

## **Zompiewolf 271**

### Chapter 271 Two Of A Kind (1)

Death is a fascinating thing. Some yearned for it and embraced it as a new beginning. While some thought it was the end of their lives. For some, it was the start of a new life, and for some, it was the conclusion. Ashton didn't believe in either.

One did not need to be afraid of death nor do they need to embrace it as an old friend. Death only served one purpose... to make sure no one grew stronger than death itself. It was supposed to serve as a measure to stop an individual or an entire civilization from becoming unstoppable.

Every city, country and planet had to abide by this rule. If there was always a bigger fish in the sea, here Death was the biggest fish. A megalodon maybe? In other words, Death existed to keep the universe in check.

But was death the end of everything? Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't. There was no definite answer to it and there would never be one either.

However, at times people were so scared of death, that they did everything they could to evade it even if it meant living an unnatural life by sacrificing countless innocents. The existence of Lich and the undead was a 'living' proof of it.

For the undead, death didn't mean a thing as they were already dead. They enjoyed 'death'. The more they spread it, the happier they were. It was the only reason those fuckers did what they did. In a sadistic way, they wanted the entire world to experience death as they did, not as an enemy, but as a comrade.

Conquering the werewolves and attacking the vampires were just excuses they wanted to make. Only to blame the responsibility of their sadism on the others.

Ashton entered the now abandoned academy, death was the only thing that greeted him. As he crossed corridor after corridor hoping to find Anna and the director, he only found death, hiding in every corner.

He did come across some familiar faces from time to time, which made it all a bit more difficult. He had sworn he would kill the werewolves for what they did to him... but now he didn't want to. Yet, he had to.

[You can't save them all. Remember that.]

Ashton nodded as his claws took the life of yet another familiar face. Werewolves weren't the only ones to die there either. Since the vampires were also studying in the same facility, there were bound to be their corpses as well.

It didn't seem like the vampires even got a chance to fight back. Even though the vampires did not need to breathe, the smoke could enter their bodies through other passages, such as their mouths as they speak.

Once the smoke was inside, it was over for them. The presence of the smoke in their bodies would trigger the 'Coffin' and... that's it.

'Should I convert them into-'

[Don't even think about it. What good would resurrecting them do? They are weak and would have died sooner or later-]

"I got your point so shut it."

The fact that a higher civilization could have been involved in this mess was already infuriating Ashton. On top of that, Astaroth's comment on the uselessness of these people was a bit too much for Ashton to handle.

The Abyssal Smoke might have made him feel good, but it couldn't turn him heartless. He was angry at the inability of all of them to protect themselves and the undead bastards for creating such a mess. At the same time, he was a bit sad as well.

No matter whether he hated them or not, seeing so many people die was enough to ruin even a devil's mood. Ashton shook the random thoughts out of his head and focused on the incoming horde. Another horde of undead creatures who thought of him as food to satisfy their hunger...

Ashton took Balmond out and rushed straight into them. With a simple swing, a couple of heads were severed. The next moment, the bodies of the undead exploded, covering Ashton in black smoke.

It was the final defence move to take down more people even in death. However, their pathetic tries to take him down were hilarious. Had it been a normal person, they would have been killed in an instant. Either because of the injuries or because of the smoke.

But Ashton wasn't an ordinary person. The more they wanted to take him down, the stronger he became.

"Get out of the fucking way!" Ashton yelled before slashing them up like a possessed man.

The abyssal smoke might have made him strong, but it was also messing up with his head. Astaroth knew this, but he also wanted to thoroughly test the effects. That's why he kept observing Ashton quietly.

As he was making quick work of them, his heightened perception sensed something. A faint sound of a heartbeat.

"Someone's alive here?"

[Looks like it's coming from below.]

That was all, Ashton wanted to hear. He summoned all of his strength and punched the floor, breaking it apart with ease.

[Right ahead of you!]

Ashton charged in the direction Astaroth pointed, like a mad man. There were a couple of zombies in the way, but Ashton killed them without even raising a finger. He finally came across a room, Kakaroff's corpse was pinned to the wall right in front of him.

Sadly, he had already turned into one of them. The potioneer Ashton that remembered was no more. Instead, a vile creature had taken his place.

"I'll put you to rest."

Ashton slowly walked up to his former teacher and plunged Blamond right through his chest. Setting his corrupted soul free. Next to Kakaroff was Anna. Several black patches could be seen on her injured body.

The Abyssal smoke was slowly turning her as well, but for some reason, her body was able to fight back.

[It's the fire coursing through her veins. The flames are keeping the smoke at bay for now. At this rate, she would eventually be converted into one of them.]

"Not on my watch." Ashton squatted next to her, gently lifting her head and placing it on his lap, "If I absorb the smoke from her body she would be able to--"

[There's no time for that. It'll take too long for the crystal to absorb it. We'll have to use some other method.]

"Like what?"

[You have to turn her. Turn her into a Zompirewolf. It's the only way.]

Chapter 272 Two Of A Kind (2)

Ashton could not believe what he heard. Turn her into one of his kind? Was it even possible in the first place? After all, Avalina did extensive research on the topic for over a month and the only answer she could derive was... Ashton could be a tribrid because of the Xyran organs.

Anna did not have the privilege he did. Without the organs, she won't survive the transformation and die! Ashton couldn't risk her life like that.

Astaroth knew this, yet he did not warn Ashton about it. Simply because he wanted to confirm something. Frankly, he did not care about anyone on the planet, but his vessel. Whether Anna survived or not was none of his concern.

But if he wanted to confirm the suspicions that had been nagging him for a while, Astaroth needed to convince Ashton to try and convert her. No matter what kind of cheap trick he had to employ to achieve it.

"Convert her? She would not survive the-" Ashton argued but was promptly cut off.

[Listen to me. If you don't do it, this girl would die either way. Her flames would eventually run out and when they do, she'll convert into one of the undead and you'll have to kill her.]

"But the Xyran organs-

[As things stand, you only have two options. One, you convert her and give her a fighting chance. Or two, you don't do shit, she turns into an undead and you kill her then. What's it gonna be?]

Ashton gritted his teeth in frustration. Anna was doomed if he did convert her and doomed if he didn't. The worst thing about it, Anna couldn't even make the choice for herself.

But the way her unconscious body was trying its best to fend off the corpsification, it was clear she had the will to live. Ashton could give her that opportunity. Even though her life wouldn't be the same as it was before, she would at least be alive.

