

Zompiewolf 141

Chapter 141 - Investments (2)

Back in Contingent, the captain of the special force was busy making enquiries about a kid named Vince who attended the academy. Only to find out that no one with that name was a student of the academy. But he simply couldn't accept that.

He was sure he had seen the kid wearing the academy uniform, but since it was a normal uniform that almost a thousand students wore, there was no way they could have found the one kid they had been on the lookout for.

"Did she find out about our plans and eliminated him, or did we really get tricked by a stupid brat?" Scarlett was irritated more than usual.

They had thought using the kid they would be able to find a way to get rid of the director but now the kid had comfortably disappeared as if he never existed. No matter how hard and fast they thought, they arrived at one conclusion...

the director must have gotten suspicious and erased the kid. Not only from the academy records but from the face of the planet altogether.

"I don't think so." Captain mumbled while the rest of them had their eyes and ears on him, "The kid never accepted our deal. So he didn't have any reason to go snooping around. I know it sounds a bit weird but it is possible the kid never attended the academy. Also, the fact that we can not find anything about him makes me think maybe he truly was a spy."

He continued, "Those bastards would know that no one messes with the academy student and somehow managed to forge a fake uniform so that they could roam around Contingent freely without any consequences."

No one wanted to admit it but what James said indeed made some sense. Although, it didn't mean that James had not let his imagination run wild. There was no way the resistance would even dare to pull such a move.

At least, that would have normally been the case. But since they have been getting pushed back quite aggressively by them, it could be entirely possible that the resistance was plotting some dangerous escapades.

"It doesn't matter whether the kid was a spy or the director got rid of him. The only thing that matters is we are back at square one." Scarlett sighed, "The conundrum would not be happy about this development."

James nodded and took a drag from his cigar, "Guess we'll have to abandon playing hide and seek and take a more direct path. Kidnapping a few kids and threatening that director bitch should do the trick. But make sure not to kidnap anyone from the higher-noble class. Those brats would throw tantrums like newborns."

Meanwhile in Deja...

Upon entering the hospital Ashton was a bit confused. Seven had mentioned this hospital was one of the cheaper ones in the city, but it seemed just a tad bit duller than the one he had been hospitalised into.

'Eh, let's just focus on what I am here for and get going. I have some calls to make once I am done here.' Ashton thought to himself while Seven made the necessary enquiries at the reception, 'Maybe I should make the calls now while I'm waitin-'

"Yeah, he's here." Seven informed Ashton, "He isn't in any danger so I guess we're allowed to meet him."

"Great, let's get going then."

It took them little to no time to get to the room Virgil was being kept in, thanks to Seven using his royal guard influence to make the head doctor personally escort them. As soon as they entered the room, Virgil was surprised.

At first, he thought they were there to punish him or something since he was the one who accidentally awoken the gorillan. But when Renee and Fae welcomed them inside, he knew that wasn't the case.

"We didn't know you were coming here or else we'd have prepared something." Fae immediately left her seat for Ashton while bowing to him.

"Relax and enough bowing, please. I'm not royalty and don't plan on becoming one." Ashton was a bit flustered and annoyed after receiving this kind of treatment from strangers, "I'm just an Adventurer who wanted to check up on an injured teammate. Also, you people forgot these."

He then proceeded to hand them their share of rewards. Upon seeing the money, all three of them got wide-eyed.

The guild had their rules and regulations regarding failure to complete a quest and since all three of them had left before the quest was completed, they did not receive a single blue unit. In fact, they were paying out of pocket for Virgil's treatment.

Also, since they suspected since they had put the lives of people close to the king in danger, they would face some sort of punishment. Instead, they were being handed out money? Was this kid... out of his mind or something?

"Why-" Virgil managed to mumble but Ashton cut him off.

"Two reasons, actually make it three." Ashton said while activating the [Influence] skill just to make sure his plan doesn't backfire, "One, you killed your share of Monklins. Two, you were the ones who discovered the gorillan and third, you deserve the money. Simple."

[You are using the skill: Influence on three targets.]

[Due to the low intelligence of the targets, the skill was successful.]

[The targets feel an enigmatic warmth towards you.]

[Your relationship has improved! Hostility towards you has been decreased.]

[Current relationship points: 30/100]

[Classification has changed: Neutral ---> Friendly]

"When you put it like that..." Fae mumbled while looking at her teammates, "I guess, it should be fine right?"

"I think so... thank you from the bottom of our hearts." Renee bowed before him unleashing her 'bottomless' cleav- heart, in front of him, "Your kindness knows no bounds."

"I-I don't know what to say..." Virgil smiled in his weak state, "If you ever need some help, just call for us and we'll be there."

"Actually, that's what I was here for." Ashton smiled like a hunter who found his prey, "Would the three of you like to team up with me?"

Chapter 142 – Investments (3)

Ashton walked out of the hospital with a beaming smile on his face, while Seven had a confused look on his face. If Ashton was looking for teammates, he could have easily gotten much better ones.

Hell, even the gold rank adventurers would have jumped at the opportunity to form some sort of connection with him considering his background. Yet, he chose to go for nobodies who had landed him in trouble with the gorillan in the first place.

Whatever Ashton was thinking made no sense to Seven, and he expressed his views to Ashton.

"That's exactly the point," Ashton replied with his ever copious smile, "As long as it makes sense to me, it doesn't need to make sense to anyone else."

Although Seven was still a bit on the edge over Ashton's decision, he knew he could not do anything to persuade this strange kid. So he dropped the topic entirely.

Ashton was glad that Seven did not pursue the matter any further. Even if he had done that, Ashton already had Jonathan's permission to make his own team independent of any royal interference.

As for the reason he was inviting 'nobodies' to join him, it wasn't anything complex. Ashton just wanted to make sure that the people he recruited had nothing to do with royalty or nobility, with the exception of Seven. And secondly, they had to feel as if they owe Ashton something which would spark a sense of loyalty in them.

So far, everyone he had recruited had both or one of these things. Virgil and his team were indebted to him for saving their lives as well as taking care of his hospital bills. While Master Baiter's case was also the same because Ashton gave him the money he required for whatever reason.

