

Zompiewolf 331

Chapter 331 Behemoth (1)

Why should Ashton be afraid of an undead manufacturing tree? He himself was undead, and how could the apples kill someone who was already dead? If anything, it might end up powering him up instead.

Ashton was confident, but there was an issue. If the apples could turn someone into an undead being, then it was best for him to turn off both the werewolf and vampire genes.

Who knows what kind of effect the apple would have on those genes? And Ashton was not interested in finding it out either. Also, since he was already 'undead', the tree or its protectors might not even attack him as technically, he was one of them.

'This fucking lake is too damn deep...'

[Frankly, I have no idea when this part was even constructed on Euphoria. The builders might have gone berserk of this one.]

Ashton kept swimming until he felt something beside him. He immediately turned around to see Ursa. She waved at him before grabbing his arm and dragging him deeper into the abyss.

Sirens were a creature that belonged to both, the water and the sky. Based on their needs, they could change their bodies to either touch the clouds or the deepest trenches of an ocean that too at inhumane speed.

While Ashton was struggling to swim and foot deeper, Ursa was diving like a pro. With her help, the journey that would have taken Ashton hours was completed in mere minutes.

It took a while for Ashton to adjust to the pressure from being so deep underwater. His movements were restricted a bit. However, Frank had already taught them a trick or two to help them get acquainted with the changing pressure and gravitational force of the planets.

The trick was to manipulate the mana around them to make them feel as if they were on earth. It took some time to get a hang of it, but Ashton got it. Thanks to that, the underwater pressure didn't feel as bad to him as it would have had Frank not helped them.

'I should thank him again for teaching me this.'

[It did help you a lot. That aside, I would like to commend you for your womanising prowess.]

'What are you talking about?'

[About Ursa, is there any other woman here? Looks at her change her! She went from wanting to eat you, to deciding to help you. You sure have a way with the ladies.]

'Oh that... Let's just say with a playboy like you inside my head, things like this are bound to happen with ease.'

[Wow... I'll take it as a compliment.]

'A virgin playboy.'

[... I take it back.]

Their bantering ended when they finally arrived at the mouth of the underwater cave. Ursa let go of Ashton's hands before turning around to leave.

"I don't know why, but I feel you will be able to defeat them, and I hope you do..." She mumbled, "It might be selfish of me to say this now, but the reason I tried to destroy the tree wasn't to protect the other creatures that once lived here... My fate is tied to the tree as well."

Ashton couldn't talk much as he didn't want the water flooding his body. But Ursa must have understood the reason behind his perplexed expression and continued on with her secret.

"I am bound to the tree. As long as that tree exists, I can not leave this place. It must have been another one of the measures that witch of a queen took to ensure I would never escape from the planet again."

Ashton nodded and gave her a thumbs up. He was going to destroy the tree regardless of the effect it would have on Ursa. After all, his primary focus wasn't on making friends but on completing the trial.

With everything being out in the open, Ursa decided to take her leave. The Siren was one of her last remaining 'rare' forms. She couldn't risk it being destroyed by being under the influence of the tree.

Ashton entered the cave as soon as Ursa left. He had already wasted a lot of time wandering around, and now that his target was right in front, he didn't want to wait any longer.

"Woah... there's air inside?" Ashton mumbled.

He had imagined since the cave was inside the lake, it would be flooded with water. But after swimming for a couple of minutes, he ended up in a fairly normal cave. A variety of mosses were stuck to the walls of the cave, providing light within just as the lake had been lit up.

[Hm... so it's because of these thingies, the lake was shining. Interesting...]

"You weren't aware of these things?"

[No. It's the first time I am seeing these. Looks like my long-stagnant civilization got a boost of knowledge from somewhere and here I was thinking I know everything about the galaxy.]

"Let's get going..."

The cave appeared to be more like a dungeon than anything. However, Ashton had to be more careful than before, in the absence of [Perception], he could be attacked from anywhere and at any time.

He kept walking and walking but unlike what he had hoped, he didn't find a single creature inside. That was until he came across some chomping sounds. Someone was having a meal and they weren't being so subtle about it.

'What the fuck...'

When Ashton heard those sounds, he thought maybe he was close to the apple tree and the undead were enjoying the fruits. But when he peeked into the chamber he saw something entirely different.

The undead were eating alright, but they weren't eating some fruit... but each other. Some of the undead being devoured were still alive, barely, but alive. Yet, the others did not give a fuck about it and kept digging in. It was a truly sickening sight.

"What is even going on here? Why are they eating each other?"

[This... is the first time I have seen something like this as well. You should back up a bit and observe them. We might be able to find something important for later.]

Ashton didn't say a word and slowly backed up. But it was too late... his smell had already given him away. The hungry undead were charging straight at him.

Chapter 332 Behemoth (2)

An hour later...

The growls of the undead had died away, and the shouting of the slaughter was finally hushed. Silence had once again shrouded the blood-stained cave. The battlefield lay quiet, for it was now a graveyard of the unburied. The undead had once again turned into corpses.

Among the victors, a single man stood out, covered in the blood of his enemies with a greatsword tightly gripped in his hands. He looked around to see if anyone else had unfortunately survived. But in the field of the dead, there was no one who could stare back at Ashton.

"That was a close one..." Ashton panted.

[Hm... they were weaker than I expected them to be.]

Ashton sighed in annoyance. Weaker than expected? Was Astaroth sleeping throughout the fight or something? The only thing Ashton could think of that made them 'weaker' would be that these undead did not explode like the ones on the outside.

Instead of the ability to be a suicide bomber, their resilience was unlike anything else Ashton had witnessed before. It was the first time he had to fight the undead that had regenerative powers. Yes, undead that could regenerate their limbs and in some cases, even their heads.

Simply killing them wasn't enough, he was forced to burn them thoroughly, and by thoroughly, he had to chop them into small bits first and then burn them until nothing was left behind.

Ashton couldn't afford to rush the process, as the undead would heal up if they weren't chopped down to bits. Also, Fire alone couldn't stop them so there was that.

[You had to burn them so, what's the big deal? It was pretty easy.]

"... let's just focus on the trial."

Despite saying that, the question was still lurking in his mind. Why were these undead eating each other? Not to mention their questionable regenerative powers. Undead are not supposed to have those kinds of abilities... well, he should have been the only exception.

'Dwelling on the topic isn't going to help. I need to find and destroy the tree before any other weird bastards come chasing my ass.'

[I bet you want to ask that Siren about the location now.]

"Yeah, I kinda overlooked that matter..."

[Haha-]

"It ain't like you remembered it either."

[Ahem... that aside, it feels nice knowing girls aren't the only ones interested in you for once. The Undead would love to have some intimacy with you too. Damn, you're a chad! Even making the undead feel alive.]

'Just help me find the tree... scratch that. I already did.'

Well, he had not found the tree yet, but he could sense a faint ominous aura around. An aura of death. Being a necromancer, sensing death wasn't weird. Still, he did feel a bit weird because there wasn't one source emitting such hostile mana, but two.

According to the description of the trial and Ursa's monologue, only one tree was supposed to exist. Which would mean, that either the tree had reproduced by itself, or there was someone protecting the tree, which would mean... they had eaten a shit ton of apples.

If there were two trees Ashton would be able to take one for himself and make himself and his summons stronger than ever. While in the second case, he might end up... finding a new summon for himself. Which would be an added bonus.

[You do know you don't have to take the entire tree with yourself, right? A couple of apple seeds should be enough.]

'I know that. But you know how lazy and forgetful I am. Do you think someone like me would have the patience to raise a tree?'

[That is true... But you don't have to do it yourself. It's not like you know a Lich who is so obsessed with life and death that he would jump at the opportunity to study something new.]

'... ok, I'll do that.'

Without wasting another minute, Ashton headed towards the expected location of the tree. He did encounter some undead here and there, but he realised something. As he was getting closer to the sources, the number of undead he found was dwindling sharply. So much so, that it had been half an hour since he last killed an undead.

It felt weird because this tree was apparently able to give them more power. Therefore, it didn't make a lot of sense that they were populated away from the tree. It almost felt like they were scared of something and running away from it.

If that was the case, then it would make sense why they were eating each other, rather than the apples. Once the apples were consumed, the undead became hungry for as long as they lived. Not being able to eat any more apples might have made them go crazy.