"Tell me what I have to do."

[Just do what you have always done, bite her. But instead of sucking blood from her, inject your blood into her body.]

"You do know what happens-

[I know. I have felt it before. Whenever you bite a prey, bloodlust takes over you and all you want to do is kill them.]

"Right."

[Don't worry about it. If such a scenario arises, I'll knock you out from the inside and take over your body it'll you regain consciousness. Do it already now, she won't last for long!]

Ashton gently lifted Anna's head up, bringing his razor-sharp canines closer to her nape. He was still having second thoughts about it, but not enough to make him stop. Soon enough, he broke through her skin, plunging his teeth into her throat.

Her blood gushed straight into his mouth. Unlike the blood he had tasted before, Anna's blood was exceptionally warm and sweet. It almost felt like he was drinking caramelized sugar. Her blood was... perfect. So much so, that he wanted more and more.

[Ashton, control yourself! You're trying to save her, not kill her. Inject your blood into her, not the other way around damnit!]

Astaroth's words shook Ashton back to his senses. Thanks to the Xyran, he was able to flee the trap of his bloodlust and focus on the task at hand. It felt a bit weird, but he somehow managed to force his blood into Anna's body, through his canines.

Moments after doing so, Anna's body began twitching which soon turned into flailing in pain. She opened her glowing red eyes, but she still seemed to be unconscious. Her body was on fire, even though she wasn't screaming Ashton knew she was in anguish.

Just like he had been over a year ago when he was bitten into by a vampire and an undead.



[Imbue her with some of your Dark Aura now!]

"What?"

[Just place the crystal on her chest and imagine pushing the dark aura into her!]

Ashton did not know what the fuck was Astaroth planning, but since Anna's life depended on him, he had no choice but to do as he was being told. Dark Aura was merely a refined form of Abyssal smoke, hence it had the capacity to kill someone.

But to Ashton's surprise, the moment he gave her some of his Dark Aura, her flailing stopped. She wasn't in pain anymore. Her breathing got back to normal... but her appearance changed.

All the black patches covering her were gone. Her skin turned light, and she grew a lot, in a lot of places...

Her already perfect figure was now more refined. One could call it a perfect hourglass. On top of that, she was no longer 5' 7", and now stood at 6' 0".

But those were only minor changes. The most interesting part was the appearance of tiny horns and scarlet wings on her back. She also grew a tail. Just by looking at her, Ashton felt a bit weird. His body temperature shot up. Higher than ever before.

[You're ahem... sexually aroused kiddo. It happens when you turn someone for the first time. You'll get used to it. However, there might be another reason why you're feeling like that.]

"What?"

[Can't you see, the girl didn't turn into a Zompiewolf, as we expected. Well, initially she did, but she evolved into something else. Something your kind calls a Succubi. A demonic one at that.]

At the same time, another notification appeared in front of Ashton. One he had never seen before.

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The transformation was successful!

The target <Anna Swan> had successfully been turned into a Demonic Ichor Succubi.

Current number of associates: 1

Third Innate ability has been revealed: [Form Conversion].

[Form Conversion]: This innate ability allows the user to convert a target into a different species altogether. By feeding your blood into the target's body, the target can extract information and freely choose a suitable subclass from the variety of creatures' DNA present in the host's blood.

Grade: High (level 10)

Cooldown: 1 Month.

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"Wait but I never-"

[It's me. Or my organs specifically, that gave her information about the succubi race and her body chose it to be her next evolutionary step.]

"This is weird. I bit her so shouldn't she have turned into a Vampirewolf or something?"

[We can discuss the details later. For now, grab her and get going. The smoke can still harm her.]

Astaroth might have said that, but all he wanted was time to think about what happened. The fact that the Dark aura helped Anna stabilise and help her select a subclass that was strictly limited to the Xyrans, could only mean one thing.

The Xyrans were the ones who created Abyssal Smoke. Or someone who had access to a lot of Xyran corpses to extract their essence from.

Either way, if a higher civilization had found its way to Earth, Astaroth might not be as safe as he thought he was.

#### Chapter 273 Trouble Never Ends (1)

The director was still missing. Ashton had to find her as well. Whether he liked her or not, didn't matter at the moment. She had saved his life on multiple occasions, it was only fair he did the same. Also, if he managed to save her, maybe she would be able to help him and Avalina in creating a clone for Astaroth.

Thankfully, Ashton had more than enough people to look for her. But first, he had to get the rest of them to safety. He retraced his step back to the portal. As soon as he walked out of the building, he was greeted by a pleasant sight.

All of the zombies had been taken care of. Including the ones the bitch called Servina brought with her. In some distance, Gokund and Lich's undead could be seen playing with a bunch of severed heads as if they were balls.

It was a sickening, yet funny sight. Celeste was roaming around creating more 'children' to help look for precious items, the undead might have dropped. While Sven was sitting next to the portal, protecting it.

Ashton's eyes then wandered over to the students, who were still in shock. And who could've blamed them? They might have studied in the same academy. But unlike him, it must have been their first close encounter with death like this.

In fact, Ashton would have gotten worried if they had not shown any emotion. After all, it wasn't every day that one's city got invaded by a bunch of over smart zombies.

However, even though they were safe, it didn't mean the crisis was evaded. They were still in danger. Hell, some of them might also have been infected with the virus without them knowing anything about it.

"Take her and protect her till I come back." Ashton warned Celeste before handing Anna to her, "She is a friend, so don't you dare try doing anything to her. If anything happens to her, I would stop punishing you entirely!"

"N-No, master! I would protect her with my life... though I'm already dead!"

Celeste being the masochist she was, couldn't even bear the thought of Ashton not berating her. Being downgraded and used by her master was her only purpose in 'life'. She couldn't let anything come between that!

Watching her behave like that, Sven couldn't help but shake his head. They were the servants of a great master. Thus they should behave like it, and yet Celeste always had to let everyone around her know how big of a pervert she was.

"Is she alright?" Layla immediately ran up to Ashton the moment she saw him.

Since Anna's appearance had changed a lot, Ashton took the liberty of covering her up. So that her wings, tail and horns were hidden away. Who knew how these fuckers would have reacted if they saw what he had done to her.

"Yeah, she's fine. Unfortunately, she had inhaled quite a bit of the smoke while she was unconscious." Ashton replied, "For now, my soldiers would keep an eye on her to make sure she's alright. Once she gets cleared, I'll send her back to her family."

