

Zompiewolf 121

Chapter 121 - Trial (2)

Prior to visiting Deja, Contingent was the biggest city Ashton had stepped foot into. But Upon seeing Deja, the capital city of Lycania, Ashton's perception of big changed drastically. Deja was at least twice as big as Contingent and the atmosphere was much livelier.

Also, unlike Contingent, no one stopped their vehicle and they were given a safe passage straight to the palace, which was located at the heart of the city. The palace was surrounded by huge walls with multiple watchtowers towering over the city at regular intervals.

As they headed inside, Ashton was surprised to see the beautiful gardens full of lavish flowers and exotic plants as well over a hundred people tend to them. Other than that, the soldiers were patrolling every inch of the palace with their hawk-like eyes.

Seeing all the security around the palace, Ashton couldn't fathom who the hell was the mistress was in a stalemate kind of situation with the king? With this many soldiers and citizens who would die for their king if he wanted them to, it would have been quite easy for his highness to squash the mistress like an ant.

'Either the mistress has something the king needs her alive for, or... he is not interested in her and her antics.' Ashton thought as the car ride finally came to an end.

Ashton was already in awe of everything he had seen so far, and the main palace building didn't disappoint him either. The building was certainly befitting of a king.

The palace appeared to have been made of grey limestone with an excellent carving on them. The symmetrically placed short but wide windows added to the overall look of the castle.

However, before Ashton could see anymore of the majestic palace, suddenly the gigantic metallic doors leading to the inside were thrown open and out of it walked the director, with a couple of soldiers behind her.

"Is it over already?" The mistress inquired to which the director laughed before replying.

"Well, it wasn't like they had a case against me either way." The director then turned towards Ashton, "You, on the other hand, do. Come on, let's get inside the trial will start within 10 minutes. Oh and Ashton, use your crutches. No need to act like a tough guy just yet."

Ashton simply nodded and took used the crutches to follow them around. He was given the crutches on the day the princess 'helped' him.

However, once the doctors started doing their job properly, he no longer needed to use them. Still, he kept them inside his inventory as a reminder of one of the worst phases of his life yet.

Within minutes, Ashton found himself in a room with over a thousand people in attendance. Well, the room was less of a 'room' and more of an auditorium. There were people everywhere, from the benches in front of him to the balconies above. On top of that, all of them seemed to belong to high ranking noble families.

There were a couple of faces that Ashton immediately recognised, like the Gruntas and the professors. Thankfully, Rose was also in attendance along with Anna and with her parents... at least that's what Ashton assumed.

But he did not know most of them. Everyone was busy chatting amongst themselves but the moment Ashton and the mistress walked inside the room there was utter silence.

"Relax, Ashton." The mistress mumbled as she wrapped her hands around him, "Everything will be fine. Believe me. I won't let anything happen to you."

'Yeah yeah... mind telling me where were you when I was about to die, again?' Ashton shook his head and kept walking ahead calmly.

He wasn't worried in the least. If anything, it was a great chance to leave a lasting mark on everyone present there. Then there was the thing the princess had told him... although he was worried about the catch related to her... generosity.

"Bow your heads before his highness, the ruler of the proud kingdom of Lycania, King Jonathan Bismark!"

The announcer yelled and immediately everyone bowed their heads to the king... even the mistress. Although she had a disgusted look on her face. A second later a man's heavy footsteps resounded throughout the room.

But way before the footsteps, Ashton's [perception] ability was going crazy. The aura around the king made his legs go numb and he began sweating momentarily. Since the others did not have the heightened [Perception] that Ashton had, they were seemingly unaffected by the king's presence.

While everyone pulled their heads back up with ease, Ashton had to force himself to do so. The power of the man in front of him was indomitable.

'This bitch is crazy to think she can get rid of someone like him... It's simply impossible!' Ashton thought about the Mistress wanting to get rid of the king.

Ashton looked up to the man who had a bored expression on his face, on his golden throne. One hand was placed on the arm of the throne, the king's cheek rested on the other. Even the attire he was wearing was different from what Ashton had imagined.

Jonathan was dressed in a black tuxedo, with a red cape dangling behind and a sapphire sword strapped to his waist. He was a century old, and yet there was not a sign of ageing on his face. But his eyes were similar to the ones mostly the old people had... full of wisdom and knowledge.

While Ashton was scanning the features of the king, the king was doing the same to him. Jonathan was trying to figure out just what his illegitimate daughter had seen in him to care about him so much. However, Ashton was just as much of a mystery to him as he was to the kid.

'Let's see what the kid has to offer, shall we?' Jonathan thought and nodded towards the minister of law and internal affairs.

"Ashton Bismark, stand in the podium.." The minister mumbled calmly, careful not to irritate Jonathan with his high pitched voice, "The trial for the crimes of assault, attempted murder and inhumane battery will now begin."

Chapter 122 - Trial (3)

As soon as Ashton got to the podium, the minister once again started speaking something. However, his voice was too low for Ashton to make anything out. Still, a couple of seconds later, he got to know exactly what the minister had said.

All of sudden, every single juror present there walked out of the courtroom leaving Ashton, the mistress and the director stunned. They were the ones who were supposed to help him out of this mess and without them... he was screwed.

In the podium opposite to the one Ashton had occupied, Amaira stood in with a smug look on her face. She was careful that only he got to see the look on her face while to the rest of them, she appeared to be normal.

"Professor Amaira, since you were the only adult present in the room when the previously mentioned incident happened would you like to shed a light on it?"

'Sure... ask her whatever you want. Hell if you had even asked her why is the sun burning up, she would have found a way to accuse me of that as well.'

His trial had just started and Ashton already knew these bastards were trying to make his situation even worse than it already was.

"Of course, Mr minister," Amaira mumbled and took a deep breath before telling everyone what had conspired in the training room.

Ashton listened to her carefully as well. Initially, he wanted to make sure she did not make up some tale, accusing him of something he had not done. Instead, he finally got to know about what had happened after he lost himself.

