

## **Zompiewolf 41**

### Chapter 41 - Whipped (1)

"Damn it! That no-name bastard took the weapon!" Rami, one of the twins yelled in rage, "I told you one of us should have taken the curse and the weapon."

"Shut up Rami," The redhead barked at him, "We can still get the weapon from him. All we need to do is to kill him. So stop barking like a dog."

"Nathan is correct," The second half of the twins said before yawning casually, "after all, that's what our plan was from the beginning. Our father even paid a huge sum of money to put us all in the same group, making this easier for us."

"Damn it, Rick! It was supposed to be a secret!" The red-head known as Nathan cursed once again.

And soon all three of them were busy cursing each other, completely ignoring the fact that their enemy was standing right there in front of them.

'I was afraid of taking on this bunch of airheads?' Ashton smirked before taking a good look at the weapon in his hands.

—

Item: Bone Whip

Type: Weapon

Damage: 100-133 HP per strike

Stats bonus:

>> Strength: +10 while equipped for use.

>> Deals 1.2x damage against Night Creatures.

>> Deals 2x damage against Werewolves.

Rarity: Uncommon

Description:

A bloodied whip made out of the bones of numerous night creatures who fell prey to its attack. A somewhat rare find and an effective weapon to fight against werewolves and night creatures. When in the hands of an expert wielder can cause havoc. One of the most preferred weapons to keep enemies at a range and attack them as well.

The weapon had been enchanted and imbued with unique abilities and effects.

Effect(s):

Attacking enemies using this weapon exposes them to Haemorrhage, making them lose 2% of their HP for the next 5 seconds. This ability has a cooldown period of 10 seconds (Ineffective on Elite beasts).

Grants the user a passive effect: <Stun>.

Whenever the user parries an enemy attack, the attacker has a 100% chance of getting stunned for 1 second. This effect has a cooldown period of 10 seconds. One target can only be affected by this skill 3 times in an hour.

Grants the user the active skill: <Cloaked>.

Temporarily increases the user's evasion rate for 5 seconds. Thus making it tougher for the enemies to attack the user down.

—

"This is quite a treasure..." Ashton mumbled slowly.

The damage of the whip was lesser than that of the twin blades as well as the stat boosts were not as high as the blades either. However, the whip more or less made up for it thanks to its passive and active effects. Stun and Cloaked were abilities that heavily complimented each other.

With Stun, Ashton could [Stun] attacking enemies and in case he failed to parry the attack, he could always use [Cloaked] to evade the strike either way. With these two skills coupled with his [Reflex] perk, he was essentially untouchable. Especially if the other examinees were on the same level as the three in front of him.

'Let's test them out, shall I?'

Without wasting a second more of his time Ashton leapt in the air and swung his whip to the nearest twin. All of them were so busy bitching about each other that by the time they noticed something was amiss, it was already too late.

The white bony whip wrapped itself around Rami's head and the next moment he was slammed headfirst on the ground. The stat boost provided by the whip might not have been much, but it was enough for Ashton to overpower them individually. After all, even with the curse on him, he was just as strong as the three of them.

"What the hell-"

The two remaining brothers blurted out simultaneously. But couldn't do anything else apart from that. Ashton's sudden move had startled them. Their minds could not produce a suitable counter for him in time. This is what happens most of the time when someone suddenly attacks a group alone.

It was in their nature to expect a pack to be stronger than a lone wolf. Such thinking wasn't wrong per se, but it was not valid all the time. Also, whenever one has attacked a group, the group would be shocked without fail, not by the strength of their attacker, but by their audacity to do something like that.

Ashton knew it very well as the mistress had taught about the basics of fighting even after being outnumbered. She did so, thinking Ashton might get attacked by the team of Vampire and undead that had been haunting Maddencreek.

However, this phase only lasted a second or two at max. This time could be either used to attack more enemies or retreat, depending on the situation. But Ashton being Ashton, running away from them wasn't something he would even entertain thinking about.

Thus, he decided to knock down at least two of them for good before the element of surprise wore off. Getting rid of two of them would make it easier for him to focus on the third. It was the best thing for him to do now. Theoretically, at least.

He threw the whip in the direction of the other twin. The whip, however, was not meant to target the twin, instead, Ashton was targeting the tree behind Rion. As soon as the whip wrapped itself around a sturdy branch of the tree, Ashton used the momentum to swing towards Rion with all his might.

A moment later, two feet were firmly planted on Rion's chest throwing him away and shattering his chest piece. At the same time, an announcement was made throughout the zone.

"Rion Marcello has been eliminated!"

It was the first elimination in the zone. However, Ashton was worried rather than being happy. This was the first announcement like that which meant...

'Shit!' he immediately turned around only to see that Rami was still in the game along with the redhead, 'Fck.... me and my hastiness gets me screwed every time!'

Chapter 42 - Whipped (2)

"Let's make sure this bastard pays for what he did to Rion." Nathan cursed under his breath before reloading his bow and firing another arrow towards Ashton.

Ashton ducked to dodge the arrow, but thanks to the curse, his movements were a bit sloppy. Even with his heightened sense, the arrow ended up grazing his shoulder. But that wasn't all. Rami wasn't sitting idle all this time either.

The moment Nathan had hurled an arrow at Ashton, Rami had rushed to attack him as well. After all, someone would not be able to dodge two attacks one after another, would they? Well, Ashton could have... if not for that prickly curse on him.

Ashton was hurt a bit by the arrow. However, the next moment a sword stabbed him in the exact same place as the arrow. And this time the pain was real.

"Oi Nathan! Aim well!" Rami roared at his brother, turning his face away from Arnold, "Our sync ability would only- what the hell?"

"I was wondering... why you hit me in the same place with such high accuracy..." Ashton mumbled through his gritted teeth, "So it was your sync skill, huh... not bad, not bad at all."

Synchronised skills were not easy to come by. At least that's what the Mistress had told him. Only a few people could learn to use these skills and even fewer could manage to execute them perfectly. There was no particular criterion that could be fulfilled to obtain these skills.

Some even said people are born with such skills and spend their life trying to master them. It went without saying that these skills were stronger than individual skills, but only when they had been perfected.