He continued, "Till then, it's for the best that I keep her around me. It would be helpful if you could tell her parents about the arrangement."

"Thank you so much..." She immediately kneeled in front of Ashton, and so did the rest of the students, "For saving all of us."

Layla choked up a couple of times as tears flooded her eyes, before she finally managed to speak clearly. They were safe. It was a feeling not many of them could feel. They were the lucky few who managed to get out of this crisis.

Ashton nodded and left them behind, "Take them to the Palace and keep them there. If anyone of them shows signs of conversion, kill them."

He instructed Sven who was busy hacking away the zombie remains to strengthen his shadowy sword. Sven nodded, crushed the head with the hilt of his greatsword and disappeared into the portal.

Ashton had no idea how strong Anna was, but Sven and Celeste should be able to keep her in check. In the meantime, he once again tried using [Detection] on Anna, but just like before, it showed him the two most infamous sentences.

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Please wait while genetic calibration takes place.

You'll be able to view the subject's status once she had completely recovered.

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With everything being taken care of, Ashton could now focus on disposing of the remaining enemies and hopefully, finding the Director somewhere in the city.

She was strong, so she should be alright. But he didn't know what the rest of the undead were planning. They could have potentially managed to defeat her.

"Let's get going shall we?" Ashton stretched his neck, "Rise and shine, you ugly bastards."

As soon as Ashton said those words, hundreds of corpses around him rose up. Well, at least those corpses that were somewhat intact.

The students assumed a defensive position the minute they saw the undead rising up. Only to see them bowing before Ashton as if they were his loyal subjects. Hundreds of undead, bowing down to one man... the sight was terrifying and satisfying at the same time.

"What even is he?" A first-year student asked.

It was obvious she did not know who Ashton was. Essentially, none of them had ever seen him before. Only the second and third years knew about him, along with the professors.

"He... is the strongest person to have ever entered the academy," Layla replied with an awestruck look, "Ashton Bismark, a student who never learned to bow before the rules that made our lives terrible."

"Senior, you shouldn't drool over a boy like that. Strong men don't like desperate girls." The first-year chuckled before heading into the portal.

Ashton closed the portal once all of them were gone. Despite his heightened perception, he couldn't find anyone who hadn't turned into undead. Let alone the director.

"Go ahead and find her. If you don't I'll kill you fuckers myself."



He ordered the undead he had taken control over before his legs gave out. He was using his abilities relentlessly. He was bound to suffer from exhaustion.

"You know, this place would be suitable for me to live." The Lich said, "A change of scenery might be helpful to me in ascending."

"You wanna live here? Go ahead, knock yourself out." Ashton replied without any care in the world, "You don't have to leave though. You might have given away the rights to the Eastern Palace, but you're more than welcome to live there."

"I will think about it."

#### Chapter 274 Trouble Never Ends (2)

Ashton's undead left no corner of the city unturned. But all they found was more and more zombies. It was safe to assume, that there wasn't anyone alive in the city anymore. Which meant, that either the director was turned or she wasn't in the city.

"Something doesn't feel right." Ashton mumbled.

Jerico said there were more than thirty thousand undead in Lycania. Yet, Ashton could only find roughly four to five thousand in Contingent. Where were the rest of them? Sheera had already informed him there were roughly about the same number of Zombies there in Deja as well.

But it only accounted for a third of what Ashton was expecting. On top of that, Jerico was under his influence while Ashton interrogated him. Thus, Ashton was sure, Jerico wasn't lying to him.

[They are hiding, but why?]

"They are planning something. Either in Contingent or in Deja or maybe both the places." Ashton replied confidently, "It's a hunch, but I think the corpsification was just the tip of the iceberg. Those bastards would never put so much effort into merely conquering a kingdom."

However, there was one more thing that had Ashton confused. He was absorbing the Abyssal smoke slowly, and yet the fog was only getting heavier. As if someone was continuously spouting more and more smoke. Yet they weren't able to find the source.

Until now.

Just then, a bunch of undead came running towards him. It appeared they found something. Instead of mobilising the soldiers, Ashton decided to check things out himself. Obviously, he had his reasons behind it.

But he decided to go alone, mainly because he didn't want to alert anyone who might be hiding. No matter whether it was friend or foe.

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Back in Deja...

"Servina? What happened?"

"That fucking kid is alive!" Servina slowly opened her eyes, "Damn it, Leo! I told you we should have taken care of that bastard first!"

She was raging. More because she had been humiliated at the hands of a brat. Her anger had no bounds, so much so, that she ripped the head off of the nearest undead she could find.

"Relax. It's just one kid and it's not like he killed you." Leo smirked, "You lost a doppelganger, big deal. Just think about what would happen to us if he failed. Yeah, it doesn't seem much of a big deal now, does it?"

Leo was a 6' 0" tall, bronze-skinned man with a wide face, neat eyebrows and a broad nose. He was turned as a teenager, thus he looked like one, even though he was one of the oldest undead in history.

He was also someone who didn't care about the rest of the world or even his own kind for that matter. Despite that, he still managed to get wound up in Servina's schemes. Well, mainly it was the scheme of their king.

But since he was missing for a while now, his two advisors decided to take the matters into their own hands.

"Yeah... I lost a doppelganger. Motherfucker, do you have any idea how much effort it requires to make one of those?"

Servina's doppelgangers were different from a simple clone. It was basically a possession technique that allowed her to transfer her 'Soul' into an undead whom she had turned and change their appearance.

The Servina Ashton had imprisoned was the human scientist Tom, who helped them. But the moment he was captured, Servina left the control over him and returned to her original body.

This skill was especially dangerous because it basically made her unkillable. If she was threatened or on the verge of dying, she could simply shift consciousness to another undead and live on. Which was another reason why she was always present on the battlefield.

It was because she knew if things went south, she could always escape. Unlike the rest of them. That being said, constantly jumping from one body to another would syphon off some of her mana permanently. Thus, she tried not to use the skill too much.

It was also why she was so angry when her doppelganger was defeated by Ashton. After all, she lost a chunk of her total mana because of him.

"It's still a childish banter in my eyes. As long as you're not dead, nothing else matters." Leo shrugged his shoulders, "It's not like the kid would arrive in Deja. He would probably be busy sorting out the mess we made in Contingent."

Servina nodded her head. Her loss could be seen as a small sacrifice for the greater good. The cities they targetted might seem to be random, but they had a reason behind attacking Deja, Contingent and Livan.