As a result, they decided to eat the next best thing: The one who had eaten the apples. Still, Ashton wasn't convinced by his own theory, or maybe it was because he did not want to think someone stronger than everyone else was having a camping trip around the tree.

If what Ursa had said about the apples was true... and there was a creature living next to the tree, it would make a lot of sense why Ashton was feeling two sources of deadly aura instead of one. After eating thousands of apples, the bastard would feel like they were on steroids or something.

"It's getting darker now. I thought the moss would cover the entire cave, not just the shallow parts of it." Ashton mumbled before revealing Seraph's crystal once again to illuminate the path, "Now it's better."

[I find it weird as well. It almost feels as if someone got rid of them. Be careful from now onwards.]

Ashton nodded and used the light from Seraph's Crystal to guide him deeper. Further ahead was a single path. Its twisted trail led passed a handful of rooms.

At first glance, it looked like someone must have lived inside those rooms long ago. Because now everything had been consumed by time. The floor was littered with bones and long dried blood that had become one with the floor now.

It was the same story for every other room. Also, there were hundreds of claw marks visible and some metal chains in each room. Someone must have been chained there once, but why?

The deeper Ashton went into the cave, the more disturbing things got. There were clear signs of some sort of civilisation there. From machines and utensils that had been long since consumed by nature and time to shackled skeletons, that had their limbs extending in the direction of the missing doors, as if they were crying for help.

At first, it was just a trial zone, but now... it had become something much more hideous and troublesome.

[Before you ask me, I have no idea what this is.]

"Looks like your kind hid secrets from themselves. Because it's surprising that even you did not know about all this. It's a bit weird, don't you think?" Ashton jeered, "Wanna know my take on it?"

Astaroth didn't reply but Ashton continued either way, "This was some sort of prison. The fact that Ursa was sent here not once, but twice and Hydra's presence makes it all the more believable."

Astaroth remained silent. He wasn't so sure about Ashton's comment, but what he said made more sense than anything else. Not to mention, the type of chainlinks that had been used was certainly like the ones the Xyrans used long ago.

Also, considering the fact that the Xyran had created the planet from scratch using precursor technology, it wasn't possible that a secret civilisation was living under the rocks without them noticing it.

Upon pondering about it, he realised that hundreds of creatures have been 'imprisoned' on the planet like the Hydra and Ursa. So, in a sense, Euphoria had always been a prison more than a 'training facility'.

[This can't be... it?]

'What is it now?'

[The precursors, we did not kill all of them as we needed some help in understanding their technology. I always found it a bit weird that they agreed to teach us, especially after what we did to them. But now it makes sense.]

Astaroth did not state the obvious, but Ashton understood the hidden meaning behind his words. These prison cells... must have once housed the captured precursors. Now it made sense why quite a few bones there looked a lot like human bones even though no human had ever stepped a foot inside the cave or anywhere close to it for that matter.

It was these prison cells that were used to torture the precursors until they committed to revealing the secrets behind their technologies. The more and more Ashton got to know about the Xyrans, the more he was beginning to loathe them.

"Please do not allow me to use Raphael right now." Ashton said through his gritted teeth, "If I see any Xyran, I swear I'm going to rip them to shreds and make these undead feast on them."

Astaroth remained silent. The revelation was a bit too much for him as well. However, before they could discuss the matter any further, they heard a roar. The sound kept getting closer and closer.

Ashton immediately bolted out of the room. He did not want to get trapped inside a tiny room for any reason whatsoever. However, by the time he put his foot out of the door, he saw something from the corner of his eyes. Something gargantuan standing next to the door.

Ashton had found what he was looking for. The two deathly auras he had sensed were in front of him. An undead creature, unlike anything he had seen before and the tree, was on top of it.

The creature and Ashton locked eyes. But the emotions they felt were completely different. While Ashton's eyes had a look of shock and puzzlement, the creature's eye remained indifferent as if he was seeing a fly. In other words, the creature did not even view Ashton as a threat.

Ashton should have been happy that the undead creature did not lash out at him instantly. Instead, he was a bit taken aback that the creature had refused to even acknowledge his presence.

It couldn't have been that the creature did not see him. After all, Seraph's crystal was still ablaze, and its unique blue-black flames were a bit too hard not to notice.

'I don't like this feeling at all...' Ashton gritted his teeth.

He was being looked down upon. As much as it frustrated him, he maintained his calm state of mind. If the creature had not noticed or acknowledged him, it would only make it easier for Ashton to strike the creature down.

The undead had a humanoid structure just like the others but looked different at the same time. It was easily twice as big as Ashton, both in height and in the area and unlike the other undead, Ashton had encountered so far, had a rigid exoskeletal structure covering the left half of its body.

It had a forearm which had been mutated into a shield-like structure that was as big and wide as Ashton. In contrast, the other side of the undead was made entirely of flesh with the ligaments and muscle exposed, the only exception to this was the fingers.

It had four bony, razor-sharp fingers that were roughly a couple of feet long. Not to mention its feet had a similar structure to that of a rabbit but were abnormally large. The most sickening feature, however, had to be the multiple spikes that protruded from its back like a cactus.

As for the tree, it was mounted on top of its shoulders. The creature had become one with the tree, or maybe it was the other way around. The moment Ashton looked at the face of the undead, he realised why it was bounded to the tree.

The creature did not have a mouth. Technically it did not have a face at all, just two eyes, no nose or mouth or any other facial characteristics were visible. Thus, maybe by becoming one with the tree, the creature was able to feed on it?

Ashton wasn't sure about it, but it could have been possible. As there was no other way for the creature to feed off of the tree since it had no mouth and stuff.

[That is... one hell of a mutation.]

'What even is that thing?'

[There are no records of such a creature. This is the first time someone has encountered the species. You know what that means, don't you?]

'You want to study this ugly shit, don't you?'

[Consider it an advance valentines gift for me. No homo.]

By this time, it seemed the creature was bored of their staring contest and began walking away. Ashton saw his chance and took it. He ran forward as fast as he could, before slamming both of his fists straight into the undead's head.

The impact was quite powerful as the gargantuan creature was forced to take a few steps back to balance itself. Ashton did not care whether the undead wanted to fight him or not, he had to kill it, regardless of whether the creature fought back or not.

"Ew!"

Ashton immediately retreated while shaking his hands. Hitting the creature in the head might not have been the brightest idea. The moment his fists collided with the head, a suspicious liquid oozed out of the wound, covering Ashton's arm.

The gooey liquid rapidly spread across his arm, as if it was trying to gobble the arm entirely. Ashton quickly used the flames to get rid of the substance. But by the time he did that, the undead was standing back where it was before Ashton hit it.

As for where Ashton had hit it, the spot had already been healed. His attack did not have any lasting effect on the creature whatsoever.

[This healing power far exceeds the ones you have fought till now.]

'I know... If only I could use aggravate this wouldn't have been a problem.' Ashton thought, 'Should I activate werewolf genes and take the risk? I don't think I am strong enough to defeat it with my undead genes alone.'

[I would suggest keeping that strategy as your last resort. We don't know how you will react once your 'living' genes come in contact with the tree.]

Ashton nodded. Astaroth was correct, the tree was said to overwhelm any living being that enters its vicinity. They could not risk him losing control over himself like that.

'I need to figure out its weakness first.'

—

Name: Atlas

Species: Zombie (Active), unknown (Deceased).

Status: Behemoth

Class: Undead Absorber

Title: [Ruler of the Domain], [The Unconquered]

Age: Unknown

Gender: None, formerly male

Grade: C-tier (Evolution is no longer possible from to conventional methods)

Affiliation: None

Level: 99 (Caution is advised)

Stats:

HP: 60,000/60,000

Mana: None

Damage: 154

Armour: 269

Stealth: 90

Stamina: 420

Agility: 23

Intelligence: 32

Nature:

Uncaring

Hostile

Assertive

Abilities:

>> Obsidian Wall: Reduces all types of damage (except true damage) by 70%.

>> Moskov: Can recover 2.5% HP/ second, upon being attacked at the cost of a permanent reduction of 5 points of stamina/second.

>> Absorption: Can recover up to 20% of lost stamina by causing damage to living or undead beings.