Apparently, the bald guy who was stomping on Nikki would not be able to stomp on anything ever again because he was in a coma due to severe blood loss. Just like the rest of his teammates. Apparently... in his 'berserk' state, Ashton ended up activating [Aggravate] skill and attacked the seniors giving them incurable wounds.

As a result, they lost too much blood and ended up in a coma. Thankfully, they weren't dead because the bleeding stopped once Ashton got knocked out.

The moment Amaira mentioned that Ashton had the [Aggravate] skill, everyone in the room started murmuring. It was a skill that Lycaon was said to have and had helped him win countless battles against the humans and the other foes like the night creatures.

Countless werewolves had tried to obtain the skill but had failed. Yet this kid had such a fabled skill even though he was yet to receive his first class? What kind of sorcery was this?

The minister asked Amaira whether she was sure about it and she replied in affirmative. There was no mistake about it. The skill was just like she had read about.

By this time, the bored expression on Jonathan's face had disappeared. He now knew why this kid was so important to Mera. Well, she still might know a couple of other secrets about this kid, but the sole fact of the kid having the [Aggravate] skill made Jonathan want Ashton in his elite force.

"So you're saying this kid turned into a blood-monger and single-handedly took down not one but three students who were capable of partial transformation?"

"As unbelievable as it sounds, he did. Also, the accused, Ashton is also capable of partial transformation. Actually, his transforming ability is better than most of the second years."

Amaira continued with a straight face, "However, he appears to have no control over himself when he transforms and this I would request his highness to make him accountable for all the harm he had caused."

At this moment the Director shot a dirty look at Amaira. The director was already aware that Amaira was more or less a puppet working for the nobles. Whatever she was saying had been thought out to paint Ashton in a poor light.

However, before she could say anything, the king raised his hands, instructing everyone to settle down. He then turned towards Amaira who immediately bowed before him.

"According to the reports I received regarding this matter, this isn't the first case this kid has defeated a senior, is it?" Jonathan asked her while smiling faintly.

"Y-Yes, your highness." Amaira replied, "a few days before the accident in the arena, he had knocked out another second-year student called Jason."

"Interesting... so you're telling me this first-year student who hadn't even attended the academy for a month can defeat students who had spent a year there?"

"That... your highness... I mean-"

Before Amaira could even form a proper sentence, Jonathan gestured her to stay silent as Rick, the minister handed him a huge file. The file wasn't an ordinary file either. It contained the reports from the rest of the professors of the academy regarding Ashton.

All of the professors who were teaching Ashton had only praises for him. Even Kakaroff, the professor who hated every student with passion had only good things to say for him. All of them, except Amaira.

That report itself was sufficient for Jonathan to revoke Ashton's expulsion. However, doing it would not fulfil any of his intentions for overseeing this trial himself. He wanted Ashton to be grateful to him, only then would he be able to use the kid for making his dream of dominating all of the werewolf kingdoms become a reality.

"What do you think, Rick? What should we do to someone who can defeat people who are supposed to be far superior to him?" Jonathan asked the minister.

"That person should be considered as an asset to the kingdom, your highness. With proper training and careful mentorship, the kid would certainly become an even bigger asset to Lycania."

Hearing the minister say those words baffled the nobles present there. They were there to see the mutt get his ass handed to him. Instead, they ended up watching the king praise him? What the hell was going on in his mind.

"But your highness, the accused had injured a lot of students-" One of the high-ranking nobles tried interjecting but was quickly silenced by Jonathan.

"If they ended up getting injured means they were weak and thus did not belong in the academy in the first place," Jonathan said with a serious look on his face, "Either that or this kid is too strong and I for one appreciate strength over blood purity of their blood. So tell me which is it, are the second-years are weak or this kid is absurdly strong?"

Chapter 123 - Royal Guard (1)

Obviously the noble had no answer for Jonathan's question. If he acknowledges that the students were weak, they might end up getting expelled instead as weak people did not deserve to study in the academy.

On the other hand, if he admitted that Ashton was strong, that would qualify the mutt to get preferential treatment from the king. As it was well known Jonathan did not care able blood and lineage when it came to his soldiers. Sadly, it wasn't true when it came to his family.

Either way, as long as someone could prove their worth to him, their lives were as good as set to drown in a sea of riches and power. Also, judging by the way Jonathan had framed the question, the noble more or less already knew he had taken notice of the mutt's talent.

"The kid... is strong, your highness." The noble mumbled and sat back down.

"For once you are right, this kid has exceptional talent." Jonathan said in a low voice, "That being said, his rampancy can pose a threat to a lot of people around him. That's a fact even I can't ignore."

"While praising the strong is important to the werewolves, protecting the weak is an undeniable duty as well. Thus after thinking about it long and hard, as well as taking the opinions of everyone present here into account. "

He continued, "I have decided to turn the accused's expulsion into an indefinite suspension. The accused is advised to get his powers under control during this time Once it is confirmed that he is in complete control of his powers, he will be allowed to attend the academy."

With Jonathan's final judgement, came smiles on the faces of the nobles. For all they knew and cared, it could take the mutt decades to control a power that none of them had any idea about. In the meantime, their kids would graduate from the academy and will have nothing to do with the mutt.

However, in their excitement, they forgot that the sentencing wasn't over yet. also the noise they made irritated Jonathan beyond any limit. However, before he could do something regrettable, Rick, went into action and immediately calmed everyone down.

Jonathan took a few seconds to calm his nerves before carrying on with the sentencing.

"That being said, it would be unfair to the accused if he was not provided with any assistance at all. Therefore, I would personally handle his case and make him strong enough to be an asset to Lycania. The details of this venture would be discussed tomorrow in private. The court is now adjourned."

And just like that, the trial was over. But the sentencing had left everyone confused and angered. The nobles who were celebrating moments ago now had a defeated look on their faces. However, they weren't alone as the mistress and the director were quick to join them.

They were too late to understand Jonathan's play. He wanted Ashton all for himself because of his special talents and under the guise of helping him, he successfully did that. There was only one winner in this trial and it was the king himself.

A few hours later...

"I won't stand for it!" The mistress yelled at the top of her lungs as soon as they got into the 'royal suite' Jonathan had his servants prepared for Ashton and his guardian.