Then, at last, came Seven, whom Ashton was partially blackmailing into submission. But Seven too had some shred of gratitude towards him because he had not only saved him but also his loved ones from dying a horrific death.

That being said, the team was coming along great. All of them had already unlocked their classes and three of them even had rare classes. By three of them, Ashton meant, himself, Master baiter and Seven.

While Virgil and his party only managed to get their hands on basic or common classes, Master baiter had received the 'Creationist' class while Seven had the 'paladin' class.

After getting to level 15, Ashton used [Detection] once again on Seven and only then he got to know about the class of the royal knight. However, even with level 15, Ashton could only get the basic information about the knight and nothing about his stats or skills.

"Let's head back for the day. Once Virgil has recovered we will take quests with higher difficulty, till then we'll be doing common quests so that I can get my rank up."

Ashton explained his plan as they headed back to the bungalow that Ashton was given by Jonathan as a reward for accepting his request. Jonathan would have liked if Ashton stayed inside the castle along with the rest of the knights, but he decided against it as his spoiled daughter might throw a tantrum.

Also, this arrangement worked perfectly with Ashton as he enjoyed having his freedom more than anything else. But there was the issue that he cannot risk killing anyone in Deja as a food source. The risk was too high.

Thankfully, he did not need to worry about feeding himself because as long as he could keep visiting the dungeons, he would have an infinite food supply for his genes.

Once Seven had ensured Ashton had safely reached his residence which was guarded by regular soldiers of the empire, he immediately headed back to his home. But Ashton's surprises weren't over yet. The moment he walked into his new home he was greeted by two familiar faces.

"Duncan and Daniella, what are you guys doing here?"

Ashton had not seen either of them after what happened in the academy arena so he was a bit surprised. But not enough to lose his composure, after all, they were his slaves and no longer belonged to the mistress.

"Allow me to be of service." Ashton heard an unknown voice as the following moment a fair-skinned man walked out of the shadows and greeted him with a smile.

Ashton briefly looked at the man. Standing at 6'0", the man had a weirdly suspicious feeling about him. His elbow-length brown hair was worn as a ponytail while his round face was covered in a half-grown patchy beard. Even though he appeared to be in his late thirties.

But the thing which caught Ashton's attention the most was the mark the man had on his palm. It was the brand of slavery. However, this man was, he was previously a human. Just like him.

"Who are you?"

"A messenger... from our mutual master." The man hissed.

"The mistress?"

"Oh my, looks like you are not as foolish as I was led to believe-"

"Cut to chase." Ashton did not want to unnecessarily drag the conversation on as he still had one thing to sort out.

"Nothing much... I've been instructed to remind you of your true purpose here." The man replied back, "Also, the mistress says congratulations on receiving your first class and would like to know about-"

"I got the message, now get out." Ashton calmly but sternly made his point and walked past him, but as he did the man grabbed him by the shoulder.

Ashton did not like this forced contact and retaliated in kind, by grabbing the man's hand and tossing him out of the house through the main door.

"Look, I'm very tired and highly irritable. Even the littlest of things can make lash out so be careful." Ashton took a deep breath in order to calm himself, "As for my reply, tell the mistress if she wants to talk, I have a device on me and also that it would be wise if she doesn't send people my way to threaten me."

He continued, "Because the next time one of her 'messengers' crosses the line, they would be able to cross anything other than the bridge to the afterlife.. Now get lost before I change my mind."

Chapter 143 – Investments (4)

The man had not expected to get humiliated like this, considering how he quietly stood there without speaking a word. It was probably because he was taken aback by Ashton's sudden outburst, or so Ashton thought.

But once he turned around to leave, the man pounced at him with his half-assed transformation into a werewolf. Ashton did not know why the man was getting so aggressive on him, but he frankly had, had enough of him and responded in kind.

As soon as the man got within the range, Ashton jumped over the man, grabbed him by his legs and started swinging him around as if he was playing with a human-sized doll before once again throwing him out.

"Stay down like the dog you are," Ashton warned the man, but he was none of it and tried getting up again, "You just can't fucking read the room, can you?"

The man once again lunged at Ashton but was swiftly kicked back before he could even arrive at the doorstep. However, Ashton wasn't the one to do so. It was one of the guards that Jonathan had appointed to protect the property and Ashton.

"You all surely took your time to get here." Ashton shook his head and began walking back inside, hopefully for the last time.

But he was yet again interrupted. This time by the guard who had kicked the man.

"What do you want us to do with him, sir?" The blonde soldier asked in the politest of voice.

"Do what you want, I couldn't care less about him. But he should be able to tell the mistress what I told him."

"You're gonna regret ever laying hands on me, you filthy mutt!" The man roared in fury as we got dragged away.

"Yeah yeah sure... why not. If I'm a mutt then what are you? A pussy?" Ashton waved him off and finally got some peace.

"You seem to have gotten stronger, master." Duncan respectfully bowed to him.

Daniella wanted to follow in her husband's footsteps but her overgrown belly prevented it from happening. Yet she kept trying to bow lower and lower as she did not want to anger Ashton. After all, she still remembers what he did to Duncan in a fit of rage.

"You don't need to do that. It wouldn't be good for your baby." Ashton shrugged his shoulders, "What are you people doing here anyways... wait, no need to answer that. I guess I already know. She sent you to spy on me, didn't she."

Duncan hesitantly nodded his head before replying, "B-But I assure you we have no intentions of following her wishes. After all, you're the only master we serve."

"I know, I know. There should be plenty of room for the two of you here. Make yourselves comfortable and feel free to treat it as your own house. I'll be skipping dinner so don't bother coming near my room. That's all."

"As you wish, master. We're just a call away in case you need anything."

Ashton nodded and went upstairs but there was a slight problem...

"Does anyone know where my room is...?"

Once inside his lavish room, Ashton quickly made a call to Master Baiter as it was the only way Ashton would have been able to contact him.

"Hello?" A strong masculine voice echoed from the other side.

"Baiter?"

There was a moment of silence followed by a series of short but loud noises. A couple of moments later Ashton heard the voice again.