>> Divinity: Additionally absorbed stamina can be used to dish out increased damage based on the user's HP. Deals 10 (+3% of user's maximum hp) as true damage to the surrounding enemies every 2 seconds.

—

'It's not hard to beat it. But those damned abilities are making him too tanky.' Ashton voiced his frustrations, 'He is like a punching bag made to force the attackers to give up. Thankfully I have my own punching bag to take hits as well.'

<The Bone Goliath has been summoned.>

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All the bones scattered around the cave were now fulfilling their use. Within moments, Bone Goliath towered over the Behemoth. Unlike Ashton, Atlas or the behemoth did not ignore the goliath and immediately attacked the skeletal beast.

'Really? Is size the only thing this fucker is intimidated by?' Aston shook his head.

[Unleash your Kraken! He'll undoubtedly be afraid of that.]

'...'

Ashton ignored Astaroth's remarks and jumped on Atlas' back to try and cut the tree off while it was focused on the Goliath. With a swing, Balmond was lodged deep within the tree. But just like the behemoth, the cut healed as soon as Ashton took the sword out to swing again.

Even after being dead, their vitality was more potent than most living beings. Not to mention that absurd damage reduction. Even if Ashton was to activate all of his genes, he might not be able to take the tree down in one blow.

"Tch, gotta come up with some other plan." Ashton grunted as he jumped back, "There has to be a way to get this bastard's regeneration down. If we can't then things are going to be quite troublesome."

[There are two options for you. Either you miraculously manage to one-shot the beast and the tree. Or... never mind, I forgot Raphael's subspace is occupied with that bastard.]

"Damn it! Raphael would have been the perfect counter for the Behemoth."

Just like Raphael had reduced Beelzebub's HP to 1% instantly, he could do the same with the Behemoth. It would have made Ashton's life a lot easier. Unfortunately, only one being can be held inside Raphael's subspace and since they were not planning on killing Beelzebub any time soon, Ashton could not throw Atlas into the subspace and get rid of him there.

"Did you hear that? Something is coming."

While the behemoth was being kept busy by the goliath, Ashton turned around to see the walls of the cave were shaking. A horde of undead was coming his way. The tree must have done something to call forth everyone who had consumed its fruit. It had to be some sort of precautionary measure to ensure its survival.

"These fuckers! They were so scared to even live around here, but look at them now." Ashton smirked, "Fine by me. You're not the only one who can call out an army."

[Alright, do it. It's not like I can stop you or something.]

"Thank you~"

Suddenly, a portal opened behind him, and out of it came the wraith wolves. They might not have enough strength to kill the undead, but it was also true the other way around. As long as the wolves

successfully managed to keep the undead busy, Ashton would be able to deal with the tree along with the undead.

The wolves caused a stampede, destroying the undead over and over again. It didn't matter how many times they healed or bit into the wolves, the undead could not stop them and soon were overwhelmed by the wolves.

Ashton had created an impenetrable wall. No matter how hard the undead tried, they weren't getting anywhere close to the tree or him for that matter.

Had the tree been a sentient being, its frustrations would have been on a whole different level. After all, it was supposed to be the unconquered ruler of the trial zone, and yet Ashton was deadset on making a bitch out of it.

A sudden explosive sound took Ashton's attention away. The Goliath had just slammed the behemoth down. It was weird, the bone behemoth wasn't supposed to be this strong. The only reason Ashton had summoned it was to take the punches that were thrown his way. Yet, the Goliath was holding on his own against the behemoth.

"How is he so strong? Is it because of the bones?"

[Hm... it could be possible. Since there were a lot of Precursor's bones scattered around, the Goliath could have received some sort of a buff.]

Watching Goliath fight the Behemoth fired up Ashton's fighting will. He wasn't going to let his pets steal the spotlight away from him. He once again jumped on the behemoth's back, wanting to sever the tree once and for all. But unlike the last time, he didn't make the same mistake as the last time.

"I have been wanting to do this for so long!" Ashton excitedly mumbled before covering Balmond with Seraph's flames.

<Balmond is absorbing hellfire from Seraph's crystal...>

<Absorption successful.>

<Balmond has obtained [The Element of Fire].>

As soon as those notifications appeared, Balmond was surrounded by black flames. Ashton wasn't sure what would happen before he did what he did, but he was delighted with the outcome. Balmond had learned a new skill, just like Ashton had hoped for.

At the same time, Goliath slammed his elbow on the behemoth's head, causing it to collapse. The creature tried his best to get up, but Goliath kept pounding his face. It had started feeling like Goliath had some sort of grudge against the undead behemoth.

Whatever it was, Ashton was happy as hell, because Goliath was making his job easier. He once again lodged Balmond straight into the tree. While his strength still wasn't enough to sever it in one strike, the flames bought him enough time to hit it again before the tree could heal itself. The process repeated over and over until the tree was on the verge of breaking.

Ashton felt the trial had gotten a bit too easy as time progressed. He wasn't complaining about it, but couldn't keep a weird thought from popping up in his head. A nagging feeling that destroying the tree wasn't going to be the end of the trial.

[Keep those thoughts in the trash where they belong and keep chomping the fucking thing down!]

"Right!"

Ashton shook his head and put all his strength into the last strike. The tree came falling down, at the same time as the behemoth. Along with them, the rest of the undead collapsed as well. The trial was over...

"Something's off..." Ashton did not celebrate even for a second, "The confirmation did not appear yet. The trial is still going on!?"

—

Beginning the second phase of the trial.

Objective: Retrieve the lost equipment of the Grim Reaper from the Evolved Behemoth.

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Ashton found the answer to the question that had been running into his mind. The grim reaper, whoever he was, was the one responsible for this mess. The reaper probably experimented around with the tree, turning it into the menace it was. Either that was the case or he died trying to complete the trial and the tree absorbed him or something.

As soon as the notification popped up, a black mist shrouded everything in sight. Ashton's vision was compromised but he could feel death rising once again. The undead were back on their feet, along with the behemoth.

"So annoying!" Ashton exclaimed as he used [Wind Elemental Control] to clear the mist.

It took a couple of seconds before he finally managed to clear the area. Only to see the behemoth had his back turned towards him. However, Ashton did not bother much with the creature and instead began looking for the tree, thinking the tree might have had the grim reaper's equipment.

Sadly, it was nowhere to be found. It had disappeared into thin air... or someone had made it disappear. But with the tree gone, only one thing could have the grim reaper's equipment: The Behemoth.

The creature still had his back towards Ashton. The latter saw this as a golden opportunity to end the trial once and for all.

"I can't waste this time!"

Ashton yelled as he prepared to lunge towards the Behemoth with Balmond in his hands, ready to sever the undead's head. But before he could even move, the Behemoth let out a bloodcurdling scream.

"ARGH!"

Ashton fell to his knees while covering his ears. The pain wasn't overwhelming but for some reason, he couldn't think clearly. The high-pitched wailing felt like someone was scratching his skull with a metal brush. It might not have been painful due to his pain resistance, but Ashton felt like he could lose his mind at any moment.

He wasn't the only one who suffered from this sudden attack either. The wolves along with the undead were having a hard time as well. It was as if the Behemoth did not give a fuck about anyone or anything except himself.

Which was true, after all, the tree might have some control over the other undead. But the Behemoth did not.

Meanwhile, blood flowed out of Ashton's nostrils and ears as he forced himself back to his feet. He even managed to open his eyes, but the vision was hazy. He could roughly make out the things in his surroundings, but that was it.

Suddenly the wailing stopped. Ashton felt relieved for a second. But if the wailing had stopped that meant the Behemoth was about to attack him.

He hurriedly equipped Hydra's armour before opening his eyes, but couldn't find the undead behemoth anywhere. Instead, he discovered a gaping hole in front of him. It was dark and Ashton could not see inside the hole so well, thanks to his head being a mess.

However, judging from the size of the hole, the behemoth must have escaped through it. This move made sense. After all, no matter how strong the Behemoth was, he must have been hurt after being thrashed by Goliath. Therefore, he had to make a hasty retreat.

On top of that, since the trial was still incomplete, Ashton knew what he had to do. Even if he didn't want to.

