

Zompiewolf 321

Chapter 321 Some Much Needed Rest

A gigantic cloud of dust erupted when Jacklin finally fell to the ground. He had been defeated... in one punch. It was the most humiliating way to get defeated like that. Not only did Jacklin fail to deal significant damage to someone inferior to him, but he also got his ass handed to him in fashion.

Not to mention, the damage to his body was significant. At least a couple of his organs were destroyed, causing him to bleed internally. On top of that, an impression of a fist was forever printed on his chest, where Ashron had hit him.

Jacklin tried getting up, but his body was in no condition to do so. He could barely keep his eyes open as blood trickled out of his mouth.

People were gawking at him while whispering amongst themselves. To think a seatholder got utterly thrashed like this. The situation was hilarious, yet no one dared to laugh at him or his distorted face. Just because a participant kicked his butt, didn't mean the rest of them could do the same.

Despite that, the situation was a bit weird. No one knew how they were supposed to react. None of them needed to react in any way, because the shocks weren't over yet.

Ashton crawled out of the crater and headed straight toward Jacklin, who could only see his death slowly approach him. His body was completely immobile, thus even if he wanted to run, he couldn't have.

"I told you, this would be the end result of your useless barking." Ashton said as he squatted down next to Jacklin, looking at his pitiful state, "But you didn't listen... did you?"

"Ugh..."

Jacklin didn't even have the strength to cry for help when Ashton dug his finger into his broken chest. But the next moment Jacklin's eye got even wider as he realised something was off. The hand Ashton was using was the same one that he had crushed in his last attack. Yet, there wasn't even a scar on it.

"It hurts, doesn't it?" Ashton mumbled with an expressionless face while putting more and more pressure on Jacklin's chest, "Next time when someone says they don't want to fight, do yourself a favour and let them go. Nod if you understand."

Jacklin barely managed to move his head, letting Ashton know his point had gotten through him.

"Good. Also, I hope you'll take good care of 'my' seat. I have no interest in it now, but I might change my mind sometime in the future. So till then, you and your family will be taking care of the seat in my stead."

By looking at Jacklin's expression, it was clear he had a lot to say upon hearing Ashton's 'instruction'. But one jab of a finger immediately changed his mind as he began nodding once again.

"Good boy." Ashton patted his cheeks before getting up to face the guards, "Someone take him to the hospital or something. You don't secretly want him to die or something, do you?"

The guards who had been stunned into silence after the fight quickly scrambled to take their lord or maybe their former lord, to get some medical attention.

"The fuck are you all looking at? Don't you have something better to do?" One of the guards snarled at the crowd before rushing away.

Jacklin probably wanted to make a public example out of Ashton, that's why he attacked him as soon as the trial was over. No one could have possibly imagined Ashton would turn the tables on the seat holder so easily.

As for the aliens, they had mixed feelings about Ashton. Most of them were scared of him and rightfully so, while the rest of them, especially the females were a bit intrigued by the mysterious male.

Anna and the twins must have sensed the crowds' lustful gazes as a moment later they immediately rushed over to Ashton. As if they were making a statement that he already had plenty of ladies for himself.

"I can understand why Anna's clinging onto me, but what's up with you two?" Ashton said coyly.

"W-We just wanted to check up on you. That's all." Irina replied with a straight face.

"Y-Yes, after all, you picked one of the toughest trials and got into another fight straight afterwards." Verina chimed in.

As for Anna, she chose to remain silent. There was no point in saying anything else, after all, Ashton was her 'mate', well sort of. Thus, he could understand very well that she was being possessive.

Ashton chalked it up to her being a succubus but in reality, Anna was acting like that because she truly felt an attraction to him. Before being turned into a succubus, she had admiration for him, but after getting to know him intimately, the attraction turned into affection.

But she was scared Ashton wouldn't accept her. Hence, for the time being, she was keeping her emotions to herself.

"You good?" Ashton asked her when he saw her staring at him.

"Yeah... just a bit tired after the trial." She replied with a smile.

"Hm... You haven't had a proper meal in a while either." Ashton blushed a bit, "Also, I think I should take a break as well. It would do more harm than good if I blindly kept pushing myself. What about you two?"

"Considering we have less than five trials remaining, there is no need for us to hurry." The twins replied simultaneously.

Ashton nodded and then turned towards the receptionist from earlier, "Do you have a place we could crash in for the night?"

"Um... yes sir. We have top-notch lodging houses made for the participants." The lady replied, "But since there are a lot of participants, the number of rooms might be limited."

,m "What!? They only have two rooms!?" The girls exclaimed but for all the wrong reasons.

"I'm afraid so." Ashton scratched his head, "The other places were overbooked so I took what I could and ran with it. We'll have to share the rooms since they only allow two people per room."

The girls weren't showing their true emotions but they were more than happy about this outcome. Four people in two rooms... someone was bound to share a room with Ashton.

"Since you are twins and know each other well, you should share a room while Anna and I take the other one." Ashton said before handing them their keys, "Now then, shall we get inside?"

The disappointment on the twins' faces was as clear as the daylight. As for Anna, she could barely hide her emotions as she followed behind Ashton.

"Guess... we'll end up together no matter what we do." Verina said with her characteristic gentle smile.

"Who wanted to share a room with that perv either way. Let's go, I can't wait to get all this dirt off of myself." Irina might have said that, but her agitated face told a different story.

Chapter 322 Monarch (1)

Taking a shower after a tiring fight was no less than bliss for Ashton. Especially ever since he started fighting these weird monsters. Also, showering made his mind focused, helping him to come up with his next plan.

He might have defeated Jacklin, but he knew people like him all too well. As long as Ashton had something that Jacklin wanted, he would cause some trouble for him. Not directly, but he will. At first, he thought the guards would do something since he had caused trouble for the second time.

But his worries were unfounded. First of all, it was Jacklin who picked a fight with him, and second of all, Ashton had all the right to challenge the alien for the fourth seat. Thus, legally, there was nothing anyone could do to him.

'Obviously, those bastards might bend some rules to get their revenge. If they come I'll just have to do what I have always done.'

He turned the knob and warm water rushed out of the floating shower head to hug his body, momentarily taking his worries away from him. After spending a good time inside the shower, he finally stepped out as the water droplets gently flowed down through his hair, down to his body, while carefully tracing his muscles.

After drying himself and wrapping a towel around his waist, he headed toward the room to inform Anna the shower was free for use.

As soon as he opened the door, Anna was standing right there. Her mouth was open, as she panted heavily. She stared at his shirtless body momentarily, before focusing on the lower regions.

"Go take a shower first, I'll feed you later," Ashton said and immediately rushed inside the room.

He could still feel her eyes on him, even though he couldn't use [Perception] anymore. That was the kind of lustful hunger Anna had for him.

"The longer you stare at me, the more your hunger would grow. So get going already."

"Y-Yes..." Anna mumbled before rushing inside.

"It's gonna be a long night, isn't it?" Ashton shook his head, "So much for getting some rest."

[Getting ready for a night of passion, are we?]

"You sure would like that, wouldn't you, fucking pervert?" Ashton glowered, "Well, now that you're up, there's something I would like to ask about."

[Shoot.]

