

Zompiewolf 481

Chapter 481 A Twisted Reunion (5)

The man led them to the room's far end, where an elevator shaft was hidden in plain sight. Ashton and Anna were surprised by this as they would have never found the secret elevator if they had been alone, assuming Ashton's dad was long gone.

In a way, the scientist had saved them a lot of trouble. Too bad Ashton had already decided to kill anyone and everyone he saw there for their 'crimes'.

The scientist, unaware of everything going on inside Ashton's head, was excitedly chatting as if they were on a picnic trip. His squeaky voice irritated Ashton to the point where he was willing to kill him just because of his annoying voice.

[Hold it in, you'll get your chance soon.]

'I hope so.'

"Here we are," The scientist mumbled before hastily opening the doors.

Ashton was surprised to see all the hustling and bustling on the lower floor. The quietness of the upper laboratory floors had fooled the duo into thinking the scientist was the only one inside apart from them.

But there were dozens upon dozens of men wearing labcoats going on and about their job. Unlike the upper floor, the lower floor had no holding cells.

Instead, the floor was filled with different types of equipment that neither Anna nor Ashton had seen before. Each of the equipment was being attended to by several people.

Everyone was so hard-pressed on their job that no one noticed the two strangers walking amongst themselves. Either they did not give a crap about who comes and goes in their 'secret' base, or they were confident in their security, which was laughable.

"Let's not disturb anyone and head straight to the main event! By the way, I only realised I never introduced myself to the lady," The scientist quickly jumped in front of Anna and took her hand, "The name's Dr Morris, and you're... not cold?"

Morris immediately let go of Anna's hand as if it repulsed him before turning his attention towards Ashton. His jolly demeanour was long gone.

"Were you aware-"

"What do you think?" Ashton replied while squinting his nose, "There must be a reason why the President sent someone like her to witness your genius."

"I doubt that's the case here," Morris got increasingly suspicious of Anna, "You said you had the President's letter; would you mind sharing it?"

Morris's annoying voice soon caught everybody's attention. Ashton knew the gig was up. Morris had noticed the discrepancies, but Ashton wasn't one to give up so easily, even if it meant ending everyone inside the room.

However, before he could put his thoughts into action, a loud explosion took everybody's attention away from them. Before anyone knew what was happening, glass shards flew everywhere, killing dozens of people and injuring even more.

"Patient Zero has broken confinement! I repeat, Patient Zero has broken confinement! Requesting backup! The Sunset protocol has been activated! All exits have been shut down until further notice!"

Taking advantage of the situation, Ashton and Anna went into action, silencing as many people as possible before the guards inevitably came rushing down.

Unfortunately, Morris took advantage of the chaos and slipped past them relatively unharmed.

"Go! I'll handle things here!" Anna urged Ashton before donning her battle armour.

"Thanks!" Ashton hurriedly replied before taking off, "Atlas, protect her."

"Roger!" The giant grinned, crawling out of his master's shadow, "Finally, it's my turn!"

With Atlas by Anna's side, Ashton could freely chase after Morris, who was running in the direction of the explosion.

'What the hell is going on here?'

[I don't have a good feeling about this.]

'Neither do I- What the hell is that thing...'

From a distance, Ashton saw a hulking beast killing everything in his path. The few guards stationed on the lower floor tried their best to hold off the beast until backup arrived, but all of it was in vain.

The beast was designed to be unstoppable.

The hulking beast had impenetrable skin, granting him absolute defence against bullets and sharp objects. At the same time, his fingers resembled blades made of diamond, easily tearing through everything in sight.

As if those weren't enough, the creature's whip-like tail was a menace, slicing people in half as if cutting through a tatami mat. Apart from those monstrous features, Patient Zero as he was called, looked like a man on steroids.

While everyone was running away from Patient Zero, Morris was headed straight towards him.

"Shit!" Ashton cursed before rushing to capture the mad scientist.

Morris was the only one who could reveal what happened to his father, his death before that was unacceptable to Ashton.

"Hey, buddy! It's me! You remember me, don't you?" Morris yelled as if he was greeting an old colleague, "Look, I know you're upset about your death and all, but hey, you're back, and that's what matter's the most! Don't you think-"

Before Morris could complete his words, his 'buddy' charged straight towards him, and he wasn't coming to hug him. Despite watching Zero head towards him, Morris refused to move, even when Zero drew his claws to rip him in half.

Zero swung his claws at Morris, who had closed his eyes, and waited. However, before Zero could hurt Morris, Ashton kicked the mad scientist out of harm's way. Unfortunately, he couldn't dodge the blow himself and was flung to the side, bursting through the wall.