If not, well, then using these moves would only cause more harm than good. And by the looks of it, these brothers might not have perfected their sync skill yet. But that didn't mean Ashton could ignore them either.

The look on Ashton's face had turned from someone who was in pain, to that of a serial killer before hunting his prey down. A dark and grim look that would even make the toughest of them sweat.

The next moment, Ashton grabbed onto the sword as Rami repeatedly tried to rip the sword away from the former's grasp. However, no matter how many times he tried, Rami's efforts proved to be useless.

"Idiot! Let go of the sword and retreat!" Nathan yelled at the top of his lungs.

Rami nodded and tried to leave, but it was too late. Ashton pulled the sword out of his shoulder and threw it like a javelin towards Rami. Ashton had come here to enter the academy. But right now, he only wanted to see one thing... blood.

Before Rami or Nathan could even react, the sword had already found its mark... The sword went right through Rami's left thigh.

"Argh!" Rami let out a blood-curdling scream as he fell on the ground, blood gushed out of his wound as if it had been waiting to escape through his body for a long, long time.

"You bastard!" Nathan yelled at the top of his lungs.

The following moment another announcement was made. Rami had willingly given up and was no longer a part of the examination. As soon as the announcement was made, the watch and the belt fell off of his body, allowing Rami to access his inventory. He quickly took out a potion and emptied it with huge gulps.

The vial must have contained some sort of potion, as a few seconds later, Rami's wounds completely disappeared.

As Nathan saw Rami access his inventory, an evil plan entered his mind. A plan if it worked would have destroyed anyone in the competition and if it didn't work... well then fck.



"Rami, empty out your inventory right where you are. I want potions, weapons, accessories... everything!" Nathan ordered his brother who immediately understood what Nathan wanted to do.

Rami dropped everything he could before walking out of the zone. There was a rule that eliminated examinees could not attack the ones who had not been eliminated. But there were no rules stopping them from 'accidentally' dropping items in the zone as they left.

"You wanna play dirty? Fine by me." Ashton mumbled to himself.

\*\*\*

"Madam director! The Marcellos are playing around with the rules!" One of the teachers in the academy pointed out, "There is a rule that no eliminated participant can influence the outcome of the match in any way, shape or form. But Rami is clearly violating this rule!"

"I know about it very well, madam Rosefly." The director humbly replied, "These are indeed the grounds for disqualification. But... I want to see what, what's his name again?"

"Ashton, ma'am."

"Ah yes, I want to see what Ashton would do when forced to fight against overwhelming odds. Aren't you excited as well?"

There was a weird shine in the Director's eyes. One none of the teachers had seen in a long time. It was clear that the Director had taken a liking for Ashton... thus teachers could not help but feel sorry for him. This examination was not going to be easy for him, now that he was on the director's radar.

However, Ashton was not the only one who had caught her eyes. The director had picked one student from each zone to test their strength and mettle. If these people were able to make it to the next round and effectively to the academy, they were sure to be shown some preferential treatment.

Or maybe not. After all, everything depended on the director's mood. She had absolute power to do anything she wanted to anyone she wanted in her academy. Her blatant disregard for the twisting rules was just a small example of it.

She was not afraid of screwing over any noble family. Why would she? After all, she had support from all of the Five stars kingdoms and also the countess of vampires. One could say, she was the strongest being in Contingent.

"Show me what you are capable of, my sweet, sweet dolls!"

#### Chapter 43 - Overwhelming The Odds

Ashton was a bit taken aback by the fact Nathan was so blatantly breaking the rules and yet he was getting off without any punishment. But then again, he was from a noble family so Ashton wasn't all that surprised either.

'Looks like the director can be bought too. The more I live within them, the more and more I start to hate them.'

As for Nathan, he was busy sinking himself into the treasure trove. Weapons, potions, tomes. Everything Ashton knew about was there right in front of his eyes.

Ashton wasn't that big of a fool to wait around for Nathan to sort through the items. And now that Rion and Rami were out of the competition, they could not attack him. Thus, without wasting another moment, Ashton leapt at him.

However, the next second, Nathan threw a tome at him. All of a sudden he was shrouded in black smoke, compromising his vision. Nathan must have wanted to take advantage of this situation and shot a continuous barrage of arrows into the smoke.

There was no way the bastard was getting out of there without being eliminated or heavily injured. Or so Nathan thought.

As the smoke began dissipating, Nathan's eyes were left wide open with horror. he had expected to see a broken, bloodied and defeated Ashton in front of him, but there was no one there. Not a single soul. As for all the arrows he had shot, they were stubbed into the tree behind the smoke.

"What the hell?" Nathan blurted out, but that was all he could do.

As a result of not holding back, Nathan was out of arrows and only had a small blade on him. But more importantly, his target was nowhere to be seen. Which wasn't a good thing to say the least.

Frantic, Nathan began looking all around him. But the result was the same. His opponent had disappeared.

"That coward did a runner... no worries. I will catch him eventually and put an end to him." Nathan shook his head and walked up to the tree to retrieve the arrows.

Unsuspecting of what was waiting there for him. Ashton wasn't someone who would run away from a fight. Hell, he fought two bloodsuckers all alone and managed to overwhelm them, who were known as werewolf hunters.

Overwhelming the odds was some kind of a joke to him at this point. A joke just like he was about to make one of the arrogant bastard right below him.

As Nathan pulled out the last arrow from the tree, he felt something rustling above. There was no time for him to load the arrows, so he quickly pulled out his dagger. But he was too slow. He didn't know what happened, but a moment later, he found his head firmly planted on the forest floor by someone.

"You! How did you-"

Back when Nathan threw the smoke bomb at Ashton, the latter truly lost his sight but not his calm. Rather than panicking and messing up, Ashton quickly switched to using his [Perception] ability.

He knew Nathan would try to finish him off why the smokescreen was still active and thus used the smoke to his advantage. With the help of the whip, Ashton was able to climb onto the nearest tree mere moments after the smoke bomb exploded.

There he waited for Nathan to show up as he knew he would have to retrieve his arrows if he wanted to continue hunting other players. Nathan thought he was playing Ashton, but it was the other way around this entire time.

"Shush! If you keep talking, I just might have to rip your tongue off." Ashton hissed into Nathan's ear before forcefully taking the dagger out of his hands.