"Like Hydra, Ursa must also be someone from Xyran history, correct?" Ashton proceeded once Astaroth confirmed his claims, "So tell me about it. Maybe I can figure out something about the trial from the story."

[Very well then... But I'm not sure if you'll like the story or not. I personally hated what happened to Ursa. Well, until she got her revenge. Mind you, taking revenge on a Xyran overlord is almost impossible, look at me-]

"I want to hear Ursa's story, not yours."

[Alright, you ungrateful brat. Here it goes.]

Back when the Xyrans became the new rulers of the galaxy, many high-ranking officials were sent to thousands of worlds to spread their legacy. To cement their place as the new 'gods' of the galaxy and force the lower civilizations to serve them.

One such official was Zorbak M'vilo, who happened to be one of the few males who served under Ibis. He travelled to the planet called Anvari, the home of golden-skinned people just like the Xyrans called the Gilori. But apart from their skin tone, nothing was alike between the two civilizations.

They did not have any hairs on their body and had spikes coming out of the back of their heads, which gave them a unique appearance. Once Zorbak arrived on their planet, due to his 'holistic' appearance and large wings, the Gilori immediately thought he was a messenger of the gods.

Zorbak was made the king of the city he had landed in. Over time, his influence grew and so did his family. Although he had a Xyran wife with him, that did not stop him from having multiple concubines.

As a result of his... libido, his wife made sure none of her maids was trying to form a physical connection with him. The last thing she wanted was to have her maids be a part of his disgusting harem. But there was one Gilori woman who caught his eyes.

She was Callisto, who was the head servant of the queen. Thus as a servant, she had sworn celibacy. Zorbak made countless efforts to sway her but failed time and time again. However, one day, Zorbak used his shapeshifting powers and changed himself into the form of the queen.

Once Callisto became unsuspecting of him, he revealed his true Identity and had his way with her. He ended up impregnating her with an illegitimate child. Callisto tried her best, but the child could not be hidden for long as her belly began to show.

Zorbak was scared that the queen will have his head if Callisto revealed the truth. After all, his wife was a vicious and unforgiving woman who had killed her brother for doing something similar to what he had done to Callisto.

Thus he used his shapeshifting abilities on Callisto, placing her in a curse that transformed her into a Cerolion, a bear-like monster that the Xyrans used to train their young ones to fight. Once transformed, she couldn't speak the truth anymore.

Then Zorbak proceeded to have her taken to Euphoria in secret. Back then, Euphoria was used as a training base to train the upcoming soldiers.

The queen got worried that something might have happened to Callisto, but Zorbak filled her ears, saying she might have broken her vows and fled in shame. The queen didn't quite believe her husband, but in front of the evidence, she couldn't deny the possibility of that happening.

As for Callisto, she might have lost her ability to speak, but her conscience was still with her. Which made it more troublesome when she lost her child, due to being transformed into a beast. Following the death of the child, she gave herself a new name since she was no longer a maiden and called herself Ursa, the cursed.

Nobody knew of it but Callisto slowly learned more about shapeshifting, and after half a century successfully transformed herself back into being one of the most beautiful Gilori women and escaped from the planet with the help of some sympathisers to reveal the truth to her queen.

Zorbak was completely unaware of the approaching tragedy. Ursa knew every nook and cranny of the castle, thus the soldiers were just as clueless as anyone else. By the time Zorbak learned about it, it was already too late. The beans had been spilt.

For some reason, this angered the queen and instead of punishing Zorbak, she banished Ursa back to Euphoria. Only this time, her punishment was going to be a lot worse than merely transforming into a Cerolion.

Ursa, surprised by the turn of events, swore vengeance upon the Xyrans. But there was nothing she could do to Zorbak or to the queen, as she was now forever imprisoned on Euphoria.

"Wow, you Xyrans really are shitty bastards."

[Tell me about it! Tch, I'm so glad I decided to leave that part of me behind.]

"Yeah, that was your intention when you died."

[You are cruel, has anyone ever told you that yet?]

"Nothing I'll ever do would be able to compare to what the Xyrans have done. Enough of that... I'm still as clueless as ever to what the trial could be." Ashton sighed.

He had tried accessing the wristband to see if it would show him what the trial was going to be. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible. A wristband would only reveal the contents of the trial once the participant had entered the trial.

Obtaining information about the lower half of the trials wasn't a problem. Those who had completed the trial often sold that information for a suitable price. The new participants would use these information brokers to get the details.

Obviously, Aamon had already given them information about the trials he had cleared. But being a C-grade Xyran, he only managed to get 9 out of the twelve trials. Information about these 9 trials was already with Ashton and the girls.

Sadly, Hydra's, Ursa's and Draco's trials were not the ones the progenitors or Aamon knew about. On the positive side, none of the girls had any of the three mentioned trials, hence they did not have to worry about unnecessary things.

"The only ones who would have the information about these trials would be the seat holders of the trials." Ashton mumbled before embracing the futon, "They are not going to give up that information... probably."

[Especially after what you did to the Fourth seat fellow. The trials serve as a protective layer to their seats as a low-levelled challenger most likely wouldn't be able to overcome the trial and die.]

Ashton nodded and was about to say something when the bedroom door was thrown open and over a dozen armed guards entered the room. However, unlike the usual guards, these people were dressed in black uniforms.

"Mr Ashton Fenrir, you have been summoned by the Monarch of the first seat."

Chapter 323 Monarch (2)

"Summoned, huh?" Ashton got off the bed, "And you are the escorts I suppose?"

None of the men answered. On top of that, since their faces were covered, Ashton couldn't read their expressions nor could he use [Perception] to know whether these people were friendlies or not.

But he did have [Heatbeat Sense]. As long as they had a heart, he could know whether the fools were lying or not. That's why he asked whether the men were escorts of this so-called monarch or not.

"Who we are is none of your concern." One of the men replied, "What matter is that the monarch wants to see you. If you don't follow through with the request, we'll be forced to execute our orders by force."

<The words have been deemed as a lie.>

[Looks like your guess was correct. It doesn't seem that bastard from earlier learned his lesson.]

'No. I saw how scared he was when I left him. This isn't his doing... Someone else might be trying to take me out before I could 'challenge' them.'

[Hm... now that I think about it, that commander from earlier could also be the one trying to pull this crap.]

Ashton quietly agreed. Now that he thought about it, his meeting with commander Leon did leave a weird taste in his mouth. As if the commander didn't want to let him go unpunished.

While the two of them were having a conversation, the soldiers had already surrounded Ashton. Considering he was still in his towel, they must have thought they caught Ashton at the most 'opportune' time. After all, he was defenceless.

"You people think you are expert liars?" Ashton shrugged before staring straight at the man in front, "Look here, I'll give you one last chance to come clean before I start cleaning the floor with your sorry asses. Who sent you?"

"Target has refused to cooperate. Proceeding with section 420A. Apprehend the criminal for insubordination."

The men immediately aimed their weapons at Ashton. In their eyes, Ashton was just an E-grade punk from a low-grade civilisation. This meant, he most likely did not have a powerful backer they would have to worry about later.

The soldiers had already been debriefed about Ashton's strength. He might have defeated a bunch of E and D-grade soldiers. But he was no match against them, all of whom were C-grade. In their minds, they could bully him all they liked.

