

Zompiewolf 431

Chapter 431 Beast Horde Of Occuna (2)

"But the man told us to rest~" Vimur yawned while complaining, but Ashton had none of it.

"Train the soldiers, and then you can sleep as much as you like." Ashton barked before turning toward the rest of them, "All of you E and D graders, you'll have to train for two more hours. That is if you don't want to get demoted."

Ashton thought he would hear more whining and complaining, but to his surprise, no one said a word. His soldiers were more than willing to train harder and improve their grades, as no one liked being weak.

Obviously, they needed help to achieve that; that's why Vimur and Laihud were in charge of training them to be decent warriors.

"What are you going to do?" Laihud politely asked.

"I'm going to train Bella." Ashton replied, "She's been having trouble with some techniques, so we'll work on that."

"Oh, I'm sure you'll be working on something," Vimur winked.

"I hope one day your brain starts working as well."

Saying so, Ashton and Anna left the group and headed towards the forest. The training was an excuse to keep everyone else busy while the duo did what they had arrived to do in Occuna.

Sadly, the Occunian soldiers were manning all exits out of the city. Since the beast horde could attack at any moment, no one was allowed to enter the forest.

Although the soldiers said it was for their safety, Ashton thought otherwise. No one was allowed entry to the forest because they didn't want anyone inciting the beasts to attack when they weren't prepared.

No matter the reason, if the beasts attacked the city now, the result would be devastating.

"Hm, if that's the case, what are they doing outside?"

Ashton pointed at the GW mercenaries who were roaming outside the fortress walls.

"They have explicit permission from the supreme commander." The soldiers replied, "Now, go back inside if you don't want any trouble."

"Your hospitality is amazing," Anna chimed in, "no wonder we drove you, idiots, out of the earth. Let's go, it's no use talking to them."

[Shots fired! I repeat SHOTS FIRED!]

Ashton was not expecting Anna to react with such ferocity. But when she did, he couldn't help but smile.

'She's got a mouth a hundred times deadlier than mine.'

[Yeah, for once, I'm glad I'm not inside her-]

'Watch your words, bastard.'

[Sorry, my bad.]

Unfortunately, the soldier did not find Anna's remark as hilarious as Ashton did and grabbed her shoulders as the duo was retreating. While Ashton could stop him if he wanted to, he did not move from his spot. Why? Because Anna was more than capable of handling idiots like him on her own.

'What a moron.' Ashton thought while Astaroth began saying prayers for the guard's unfortunate soul.

The next moment, the soldier was thrown right outside the gates he was protecting so eagerly. A single punch is all it took for Anna to neutralise the threat.

The loud noise of the soldier banging on the doors attracted much attention. A couple of them rushed to check on the guard who was flung away, while the rest stared daggers at Ashton and Anna.

They obviously didn't know the whole story and assumed Anna was in the wrong just because she was a werewolf. Talk about being racist. The pedestrians were angry and immediately took to arms. Although Ashton thought their reaction was cute, he did not like the idea of a clan of Hyenas challenging a pride of lions.

"It doesn't look like the guards have any plans of stopping them," Anna mumbled.

"You beat one of them and still expect them to maintain order?" Ashton smiled, "Well, it's not like we can't handle them."

"Want me to burn them to a crisp?" As golden ember began circling around her fingers, Anna suggested, "Or do you want to chop off their limbs instead?"

"Calm the fuck down, woman!" Ashton was surprised by Anna's readiness to kill people, "I knew leaving you with the twins was a bad idea. What did the three of you do on your trip?"

However, their amusing conversation was cut short when one of the guys rushed to swing a heavy stick at Anna. Unfortunately for the man, the blow was stopped by a skeleton twice as tall as the one using the stick.

Within moments, the entire crowd was trapped by the skeletons on the outside and inside. The moment they saw armoured skeletal soldiers rising out of the ground, all of their fighting spirits evaporated.

Even the uncaring soldiers realised the graveness of the situation and rushed to control the situation before all hell broke loose.

Fortunately enough, Ashton didn't need more skeletons to join the ranks. Otherwise, the place would have transformed into a graveyard before the beast horde appeared.

"Alright, tell me whether you are a bunch of fools or racists?" Ashton remarked, "We are mercenaries employed to help you out of a crisis, and yet you think it's acceptable to attack us?"

After a lack of response from the crowd, Ashton spoke up again.

"Alright, let me rephrase my words. We are mercenaries called to take care of something that you fools, can't, and you think you can take us on? I don't know about you, but humans back on earth, do have brain cells. So use those if you can, and think, people, think!"

[Xyran's research was accurate, humans are dumbasses.]

'It appears the Xyrans are closer to humans than previously thought.'

[...bitch, I was on your side!]

'It doesn't matter whose side you're on; I'll roast you whenever I can. That's the rule of law.'

[...]

Eventually, Ashton called the skeletons back, and the crowd immediately dispersed. As soon as they did, Ashton heard the sound of someone clapping.

"It's rare to see a fellow mercenary use words instead of weapons," The man said, "You are a unique one amongst us, Mr?"

Ashton looked at the brown-skinned man and knew it wasn't his first time facing beasts. There were countless scratch and bite marks spread throughout his body, but the unique thing about him was his eye patch and the triangular skull tattoo he had on his shoulder.

This wasn't the first time Ashton had seen the tattoo, and it was the logo of one of the many blacklisted mercenary groups. However, this particular tattoo belonged to the same group that kidnapped Anna back on planet Euphoria.

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"Hm, it seems you aren't very talkative." The man said, "It's good for business and makes you feel all mysterious and strong, but if I were you, I'd drop the act in front of a senior-"

Without speaking a word, Ashton leapt at the man. Whether the man was unprepared or weak, Ashton's punch landed on his face sending the former on a trip outside the city walls.

Everyone stared at Ashton as if he had a personality disorder. Just a moment ago, he was trying to stop unnecessary fights, but now he had started one himself.

Even Anna was confused. Unlike Ashton, she had no idea why Ashton was so furious all of a sudden. Anna did not remember who kidnapped her because she was drugged and couldn't see their faces, let alone a tiny tattoo. In her eyes, the fourth and the second seat holders were the ones who kidnapped her.

As for the man's lackeys, they weren't going to stay still while some punk attacked their boss. However, a moment later, they were too scared to move when they saw two shadowy figures crawl out of Ashton's shadow.

"Your command, master?" Sven and Raven simultaneously mumbled.

"Protect Anna till I'm gone," Ashton replied in his emotionally void voice, "If anyone makes a move, do with them whatever you wish but make sure they die."