Ashton used the dagger to hit and break the chest piece, forcing Nathan to get eliminated.

"Nathan Marcello has been eliminated!" The announcer announced, "Ashton Bismark is on a killing spree! Additional points would be provided to the one who takes him out! The Location of the leading examinee will be provided to other contestants at an interval of 15 minutes."

Everyone in Zone 5 was stunned. Someone had just managed to score back to back eliminations just like that. That too all by himself!?

"The hell? Why do you have to announce it like that?" Ashton cursed in an annoyed tone.

He was hoping to listen to the first part of the announcement, but the latter part was completely unexpected. After all, not everyone in the zone would know about him... and essentially, the announcement had painted a target on his back.

His vision was still compromised and he was able to win against Nathan just because he knew how he would behave in a certain situation. Also, [Perception] wasn't all that effective either as he had already been fooled once by the Marcello brothers while depending on the ability alone.

No matter how Ashton tried to see it, it felt like someone was desperately trying to screw him over. At this point, he heard a cackle coming out of Nathan's mouth. It was obvious that fcker was happy. Ashton would have been happy if he was in his place too.

"Looks like you are as good as dead, you filthy common bastard." Nathan snarled, "But don't worry. Your troubles won't end just by getting eliminated from the competition. The Marcello family will make your life miserable outside the academy as well-"

As Nathan kept blabbering on and on, Ashton couldn't keep his cool anymore and kicked him with all of his strength. Which was enough to dislocate Nathan's lower jaw, rendering him incapable of speech.

"You talk too much." Ashton shrugged his shoulders and began walking away. He couldn't stay there for long as everyone would probably start hunting him soon.

The situation was so painful that Nathan wanted to scream. But he couldn't even do that. His jaw was stuck at an odd angle. In his pain and rage, Nathan tried to attack Ashton even though he knew he wasn't supposed to...

But by this time, the curse finally lifted off of him and Ashton was back to his full strength. He could sense Nathan chasing after him, so he did what any sensible person would do. He stepped out of the way, letting the mad man bang his head on the tree and effectively letting Nathan knock himself out.

"All bark and no bite? Interesting.. Now I need to get rid of this blindness before someone finds me."

## Chapter 44 - The Hunt (1)

The examination for survival had suddenly turned into a competition to see who could hunt this Ashton person first. Some were after the additional points they could receive by eliminating him. While the rest of them were worried about what would happen if they encountered him.

It was safe to say that none of them wanted to get eliminated and letting Ashton do as he pleased, was something they could not risk. For all they knew, Ashton might already be preying on them and could eliminate them at any given moment.

But that wasn't the only reason for their hostility. Ashton had just eliminated a group of nobles, which left the rest of the nobles enraged. They have heard about the Bismark name and knew it very well that it belonged to the half-sister of the current prince.

It went without saying that the Mistress did not have a good reputation among the spoiled noble brats. She was detested by everyone in the noble families, except a few who were close to her. Since Ashton shared the same last name as her, the young masters were quick to decipher identity and came to an agreement amongst themselves...

"We will eliminate him first. Let's put everything else on hold." One of the nobles announced to the fifty or so noble who had gathered there, "Although it's a shame not all of the purebloods shares the same view as us. I can understand their perspective. Qualifying the examination is important as well."

This young man was named Lucas Wring, the sole heir of the Wring family who had friendly relation with the Marcellos. Whose family members Ashton had just eliminated. His waist-length white hair was proof that he had not lost a battle in a long time as according to their family tradition, the Wring never cut their hair off until and unless someone defeated them in battle.

At least that was what the others believed. The Wrings were truly a despicable family. They never lost a battle before not because of their strength or valour, but simply because they never fought with anyone.

Instead, they use to manipulate others into doing their dirty work for them. To them, nothing mattered as long as they were able to achieve what they wanted and Lucas was no different from his ancestors.

Having been gifted in the art of speech, Lucas was someone who could turn a villain into a hero and vice versa just by inciting the crowd around him. That was the reason why other nobles on the same level of strength as them, rarely if ever went against them.

No one could mess with them unless they had the overwhelming strength to destroy their entire family. But anyone who had the strength to do so never bothered with the kinds of them. After all, why would someone waste a missile to kill an ant?

Either way, Lucas was successfully able to incite the crowd to hunt Ashton. However, he himself had no intention of participating in the hunt. He was a master of manipulation but when it came to fighting, he was much weaker than any of them.

Thus by making others waste their time looking for Ashton, he had cleared himself a path to earn the points that those fifty nobles would have earned on their own. In other words, while these nobles would be busy hunting Ashton, Lucas would be looking for alternate ways to gain points and qualify for the exam.

On top of that, since his family was close to the Marcellos, no one would ever question him for doing this. In the eyes of the others, he was a true friend who simply wanted to avenge his fallen comrades.



The nobles who did not answer his call for help knew very well that Lucas had an alternate motive. So, rather than wasting their time on nonsensical things they decided to focus on the competition itself.

'Fools... all of them are a bunch of fools and nothing more.' Lucas could barely conceal his grin behind his mask of innocence, 'However, I am thankful for their foolishness. If it hadn't been for their gullibility, I was surely not going to pass this survival exam. Hehe.'

"Alright then, listen up!" Lucas roared at the top of his lungs, "Let's divide ourselves into groups of five. That way we will have enough strength to confront him and cover the maximum area as well. Are there any questions?"

All of them shook their heads in unison.

"Alright then, let's hunt him down!"

\*\*\*

Meanwhile, on the other side of the map, Ashton had blended himself in with the surrounding. His blindness was slowly wearing off. Since the item did not belong to the examination, its effects were slow to disappear, unlike the curse he got affected by after opening the chest.

'At least I got some of my vision back.' Ashton thought, 'It will still be a problem if I encounter another trio like before.'

In his state, he was worried if he would be able to fight two examinees simultaneously, let alone three. However, his problems didn't end there. He couldn't stay in one spot for long as once 15 minutes passed, the rest of the examinees would get informed of his location.

Thus not only he was forced to fight in a state of partial blindness, but he had to run and hide as well. It almost felt as if someone was plotting against him. First, Nathan was suspiciously allowed to use forbidden items and then the announcement after eliminating him practically screwed him over.