Little did they know both his stats and his cumulative levels were that of a Mid-levelled C-grade being. In other words, he was just as strong as the soldiers in front of him. All thanks to defeating the Hydra.

Still, Ashton had no misconception that this fight would not end up well for him. He did not want to use any of the remaining abilities with absurdly big cooldowns as he was saving them for the trials. Also, way too many important skills had already been wasted thanks to the stupidity of a few morons.

And without those skills, he was essentially up against people who were probably more experienced than he was. Thus, he wanted to evade fighting if possible. Thankfully, he had the perfect skill for the occasion.

<Skill: [Influence] (Mid-grade) had been activated. Surrounding targets possess lower intelligence than you. The skill has been successfully utilised.>

"Criminal? You're the one who broke in without permission." Ashton smiled, "Therefore no matter what I do to you, it'll be called self-defence. Even if I killed you, you know that right?"

Upon seeing him smile like a maniac, the soldiers exchanged their looks. The man was correct, he could kill them and remain justified. At least, that was what they were being forced to think at the moment.

Ashton had successfully got a hold over their minds and emotions. As a result, they began questioning the morality of their behaviour and plans. Had they not been under his influence, they could have killed him and then framed him as a criminal, as they probably wanted to.

Since they were soldiers, they could abuse their powers however they liked and no one would question them. In other words, the legality and morality of the situation were of little importance to them. But since Ashton was playing with their minds, they became worried about their actions.

[You should make them kill or at least hurt each other somehow.]

'Hm... I was planning to force them to admit who sent them. Then maybe I'll feed them to the wolves afterwards.'

[Ah, yes. Gotta take care of your pets.]

However, before they could do anything, the room's service phone rang. The leader of the soldiers received the call. Although the leader did not speak a word, Ashton could hear what was being said clearly due to his sensitive hearing.

Someone was badly ripping into the leader. Ashton had never heard anyone being berated the way the leader was. So much so, that he held his head down. The valour and might he had shown before, evaporated instantly.

Upon seeing their leader in such a pitiful state, the rest of them got concerned as well.

That was all the confirmation Ashton needed to know their action had nothing to do with the monarch. Someone else was behind the plan and they probably got caught for using the Monarch's name.

After what seemed an eternity, the berating ceased and the soldier passed the communicator to Ashton.

"Hello?"

"My most sincere apologies for the inconvenience caused by my soldiers, Mr Ashton." The unknown voice responded, "I assure you that I'll personally handle those morons for troubling you. But in the meantime as an apology, you're allowed to use any services on Euphoria for free."

"That's alright but-" Ashton wanted to know who was he talking to exactly but got cut off.

"I know it isn't remotely enough to compensate you. I'll prepare a gift for you and your companions, first thing tomorrow morning. I will explain everything in detail later."

The voice kept spewing one word after another without break. As the woman kept talking Ashton remembered he had heard the voice before. It sounded awfully similar to the voice of the woman who wanted to 'punish' him earlier for fighting with the mercenaries... Lucia Zhask.

Well, at least that was Ashton's guess as before he could confirm his suspicions the call was disconnected. As for the soldiers, they immediately apologised for their actions and left. But Ashton stopped their leader from leaving. He needed to confirm whether this was all Lucia's plan.

"Who was the one on the call?"

"The monarch of the fifth seat, Lady Otina Zhask."

Chapter 324 Confession

"Zhask? Is she related to Leon Zhask by any chance?" Ashton asked another question, but before the man could reply, he collapsed with a loud thud.

He wasn't the only one either. All of the soldiers who had managed to walk out had also collapsed in the corridor at the same time.

"Anna, you were a bit late to the show- wow..."

Ashton turned towards the bathroom to see Anna standing there with a towel clumsily wrapped around her. She hadn't even bothered drying herself... which meant the towel was hugging her figure quite... intimately.

Either she wasn't aware of how desirable she looked, or she was feigning ignorance to that fact in order to get Ashton all riled up. Whatever her intentions were, they were working flawlessly.

"Are you alright?" Anna asked turning her gaze away.

"Y-Yeah, I'm good. Ahem, thanks for the help." Ashton replied and tore his eyes away from the captivating sight in front of him, "I'll dump this idiot out in the corridor. In the meantime, why don't you go ahead and settle down?"

Ashton might have asked her to settle down, but he needed to settle down his aroused mind and physical work was the most effective way to do so.

A couple of minutes later...

[I don't know what's your problem.]

"What do you mean?" Ashton asked while dumping the leader's sleeping body beside his soldiers.

[You know exactly what I mean.]

"Then you also know the answer."

Astaroth was referring to the relationship between Ashton and Anna. Since he resided in Ashton's head, he was well aware of how Ashton felt toward Anna. The boy clearly liked her but was afraid of committing to fulfilling his desires.

Why? Because Ashton felt by transforming Anna into a succubus, he had bound her to himself without considering what she might or might not have agreed to it.

In other words, he thought Anna wasn't doing whatever she was because she genuinely had feelings for him, but she was only doing what she was obligated to do so for her 'master'.

This guilt of 'forcing' Anna, was the thing preventing him from making the leap of faith and confessing his feelings. However, Astaroth had taken it upon himself to get rid of his bullshit thinking. Even though he wasn't a 'human', even Astaroth knew the girl too had feelings for him, but wouldn't do anything to reveal her feeling.

Both of them were stupid brats who thought the other was bound to them due to some 'obligation' and not love. Seeing the two behave like awkward idiots was super infuriating.

That was the reason, Astaroth had made it his life's mission to have Ashton reveal his feelings to the girl. He probably decided to make Ashton confess, because Astaroth had no control over Anna, so convincing Ashton was all he could do.

[I say you're scared she would turn you down.]

"You know what? Yes, I am scared that she wouldn't reciprocate my feelings. I am scared that she would reject me and then everything would get even more awkward than it already is." Ashton lost it after being nagged over and over about the same topic.

He continued yelling, "You of all people should know how it feels to be abandoned by someone you love and I don't wanna go through all that! So yes, I love Anna but am I ever going to confess to her? No! Because I don't want to ruin whatever relationship we have for my selfish greed of wanting more. Is that what you wanted to hear?"

[No, but someone else did.]

Once Astaroth said that only then did Ashton realise he had been yelling this entire time. Which meant... someone else could have easily heard him yelling. And by someone, he meant Anna.

He frantically turned around, praying to every god he knew of. But his prayers weren't answered because Anna was standing at the doorway when Ashton yelled he loved her.

Her eyes were fixated on him, as she emotionlessly stared at him. In his mind, Ashton threw every foul word he could at Astaroth who had gone silent after making the mess.

'I swear I'm gonna kill that bastard when he gets his own body! Right now, I should try and sort out this mess... come on you 200-points worth of intelligence, show me your magic!'

His stats might have helped him against his enemies, but in a matter involving hearts, no matter how high intelligence one possessed, they were at the mercy of the heart.

"A-Anna, I'm sorry. I-I was just rambling to myself. Maybe one of those idiots hit me in the head or something. Yeah... that was it. You know I would never force you into something like that. Come on please say something..."

Anna didn't reply, instead, she pushed him into the wall next to the room, pressing him down with her elbow and looked right into his eyes, "Do you have any idea how tough it has been on me?"

