a bit more conversation, Adyr went up to his room and lay down on the bed to log out. He was already an hour late for dinner.



---

When he got home, Niva was sitting alone at the table in a dimly lit room, the soft glow of candles casting long shadows on the walls. The table had been set for two, but none of the food had been touched.

"Sorry," Adyr said as he took off his shoes.

"It's okay. You have a job now—it makes sense you'd be late sometimes," Niva replied as she stood to reheat the food. Then, almost in a whisper, she added, "Just like Mom used to do."

Her mood was clearly down, though she tried not to show it. Being alone in a large house, worrying about her brother and mother, was starting to take its toll.

At least the exams are not far off, Adyr thought as he looked at her. Once university started, she wouldn't be stuck at home so much. Education in the city happened mostly online, but until then, the only time Niva left the house was to shop for groceries. Her world was small, and she was bearing it quietly.

After changing his clothes, Adyr came back down. The food had been reheated, steam rising again from the dishes. Niva was already seated, waiting for him with a quiet smile.

Just as they were about to begin their dinner, the phone rang.

Niva looked at him, concern in her eyes. With the city under nightly blackouts, only emergency lines stayed active. That meant this wasn't just a casual call.

"Don't worry," Adyr said, trying to ease her nerves. "It's probably just Victor calling to say something ridiculous again."

But even his expression had changed.

When he picked up the phone, the voice on the other end wasn't Victor's.

"Adyr, I'm sorry to call at this hour," came Selina White's uneasy voice. "But there's been an update on your mother's team."

"According to the report, the expedition convoy was attacked in the village where they were staying."

## **Chapter 66: Farming Merit**

"Okay, thank you," Adyr replied with a calm smile and ended the call.



He turned to Niva, who was watching him with anxious eyes. "As I guessed, it was Victor. He wants to meet at the cafeteria tomorrow morning," he said casually as he sat back down and resumed his meal.

His lie was flawless, delivered with perfect ease. But Niva didn't look entirely convinced. She had that sixth sense women were known for, something that told her something wasn't quite right. Still, with no clear sign of deception to hold onto, she chose not to press the issue. Instead, she nodded and joined her brother in silence.

They ate their dinner together, sharing light conversation.

Adyr talked about his day, both in this world and the other. He told her about reaching a new kingdom, describing the Velari people and their gentle, friendly nature. He laughed as he recounted how they sat together in a tavern, drinking like they'd been old friends for years.

He made jokes along the way, telling it all like a fantastical children's story. His tone, timing, and playfulness slowly lifted the tension in the room. He eased her worries and helped her forget the silence that had haunted the house just minutes ago.

By the time night came, both of them headed to their rooms, the evening ending just like any other—quiet, normal, and without suspicion.

—

When morning came and Adyr arrived at the player headquarters, he was greeted at the front desk by Selina. Her dark purple hair was tied back in a ponytail, and she wore a sleek black tracksuit.

"Selina," Adyr said with a calm smile.

To most, that smile would seem completely normal—his usual self. But Selina wasn't most people. She could sense something underneath, something cold and restless, like smoke curling beneath a still surface.

"I've been waiting to give you the details," Selina said, walking beside him as they made their way to the elevator.

Adyr remained silent, so she continued once they began ascending. "There's nothing to panic about right now. The team is reportedly fine. A few STF members were injured during the attack, but your mother's expedition group is unharmed. For now, though, they're stranded."

She glanced at him out of the corner of her eye, trying to read even a flicker of emotion. But there was nothing—just that same unreadable expression.

"Do we know who the attackers are?" Adyr asked as they stepped out of the elevator and started down the corridor.

"They're believed to be part of a terrorist group operating in that region," Selina answered, matching his pace. "The name that came up... is 'Cannibal.' The STF thinks it's his gang."

To her surprise, Adyr stopped in his tracks and turned to face her.

When she met his gaze, something flickered behind his eyes, just for a heartbeat. She couldn't name it—rage, recognition, something deeper—but whatever it was, it wasn't meant to be seen. It vanished as quickly as it came, leaving behind only the weight of it, heavy and cold.

A chill crept down her spine. Her skin tightened, every hair standing on edge.