Moreover, none of these things was mentioned in the 'rulebook' that was fed into their watches. To say that Ashton was pissed would have been an understatement. At first, he thought the director would be fair with her treatment of everyone. But hell, he was wrong.

'Oh, she's fair alright. But only to those fcking nobles!' Ashton cursed the director, 'If things keep going on like this, I might have to use the other genes as well.... but for now let's keep it as a last resort.'

## Chapter 45 - The Hunt (2)

"Oh... looks like he is not pleased with this development." The director smiled, "Too bad, his problems are only going to get bigger from here on out."

"Is it time?" A brunette, brown-skinned woman politely asked.

The director nodded. The rest of the teachers had no idea what these two were talking about. But then again, the director hadn't been one to reveal all of her cards to anyone. Even to her most trusted comrades.

"Professor Meena, I assume you have only prepared trained night creatures?" The director mumbled as the artificial sun started going down, marking the second phase of the test.

"Yes, madam director. They have been trained to 'hunt' and not to kill. The examinees might get injured, but none of them would die." Meena diligently replied.

The director hadn't informed the academy's best beast tamer why her beasts would be needed for the exam. But Meena trusted the director more than anyone in her life. So she did what she was asked to without a moment's hesitation.

Similarly to Meena, the director had given some of the other professors different tasks as well. But it was done in a way that they would have never been able to guess why she needed all of their help. On top of that, none of the professors was aware of the involvement of other professors in the exam.

With that being said, the Director was planning to use all of their resources to make sure only the toughest and most resilient werewolves among the examinees would be able to attend the academy.

'I can already see some rising stars among these younguns.' She thought while looking at the eight examinees she had taken a liking to, 'It would be a shame if some of them were not able to pass the exam.'

"It's done, madam director." Meena informed her shortly, "The beasts would soon enter the zones."

"Excellent!" The director clapped in excitement, "Let's see who will break first... make the announcement now! Huhu!"

\*\*\*

"Attention all examinees! The Survival exam will now enter its second phase. For the next 24 hours, you will be shrouded in darkness with only little light available to you." The announcer announced the new set of rules, "As you must be aware of, with darkness comes night creatures. Thus, some of such creatures will be released in your respective zones as well."

"You have two choices. Either hide and wait till the exam is completed or put your life in danger and defeat as many night creatures as possible. However, as an incentive, you will be given points according to the number and type of monster you defeat. Good luck and may the best survive!"

"Things got a bit interesting..." Ashton couldn't help but smile.

Darkness was his friend more than anything else. His was suffering through a stat debuff thanks to the sun shining over their heads. But now that it was going to be dark for the rest of the duration, he could finally start attacking rather than what he had been doing so far.

It also made sense why all of the weapons they had received through the chests and by looting others had bonus damage against the night creature apart from werewolves.

'On top of that... I no longer need to depend on [perception]. The darkness of the night will help me out.'

Without wasting another moment, Ashton opened his info tab to check his stats.

—

Name: Ashton Fenrir

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

Status: Zompiewolf

Class: Unassigned

Title: [Defiant]

Age: 16 years

Gender: Male

Grade: F-tier (Evolution is possible)

Affiliation: Werewolves.

Level:

Werewolf Level: 9

Vampire Level: 7

Zombie Level: 5

Stats:

HP: 1900/1900

Damage: 32

Armour: 22

Stealth: 18

Stamina: 34

Agility: 21

Intelligence: 8

Nature:

Bratty

Abilities/skills/spells:

Vampire Skills:

>> Mid-Grade perception

>> Skill Absorption

>> Transformation (Vampire)

Werewolf Skills:

>> Enhanced Agility

>> Transformation (Werewolf)

Zombie Skills:

>> Transformation (Zombie)

Current Vampiric skill points: 7

Current Werewolf skill points: 3

Current Undead skill points: 4



---

Ashton's training had paid him off well. But he was still stuck being an F-grade being. Although he still had a lot of room for growth, he needed to figure out a way to evolve before he reached the bottleneck.

This was the primary reason why he wanted to attend the academy. He believed someone there might be able to help him with this. After all, the entire purpose of the academy was to nurture young talents and make them grow to the best version of themselves. If... they were valuable able to do so.

In order to prove his worth to them, Ashton needed to qualify for the academy with flying colours. And thanks to the second phase of the exam, he would be able to do just that.

\*\*\*

Meanwhile, on the other side of the zone, the night creatures had started to appear already. One of the groups that Lucas had incited was the first one to encounter the beasts and things did not end well for them.

They wanted to be the first ones to hunt the night creatures... but they became the ones who got hunted down. But they weren't the only ones. Mere minutes after the announcement was made, over two dozen examinees had been eliminated reducing the number of survivors to half of what it was when the exam started.

The night creatures tamed by Meena were trained to knock their opponents down and leave them be. These wolf-like creatures were one of the easiest night creatures to tame, but not the easiest to defeat, especially thanks to their pack mentality.

They were the ultimate prowlers and were named just that. Prowlers. They were creatures who had adapted themselves to the art of hunting using the darkness around them. Although their levels weren't as high as that of the examinees, those of them who had no experience fighting them would not be able to defeat them head-on.

The entire purpose of using prowlers in the test was to make the examinees understand that while the levels and attributes were used to measure one's strength and capabilities, it wasn't absolute and even an insect could make werewolves cry tears of blood.

### Chapter 46 - The Hunt (3)

Releasing the prowlers also served another purpose. Since it was a test of survival, the first idea that would enter anyone's mind would be to hide. This would allow them to stay safe and pass the exam without fighting or anything that would harm their chances of passing the exam.

The other Examinees might not have been that skilled to locate and hunt down all these examinees who were interested in playing hide and seek. The prowlers, on the other hand, were creatures who had evolved to hunt others.

After being properly trained, they were able to hunt down those whose armours were still active. You see, the chest plate which was provided to the examinees was designed to leak a special scent recognisable only to the prowlers.

Thus as long as the chest plate was active, this scent would keep leaking out of that and hence help the prowlers to locate the examinees without an issue. As a result, those who thought they were safe by hiding in bushes or trees or even abandoned structures scattered around various zones, were no longer safe.