"I-I know And I'm sorry. Let's just forget that I ever said anything alright-"

"You're an idiot, you know that?" Anna smiled, while still pressing him against the wall.

"I know I am. Hell, I'm probably the biggest one to ever-"

"Shh... you talk too much."

Anna pressed her finger against his lips, before moving her head closer to Ashton's. He stood there frozen, from both the fear of losing her and the excitement of having her so close. She leaned in, so her forehead rested against his. They close their eyes, both of their breaths were shaking frantically. Having her so close, slowly but surely, withered away the feeling of losing her.

"I have been waiting for long enough to say this... Ashton, I love you too."

She then gently leaned in further and kissed Ashton's warm lips. They slowly pulled apart to take shaky, shallow breaths. Unable to contain themselves anymore, Ashton held Anna's head in his hands and pulled her into a long, fiery and passionate kiss while her hands work their way around his body, feeling each other's love, each line along with his perfect physique.

She kissed him and the world melted away. It was slow and soft, comforting in ways that he never thought he'd experience. His hand rested below her ear, his thumb caressing her cheek as their breaths mingled. She ran her fingers down his spine, pulling him closer until there was no space left between them and she could feel the beating of his heart against her chest.

They pull apart and open their eyes and stared at each other, looking deep into each other's eyes. Anna's eyes were full of wonder and love, while Ashton's had curiosity, confusion and passion in them. No words are spoken but a story worthy of them is communicated.

Astaroth decided to give the two some much-needed privacy and faded away for the moment, knowing that his job was done.

Chapter 325 The More, The Merrier (1)

The day dawned crisp and clear. The warmth from the twin stars flooded the room, waking Ashton up. Being in contact with sunlight caused a little bit of pain to him. Yet he didn't move from his place.

'The pain is minimal, besides I've already gotten used to it by now. I can't hide from light my entire life, can I? Besides... where will I get to enjoy this view?'

It was one of thousand mornings Ashton had lived through, and yet this morning was extra special to him. How could it not be after what happened last night? Initially, he was scared that everything would be ruined, thanks to Astaroth. But what Astaroth did, led to what was probably the best thing that happened to Ashton in his entire life.

'I should thank him one of these days.'

Ashton still had his arms warped around Anna as she let her head rest upon his naked chest. All his thoughts that weren't about her stopped as if his heart had taken over his head when they were close. The trials, the assassination attempt, everything was long forgotten about. The only thing that mattered the most to him was already in his arms.

The next moment he squeezed her body as if he needed to check she was there with him. He wanted to make sure everything that happened last night was all real and not a dream... and real it was.

Anna was lying next to him, in body and soul. Just watching her sleep so peacefully was a bliss. So much so, he wanted to beat himself up for not confessing her true feelings to her. At the moment, he also doubted anyone else ever felt the way he did keeping her in his arms.

He brushed the red hairs off her face to get a clear look at her, sleeping like a baby in his arms. Although they had been doing some not-so-decent stuff for some time now, what happened last night was different. They had a connection, or at least that's how Ashton felt at the moment.

"By God, I'm one hell of a lucky man, ain't I?" He mumbled after making sure Anna was asleep, but to his surprise, she wasn't.

"Damn right you are." Anna slowly opened her eyes, revealing his reflection in her crimson eyes, before leaning in to give him a morning kiss, "Good morning!"

"I wish all of my mornings were this good," Ashton mumbled and kissed her back.

At this time, there was a knock on the door, snapping the love birds back to reality.

"If it's the twins, I swear I'm gonna do something I'll regret later." Ashton hastily jumped out of the bed and got dressed, all the while Anna keep smiling and shaking her head, "Yeah yeah I heard you knocking the first time. I haven't gone deaf yet!"

Ashton was expecting the twins when he opened the door. Instead, he was greeted by a couple of unfamiliar faces. Well, not entirely unfamiliar since one of them was Leon Zhask and the other was some lady Ashton had never seen before.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of having Commander Zhask greet me so early in the morning?" Ashton asked in the politest tone possible before focusing his attention on the lady, "You might be Lady Otiga. It's an honour to meet you."

Ashton pretended to guess who the lady was, conveniently forgetting that he already used [Detection] on her the moment he saw a new person.

Unlike other Zhask family members Ashton had met so far, Otiga was a woman with a small stature. But felt like she was a bit quick-tempered. Her white hair was closely shaven, giving her a 'warrior-like' look when coupled with the tattoos she had engraved on her body.

She also had mysteriously wide, black eyes and fairly large black lips that complemented her shaven hairs. An excessive foundation was laden on her face, probably to hide her blemishes or scars. She had wide feet, strong legs, and strong arms.

The legs and her back were completely covered with a black tattoo. Which was a bit weird and yet beautiful at the same time.

"Oh my, such a polite gentleman." Otiga replied before turning toward Leon, "Unlike what I have been informed about."

Leon did not utter a word and kept his head low. He was already in a lot of shit for what happened last night, talking back would only increase his problems.

The last time Ashton had seen Leon, it didn't appear he was someone who would care about anyone but himself. But look at him now, behaving like a good boy.

"Please come inside, I believe you have some business to discuss with me." Ashton led them inside, where Anna was waiting, already dressed up and ready to head out and complete some more trials, "This is Anna Swan, my companion from Earth."

Otiga acknowledged her presence with a nod, while Leon did not bother with anything. Anna, on the other hand, didn't do anything and sat next to Ashton when he gestured her to. While the guests took their place across the table.

"I have been wanting to meet the one who manhandled the 'Mountain Lord' of Euphoria." Otiga said with a smile, "No one apart from the first seat holder had ever thrashed Jacklin so badly that he had to spend more than a minute in the hospital. And yet, you did it with such ease."

"It wasn't my intention to hurt him that badly. Sadly he left me no choice but to put him to rest a bit."

Otiga nodded before continuing while pointing at Leon, "Either way, I'm not here to talk about that moron but about the actions of my daughter. I suppose you've already met her along with my son."

Ashton was a bit stunned, if anything, Otiga looked much younger than Leon. If Ashton was told to guess their relationship based on their looks, Leon pretty much looked like Otiga's uncle. Yet, he was her son? It would seem the years had been kind to her.

"Oh... was your daughter behind the attack?"

Otiga nodded her head. She appeared to be disappointed due to her daughter's actions.

"Before you ask, he is already behind bars for unnecessarily attacking a participant as well as using the name of the Zodiac seat holders. Her punishment... wouldn't be merciful. She'll probably be banished from the planet, if not killed." She said without a tinge of emotion on her face.

'Her daughter might get killed and she's... so calm?'

[A powerful person has to often make sacrifices. She probably got used to it by now.]

'How long have you been up for?' Ashton was a bit startled.

[Hm... you might not like the answer. So let's just focus on the topic.]

'You pervert, tell me what did you see!?'

[Nothing new. Now listen to her or I'll trigger some sort of memory loss for you!]