"Cannibal?" Adyr asked, one brow raised in calm curiosity, as if the name meant nothing to him.

"Y—" Selina's voice caught for a second. She cleared her throat and forced the words out. "Yes. Sorry. That's the name they gave."

"As I said, there's no immediate danger. Your mother and the expedition team are under protection, and they've managed to hold the attackers back. From what I've heard, another support unit is already on the way," she added, trying to offer some reassurance, though she still couldn't read what was behind his perfectly composed exterior.

"I see. Thank you, Selina." Adyr said, offering that same warm, effortless smile.

Selina tried to return it, but her face felt too tight, her muscles too tense. In the end, she just gave a quiet nod.

"Can I ask you a favor?" Adyr said suddenly.

"Sure."

The two walked down the corridor for a few minutes until they reached his room. Adyr stepped inside, took out the notes he had written and hidden yesterday, then handed them to her.

"Can you deliver these to Eren? You should also keep a copy for yourself. It might be useful to you as well."

Selina took the papers and quickly realized what she was holding. They weren't just notes—they were a detailed explanation of a language she had never seen before. Structured, methodical, and clearly the result of careful study.

"Okay... thank you," she said quietly, still scanning the contents.

Without asking any questions, she turned and left.

—

Adyr didn't stay in his room for long. Soon after, he left and made his way to the playroom.

Upon arrival, he greeted the doctor and nurse with a calm "Good morning," then added, "Can you call someone from the research department for me? Preferably a linguist. I have something I'd like to share."

The doctor and nurse exchanged a brief look but complied without hesitation. It didn't take long before Lilian Vide—the same linguist Adyr had spoken with about Latin—and her assistant Mary burst into the room, visibly excited.

"Mr. Adyr, I heard you have something for us," Lilian said, trying to sound composed, though her eagerness was impossible to miss.

"Yes," Adyr replied without wasting time. He pulled out a neatly organized folder containing several pages and handed it to her.

The contents detailed a language rooted in Chinese structure. It was professionally formatted and carefully written—comparable to the Latin presentation he had previously given her, though this one was slightly more limited. Unlike the full versions he had shared with Selina and Eren, this report contained only what was necessary to earn him a reasonable amount of merit. Nothing excessive. Nothing suspicious.

But even that was enough to light a fire in Lilian's eyes.

She let out a laugh. "Mr. Adyr, when I heard you'd requested a linguist, I expected something that might be worth my time, but..."

She paused, finally tearing her gaze from the pages in her hand. "This is more than worth it. This is a treasure."

Since Adyr had first introduced her to Latin, she had spent nearly all her time attempting to decipher and understand it. His clarity, structure, and the depth of his explanations had left a lasting impression. She had spoken highly of his brilliance across the entire department.

And just when she thought nothing could surpass that first encounter, he had returned—this time with an entirely new language, presented with the same precision, maybe even more.

"I'll make sure you receive the merit points you deserve," she said before rushing off with the notes, clearly unable to wait another moment to dive into them.

Seeing the linguists rushing out of the room while practically trembling with excitement, Dr. Eliot glanced at Adyr with expectant eyes, silently hoping he might have something for them as well. But he was ignored.

Adyr entered the capsule in complete silence, started the link, and left the room behind him as if nothing there deserved a second thought.

## **Chapter 67: Preparing for Another Journey**

Adyr sat up in bed as the faint scent of dampness and polished wood filled his nostrils. Morning sunlight streamed through the window, catching the dust particles drifting lazily in the air.

It wasn't a luxury suite by modern standards, but it offered a quiet, undisturbed start to the day. Not that Adyr cared. He got dressed, exchanged a few words with the innkeeper, and walked out.

—

At the center of a spacious, sunlit room, a girl slept peacefully on a double queen-sized bed. Her golden hair shimmered in the morning light, which gently warmed her soft, delicate features.

As Vesha shifted beneath the covers, settling into a more comfortable position, a quiet knock came at the door.

A calm, gentle voice followed, belonging to a middle-aged woman. "Lady Vesha, are you awake? Your father is waiting for you at breakfast."