"Argh!" Ashton groaned in pain, as even his [Pain Resistance] couldn't soften the blow for him.

"Master!"

Sensing their master's pain, the summons couldn't help but call out to check on him.

"Don't leave your posts," Ashton replied, ignoring the pain, "I'm fine."

It took a few seconds before Ashton got back to his feet, only to realise that bastard Morris had not learned his lesson.

"This fucker-"

[Ashton, what's wrong?]

"This has to be some sick joke... right?" Ashton mumbled as his legs gave out, "How..."

[Ashton! What's happening!?!]

Astaroth kept yelling, but Ashton didn't speak a word and helplessly kept staring at the monster in front. Morris was stomped to death a moment later, but Ashton didn't react. It almost seemed like he wasn't there anymore.

Having no other choice, Astaroth invaded Ashton's mind to know what was wrong with him. But even he wasn't ready for the answer.

[Oh my... this can't be happening. That man is your father? How can this be? No, no, no! There has to be a mistake. Ashton, get up. Please GET UP! We have to go, NOW!]

Chapter 482 A Father's Gift (1)

People say there are five stages of processing grief: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. Ashton's case wasn't different. The stage of denial passed as quickly as it had appeared.

Now, was rage's turned. All sense of reason and logic had long since left Ashton's mind. Was he being discrete? What was the point of it now that he found his father in such a pitiful state?

The sole purpose he wanted things to be quiet was to ensure he could get his father out of there had he been alive. In a way, his father was alive, but Ashton wasn't deluded enough to think the creature in front of him was his father.

The thing might have shared a resemblance with John, but it was no longer him. His body was only the shell, storing the soul of a monster within... at least, that was what Ashton kept telling himself; otherwise, he won't be able to do what needed to be done.

'Astaroth, is there any way to turn him back?'

[... I'm afraid not.]

'I see...'

Ashton quickly gathered himself while the creature was busy feasting on Morris. However, it didn't take long for the beast to turn his attention towards Ashton. Unlike before, the creature did not attack him immediately but gazed at Ashton as if he wanted to say something to him.

For a moment, Ashton's resolve to put his father down quivered. Unfortunately, the moment did not last forever as the beast charged towards him like a cannonball.

Despite having the build of an elephant, the creature was abnormally fast. So much so Ashton was barely able to raise his arms to soften the blow, but even then, he got sent flying away for the impact.

Unsurmountable pain hit Ashton's body. Two fingers of his left hand had been shattered, while his right forearm had been cracked as a result of the blow. Had it not been for the [Regeneration] ability, the damage would have been much worse.

[Ashton, I know you're grief-stricken, but think about your mother, Anna and countless others who love and admire you. How do you think they'll feel after losing you as well? It's difficult, I know it damn well, but don't let your anger cloud your judgement.]

'...'

[We need to put your father out of his misery. For that, you need to be in your top form, both physically and mentally. I'm not asking you to calm down, but use the rage within you to your advantage, not the other way around.]

Ashton refrained from speaking, but Astaroth sensed his words had gotten through his host. Ashton's raging blood had calmed down somewhat. The sensible part of Ashton's mind now synced with the raging one.

While the situation wasn't perfect, it was the best they could have done.

"Ashton!"

Since all his attention was focused on his father, Ashton hadn't noticed he had been flung back to where he had left Anna and Atlas. However, Ashton raised his hand, gesturing them to stop where they were, and a moment later, they realised why.

The beast charged at Ashton again, but the latter was prepared this time. Ashton grabbed the creature's fist while the creature's claws ripped through his palm.

Ashton's [Pain Resistance] wasn't high enough to negate the pain. Even then, Ashton didn't flinch a bit. The shock of seeing his father like that had numbed his senses, or maybe it was the endless adrenaline coursing in his body.

"Remember the quote you once told me, dad? An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind?" Ashton mumbled gloomily, "Guess what? The world had been blind for a long time, and it's time the bastards who did this to you felt it as well."

Saying so, Ashton slowly transformed into his primal form. To take down the beast, he had to become one as well. It was the second time Anna had seen Ashton's zompiewolf form, and it was just as intimidating as the first time, if not more.

Thanks to the levels Ashton gained since the last time; his form had an even more menacing look than before. In his presence, even hell would appear like a children's playground.

Even the mindless creature was a bit taken aback as he stepped back. However, Ashton did not let him go.

"That's your dad?" Anna mumbled in shock, but Ashton wasn't in the mindset to answer questions.

"Atlas, take her and leave. I'll join you shortly." Ashton coldly replied before once again focusing on his father. "You kept preaching non-violence, and look at you now, dad, killing people left and right. I guess I truly am your son, don't you think so?"