[You're not planning to jump in... are you? No matter what I say, you can't possibly be such a moron to do something like this. You should send your goliath instead, that would be a better option.]

Ashton nodded. It could easily be a trap as well. In any case, sending goliath inside would have been the better option. After all, it wasn't like Behemoth would be able to kill it.

'I think I have-'

Before Ashton could even complete what he was saying, a gigantic hand ripped through the ground, lunging at him. He tried to dodge, but he was still under the influence of Behemoth's previous attack and his body coordination was a bit off.

The hand was going to smash his head. But out of the corner of his eyes, Ashton saw the white giant rushing in to stop the attack. Within moments, Goliath had grabbed the hand and pulled Behemoth out of the hole with ease.

Goliath wasn't going to take shit from anyone. How dare that damned undead bastard to have the audacity to hurt his master in front of him? As soon as Behemoth was back on the ground, the Goliath slammed his knee right into Behemoth's face.

The kicks kept coming, and Behemoth couldn't do anything but take them as Goliath already had his hands forcing Behemoth's face downwards.

But Ashton could feel something was off. Goliath's kicks were just as explosive as before, and yet after taking so many hits, Behemoth stood there as if he wasn't hurt at all. He immediately rushed in to help the giant, but he was a bit too late.

As Goliath threw another kick, Behemoth blocked it using his forearms, before freeing himself from his opponent's grasp and headbutting the white giant. Headbutting a skeleton would have been painful, Behemoth was doing himself more harm than good... at least that would have been the most logical outcome. But something unexpected occurred.

"How the hell..." Ashton mumbled in absolute shock as the head of Goliath shattered into bits as soon as Behemoth's strike landed on its head.

So far, no one except him had managed to do so. Not even Sven or Gokung for that matter. The only one who had ever overwhelmed Goliath like that was him. But Ashton knew his eyes weren't playing any tricks on him.

Just like that, the giant was down and out for good. It was quite a feat to destroy something that was made to absorb an astronomical amount of damage.

Once Goliath was down, Behemoth turned his attention towards Ashton. It was the first time Ashton got a good look at the evolved behemoth and it looked much uglier than before.

His facial features had changed a lot. The behemoth no longer had those empty eyes. His entire forehead was covered with blisters and tumours which entirely covered his eyes. On the other hand, the undead had grown a mouth-like slit across his face and had a tongue that was covered with thorns and dangled down, almost touching the ground.

"And here I was thinking you couldn't possibly look uglier." Ashton smirked, "Well, it isn't the first time I was wrong."

[Nor would it be the last.]

He was no stranger to how dangerous the Behemoth had become. Yet, his mind was as calm as a freak's. It wouldn't have been much fun if the trial ended like that either way. Not to mention, the stronger the enemies were, the harder it was to beat them and the more fired up Ashton would get while facing them. This case wasn't any different.

With Balmond in his hands, Ashton charged at the Behemoth. The creature saw him coming and snarled loudly, before whipping his vicious-looking tongue at him. Ashton didn't dodge it though. He had had enough. No more running. Now was time to either go big or go home.

Instead, he caught the tongue and wrapped it around his arm. It felt like hundreds of syringes were trying to pierce through his skin, but the Hydra's armour ensure he wasn't hurt. Ignoring whatever discomfort he felt and Ashton pulled the undead toward him with extraordinary force.

A moment later, the behemoth's feet were off the ground as he made an arc over Ashton before being slammed into the horde of undead.

"I must say, the way you crushed Goliath's head was impressive. But that doesn't make you stronger than me."

Even after evolving, Behemoth's level barely exceeded Ashton's cumulative. In other words, the behemoth might look scary, but apart from his looks, there was nothing more to be scared of.

But Ashton wasn't done yet. The tongue was still wrapped around his hands, so he did what any logical person would do... he sliced it with a swing of his blade. Behemoth screeched in pain, thrashing everything around him, including the undead.

"Hm... this tongue might be useful later on. I can think of a few things I could get made out of it." Ashton examined the tongue while his opponent was down, "But I can get a lot more things made out of your body."

Behemoth got up once again, chowing down on whatever he could get his hands on. Ashton didn't know why, but his guess was the damned monster wanted to recover some of his lost HP as, unlike his other wounds, the tongue did not heal back.

"Could it be his organs are his weak points?"

[You will have to operate on him either way. It would be a waste to not get at least one of his skills. Also, the fucker had most likely digested whatever that piece of equipment was, so you'll have to tear him up either way.]

Ashton swung Balmond in anticipation, "Who wants some behemoth soup."

Chapter 336 Warden

Ashton rushed in to finish the fight, but as soon as he took a step, everything froze. The undead, the wolves, the air... everything. He was still aware of his surroundings but he couldn't move an inch, nor could anything else. It was as if someone had stopped the time itself.

'What's going on?' Ashton asked Astaroth, but there was no answer, 'Damn it!'

Ashton did not like what was going on. Even Astaroth was 'frozen'. But unlike what he was thinking, not everything was frozen.

From the corner of his eyes, Ashton saw the Behemoth making his way toward him. It could have been one of the undead's skills, but to be honest, Ashton was too focused on the Behemoth to even think about anything else.

He was helpless and the behemoth could finish him in a single strike, had he desired to do so. But it didn't seem like the creature was planning on ending him so soon.

"You... Human..." A voice echoed in Ashton's ears, "You are human... yet you're different. Two souls... one body. Not like... you were supposed to be."

For a moment, Ashton thought he was going mad. But what he heard was true. The behemoth was speaking to him as he slowly approached him.

"What do you mean?"

"You were created... to embody... the precursors..." The behemoth hissed while he walked around Ashton, "Your lust for power... has corrupted you. You are no longer... their successor..."

Ashton couldn't make the head or the tail of what the bastard was speaking. Also, why the hell was he speaking in the first place? He could have killed Ashton easily considering his time-frozen state, and yet it appeared the Behemoth was more interested in talking with him.

"What do you know about the precursors, and who the hell are you?"

Behemoth didn't reply but kept sniffing Ashton up. While he no longer had his eyes to see, but behemoth could still sense the 'human'. It almost felt like he was looking for something, within Ashton.

"Who am I...? It's been so long... since someone... asked me that. Let me show you... instead."

The behemoth tapped Ashton's forehead with his pointy fingers and everything went black. After what seemed like an eternity, Ashton finally opened his eyes, only to realise that he was in a completely different place.

'Where am I?' Ashton wanted to speak, but no voice came out of his mouth. He looked down, and the sight surprised him. He could see thorough himself as if he was a ghost or something.

'What's going on? Astaroth, are you there?'

No reply.

'Great... looks like I'm already dead.'

Having nothing else to do, Ashton decided to take a look around and see if he could find a way out of this... dream-like state. He walked around a bit before the realisation finally dawned upon him. The place felt familiar to him because it was the same cave he had been inside mere moments ago.

'Did I travel back in time or something? Unlike before, this place looks... well maintained.'

The corridors were cleaner than Ashton remember and most importantly there were no undead. Hell, it appeared there was no one inside the cave, only him. That was until Ashton heard a voice ahead.

'What the hell is going on here?' Ashton was having a rough time believing his eyes.

There were Xyrans all over the place. Everywhere he could see, there were Xyrans. Not only that, there were different coloured Xyrans... none of them had the golden skin like Beelzebub had. It made Ashton wonder whether it was some sort of a classification based on the colours of their skin or not.

'The ones with brighter skin colour have useless decorative armour, but the ones having darker shades have better weapons and armours... Maybe the brighter ones have more authoritative powers but less combat experience? Or is it something else? I'll definitely ask Astaroth about this if I ever get out of here in one piece.'

Their skin tones weren't the only thing different. The wings were different as well. Not all of them had white angel-like wings. Some were nastier than the other, but for some reason, the brighter ones had poorly maintained wings, which was different from what Ashton had expected.

However, before he could analyse his surroundings any further, a conversation took his attention away.

'Looks like I can hear them after all... but why can I only hear a certain person talk?'

Everyone around him was moving their lips as if they were conversing with each other. Yet Ashton could only one such conversation. Thinking it could be a clue to get him out of there, he headed over to listen in on them.

"Torvak, I head you have been promoted as the warden for the prison?" One of the brighter Xyrans excitedly asked.