"What are you gonna do then? Fight Jonathan in his city?" The director tried her best to calm the raging mistress.

Ashton didn't know why, but this event had seemed to make both of them put their differences aside and work towards finding a solution. Well, to be honest, he did not care about it at all. After all, who wouldn't want to work under the special guidance of a king?

'I can understand the mistress's anger. I was supposed to be the weapon to take down the king and now she is about to lose me to him. So, it's obvious she would be pissed. But why the hell is the director losing her crap over this shit?'

He couldn't help but wonder why was she behaving like this. Still, this wasn't the first time the director did something like this either. All of a sudden, Ashton remembered all those times when the director had protected him or at least tried to.

Although Ashton wasn't that big of a fan of the director, he somehow knew she always or at least most of the time had his best interest in her mind. Then there was the fact she happened to know his parents.

There were a lot of things he still needed answers to, but for now, there wasn't anything he could do on his own.

"I will do so if that's what I have to do." The mistress did not seem to be relenting but then Ashton had a bright idea of opening his mouth.

'I don't like sucking that bitch's ass, but if I want to get close to the king, I will have to let this bitch allow me to do so. Well, it's not like she can refuse his direct order either. Here goes nothing.'

"With all due respect, I can not allow you to do anything that would cause you harm, mistress." Ashton mumbled in the sweetest and worried voice he could manage to spout, "You are strong, really strong, but even I don't think you can take on the entire kingdom down by yourself. If you could, you would have already done so."

Ashton waited for a bit for the mistress to reply. But when she didn't he continued.

"In hindsight, I think this is a great opportunity for you to get what you wanted in the first place."
Ashton's this line seemed to have caught the mistress's interest.

"What do you mean?" She asked him.

"Let me go and work under the king. I'll gain his trust and once he trusts me completely I'll blindside him."

Ashton had a smug look on his face, why wouldn't he? It was the brightest idea ever! Though it would have been better if the director and the mistress were not laughing at him.

"We need to get your intelligence up asap." The director mumbled breathlessly, "You think you're the first one who came up with such a ridiculous plan?"

"I agree," the mistress was still laughing, "but I also agree that we have no other choice. Since father has set his eyes on you, there's no way he would give you up so easily.. For now, let's get some food, we can discuss all this later."

Chapter 124 - Royal Guard (2)

The next day, in King's palace...

Well, the day did not start the way mistress wanted to. For starters, when the king said he would like to meet Ashton, he meant he would like to meet him alone. No one else. The mistress was baffled by this but it wasn't like she could have done anything about it.

So Ashton went in and sat in silence in the courtroom alone. Out of boredom his eyes eventually began wandering through the room feeling a bit overwhelmed because of the sheer size of the room.

He could not believe it was the same room in which he had been put on a trial. Probably having all those people sitting there and the tense atmosphere made Ashton not aware of his surroundings.

The room was more or less like the one the mistress had in Maddencreek, only this room was about five times as large as the mistress's throne room if it could be called that. As for the decorations, everything in the room was either covered in gold and silver or in innumerable precious stones.

"How the hell did I miss all of this yesterday?" Ashton mumbled absentmindedly.

"Sometimes things are better left unnoticed." A sharp, authoritative voice echoed from behind.

Ashton immediately turned around only to see Jonathan standing there in some basic yet elegant attire. He wasn't wearing a tuxedo or anything, just a simple black turtleneck sweater along with a pair of black jeans. However, his sword was right by his side, as usual.

'How did he appear here out of nowhere?'

It was only yesterday when Ashton could sense Jonathan's indomitable aura even before he had entered the room, but now, he was standing right behind him and yet his [perception] could not trace him?

But there was one more thing... when Ashton tried viewing Jonathan's stats, he could only see a bunch of '?'.

—

Name: Jonathan Bismark

Species: Werewolf

Status: Werewolf

Class: ??

Title: ??, ??, ??, ??

Age: 86 years

Gender: Male

Grade: ??

Affiliation: Werewolves.

Level:

> Werewolf Level: ??

Stats:

HP: ??/??

Damage: ??

Armour: ??

Stealth: ??

Stamina: ??

Agility: ??

Intelligence: ??

Nature:

???

Abilities/skills/spells:

??

??

+ 12 more

—

Although Ashton was familiar with being denied to view someone's stats. This was the first time he had seen so many '?' on someone's status page. Hell, he wasn't even strong enough to view Jonathan's grade, class or title.

'Just how strong is this guy...'

The next moment Ashton ended up chuckling. He did not want to but he couldn't help but do so after thinking how the mistress wanted to challenge someone like the king on his turf. Just thinking about it was much worse than committing suicide.

"Mind if I ask what you find so amusing?" Jonathan asked Ashton and although he had a smile on his face, it didn't look like the king was in the mood for joking around.

"N-Nothing, your highness."

Jonathan sighed before speaking again, and the words he spoke... were nothing less than a threat concealed in flowery words. he explained how he had been wanting to claim the other kingdoms for himself but facing setback after setbacks. All thanks to the swamp lying between him and his ambition.

The conversation was long but the gist of it was that Jonathan wanted Ashton to work for him.

"Don't overthink it. I don't have any interest in you. But the skills that you possess." Jonathan made his intentions clear from the get-go, "But since both of you come as a single package, I have to make do with whatever I can."

When Ashton did not reply to him, Jonathan put his offer in even simpler terms.

"Join the royal guards and I'll personally train you to become an excellent warrior. A true force to be reckoned with. And once you are done with the tasks I give you, you'll be generously rewarded. Women, riches, hell, you can even have one of my daughters if you like."

He continued, "But I don't think you are someone who would be interested in such meagre things. So how about... the location of your lost parents?"

As soon as those words escaped Jonathan's mouth, Ashton could not keep his face expressionless anymore. He was happy, angry and confused at the same time. How the hell did everyone know about them except him? Just what were these people hiding from him?

"How do you-"

"How do I know them? What a foolish question to ask." Jonathan said with a faint smile, "How can I not know two of the founding members of the Resistance?"