Chapter 326 The More, The Merrier (2)

"The soldier that raided you were my family's personal soldiers. All of whom came to Euphoria to complete the trials, but I scouted them and made them join the family. Thus they only follow the rules created by the family. One of which is that they cannot decline a request from a family member. "

Otiga continued, "In a way, you can say they are an independent force under me. My shameless daughter knew about it and instructed the soldiers to teach you a 'lesson'. Thankfully, someone spilt the beans and I stopped them before anything could happen. After all, they are my responsibility and their action could come to bite me in the ass, had I not punished the culprit."

"You did the right thing, madame," Ashton smirked while staring at Leon.

In his mind, there was no doubt Leon was the real mastermind of the plan. However, once he realised the plan was about to fail, he threw the sister under the bus to save his ass. Another reason for Ashton to believe so was the stats of the siblings.

Leon had twice the intelligence that his sister possessed. Consequently, there was no way for the sister to come up with such an elaborate plan on her own. The situation was fishy, but Ashton decided to ignore it and focus on Otiga.

"Please accept this as an apology." Otiga said before pushing a small emerald card towards him, "This is the mark of the Zhask Family. It represents that you are my guests. Not only that, as I informed you last night, with this, you can use all the services provided to a member of the family without any cost."

"That's very generous of you," Ashton immediately stored the card in the inventory.

Otiga then proceeded to hand a three-pack of vials filled with weird liquids to Ashton. The first pack was filled with a blue solution, followed by green and yellow ones. Their uses were mentioned on top of each vial.

"These solutions would provide you with temporary enhancements upon consumption," Otiga explained after looking at Ashton's confused gaze, "I hope this would be enough for you to forgive my incompetent daughter."

Ashton nodded. The gifts weren't anything extraordinary, but he wasn't complaining as it essentially was free loot. However, it seemed there was something else on her mind. Something that ended up being an unnecessary request.

"I also wanted to talk to you about something else. If possible, I would like you to not challenge me for the fifth seat once you clear Ursa's trial." She said, "Obviously you will be compensated for it as well."

Like before, Ashton wasn't planning on challenging any more of the seat holders. But Otiga did not need to know that. Especially, if there was an opportunity to squeeze out more precious materials out of her.

[Ho ho, more rewards?]

'The more, the merrier.' Ashton thought before coming up with an answer, "I wonder how will you compensate me for that? After all, what could possibly be more precious than one of the twelve Zodiac seats?"

"I assure you. If you agree to not challenge me for my seat, you wouldn't have any troubles on Euphoria. As you know, Leon is the commander of the security forces on Euphoria, therefore, you wouldn't have any problems with the other participants in any of your trials. They'll basically become your personal security."

Ashton nodded. If Otiga only had a bunch of bodyguards to offer for him, then the deal wasn't that bad. He didn't need to have guards around, since his strength was more than enough. Still, considering he had been wanting to conserve his abilities for the trials, having a bunch of C-grade bodyguards would be great.

However, Ashton had a feeling he could get more out of her. It seemed Otiga was thinking the same thing because the next moment she threw another condition in.

"Not only that, I'll personally help you to clear your trials. Doesn't matter whether you need resources or information, you'll get it."

"Fine. It's enough." Ashton smiled, "But I also have another condition. You have to make sure we do not get a repeat episode of what happened last night. If you fail, the ending might not be as good as you're hoping."

"You dare threaten us, worm?" Leon finally found his voice and retorted.

"Anna, the next time he opens his mouth, rip his tongue out." Ashton replied without even looking at Leon, "That, is a threat. What I said early was a warning. Learn to know the difference between the two, good sir."

Leon was infuriated with this blatant display of disrespect. Had his plan not failed, he wouldn't have to sit there listening to a bastard from earth talk to him like that. But for now, there was nothing he could do.

Otiga was already enraged at her children and acting out would only cause more trouble for them. It wasn't the right time, but he swore, he would make Ashton regret ever saying those words... for now, he would have to patiently wait for the arrogant bastard to make a mistake.

"You need not worry. I'll make sure no one causes you any inconvenience." Otiga immediately shifted the attention to herself, "If there is anything else you would like to say or know, please do not hesitate."

[Ask her about the trial. Since she has Ursa's seat, she probably knows about the trial.]

"I assume you're aware of what Ursa's trial is about?" Ashton asked while scratching his chin, "It would be of quite some help if you could tell me more about the trial."

Whether she had expected Ashton to ask her that, or because Ashton had accepted the deal, Otiga was smiling.

The next moment she turned toward Anna and said, "The seat holders of the first six seats cannot reveal the details of the trials. But I can give you a hint if you like."

Ashton agreed. After all, a hint was much better than going in blindly without any plans. Especially when there was so much to gain.

Upon getting his approval, Otiga continued, "If you have been living with someone of her kind all this time, then you don't have to worry about a thing. The trial would be easy for you to complete."

Both Ashton and Anna were a bit disjointed. What does Anna have anything to do with the trial? But before Ashton could ask something else, Otiga got up to leave.

"Oh my, it took a lot more time than I expected, please excuse me as I have some other appointments as well. It was good meeting you, Mr Ashton, hopefully, this wouldn't be our last meeting."

Chapter 327 Draconic Physique

"You're sure you'll wait here?" Anna asked Ashton.

"Yeah, you guys head out. I'll join you after I'm done taking care of a few things."

After Otiga left, the duo began getting ready for their second day of adventure. But right before heading out, Ashton remembered something important. With all the chaos and unplanned events going on, he had completely forgotten about the rewards defeating Hydra gave him.

If he wanted to be at his best, then he had to consume the flesh and blood of Hydra that were stored in his inventory. But, he didn't want to do it in front of Anna. Even though she knew he was a Zompiewolf, watching him eat raw meat and drink blood so giddily, might be a bit too much for her.

"Alright... I'll see you later." Anna smiled and left the room.

After making sure she was gone, Ashton locked the door and shut the windows. Without his perception skill, he was forced to take these measures. After all, neither he nor Astaroth had any idea what would happen once he consumed the flesh and blood.

Also, after what happened last night, Ashton did not want anyone to take advantage of his possibly weakened state to get some revenge.

"All done, I think," Ashton mumbled and took out a small chest and a jar filled with Hydra's blood.

[The only thing Xyrans used Hydra's blood was to make weapons. We couldn't do anything else, after all, it was too poisonous for anyone of us to handle. However, for someone like you it should be a piece of cake.]

"I got immunity, after all."

[Making it the perfect opportunity to test the effects of the poison.]

"Am I just a lab rat to you?"

[Bitch, you were born in a lab. Now shut the fuck up and bottom's up!]

"Here goes nothing."

As soon as the blood went down his throat, Ashton felt as if his entire body was on fire. The heat was immense, and how couldn't it be? He was drinking the blood of a draconic species. But it did not hurt him, thanks to [Fire Immunity].

As a result, he kept drinking it until the jar was entirely empty. But just because he wasn't feeling the effect of the immense heat within his body, it didn't mean the heat wasn't doing anything. His stamina was eaten away instantly and his legs gave away. His mind began to go hazy, and so did his vision.

[Eat the flesh now! Maybe it would help?]

Ashton didn't bother replying and shoved the flesh in. He felt a little bit of his energy return to him. But that too was being eaten away, slowly. However, a moment later, a notification appeared in front of his eyes.

<Hydra's Flesh and Hydra's blood are taking their place within the user's body. Please wait patiently while your body stabilises.>

The process wasn't painful at first, all Ashton could feel was the changes in his body. But as the changes became apparent, so did an overwhelming sense of pain.