Anna got scared looking at Ashton. For him to react this way, the man from before must have done something terrible.

"Ash, what's wrong?" She softly mumbled so that no one else but Ashton could hear her.

"Oh, nothing much." Ashton was momentarily back to being sunny as he replied, "That fucker owes me a debt, and I'm settling it today."

Having said his piece, Ashton spurted out his vampiric wings and followed the man from before. No one dared to move in his absence, not the crowd or even the soldiers.

Sven and Raven were undead soldiers blindly loyal to their master. Ashton's mood affected them, and since he was pissed beyond the limit, so were his servants.

Back outside...

"C-Cough, cough...!"

The man with the eye patch slowly tried to regain his balance. His plans were in disarray, not because of his lack of planning but because the information given to him by the clan master was entirely off the mark.

"How could a C-grade brawler throw a punch like that?"

The man struggled to get back on his feet while coughing up bloody saliva. Being a member of the Cult of Cosmos, he knew everything that happened on planet Euphoria a few months ago.

The Metal sharks required a succubus for some experiments, and when the cultists found one on Euphoria, they decided to collaborate with the sharks and kidnap her.

However, due to the foolishness of the second and fourth seatholders, not only did they fail, their branch of the cult took a hit they were still trying to recover.

That's why when the man saw Ashton and a succubus back in Kernel tower, they planned to take back their lost honour by kidnapping the succubus for good. After all, taking down a C-rank brawler was no big deal for them.

Sadly the cult's 'latest' information appeared to be outdated, and now his life was in danger.

"Chet, I need to get away from here as soon as possible."

The man was about to make a break for it with Ashton landed in front of him with a loud thud. His eyes were colder than they had ever been, and just looking at him was like staring at the Grim reaper.

"That symbol on your shoulder, which group does it belong to?" Ashton asked while slowly approaching the man.

"I-I don't know what you're talking about, man! You must have mistaken me for someone else. But since I'm kind and y-you most likely don't want trouble, how about we- ARGH! YOU PSYCHOTIC BASTARD!!!"

Ashton hurled another [Wind Blade] in the man's direction, cutting yet another slice off his left ear.

"I have no interest in hearing your rambling," He said, "If you want to live, then answer me or else I wouldn't hesitate before killing you."

"Kill me? W-Who will give you your answers then?" The man yelled while holding onto his ears.

"So, you do know something. That's all I wanted to know; you can die now."

Ashton aimed for the man's neck and shot another [Wind Blade], but this time, it was deflected at the last moment.

"As much as I would love to see some bloodshed, let's leave it for when the beasts appear, shall we?"

A muscular, ruddy-skinned man with dark blue eyes was standing between Ashton and his prey. The man was also carrying a blue blade which he probably used to deflect Ashton's attack to save the bastard's life.

"I'm Nico Vercetti, the Supreme Commander of Zanna, and as you can see," Nico mumbled while wiping sweat off his face, "I had to stop my training in the middle to stop two paid mercenaries from killing each other."

Nico then stared down both Ashton and the guy with the eyepatch before turning back to Ashton, "Although, it looks like you were the only one doing the job correctly."

[Ashton, he's an A-Grade warrior, calm down before you do something stupid.]

However, Ashton paid no attention to Astaroth's words.

"I don't think this matter concerns the city," Ashton replied in a calm yet firm way, "That man pay for what-"

"I'm afraid you don't understand the situation you are in, kid,"

Suddenly, Nico's bubbly personality was replaced with hostility. At the same time, Ashton was surrounded by six more A-grade humans. All of whom had their weapons pointed at him.

Nico continued, "Every mercenary we have employed is under the city's protection, including you and him. If you have to settle your differences, do so after finishing the job we are paying you for."

Nico then left, and the others followed their leader, but not without giving Ashton a piece of their mind.

"Normally, I would have killed the one causing a ruckus to teach everyone a lesson, but I'll make an exception, as it would be a waste to kill a strong guy like yourself." The bald man wielding dual energy blades remarked while others laughed.

"Supreme commander doesn't give second chances all that often," A woman approached Ashton as the group left, "Being chivalrous is good, but not to the point of being stupid. See you tomorrow. As for you, Cyclops bastard, get out of here before I kill you myself!"

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Once Ashton entered the gates, everyone stared at him as if he was a psychopath. But no one spoke a word against him and soon dispersed to get on with their lives.

The eye-patch guy, or Cyclops as he was called, threw a smirk in Ashton's direction before making a hasty retreat. It was as clear as the skies above that this wasn't the last time they would see each other.

All this while, the Supreme commander's team kept an eye on Ashton's movements.

"What happened?" Anna placed her hand on Ashton's shoulder, but he just shook his head.

"Not the right place to talk about it." While recalling Sven and Raven, Ashton mumbled, "Just some idiots got in the way. Let's go."

Anna was still confused by Ashton's sudden outburst, but she knew it wasn't the time to push him for answers. After all, he had a habit of not troubling her with unnecessary troubles.

In the meantime, the team members who subdued Ashton assessed the boy with attentive eyes. While they did not give a crap about Cyclops, Ashton was of great interest to them because of his recent feat.

However, after seeing them, they had trouble digesting the thought that Phantom had lost to someone like him.

"For being so proficient in Necromancy, that kid is quite strong." The woman from before remarked, "But not strong enough to defeat the Silent Assassin."

"I agree with Qalea. That boy is weaker than my seventh wife." The dual wielder laughed, "I can't see someone like him beating Phantom."

"Your wives beat you, though?" A small girl indifferently remarked.

The rest of the team restrained themselves from commenting, but not for long. Since the mercenary association had confirmed that Ashton fought and survived Phantom, it was clear the boy had some trick under his sleeves that helped him, and Nico wanted to know what it was.

"There's more to him than meets the eye. Tell that half-breed bastard Arno to keep a close eye on him." The skinny man said, "For now, let's prepare for tomorrow's operation."

When Ashton and Anna returned to their quarters, everyone could sense something was off. Vimur and Laihud dismissed training and rushed inside to get the story.

"Good, I was about to call you." Ashton mumbled while pointing at the seats in front, "I have something I'd like to share."

Vimur and Laihud stared at each other. Although they trusted Ashton enough to follow him, they knew little to nothing about him. Hell, they didn't even know his real name, so the fact Ashton wanted to open up to them about something was entirely unexpected.

However, they did not waste any moment in joining Anna, who unequivocally was just as confused as them. Once everyone was stelled down, Ashton told them everything.