"Founding members?"

Ashton was getting too much information all of a sudden. How could his parents be the founding members of the resistance? If they were so important, then shouldn't they have been the last ones to get arrested? Nothing was making sense anymore...

Then Ashton remembered something he had heard a lot of oldies in the enclosure said about him. How he was different because unlike them he wasn't born in the enclosure. However, before they could tell much they were immediately silenced by the guards so Ashton thought it was just another one of their made-up tales to make him feel special.

But now those tales did not seem to be made-up at all. While Ashton was still thinking about all that, Jonathan immediately began hammering the iron while it was still hot.

"Oh, I assumed you already knew all that considering you are quite close with the third founding member." He acted all surprised but deep inside he was laughing hilariously because his plan was working brilliantly, "After all, she showed up with you during the trial."

'Close with the third member? Who could that be- no... way. It can't be her.'

Everything finally made sense. How the director knew about his real name and his parents... why she was trying to protect him at all cost... everything made sense. She herself had told him that she too was a mutt when they first met after the entrance examination. The dots were floating right in front of him and yet he wasn't able to connect them.

"But why would she hide it from me?" Ashton started mumbling to himself in his confused state.

"Maybe because she is ashamed of what she did." Jonathan shrugged his shoulder in a nonchalant way.

"Ashamed for what?"

"For betraying them. Who do you think helped Mera to catch them?"

Chapter 125 - Duel (1)

"Think carefully, Ashton." Jonathan continued with his plan of manipulating Ashton, "What do you want? If you choose revenge, I'll give it to you as long as you do what I ask of you. Help me take care of the swamp, and I'll help you take care of your foes."

"...Fine, I'll do it." Ashton agreed with his expressionless face.

"Excellent-"

"But I have some conditions of my own."

"What is it?" Although Jonathan did not like to be interrupted while talking, he was willing to make an exception here because the kid was a valuable asset for him.

"Allow me to form an independent team. I don't mind working with the soldiers you trust but I'd rather have my own people whom I can trust around me."

'This fcker...' Jonathan forced a smile on his face as soon as those words emerged from Ashton's mouth, 'He doesn't even know how everyone had been betraying him and yet he talks about trust so high and mighty.'

Jonathan pushed those thoughts aside and even though he wanted to laugh right at Ashton's face, he controlled his urges. If the kid wanted to have fun with people around him then it was fine. He could have whatever he wanted.

"Fine. Do as you please." Jonathan agreed to Ashton's request, however, Ashton wasn't done yet. He had yet another condition to put forth.

"Please make sure whatever we have talked about remained between us. I would not want the mistress or the director to know what's about to hit them in advance."

Jonathan nodded "Anything else?"

" I feel really frustrated, so I'm gonna kill a lot of people soon. I hope you can take care of it."

At this moment Jonathan had had enough. He ended up laughing like a maniac. This 16-year-old was going to kill a lot of people? What a hilarious joke! Jonathan was aware that this young lad had the skills to do so, but he didn't know if he had the will.

Kill night creatures and killing werewolves were two entirely different things. Not everyone had the guts to do something like that, let alone proclaim in advance that they were going to do that crap either.

However, for the sake of the things Jonathan was about to have the kid do for him, he had to get acquainted with killing soon. After all, his plan of dominating and ruling over the other kingdoms will not get fulfilled without lots of bloodshed on both sides.

Still, what Ashton was saying was downright absurd. How could someone of his age so calmly proclaim of doing such a thing?

"My apologies for laughing over such a serious matter, but I would like to know one thing. Have you ever killed someone before?" Jonathan asked after calming himself a bit.

There was no ulterior motive behind asking such a question. Jonathan just wanted to know whether this kid was all bark and no bite or did he actually know what he was talking about.

"Do you think those three students who died during the ranking exam was caused by a night creature?" Ashton responded with a calm and cold voice.

For the first time ever since they had started chatting with each other, Jonathan felt that the kid was being serious. Or in other words... he felt like Ashton had finally dropped the mask of innocence from his face.

'So the brat was being serious huh...' It was Jonathan's turn to be surprised this time, 'I guess he is more capable than I was led to believe. Mera... I don't know what you did, but you have raised one hell of a monster.'

Jonathan had thought he would use the brat's feelings to turn him against the ones who had been protecting him till now. Only to realise that Ashton did not need anyone's protection... other's needed protection from his rage.

"Alright kid, enough talking for now. Let's see if your talent can back up your words or not." Jonathan got serious and drew his sword while simultaneously throwing another one towards Ashton who easily caught it, "I'll consider your offer if you can land one hit on me. However, if you can't then you'll forget about killing anyone till I say so."

"Fine by me," Ashton responded confidently and wore his equipment, "Just one hit should be fine."

"I thought you would say no. But I guess you are either the most stubborn person to ever live or you are just a maniac." Jonathan smiled, "Let's make this duel a bit fairer, shall we? I'll not move from where I am standing. Also, I won't attack you either. if I break any of those rules, you'll win again."

"Your place, your rules. I'll fight you either way. After all, I have to prove my worth to you, don't I?"

[Armour Skill: <Lure> has been activated.]

[Number of targets affected: 1]

[The affected targets are found to have a higher level than the user. The effectiveness of their skills have been reduced by 60%]

[Skill: <Wolf's Mark> has been activated.]

[Number of targets affected: 1]

[Damage and Agility have been boosted by 10% for 3 minutes.]

"Impressive. I can see why those second years had trouble taking you down." Jonathan smiled as Ashton charged right towards him, "However, your technique needs a lot of work."

Ashton ignored Jonathan completely and went in for the attack. He kept moving from left and right trying to confuse Jonathan but right when he lunged in to attack Jonathan, something went wrong. Jonathan released the aura he had been hiding and the next moment Ashton fell on his knees.

Ashton never thought a man could be so overwhelming. The aura was much denser than Ashton had felt before. Probably because he was much closer to Jonathan than he had been previously. It almost felt as if something was choking him. It was unlike anything he had ever experienced before.