"Yeah, it's me. Who am I speaking to?"

"It's me, Vince. Just wanted to check in on you."

"It's you! I was meaning to call you as well. But I didn't have your contact info so... haha."

'If you're gonna lie then at least try to sound genuine...' Ashton shook his head before continuing the conversation, "I hope you have dealt with whatever you needed the money for?"

"Yeah, my wife is alright thanks to your generosity. And don't worry about the money. I'll return them back as soon as I-"

Baiter might have wanted to talk some more but Ashton couldn't be less interested in getting his money. He was only interested in getting the creationist on his side. Or at least his abilities.

"No need, it was the money you deserved. But I was hoping you'd be kind enough to do me a favour while making more money." Ashton then put forth his conditions.

Once he was done, Master Baiter got silent, but Ashton knew he was considering his offer of fighting alongside him. It had barely been a minute but to Ashton, it seemed like hours.

"I'm afraid I'll have to decline the offer." Baiter mumbled softly, "Don't get me wrong. Normally I would have jumped at the opportunity but I need to take care of my wife. She needs to be taken care of twenty-four hours a day, which I won't be able to do if I'm busy fighting night creatures."

"Is that all?"

"What?"

"I asked is that it?" Ashton reiterated his words, "Because if it is, then you don't have to worry about it. I have slav- I mean servants who can take care of her. Also, the hospitals in the capital are much better so your wife would be able to get better treatment as well."

"When you put it like that... fine. I don't see a reason to refuse." Baiter laughed, "So when do you want me there, boss?"

"In a couple of days?"

"Alright see you there and since again, thank you, Vince."

"Ashton. That's my real name."

"That's a pretty high-class name you got there, You can call me Baiter... because as weird as it sounds that's my real name."

After exchanging a few more words Ashton disconnected the call. Finally, all of his investments were in place. The team he had been wanting to make out of nobodies was finally coming together. Even though there was room for a couple of more members, for now, Ashton was content with all that he had.

'Now then, shall we have a taste of Seven's blood?' Ashton thought, 'But before that, I gotta sweep this room. Jonathan is a cautious man.. It wouldn't surprise me if he had placed some surveillance devices here.'

Chapter 144 – Mistress's Rage And A New Baronet In Town

The next day...

"He did what!?"

The mistress was trying hard not to lash out, but after hearing the things Lashken said to her it was really tough not to allow her anger to get the better of her. She had sent Lashken to congratulate Ashton on getting his first class, but according to Lashken, Ashton immediately started berating him.

In his words he took all the insults Ashton threw at him, but when he started disrespecting her, he attacked Ashton and as a result got banned from ever entering the capital again.

Obviously, everything he said was a lie. The mistress had already informed him not to trigger Ashton. But Lashken intended to show off his worth by defeating her precious pawn. He did exactly the things mistress told him not to but he could not tell her that, so he decided it was best to manipulate the story in his favour.

"He berated me?" The mistress asked Lashken in a serious tone, "He, who did not ever lash out no matter what I did to him, berated me?"

"Y-Yes, Mistress-"

"You seriously expect me to believe that?"

"I... I only speak-"

Before Lashken could complete his sentence, the mistress snapped her fingers and the next moment he was on the ground withering in pain. He was desperately clinging on to the collar the mistress had forced him to wear prior to the meeting.

Although it looked nothing extraordinary, it was a restraining device in all sense of the word. After Donovan and Disha betrayed her, she was forced to see the wrong in her ways and immediately decided to correct them so that no one would be able to betray her again.

The collar was an electrocuting device that the mistress could control with her gestures. Since the collar Lashken was wearing was only the first prototype, the mistress decided to test it first-hand.

"I wanted Ashton to be the one to get the honours of being tested on," She mumbled while Lashken kept crying out in pain, "but since he got taken away from me before I could use this, I guess you should do just fine. After all, you're both mutts."

She expected Lashken to respond to him but the pain was too much for him to do anything but scream. After what seemed like an eternity, the mistress snapped her fingers once again. Although Lashken was free from the pain, he was still hurting even though his body was completely numb.

"Get up." The mistress walked up to him and kicked him over, "and this time, tell the truth. If you don't, then you already know what's going to happen to you the next time."

Lashken's face was drenched with tears and sweat but he somehow managed to get back to his knees. He wanted to speak but no words came out of his mouth. It seemed the collar still had some issues but the mistress couldn't care less about it.

She wanted to know what this fcker had done to anger Ashton to the point where he handed Lashken over to the guards. Lashken kept trying to explain, but the darn collar kept getting tighter and tighter around his neck.

Soon the low ranking creationist who brought the prototype collar for the mistress to examine realised what the fault was and informed the mistress about it. It goes without saying, the mistress was a bit annoyed and ordered the man to take off Lashken's collar.

"Go back and fix the fcking collar or I'll send someone to fix your entire department up!" The mistress yelled and anger completely consumed her, "Looks like we'll have to do this the old way then."

A week passed since Ashton received his first class. By this time his team had finally assembled in front of the guildhall to take on their first mission together as a team. In the last week, Ashton and Seven had done nothing but clear quests.

Well, Ashton did all the work while Seven only intervened when things got a bit overwhelming for his 'lord'. That's right when Jonathan got the good news of Ashton getting his first class and what the class was he only saw it fit to reward Ashton.

What was that reward? Let's just say Ashton was a couple of promotions away from being considered nobility. He was no longer an ordinary citizen in Lycania but a Baronet. Although the title meant that his powers were above that of the usual knights, he only had one knight under him. That was Seven and hence the knight now referred to Ashton as 'lord'.

Although Ashton did not like when he did that and often instructed Seven to call him by his name when they were on a quest or something. Ignoring all that mess, Ashton along with his teammates headed inside the guildhall.

Most of the people who were standing near the blue board immediately stepped aside as soon as they saw Ashton. It had only been a bit over a week since this kid became a Bronze-A ranked adventurer, but now he was only on dungeon clear away to being promoted into Silver rankings.

"Woah... I never thought I would ever get to be inside the guild!" Baiter exclaimed and immediately went down to his knees and started kissing the ground as if it was a holy place from him.