Vesha stirred, her eyelids resisting as she tried to open them. After a moment of reluctant stretching, she called out in a drowsy voice, "Yes... I'll be there in a while."

Still blinking sleepily, she looked around in search of her nightgown. The sunlight pouring through the window made it even harder to keep her eyes open.

Her gaze moved lazily from the nightstand beside her to the fabric toys on her stylish, patterned rug, to the chair in front of her wooden vanity, and finally to the wide leather armchair in the corner, where a tall man sat, smiling at her. But she still couldn't see her nightgown.

"Who...?"

Her eyes flew open, and she let out a startled scream.

"Lady Vesha, are you alright?" the maid's voice came again, now filled with concern. The doorknob began to turn as the maid tried to enter, but Vesha quickly shouted, "I'm fine, don't come in!"

She froze, then glanced at Adyr's amused face with an apologetic look. "I just saw a cockroach. It's okay, I can deal with it."

"Oh... okay. If you need my help, I'm here," the maid replied from behind the door.

Vesha stood up and rushed to her wardrobe. She was wearing only a loose satin crop top that barely reached her waist, revealing more than it should, and matching pink satin underwear.

Her face flushed bright red. She quickly threw on her nightgown, turned to Adyr, and stammered, "I-I wasn't expecting you."

He had told her the day before, "*I'll find you*," but she hadn't expected him to take it so literally.

The mansion was crawling with guards, yet the man standing in front of her had fought and defeated a pack of monstrous wolves. Slipping past a few mortals didn't seem all that difficult.

"Sorry, old habit. I didn't mean to scare you," Adyr apologized.

Old habit? Vesha paused for a moment, then sighed. "It's okay."

"I came to ask if you have any information on collecting energy crystals," Adyr asked casually.

Lately, too many things demanded his attention. But he had started to realize that the power he currently possessed wouldn't be enough—at least, not enough to guarantee the success of his plans.

Energy crystals were the key to increasing his strength. And to obtain them, he first needed to know where to find them.

"Um..." Vesha opened her mouth nervously. "Can you turn around first? I need to change."

"Sure." Adyr smiled and turned to stare out the window.

While she picked clothes from the wardrobe, she began to speak. "As far as I know, there are two ways to get energy crystals. The first is through crystal mines." She sorted through a few outfits, eventually holding up two dresses—one pink, the other a lighter shade—and continued, "Crystal mines are naturally formed and extremely rare. I've heard of them, but I don't know where they form or how to find them."

She finally chose the light pink dress and laid it neatly on the bed.

"The second method, which you already know, is through creatures affected by Sparks. They often mutate due to Spark energy and form crystals in their bodies. Hunting them is the easiest method."

Just as she said, this was something Adyr was already familiar with. The skeletal creatures in the cave and the wolves he had recently killed had both carried energy crystals.

He nodded while admiring the flowers blooming in the garden outside the window. "Do you have any information about a low-ranking Spark appearing nearby?"

From his new companions at the inn, he had learned that Vesha often chased down rumors like this, especially those involving threats to local villages. It was likely the only reason she had found the cave where the Dawn Spark lived. There was a good chance she knew about other suspicious locations—or even the exact whereabouts of another Spark.

As he had hoped, she gave him an answer.

"Yes. Since the kingdom's practitioners have been so busy lately, they haven't been able to deal with low-ranked Sparks. So they've been appearing more often around here." She paused, thinking for a moment. "I heard a recent rumor from a nearby village. They said trees vanished overnight... and a few children disappeared too. They came back days later, confused, unable to remember anything. It's probably the work of a Spark."

Adyr raised an eyebrow, thoughtful. His current knowledge of Sparks was limited, but he understood they could vary wildly in abilities. So he struggled to see how disappearing trees and memory loss in children could be connected.

"I'm done." Vesha's voice reached him just as he turned.

"What do you think?" She murmured, a soft blush coloring her cheeks. It was clear she wasn't talking about the Spark.

"Like a flower freshly taken from the garden," Adyr replied, a trace of amusement in his eyes.

Her face flushed deeper at the unexpected compliment. She fidgeted with her hair before glancing at him. "Want to visit the village?"