Attacking Deja was to serve as both a declaration of war as well as crushing the command centre. Similarly, attacking Contingent served two purposes as well. Firstly, it would get rid of the vampires in the academy while also crushing the economy of various werewolf kingdoms and cities.

As for the reason behind attacking Livan... well, it only made sense for them to end the strongest man in the kingdom or at least keep him busy while their plans came to fruition. Despite failing to accomplish either of those tasks and technically losing Contingent, they were still going strong in Deja.

Jonathan was in their possession, while his kingdom was slowly but surely being turned upside down. Just as their 'King' had wished. At the same time, they were preparing for the ritual just like the spacefarer had advised them to.

As long as they did as he wanted them to, the gods would arrive on earth. And when they did, not even the combined force of the vampires and werewolves would be able to stop them. While the undead would rule over the planet along with the gods.

"We should keep our focus on gathering the corpses. We would need a lot more vessels for the gods to materialise on the planet." Leo smirked, "Even our progenitor won't be able to stop us then."

Chapter 275 Ogre's Ghoul (1)

'What are these bastards doing?'

,m Ashton's undead soldiers had led him to the black market. At least where it was supposed to be. The market had been destroyed. The gates, the stalls, everything inside was in tatters. As Ashton quietly snuck inside, he was greeted by another gruesome sight.

Everything around him was covered in blood and gore. Not a single inch of space was left untainted blood. The place appeared to be rundown as if a century had passed since the place was last used when in reality, it barely had been a day.

The place did not look like it belonged there among the rest of the buildings and structures. He looked around cautiously, not knowing what to expect.

Suddenly, the air around him felt heavier than before. It was absurd to think of it like that but it felt as if the air was begging him to turn away and run. On the other hand, the smoke was getting denser. Ashton had no doubt that the source of the smoke was somewhere close by.

If only he could find it, maybe he'll also find the reason why the undead were there and what were they up to.

"Look around, tell me if you see something suspicious. But be careful not to make noises." Ashton instructed the undead who immediately spread out.

While the undead were doing their own thing, Ashton couldn't shrug off the weird feeling. He had no doubt the bastards were up to something. However, the lack of zombies left a sour taste in his mouth.

If something important was going on there, then shouldn't they be protecting the place? That was the question Ashton kept asking. Regardless of that, Ashton kept moving forward. Until he saw something that made even his skin crawl.

The ground beneath his feet was soaked up in crimson blood like the rest of the market. However, hundreds of bones were scattered everywhere, and these were just any bones... they were mortal skeletons, belonging to humans and werewolves.

But that wasn't all. At some distance, he could also see a pile of mangled corpses. The Zombies must be behind it, but only God knows what was the reason behind doing it. Upon closer inspection, Ashton realised these were the guards stationed at the black market.

All of these people were exceptional fighters, even if they were only in their mid-20s in terms of levels.

"How come these people did not turn into zombies despite being so close to the smoke?"

[Maybe the smoke can't convert those who were killed before it could take effect?]

Ashton nodded. It could be a possibility. However, since these corpses had been piled up neatly, it meant someone or something was there doing all this weird shit.

"Let's get a closer look," Ashton mumbled before heading towards the corpses, hoping to get a clue or two behind what was going on there.

However, the next moment he heard a bunch of hasty steps coming toward him. They were talking quite loudly, so Ashton decided to hide and listen to what these people were talking about. Hundreds of Undead assholes kept popping up there like mushrooms in the rain.

But they weren't alone. Behind them were more than a hundred humans and werewolves. All of them were chained together and had a collar around their neck. Just by looking into their lifeless eyes, Ashton knew they were under some kind of a spell.

But the worse was yet to come. The director was one of the people who had been captured along with her niece who also happened to be the owner of the black market.

"What is this..."

[I'm just as clueless as you are.]

"How much blood do we need!" One of the undead dressed in similar clothes as Servina yelled.

"Shut up and keep killing them. When we have killed enough of them, the summoning would be completed by itself." Another one yelled back, "Also stop asking me questions as if I know any more than you do!"

"The situation is already tense. We have lost all communications from any other group." Yet another one chimed in, "It's safe to assume we are on our own."

'Summoning? What the hell are these bastards up to?'



The more Ashton listened to them, the wilder the situation became. Smearing blood all over the place would summon a creature? What kind of stuff were these undead assholes smoking?

[Whatever it is, it doesn't seem like it would do us any good. Just kill them now.]

Ashton rushed at them before they could kill anyone. Usually, he would have waited for his undead soldiers to arrive before attacking them. But now wasn't the time.

He could not allow those bastards to kill anyone, or else they could possibly end up successfully summoning whatever the fuck they wanted to.

Ashton brought out his hand cannon and blasted the zombies away. The creatures were surprised to see him there and thus couldn't counter-attack.

"Damn it! He's already here!"

"What are you waiting for, start killing the people while we-"

Before the undead could finish what he was saying, his head was chopped off along with dozens of others. Ashton had jumped right into the centre of the horde, killing the undead like a butcher. He swung Balmond around as if he was a shredder.

Anyone who dared to go near him got their heads chopped off. But soon, he began taking damage as well. He was strong, but he wasn't unstoppable. He had jumped into an ant hive, it was obvious the ants would bite him.

This would have been the perfect opportunity to test out [Heaven's Downfall] skill. However, since it had a wide range, Ashton would have ended up killing innocents as well. Something he wasn't keen on doing, as he could potentially end up summoning the creature himself.

At the same time, some of the undead left the group and headed toward the hostages. If they could somehow summon the beast they had been wanting to, they just might be able to end the mutant once and for all.

"Get over here!" Ashton yelled before pushing the crowd aside using his unstoppable strength.

Ashton punched the ground with all his strength, sending a shockwave and knocking everyone down. Unfortunately, one of the hostages got caught up in the attack and fell over an undead's blade.

Blood Ritual was successful.

<Tainted Ogre's Ghoul> has been summoned from the abyss.

Chapter 276 Ogre's Ghoul (2)

As soon as Ashton read those words, there was an explosion, blowing everything away. It almost felt like Baiter was again experimenting with something out of the grimoire. But the reality was different.

Following the explosion, some sort of a hole had been created in the air. Just like a portal but this was different. Something no one on the planet had seen yet.

Ashton slowly forced himself on his feet. Struggling from the constant ringing inside his head and blurred vision, he saw a giant monster standing in front of him.

"What the hell is that?" He mumbled as his vision slowly cleared up.