Something was reinforcing his bones as well as his muscles. He knew he was getting stronger. His body expanded a bit to accommodate the changes in his bones and flesh.

But that wasn't all, his eyes were behaving weirdly. His vision got wider than it had ever been. While consuming the flesh and blood of the Hydra, Ashton had assumed he would get some kind of ability like usual. Never in his wildest ideas had he thought something like this could be possible.

After what seemed an eternity, everything began to calm down.

<Hydra's Blood and Flesh have been stabilised within the host's body. You have acquired a stronger body: Draconic Physique.>

<Armour: +30 points>

<Stamina: +50 points>

'Anna would be pleased to know this...' Ashton smirked while wiping the sweat off his forehead.

[... just check the damn thing first and keep your fantasies to yourself.]

'Right...'

—

Name: Draconic Physique

Type: Physical Trait

Rarity: Epic (Evolvable)

Description: A dragon's body is its most prized possession. Ever since their birth, they had an absurdly high resistance to magic as well as physical attacks. This fact made it almost impossible for anyone to slay them.

For hundreds of thousands of years, sentient beings have questioned themselves what could possibly give the Dragons their characteristic resistances? The answer has now revealed itself.

Effects (stage 1):

>> Increases Armour and Stamina by 30 and 50 points respectively.

>> Take 20% less damage from magical attacks.

>> Take 25% less damage from physical attacks.

>> Invalidates true damage* entirely.

>> Efficiency of Healing abilities has been improved.

Note: Evolving your physique would unlock better and improved effects.

"Hm... that solves the problem of dealing with magic-based attacks. Hm... after all that trouble, this is really great!"

[It is. To think you will obtain a trait even I didn't have. Especially the immunity from True damage... that shit is broken.]

"Is it?"

[No increase in brain cells was noticed.]

"..."

[Do you have any idea how broken immunity from true damage is? Most high-grade beings look for abilities that deal true damage to their enemies. The A-grades usually have to fight amongst themselves, normal abilities aren't all that effective because, at their level, they usually develop pretty strong resistances.]

[Therefore, True damage, that doesn't give a fuck about one's armour or resistance, is their best friend, their hoe and the love of their lives. Now you have immunity to that! What do you think would happen if they got to know about the existence of such a skill?]

Ashton didn't need to think even for a moment. If true damage was something the high-grade beings were so crazy about, then they would see him as a threat. After all, their ultimate skills would be completely useless against him.

That being said, they would try to get their hands on [Draconic Physique] as well. Once they'll fail to do so, they will get rid of him. No matter how strong he was currently, he was in no way strong enough to face an A-grade being.

"Gotta keep it a secret. Got it."

[Keeping secrets and you? Don't worry, I'll take care of you in case your blabber mouth opens wider than a hoe's-]

"Alright alright, I get it." Ashton cut Astaroth off before he could say something else, "Now the only thing that remains is the egg."

[What about it?]

"What about it? Aren't you intrigued to know what's inside it?"

[Huhuhu.]

"Why are you laughing?"

[I already know what's inside the egg.]

"What?"

[While you were doing someone else, I was doing the important work and analysed the egg. It belongs to some sort of draconic species, could be a hydra too for all I know. That's all I can say now. As it grows I'll be able to learn more. So forget about the egg and focus on the trial.]

"Right, gotta leave now. Who knows how long would it take to clear Ursa's trial."

Chapter 328 Trial Of Ursa (1)

An hour later, Ashton was prepared to face the next trial. With his new body, he had attained a boost of confidence. However, he did not get complacent as the trial was still one of the upper six trials in difficulty.

This time, the trial ground was located near a mountain range. The soil underneath was pitch black, as was the sky above. The visibility was pretty bad as well, however, thanks to his eyes evolving, Ashton could see everything around as if it was a bright day.

—

[Objective]: Complete the Trial of Ursa.

[Task]: Find and destroy the apple tree of misfortunes.

[Progress]: 0 out of 1 tree destroyed.

[Reward]: Random Skill x1, Random unallocated skill points.

[Mission Commissioned by]: Planet Euphoria [Only an Administrator can view this info: Euphoria is a Xyran AI]

[Priority Level]: 1 (The host cannot ignore the mission, the mission needs to be completed as soon as possible and within two attempts.)

—

"Lumberjacking. Nice. Let me see if I have an axe or something in my inventory."

[While you're at it, look for some brain cells as well. You'll need them.]

Ashton sighed. If Astaroth was calling him stupid, he must have missed something. Fortunately, it wasn't true this time and the administrator was just pulling his leg. However, Ashton did end up finding something a bit... unsettling.

"Are those... skeletons?"

[Looks like it. What did the Xyran queen do to Ursa for her to become so vengeful?]

"You tell me. Your kind always seems to cross the boundary when it came to committing heinous crimes."

[... I would have mocked you, but I know you probably already have another verbal shot prepared, so I'll keep my mouth shut for now.]

"If your Zorbak or whoever that asshole was, could keep his schlong in his pants, I wouldn't have to shoot 'verbal shots' at you."

Either way, Ashton turned to look around to grasp the situation. The place was like an unkempt graveyard. Thousands of skeletons and other mortal remains were scattered as far as his eyes could see.

Oddly enough there were some clean piles of corpses as well. It almost felt as if someone was cleaning the place, or at least trying to.

It was especially surprising because according to the management, no one had attempted the trial in well over a century. But judging from the fresh corpses, quite a few people must have entered the trial grounds.

That would have been the most obvious conclusion. But Ashton was well aware of how strict the management was on Euphoria. The only way to enter these zones was through the portals managed by trial management. Therefore, it was impossible that they were unaware that over a hundred people had entered the trial grounds in the last couple of weeks or so.

"Something feels odd about them though..."

Ashton wasn't being fooled. He knew what his eyes were seeing, but what his senses were telling him was completely different. Being a necromancer, he had a special connection with death and the dead. That very connection was somehow telling him things weren't as simple as he was seeing.

"Hm.. if they are dead, then it serves me well." Ashton raised his hands, "And if they aren't dead, well... then we'll know something is amiss."

Ashton tried resurrecting them as skeleton soldiers to help him look for the apple tree. But none of the bones even flinched. He tried a couple more times before coming to a conclusion. The bones weren't 'real'.

They could have been some sort of simulation. Probably made by the Xyrans to scare away any 'curious' idiots from wandering inside. But if that was the case, Astaroth would probably know about it, however, his silence was telling Ashton that wasn't the case.

"How could I forget about it!?" Ashton yelled and immediately jumped backwards.

There could have been another reason why he wasn't able to control the skeletons. They were already under someone's control and this time his guess was correct. A moment later, the neatly piled corpses exploded. Simultaneously, the corpses and skeletons around him rose up to fight the intruder.

Thousands of undead creatures had him surrounded in an instant. It was at that moment, that Ashton got to know why the trial was impossible to clear.

"It doesn't make any sense though!?" Ashton blurted out while calling forth Balmond, "Otiga said the trial had something to do with Anna, which meant it had something to do with succubi. This isn't related to succubus at all!"

[We can figure it out later. For now, take care of these undead.]