"Haha, yeah. I just received the news myself." A dark-skinned Xyran, wearing an azure blue armour smiled.

"Well deserved promotion, my friend. If it is anyone who could get those fucking 'forefathers' of us to speak, it's you. No one can torture the hell out of the Precursors as you do!"

'Fuck! It is a prison, just as I expected!'

The armoured man only smiled wanly in response. Soon the lighter-skinned Xyran left the warden to himself. It was then Ashton saw something weird.

The warden had clenched his hands tightly as if he was enraged, yet he was smiling as his colleague congratulated him. Something was off about him. Ashton decided to follow him as the warden entered one of the many prison cells.

'WHAT THE HELL?'

Ashton got wide-eyed when he saw who was inside the cell... a human. An ordinary human!?! Although Ashton did not know what time he had travelled into the past, he was certain all of this was happening while the humans on earth were learning to make weapons out of stones.

It didn't make any sense how the hell there was a human prisoner there. But what if the man inside wasn't a human at all?

While Ashton was computing what was going on there, the Xyran entered the chamber and did something to the switch next to the wall. The next moment, the cuff bounding the naked man to the ceiling vanished.

However, instead of falling down and hitting his face, the man gently landed on the floor. Ashton wanted to know who the man was, but for some reason, the face was blurry. Almost as if someone forgot about him.

"You did well, Mr Warden." The man said as the warden kneeled before him, "I hope you're not having second thoughts about doing the necessary?"

"N-No, my lord. Unlike my people, I will never betray the precursors." The warden replied but it almost felt like he was more scared of the man than anything else.

'Precursors? Wait... I knew the precursors were similar to humans but I never expected them to be so... alike...'

"Sadly, you had to take the lives of my brethren to achieve what you did..." The precursor replied while gently stroking the Warden's hairs, "I don't hold a grudge against you, my child. How can someone of my stature hold anything against an insignificant creature like yourself?"

Suddenly the warden gritted his teeth. The precursor was clearly doing something to him, but the Xyran did not fight back. Either he was too weak to do so, or he simply didn't want to, was a mystery to Ashton.

However, what he did realise, was the fact that Precursors weren't as merciful as he was led to believe. Judging by how scared the Xyran was of the man, Ashton had no doubt the precursor must have shown the Xyran a bit of his powers.

"My apologies, great lord..." The Xyran mumbled, "I swear I will pay for the sin of beheading your family."

"I have no doubts that you will... and quite dearly so, I'm afraid." The precursor let go of the warden and turned his back on him, "Make the preparation as fast as you can. The foolishness of both of our kinds has already caused havoc in the galaxy."

He continued, "Thanks to your kind's insolence, there is no order anymore, only chaos. I have to return to the Motherworld and make a report to the <One Above All>. You understand me, don't you... Atlas?"

The Xyran did not dare speak a word. He simply kept kneeling down, watching his own feet as drops of sweat left their mark on the floor.

'Atlas? Where have I heard the name before? Wait... it's-'

Just the mention of a name was enough for Ashton to piece everything together. His consciousness had not travelled back in the past as he thought. He was simply living through the memories of the warden. The warden who would be known as the Behemoth in the future.

The following moment, the scenery was replaced. Everything was on fire, everywhere Ashton could see, he only saw corpses, of both Xyrans and precursors. Sirens were blaring crazily and in the middle of all that... was Atlas, on his knees.

In his hands was a scythe... Ashton immediately sensed the familiar aura of death revolving around it. It had to be the equipment the notification informed him about.

'What the hell happened here?'

"You tricked me... you took everything away from me!" He yelled at the top of his lungs, "It's not over yet. YOU HEAR ME! It's not over yet, you piece of shit Precursor! I will take my revenge on you! With the same scythe that you killed my family with! I'll live until the day I kill all of you bastards and anyone related to you!"

Those were the last words Ashton heard before darkness swept his vision again. But this time, he was back to where it all began. Back inside the cave. Only this time, the space wasn't frozen anymore.

"Now... you know... why I will... kill you." The Behemoth roared as the scythe from before materialised in his hands, "Die!"

Chapter 337 Scythe (1)

Back in the outside world, more than a day had already passed since Ashton was headed to clear the second trial. Since then, there had been no news about him. As a result, the management thought it was another loss and was about to mark him as MIA (missing in action).

Technically, he was assumed as KIA (Killed in action), but since no one would be able to recover his corpse from the trial zone, they could only mark him as MIA. This was a common occurrence on Euphoria. People who got tough trials assumed they would be able to complete them and boldly head in. Only to find despair on the other side as they either died or went missing.

Simply because someone gets a trial, it doesn't mean they'll be able to clear it. Getting a tough trial only signifies that they had the potential of completing it. Whether it would take one attempt or hundreds depended on the examinee of the trial.

The management always made sure the examinees or the participants were aware of the risk. But they often ignored the guidelines and did what they wanted to, resulting in the loss of their lives. Ashton's case was about to be marked as one such unfortunate incident.

Once a person was marked MIA, the wristbands provided to them would cease working. Which would mean... even if they were able to beat the trial, they would not be able to use the return portal to get back. It was because the portal could only recognise the wristband, and not the person wearing it. In other words, all help they could receive from the wristband would cease.

Something like this was about to happen to Ashton, simply based on an assumption.

The management had to do it because they were too lazy to invest in making new wristbands along with new basic AI(s). Instead, they simply patched the old AI into a wristband, before allotting it to a new person.

Simply making the wristbands was easy and cheap. But manufacturing new AI was both Expensive as well as time taking and time was something the management did not have as thousands of new examinees entered the trial every day. They simply would not be able to keep up with the demand if they began manufacturing new AIs.

All of this was explained to Anna and the Twins, but they were not having it. Anna could feel Ashton was alive as he was her mate. She explained it to the receptionist who was 'supposedly' handling the matter with utmost care. But he refused to listen to them.

"Why don't you understand!? Our lives are linked, if anything were to happen to him, I would know immediately!" Anna yelled at the receptionist who kept sighing as loudly as he could.

"Look, ma'am, we have a policy. No contact for 24 hours means the person has gone missing. We can't keep on wasting our resources on every weak-ass moron-"

He barely said that when Anna grabbed him by his neck and effortlessly lifted him off of his seat. The person looked terrified to the limit he did not even try to fight back. Well, even if he had tried, there were two more ladies with their swords out who would have chopped him to pieces.

Unfortunately for the ladies, the place was filled with guards, who immediately rushed in to stop the girls from causing a mess. The soldiers had already heard the tale of what happened to Lady Otiga's special force a couple of nights ago.

Thus, they did not want to mess with them initially and were a bit hesitant before taking action against the Succubus.

But it wasn't like they could skip out from doing their duty. Especially when so many people were watching them. They had already been turned into a joke after what the one named Ashton did to the third monarch.

If they wanted to preserve whatever semblance of authority they had, they had to make an example out of the ladies to make sure no one else even thought about causing a ruckus. Not even the strongest of them all.

"Put the man down and surrender yourselves." The force's captain yelled, "Failing to comply would result in a painful learning experience for you and an entertainment session for us."

"Pain can be entertaining too, don't you think so, Leon?"

"Who the hell- Lady Otiga, how can I help you?" The captain's tone changed instantly when he saw Otiga and her guards along with Leon.

"Hm... It is none of your concern, captain. Take your men out for a patrol while I do my business here." Otiga replied without even sparring the man a look, "My men would be taking over your duties till I accomplish what I came here for."

"But, my lady, I'm sure you know the guards can't leave their assigned-" The captain tried to argue but was immediately received a verbal slap across the face by Leon.

"I am your commander, I can make or break as many rules as I please. Either you follow Lady Otiga's command, or I'll station you someplace where you and your soldiers would beg me to kill you. Is that what you want?"

Honestly, Leon did not give a shit about what happened to that bastard called Ashton. However, since Otiga was still suspicious of him, he was forced to play the good guy.

"N-No, sir! You heard the orders! Let's go!"

The captain saluted Leon and ran out of the place as if their asses were on fire. Once everything had calmed down, Otiga placed her hand on Anna's shoulders.

"Hurting him wouldn't make your man come any faster." She whispered in Anna's ear, "Why don't you let me handle this mess, hm?"