Adyr looked back at the garden, letting the colors burn into his memory before responding. "Yes. Will you join me?"

Her presence would make things easier. The villagers trusted her, and if he needed their help to track or trap the Spark, she'd smooth the way. On his own, they wouldn't tolerate a stranger roaming freely.

"I will," she replied without hesitation. The thought of saving another village had already begun to soften her heart.

## **Chapter 68: Looking for the culprit**

As Adyr waited beyond the walls, a carriage bearing Vesha's family crest emerged from the gate and rolled toward him at a steady pace.

He watched it approach, eyes narrowing slightly as he recognized the figure holding the reins—it was Vesha.

"I expected a few guards with you," he remarked while stepping into the carriage.

She was a noble's daughter. It didn't make sense that her father would allow her to travel unescorted.

"Hehe. My father didn't want to let me go," Vesha replied with a sly grin. "But I stole the carriage and ran off." With a flick of the reins, the horses began to move. Oddly enough, she handled them with practiced ease.

Adyr exhaled through his nose. "And that won't be a problem?"

If her father sent guards after them, her presence could become more of a burden than a benefit.

"Don't worry. He won't do anything that'd upset me. He's... different now." Her voice faltered at the end, as if catching herself before saying too much.

She didn't need to finish. Adyr had already pieced it together. She was likely referring to the Rank 4 Nether path practitioner she had been promised to.

He could see the drama. The daughter accepts a political marriage to save the kingdom. The father, heartbroken, watches as his only beloved child walks toward a fate she never wanted, powerless to stop it, offering her a brief moment of freedom before the prison called marriage shuts behind her.

Adyr leaned back in his seat, eyes closed, letting the breeze and the earthy scent of grass and soil mix into a calming lull as the carriage rolled on.

Roughly half an hour later, the carriage slowed. He opened his eyes to see they were crossing a wooden bridge over a narrow river, approaching a small village lined with modest homes.

"So this is the place," Adyr muttered, narrowing his eyes slightly.

The village looked ordinary. A few children played nearby, adults went about their daily routines, and at the center, a small crowd had gathered around a middle-aged man in priest robes, listening to a sermon.

Some villagers glanced toward the incoming carriage with mild curiosity, then calmly returned to their tasks.

One of them, recognizing Vesha, quickly approached to help secure the horses. After tying the reins, he gestured for them to follow him toward the village square.

"Lady Vesha! What a welcome surprise to see you in this quiet village," the priest called out, pausing his sermon as he approached with open arms.

"Priest Malthor, it's a pleasure to see you," Vesha replied warmly, then turned to Adyr. "This is Malthor Aven—a priest from the kingdom's church and also the head of this village."

"Hello, Mr. Malthor. I'm Adyr," he said, reaching out a hand in greeting.

But the priest had something else in mind. With a broad smile, he stepped forward and pulled Adyr into a brief, hearty hug.

"What a tall man," he said with a laugh. "You don't see many your height around here. You must've come from far away."

"Yeah, I hear that a lot," Adyr replied, returning the hug with a slight nod. The overly warm welcome caught him off guard—it wasn't the kind of approach he was used to.

"So let me guess, Lady Vesha—you're here because of the rumors, am I right?" Priest Malthor asked, turning his gaze toward her. There was a hint of concern in his expression.

"Yes, Priest Malthor. If possible, I'd like your assistance. I want to visit the site and see if there's anything we can do," she said, glancing briefly at Adyr as she spoke.



Malthor raised an eyebrow and looked Adyr up and down, his gaze lingering on the black tactical gear, the crossed blades strapped to his back, the small shield, and the grenades and throwing knives at his waist. Then he turned back to Vesha.

"Lady Vesha, I'll gladly assist you," he said, his tone polite but cautious, "but I'm afraid the situation may be beyond what one man alone can manage."

He hadn't expected a practitioner to accompany her—those were all currently overwhelmed, and he knew it. Still, he had assumed she would at least bring a few capable guards with her, not a strangely dressed man who looked more like a mercenary.

To be fair, Adyr's appearance gave off a certain presence. The black tactical outfit lent him a sharp, professional air. Combined with the weapons and his posture, he certainly looked like someone skilled in combat. But if a Spark was truly involved, even a well-trained man would have limits.