Ashton nodded and charged straight into the horde. No matter how many undead there were, he could take care of them. With a single slash of Balmond, over a dozen heads went flying. But a moment later, he realised fighting them like that was the worst decision he could have made.

As soon as the undead were killed, they exploded, just like the ones from earlier. Even though Ashton wasn't injured thanks to fire immunity, he lost his balance due to the shockwave. This was enough for the undead to bite into him.

It wouldn't have mattered if one or two or even a handful of undead had bitten him. But as soon as he fell, the undead overran him. Dozens upon dozens of those bastards bit him.

"Get off of ME!" Ashton roared at the top of his lungs.

A sudden stream of fire erupted out of his hands, at the same time, he used the wind manipulation ability to distance himself from the horde. There were numerous wounds on his body. All of which were surprisingly shallow and got healed instantly.

[You got lucky.]

'I know.' Ashton panted.

Had it not been for his [Draconic Physique], Ashton would have received a lot more wounds than he did now. However, the fact that the undead managed to hurt him even with such a body, meant he shouldn't be underestimating them.

These undeads were unlike the ones he had fought on earth. They were stronger, more intelligent and knew when to attack. Using the method Ashton had used on earth wouldn't be sufficient to end them swiftly.

"Thanks to those annoying explosions, I can't fight them head-on. I'll have to make use of the distance between us and take care of them safely." Ashton mumbled, "Either that, or I could find the darn tree and get this over with."

Chapter 329 Trial Of Ursa (2)

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Ceaseless explosions shook the ground every few seconds. Corpses exploded, leaving behind a skeleton soldier to fight in their stead. No matter how much Ashton tried, the number of undead kept increasing.

"Where is that damn tree!?" Ashton gritted his teeth before shooting another fireball behind him, "If only I had my [Perception], I would have already completed this trial."

[It wouldn't be much of a trial in that case now, would it?]

"You're right. Thinking about what-ifs isn't going to help me out."

Rather than dealing with the undead who kept regenerating, Ashton decided to concentrate on finding the apple tree. As long as he destroyed the tree, he would complete the trial and be done with the undeads chasing after him.

But the land was vast. Finding a tree wasn't going to be easy, especially with all these creatures running behind him like he stole their wives from them. Ashton did have a way to keep them engaged while he worked on finding the tree.

He could summon the wraith wolves and since they were indestructible, they would be the perfect bait to keep the undead busy. After all, since both the undead and the wolves would be impossible to kill, they would be perfect to occupy each other.

But Astaroth suggested Ashton shelf that plan of his. The trial was about him and his strength alone. Having summons and other creatures involved in it would only make him more dependent on them than anything.

As much as Ashton wanted to disregard Astaroth's suggestion, he didn't. Because he knew what Astaroth said was correct. On top of that, Ashton wasn't sure if he could even summon the wolves to some other planet or not. It should have been okay, but Ashton didn't want any of the wolves to die due to his negligence.

"Wait a minute, only the corpses explode, right?"

[From my observation, yes.]

"Good, then I can probably do this."

Instead of running away from the horde, Ashton began running around them. Astaroth had no idea what was he even thinking. But it wasn't like he could do anything either. Soon, all of the undead had been grouped up.

Once the first phase of his plan was over, Ashton jumped in the air using the winds to form a makeshift platform for him. At the same time, he created a prison of air, similar to the one Celeste made before he converted her into a summon.

After knowing he was at a safe distance from the horde, Ashton unleashed a barrage of flames at them. The explosion that followed was massive. The darkness evaporated for a moment, washing everything in its light.

One after another explosions kept repeating. It almost felt like Ashton had managed to replicate the explosions occurring on a star.

Once all of the corpses had been taken care of, Ashton carefully landed back on the ground. Watching the skeletons get shattered apart from the explosions.

"This should keep them busy for a while." Ashton breathed a sigh of relief, "Now where do I find that darn tree?"

"Help... me..."

Out of nowhere, a feminine voice rang through the still winds. It was frail and weak, similar to how Ashton's voice had been after fighting Beelzebub. Ashton's ears immediately perked up. Could it be possible that someone survived the hell and now Ashton had taken care of the undead, they decided to make their presence known?

"Where did that voice come from?"

[What voice?]

"It ain't the time to be shitting around, Astaroth. Didn't you hear the cry for help?" Ashton retorted looking around himself.

The voice called out again and this time Astaroth heard it too. This time, Ashton picked up the direction the voice was coming from. But the urge to help the owner of the voice was long gone. Something was off about it.

If the voice was as weak as it seemed, how the fuck was he hearing it when there was no one in sight? Ashton was positive it had something to do with the trial. The fact that the voice only appeared after the undead were rendered useless was also interesting.

"It's almost as if something-"

[Wants to lure you into a trap.]

Ashton nodded, "Regardless, this is the only clue we have."

He had no other choice. Searching the entire area to look for a tree was inhumanely time-consuming and difficult. So much so that, Ashton was willing to gamble on escaping a trap and forcing the owner of the voice to reveal the location of the tree.

Was it a dangerous plan? Certainly. But if taking that risk could give him the opportunity to clear the trial, then he would take it.

After following the voice for about an hour, Ashton came across a pond of some sort. The lake was in complete contrast with its surroundings. While everything was shrouded in darkness, the lake was illuminating everything around itself as if it had the stars residing in itself.

"It looks so beautiful..." Ashton was struck by the beauty of the lake.

The plan was for him to hide and check the surrounding before making any moves. But for some reason, Ashton disregarded all the plans and headed straight towards the pond. All of sudden, the weak voice appeared once again.

Though it wasn't weak anymore. It was clear and soothing at the same time. There were no cries of help any more, just a beautiful song.

[Oi brat, something is off. Get back now.]

Astaroth warned Ashton, but it didn't seem like the latter heard him and kept walking until he was on the edge of the lake. Then... something weird happened. A naked woman appeared in the middle of the lake. She saw Ashton and smiled, but continued washing her hair in the water while singing a song Ashton couldn't understand.

Ashton was in some sort of trance. His gaze was fixated on the woman, waiting for her to do something. The raven-haired maiden pointed her finger at him, calling him. He blindly followed her command and stepped inside the lake.

The lake was so deep it could even drown the hydra itself and Ashton walked into it. He didn't swim, he walked. After a dozen minutes or so, the pleasant voice was replaced by a shrieking cry of victory as the woman revealed her true form.

It was no lady, but a monster. A Siren to be exact. Astaroth had figured it out and was yelling at Ashton to get his shit together. But his efforts were in vain. Ashton could not hear a word he was saying.

"Another prey... after so long!" The siren licked her lips in excitement before diving deeper into the water herself.

This was the way Sirens hunted their prey. They would lure the prey using their charm and drown them before either killing them or having intimacy with them and then killing them. It depended on their mood to be exact. That's why she waited for almost twelve minutes to make sure her prey had drowned before revealing herself.

Since this particular siren had been feeding on the rotten corpse of the undead, her appetite to eat something fresh took precedence over her itch to mate with someone. She looked for her prey and found him easily.

The innocent expression on the boy's face swayed her heart. He was too pretty to be eaten instantly. But there was nothing she could do now, it had already been so long. The boy must have drowned already. Even so, she swam towards him, caressing Ashton's cold hard skin with her fingers.