"This batch of examinees..." The director shook her head in disappointment, "Why are these idiots so weak!? Pathetic!"

The director, much like the professors was not in a good mood. Although hunting down Prowlers was completely optional, she had thought the rewards for doing so would attract at least some of them to try and fight the night creatures. But all of them were busy running away from them as if they could outrun Prowlers with their miserable levels!

In her eyes, it wasn't that the prowlers were stronger than the examinees. But simply that the examinees were a bunch of weaklings. Especially the examinees of zone 5. Most of them started to run as soon as they saw or got a whiff of the prowler's revolting scent. Even though the prowlers they were using were the weakest of the weakest night creatures.

As the exam proceeded, the professors along with the Director were losing hope for those in Zone 5... however, before they completely gave up on the zone, an automatic announcement was made.

"12 Grade-F Prowlers have been eliminated! Additional points will be rewarded to Anna Swan."

"Show me the footage of what happened!" Director's eyes that were about to lose the excitement she had earlier, were once again shining brighter than the artificial sun.

As the Crowcams scanned the area they saw a girl standing in the middle of a burned down forest clearing. The field below her feet had been charred beyond recognition and so had the corpses of prowlers scattered around her.

As the cameras got a closer view of her, the director along with most of the professors immediately recognised her. Well, not her but her lineage.

Standing at 5'7", this brunette girl had a pious feeling in her flaming crimson eyes as if she had a desire hidden deep within them. Her shoulder-length hair was tied in a high ponytail. As for her physique... it was clear she rock the heart of more than just the boys around her.

There was a small tattoo on her angular face, right below her chin which was more like a family insignia than a random mark. Apart from that, there wasn't much difference between her and the others. That is if one were to count her flaming fists out of consideration for her being unique.

"The Swans... always having a blast." The director let out a crooked smile, "Things just got a bit more interesting. On another thought, Professor Meena, are you alright?"

"There is no need to worry, Madam Director." Meena said in her usual emotionless voice, "Those prowlers were only Grade-F. It wouldn't matter to me in the slightest if they are killed."

"That's good to hear because I don't think the others are going to stop now either."

The Director's words confused the professors. They knew that Swans had strong control over their magic and thus it was no surprise when Anna killed a dozen of them in one go. But they were not expecting others to achieve such a feat.

There might be some strong examinees in Zone 5. But all of them doubted there would be someone else who would be able to take down a dozen or so prowlers by themselves. However, their doubts were shattered a moment later when yet another announcement was made...

"14 Grade-F Prowlers have been eliminated! Additional points will be rewarded to Ashton Bismark."

"Looks like our sleeping underdog is back in the game."

The Director got so excited that she started rubbing her hands together like a gambling addict who was on a roll. Thanks to the two of them, the other examinees realised that it wasn't impossible for them to defeat the prowlers and they finally went on offence rather than running away from danger.

\*\*\*

"My name is Ashton Fenrir, not fcking Bismark!" Ashton cursed under his breath as he withdrew his blood-drenched whip. However, as he did that another notification popped up in front of him.

—

You have received 60% Exp by killing a <Lvl 8> Prowler.

Current Werewolf Level: 10

You have levelled up! Exp limit has been reset. All wounds have been healed.

Current Werewolf skill points: 10

Current Exp: 0%

—

However, that wasn't all. The mistress had already informed Ashton about how the Blessings worked. Once a being hit level 10 on the evolution tree. They were given a choice. A choice that would inevitably shape the future of that individual and right now, Ashton had to make one such choice.

—

Please choose one of the following [Skill Page] as a reward for reaching level 10. Remember, the choice you make is irreversible and choosing a certain path will unlock the skill tree for that path which can be expanded by using Skill points. Each skill can evolve into unique abilities and attributes hence make your choice carefully.

[Crimson Claws]: When using werewolf claws, deals 1.2x more damage to enemies already injured by the user.

[Accelerated Healing]: Boosts up your healing. Can be used to heal minor injuries on will.

[Wolf's Mark]: This skill allows the user to 'mark' someone. The marked target cannot hide from the user when within a kilometre's radius. Up to 5 creatures can be marked using this skill. Deals additional damage to the marked enemies while also boosting damage and agility by 10% when around a marked creature.

---

"This is.... awesome!"

#### Chapter 47 - Playtime's Over (1)

It took a while to analyse the pros and cons of the skills he was offered. But in the end, Ashton decided to go with the skill which would complement his fighting style the best. As he did that, a piece of paper, or a 'skill page' as it was referred to, got deposited in his inventory.

Ashton took out the frail-looking paper and tore it in half. Just like that, he had learned a new skill. It felt a bit weird that it was so easy, but Ashton wasn't complaining. In fact, he liked this system quite a bit.

It was much easier for him to learn and upgrade skills this way, rather than torturing himself to upgrade the efficiency of the passive skills as he had been doing till then.

'Let's take a look at the skill again, shall we?'

---

>> Wolf's Mark: This skill allows the user to 'mark' someone. The marked target cannot hide from the user when they are within a kilometre's radius of each other. Up to 5 creatures can be marked using this skill at once. Deals additional damage to the marked enemies while also boosting damage and agility by 10% when around a marked creature.

Grade: Mid

Cooldown: 10 Minutes

Active Duration: 3 Minutes

Activation Radius: 70 meters (Your targets must be within this range to get marked.)

Condition to upgrade the skill: Kill at least 10 beings while the skill is active or use 15 skill points to level this skill up.

Current Werewolf skill points: 10

—



'The skill is already at Mid grade? That's a first. I always thought you had to learn a skill from Low-tier and slowly climb up to the highest tier.' Ashton smiled as he went through the contents of the skill, 'This will go along well during the hunt in the night.'

The number of targets that could be affected by the skill was just perfect as well. The others were trying to hunt him in packs of five and he could mark five of them at once. Thus, in other words, once he used this skill to mark a pack of werewolves, there was nothing they could have done to save themselves.

It was about time for the hunted to become the hunter. Ashton was in no mood to hide anymore and set out to find prey while hunting down the prowlers who relentlessly got into his way again and again.