He didn't reveal his name to the tank and healer, but he told them about what happened on Planet Euphoria. Even Anna was a bit surprised at the events that followed her kidnapping, as she had been unconscious through most of it.

The more Ashton talked, the more enraged Vimur got. Even Laihud, who was well known to keep his composure no matter the situation, was having a hard time keeping his emotions in check. Finally, when Ashton was done narrating everything, they realised why Ashton lashed out at strangers.

"I think I know which group they are," Laihud broke the silence, "Based on their tattoos, it's the Cult of Cosmos. Simply put, they are an organisation that works with various terrorist organisations for mutual benefit."

"Everyone knows what they do; however, due to a lack of sufficient evidence, they are nothing more than a mercenary faction in the eyes of intergalactic law." Vimur chimed in, "A load of cosmic shit, that's what they are, in my opinion."

"But, they have a fucking tattoo on their body," Anna said, "That should be enough to take action against this cult or whatever it is!"

"It's not a crime to get a tattoo," Ashton shook his head, "Even if they are caught, the cult can say they do not have any relations with the criminals and be done with it. As for the tattoo, anyone can get their body engraved with stupid shit."

Frustration was all over their faces; sadly, there was nothing they could do about the cult. However, Ashton wasn't going to let the matter go so quickly.

Cyclops was possibly the only key that would reveal why they were after Anna, and he wasn't going to miss it because of some mentally disabled 'Supreme Commander' and his warning.

"What do we do now?" Laihud asked.

"You guys don't agonise yourselves regarding the cult. I'll handle them." Ashton replied, "Vimur, tell the guys to stay away from those cultists once the beasts appear and focus on completing the job. Laihud, you'll be in charge of keeping an eye on everyone. Bella, you'll focus on burning those creatures while staying hidden from vision."

He continued, "I'm sure those bastards will pull some shit tomorrow. If we have to beat them, we'll just have to pull something bigger than they can."

"The Supreme commander might not like it," Vimur pointed out, but it only made Ashton laugh.

There were a few reasons why Ashton did not fight with Nico. First, he was his employer for the time being and getting into an altercation with him would only hurt the faction's reputation.

Secondly, he had an army backing him up, so it would not be wise to fight him head-on. The other mercenaries might join his side and make things more difficult for Ashton.

Lastly, Nico would have a moral advantage over Ashton and the Ghosts as he was fighting for his people and country while Ashton, a mercenary, would be fighting for money and rewards. Hence, people throughout the galaxy would believe Nico's words or his.

However, Ashton could quickly get rid of most of the reasons with ease.

Once chaos breaks out, it would be every man for himself. Nico and his army would be divided and too busy to think about the safety of the mercenaries, unlike what Nico said to Ashton's face earlier.

During that chaos, maybe a beast or two would take care of the cultists. After all, beasts are unpredictable and can do anything they please. That way, no one could blame Ashton for mistakenly tripping over something and stabbing Cyclops while protecting himself.

As for Nico's moral high ground, no one would want to associate with someone who employs galactical terrorists for help. For obvious reasons, Ashton wouldn't be the one to reveal that information.

However, no one could stop the news from 'accidentally' getting leaked to the media, especially if that source were someone as renowned as Eula, who already had a beef with terrorists. No one would doubt her for a second, making sure Ashton had a way out if things went south regarding Nico.

"I sure hope that supreme commander doesn't get in my way," Ashton smirked, "unless he wants to commit a career suicide."

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The next day arrived, and everyone gathered for the debriefing. With the mercenaries at the centre, the army from Occuna had surrounded them. At a glance, it felt like the mercenaries were being taken hostage, and were prepared to get sacrificed to calm down the raging beasts.

The only thing was that none of them was carrying weapons, or else the mercenaries would have wiped the floor with them.

After a few more minutes of waiting, Nico finally arrived with the rest of his team. Unlike the last time Ashton saw him, the supreme commander was dressed in armour, befitting his stature.

"Firstly, I would like to show my gratitude towards you brave mercenaries who answered our call for help," He said, "Your support in such a grave situation is something the people of Zanna would never forget. That said, I'm not going to lie and say all of us will survive this trial of the gods."

As he said that, a live map of the forest was displayed in front of them. Ashton immediately noticed that something was off. The horde's size was much larger than they had been told while accepting the job.

The murmuring around him showed that he wasn't the only one to notice the discrepancy. At that moment, Ashton realised why the guards were stationed around them.

"This cunning son of bitch." Ashton mumbled under his breath.

"Don't worry. I got a reply from Eula and Otiga." Anna reassured him, "The plan has been set in motion. The second this fool tries to stab us in the back, they'll take action against him."

Ashton nodded and focused on the quarrel between Nico and some mercenaries.

"Do you take us for fools?" The man roared over the crowd of murmuring voices, "The size of that horde is more than ten times what was mentioned in the contract!"

"I know how you feel," Nico interjected, "however, just like you, we received this information just an hour ago."

'I'm sure you did,' Ashton scoffed.

A person would have to be a complete moron or have been completely charmed by Nico to believe his words. Ashton's [Heartbeat Sense] had already confirmed Nico was spouting lies left and right.

It was highly likely that the Ocuunians were well aware of the horde's size and knew the mercenaries wouldn't help them if they revealed the truth.

So they decided to fool everyone into thinking that the horde of regular size, which was about a thousand beasts, when their numbers were more than ten thousand at the very least.

"Lying to the mercenary association, they sure are quite bold," Ashton mumbled.

"But the association verifies the job requests like these before issuing them," Laihud replied.

"Not necessarily," Vimur chimed in, "They only do it for fairly new clientele. However, since countries and cities throughout Occuna get attacked bi-annually, they likely took their word for it."

Ashton nodded. Although he knew the mercenaries would feel wronged by the association, Ashton understood why the association decided to save resources by unnecessarily sending people on Occuna to confirm the legitimacy of the same job request over and over.

At the same time, if any mercenary made it off the planet and reported Nico's betrayal to them, things would be over for Nico and Occuna altogether. After all, the association would blacklist them, and they wouldn't be able to hire legitimate mercenaries again.

"So that's why he decided to have us surrounded by the guards," Ashton mentioned.

"These bastards do not intend on letting us go back," Anna concluded Ashton's words.

"Once beasts are repelled, they can report us 'Killed-in-action', and no one would ever know the truth of what happened to us. These sly bastards!" Vimur gritted his teeth but kept his voice on low.

At this moment, the army men surrounding the mercenaries threateningly took a step towards them. At the same time, Nico continued, "Sadly, since the contract binds you, you can not leave until the first phase of the job is completed."