"I'm sorry I couldn't make the last moments of your life bliss." She hissed in his ears, "After all, not everyone gets the opportunity to have intimacy with a siren. But I will make sure you enjoy the feeling of being devoured in the afterlife."

She prepared to tear through Ashton's muscles using her razor-sharp teeth. But before she could, something grabbed her neck and pushed her backwards. The siren was confused, but her confusion soon turned to horror when she realised her prey was very much alive.

"How can this be possible!?" She shrieked trying her best to get away from Ashton's vice grip.

Ashton kept smiling while watching her struggle to free herself. There was a saying that a being is the most powerful in their domain. Water was the siren's domain, and still, he was dominating her like she was nothing more than a fish in an ocean of sharks.

Ashton had some questions he needed answers to, but he couldn't get them underwater. After turning off the werewolf genes, Ashton did not need to breathe anymore. That's how he managed to survive underwater and baited the siren into following him. As it was the only way for him to get her within his range of attack.

Once she was trapped, he swam all the way back to the land, all the while dragging the siren behind.

[You son of a bitc-]

"Careful with what you say next." Ashton said with a cocky smile, before turning to face the siren, "Now, if you tell me where is that damned apple tree, I'll let you off or else, I'll off you instead. What's it going to be?"

The siren did not answer. She was clearly in shock that someone, a man of all things, could escape her charm. It did not make any sense!

Ashton seemed to have figured out what she was thinking and was more than happy to answer her unasked question.

"Your powers of seduction are frightening, there's no doubt about it. However, it's nothing in comparison to the level of seduction I had to tolerate for months." He smiled as he was reminded of Anna.

He continued, "If I can control myself around a succubus in heat, then what would a mere fish be able to do against me? Now, tell me where that tree is, Ursa."

Chapter 330 Trial Of Ursa (3)

"That name... how do you know it!?" Ursa hissed.

Ursa... that was a name she hadn't used or heard in a long time. No one should have known about her since so many years had passed. Yet the strange man in front of her knew it? How could it be possible?

Ursa was sure her former queen must have erased her existence as she had said she would before exiling her. After all, the 'gods' wouldn't want their reputation to be tarnished by a 'whore'. Either way, even if she did say something, no one would have believed her words against the queen's.

That aside, how could Ursa be alive thousands of years? The answer was simpler than someone would have expected. When the queen banished her, she wanted Ursa to live a gruelling life such that the pain would force her to forget about Zorbak.

In order to do so, the queen added an additional effect to Ursa's generic shape-shifting skill. Thus making it a unique skill. Whenever she changed her form into a new being, she would gain the average lifespan of the creature she would transform into.

Then, the queen made sure to fill Ursa's domain with thousands of unique creatures. While unleashing predators on her at the same time. In other words, Ursa was forced to change her forms frequently to ensure her survival. Had it not been for that, she would have perished a long time ago.

"Would you prefer to be called by your maiden name instead?" Ashton's words pulled Ursa out of her trance, "Never mind that I don't give a crap what you want to call yourself. I'm the one asking questions here, not you."

"You're a Xyran, aren't you?"

The resentment Ashton saw in her eyes as she mentioned the Xyrans, was even more than his hate. However, it wasn't a surprise considering she had been tormented for years by them. Her life was destroyed and when she tried to take revenge, she was pushed into an even deeper hell hole.

"I am not. But I am someone who hates them with a passion. More on a platonic level though... unlike you." Ashton answered out of sympathy, "That's the reason I am here. I want to get stronger so that I can give them a dose of helplessness, just like they had so graciously offered to the lower civilizations. So please, answer me, where is the apple tree of misfortunes?"

Ursa did not answer him but kept staring into Ashton's eyes. It almost felt as if she wanted to make sure that she could trust the man before telling him anything. Ashton didn't say a word. He was already aware of what Ursa wanted to do. After being betrayed so many times, anyone would have a tough time trusting someone else again.

"It's... inside the lake. At the bottom, there is a cave. The apple tree is inside it." Ursa pointed back at the lake, "But you won't be able to destroy it. I have tried countless times and failed."

"You failed huh? Would you mind telling me the reason?"

Ursa took a deep breath before responding, "You must have encountered the undead while you were on your way here, correct?"

Ashton nodded and she continued, "The apples on the tree are the source of all corruption. The undead are also its creation. The fruits of the tree are shrouded by a strange aura. Anyone who gets close to it is consumed by a seemingly endless hunger. No matter what you eat, only those apples would be able to satiate their hunger."

"However, the apples are cursed. Once consumed, they would show their true colours by turning the ones who ate them, into a bunch of undead. The weaker ones were thrown out of the cave, the ones you encountered were the weaker ones. While those deemed strong were allowed to stay inside the cave and eat more, getting even stronger in the process."

Ashton kept nodding as Ursa narrated the tale. An apple tree that made the undead even stronger. What was something like that doing on Euphoria? The tree should have been in his garden back in the Eastern Palace.

[Oi, you're really not going to do that, are you?]

'Hm... I'm still thinking about it. If I could somehow manage to 'tame' the tree then it would be beneficial for the summons.'

[And if you failed, you might as well be raising an unstoppable army of undead that would consume earth in its entirety.]

'Since when did you begin giving a fuck about the earth?'

[Do whatever you want, I was simply warning you about the possibilities.]

'I know. Either way, I have to destroy the tree to clear the trial. Replanting it ain't gonna work... probably.'

While the two of them were having a discussion, Ashton could see Ursa fidgeting. She clearly wanted to ask something else, and since she had helped him so much, Ashton decided to entertain her request. That is if it wasn't completely absurd.

"Go ahead, say what you want to before I head inside the lake."

"You didn't tell me... how did you know who I was?"

Ashton shook his head. He was expecting her to say something along the lines of, 'I would like to help' or 'Take revenge' or some shit. But to think she was still stuck on how Ashton figured out her identity was quite... childish.

"I know your story. In a way, the lust of a man, caused you to lose everything. It only made sense if you used the same to make the others lose everything as well, that is, their lives." Ashton stated matter-of-factly, "When I realised a siren was attacking me, I thought it had to you and your reaction gave your identity away."

[Yeah, that's exactly what happened. I totally did not use something called a Detection skill to simply know who you were.]

'Yeah, good luck explaining all that to her after I said I wasn't related to the Xyrans.'

[Just saying...]

"You are a smart person... Unlike me." Ursa replied after listening to Ashton's monologue.

[Smart person? Eh? How dumb do you have to be to call someone like him smart?]

'Being a Xyran should suffice. Either way, I have a question to ask...' Ashton thought before turning towards Ursa, "If the apples are so dangerous, then how come you survived after attempting to destroy the tree? The apples should have converted you into an undead as well, right?"

Ursa sincerely replied. The apple did consume her, but since she had an innumerable amount of forms she could have changed into, the apples could only kill one of her forms at a time. The shock of death helped her regain her senses and she managed to narrowly escape every time.

"But it came at a price... I lost a lot of my precious forms. Since they 'died' inside the cave, I couldn't use them again." She looked at Ashton with pleading eyes, "That's why I'm saying... you would not be able to destroy the tree."

"Watch me."