However, he wasn't the only one who was busy strategising his next move. Lucas was busy coming up with one as well, after all, his initial plan got screwed over thanks to the introduction of prowlers into the exam.

"Shit Shit shit!"

"Lucas keep it down! The prowlers will find us!" One of Lucas' teammates cursed him out.

The four of them had a bit of combat experience, but not much. That was the reason Lucas had made them follow him. As for the four of them, they knew Lucas had something planned to qualify for the next round. Thus they went along with him without asking him any questions.

But now that the things had turned this way, they were reluctant to tolerate his crap anymore. If it wasn't for the retaliation from his that they would have suffered, the four of them would have abandoned Lucas long back.

"It wasn't supposed to be like this..." Lucas said while biting his nails, 'I was going to take away all the hidden chests and secretly use these fools to earn points for me. But thanks to that damned director all of my plans have turned into ruins!'

Lucas looked around him and realised in that abandoned structure he was all alone. He had four others accompanying him, but he knew they were no longer his 'friends'. In fact, if they could they would have already thrown him out to fend for himself.

'I have to plan my moves carefully or else these bastards would throw me in front of the prowlers as a distraction... Think! Think! Think!'

"Hey look! There's someone outside!" One of the lackeys whispered to the rest, "It looks like he got caught by a pack of Prowlers."

"Looks like he has quite a few items on him as well." Yet another one of them chimed in.

Just that single sentence was enough to grab the attention of the others. Items... that was one thing they were in desperate need of. The whole reason that they had been avoiding Prowlers like plague was because they did not have enough proper weapons to confront the night creatures.

But now they had a chance... as long as they could eliminate the one examinee in front of him, all of his treasures would be theirs to claim.

"Let's go and take that bastard down. We can take care of the prowlers after that." This time it was the leader of the three lackeys who spoke with confidence.

However, before they could take a single step, Lucas stopped them. To him, it was clear that these four idiots did not have an ounce of a brain between themselves.

"You should leave using the brain to someone like me." Lucas reprimanded the four of them, "Why the hell do you, idiots, want to rush out right now? There are about a dozen prowlers out there and he is all by himself. Can you see where I am going with this?"

The four of them stared at each other with perplexed eyes. Not a single word that Lucas had spoken had entered their head. The look on their faces was evidence of it.

Lucas sighed and continued, "Let him fight the prowlers. Either the prowlers will eliminate him, leaving his items behind. Or the man would get tired after defeating the night creatures. That's when we will make our move."

"So either we will have to fight the remaining beasts or the injured examinees. It'll be a win for us either way.." The leader mumbled to himself, "I knew you would make good use of that head of yours! Haha! Let's go according to your plan."

Chapter 48 - Playtime's Over (2)

'Weird... I swear I could sense some people here other than these prowlers.' Ashton thought to himself while fighting off the prowlers.

Ever since his [Perception] evolved into High-grade thanks to how heavily he had been depending on it, Ashton was able to sense the presence of others around him. He was using this to locate and hunt down other groups.

So far he had managed to hunt down a couple of five people teams. It was thanks to that, he had obtained quite a few useful things, like a cloak called 'Nemean Hide'. This armour along with the whip was the best set of items he had obtained yet.

—

Item: Nemean Hide

Type: Armour

Defence: 100-133 HP per strike

Stats bonus:

>> Armour: +10% while equipped for use (increases with user's level).

>> Reduces 2x damage taken from Night Creatures.

>> Reduces 0.5x damage against Weapon attacks.

Rarity: Uncommon

Description:

An armour said to be made of the leather of one of the only known Grade-A night creatures found in the dungeon of Might. While alive, this lion slew more than 300 werewolves who were unfortunate enough to encounter it while dungeon diving. The second prince of Ashvana, the strongest Empire of the eastern world and the leader of the kingdoms belonging to 5 Stars slew this gigantic lion after a battle that lasted for weeks.

The weapon had been enchanted and imbued with unique abilities and effects.

Effect(s):

Protects the wielder from negative effects such as Poison, Haemorrhage, Stun, and Paralysis.

Increases all of the user's existing resistances by one grade (when equipped).

Grants the user the active skill: <Aggravate>.

Temporarily increases the user's armour by an additional 20% for 5 seconds. Up to 15 targets around the user can get affected by this skill. Affected individuals are unable to use any abilities (If they have a low level than that of the user) or the effectiveness of their abilities reduces by 60% (if they are at a higher level than that of the user) for the duration of the skill.

This skill can be activated 3 times a day.

Cooldown: 2 Hours

Activation Radius: 5 metres

—

Although the armour did not have as many effects as the Bone whip, the couple of effects it had were more than enough to allow Ashton to move freely across the zone without any worries. It was because of these options, eliminating the examinee who had it equipped was tough. Even though the examinee didn't possess any exceptional talent at all.

That was all because of the armour's active skill. Ashton had to quite literally beat the crap out of the one using the armour to eliminate him. It was just to show what the armour could have done in the right hands... which it was.

The Prowlers were no match for Ashton anymore as a result, even if he got hurt, he did not receive much if any damage at all. While the Prowlers were getting frustrated.

However, as fun it was to fight the Prowlers, they weren't the reason why he was there. Ashton wanted to hunt down the other examinees and not waste his time on worthless beings.

'Wait... did I just get lured in a trap?' Ashton thought as he snapped the neck of yet another Prowler, 'Damn... what a worthless trap. I think it would have worked against me if it wasn't for the armour.'

The realisation that he might be in a trap alerted Ashton. All of a sudden, Ashton was on the lookout for anything out of the ordinary. It only took him a couple of seconds to find an abandoned building... with light coming out of one of its broken windows.

'Either they are hiding there, or it's another trap...' Ashton smiled in a sinister manner, 'Why don't I lure them out instead?'

With a plan formed in his head, Ashton jumped into action. He intentionally dropped his guard around the Prowlers to make it seem like he was being overwhelmed. But not enough to eliminate him, just enough to let him get injured.

An injured Examinee, with additional rewards on his head and loaded with items that can decide the course of the exam? That would be the perfect bet for them. A bait that even a fool wouldn't leave behind.