"Bullshit!" The man spat on the face of the soldier next to him and pushed him out of the way, "I don't care about the rest of you, but I'm not tolerating his BS anymore-"

Bang!

Following the resounding gunshot sound, the man fell to his knees while staring at the gaping hole in his chest. No one could comprehend what happened there.

They all turned around to see Cyclops had shot the man down and walked up to join Nico on the stage. At that moment, everything became obvious to Ashton.

Why had Nico requested help from the cult, and why had he rushed to protect Cyclops from getting killed? Occunians and the Cult had been in cahoots all this time and played the mercenaries like fools.

"It's been a long time, brother!" Cyclops proudly proclaimed while hugging Nico.

"Indeed it has been," Nico replied, smiling before leaving Cyclops to take charge of the 'debriefing'.

"Why the long faces? Do you think I'll kill you all? No way~ I'm not that kind of a man. But I will give you a way out of this mess." Cyclops said while laughing, all the while pointing at Ashton.

"Anyone who kills him and brings that succubus to us would be allowed to leave. However, if you decide not to fight, I'll feed you to the beasts lurking around the city walls!"

Ashton's soldiers immediately formed a perimeter around him and his lieutenants. Although Ashton was touched by their action, it was unnecessary. The mercenaries, excluding Nico's soldiers, outnumbered them 20 to 1. It was unfair... For the mercenaries and the cultists, that is.

Ashton broke the makeshift barrier and calmly walked out in front. Nico couldn't help but raise his eyebrows when he saw Ashton's calm expression. It was almost... frightening.

"I'm not here to beg for our lives or to tell you not to attack us," Ashton had the widest smirk on his face, "Do what you want to. I won't blame you for trying. But I would like to tell you something.

"Firstly, no matter your decision, they plan to kill all of us. Without a shred of doubt. Secondly, I'm somebody even someone like the Phantom couldn't kill, so take that information and do what you will."

"And last but not least," Ashton said while opening the gates of [Valhalla] behind him, "anyone who raises their weapon against us dies. That's my word."

Chapter 435 You Should Have Known Better

"What is this!?"

Numerous people exclaimed the moment the dead army walked out of [Valhalla]. The skeletons were frightening enough, but what followed was even worse. The aura of death flowed through the endless portal along with Ashton's shadow generals.

Since Ashton had levelled up quite a bit recently, the growth of his shadow generals had also skyrocketed. By looking at them, the mercenaries understood why Ashton acted so bold, even in the face of death. He had outnumbered them since the beginning!

"Your command, master."

All his summons knelt to greet him, but most surprisingly, Atlas had decided to join them for the first time. However, now wasn't the time to look surprised.

With his back turned to them, Ashton pointed at his team and said, "If anyone dares to take a step towards them, send their heads flying."

"Understood."

As soon as Sven said that, the skeletons surrounded everyone in the area. The message was clear, if the Ghosts weren't going to survive, neither were the rest.

Celeste raised a shadowy barrier to protect the Ghosts while also prohibiting the rest of them from escaping the carnage that would come in the form of the beasts. At the same time, a bunch of skeleton mages helped her reinforce the barrier to improve its sturdiness further.

Ashton wanted to test the barrier and launched a punch at it with all his might. His knuckles began to bleed, but the barrier remained unscathed. Nico would have a hard time breaking it, let alone the beasts.

Raven surprised Ashton the most. While inside [Valhalla], he didn't idle around; he took some skeletons under his wing and taught them the way of the assassins. Watching a small number of hooded skeletons with daggers was a cute surprise.

On the other hand, Atlas stood beside Ashton with his warhammer sling over his shoulder. Although Ashton didn't know what caused the change in Atlas, he was happy nonetheless.

"Aren't we going to fight?" Vimur was confused.

,m "Believe me, we will." Ashton calmly replied, "But not just yet."

With the preparations completed, all they had to do was wait for the beasts to do their dirty work. Once Nico, Cyclops and their men had been weakened enough by the beasts, Ashton would put the final nail in their coffin.

Nico was an experienced warrior and knew he was at a disadvantage. It wasn't the first time he had crossed paths with a necromancer, so he thought he would quickly take care of Ashton.

However, his calculations were drastically off the mark. Ashton wasn't unlike any other necromancer he had seen, and judging him like one was something he would have to pay the price for.

Although Ashton followed the same tactic of using the number to his advantage, that's where the similarities between him and any other necromancer ended.

Ashton's summons were unlike any other Nico had seen before. While the skeleton soldiers Nico had fought before would flail their swords around, hoping to hit someone, Ashton's summons were built different.

Not only the skeletons had specific roles they filled, but Ashton's undead summons were comparatively just strong as their master.

"Tsk, we underestimated that bastard," Cyclops mumbled while staring daggers at Ashton, who was still smiling from ear to ear.

"We wanted to use the horde to our advantage, but the plan backfired on us." Nico replied, "We might be strong, but we can't handle the beasts and the bastard one after another."

Despite his backstabbing ways, Nico was still loyal to his people and thus wanted to protect them from the beasts. However, there was no guarantee that Ashton and his army wouldn't attack them from behind if he focused on taking care of the beasts.

Being sandwiched between two deadly forces was the last thing Nico wanted for him. Also, Ashton might destroy the city as 'revenge' if he was killed.

After all, he was a mutant, and the animosity between them and the humans ran deeper than the most grievous wounds. Nico had to do something to un-fuck the situation.

"How long will it take for the cult to arrive?" Nico asked Cyclops.

"A week, at least." Cyclops begrudgingly replied.

"Then that's enough time to prepare for them."

"What do you-"

Ashton couldn't help but raise his eyebrows at the surprising turn of events. Out of all the scenarios inside his head, he never thought Nico would stab Cyclops in the back.

Cyclop's lackeys were too shocked to do anything. Using that to their advantage, Nico's team slaughtered them. Once that was done, Nico walked up to Ashton and offered his hand.

"I hope we can temporarily put our differences aside and get rid of the horde first," He said unapologetically, "Let's not punish the innocent for my misdeeds."

Ashton looked at Anna, who shook her head. Vimur and Laihud both had similar reactions, and they were right. If Nico could betray Cyclops without a second thought, he wouldn't hesitate before doing the same to them.

Ashton nodded in Celeste's direction, who immediately lowered a portion of the barrier. To everyone's absolute horror, Ashton accepted Nico's offer by shaking his hand.

"What are you doing!?" Vimur yelled in absolute horror.

"Relax," Ashton replied, "I know what I am doing."

"You made the right choice," Nico smiled, "You are more humane than you look."