"Don't worry, Priest Malthor," Vesha replied calmly, her tone composed and reassuring. "He's quite experienced. And besides, we don't even know for certain what we're dealing with. There's still a chance it isn't a Spark, right?"

Priest Malthor placed a hand over his chest and spoke a short prayer aloud. "May God Astrael bless us—let's hope the culprit isn't a Spark."

Then, with a nod, he turned. "Follow me."

They walked down a stone path leading to a sparse forest behind the village. A few minutes later, Malthor stopped near a shallow pit and pointed to it.

"This is where the first strange incident happened," he explained. "There used to be a tree here—older than even me. It had stood for decades, maybe longer. Then, one night, it vanished without a trace. The next morning, a villager came to me in a panic. His child had suddenly lost all memory."

"Are you certain the tree's disappearance and the memory loss are connected?" Vesha asked.

Adyr gave her a subtle nod of approval. It was the right question.

"At first, of course not," Malthor said. "We didn't see the pattern. But it didn't stop there."

He continued walking, leading them a little deeper into the woods, then stopped at another identical pit.

"There are thirteen of these," he said. "Thirteen missing trees—and thirteen children who lost their memories. Every time a tree disappeared, a child forgot everything."

Vesha paused, studying the area carefully. "Do you have any idea how the trees vanished? Did anyone see what happened?"

It mattered. Whether they had been pulled underground, dissolved into dust, or vanished into the sky, it could point to the nature of the culprit. Maybe even its Path.

But Malthor shook his head. "No witnesses. It always happened when no one was around. Judging by the soil, we assumed they dried up and crumbled into dust."

Then, cutting through the logic they were all clinging to, a calm voice broke the silence.

"The trees didn't go anywhere. They're still here."

Adyr was crouched beside the pit, fingers trailing through the air as both Vesha and Malthor turned to him in stunned silence.

## **Chapter 69: Rank 2 Spark**

"What do you mean, the tree is still there?" Malthor asked, staring into the empty space with clear doubt. There was nothing to see, and for a moment, it felt like the young man was mocking him.

Vesha, on the other hand, watched Adyr closely, eyes filled with curiosity. She could tell he had noticed something.

"Was the tree that stood here a fruit tree? One that bore small, orange fruits—about the size of a palm?" Adyr asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Yes... How do you know that?" Malthor replied, taken aback. Adyr was a stranger; this had to be his first time in the village.

At the priest's response, Adyr let out a quiet chuckle, his gaze fixed on the space in front of him, where the tree should have been. Though invisible to everyone else, he could see it clearly. Its ghostlike trunk, motionless leaves untouched by the wind, and translucent fruit still clinging to its branches.

It looked as if it had slipped into another dimension.

He stroked his chin, thoughtful. Unless there was some unknown factor at play, this had to be tied to his **[Sense]** stat.

Instead of answering Malthor's question, he asked one of his own. "Do children usually come to play in this forest? Especially the ones who lost their memories—did they ever interact with these trees before it happened?"

"No," Malthor answered firmly. "We don't let the children play near the forest. Wild animals sometimes wander close when they're hungry—it's too dangerous."

Adyr frowned. Not the answer he was hoping for. He had been trying to establish a link between the trees and the memory loss.

"What about the fruit?" He continued. "Do you gather or eat them?"

This time, the priest gave him a suspicious look, his tone slightly off. "That fruit is wild. No one eats it. It's bitter—and mildly poisonous."

That was... something Adyr probably should've known.

*I think I need to start reading more picture books,* he thought, amused.

Another dead end. No connection to the children—at least, not yet.

Adyr shifted his gaze to the other trees and pointed at a small bird perched on a branch. Its feathers shimmered in shades of blue, with a long yellow crest atop its head, chirping softly.

"What about them?"

Malthor followed his finger and spotted the bird. "Ah, those are rainbow sparrows," he said with surprise. "They usually feed on the fruit from these trees. They're quite common around the village."

He paused, then glanced at Adyr. "Children often set traps to catch them. They like to play with them. Are you suggesting the birds are connected to all this?"