"What's wrong? Get back on your feet. Show me you're worth my time." Jonathan smiled while looking down at him.

Jonathan was pretty sure Ashton would not be able to get up, let alone fight anymore. However, to his surprise Ashton forced himself up and even managed to swing his sword.... before passing out.

Chapter 126 - Duel (2)

Ashton woke up a couple of minutes later, surrounded by medics who were checking if he had sustained a concussion or something. Even though Jonathan had withdrawn his aura, Ashton could still feel it looming over his head. It wasn't an experience he would ever want to go again.

'I knew I was going to lose even before we started... But I didn't think I would lose without even touching his sword.' Ashton squinted his eyes as he got back to his feet, 'That sounded so... wrong.'

The medics still wanted to check him but Ashton shrugged them off. After the stunt those hospital staff pulled, he couldn't bring himself to trust anyone meddling with his body. Hell, he was ready to fight these medics off when they kept pestering him until Jonathan made an appearance again.

"You're awake, good. I had the medics on standby in case things went south but I guess it wasn't needed." he said with a smile before patting Ashton on the shoulder, "You exceeded my expectations, but you're still too inexperienced to be of any use to me. We gotta take care of that first. Then you can go killing whoever you want."

"But I lost-"

"I'm not someone who fights battles he knows he's gonna lose." Jonathan's smile got wider, "I didn't expect you to win in the first place. It was all to test your willpower and well, let's just say it's better than most of the soldiers under my command."

Ashton nodded and scanned the soldiers standing behind Jonathan. Just a couple of minutes ago, there was no one in the room, Ashton was sure of it as neither of his skills informed him of any other presence. But now he was surrounded by more than a hundred people.

All of them must have been well above level 30 as he could not detect any of their information. Apart from their basic information like name and age. These people were members of the royal guards. The same group the king wanted Ashton to join.

'I know I have rare skills and stuff, but why would he want a level 13 werewolf like me to join them? Ain't I too weak in comparison?'

"You are not joining them just yet." Jonathan said while looking Ashton straight in the eyes, "But you will soon."

"Can you read my mind or something?" Ashton asked Jonathan, expecting him to say yes, but he didn't.

"I don't need to be a mind reader to read your facial expressions kiddo."

"So... what's next-"

"Mind your tongue in front of his highness!" Suddenly a knight pulled his sword out and the rest of the knights followed his lead.

Ashton immediately jumped back. Their swords were laced with poison, Ashton could smell it even from the distance between them. While he was jumping back, he also tried to get a look at the knights' faces, but since they were covered in weird bronze and silver armour from head to toe, he could not get a read on them.

"Micheal, I don't think I gave my permission for you to intervene, did I?" Jonathan looked calm but Ashton knew he was pissed, "This is the last time I am warning you. Do not act before I say so or I'm harmed in any way. Is that clear?"

"Yes... your highness." Micheal put his sword back inside the scabbard and just like before, the rest of the knights followed him in unison.

"You can leave now. We'll carry on with our discussion later."

"As you please."

With that, Ashton and Jonathan were left alone once again. Once everyone was out, Jonathan spoke once again.

"So as I was saying, you know how to fight but you lack the experience. Thankfully, there is a way for you to gain the said battle experience quickly. The dungeons. Before you can join the royal guards, I would need you to fulfil some criterion one which is getting a class."

He continued, "Since people are given the choice to select a class based on the skills they have earned so far, it would be difficult even for me to predict what kind of classes you would be offered. Considering that [Aggravate] skill of yours is a unique skill the class would also be a unique class."

"So I would need to go and get registered as an adventurer in the guild..." Ashton mumbled slowly, "I mean, that's the only way since returning to the academy so soon for the dungeon trip is out of the question."

"Precisely," Jonathan nodded, "Are you aware of the ranking system of the adventurer's guild?"

Ashton shook his head. He only knew a bit about the adventurer's guild and their work. That too he had to pester the mistress into telling him because she did not want him to join the guild and put himself into unnecessary danger. But Ashton was pretty sure she did it because she wanted to monopolize him and his skills for herself.

"This is turning out to be too much work for me... but it's fine." Jonathan sighed and proceeded to tell Ashton about the ranking system.

Unlike the academy, the guild had an entirely different ranking system. The ranking of an adventurer did not count their levels but the level of threats they had subdued or the number of jobs they had completed.

Based on this, the rankings were classified into seven different ranks, namely: Copper, Iron, Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum and Diamond. Copper was the lowest tier while Diamond was the highest.

At the moment, there were only 5 Diamond ranked adventurers in the entire world... or at least in the continents where the Vampires and werewolves ruled. Because the guild had branches in both werewolf kingdoms as well as vampire kingdoms.

There was a further six sub-division between the grade, E, D, C, B, A and S. Everyone had to do a quest based on their subdivision grades to climb higher.

For example, if someone wanted to upgrade their rank from copper to iron, they would have to do complete one mission from E, D, C, B, A and S grade under their ranks. Only then they would be promoted to a higher rank.

"So here's your first test. You have two months to show me how sincere you are." Jonathan said with a serious tone, "Get your rank up to Gold in these two months or else forget about our deal. I'll have someone guide you to get tested in the guild.. May Lycaon's blessing be with you."

Chapter 127 - Let's Get Ranked (1)

The mistress had been waiting for Ashton the moment he walked out of the courtroom. She was worried about him as it had been a while since he went in. But the moment, he walked out she immediately realised there was something wrong with him.

'Why is he pissed?' The mistress thought to herself before rushing in towards him. But before she could get close enough the knights accompanying him jumped in front.

"What is the meaning of this?" The mistress growled at the knights, "I am his lawful guardian-"

"Not anymore." To her surprise, it was Ashton who interrupted her.

"What did you say?"

"I said, you are not my guardian anymore. So it would be better if you leave." Ashton repeated his words while looking straight into her eyes, "Till I manage to get my powers under control, my guardianship belongs to the kingdom, and effectively to his highness, the king."

The mistress was taken aback by this sudden development, but she wasn't going to let him go without a fight. He belonged to her and her alone. Not to the kingdom or to the king.