Although Ashton was calm, Baiter's behaviour prompted him to kick his butt and that's exactly what Ashton did.

"I know it's your first dungeon trip but get a grip over yourself!" Virgil immediately criticised Baiter when he saw Ashton taking the initiative, "Your name is already humiliating enough for the girls, at least show some decency through your actions."

"Oi! What's wrong with Master Baiter!? It's a good name!" Baiter countered and punched his metallic fists together, "Wanna get a piece of these?"

"What have I done..." Ashton mumbled and shook his head.

"Only God knows the answer to that question, my lord." Seven Shrugged his shoulders, "Don't worry, I'll put them in their places. Till then, why don't you go ahead and select a quest?"

Ashton nodded and left, but not before smacking both of them at the back of their heads.

Chapter 145 – This Won't Do (1)

Ashton initially wanted to travel back to the quest to hunt the Gorillan queen. But there was a problem he couldn't solve either with money or influence. He didn't know the complete details but the requirements for entering the quest related to finding the hidden breeding ground of the monklines had been changed drastically.

Earlier, Silver ranking adventurers could participate in the quest, but now only gold and above ranking adventurers were allowed to do so. Upon inquiring about it, it was revealed to him that the squad containing 10 Silver rankers was found dead after a search operation was organised to look for them.

"Their death did not seem to be painless or quick either." The receptionist informed him, "Sorry, but I can't give you any more information about it as you don't have the rank nor do I have the authority."

"Don't worry about it..." Ashton smiled wanly and headed back to the bulletin board, "I guess the gorillans are out of the picture then. Guess I wouldn't get to test my level 16 strength anymore."

Ashton kept looking for something new, but no suitable quest appeared in front of him. He wanted to keep levelling his adventurer rank but taking low ranking quests was not going to help him in that.

'My vampire and zombie genes are stuck at level 14. I need to get some monster hunting quest to get them to evolve.'

Just like continually hunting and consuming the same species over and over again did not give him an extraordinary amount of exp. Consuming the same rank monsters had a similar effect. Although Ashton had been relentlessly participating in quests, most of these quests had him hunting low-levelled monsters.

That essentially meant despite killing dozen upon dozens of monsters, he was only getting a small amount of exp. Hell, sometimes he had to kill more than 5 monsters at once to get a 1% exp increase for werewolf Genes. It was the same with the rest of his genes as well.

"This should work."

He picked a quest and at the same time he received a call from Duncan, and it wasn't something Ashton wanted to hear.

Meanwhile, Members of Ashton's team which had been named 'Zero', were having a discussion of their own. About how they met him, it was supposed to be their ice-breaking conversation but Baiter's ass-kicking kinda already did it for them.

"Well, I only met him once before today." Baiter explained it to them, "Someone who helped me told me to go and see him for something. He gave me an opportunity to make some money while also helping with my wife's treatment so I couldn't say no."

"Would you mind telling me who this person was?" Suddenly Seven was intrigued by Ashton's background as he didn't know anything about his new lord.

"It's a man kid Vince. I think about the same age as master Ashton. They are supposedly good friends and when the master was looking for someone to join the group Vince recommended me to him." Baiter explained to Seven.

"Intriguing. I never knew Lord had such mysterious friends."

At that moment they saw Ashton making his way towards them. He was supposed to brief them about the quest he had accepted, instead, he simply shared the information through their watches and told them to follow him.

"We're going to the swamps?" Fae couldn't help but get surprised, "That place is like the hub for high-levelled monsters! What are we going to do there?"

"I have a better question. Why is there a swamp quest available for mid rankers like us in the first place?" Renee jumped in but both of them had missed something that Virgil and Seven didn't.

"It's not a quest." Virgil said while tapping his bald head, "It's a request from someone. Specifically the director of the academy. Ashton mentioned he was a former student right? Maybe it's something related to that?"

Since Baiter had next to no knowledge or experience when it came to guild things, he didn't know what was the difference between a quest or a request. When he asked about it, Seven was more than happy to educate him.

While quests are open for any adventurer to take as long as they met certain mentioned requirements, requests were something different. Basically, it was a quest but instead of asking for the guild to help, they ask help from certain adventurers.

Whether the adventurers accept the request or not would be a completely different thing. In case the adventurers who had been requested for accept the quest the guild would take a 10% of the reward as compensation of basically acting as a broker.

However, in the event the adventurers don't accept the request, the guild would be free to send in someone else to complete the quest for them. But it seemed like Ashton had accepted the quest.

"Wait, it's not in the swamps but in a city close to it." Baiter pointed it out, "I know it because that's the city my wife is from."

"Hm... you're right." Virgil confirmed after taking a closer look at the map, "But I have one question. How did a weirdo like you score a wife in the first place?"

Instead of getting pissed or angry about it, Baiter placed his hand on Virgil's shoulder and whispered in his ear, "That my friend is the greatest mystery of my life."

While the rest of them were chatting amongst themselves, Seven was busy reading more about the quest. The quest wasn't anything extraordinarily dangerous, just him and Ashton would have been sufficient to take care of a bunch of goons.

However, there was something else. Although they had only been clearing dungeons together for a week, Seven knew this kind of quest wasn't something Ashton would have usually accepted. After all, he liked fighting and killing night creatures more than anything else.

But the moment he looked at the rewards, Seven immediately realised why Ashton was going in for this quest. Or at least he thought there was a possibility.

[Reward(s):

Rare equipment of choice (for up to 6 members).

Information regarding a sensitive topic.]

"Everyone, let's get going." Seven reminded them and they left but as they chased after Ashton he thought of something, 'Just what the hell could this sensitive topic be?'

Chapter 146 – This Won't Do (2)

The sky overhead had turned into the deepest shade of grey possible before it turned completely black as raindrops drenched everything in sight. The area everywhere was surrounded by buildings... broken beyond repair.

Still, the people were forced to take shelter in these houses and covered their heads with whatever they could find so that the acid pouring down from the sky did not do much physical damage to them. But that wasn't enough to protect them indefinitely.