Adyr let out a quiet laugh. "We'll see."

Before the priest could ask anything else, the bird dropped from the branch.

"What—?" Malthor blinked in confusion, unable to understand what had just happened—until he noticed the black throwing knife embedded in the bird's side.

He froze. *He's that fast,* he thought in shock.

Vesha, standing quietly beside them, just smiled. She hadn't seen the movement either, but she enjoyed the look on Malthor's face. He'd doubted Adyr earlier—now he knew better.

Adyr stepped forward, knelt beside the fallen bird, and picked it up. He pulled the black throwing knife from its body, wiped the blade clean on the grass, and slid it back into place at his belt. Then he turned his attention to the bird, examining it closely.

But after a few seconds, something felt off.

A strange sensation crept in—an emptiness, like the lingering ache of having forgotten something important. A hollow weight pressing down on his chest.

"What was the name of the bird?" He muttered, brow furrowed.

He paused, uneasy. His memory was near perfect—sharpened over the years, trained to recall everything he saw or heard unless he chose to discard it. But now, strangely, he was struggling to recall the name he had just heard moments ago.

Realization hit him. He abruptly let go of the bird and stepped back.

Moments later, its body began to fade. Bit by bit, it turned translucent, losing its physical form like the tree before it—until only a faint spirit-like image remained. On the grass, the only thing left behind was a single energy crystal.

*I was careless again*, Adyr thought, irritated.

This was the second time he'd found himself caught off guard—first with the alpha wolf, and now here. It was becoming clear that the logic-defying nature of this world clashed hard with his mind's rigid grip on reality.

If he wanted to survive, he realized he had to stop relying on conventional logic. At the very least, he needed to retrain his sense of reasoning—to adapt it to the rules of this world.

"Looks like our culprit is a Rank 2 Spark," Adyr said confidently.

The clearest proof lay beneath the bird's now-transparent corpse—a Level 2 energy crystal resting quietly on the grass.

Now, the full picture began to form in his mind. The children weren't directly connected to the Spark. Their involvement came through the birds. Mischievous and curious, they had caught the creatures and unknowingly exposed themselves, triggering the memory loss.

The birds, in turn, were linked to the Spark through the trees. Feeding on the fruit, they had been subtly altered, touched by the Spark's power without realizing it.

And the real clue—the one that tied everything together—was the trees themselves.

He didn't yet know how or why, but it was clear the Spark's true interest lay with them.

*Either it's feeding on the trees... or using them to feed on something else.* Adyr speculated, eyes narrowing.

"Oh God Astrael, what have we done to deserve this?" Priest Malthor clasped his hands tightly, whispering a prayer. His face had gone pale, and his body trembled.

He had doubted Adyr at first—but after witnessing his analysis, his composure, and the way he unraveled the situation piece by piece, those doubts had vanished. This young man clearly knew what he was doing. And the glowing purple crystal on the ground was undeniable proof of his words.

Malthor had always feared the culprit might be a Spark—but Rank 2? That was something he hadn't even dared to consider.

"What are we supposed to do now? We're doomed. My poor village... those children... why?" His voice broke as his knees buckled, and he sank to the ground like a man whose faith had been pulled out from under him.

The culprit wasn't just an enemy. It was a truth they were never meant to face.

## **Chapter 70: Farming Energy Crystals**

"Priest Malthor, please pull yourself together. As a strong believer, don't let yourself fall apart like this," Vesha said, kneeling beside him and helping him to his feet.

"Lady Vesha..." Malthor tried to speak, but his voice faltered.

"Why don't we head back to the village?" She suggested gently. "We can sit down, have some tea, clear our heads, and go over everything calmly. Who knows, maybe it's not as hopeless as it seems."

She began guiding him away, slowly pulling him by the arm in a quiet attempt to steady his nerves.

Behind them, as they walked away, Adyr raised a hand and gave her a thumbs-up.

As far as he was concerned, the priest had served his purpose. Now that he had the clues he needed, it was time to begin the real hunt alone.

But first, he nudged the ghostly form of the rainbow sparrow aside with his foot, careful not to make direct contact, then picked up the crystal beneath it and sent it to the Dawn Land.