Saying so, Nico turned around to leave. However, Ashton still had fingers firmly wrapped around his hands.

"What are you doing?" Nico angrily asked.

"You should have known better than to get this close to a vampire," Ashton whispered in Nico's ear before baring his fangs, "It's just been a while since I had a taste of human blood."

Nico's team saw what was happening and immediately rushed to protect their leader. However, it was too late. Ashton had already dragged Nico inside the barrier as Celeste closed it.

The soldiers kept attacking the barrier with all their might, but they couldn't do a thing to protect their beloved supreme commander and only watched in horror as Nico flailed his arms to push Ashton away.

Sadly, a vampire's venom had a 100% fatality rate for humans. But since Nico was an A-grade being, the poison wasn't enough to kill him, but it was enough to paralyse him, allowing Ashton to do his job without any disturbance.

"Let... Go..." Nico barely mumbled before everything went black in front of him.

[Do you want to resurrect the selected being?]

"Yes," Ashton replied before wiping his bloodied mouth, "I can't let him go without fulfilling his wish of fighting the horde, can I?"

Chapter 436 Master Of Death

Necromancers were failed by-products in the form of living beings that couldn't properly utilise the magic around them.

That was the general consensus amongst the species living throughout the galaxy. They weren't off that mark either, as most of the necromancers only bothered to learn curse spells and, at most, raise a bunch of undead to support them.

However, most curses they used were easily countered with the help of basic healing abilities. It was rare to find a necromancer or a dark mage, as some called them, who could cause severe and lasting damage to anyone.

The combination of advanced technology and the easy availability of healers almost made necromancers useless. That was one of the primary reasons why Nico had his guard down, despite seeing how strong Ashton was just a day ago.

In the end, his negligence and overconfidence became the reason for his death. Being an A-grade being also made Nico a bit arrogant, which bit him in the ass later. At that time, Nico's team could only be enraged. This wasn't the death someone of his calibre deserved.

Their emotions were already all over the place, but once they saw Nico getting up, they thought he miraculously survived and were filled with joy. Sadly, that wasn't the case because a moment later, he was kneeling in front of Ashton just like the rest of his summons had moments ago.

Their supreme commander was gone. The man in front of them was nothing more than a twisted doppelganger and nothing more.

"How could you!?" The dual-energy sword wielder yelled at the top of his lungs, "Killing him using treachery wasn't enough, so you decided to defile his corpse?"

"I don't think I have fallen enough to be lectured by backstabbing bitches like yourself." Ashton shrugged before walking to the edge of the barrier while the new shadow soldier closely followed him.

"There's a saying back on earth, I don't know whether you people remember it, but it went like, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. Your leader wanted to kill me, so I killed him instead. How is that wrong?"

By this point, Ashton was inches away from the man, who subconsciously jumped back. The Zompiewolf had done a number on them by killing the strongest man in the city so effortlessly.

Being pleased with the fear in their eyes, Ashton retreated to finish the job as the resurrection ceremony was incomplete. The shadowy figure of Nico was eagerly staring at him like a dog expecting pets.

"I know, I know. You want a name, right?" Ashton asked, and the shadow nodded like the cute little puppy it was.

Seeing their leader in such a pitiful state broke whatever resolve the Occunians had to fight back. When they left earth, their forefathers had sworn not to ever feel the humiliation of defeat again, especially at the hands of a mutant.

However, history was repeating itself. The humans have been defeated once again, and this time their defeat was more humiliating than before. At least, that is how they felt at the moment.

"Considering your treacherous ways of living, I should give you a name which reflects that," Ashton mumbled while scratching his chin, "Dolos, that's how you'll be known from now on."

"Thank you... Master." Dolos gleefully replied.

Ashton immediately used [Detection] on Dolos to review his information. Based on the stats, Dolos was somewhat superior to Atlas. However, his skills could have been better.

Overall, he was an excellent addition to the team. The shocker came when Ashton noticed Dolos's class.

"Shadow Tyrant? What the fuck even is that?" Ashton mumbled.

[I have known my fair share of undead, but this is the first time I have heard of something like this.]

Ashton expected some pop-up to emerge and quell his doubts, but sadly, nothing happened. However, there was a more important thing that immediately stole away his attention.

—

The synergy effect is activating...

Conditions fulfilled!

Master of Death (Epic Synergy): Whenever five or more Undead beings gather close to their master, all necromancy abilities receive a buff.

> The level of Skeleton soldiers is increased to match the lowest level among summoned undead. Specialised skeletons share their battle IQ with that of the undead summons.

> The User can call forth up to 20 zombies to aid in battle from [Valhalla]. The level of the zombies is half the level of the user. (Undead genes must be active for this ability to take effect).

> Storage size of skeletons in [Valhalla] is increased to 450.

> The user cannot make more undead soldiers until a Lich is summoned.

—

[Fuck Dolos, focus on this!]

Astaroth's excited voice was enough for Ashton to know he had hit the jackpot. The lowest-level undead summon had to be Celeste, but even she was at level 76.

Keeping the synergy effect in mind, Ashton essentially had an army of C-grade skeletons at his command. Most of whom would share battle IQ with Atlas and Sven. Summoning Zombies was a decent bonus as well.

The only issue was... The Lich.

According to the Synergy effect, he could no longer make an undead summon for himself until he summons a Lich. Sadly, the method of summoning a lich was unknown to him.

[Oi bastard, why do you keep forgetting about my existence?]

"You know how to summon a lich?"

[No, but you have something that could help. Open your inventory.]

Ashton was confused and not in the mood for one of Astaroth's pranks. However, since he did not know anything about the topic, he trusted Astaroth's words.

[See, I told you I had something for you.]

An old book was glowing within his inventory titled the Grimoire of Death. It was the same book Astaroth picked from the Eastern Palace after passing the Forgotten's witty trial.

[If anything can help you, that's it.]

"Congratulations on doing the right thing for the first time in your life."

[Yeah, I agree. Choosing you as my host wasn't the right thing.]

"..."

Chapter 437 Come One, Come All! (1)

As much as the people of Zanna wanted to attack Ashton and his troops, they had no choice but to ingest their anger. However, there was another bitter pill they couldn't swallow.

With Nico and Cyclops gone, no one could save them from the horde, even if the mercenaries decided to spare their lives. Typically, they would have begged the mercenaries to stay and help, but that wasn't an option anymore as they were the ones who tried to exploit them as free labour.

No one in their sane minds would help them after the stunt they pulled. Hell, they would be lucky if the mercenaries decided to leave them alone and go their way.