There were others around these people as well. But they were well armoured and the rain did not affect them all that much. Probably because those in armour were werewolves while those hiding were mere human slaves brought there to help in the construction of the new stronghold for the soldiers to stay in as they ventured in and out of the swamps.

Although Ashton was filled with more than a teensy bit of anger when he saw the humans being treated as expendable resources. But was he any different from the other werewolves at this point? After all, he too had slaves of his own and although he took good care of them, it didn't admonish the fact that he had slaves in the first place.

"Damn this place is nasty," Renee mumbled and promptly covered her nose, she wasn't alone, the others followed her lead as they had a sensitive sense of smell.

But Ashton was fine. It wasn't the first time he was subjected to the smell of rotting human flesh. Well, it would have smelled the same even if werewolves had died there, but after taking the living conditions of the humans into consideration, it would surprise him if the corpses did not belong to humans.

But before they could put much thought into it, a military officer made his way towards them to confirm the purpose of their visit.

"Histeria flowers eh? Good luck finding that shit here, haha." The officer scoffed but his smug look vanished the moment he saw Seven standing behind them.

Obviously, the officer did not know Seven but only a fool or a blind man wouldn't recognise the insignia engraved on his chest plate. As soon as the name saw Seven, the tone of his voice and demeanour, everything changed. He went from acting all high and mighty to their personal tour guide.

"What do you mean good luck?" Ashton asked the officer as soon as they were done registering themselves as new arrivals in the ruins of the city once known as Ethereal Falls.

The officer was not in the mood to indulge in random talk with a freaking child and was about to express his thoughts but Seven immediately unsheathed his sword and slashed it at the officer's neck, stopping a mere millimetre before he ended up chopping the head off entirely.

"Mind your language in front of Sir Ashton Bismark, 213th baronet of Lycania and my lord. This will be your one and only warning."

"M-My apologies!" The officer immediately asked for Ashton's forgiveness.

"Just answer the question..." Ashton sighed and Seven put his sword back in place.

"Sir... the answer to your question is right outside." The officer pointed out the downpouring rain, "Histeria flowers are known to grow in open fields. This ruined city was once the primary source of naturally grown histeria flowers."

He continued, "But ever since these damned acidic clouds shrouded the skies, everything was ruined and this place became a ghost town for night creatures to raid and feast. But thanks to the efforts of his highness and his brave knights we have been able to secure the town a few years back."

"I remember about it." Seven nodded, although he still had his face covered Ashton knew he was reminiscing about the past, "I was still a trainee back then but I remember our trainers talk about it. It was a blood bath."

The officer silently nodded along, "Since then, not a single histeria flower has grown in these parts. Therefore, when I saw that absurd request I couldn't help but laugh it off as if it was a joke to trick some fo-, I mean innocent beginners."

Ashton had a feeling the person wanted to call them fools but changed his words at the last moment. Still, Ashton could not get his words out of his head. Did that witch of a director had really pulled a prank on them was there a chance they could somehow find the histeria flower there.

However, after he had got to know who exactly the director was and how she knew his parents, it wouldn't surprise him in the least if she actually pulled a shitty prank on him.

'I just wanted to know what the fck was this sensitive information she wanted to share.' Ashton clenched his fists, 'I was hoping it would be some information regarding my parents but now... I don't think it is like that.'

"Is there no place where we could find those flowers?" Fae politely asked the officer, who seemingly got lost in his thoughts.

"There might be one place, but I would advise you to not go there."

"And why is that?" Baiter chimed in while Virgil played around with his gigantic hammer.

"It's a dungeon infested with terrible night creatures. As if it wasn't already enough of a challenge to take care of the beasts, we suspect the dungeon might be a maze. After all, whoever went inside there never came back out."

"So it's a kill box." Seven said before turning towards Ashton, "How should we proceed?"

Ashton thought about it while looking around his 'teammates'. Normally he would have taken them with him. But after what the officer had told him, he did not want to do so. It wasn't for some noble reason of not getting others involved for the sake of him.

However, Ashton decided to go solo because he wanted to go all out in the dungeon. If the beasts were actually as strong as the officer was saying, it would be a waste to not have a taste of them. Not to mention, he wanted to take out his frustration... in peace.

"I'll go alone."

Chapter 147 – This Won't Do (3)

"Alone? Are you out of your mind?" Renee expressed her disapproval, "I know you're stronger than all of us, but you shouldn't-"

"It wasn't a suggestion. Also, I'm only going to scout the place. I'm not that big of a fool to fight all those creatures head-on." Ashton replied, "If anyone of you has better recon capabilities then step forward. I'll let you go without any problems."

Obviously, none of them stepped up. Ashton already knew he had the highest stealth stat amongst the ones present here with the exception of Seven. Ashton's level was still not enough to view his stats. But the fact that he didn't step up, meant either one of two things.

One, he really didn't think he had more stealth points than Ashton. Or second, he knew Ashton had something in his mind and therefore did not object. Either way, it was good for Ashton.

"Well, if you're dead set on going alone. Take this with you." Baiter broke the silence and handed Ashton some sort of mobile device, "It's a thermal scanner. It might come in handy for you to avoid large groups of monsters inside the dungeon. It can look through walls as well."

Ashton nodded and placed the scanner in his inventory. Having a creationist on the team was already showing its benefits. Following Baiter's lead, all of them gave a thing or two to Ashton. Most of them were potions to temporarily increase a variety of resistances.

The only other useful item he got was a rough map of the area Ashton was about to venture into. The officer was a bit reluctant to give it to Ashton, as it was the last map they had, but it wasn't like he had a choice in the matter. Especially when Seven was looming over his head.

"I'll accompany you till we find the cave." Seven uttered in a definitive voice, "Someone would need to protect the entrance after all."

"Do as you please." Ashton shook his head.

Ashton knew there was no point in arguing with Seven. After all, his life was linked to his *lord's*. So he went along with him, leaving the rest of his party back.

Unlike Deja, there were no portals connecting the outskirts of the ruins with the main city, which was obvious, considering each portal would need at least a dozen or so soldiers to guard it as the forces in the city were severely understaffed.