"You don't know what you are talking about, this is-"

"This is all for the better. Just like I said." Ashton cut the mistress off once again but this time he nodded at her.

The mistress was quick to take the hint. Ashton was still on her side, but now he was doing things his way.

'This brat... he actually plans on infiltrating the palace on his own? Either he is too brave or too foolish. But looks like he had already made up his mind to do this.'

The mistress was not on board with his plan, but there wasn't anything she could have done to persuade Ashton to do otherwise. The only thing that she could do was to hope whatever the brat had in his mind actually ended up working. Or else her plans of taking over the kingdom would fail hilariously.

"Believe me, Ashton, you will regret this decision you have made today." The Mistress scoffed, "And I'll be laughing right on your face when you do."

"We'll see about that. For now, you should get going." Ashton smirked and waved his hands as if he was shooping away a street dog.

Even though she knew Ashton was acting, the mistress did not take his gesture kindly and swore to 'punish' him thoroughly for doing what he did when he came back to her. Maybe after spending some time apart, Ashton would start missing her for once and enjoy his 'punishment'. Just maybe.

'Looks like phase one was a success.' Ashton thought to himself, 'This bitch really thinks I'm on her side when I'm on... my side. Working for the king is beneficial to me. So I'll work for him, when someone else can benefit me more, I'll jump ships again.'

Ashton did not care about things like loyalty when it came to werewolves. The only thing he cared about was revenge, but now that the king had offered him something even better, he would focus his efforts on that.

Jonathan apparently knows the location of his parents and they are still alive... well, at least Jonathan thinks they are. As long as Ashton helped him clear the swamps, he will get to see them again or at least get to know more about them.

But it would take a lot of time before it becomes reality. He would need to do a lot of things before even thinking about taking on the swamps. As from what he had heard, even the soldiers above level 30 and above die there on a regular basis.

Thus Ashton wanted to get to at least level 50 before stepping foot into the swamps and Jonathan seems to agree with it as well. Ashton was a valuable asset for him. Therefore, Jonathan would rather have Ashton proceed slowly than jump headfirst into danger and lose Ashton.

That being said... there was one more thing that Ashton wanted to do once he was strong enough. Which was to confront the witch of the director for the piece of shit she was. Ashton still had not gotten the complete truth about what the director and his parents had to do with each other.

But one thing was for certain... she had betrayed his parents which ended up with them landing in the mistress's enclosure. The place where his shit show of life began. She would have to pay for whatever she had done. But for now, Ashton could only turn his grudge into anger and use it to fuel himself up.

Also, Ashton had no intention of abiding by the rules Jonathan had presented him with. Especially the rule about not killing high-ranking nobles or simply not killing at all. After all, he had to feed his other genes and killing was the most important part of it.

'For now, let's just focus on getting that class of mine and killing whenever I get the chance to.'

"We are getting late. According to the orders, you need to get registered as an adventurer by the evening." One of the knights escorting Ashton remarked in a very formal tone.

"Let's get going then." Ashton smiled as they headed towards the guild.

"This is the guild?" Ashton asked with raised eyebrows.

When Ashton had gotten to know about the guild he had imagined it would be some kind of lavish place with lots of high levelled people around. Well, the building in front of him was not in a bad shape but it was certainly below his expectations. So were the people around him. Some of them had not even reached level 10!

"No. This isn't the guild's head office, but the recruitment centre." The knight responded to Ashton's query, "All of these people are here either for the recruitment test or for a revaluation."

"Ah, that makes sense. So what do I need to do?"

"Nothing much. You just have to wait till they call your name and then head inside for the test. Before you ask how they know your name, preparations had already been made since yesterday.. In fact, the first name they will call should be yours."

Chapter 128 - Let's Get Ranked (2)

Everything happened just the way the knight had informed. Although he was one of the last people to appear for the test, Ashton was called inside first which kind of made the others blab a bit about him. However, the moment they saw that the kid was accompanied by royal guards, they immediately shut their mouths.

None of them even wanted to mess with regular guards of Deja, let alone royal guards who were the strongest force in the city. Still, they kept mumbling about it to themselves every now and then.

'No wonder the nobility and the royalty are just some petty brats. They get everything handed to them after all.' Ashton shrugged his shoulders and walked inside, 'Why the heck am I complaining though? I'm using the same privilege for myself, haha.'

Once inside, Ashton saw a dozen people working all around the room. Ashton did not know what they were doing but they appeared to be occupied. Only the woman who had called his name seemed to be somewhat free.

"Alright, looks like everything checks out. We can begin the test." The woman said while flaunting his shoulder-length brown hair, "The procedure is really simple. You'll head into the simulation room next door. There, you will have to face various F grade night creatures for ten minutes. The more night creatures you end up eliminating, the higher will be your rank. Any questions?"

"Will this process be recorded? And am I allowed to use my weapons and other gear?" Ashton asked the attendant without wasting any time.

"Of course, this process will be recorded. How else are we supposed to rank you?" The lady said with an annoyed look, "As far as weapons and gear are concerned, you are free to use whatever you like. However, the use of any potion is strictly prohibited. Anything else?"

"How many do I have to kill to get the Gold rank?"

"Ambitious, aren't we?" The lady shook her head. Ashton's ignorance was slowly getting on her nerves now.

The lady had no idea about Ashton's skill and all she knew about him was that he was a royal brat. Who often turn out to be mostly all talk and no show. On top of that, during this time of year when the academy had already begun, only those who could not make it into the academy came to get tested in hopes of redeeming themselves one way or the other.

Even the top 5 Diamond ranked adventurers had to slowly crawl their way up through the rankings and take multiple reevaluation tests over a decade to reach where they are right now. Also, none of them had reached the gold rank in one go.

"Here's the ranking chart. Feel free to go through it." The lady could have given Ashton a direct answer, however, she instead decided to show him exactly what kind of hell he was in for.

Most of the nobles could only get to bronze let alone any other higher grade. In fact, after getting their result, some of them even end up giving up on being an adventurer altogether. And she had a feeling this brat was going to be one of them.