"Let's leave before things get chaotic here." One mercenary suggested.

No one opposed his suggestion. It would take around three hours for the horde to reach the city's outer walls. The mercenaries had plenty of time to depart and leave the treacherous bastards to fend for themselves.

However, there was someone who objected. Surprisingly, it was the man Nico, and the Cultists wanted to screw over the most.

"Don't give me that look; I'm not pitying them or anything." Ashton shrugged, "I don't know how loaded your bank accounts are, but I'm not leaving without recovering the fuel and travelling expenses I had to incur. Fuel prices are no joke!"

Now that Ashton pointed it out, the mercenaries were unsure about leaving without appropriate compensation. After all, some of them had to pay thousands of Yenos worth of fuel to get to Occuna, and leaving barehanded would only do them more harm than good.

That said, they weren't sure how will they get their money back. With the contractor dead, it wasn't like the citizens of Zanna were going to empty their pockets for them. To top it all off, Nico employed them, not the citizens, which meant they were not bound to pay mercenaries for their work.

However, judging by Ashton's confidence, they knew he had some plan in his head.

"We don't need them to pay us. The treasure is headed our way after all." Ashton said with a smug smile.

"Surely you don't mean-"

One of Nico's former teammates began to yelp, but Ashton immediately cut him off.

"Of course I do," Ashton said before facing the mercenaries, "We'll sell the beast corpses and make ourselves some money. Unfortunately, that'll mean we will be saving these ungrateful bastards in the process. Don't fret, though; taking the corpses should be enough punishment for them."

Zanna wasn't a city with a lot of ways to generate revenue. Being located on a distant island of the planet, the only resources they had control over were the beasts and very few natural resources.

Whenever a horde appeared, they would subdue the beasts and then sell them off at high prices. Without significant competition, they could set ridiculous prices for raw materials generated by the beasts, and the buyers had no choice but to agree to their outrageous prices.

That said, if the mercenaries took everything from them, Zanna would die a slow death. Without the corpses, they won't be able to hire help even from the shadiest organisations, and without help, they won't be able to repel future hordes.

Forget about hiring help. They won't be able to repair the damage caused by the hordes, and fighting savage beasts in that condition was nothing less than suicide. With his plan, Ashton was essentially ramming them to their doom while coming out as a 'good guy' for helping them.

"You can't do this!" Qalea, Nico's left-hand woman, yelled at the top of her lungs, "That's not what the contract-"

"Contract? What contract?" Anna acted surprised and gasped, "Oh, you mean the contract which became void when your leader died? Sorry to say, but you can do nothing to stop us."

"I-I'll offer you a new contract!" Qalea panicked, "We'll pay you four times the money Nico offered, but please just leave half of the corpses to us-"

At this moment, Ashton had enough of their bullshit. These bastards did not hesitate for a moment before screwing others over, but now that they were facing the same treatment, suddenly it was unfair?

"A contract? It seems you're unaware of the situation you're in." Ashton calmly walked up to her, "You're fucked. You wanted to fuck us over, but I shoved a reverse card straight up your asses. Get lost if you don't want someone else to shove something in your ass."

[I almost believed you were doing it for revenge, haha!]

'All warfare is based on deception.'

[You thought of the line by yourself?]

'Nah, Sun Tzu did. Unlike a certain body-less bastard, I don't take credit for someone else's work.'

[...]

Different from the other mercenaries, Ashton was full of funds. Loss of a few thousand yenos wouldn't have any long time consequences for him either.

However, he needed corpses, a lot of corpses, for some other reason, namely to create a lich. At least, that's what was written in the grimoire. The reason why he wanted other mercenaries to contribute was to ensure the safety of his faction.

While he was strong enough to protect himself and his lieutenants, the others were inexperienced and could become dinner for the beasts. Having the support of other factions would solidify the position of his forces.

The mercenaries get their money, Ashton gets his corpses, and together they'll get their revenge on Zanna. It was a complete win-win situation for them.

After pondering for a few more minutes, most of the mercenaries agreed to fight off the horde together while some left to 'inform the association' about the crap Zanna had pulled.

"I'm pretty sure they just wanted an excuse to run away." Vimur shrugged, "What a bunch of cowards."

Everyone laughed at his reaction. In the meantime, Ashton and the leaders from the other factions were busy holding a meeting. They had decided to fight, but they needed a strategy first. Thankfully, Astaroth and his years of experience were on their side.

Chapter 438 Come One, Come All! (2)

Zanna had six outer walls as its primary defence. Each wall got thicker to make it progressively difficult for the beasts to break through and reach the central city.

So far, the walls have been enough to protect the citizens. However, this time the horde was much larger than ever before, and the horde might rip through the walls if left unchecked.

"We'd need to thin out the flock as much as possible." Skarr, a green-skinned hulking disaster, suggested.

"A funnelling strategy might be the best option for us if that's your goal."

Ricochet was one of the few native Occunian who decided to aid the mercenaries despite being shunned for it. It was all the more reason for Ashton to like him. Most people would crack under such pressure, but Ricochet was a diamond wasting away in a coal mine.

"That's what we'll do then," Ashton mumbled.

Astaroth had suggested a similar plan of action, and Ashton was waiting for his turn to pitch the plan. But Ricochet and his quick thinking beat him to it.

Instead of letting the beasts freely move around the walls and attack from various places, it was better to allow them a narrow passage so that they'll focus on taking the 'easy path'.

Astaroth further suggested they could set up some traps, but it was too late for that.

"Tell Vimur to take a few people and create a small path for the monsters through the walls. But only through the first three walls, leave the rest untouched."

"Got it."

Ashton gave instructions once everyone agreed on the plan, "Atlas, take fifty skeletons and help him out with the task."

"Yes, master."

Ashton could see the uncomfortable gazes coming his way, but he paid no attention to them. His summons were the ones who'll face the horde head-on. If anything, the rest should be grateful for their 'sacrifice'.

Now that the primary step was taken care of, they needed to refine their plans a bit. The funnelling strategy would only be successful if they managed to avoid overcrowding the space. Failing to achieve that would bite them in the ass.

"We need high firepower to avoid such a scenario from becoming a reality." Ricochet said, "The defences we have installed might not be enough to deal with them."

"That can be taken care of with ease." Ashton smiled, and as he did, loud hovering noises were heard outside.

Everyone rushed out to see Ashton's spacecraft hovering over the city and a few others. Being a light battle cruiser, the ship was enough to keep the beasts in check if things started to get out of hand.

"That should do the trick," Ricochet mumbled.