They were only managing to protect one portal which connected them to the capital and that was enough. However, this meant Ashton and Seven had to traverse all over the muddy ground by themselves which proved to be a tiring task.

Not to mention the acidic rain wasn't the only thing they had to be cautious of. As they continued following the map, they were slowly surrounded by one of the thickest layers of fog, they had ever seen.

It was proving to be almost impossible for them to look at anything and had to heavily depend on the thermal scanner Baiter had given Ashton to look for enemies. Well, At least Seven had to, because Ashton had his [Perception] skill.

Although it wasn't all that accurate. Some of the monsters they had encountered were simply too good at hiding. But weren't all that strong once they found them through the scanners. It took them a couple of hours to make the journey that would have usually been completed in half an hour.

"Are you sure you wanna do this alone?" Seven was hoping Ashton would change his mind after facing all the couple of night creatures they had till now. Sadly, his hopes were bound to get shattered.

"I didn't stop you from accompanying me till now, so you shouldn't either. See you in a bit." Ashton flexed his neck and was about to walk into the wicked-looking dungeon when Seven stopped him again.

"45 minutes." Seven mumbled, "I'll barge in once 45 minutes have passed. That much time should be enough for you to do whatever reconnaissance you want to."

"You think I will let you interrupt me like that?" Ashton was now getting a bit annoyed.

Yes, he knew his safety was Seven's priority, but the situation was getting out of hand now. He did not appreciate Seven's continuous interruptions even when he had made his intentions clear.

"Don't forget what'll happen when the king finds out the truth about the gorillan." Ashton warned Seven, "If you want the things to remain as they are, then shut your trap and stay out."

A moment later, Ashton walked inside the cave. The cave looked big enough from outside but Ashton did not think he would find such majestic foliage within. While the tree and plants outside were decaying thanks to the acid, the plants within the cave were flourishing.

But the beauty of this hidden forest had its scars as well. Numerous skeletons were scattered all over the place. Some belonged to humans, or at least Ashton assumed so while the rest belonged to some unknown creature with huge canines attached to their skull.

The nutrients from these corpses might be the reason why the forest was able to flourish inside a cave without any visible source of light apart from the mosses which had attached themselves to the trees and were giving off a weird purplish light.

The light wasn't bright or anything, but Ashton could feel a weird sense of warmth coming from them.

While Ashton deeper into the forest, he felt sudden movement behind. He quickly turned around and saw claw marks running up one of the trees. The following moment, the leaves began rustling in the thick foliage.

"This won't do. I've already been found.. The recon mission is a bust, what shall I do? I have no choice but to fight, do I? Eh, enough drama for the day." Ashton smiled and quickly activated all of his genes, "Let's have a tasting session, shall we?"

Chapter 148 – Claws And Horns (1)

The creatures took their sweet time to show up, but when they did, it was to show Ashton that they meant business. These black horned creatures were much bigger than Ashton had expected.

In fact, after taking a good look at their ginormous size, Ashton was wondering if these creatures were actually hiding in the foliage of trees or not. Their bodies were covered in translucent blue fur except the horn protruding from the middle of their foreheads.

"It's the first time I've seen such beasts." Ashton mumbled to himself and quickly took out the twin blades from the inventory, "Which means I can get new skills."

He quickly used [Detection] to know more about their weakness, only to realise these creatures were a tad bit too weak as they were only at level 10.

Still, he knew he was going to have a tough time there considering that these creatures only had four stats, agility, damage, armour and their HP.

—

Name: Horned Wraith Wolves

Species: Direwolf

Class: Tank/Prowler

Age: 7 years

Gender: Female

Grade: F-tier

Affiliation: none

Level: 10

Stats:

HP: 5000/5000

Damage: 10

Armour: 60

Stealth: 0

Stamina: 30

Agility: 30

Intelligence: 1

Nature:

Prowlers: 5% chance of inflicting 2% additional damage after using a skill.

Abilities/skills/spells:

Grievous Bite

Dark Vision

Resistance(s):

>> Elemental attacks (10% damage reduction)

Weak Against:

>> Poison (receives 20% more damage)

Conditional Immunity:

>> Physical attacks (Hidden Condition)

Remark:

A species branching off from usual direwolves which had gone through a secondary mutation phase due to an unknown reason. Due to next to no exploration done of the only cave they inhabit, no information other than what's shown is currently available.

It is advised to proceed with caution and collect sufficient information regarding these monsters.

—

"This is new..." Ashton thought to himself as the wolves slowly surrounded him, "The system is more or less as clueless as I am."

Before Ashton could finish speaking his mind, yet another notification popped up in front of him. But it was a notification he had never seen before.

—

You have received a new mission!

[Introduction]: It seems like a few direwolves have mutated yet again. Uncertainty is the enemy of progression and thus you are being given the task to ease this uncertainty behind the mystery of these Horned Wraith Wolves.

[Objective]: Find out more about the secret mutation of direwolves.

[Task]: Hunt down 40 Horned Wraith Wolves and submit their horns and claws as samples for analysis.

[Progress]: 0/40 Horned Wraith Wolves killed.

[Reward]: 10 stats points, 500 HP increase, 200 Mana increase.

[Mission Commissioned by]: Administrator

[Priority Level]: 2 (The host cannot ignore the mission, but can delay it for 24 hours)

—

'How come you know their weaknesses and immunities if you don't know shit about them?' Ashton scoffed, 'If you want me to kill them, just say so. No need to sound all important or some shit.'

—

The Administrator has changed the rewards for the above quest.

[Reward]: 5 stats points, 250 HP increase, 100 Mana increase.

Special Note from Administrator: Do you have any idea how many people have already faced these creatures and died? All the information you are seeing is courtesy of those fallen people.

If you don't want to join them, then I recommend you focus on completing the task before I change the rewards to something entirely useless.

—

"What the hell, you stingy bastard!"

Ashton wanted to know more about whatever this mission thingy was, but it seemed that the wraith wolves had different plans. They simultaneously lunged at Ashton while he was still looking at the notification in front.

Ashton was already surrounded, there was no place for him to run to. But it wasn't like he was trying to run away in the first place. Especially after receiving the quest by Lucifer.