[That's... an Ogre. One that was raised by the power of death itself. I'm pretty sure it's the work of a necromancer like yourself. Whoever did that, is most certainly dead now.]

Ashton nodded his head even though he didn't know what Astaroth was talking about. All he could gather was the ugly red-skinned bastard in front of him was an undead creature. As long as it qualified as an undead, he had nothing to fear about.

He used [Corpse Parade] once again, in the hopes of controlling the ogre. However, his attempts resulted in failure.

"Why can't I control it?"

[Because it was raised by another Necromancer! On top of that you can only control undead that have free will or aren't under someone else's control.]

"So I can't even resurrect him later on?"

[Nope.]

"It's a shame."

The nine feet tall giant stood in front of them, staring at everything around itself. The next moment his eyes fell on the undead morons who summoned him.

"Yes! I'm the one who summoned you. Obey my command-"

Before the undead could even complete his speech, the ogre stomped him down like an ant. Rotten blood splattered everywhere. The undead were in shock. They might have summoned the beast, but none of them had any control over him.

In the ogre's eyes, all of them were ants whom he could kill. After all, he had been brought to an unknown place by unknown creatures. If Ashton was in his place, he would have been pissed too.

The ogre attacked the undead like a raging mad bull. The ferocity in which he attacked them even surprised Ashton. Within moments the undead were on the ground writhing in pain, mere moments away from true death.

Mere moments ago they were boasting about dominating Lycania. But now, they could only beg for their lives as the ogre relentlessly killed them all.

"He is an effective killer. That's for sure."

[Just try not to get in its way.]

"You scared?"

[No. I'm just worried your stupid ass would do something horrible and die in the process.]

"Don't you remember? You said it yourself."

[What?]

"I'm too dumb to die."

[...I guess that's true.]

Their bickering aside, Ashton couldn't stomach how bizarre the ogre looked. He did not want to say it out loud, but the Ogre was one of the most disgusting yet frightening things he had seen in his life.

The creature's entire body was covered with rotten wounds and dried blood. Much like his arms, his legs were also quite muscular. Giving the Ghoul the weird look of a warrior who had died on a battlefield.

"AAAAAGH!"

The ogre let out a bloodcurdling scream. The undead along with their hostages went down on their knees. They weren't paying the ogre any respect or something, they fell because of the pain the ogre's frightening scream had put them into.

Ashton, on the other hand, kept standing in front of him as if nothing had happened. His pain resistance was strong enough for him to remain unaffected by the shrieking. However, the noise was still a bit unpleasant to him. Especially when coupled with the ringing sound in his head.

"Gokung shut this bastard up please," Ashton mumbled before casually walking up to the hostages.

Suddenly the ground shook as the Gorillan queen jumped out of Ashton's shadow, grabbed the ogre by his neck and tossed him out of the black market. It all happened so quickly that the ogre didn't even have a chance to retaliate. Gokung then charged out of the market herself.

"Oi, wake up." Ashton slapped the cheek of the hostages, waking them up one after another.

"Ashton, what are you doing here?" The director yelled at him, "It's too dangerous, even for you-"

"I see... you're still underestimating me. That means you're good." Ashton nodded before getting back up, "Also, that isn't something you should say. Given your condition."

It was just like he said, the director wasn't in a good shape. Her armour was in tatters, with multiple bruises spread all across her body. Thankfully, all of them still had their masks on, so they weren't in danger of turning.

Had they been, Ashton would have had no choice but to kill them. Which would have sucked since he had just rescued them.

"Alright, let's get you people out of here."

Ashton quickly called forth a dozen or so undead and have them escort the hostages to safety. At first, they were a bit taken aback by the undead. Nevertheless, when they saw how gently the undead were behaving with them, they knew they weren't there to harm them.

However, the hostages got distracted by the noises coming from the opposite direction. The same place where Gokung and the ogre were busy exchanging blows.

"What's going on there?" The director asked.

"Believe me, you don't wanna know."

"You're not coming with us, are you?"

Ashton shook his head and walked away. he had wasted too much time chatting with them. Time that could have been used to earn some exp.

Ashton was worried that Gokung might not be able to handle the Ogre by herself. However, when he arrived at the location, the gorillan more or less had the Ogre under control.

The Ogre wasn't being able to attack Gokung, but then again, Gokung's blows weren't that effective against the ogre's thick skin. More or less, the two of them were locked in a sort of stalemate.

"That Ogre would have been a great addition to my forces." Ashton sighed before taking out Balmond to breathe in the fresh air, "Hm... at least I'll have enough resources to have an armour made from the ogre's skin."

### Chapter 277 Ogre's Ghoul (3)

After the initial surprise attack, it seemed Gokung wasn't able to carry the momentum. By the time Ashton arrived there, the Ogre Ghoul was decimating the gorillan. But then again, unlike the ogre, close combat was never Gokung's forte.

The Ogre had locked Gokung in his vice grip and was slowly crushing her. Even if Gokung 'died' there, she would resurrect in a couple of hours. So instead of helping her, Ashton decided to keep watching the fight.



That way, he would be able to get some insights on which part he would have to focus on while training her. Sadly, it didn't seem like Ashton would be able to gain much information as the ogre had wrapped grabbed onto Gokung's jaw and was about to tear her head in half.

"Bad move..." Ashton shrugged his shoulders as he knew what was going to happen next.

Gokung did not resist the ogre's attempts to kill her. Instead, she charged up and waited for the correct moment. Soon his mouth was aligned with the Ogre's face and at that moment, she rained fire upon him... quite literally.

"Got em."

[That hellfire is no joke.]

Ashton nodded and watched on like a proud pet parent. If there was one thing the undead absolutely loathed, then it had to be fire. The element that could annihilate them.

The ogre's face was on fire. There was no chance he was going to fight back any time soon. Gokung seemed to be aware of it as well and wasted no time in thrashing the ogre. She employed the same technique she had used to almost kill Ashton and bombarded the ogre with fire.

The searing smell of rotten flesh flooded Ashton's sharp nose. Yet Gokung kept on spewing fire at the ogre. In the end, Ashton had to tell her to stop, because he wanted baiter to make an armour from the Ogre's skin and cooked skin wouldn't have been of any use to him.

"Enough, stand back!" He yelled at her and Gokung immediately stopped attacking.

However, it turned out to be a mistake. There was another explosion, right behind Gokung. A hand raised itself out of the smoking pits of hell before grabbing onto Gokung's head and crushing it in one swift motion.