'Her man?'

The twins looked at each other with confused eyes. But they realised what Otiga meant a moment later. Irina was visibly confused and upset, but Verina smiled before nudging her. Being the mature one among the two, Verina knew it wasn't the time to discuss such a thing and hushed Irina while Anna let go of the receptionist.

As soon as the receptionist's feet hit the ground, he was ready to get his revenge. How dare someone from a lowly civilisation to touch him without his permission? But before he could do anything, Lady Otiga interrupted him.

"Ahem, Riksha, is it?" She said while looking at the man's name tag.

"My lady, what pleasure do I owe to have you here?" Riksha faked the most sincere smile that he could.

"It's related to the man you are so intended on screwing over," Otiga replied with a straight face.

"I-I don't understand what you are saying, my lady." Riksha was clearly flustered... as expected, he was hiding something, "Why would I do something like that to a participant I have never even seen before?"

"Do I need to spell it out for you? I gave Ashton Fenrir a special task to accomplish inside the trial zone. That's the reason his wristband is acting weirdly." Otiga replied, "Until he finishes the trial, no one is allowed to pull the trigger on him. Is that clear?"

"I'm not sure if I can-"

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but the Abandonment rule has not been forced so strictly ever before. Then why now? People have been given a chance to prove themselves before, some even have cleared a trial well after a week had passed from the allotted time period."

She continued, "I know it very well because I was one of them. Then would you mind telling me why are you being so persistent about pulling the plug as soon as 24 hours have passed?"

"My lady, it's not like that. We need those AIs to allot them to new-"

Otiga sighed heavily and the man felt like his life was coming to an end, "Seriously? Pull the record of a single person other than Ashton Fenrir who wants to attempt Ursa's trial. Just one and I'll let you mark Mr Fenrir as MIA."

The man gulped down his saliva, but the lump in his throat took a while to disappear. He did not have an answer for her.

After all, it wasn't every day a lowly worker like him got to witness an upper six monarch so closely, let alone argue with her. As for her request, even if it was reasonable, he could not do as she told him to.

Riksha had already made a deal with Jacklin to get rid of the man in question as soon as he could for any possible reason. The money he was supposed to get had also been transferred to his account. If he backed out now, Jacklin would stop at nothing and his lackeys would most definitely end him.

The choice would have been simple if it was someone other than Lady Otiga stopping him. Since Jacklin was the third seat and Otiga was the fifth, usually, anyone would have supported the one with the higher seat.

But with Otiga in the picture, things were not as simple. She might have been weaker than Jacklin in terms of seats, and strength. However, she possessed the strongest and most reliable intelligence network in the Orion belt. This meant, she had strong backers, and the monarch of the first seat was one of them.

'Tsk... no matter what I do, I'll end up putting my life in danger.' The man thought, 'But in hindsight... doing as Lady Otiga wants, would be more beneficial. She might even protect me from that dumbass gorilla.'

Seeing the man hesitate was all Otiga needed to confirm her suspicions. Someone was behind all this drama and she could already guess who was the culprit behind it.

'I'll take care of him later... for now, I have to save Ashton. I'm sure he would become a strong being in the future, and then I'll be able to cash in the help I give him today.'

Otiga cleared her throat before speaking, "What's it going to be?"

"Ahem, since Mr Fenrir is completing a special task for you, I think I can give him a week or two. No one would give a shit about a missing wristband anyway... hehe."

A wave of happiness washed over the girls. But none of them was as elated as Anna. She was happy, but she immediately masked her emotions. She was certain someone like Otiga would not go out of her way to help them without seeking some sort of benefit.

"Thank you." Otiga gave the man her signature smile before turning towards the girls, "See, you don't always need swords and strength to get your point across. Now, while Ashton completes the trial, why don't you ladies join me for lunch?"

"Hm... I don't see why not."

Anna took her up on the offer, not because she wanted to get close to Otiga or something, but because she wanted to know why was Otiga being so helpful.

Chapter 338 Scythe (2)

Ashton's gaze was fixated on the scythe and the weird aura revolving around it. The weapon was... different, to say the least. But the moment Atlas called out the weapon, Ashton immediately realised, the source of the death wasn't Atlas, but the weapon he was storing within himself.

[Ashton, I'm only going to say this once. Whatever happens, do not let that scythe hit you. I don't care whether you are a necromancer or not, just don't let it hit you.]

'I can feel the weapon is dangerous. But is there a need to-'

[Just listen to me once. I don't have a good feeling about it. If that weapon can kill so many Xyrans, you do not stand a chance against it.]

'Fine... you don't have to lose you shit like this.' Ashton replied while steadying Balmond, 'I wasn't planning on getting hit by Atlas or his weapon either way.'

"I can feel your gaze on me... foolish human with two souls." Atlas snarled, "You will never... succeed in defeating me... with a frail body like yours."

"Oi, stinky breath, could you keep your mouth closed while we fight?" Ashton replied while trying his best not to puke, "Not to sound rude or anything, but your thousand years old breaths will kill me before you get an opportunity to."

Atlas loudly gritted his teeth before launching an attack on Ashton. Ashton could sense that Atlas wasn't the same as before. He had changed and for the better, he wasn't going to have a great time fighting an undead Xyran.

'Damn he is fast!'

Ashton barely managed to parry the attack while only spending on his undead genes. But Atlas wasn't done yet. While Ashton was focused on blocking the scythe, Atlas let go of the weapon and swiped Ashton off his legs. Without a solid foothold, it would be easier to attack the human... or so Atlas thought.

As soon as Ashton's feet left the ground, he created a platform of wind to stabilise himself and counterattack. With a single kick, Ashton found his face firmly planted on the ground.

Without wasting any time, Ashton swung Balmond to sever Atlas's head, but the undead Xyran displayed his brute strength and kicked Ashton in the gut to get away in the nick of time, creating some distance between the two.

<Draconic Physique has converted the 50% true damage into physical damage and magical damage respectively.>

<Draconic Physique has reduced the physical damage by 25%.>

<Draconic Physique has reduced the magical damage by 20%.>

'So that's how it works... and I was thinking it would nullify the true damage instead.' Ashton thought once he managed to stop himself from sliding backwards. 'But more importantly, I can't seem to overpower him using strength.'

[Tsk, it's a shame the wolves are already occupied.]

Atlas got back to his feet and appeared to be agitated. Ashton didn't know with certainty why he was behaving like that, but if he had to guess, Atlas' reaction was a result of his HP loss. Even though Ashton lost more HP from his attack.

'I guess he doesn't like getting hit, at all.'

"Pathetic..." Atlas yelled while scratching his face with his claws, "Pathetic weak idiot! You... are... too weak! You are not even as strong as... the Xyrans. Pathetic weak! Getting hit... by you... is humiliating!"

"Oi... aren't you getting a bit carried away now?"

When the day started, Ashton never thought he would have an undead bastard calling him out for being weak. Yet, there he was listening to Atlas rant about how weak he was. To be honest, if ranting would make the bastard die faster, then Ashton had no problem lending him an ear.

[If that were the case, he would have been dead for a long time.]

'True, true... jokes aside, if things keep proceeding at this speed, it'll take a while to beat him.'

Even though they had only exchanged blows once, Ashton realised where Atlas' strength lay. The undead Xyran was thicker than Mera's butt. Not only did he have an absurd amount of damage reduction, but he also had a high regeneration ability.

These factors not only made it impossible to either one-shot him but also protected him from getting his HP chipped off slowly. Whatever little bit of HP Atlas might lose, he could simply recover it from his broken regeneration ability.

"Kill you... KILL YOU!"

Atlas lunged at Ashton once again, but this time Ashton was prepared. The moment Atlas raised the scythe above his head, Ashton ducked below and immediately targetted the Undead's legs. Atlas had been too focused on striking Ashton down, that he forgot to cover his openings.

Ashton heard the legs getting sliced off, and immediately turned around to launch another attack, hoping to capitalise on the moment. However, by the time he did so, Atlas' legs were already healed.

"Now this is just fucking annoying-"

Before Ashton could even prepare himself, Atlas flung his scythe toward Ashton. Ashton easily dodged the flying scythe. It wasn't until it was too late, did he realised his mistake.