If Ashton wanted, he could have easily gotten rid of the prowlers like he had done before. But he didn't want to scare those hiding idiots away. So he waited... while slowly getting rid of the Prowlers and as he

had predicted, those fools came rushing out of their hiding place as soon as there was only one Prowler left behind.

'Come one, come all...' Ashton let out another smile, while patiently waiting for them to get close enough.

\*\*\*

A few moments earlier...

"He's down! Charge out now!" Lucas yelled at his lackeys who immediately took out their weapons.

Their greed for points had blinded them to obvious things... but not Lucas. That's why he stayed behind while the barbarians ran ahead of him to 'claim' their prize. He couldn't pinpoint it, but something was off about the man who had been fighting the prowlers.

Initially, the man had jumped in between the Prowlers with confidence that would have rivalled even the strongest warriors on their continent. It felt as if the man knew exactly what he was doing, but then all of sudden the prowlers started overwhelming him?

It made no sense, at least to him. Unless... that person was aware of their presence and wanted to lure them out instead.



'Those fools can do the dirty work themselves. If nothing goes wrong, I'll show up and take the best items using my family name.' Lucas thought, 'And if things went south... I can always dump those fools and make a run for it while there's time.'

Survival was the most important thing. It didn't matter how many dirty tricks one might need to use.. As long as survival was ensured, nothing was right or wrong.

### Chapter 49 - Playtime's Over (3)

'Only four of them? I swear I sensed at least 5 different people...' Ashton thought when he saw four brute-like people rushing towards him.

There was something off, but well, eliminating four of them simultaneously should give him enough points to maintain his lead. As long as he qualified for the second round of the exam, he wasn't going to complain about anything.

"Rip him apart!"

Ashton heard one of them roar at the top of his lungs. They were enthusiastic, but their courage was misplaced.

'They have a pack mentality as usual. Their items look shabby as well. Maybe that's why they came rushing out of their hideout wanting to claim the items I have on me for themselves. Let's teach them a lesson.'

"Wait! Something's wrong-"

One of the lackeys realised that the way the last prowler was attacking the examinee wasn't normal. But before they could realise what was happening the corpse of the prowler was hurled in his direction, knocking the wind out of the lackey's lungs.

"He baited us out! The prowlers were dead already! Fall back!"

—

Armour Skill: [Aggravate] had been activated.

Number of targets affected: 4

The affected targets are found to have a lower level than the user and can not use any abilities for the next 5 seconds.

—

"What in the world!? I can't use my dash skill!"

"I can't either!"

"Fck! I knew it was a bad idea."

Panic and chaos ensued among the four of them. However, little did they know it was just the beginning of Ashton's attack.

—

You have activated [Wolf's Mark].

Number of targets affected: 4

You will be able to see a crimson wolf mark hanging over the head of the affected targets. When you're close enough to a target, your damage and agility will be increased by 10%. This effect can be stacked up to a maximum of 50%.

Current Boost: 40%

—

Ashton wasn't the only one who could sense the increase in his powers. The four lackeys were also aware of the fact as they recognised the wolf mark hanging over their heads. All of them knew what the mark signified, but none of them had ever seen the skill in action.

Luckily for them, Ashton was kind enough to give them a first-hand demonstration of exactly what someone with that skill was capable of doing.

"Get a hold over yourselves! We can't run away nor hide while we are marked." The leader of the lackeys tried to gain some control over his panic-stricken gang, "The only way for us to get out of this mess is to get rid of that man. He might be strong but he can't take down all four of us simultaneously!"

'Are these idiots blind?' Ashton could not believe their misplaced and naive way of thinking, 'I just killed a dozen Prowlers in front of them and they think they can get me? What kind of drugs are they running on?'

At first, it seemed as if they were just going to try and run away. But as soon as their leader mentioned his intentions, all of them did a complete 180 and drew their weapons out. They were not going to go down without a proper fight. The next moment, all of them had Ashton surrounded.

'Trying to blindside me with your attacks so I wouldn't know where you're attacking me from?' Ashton smiled, 'That would have worked against others, but my perception skill gives me an unfair edge over you.'

All of them simultaneous drew a bunch of throwing knives and hurled them towards Ashton, who thanks to his enhanced agility, blocked all of them. Why did he block the attack instead of dodging? He wanted to trigger the whip's ability and get rid of them as soon as he could.

[You have been stunned.]

This message appeared in front of the ones who attacked Ashton... but only three of them had the notification pop up in front of them.

A second later, Ashton heard someone's footsteps and turned around to realise that the one leading them was running away. That bastard had tricked his own party along with Ashton. He did not have any intention to stay there and fight. He just wanted others to think that he was and use them to get as far away from Ashton as possible.

'You can run, you can hide. But you can't escape. Not so easily.'

Ashton was in no hurry to chase after one of them when he had three of them in front of him. Also, how far did the kid think he could run away? Ashton would catch up to him in no time.

But first, without wasting any more of his precious time, he destroyed the chest pieces of the three of them, before chasing after the fourth of them. He couldn't see the person, but he could still see the wolf mark looming over his head.

'The more I see it work, the more I realise I made the right choice during skill selection.'

Using the whip as a grappling hook, Ashton swung his way over to where the man was... inside the abandoned building. There when was greeted by a welcoming sight.

"I knew there would be five of you here." Ashton smiled as he saw two people hiding inside the building, 'So, shall I get rid of both of you?'

Seeing Ashton their petrified Lucas. Due to the darkness, the Lackeys had not been able to recognise the man whom they were going up against. But in the room filled with light, it only took the two of them a glance to recognise the one who had been leading in the contest.

"Fcker! Couldn't you find us anyone easier to hunt?" Lucas slapped the lackey hard across the face, "Why did you anger someone as great as a Bismark?"

Lucas then immediately turned to face Ashton whose face had been plastered over their watches thanks to the killing spree he was in.

'Look, it's an ass-kisser... why am I not surprised?' Ashton shook his head as Lucas started throwing false words of greatness in his way.

But there was one thing even Ashton could not deny. Lucas had a way with words. If Ashton didn't know what Lucas was trying to do, he would have accepted his false praises without thinking about it.

However, Ashton Lucas was trying to talk his way out and decided to get rid of him first. Yet, before he could even do anything about it, an announcement was made. The exam was over due the most of the candidates being eliminated...