—

Shadow Soldier: Gokung has been destroyed.

Estimated time before resurrection: 1:59:59 seconds.

—

"What the hell..." Ashton mumbled when he saw what could only be referred to as charred remains of a corpse walking out of the crater Gokung had created, "How is the motherfucker still alive?"

[I already told you. It's an ogre. A tenacious species that is extremely difficult to kill using generic methods. He wasn't dead, that's why your gorillan kept attacking him.]

"Couldn't you have told me all this before?"

[Maybe you should have used detection on the bastard before engaging him in a fight? As t answer your question... where's the fun in spoon-feeding you everything?]

"You're screwed up."

[I'm living in your head, take a guess why am I like this. It's not like you can't kill him.]

Ashton sighed but decided to let the matter go. After all, the freakshow was walking straight toward him. He needed to handle him before the ogre handed his ass to him.

The ogre yelled once again but this time, Ashton rushed in and punched him right in the face before the ogre could let out his disgusting shriek again. The ogre waved his arms in an attempt to strike back.

However, not only did the ogre fail, but he also gave Ashton a platform to land on and dung Balmond deep within the creature's chest. The ogre shrieked in pain, but it wasn't enough to kill him.

But the next moment, something unthinkable happened. The ogre spewed Hellfire of his own. The flames completely swallowed Ashton. The force behind the flames was extreme and managed to knock off Ashton who was somehow dangling to the Ogre's chest.

Thinking he got rid of Ashton, the ogre raised his head and roared loudly. It almost felt like the ogre wanted the world to be aware of his victory.

His ability to control fire had given him high resistance to fire. That's why Gokung had to attack him multiple times to deal with even the most insignificant amount of damage. That on top of his skin, gave him near immunity to fire.

However, the next moment he felt a sharp pain in his thigh.

"So damn noisy..." Ashton mumbled before twisting the blade which was still plunged deep within the Ogre's thigh, "Didn't your mother tell you not to play with fire?"

The ogre's legs gave out and it fell hard on his back with a loud thud. His eyes were locked on the earthling who had the most maniacal and menacing grin the ogre had ever seen.

"Well guess what? Mine didn't tell me such a thing either."

—

You have activated the legendary skill: [Heaven's Downfall]

---

Suddenly a pit of black flames surrounded them. On Ashton's command, hell had been summoned on earth and anyone who dared to approach him would get burned in an instant. The pit of fire was Ashton's domain and he was the sole ruler of it.

Even though the ogre had high resistance to fire in general, the only one truly immune to Heaven's downfall or Seraph's flames on earth was Ashton. At the same time, another unfamiliar notification popped up in front of him.

---

Analysis completed.

You will now be given a subclass suiting your abilities.

Subclass allotted: [Cinder Soul]

All [Fire] related abilities have been maxed out. You have learned new skills!

[Fire God's Will]: (Passive Skill) You can manipulate [Fire] Abilities cast by others like your own.

[Elemental Summoning (Fire)]: (Active Skill) You can summon a creature from hell to serve you temporarily.

Cooldown: 6 hours.

Duration of the skill: 1 hour.

[Phoenix's Song]: (Active Skill) A mythical creation said to have been born alongside the universe. No one had ever seen or heard, but people who believe in her, also believe in the strength of her voice.

Effect: You can grant fire-based buffs to anyone you desire as long as they can hear your voice.

Cooldown: 10 minutes.

Duration of the Buff: 1 hour.

Ashton might have been unresponsive to the prompt, however, Astaroth couldn't help but smile as soon as he read the name of the subclass he got.

Chapter 278 A Succubus Problem (1)

A week later...

The journey back to Livan was uneventful, but it was fine that way. After all, Ashton had too many questions running inside his head, he needed some time to sort it all out. In the end, even Deja had to be completely evacuated, just like Contingent.

Only 20% of the population residing in Deja could survive. Sadly, Jonathan wasn't one of them and although no one had seen him die, it was safe to assume he was no more. They didn't even have the time to mourn his loss. Not that Ashton wanted to.

Still, Jonathan was a good man, who had his fair share of flaws. Ashton decided to let his ill feelings be gone. Just like Jonathan was.

Other than that, the cities of Contingent and Deja were marked as 'Blight Zones'.

Blight ones were the places that had been overrun by Zombies and the Abyssal Smoke. No one was allowed to venture into these zones no matter who they were. With the help of Ashton, the lich and Sheera, containment protocols were placed, hoping to stop the spread of the undead virus.

The situation in Deja was much worse than in Contingent as Contingent had been more or less wiped clean by Ashton and his flames.

On top of that, The Lich had decided to make the city his new home, for the time being, the Eastern Palace now belonged to Ashton. Thus, Ashton was more or less sure the city was safe.

The time the Lich would spend there would be dedicated to finding a cure for the abyssal smoke. Since the Lich was already dead, the smoke would only make him stronger. Thus making him the perfect candidate to help in figuring a cure.

However, there were a plethora of other problems that Ashton had to solve. One of which was to decide who was going to succeed the throne. But Ashton wasn't interested in all that, at least for now.

Everyone's morale was already down. The absence of a ruling figure just made things worse. A lot of criminals popped up out of nowhere, killing and looting others became a norm in Lycania. Thus Ashton was more focused on keeping those things away from his territories.

There wasn't a single person who hadn't lost something in the terror attack. Some had lost their loved ones while all of them had lost their homes. This huge population needed to be settled down somewhere.

As much as Ashton wanted to welcome them all to Livan, that wasn't going to be possible. The city was still being built, also, even if the construction had been completed, there was no way they could house over two million people there.

The royal knight already asked the other Barons for aid. But in the king's absence, it seemed they had grown a backbone of steel. All of them were ambitious and wanted the throne for themselves. In the time of crisis, all they could see was an opportunity only a fool would pass up.

Thankfully, Livan wasn't the only territory owned by Ashton. People soon were sent to Maddencreek as well as the territories previously owned by the Morgans. Since even that wasn't enough, Ashton reluctantly decided to open the doors of Livan and hopefully work something out later on.

Following the attack, Ashton decided it was for the best to Warn Alucard. After all, who knows when these fuckers would attack them.



Following his warning, every single city owned by the vampires was placed under indefinite lockdown. No one was allowed to leave their homes. Even if they had an emergency, the soldiers were the ones to solve them.

The rules were a bit strict, but since the Abyssal Smoke posed more danger to them. These measures were essential.