Atlas used the scythe as a distraction to close the distance between them. It was never his intention to hit Ashton with the scythe. He wrapped his hands around Ashton, pulling him into the most disgusting and strong bear hug Ashton had ever faced.

"Now... you die..." Atlas whispered in his ears before biting into Ashton's shoulder.

"Argh! Let me go you bastard!"

Ashton summoned all his strength and began headbutting the undead Xyran, as his head was the only weapon he could use since his hands were tucked to his sides. All thanks to the bear hug.

It took well over a dozen attempts before Atlas was forced to let him go. Even then, the damage had already been done. Ashton's skin around the bite marks turned black in a couple of seconds. Soon his entire body began getting numb.

Ashton couldn't feel any pain, but he knew something was seriously wrong. It couldn't be poison as he had already obtained immunity from being poisoned after defeating Hydra.

"Death is a disease like none other..." Atlas smiled when he realised his plan was already working, "I, who ingested the Scythe of death... for millenniums... have become one with death. Being attacked by me... is the same as... getting attacked by the scythe. Your death is now... certain."

"So that's it, huh? You... have made death flow into me?" Ashton sniggered, "I don't think anyone told you this, but... one shouldn't boast about their grand plan before it takes effect."

"Laugh all you want... you are already dead..."

Ashton placed his hand on the wound, "No shit sherlock. I am already dead. More like... I'm already undead, so doing something like this would not affect me at all!"

The next moment, Ashton ripped off the corrupted flesh from his shoulder. As soon as he did that, everything went back to normal. Although he had a gaping hole where his shoulder mass was supposed to be, he was alright.

No... he was better than before. Because now he knew what Atlas was capable of, however, the reverse wasn't true.

"Time to show you what I am truly capable of..." Ashton smiled as his wound miraculously healed, "Sorry to disappoint you, but I'm no human. Neither am I an undead... unlike you, I am one of a kind. A being that was never supposed to exist in this damned galaxy... I am a fucking Zompiewolf!"

<Werewolf (Lvl 56) genes have been activated.>

<Vampire (Lvl 54) genes have been activated.>

<Effects of cumulative levels have been revealed.>

<User's current Cumulative level: 110>

<User's current Cumulative grade: C (intermediate)>

Chapter 339 Scythe (3)

The sudden surge of potency in Ashton baffled Atlas. He couldn't believe the mortal was hiding his true strength till now. But in hindsight, no matter how strong his enemy got, they would not be able to defeat him.

His abilities made him almost unkillable, even if the power of death had corrupted him and made his rank fall after his 'death'. His combination of tanky abilities was the reason why he was able to kill even the most fearsome Precursor prisoners after they betrayed him.

"I don't care... now matter what you become..." Atlas laughed, "You still can't... defeat me..."

That's right. The number of broken abilities that he possessed, made it impossible for Atlas to die. Not to mention, his weapon was something the precursors had created.

There was no way a mere mortal would be able to get rid of him so easily. But why was he reassuring himself over and over again?

The reason was standing in front of him. Ashton's sudden powerup had forced Atlas to be concerned about his safety. What else could the mortal be hiding from him? Atlas' train of thought was stopped when he saw Ashton's expressionless face.

"I told you to keep your mouth shut, didn't I? Ugh... just go back to being a mouthless piece of shit please." Ashton reminded Atlas of his words, "Your breath makes me wanna puke... especially now that I have a werewolf's keen sense of smell."

Ashton might have been busy mocking Atlas, but on the inside, he was having a different conversation. Astaroth was furious with Ashton's lack of sincerity. Even though he wasn't someone who would remain serious during battles himself.

[Are you out of your mind? The only reason you could 'rip' your flesh off and survive was that you were undead. Now if the bastard manages to as much as break through your skin, you might not be able to recover... like ever!]

'Do you really think I'm such a moron? I have taken care of everything, so just wait and relax. If the fight still worries you, just go and watch a memory of mine like some movie. Let me take care of this.'

Mere words were not enough for Astaroth to be convinced. However, the smirk on Ashton's face and his confident voice were enough to sway him otherwise.

[You're right. Worrying about this isn't doing anyone any favours.]

If it comes to worse, Astaroth could always take matters into his own hands. His only worry was whether he would be able to save him in time or not.

Ashton might have everything planned out, but he could not refute the fact that he activated the genes due to desperation. His undead genes were not nearly enough to kill Atlas. Therefore, he was forced to use his full strength even though he knew he was putting himself in grave danger.

Back when Atlas bit into his shoulder, his undead genes managed to slow down the process of corruption long enough for him to take care of the wound. However, with his werewolf and vampire genes now active, doing so wasn't going to be that easy.

'The scythe's corruption was specifically made to kill living beings in an instant. With my werewolf genes now active, I might be strong, but I'm at more risk than I was before. I will have to be careful.'

But that wasn't the only thing Ashton was worried about. While he was immune to entering the 'coffin' state from an undead's bite, he did not know whether it would protect him from Atlas' bite as well. In reality, Ashton had no idea what would happen if the bastard was to bite him now.

After all, from what he had seen, the undead on Euphoria were much different than the ones back on the Earth. This meant, their bites could be stronger and can possibly kill him as well. It was just a theory inside his head, but he wasn't so keen on testing it for real.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Atlas' heavy footsteps echoed throughout the cave as he charged toward Ashton. The behemoth was still as fast as before, however, this time Ashton could outmatch his speed. Werewolf genes boosted his agility astronomically, allowing him to outmanoeuvre Atlas with ease.

Before Atlas could suspect anything, Ashton dove between the behemoth's legs and buried his claws within his legs. A huge chunk of his hamstring muscles away. The next moment Atlas fell to his knees as his legs gave away, but as usual, he could not feel any pain from the attack.

It wasn't until he tried to get back up, did he realise something was seriously wrong with his legs. The wounds in his legs were not healing!

"What sorcery... is this...?" Atlas bellowed while he kept attempting to get back to his feet, but in vain.

"Sorcery? Sorry to disappoint you, but I didn't even use my mana." Ashton replied with a confident smirk, "It's just one of the abilities I have in my bag of tricks."

While Atlas thrashed his hands around, trying to force his gigantic body back to his feet, Ashton was formulating the next steps of his plan.

'Perfect. The aggravate skill is working like a charm. Although it can efficiently counter Atlas' healing, the damage done to him is still quite low. I need to do something about it.' Ashton took a deep breath to calm his nerves due to the adrenaline flowing through his body.

'It's a shame I can only use my claws to attack enemies while using Aggravate. If only I could use Aggravate along with Balmond, I would be able to deal a lot more damage.'

Aggravate's passive damage depended on the damage dealt in the first attack. Since Atlas had ridiculous damage nullifying ability, the damage Ashton's claws caused was minimal. In fact, he was surprised that he even managed to stop the bastard from healing.

However, if things kept proceeding like now, it would take Ashton a year to kill Atlas. That's assuming he wouldn't make any mistakes. Which was unlikely.

Ashton kept thinking of ways to deal a much more devastating blow to Atlas. That was until Seraph's crystal flashed before his eyes.

'People will call me a mad man for what I am about to do...' Ashton sighed while clasping his hands together, 'Let's do this!'

Fire erupted from the crystal. In an instant, the claws were on fire. Ashton had never thought of doing anything like this, but he realised since the Hellfire worked with Balmond, it would probably work with his claws as well.

He would have been unaffected even if his plan failed. But since he had fire immunity, Ashton decided to abuse it as much as he could.

With blue-black fire revolving around his claws, Ashton once again began his ruthless attacks on Atlas. However, he had lost the element of surprise, since Atlas now knew that his opponent could actually hurt him.

"Your resistance is futile. You had already lost the moment you lost your legs."

Ashton's face was the last thing Atlas saw before everything got shrouded in a red mist. Atlas couldn't do anything but lay helplessly there, unable to figure out the direction Ashton would attack him from. As usual, the blood mist skill was enough to confuse Ashton's enemies.

'He might be strong, but he is out of practice.' Ashton thought before lunging at him, 'Your rustiness and overconfidence have led you to your demise. Nothing else.'

Ashton mounted the giant and repetitively plunged his flaming claws within Atlas' chest. Atlas tried to swat him off with his hands, but Ashton's agility made it impossible for him to successfully land a hit.