"Now let's see what this culprit looks like," Adyr said with a grin, turning toward the forest's depths.

He didn't know exactly what he was looking for, but he knew where to start. And he wasn't wasting time.

From time to time, he reached for the throwing knives at his belt and struck down rainbow sparrows perched on the branches above. As their bodies dissolved into their spectral forms, he gathered the crystals left behind.

What pleased him most was their number. The trees were alive with their cheerful chirping, and the forest seemed full of them. Unlike the wolves he had fought before, these creatures weren't particularly dangerous.

Sure, the memory loss effect was strong, but as long as he avoided direct contact, they posed no real threat. They weren't aggressive either. The most they did was flap away when they sensed danger, but they rarely got far before his knives found them.

"This place is just a perfect farming spot," Adyr laughed in satisfaction. At this rate, he might even collect enough energy crystals to register a level 3 talent—or maybe even subdue a Rank 2 Spark.

Especially the one resting quietly in his pocket: the Null Maggot. If he could use its Sense Fade skill, it would be the perfect ability for someone like him—a former serial killer.

As Adyr continued deeper into the woods, he came across more of the missing trees the priest had mentioned. According to Malthor, there were 13 of them—but Adyr, unsurprisingly, found more than that.

The number 13 was just a projection—a false assumption made by the villagers. Since 13 children had lost their memories, they believed 13 trees had vanished. But they had never ventured this far into the forest. They didn't know how many had actually disappeared—or that the connection to the children wasn't as direct as they thought.

Assuming there was a gap of one or two months between each disappearance, Adyr began analyzing the details. There had to be a pattern, some consistent logic connecting the first missing tree to the most recent one.

If he could identify it, predicting which tree would vanish next wouldn't be difficult at all.

He spent around three hours walking between the ghostlike trees. Starting from what he believed was the first to disappear, he traced a path—then found the second, then the third.

Just as he suspected, each tree had vanished in sequence, almost as if they were aligned along a straight path.

The Spark was moving through the woods with intent. It would target a tree, begin whatever strange process turned it into that spectral shell, then move on once it was done.

Now he only had one objective: find the tree currently undergoing that shift. The Spark's next victim. If he could locate it before the process was complete, he might be able to catch the Spark itself in the act.

And finally, after nearly six hours of searching, he found it—the last tree that had already transformed, and just ahead, the next one still untouched. Its trunk was solid, its leaves real, not yet faded into that ghostlike form.

"So where is it?" Adyr muttered, narrowing his eyes at the tree ahead. He kept his distance, studying it carefully. He knew firsthand how dangerous a Rank 2 Spark could be—getting too close without caution wasn't an option.

But even after observing it for a while, nothing happened. No system message appeared. No unusual signs on the tree. Nothing out of place.

He understood why the system remained silent. Just like with the alpha wolf, it wouldn't trigger a **[Spark Found]** notification unless he made direct visual contact with the creature itself.

What bothered him, though, was the tree. It looked completely normal. Too normal.

He just couldn't figure out how to draw the Spark out.

After some thought and further observation, he realized he was spending too much time in one place. Shifting focus, he turned his attention inward—toward the Dawn Land.

There, in the middle of the still, transparent sea, bathed in the golden light of a sun that didn't exist, stood his small island. A patch of green grass surrounded by silence. At its center, on a cushion, rested the crystals he had collected.

His energy body approached them. It was just like his physical form, only entirely transparent—made of pure energy. In the Dawn Land, despite its ethereal appearance, everything could be touched, moved, and interacted with as if it were real.

On the cushion were exactly 43 Level 2 energy crystals and 10 Level 1s. That made 44 usable energy points in total.

*With these, I can register four Level 2 talents and get 40 free stat points,* Adyr thought, his energy form placing a hand under his chin.

After a moment of quiet calculation, he made his decision. He would use 20 of them.

Even a 20-point boost might be enough to catch the Spark.

His energy form reached out and picked up 20 crystals. In an instant, they dissolved into pure energy and merged with his body.

Back in the forest, Adyr opened his eyes and immediately pulled up his stat panel to review the changes.