Ashton didn't want to be a part of either of these things. However, by the time he realised, he was already fulfilling the role of a ruler for everyone. Even the royal guards were working under him now.

"Our food supplies are critically low. The farms running across the might not be enough to provide food to everyone here." Renee reported to Ashton.

"Form small hunting parties and send them to procure whatever they can find in the forest. We have more than five hundred thousand mouths to feed in the city. It's about time some of them started fending for themselves." Ashton quickly gave her a solution, "Virgil, what about the defences?"

"Those who can fight are being trained to use Baiter's weapons. Guard towers have been erected across the city's boundary and more mines have been spread around the city." Virgil religiously replied, "If anything appears out of the woods, we'll instantly shoot them down."

Ashton nodded before stopping and pulling Fae and Virgil together, "I'm sorry about your wedding-"

"Oh come on, it's nothing more than a formality." Fae laughed it off, "We can have our wedding once things settle down a bit. Also, we all are safe and that's what matters the most."

Ashton smiled before facing Verina and Irina. The sisters were shaken after listening about what happened to the vampires attending the academy. They tried their best not to show it, but Ashton's perception caught them.

Under normal circumstances, Ashton would have been scared as well. Just the thought of dying because of unintentionally inhaling a gas was nerve-wracking.

Their mood was the reason Ashton was giving them more attention than he ever did before. As a friend of course.

Michelle, Jonathan's daughter wasn't living in Lycania, but in Transylvania with Alucard's nephew. She was there because Jonathan wanted them to be close. Thankfully, both she and Alucard's nephew were safe.

Had they been attending the academy as usual. Both of them would probably be having their funerals now. Ashton wanted Verina and Irina to go back to Transylvania as well. Probably because they would be safer there. But once again, they declined, saying they wanted to help there.

Other than that, everything was a mess, but slowly getting under control. Well... most of the things.

[It's time.]

"Alright people, keep up the good work. I'll go have some rest, then we'll get right back at it."

Ashton hurriedly made an excuse and rushed into his room. Once inside, he summoned a portal to the Eastern Palace and jumped right through it.

As soon as he appeared on the other side of the portal, he was tackled to the ground. His hands were pinned on the floor just like his body and a familiar person was sitting on top of him.

"I want you!" Anna licked her lips while her gaze stripped Ashton down, "I can't wait anymore!"

Chapter 279 A Succubus Problem (2)

"Technically, you want my blood." Ashton rolled his eyes, "Why are you naked either way!?"

"Exciting you makes your heart beat faster," Anna replied before revealing her succubus form, "more blood for me..."

"Oh, I can see that..."

If he wanted to, he could have easily pushed Anna off of himself. The only thing was, this whole succubus thing was new for both of them and Ashton didn't want to hurt her any more than he already had. After all, she was in this mess all because of him.

Yet, her... felling her barely clothed body on top, his mind was bound to wander off and have some indecent thoughts. The worst things about it? She had no control over herself when she got like this.

Her hunger would force her to transform into her true form of a succubus. At that moment, she needed food. But not just any food. She wasn't a succubus who could fulfil her desire with any other person.

Anna needed to feed on Ashton's blood. Because since he had created her, he was the only one who could tame her. Her erratic behaviour was also the reason why Ashton had kept her in the palace and not with the rest of the refugees.

All in all, Anna was in the 'newborn' stage and her brain could not comprehend the needs of her body properly. That's why it was up to Ashton to train her, which he wasn't really very good at it. If it hadn't been for Astaroth's proper guidance, Ashton would have messed the thing up really bad.

While Ashton was thinking all this, Anna could only feel her receptive organs going crazy. She wasn't like this before, but now whenever she saw Ashton, she couldn't hold herself back. All she wanted to was to tear his clothes off and do the thing she shouldn't have.

But his touch, his smell and especially the smoky taste of his blood... were too much for her. Her need for Ashton's blood overpowered her rational side, no matter how hard she tried to control her urges. So far, his blood was enough to satisfy her, but she had a feeling that soon, it wouldn't be enough.

"Enough!" Anna roared loudly, ripping Ashton's shirt with her tail.

Her eyes fell on his bare chest, while her fingers slowly explored every inch of Ashton's body. Her gaze and actions might have felt seductive, but she was merely looking for an appropriate part to sink her teeth into. In the end, she went for her usual spot... the side of his neck.

She was possessed. Ashton's blood was like a drug to her... the more she drank, the more she wanted to have. However, she knew how to restrain herself. It was something that intrigued Astaroth.

Usually, when a succubus bit into her mate, partner or owner, she couldn't hold herself back. Even though she might have been trained extensively. But the case with Anna was different. Despite her dominant demeanour, she knew how to restrain herself from drinking too much blood.

'Here it comes...' Ashton thought to himself.

This was his time to train. A moment later, his snow-white cheeks blushed out of nowhere. As soon as Anna's canines broke through his skin, Ashton's body temperature shot up. His charm resistance was failing him once again.

Meanwhile, Ashton was only a man. If a seductive woman would push herself on him, even his charm resistance wouldn't be enough to keep his second head from rising. The way Anna kept grinding on his crotch while biting his neck didn't help the case either.

Her one hand was firmly keeping Ashton's hands pinned to the floor. While the other one carefully caressed his face while she sucked the blood out of his neck. Her chest was pressed against his so hard, that not a molecule of air could enter between.

[Kinky...]

'Fuck off! Close your eyes or something damn it!'

[I have already. But judging by how erratic your breathing has become, not much is left to the imagination.]

'Shut it, you pervert! I'm not like you.'

[Believe me, you're well on your way. Either way, enjoy your girl, I'm gonna rest for a bit.]

'Shit, shit, shit...'

With Astaroth's voice gone, it was even harder to control himself. Anna's charm was leaking all around her in the form of her smell which mixed with the air.

The more Ashton breathed around her, the more aroused he was getting. His hands were itching to do something...Thankfully, the torturous situation was over sooner than he had expected.

"I'm... done..." Anna mumbled as she slowly turned back to her normal self.

All the pent up energy she had in her was drained in an instant. She collapsed right on top of Ashton, his chest turned into her pillow.

"At least wipe your mouth..." Ashton panted.

This had been his everyday routine for the last week, and yet his body hadn't adapted to it. At least Anna was getting a bit better at controlling herself so that was a good thing.

"I swear... one of these days I'm gonna lose it."