'I thought there were still around 60-70 of us remaining?' Ashton was surprised but soon his surprise turned into shock when he saw the leaderboard.

—

Zone 5 leaderboard:

First Place: Nicole Grunta [90 points]

Second Place: Nick Grunta [84 points]

Third Place: Ashton Bismark [83 points]

Fourth Place: Anna Swan [67 points]

Fifth Place: Kristin Hodgson [54 points]

Sixth Place: Alanah Cross [52 points]

Seventh Place: Isabell Moon [45 points]

Eighth Place: Selin Cain [33 points]

Ninth Place: Micheal Bonowich [14 points]

Tenth Place: Lucas Wring [13 points]

Please leave the arena and collect your suitable rewards. Thank you for your participation in the Annual Academy Entrance Examination and congratulations for making it into the academy!

—

Ashton had achieved his primary goal but still, he was having a hard time believing that within a matter of seconds, not one but two examinees got past him in the rankings. Just who were these Gruntas?

Chapter 50 - Reward Time (1)

Back outside, they were greeted by sunlight shining right over their heads. And with the light came Ashton's stat nerf. All of his stats were reduced by 20% in presence of sunlight. It wasn't as bad as before but the fact that the nerfing depended on percentage and not a fixed amount was a bit problematic.

But Ashton had other things occupying his mind. Although Ashton was pretty bummed out that he did not get the first position. The more he thought about it the more he realised it was for the better.



Him getting the first place would have gotten him some unwanted attention and that was the last thing he wanted. Especially if he did not have anything to hide his identity as a Zompiewolf, like a mask or something.

On top of that, he was already getting a bit of attention thanks to him sharing the Mistress's last name. Gathering even more attention would not have done him any good. Especially when the matter involved the noble families.

The lowkey he stayed the better hidden his secret would be. But it seemed like things would not go the way he wanted them to. As Lucas was on his tail.

'I didn't even kill the bastard and yet he is following me... this is not good.'

Ashton had decided to treat the exam as an exam and not take things the hard way. But it appeared the others did not harbour the same emotions as him. He could feel the hostility of the qualified examinees towards each other.

This was to be given because most of these families had some sort of history with one another and now that all of them were members of the academy, it was time to assert dominance.

"Please wait here for a few moments. You can step out and collect your rewards when your names are called." One of the attendants uttered before rushing away leave the ten of them in an open courtyard.

As soon as they were left alone, people started chattering amongst themselves. But there was one thing common among their talks... Ashton Bismark. All of them wanted to know who he was and what was his relationship with Mera Bismark, who was also known as the Mistress.

All of them except 4 or 5 of them were busy speculating about the origins of this unknown werewolf who was leading in the exam before Nicole and Nick Grunta left him behind. But speculating was all they could do, after all, the mistress herself was shrouded in mystery.

At this time something weird happened. Suddenly two people from the crowd made their way towards Ashton. As they did that, the others got awkwardly silent. Ashton doubted whether they were even breathing or not.

He looked at their faces and realised who they were. Since they were twins clad in bloodied black clothing, Ashton guessed they were the Gruntas.

Nick was the first one to Approach Ashton out of the twins, with extended gloved arm. Their oddly white skin was reflecting the sun as if they were made of a mirror. Both of them had black hair, matching their clothes and accessories and an equally expressionless face.

Nick had his hair unstyled while Nicole had her shoulder-length tied in a ponytail. But the thing which got Ashton's attention the most was Nick's muscular build. He had innocence on his face just like most of them, but his 5'9" body did not match the look on his face at all.

Nicole was around 5'5", and her physique was much like an assassin. Just with a look, Ashton could tell that she was most agile among the twins. Apart from the difference in their heights and physique, the two looked the same, which was obvious as they were identical twins.

"You must be Ashton Bismark. It was a pleasure to fight against you." Nick said with an almost authoritative tone.

Ashton shook his hand because why not? The man didn't seem hostile and well, since Nick 'defeated' him for the number one spot in such a short time frame. Thus by shaking his hand, Ashtn wanted to show him mutual respect like Nick was... or so he thought.

The moment Ashton was about touch Nick's arm, Nicole grabbed Ashton and ripped his sleeve apart. Ashton was taken aback by this action and tried to get back, but this time he was stopped by Nick who had firmly grasped his hand. Not letting him get away.

"Just like I thought... another filthy mutt." Suddenly Nick's expression changed from uncaring to disgusted.

The same happened with the rest of them. All of their eyes were filled with disgust, except for a couple of them. And Ashton knew exactly why. Mutt was the slang term for those who were born as humans but eventually were forced to turn into a werewolf.

Thus, it was given that in a place filled with nobles, Ashton's presence was going to be frowned upon. However, being related to the mistress did not help his reputation either. The slave mark on Ashton's hand was something he would have to live with for the rest of his life... Just like all of the other slaves.

"The fck are you doing?" Ashton finally snatched his hand away and transformed them into werewolf claws.

He wanted to acknowledge the Gruntas, but had he known it would turn out to be like this, he would have kept his distance from them. However, turning his claws upon the Gruntas propelled the others to go into action as well.

Within seconds, all of the nobles were standing beside the Gruntas, while Ashton stood in front of them alone.

'So much for keeping it under the radar... I couldn't have picked a nicer time to gain unnecessary attention. Damn it!'

"One against nine. You think you can overcome these odds?" Lucas grinned like the bastard he was while the other laughed along.

"You talk a lot for someone who was about to wet his pants just by seeing me. But then I guess talking is the only thing you can do." Ashton fired back.

"You filthy mutt!" Lucas cursed under his breath. What Ashton said stung him even more as he knew every single word that came out of his mouth was true. The only reason he qualified was his luck and not his competence.

He knew getting physical with them wasn't a good choice. But it should be fine as long as it is a verbal bout. However, there was someone else who wanted to offer a piece of her mind.

"Who said it was 1 vs 9? I never joined your side.." Anna Swan, the flaming wizard proclaimed as she joined Ashton's side, "Because of idiots like you, all of the nobles get hate from others. Do you not know

how tense our relationship with the vampires is? And yet you foolishly waste your time asserting dominance on unnecessary things?"