In the meantime, Ashton carefully went through the pamphlet the lady had so generously handed to him. As he went through it, he realised it was nothing extravagant. As long as people had the skill for it they could easily reach beyond Iron rank. The only problem was the time limit.

—

No. of monsters killed / Rank achieved

Less than 10 → Not qualified to be an adventurer

10 to 24 kills → Copper Rank

25 to 49 kills → Iron Rank

50 to 99 kills → Bronze Rank

100 to 249 kills → Silver Rank

250 to 499 kills → Gold Rank

500 to 999 kills → Platinum Rank

1000 or more kills → Diamond Rank

Time limit: 10 minutes.

—

"I'm ready." Ashton confidently replied and handed the pamphlet back to the lady, "Let's begin."

Ashton headed inside the room with his armour and whip in hand. It went without question that he was going to aim for the gold rank right from the beginning. However, he was prepared in case he could not achieve it.

After all, since this was a task given to him by the king himself, it had to be quite challenging, to say the least. If not gold he at least had to get the bronze rank. Anything below that would be damaging to his self-confidence.

As soon as the door locked behind him, the atmosphere of the room changed. All of a sudden it got cold... really cold and a dusky forest formed in front of his eyes. Followed by innumerable night creatures.

Ashton scanned the nearest one of them and it turned out to be a level 10. On top of that, these six-legged creatures were unlike Ashton had ever seen before. Horns converted their entire body and disgusting mutations had popped out of their bodies like wild mushrooms in monsoon.

In other words, they looked like a bunch of overgrown insects. Who now instead of sucking the blood of animals, were dead set on eating their flesh. However, since they were level 10 and below, Ashton could easily handle them. That is if there weren't literally over a thousand of them surrounding him.

Also, since all of this was being recorded, he could not afford to use his Vampire or undead skills either. He had to fight using the skills he had retained as a werewolf and the gear he had on himself.

"Fcking hell, let's do what we can and consider everything else later." Ashton sighed before jumping into the sea of monsters.

10 minutes passed sooner than expected and Ashton was out of the simulation chamber in no time. However, he was not pleased with the results. He knew what rank he had achieved, but it took about a couple of hours for his official results to arrive.

—

Adventurer Name: Ashton Bismark

Adventurer Level: 13

Adventurer Class: Unassigned

Adventurer Rank: Bronze-A

Number of monsters killed: 94

Time: 10 minutes

Injuries received: None

Chapter 129 - First Dungeon (1)

Unlike the test, the results were publicly announced for every adventurer and examinee to see. And to say a lot of people were baffled and impressed would be an understatement. After all, getting to the bronze rank in the first go was nothing less than an achievement, that too at such a young age.

But none of the people present there had expected Ashton, whom they all assumed to be a noble brat, would be the one to top the list. However, Ashton was far from pleased. He was merely able to secure the bare minimum of what he had desired to.

The creatures he had to face were especially difficult to one-shot despite being only level 10. Their tough exoskeleton made it difficult for him to kill them swiftly, especially with a whip of all things. However, Ashton wasn't pissed because of his performance but because of his weapon of choice.

If only he had used the twin blades instead of the whip, he would have been able to kill those creatures much more easily. Hell, if he had some kind of heavy weapon, that would have been even better. That way, he would have been able to squash their heads in one go.

'No point in crying over spilt milk.' Ashton thought to himself as he was given his bronze dog tag.

He stared at the prize of his efforts for a moment. The tag had some weird engravings on it which he did not know the meaning of along with his name. He was officially an adventurer now and was allowed to head into appropriate dungeons after receiving a contract from the guild.

He did not waste any more of his time there and immediately headed towards the head office of the guild that issued quests to the adventurers based on their ranks.

It also appeared that one of the knights was called back to the palace while Ashton was giving the test. Leaving him with only one knight to guide him around. The Knight accompanying him suggested him to rest for the day but Ashton did not listen to them.

Thanks to not getting the rank Ashton wanted to, he would have to clear 7 to get to Gold rank missions instead of 4 that he would have needed to in case he had gotten the silver rank. That being said, he wanted to get a higher rank as soon as possible.

But that was only the secondary reason. His primary reason was to level up the rest of his genes by feasting on the night creatures. It was a blessing that the monsters he had to face during the test were simulated beings and not real. Otherwise, his werewolf class would have already levelled up and as a result, a genetic shit show would have started within his body.

'Status.'

—

Name: Ashton Fenrir

Species: Zombie (Active), Vampire (Active), Werewolf (Active), Human (Deceased).

Status: Zompiewolf

Class: Unassigned

Title: [Defiant], [Novice Brewer]

Age: 16 years

Gender: Male

Grade: F-tier (Evolution is possible)

Affiliation: Werewolves.

Level:

> Werewolf Level: 13 (18%)

> Vampire Level: 9 (89%)

> Zombie Level: 8 (92%)

—

'Only 8% more exp needed to level up the undead genes. It should be fine if I just kill and consume one monster.' Ashton thought to himself, 'But just to be safe, I'll try to level up the vampire and zombie levels as much as I can.'

The headquarter was only a five-minute walk away from the testing facility, and this time, Ashton was not disappointed. The building was humongous and the people around were at least level 15 and had lots of good gear on them. All in all, the place looked like somewhere strong people would frequent.

Well, on the inside, the place was even more hustling and bustling. People were chatting amongst themselves, discussing their adventures or looking to team up to take on a variety of quests.

"You should go and take a look at the available quests. In the meantime, I'll go ahead and inform the concerned authorities about who you are. That should make it somewhat easy for you to get some intel about the dungeon in question." The knight accompanying him informed Ashton before disappearing.

'Let's see what we have here...'

There was an electronic board in front of them that listed the available dungeons that were free for anyone to try and clear. Next to this bluish bulletin board was another red coloured holographic board which listed 'Exclusive quests'.

These were the quests only gold or above ranked adventurers could accept and they also needed the permission of the guild before accepting the quest. Thus, not a lot of people were standing there and the majority of the crowd was gathered in front of the blue board. That's where Ashton was headed as well.