Despite his manly appearance, he was still seventeen. The hormones in his body were running higher than they had ever been and these weird experiences were only making the animalistic side of his body act up.

"I need to... control myself better." He shook his head before carefully lifting Anna up and putting her on the bed, "Maybe I should have thought of another way to save you... you don't deserve this."

He covered her with a blanket before walking out of the room. As soon as he closed the doors behind him, Anna opened her eyes. It wasn't the first time she had faked getting tired right after having her fill of blood.

She did so to avoid any weird talks between the two of them. Ashton had saved her life and she was grateful for it, she wanted to tell him that more than anything. But the situation between them was... complicated.

"Stop blaming yourself... please. You did the right thing." She mumbled, got up and headed toward the bathroom, "You saved me, and I'm grateful for it. More than I let on."

Outside in the courtyard, he saw Sven and Gokung fighting it out. While the undead had formed a circle around them, watching them spar.

Celeste, on the other hand, was waiting right outside Anna's room. Her depraved nature had made it impossible for her to keep her distance when her Master was with the succubus.

"Rather than gawking at us, how about you train for once?" Ashton reprimanded her before opening a locked door, someone had been tied to a chair inside, "As for you... would you mind continuing from where we left off last time, Servina?"

Chapter 280 Dance Like A Fool, Kill Like A Maniac (1)

As soon as Ashton opened the doors, he was greeted by a weird stench. A strong fishy odour. A smell that he had been acquainted with quite recently.

"The fuck did you do..." Ashton shook his head in dismay.

"Tortured her of course! Just like you said."

Since Ashton could not control Servina with [Corpse Parade] skill and had a lot of other things that required his attention. He had left the task of Servina's interrogation to Celeste. Hoping she would figure out a way to get information out of the undead.



He looked inside the room, and then stared at Celeste. Torture? What kind of torture was this? Besides that, Ashton didn't even know the undead were capable of feeling... pleasure. Well, he didn't know how else he could explain the sight in front of him.

The woman, Servina, was tied to a chair, stark naked. A small puddle of suspicious fluid had formed at her feet, which were shaking uncontrollably. Her mouth was open like a venus fly trap. Not to mention, she was drenched in... some sort of fluid as well.

Her breathing was heavy and she looked exhausted yet not a single wound was visible on her curvy body. Everyone in the courtyard was gawking at her as well as Celeste, who couldn't be prouder. Even the undead could tell exactly what had happened there.

'Anna's powers seem to have been affecting the summons too.' Ashton sighed, 'I might need to shift her out of here sooner than later.'

"Remind me not to ever let you be in charge of interrogation ever again."

"But master-"

[I'll let her interrogate me.]

'I thought you were resting?'

[Rest? You really believed that shitty excuse?]

'...'

Ashton accepted his defeat. He wasn't going to win against two perverts, so he decided to focus on the necessary thing.

"Did she reveal their grand plan?" Ashton asked the bitch of a shadow mage in heat.

Celeste wrapped her arms around him and whispered in his ears, "Of course, master. You seem to underestimate the power of... pleasure."

"Believe me, I'm not significant enough to underestimate such a powerful weapon." Ashton replied before smacking her hands away, "Tell me what it is."

Well, it was true. In the week he had spent with Anna, she had proven him wrong every single day. Still, he wasn't there to discuss ridiculous things.

"Aliens. The undead have been colluding with some species of Aliens. The undead would provide them with corpses, and the aliens would give them enough weapons to conquer the planet." Celeste religiously replied, "That's what she told me before... she became like this."

[Ask her whether she described what these aliens looked like.]

Ashton conveyed Astaroth's question to Celeste. Thankfully, she had Asked Servina about the aliens since her story felt a bit far-fetched.

According to Servina, these aliens are a type of mammals, having four arms and two legs. Along with a long, thin tail that was attached to the back of their heads. Coupled with that, they also had six eyes which sit deep in their sockets and can often make them appear to be agitated.

Their small mouths and narrow noses made the aliens appear to be restrained. However, the truth was far from it. It didn't appear like they had any ears, yet their hearing was quite good.

Surprisingly they also knew the human tongue and had no trouble communicating with the undead. They also have small horns across their chests and backs.

Their skin is very thick and very strong. How did the undead know that? Because they attacked the alien and got their asses handed to them. The aliens didn't kill any of the undead, but they did break them beyond repairs.

Some of them had their bodies covered in hair, while the rest of them were hairless like an eggshell. As for their skin, it was mostly light grey and dark gold.

"Are the aliens or some kind of mutated version of monklins or gorillans?"

Ashton couldn't help but speak out. After all, the description was a lot similar to that of gorillans he had fought. As far as he knew, there weren't any space-faring gorillans just yet.

[It does ring a bell. I'm not sure but they could be Giholo.]

'You mean gigolo?'

[No. But the Xyrans named them so because of how their society was structured. A matriarchal society where the men are only kept for three purposes, breeding, sexual entertainment and to serve as cannon fodders.]

'Maybe Mera was a Giholo.'

Astaroth chuckled at Ashton's remark before continuing.

[The males are usually more arrogant than their female counterparts, even though they are treated like shit and their colours are less varied. The females, however, are usually more emotional and authoritative. Their eyesight is perhaps the best among the rest of the species.]

[The ones Servina, or whatever she is, saw might be an exploration group. The probable reason why they would want corpses is to conduct research and decide whether they can use y'all or not. Maybe they'll even decide to turn you all into livestock and milk you?]

Ashton scoffed when he realised Astaroth was joking about the last part. Still, these aliens might have been scared to take over the world by themselves. So they chose a faction and decided to manipulate them into breaking into a war.

Once the war swallowed every single continent, kingdom and city on the planet, the Giholos would take advantage and take them for what they were worth. Divide and conquer. An ancient strategy, yet as effective as always.

"Leave it to the undead to be played like a fiddle." Ashtn smirked, "The fuckers are too horny for power and authority. Hell, waging a war against the entire planet? How high were these fuckers? How strong are these Giholos?"

[In terms of technological advancement... it would take at least a couple of decades for your kind to catch up to them. That too if y'all stopped doing anything, but work on advancements. But in terms of physique, the earthlings might be stronger.]

Ashton nodded before turning his attention to Celeste, "Is that all she said?"

Celeste shook her head, "She blurted out a lot of incomprehensible things. But I could make out the words 'Civil war' through her slurry speech. I was about to question her about it, but she passed out."

[I wonder why...]