He leapt over them using one of the wolf's heads to further push him above. A moment later, he activated [Rock Pound], the low levelled skill he had earned after defeating the Gorillan.

Ashton did not have many expectations from the skill and had used it since it was the only AOE (area of effect) skill he had. Also, this was the perfect chance for him to see if the skill was even a bit useful or not.

The next moment, the ground in between split apart and huge chunks of borders were spat out, hitting the wolves right in their heads. The damage wasn't massive, but it was enough to stagger them long enough for Ashton to put the next phase of his plan into action.

[Skill: Stride has been activated.]

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

[Armour skill: Lure has been activated.]

Just like that Ashton got an agility boost of 70% while his damage got increased by 50%. The tables had turned on the werewolves. Instead of Ashton, it was them who longer could escape from his grasp.

The next moment Ashton slashed all of them one after another until his blades were drenched in the slimy white blood of the wraith wolves. But something was a bit weird. He was pretty sure he had killed the wolves and yet neither the [wolf's mark] skill was deactivating nor did he receive any exp for killing the wolves.

—

A hidden condition has been revealed!

Physical immunity: A Wraith Wolf will not receive any physical damage when 4 or more wraith wolves are targeting the same target.

—

"YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING ME!" Ashton screamed at the top of his lungs before turning around.

What he saw next was both mindboggling and extremely frustrating. All of his strikes had been killer strikes, just like he had thought... but his strikes didn't do shit to them as their wounds healed up by themselves.

Since Ashton didn't know any 'spells' and only had 'skills', all of his attacks were physical in nature. As a result, even though his attacks had 'killed' the wolves, due to their immunity to physical damage, they were unharmed.

"On a positive note, at least now I know how the hell these weak bastards were able to kill so many soldiers." Ashton shook his head in disappointment.

While the creatures were still recovering, Ashton once again reviewed the information he had about them. That's when he realised one thing... he could kill the wolves. He simply needed to do one thing more before slashing the creatures left and right.

[Unique Skill: Blood Poison has been activated.]

Chapter 149 – Claws And Horns (2)

There was a reason behind the wolves being referred to as Wraiths. Sadly Ashton got to discover it the hard way. But it was alright. After reading the descriptions of the wolves, he knew their weakness and was ready to exploit it.

Even though the wolves healed up, they were now being a bit conscious of Ashton. Even though their injuries could heal time and time again, it wasn't like they didn't feel any pain. While they were busy circling around him, Ashton slit his palms and drenched the blades with his blood.

Thanks to his [Pain Resistance] and [Haemorrhage Resistance], he wasn't going to suffer through any long term side-effects. The same, however, couldn't be said for those poor wraith wolves.

"I hope this skill doesn't disappoint me..." Ashton mumbled to himself before rushing into the wolf nearest to him.

Since the creature's body was translucent, Ashton's job was made even easier. He could more or less see the organs within their body and hence knew exactly where he had to stab those fckers. Their hearts and brains were the idea targets and with his agility, it wasn't difficult for his strike to meet their mark.

You have received 2% Exp from critically injuring the <Lvl 10> Horned wraith wolf.

Current Exp: 52%

The horned wolf has been infected with your poison. The poison has dealt 10 HP worth of additional damage.

Your Bloodlust is increasing.

—

Ashton paid no heed to the notification flashing in front of him and rushed in to attack the rest of the Horned Wraith Wolves. Just like before, it didn't take him much time to stab the rest of them. Once it was done, all he had to do was to sit back and relax as the wolves slowly succumbed to the poison coursing in their veins.

Each of his attacks dealt around 600 HP worth of damage to the wolves per minute. It wasn't much, but thankfully, the skill could be stacked innumerable times. Which meant... the more he stabbed them, the more damage they received because of the poison.

A battle that would have normally resulted in the deaths of even the high ranking adventurers, was taken care of in a matter of minutes. All thanks to Ashton's detection skill.

Sadly, even though the wraith wolves were a tough mob to handle, at the end of the day they were only level 10 monsters. As a result, the amount of exp Ashton got for killing them wasn't enough for him to level up the werewolf genes.

"It's not like I wanted to level up the werewolf part of me either way." Ashton shrugged his shoulders and got to work.

He needed to collect the horn and claws of 40 different wolves, which wasn't going to be an easy task. Not because the wolves would pose a threat to him or something, but in such a vast and dense forest, it would be tough to look for the wolves alone.

For a moment, he wondered about calling Seven in for help but ultimately decided against it. Inviting him inside would only cause more troubles for Ashton as he would not be able to freely use his [Blood poison] skill.

"I'll figure something out later, for now, I need to feed."

This time Ashton was a bit hesitant before consuming the flesh of the wolves. It was all gooey and their slimy blood didn't make it look any better either.

"Things I have to do for the sake of revenge..." Ashton closed his nose and gulped down some of the flesh along with the blood.

A second later Ashton got wide-eyed. The flesh did not look appetizing at all, and yet it was better than any other monster or mutants he had ever tasted. Even their blood was amazing and had a sweet aftertaste.

—

You have received 15% Exp by consuming the blood of a new creature.

You have levelled up! Exp limit has been reset.

Current Vampire Level: 15

You have received 6% Exp by consuming the blood of a <Lvl 10> Horned Wraith Wolf.

Current vampire skill points: 21

Current Exp: 6%

After analysing your skillset, you can pick up one of the following classes:

2039c Error encountered. There is only one class that can be assigned to the user.

Automatically assigning the mentioned class to the user.

Congratulations! You have obtained a new Vampire Class: [Blood Mage]

You have obtained two class abilities: [Blood Mist] and [Exorcize]

—

"The same error again-"

As Ashton was saying that, he felt as if his insides were getting churned into liquid. He immediately threw up... blood, his own blood. All he could hear was the sizzling sound and the next moment he realised the part where his blood had touched the ground had been scorched black. The grass and moss there was burned away as if his blood was lava.

But that was only the beginning. The pain in his abdomen hadn't even subsided when his head started pounding crazily. The pain was too much for him to handle even with his level 8 [Pain Resistance], it was too much.