However, just as he reached there, a man stopped him. Well, he wasn't alone, he had a few other members as well. The man who stopped him was carrying a gigantic hammer strapped to his back while the two women behind him had a bow and staff each.

'Better take a look at them before getting into a fight or something.' Ashton calmly reminded himself.

Everyone in the trio was at level 15. Which meant they had just received their classes and were probably looking for a quest to test their new skills out. As for their ranks... well the man was a Bronze ranker while the two behind him were both ranked at Iron, judging by their dog tags.

The only thing Ashton wondered was... why the hell were they stopping him?

"Kid, this is not a place for someone like you. Go there and get some non-combat quests." The man had a gentle voice, unlike his ragged appearance.

"Don't worry me. I can handle myself just fine."

Since the man was being friendly, Ashton replied to his question with a smile and walked towards the board. Only to be stopped by the bearded man. However, before he could utter a single word, someone quickly called out for Ashton.

"Ah, you must be Ashton Bismark. A pleasure to meet you." A smartly dressed man was standing behind them along with the knight.

Standing at 5'5", the man had a gentle feel about him. He had well-kept brown hair which went quite well with his dusky, beaded beard. There was a deep scar on his face, which would have probably been the reason why he was wearing an eye patch as his left eye was in the middle of the scar.

"I'm Markus Finnely, the assistant guild manager."

Chapter 130 - First Dungeon (2)

Everyone around them immediately gasped as soon the man introduced himself. Everyone present there had heard of the great spearman. After all, he was one of the first people to head into the dungeon where the werewolves encountered their first A-ranked night creature... the Juggernaut.

The Juggernaut was a dozen feet tall nightmarish creature with unbelievably strong defence. However, its offensive abilities were even worse. It also took about a week to finally kill the monstrosity.

But by the time that was achieved, out of the 100 adventurers who participated in the raid, a quarter of them were annihilated and numerous souls were left crippled for life. Markus Finnely was one of them as he lost an eye to the monster. But he was also the reason why more than seventy members survived the battle.

In short, the man standing in front of them was a living legend. Someone whom all of them looked up to and for someone like him to appear in front of them was a bit overwhelming for everyone.

Well, everyone but Ashton, who did not have a single clue about who Markus was. However, judging by how everyone was acting up and that the old man's stats were hidden, he decided to treat the man with respect.

"The pleasure is all mine, sir." Ashton respectfully replied.

"Oh my, I never imagined a Bismark would address me as 'sir'." Markus joked before heartily laughing.

Immediately the people around them had found something new to talk about. It was their lucky day... probably?

"Great. You went ahead and messed with royalty. Good going, Virgil. We got new classes and now we're gonna die even before we got to test them out." The woman with the bow smacked the hammer guy right in the head.

"Oh, shit... I grabbed someone related to the king by his shoulder..." The hammer-wielding man mumbled absent-mindedly, "I'm so dead."

Before everything could get overly complicated, Ashton cleared any misconceptions they had about him being related to the king. After all, Jonathan did not seem like a man who would have enjoyed having a son like him.

"I'm a Bismark only in name. His highness is only my patron, nothing more."

"Still, for him to send a recommendation letter for you, he must value you quite a bit. After all, he did not even do it for any of his children."

Ashton did not know anything about a letter but judging from how pleased Markus looked, Jonathan must have written something good about him.

"Either way, I have been informed you obtained Bronze rank in your first attempt and hurried here to find a quest. You are quite ambitious, Mr Bismark. That being said, I think I have the perfect quest for you."

Just as Markus said that a new quest appeared on the screen. It was a subjugation quest alright, but an extremely rewarding one. Twenty thousand blue units as the clearing reward and on top of that, whatever they found inside the dungeon would be theirs.

However... the requirements were a bit troubling. It needed to be a five-member team with at least three of the members having bronze rank or above. Ashton was hoping to get into a low-rank solo dungeon as he needed to focus on levelling up the rest of his genes. However, with a team that was certainly not possible.

"I was thinking about solo-

"Don't worry, I'm sure some of these people would likely accompany you two." Markus interrupted Ashton.

"Two?"

"You don't think his highness would let you go on a rampage, do you?" The knight standing next to him replied, "I'm not just your escort. I'm also a Silver ranked adventurer, which means I'll be looking after you in every single dungeon trip."

'Great... just what I wanted.' Ashton sighed heavily, 'Nothing ever goes right in this accursed world.'

He actually thought Jonathan would let him do things his way. But it didn't seem like that was going to happen anytime soon. Maybe, it was another one of Jonathan's tests to see if he was loyal to him or not. After all, he was psychotic enough to actually do something like that.

"Fine. Let's look for teammates then-

"Excuse me, but we overheard your conversation and were wondering if we could be a part of the team?" Virgil, the hammer guy asked while scratching the back of his head, while the rest of his party members smiled awkwardly behind him.

Ashton was not in a good mood anymore so he decided to throw a verbal jab at the man, "This is not a place for kids like me right? So piss off!"

"I-I only said that because I didn't know you were a Bronze ranker like myself. Hehe... otherwise I would have asked you to join our squad instead."

"If you don't want them to join we can join you instead!" A different group roared at the top of their lungs. Followed by another and another.

Ashton didn't know why all of sudden these many people wanted to join him when they were not even paying any attention to him before. Then it hit him. Not only did the subjugation quest give better rewards than the rest of them, apparently, but Markus had also already registered the quest under Ashton's name.

Which essentially meant there was only one way for any of them to participate in the quest. They had to form a team with Ashton and no one wanted to miss the opportunity to obtain such high rewards.

'They behave more like jackals than wolves, to be honest.' Ashton thought before turning towards Virgil, 'This guy doesn't look too bad. He has decent abilities and on top of all that, I know he genuinely was looking out for me when he stopped me earlier.'

Ashton pondered about it for a little more time before coming to a decision as the knight and Markus both had left the decision on him.

"Fine, you can join us... Virgil was it?"

"Yes, sir... *cough*" Virgil proudly banged his chest... but he might have been overly enthusiastic and hit himself too hard.

'Oh boy.... what have I gotten myself into?'