There were a few more things to discuss, like the division of the loot and battle positions, but for now, they had prepared as much as they could.

Most of Ashton's skeletons had to be stationed outside and on the first wall, as none of the mercs wanted to work on those posts. Some might think they were behaving cowardly, but Ashton understood their reasoning.

Being on the frontline meant accepting a death sentence. It was the least defended place; hence, the survival rate was the lowest. That being said, the job there was the easiest. All they had to do was kill and maim as many beasts as possible.

Since the job was simple, Ashton decided to make the best use of his skeletons. That said, he also had an ulterior motive, which was to judge Dolos's capabilities when it came to leading the troops.

If the bastard proved to be useless, Ashton would discard him and create a new summon in his place. After all, he already had a few suitable targets in his mind.

The rest of the walls were occupied by other mercenary groups. As for him, Ashton decided to take command of the second last wall along with his undead summons.

If the beasts got past him, then it was all over. There was no one to help him except Kass, who was hovering between the walls.

The troops were stationed, and the sun went down. The night was eerily and unexpectedly silent. If someone had said a horde of more than ten thousand beasts was about to attack, people would have laughed at their faces and moved on.

"I don't think they are coming," Vimur sighed.

"Sometimes I wonder how someone as restless as you are still alive." Anna laughed.

Just then, Kass said the words Ashton had been itching to hear.

"They're here."

Sirens were blaring, and everyone rushed to their posts. Even Nico's former team joined in, as it was high time.

A moment later, trees were ripped apart as thousands of creatures rushed towards the city. Their crazed eyes didn't care if they had to trample over each other to reach the target. They just wanted to rip something. Anything with flesh was a welcome sight for them.

Even the ground wasn't left untouched either, as the horde's raging steps sent tremors through the land.

For the first time, Ashton had thoroughly researched the types of beings usually seen around Occuna. That's why he was surprised when he saw trolls rushing towards them. However, he wasn't the only one who took notice of it.

"What are trolls doing here?" Anna questioned, but Ashton had no answer, "They are not native to this planet, are they?"

"The trolls aren't the problem," Laihud remarked, "If they can appear on a planet they shouldn't have existed, then who knows what else would appear?"

While handling trolls wasn't a big deal for them, that said, their sudden appearance undoubtedly wasn't a welcoming sight. But now wasn't the time to ponder.

"Kass, blow them up before they reach the walls." Ashton commanded, "They'll destroy the walls if we leave them."

Without wasting precious time, Kass immediately fired missiles at the charging trolls. Under the continuous barrage of rockets and lasers, the trolls' regeneration abilities were a joke.

However, Kass had to use up all she had to stop them. Without Kass's help, Ashton didn't have a way to control the raging beasts.

The battle had barely started, and things were already turning out to be hopeless.

"Anna, hold the fort," Ashton kissed her before jumping off the wall.

"Where are you going!?"

"Animal control," Ashton replied before running to the outer walls.

Chapter 439 Come One, Come All! (3)

The starless sky was filled with smoke and dust. The smell of burning flesh and blood filled the smoky air. It didn't take a genius to know what was going on, yet, it was better not to let the civilians ponder the details of the horrific scene from outside the walls.

Watching the monsters was like watching the cornfields sway under the wind. Napalm missiles soared in the sky before dropping down on the beasts like magma from hell, but the beasts didn't stop as Dolos yelled, "Fire!" at the top of his lungs.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Numerous turrets rapidly rained havoc on the incoming beasts while the skeletons tried their best to stop them in their tracks. The mercenaries were dealing a lot of damage; however, the endless horde seemed unaffected no matter what was thrown at them.

When it felt like the situation was under control, another wave pushed past the injured ones and continued attacking whatever they saw. It didn't take long for them to push back the skeletons.

Soloe, one of the mercenaries stationed at one of the countless turrets, barely had the time to think as he kept hurling one artillery shell after another at the beasts.

When he joined the group called the Vengeful Spirit, this wasn't how he imagined leading his first mission.

"Maybe I should have left with the rest," The blonde-haired meta-human mumbled to himself, "At this rate, I'll die even before I rank up!"

He looked at the horde's evergrowing size and knew it was only a moment before the beasts would break past the first wall.

Despite knowing how shitty it was, Soloe couldn't help but think how the guys over at the second wall should slow down the horde. Either they'd achieve that by killing the beasts or being killed by them. Even in death, they should buy the rest of them some time to fight back.

"What's happening?" Soloe questioned a tentacled alien stationed next to him.

"I'm not sure," The alien replied, "It seems the beasts are falling back!"

A moment of relief washed over their faces. It felt like they were dealing more damage to the beasts than they had assumed. Everyone began celebrating.

However, Soloe knew the beasts had no reason to stop attacking now. They had already pushed the defenders to their limits, so why stop now? Numerous creatures could be seen lurking around the edge of the forest, and it felt like they were waiting for something.

"Take cover!" Soloe yelled as soon as he realised something was off.

Sadly, most mercenaries were less attentive than him and became a target of the countless spikes hurled at them by the monsters. Blood and impaled corpses painted their side of the wall.

The battlefield lay quiet, for it was now a graveyard of the unburied. In one swift move, the beasts destroyed whatever little bit of momentum the mercenaries had going for them.

Soloe carefully walked out of his hiding place, only to puke his gut out after witnessing the spine-shilling scene. Among the mangled corpses lay his comrades, and most were smiling, not knowing they had already embraced the afterlife with open arms.

"It's over..."

Soloe fell on his knees, his clothes soaking up the blood of his comrades. The battle was lost; the enemy had won. At that moment, he couldn't help but curse his greed.

Had it not been for the money, he would have left Occuna with the rest of his team. The monsters were only a means to kill his friends; in the end, he was the one who took their lives, and this feeling was eating him alive.

The horde resumed his march, and there were no turrets to push them back this time. As everything seemed lost, something whizzed past his head. Soloe turned around to see Ashton heading straight for the horde.

"Looks like he lost his lid as well..." Soloe mumbled, "We're doomed."

A few moments ago...

Ashton flew over the walls as fast as he could, flapping his gigantic wings. People saw him rushing towards the beasts, and they were either baffled at his stupidity or filled with admiration towards his bravery.

[I hate to say this, but it is unlikely for the funnelling strategy to work now.]

"Their behaviour is strange, and it's not how beasts would usually act." Aston replied, "It's almost as if they are being controlled by someone or something."

[I was thinking the same thing.]

Just then, an explosion interrupted their chat. A wall had fallen, but surprisingly it wasn't the first, but the second. As Ashton neared the rubble, he noticed most of the people stationed there were dead. The few who survived were in no condition to fight, either mentally or physically.