Barely a minute had passed since the weird pain took over his body, but he bit his tongue so that he could muffle his painful screams a bit. After what seemed like an eternity, the pain finally lessened enough for Ashton to breathe properly without scratching himself.

"The hell... was that..." Ashton barely managed to mumble before once again collapsing to the ground.

The pain might have subsided, but it had clearly taken a toll on his physique. He felt weak and tired but strong at the same time. Which didn't make any sense... until he noticed the system prompt in front of him.

—

The physical modification was successful!

HP: 3500 → 4000

Mana: 500 → 750

Damage: 45 → 50

Armour: 30 → 35

Stealth: 30 → 35

Stamina: 45 → 50

Agility: 40 → 50

Intelligence: 29 → 30

The next modification would occur when another gene hits level 15.

The Innate skill: [Detection] has been upgraded!

You can now view detailed information of beings up to level 30.

Chapter 150 – Skills: Some New, Some Old. (1)

Ashton was still a bit shook from the upgrades that he had received, and to be honest, although the pain was a ridiculous part of the process, he felt a lot stronger than he did before. Not only he was feeling good, but his body had also changed a bit.

He had gotten a bit bigger and new muscles had taken over his body to make him look even buffer than before. The change which Ashton was concerned about the most was his eye colour. His right eye was red as usual whenever he activated the vampire genes.

But his left eye had turned yellow, Ashton didn't know why it happened, but if he had to guess it would be because of the upgrade his [Detection] skill received.

"I just hope the colour turns back to normal once I turn off the rest of the genes." Ashton sighed while looking around the forest.

Although the forest was located within the cave, it was surprisingly huge. Huge enough to make Ashton lose his sense of direction. Which was a bit problematic. While he wanted to level up his genes as much as he could, he also wanted to locate the Histeria flower.

"Forget about looking for a needle in a haystack, locating anything in this forest is next to impossible. Maybe one of my new abilities could help?"

Ashton quickly opened his stat page and began checking his skills out. Sadly, neither of the two skills he had obtained could help him locate the flower. [Blood Mist] was an offensive skill while [Exorcise] could be used for recovery.

[Blood Mist] was basically an evolved version of [Blood Poison]. Rather than coating his weapons with his blood and then attacking the enemies, Ashton could now activate [Blood Mist] to do so.

Once activated, the mist would either ooze out of his existing wounds or burst out of the palm of his hands. Whoever breathes in this mist would get affected with poison and their vision would get obstructed.

However, there was a downside to it. The poison effect would be slow and the target would have to breathe in the mist for at least 10 seconds for the poison to kick in. Also, using this skill would consume HP rather than mana with the cost being 2 HP per second.

Meanwhile [Exorcise] was a skill that countered the ill-effects of [Blood Mist]. Upon killing a target, Ashton could capture their 'souls' to heal up or to recover his lost stamina back. Depending on the level and grade of the soul, Ashton could recover anywhere from 50-500 HP per soul consumed.

"Hm... these skills won't be of any use for me in looking for the flower." Ashton mumbled to himself while scrolling down the page further, "Wait- this is it!"

His eyes began to shine the moment he realised he had found the answer to his problem. If the werewolf and vampire skills weren't going to help him, then this zombie skill will.

"Let's give it a try, shall we?" Ashton excitedly rubbed his hands together as he walked up to the dead Wraith Wolves.

[Unique Skill: Corpse Parade has been activated.]

[You have resurrected 2 Skeletal Wraith Wolves.]

[The Host's intelligence isn't high enough to raise more skeletal soldiers.]

[Unique Skill: Corpse Parade level is too low. The skeletal soldiers will only do the host's bidding for 1:30 hours before disintegrating into dust.]

[The Host can also cancel the skill anytime they want.]

As those words flashed before Ashton's eyes, two dead wraith wolves shed their skins and organs, before standing in front of him. Watching their skin peel off right in front of his eyes made him a bit uncomfortable. Well, to be honest, it made him plenty uncomfortable but at least he didn't need to look for the flower by himself anymore.

"Hm.. their levels dropped a bit. But it isn't like I raised them to fight so it should be fine." Ashton mumbled while looking at their information, "Also, they can't use most of their skills... not gonna lie, I was expecting a bit more out of this skill but I guess beggars can't be choosers."

He closed the interface and was greeted by his temporary servants, but it didn't look like Ashton was pleased with the way they were looking at him.

"Ayo, stop looking at me with those eyeless holes... it creeps me out."

Ashton wasn't expecting them to do anything, but to his surprise, they actually bowed their heads down. It almost felt as if they could understand what Ashton wanted them to do.

"Woah, Woah, Woah! You freaks can understand what I am saying?"

The skeletal wolves looked at each other before nodding. As they did that, Ashton jumped and threw a punch in the air. His mission had just gotten a lot easier! Now he only needed to ask the wolves about the flower and they'll guide him to it. Simple!

However, when he did that, the skeletons looked a bit... nervous. Ashton would have never imagined that a bunch of bones would be able to show such vivid emotions. After all, how the hell would

someone dead express such emotions- well, scratch that. More than 50% of the world's population was officially dead. You know with the vampires and undeads walking around.

"Something's wrong?" Ashton asked the skeletons hoping they'd start talking as well. But he was disappointed, "Fine, if you're scared of something, just show me where I can find the flowers and I'll take care of the rest."

Meanwhile, the mistress had arrived at Ashton's bungalow in Deja, only to find out that he wasn't even there. Instead, she was greeted by hostile security guards who didn't know what to do with her.

For starters, she was much stronger than they were even without the bodyguards standing behind her and on top of that, she was royalty. Which made it impossible for the soldiers to lay their hands on her.

"Please evacuate the premises, Marchioness Mera." The soldier in charge of the bungalow's security addressed the mistress with her official title, "The king has explicitly instructed us to only allow those who have his permission to step inside. After the... last incident."

The soldier half expected Mera to strike him down, but to his surprise Mistress nodded, "I understand. Very well then, I'll go and greet father first.. But when I'm back, you better not show me your face."