"Come on! Die already you fucking fatass bastard!"

Ashton yelled while his claws dug deeper and deeper into Atlas' chest. Suddenly Atlas stopped trying to get Ashton off of himself. Instead, he focussed his efforts on escaping from there.

Atlas couldn't see Ashton, but he could sense the looming death over its head. At that moment, he gave up on fighting back and tried to run away from the monster of a human.

"Thinking of escape? Sure... I wonder where will you run to though? The cave is not big enough for you to hide for a long time. Either way, it's not like I'm going to let you go. Just wanted to quench my curiosity." Ashton sighed.

The predator had turned into prey, and Ashton wasn't going to let his prey get out of his hands. Not when he was so close to ending him.

Atlas, however, used whatever strength he had to lift himself off the ground. With the sudden movement, Ashton couldn't hold on and slipped off of Atlas' chest. Ashton was surprised but latched on to Atlas' retreating back.

A moment later, Ashton warped his legs around Atlas' waist, while his free arm grabbed onto his neck. With a swift movement and using physics to his advantage, Ashton managed to pin the behemoth to the ground.

It was Ashton's half-assed attempt to lock Atlas in a rare-naked choke. However, he had made a mistake. The Behemoth saw the opportunity and bite into Ashton's arm. It was over for the mortal now.

Atlas felt Ashton's grip weaken and waited to hear the screams as Ashton slowly withered away. But the wait never ended. There were no screams... just calmness. Until the grip tightened once again.

"How..."

"You are so predictable. I knew you were going to bite me, so I simply turned off my genes for a moment to take care of the wound." Ashton whispered into Atlas' ears, "You can keep biting my arm as much as you want. But you are dying, and that fact would remain unchanged."

Atlas bit into Ashton's hands a few more times, but the end result remained the same. Just like Ashton had stated.

However, the chokehold wasn't going to kill the undead. That's why Ashton improvised. Rather than grabbing his bicep with his other arm to complete the traditional chokehold, Ashton plunged his free hand straight into the behemoth's chest to keep attacking him over and over.

Aggravate's passive damage coupled with Seraph's flames was enough to slowly eat away Atlas' HP.

"No... my revenge isn't... complete... LET ME GO!"

Atlas thrashed his arms around for a while, before letting out a final cry of pain. Soon the behemoth stopped moving. Its limbs turned limp, falling sideways. Ashton's job was complete and so was the trial.

—

The trial has been concluded.

Official results: The Secret ending has been fulfilled. The participant wins by default. Since an impossible feat has been achieved, additional rewards would be provided.

Equipment: Grim Reaper's Scythe would be awarded as a special clearing reward.

The participant will be teleported out of the trial zone in: 20 seconds.

—

As soon as the notification appeared, all of the remaining undead turned to dust. Everything had been handled.

"Finally... it's done." Ashton mumbled and pushed the behemoth off of himself, before looking at him like the greedy gentleman he was, "Now what should I do with you?"

Chapter 340 All Eyes On You (1)

A few moments later, Ashton was teleported out of the trial zone. Similar to the last time, everyone around him was looking at him as if they had either seen a ghost or a mythical warrior. However, the surprised participants weren't the only ones waiting for him.

"He's here! Paramedics, please attend to him ASAP!"

Ashton heard someone yell. A moment later, various types of equipment were strapped to him while a few others were checking his vitals. Judging from the way they were behaving, it didn't seem like they believed he would come out of the trial zone in one piece.

"What is going on here?"

Something like this didn't happen to him when he cleared Hydra's trial. Then why were they going overboard this time around? Did something happen in his absence?

"Don't worry. It's just a standard procedure." Otiga's voice popped out of nowhere, "You have been gone for a while after all. They need to check if you have contracted a disease or something."

Ashton turned around to see her standing there in a nightgown. Not only her, everyone except the participants, security and paramedics were wearing similar attire. Till now, he hadn't noticed it was already night, and all the light the paramedics were throwing his way did not help either.

'It's night already? Damn, it took me a lot longer than I expected.'

Since he had entered the portal during the day, it must have taken him an entire day to clear the trial. Hydra's trial only took him a few hours to complete, yet a trial which was supposedly easier than that took him longer to clear. It didn't make any sense at all.

"Clear. Nothing's wrong with him. Nor did we find any foreign virus or bacterium on him. Still, I'll advise you to quarantine yourself for a couple of days. Just to make sure you're good."

After half an hour of tests and other medical procedures, Ashton was given the green light to go. Ashton looked around, he was expecting to see Anna there as well, but she was nowhere to be found.

'Maybe she was tired from her own trials. I should probably head out as well.'

"Mr Fenrir, do you have some time?" Otiga politely stopped him before he could leave.

Although Ashton wanted to hurry back to the hotel, he decided to hear Otiga out. Since someone as important as her was there to attend to him as soon as he was out of the portal, he could spare some of his time to hear her out.

"Sure, what is it?"

"This might not be the right place to talk," She replied with a smile, "Would you mind accompanying me to my quarters?"

Ashton was a bit wary of them. Especially after the stunt Leon and his sister pulled on him. But he also wanted to have a somewhat good professional relationship with Otiga. She seemed a lot more influential than anyone else he had met. getting close to her would certainly help him. So he agreed to her request.

[Aren't you trusting her a bit too much?]

'She is cool, I think. Also, it's not like I'm heading in blindly. If she or anyone tries to pull something off, I'll make them regret it for the rest of their lives. That is, for a couple of seconds.'

[You're getting way comfortable with the thought of killing someone...]

'Learned it all from the Xyrans... and probably the Precursors as well.'

[Touche.]

'This bastard survived!?'

Leon was ready to breathe fire the moment he saw Ashton... unharmed. Ursa's trial was considered to be one of the easier ones among the upper six trials. But it didn't mean everyone could conquer it. Even the monarch of the first seat decided not to try and clear the trial.

That alone spoke volumes about the trial. Yet, Ashton walked out of the trial as if he was walking in a park? The trial's difficulty wasn't a joke. Otiga had told him that much after her failed attempt to clear it, a long time ago.

That's why Leon was sure he wouldn't have to do anything in order to get rid of Ashton. The trial would do the dirty work for him. But he was wrong... even the trial wasn't able to stop the bastard.

To top it all off, what Otiga said to Ashton's harem of girls bothered him. On one hand, Leon was sure Ashton's inclusion in their ranks would be beneficial to them. Yet, on the other hand, he couldn't tolerate someone lower than him being immune to his ability.

He did not want someone like him to join their ranks as it would undermine his authority. The one thing he loved more than anything else.

'I shouldn't worry... one of these trials should lead to his demise.' Leon calmed himself, 'It's not like I can do something to him. Not with Lady Otiga keeping an eye on me.'

It took around 10 minutes to reach Otiga's 'quarters'. Normally Ashton would have called the place a mansion because that's exactly what it was. There were many guards and warriors patrolling around, most of them carried weapons but those with higher levels didn't. Their abilities were the only weapons they needed. Ashton quickly checked their levels and most of them were C-grade.

The next thing he noticed was even though they had different attires, the colour of the attire was the same... black. Trees and few other decorations were the only exceptions to this 'all black theme'.

Otiga did not speak a word till they entered the building. The guards insisted on using special cuffs to make sure Ashton could not access his inventory. But Otiga instructed them otherwise.

In her words, he was a guest there. Therefore, he was to be treated with respect and not hostility.

"Please don't mind the guards." Otiga casually replied.

"Don't worry, they were only fulfilling their duty." Ashton replied, "So what did you want to talk about?"

"I think you already know. I'd like to know more about the trial. What was it about-"

"So that you can go and clear it yourself. I see." Ashton interrupted her.

"That's the gist of it."

Ashton went quiet for a second, before smiling awkwardly. Otiga was a bit confused after seeing Ashton's reaction. She knew someone like him wouldn't give her the information for free. He was too smart for that. That's why she had already prepared to give him quite a few things to bribe the info out of him.

"If you want money or anything for that matter. I'm willing to help you out." Otiga stated the obvious but Ashton shook his head.

"Please don't misunderstand me." Ashton toned down his smile, "I can't give you any information regarding the trial, because the trial does not exist anymore. There's nothing more left to do there."

"Eh?"