"We thought we were being smart, but it was the other way around." Ashton shook his head and rushed into the area between the first and the second walls.

As soon as he landed, he immediately ordered the skeletons to retreat. After all, the spell he was about to use did not differentiate between allies and enemies.

"Come one, come all!" He yelled and slammed his fist on the ground.

[Skill: Heaven's Downfall is taking effect.]

Not only did the earth split apart, everything in front of Ashton was set ablaze with hellfire. As soon as a beast stepped foot in the area, it burned to a crisp. More than a hundred creatures were sacrificed to hellfire instantly.

But Ashton wasn't done. To everyone's horror, he charged into the fiery pit without hesitation. But the flames didn't harm him, and it almost felt like they were bowing down to greet him.

Those who saw Ashton couldn't believe their eyes, while at the same time, his faction members gleefully watched on.

,m "The hell are you bastards smiling for?" Vimur slapped one of them on the back of the head, "You get to smile like that when you achieve half of what our captain has. Now focus on your job instead!"

"Y-Yes, sir!"

Chapter 440 Scorching Rain

Ashton had a contingency plan ready in case the formations collapsed. With the second wall destroyed and his skeletons rendered useless, it was time to implement the solo contingency plan.

Although it meant he would have to fight the beasts alone, it was the best chance he would get at subduing the creatures. After all, most of his skills were structured to fend off hordes.

[Skill: Blood Mist is in effect.]

Since [Heaven's Downfall] wasn't enough to kill every beast, Ashton decided to take things up a notch and activate another AOE 1 skill.

But unlike [Heaven's Downfall], the targets didn't need to step into an area. Instead, [Blood Mist] travelled to the targets. In other words, there was no way for the beasts to run away from the fog.

Not to mention, Ashton could manipulate the winds using [Wind Manipulation] for faster propagation of the poisonous mist in the direction of the beasts. This concluded Ashton's contingency plan.

However, not everything goes according to plan, for better or worse, and Ashton would learn that shortly.

—

Skill: Blood Mist is evolving to skill: Blood Rain.

Active Skill: Heaven's Downfall is combining with Blood Rain.

Passive Skill: Draconic Physique is combining with Blood Rain.

New Epic Skill: Scorching Rain (Lvl 1) has been created. (You can view the details of the skill in the Skills tab.)

Note: The user can still use the skills mentioned above separately as well as in the combined form.

—

'What the hell?'

Ashton did not plan for this to happen. All he wanted to do was to simultaneously use [Heaven's Downfall] and [Blood Mist] to deal as much damage as he could to the beasts. Instead, he ended up creating a new skill!

Blood Mist turned into crimson clouds dancing in the night sky, and the next moment, something unimaginable happened. Ashton couldn't comprehend what was happening, but a mixture of fiery poison rained down on the beasts.

[Interesting.]

'You knew this would happen?'

[I had my doubts. But nothing is predictable regarding skill combination, thanks to various RNGs. 2]

'Rn-what?'

[Don't burden your feeble mind with unnecessary things. Focus on the battle.]

The emerald green raindrops burned everything they touched. Those fortunate enough died as the raindrops drilled through their body and melted essential organs.

But The unlucky ones had to suffer the torment of the sickening poison that rapidly spread through their bodies. However, that wasn't all. As much as the rain harmed the beasts, it reinforced Ashton's genes and abilities along with his skeleton soldiers.

The cornered beasts again resorted to using the same skill they did to destroy the second wall. Thousands of spikes covered the skies before zooming in on Ashton.

The onlookers gasped in horror. All of them had witnessed the destructive force of the spikes and knew the chances of Ashton's survival were low if not nil.

While most mercenaries were worried about Ashton's well-being, the Gold Water Mercenaries could not help but smile internally. It was no secret they loathed Ashton, and that's why his death was more than a welcome surprise.

Gold Water mercs were so sure of Ashton's defeat that they almost left their posts to escape the horde. One can imagine the shock on their faces when Ashton was ungrazed by the destructive attack.

"It'd take a lot more than that to kill me." Ashton smiled as Bone goliath deflected all of the spikes headed his way.

"How is that even possible?" Kern mumbled in frustration, "That bastard is resilient like Cohega!"

"Cohega? Some would think you were hoping for Reaper's death." Laihud appeared behind the GW mercs like a ghost.

Unlike his faults, Kern was a seasoned actor. Without fumbling, he recollected himself and faced Laihud with a smile. Only then did he realise that Laihud wasn't the only one behind him, but the rest of Ashton's faction was as well.

"No, no, I was complimenting his resilience!" He said, "My sincerest apologies if it came off as me wishing ill upon Mr Reaper."

"Cohega? What's that?" Anna asked Ricochet.

"Think of it as a space cockroach."

Anna's eyes were red as soon as she heard that. Was this worm comparing Ashton to a cockroach? He was courting death! 3

Thankfully, Laihud was there to keep her in check. As much as Laihud despised the Gold Water mercenaries, he knew nothing good would come from needlessly fighting them.

"You should expand your vocabulary to find a better analogy." Laihud said with a smile, "Or else you'll end up in deep trouble one of these days."

"Haha, yes, yes." Kern gave them a fake smile, "So what are you doing here? I thought we weren't supposed to leave our assigned spots."

"Does it look like everything's going according to plan?" Anna snarkily commented, "The beasts are not getting past Reaper, and if they did, nothing would be able to stop them. Not you, at least."

Anna's remark made a vein pop out of Kern's forehead, but his smile was as radiant as ever. Kern was an A-grade being, yet a mere C-grader was spouting shit about him?

Had it not been for Mazton, he would have made Reaper and his little lover into his bitches without hesitation. Sadly, he could only imagine how he would torture them to death but keep his hands stuck to his sides for now.

However, someone radioed in on their conversation before he gave in to his anger.

"Unless y'all are a bunch of professional wall climbers, boarding a ship would be the quickest way to reach Reaper," Kass's voice echoed through the secure channel, "Hop in, and I'll take you as further as I can without injuring the baby."

"The baby?" Vimur voiced his confusion.

"She means the ship." Laihud replied, "Come on, let's get going."

Author's note:

1. AOE skill: Area of effect skill. In simple terms, skills/abilities that affect multiple targets in an area.

2. RNG: RNGs, or Random Number Generators, are a way to introduce a touch of randomness and causality in games. (Credit: Google)

3. Courting Death: It references Chinese novels' most beloved and cringeworthy phrase. You can now die of cringe, as I did while typing it.