As soon as those words escaped his mouth, Ashton threw a punch. The creature would have flown away from the impact, but Ashton had a firm grasp over one of his arms. Thanks to that, no matter how hard Ashton hit the creature, the latter would remain in his place.

The punch was the last thing Anna saw before Atlas dragged her away, and it was for the better because things were about to turn ugly.

The tentacles on the creature's back retaliated on the creature's behalf. In order to defend himself, Ashton had no choice but to let go of the creature's arm.

A big mistake.

Instead of backing up, the creature unleashed a barrage of attacks at Ashton. The tentacles ripped holes through Ashton's limbs. But to the creature's and Ashton's surprise, the wounds were not as severe as they should have been and healed over time till no scar was left behind.

The creature tried again. However, after his transformation, Ashton was superior in terms of agility and blocked the attacks with a little effort.

One by one, the creature lost his tentacles, arms, and tail. Anything the beast could have used to fight back was gone.

At that moment, Ashton realised he could end the creature and put his father out of his misery... but he couldn't bring himself to do it. Although he knew his father couldn't be saved, a part of him was hoping for a miracle.

If he could drag out the battle, maybe his father would regain control over his mutated body. What if the creature got tired? What if he only destroyed the mutated parts? His father wouldn't be a monster without the monstrous organs, right?

[Ashton...]

"I'm pathetic, aren't I?" Tears flowed down Ashton's face, "I know it's not possible, but still..."

[If you want, I can do it for you. You won't have to see or remember anything-]

"No." Ashton shook his head, "I have to do it myself. It's the least I can do for him."

However, Ashton did not want to send his father to the afterlife as a monster and transform back into his humanoid body.

"If there's an afterlife, I hope I'll meet you there. We have a lot to talk about, but for now, this is enough."

There was no stopping the tears anymore as Ashton said his final goodbyes to his father, "Goodbye, father."

The next moment ripped the creature's heart out, finally putting his father to rest. However, something was off, and Ashton collapsed beside his deceased father in a turn of events.

At first, Astaroth thought it was due to the combination of shock and exhaustion. But when he analysed Ashton's body, he knew something more sinister was happening.

[Ashton? Ashton!? What is happening? Get the fuck up, damnit!]

Astaroth kept yelling, but Ashton didn't react. How could he react when he was no longer there?

Chapter 483 A Father's Gift (2)

"AH!" Ashton woke up with a start, panting as if he had finished a marathon, "Was it just a dream?"

No matter how much Ashton wanted it to be a dream, he knew what he had gone through couldn't possibly be a fabrication of his mind. He had fought and killed his father or whatever was left of him either way.

"Wait... what is this place?"

Ashton hadn't noticed where he was as he was busy debating whether he had killed his father or not. But now that he looked around, he could say with certainty that he wasn't anywhere in Fright City. The place was too damn beautiful to belong to Earth.

The scenery reminded him of the place his mind went to after Astaroth saved him from killing himself onboard the Endearing while protecting Eula.

"Oi Astaroth, is this you doing?" Ashton yelled, "I swear I'll kill you if you dare play tricks on me! Oi! Can you hear me-"

"Handing out death threats like postcards, I don't think your mother or I taught you such crude language?"

Before Ashton could continue yelling his heart out, he heard a familiar voice. A voice tucked away in a remote corner of his mind, a voice whose existence he had long since forgotten about—the voice of his father.

Ashton immediately turned around to see a man in his late thirties smiling at him. At first, he was shocked to see the grey-haired man, but his eyes soon welled up as he bolted in his direction, wrapping his muscular arms around Johnathan.

Thirteen years. That's how long Ashton had to wait to see his father again, to touch him again, to feel... complete. Johnathan patted his son's head, patiently waiting for him to cry his sorrows away.

"Now that you're done crying like a baby, shall we go for a walk?" Johnathan suggested, to which Ashton replied with a nod.

"How are you- I mean, how can you-"

Ashton felt so pathetic at the moment, as he couldn't even frame his question into words. But Johnathan just smiled, letting his son carry on.

"This isn't a dream, is it?"

"No, it's as real as anything will ever be." Johnathan replied, "Or I should say, it's happening inside your head."

His father's answer confused Ashton even more, but he kept going.

"But I killed you..."

"You sure did, but you only killed a part of me. Seemingly the final part."

"Then how are you here?"

"You have heard about Soul Fragments, have you not?"

The comment confused Ashton. As far as he could remember, Celeste and the rest of his summons walked him through their regeneration process.

They had mentioned something about a fragment of their soul always being held inside [Valhalla] that helped them regain their body after being destroyed.

However, how did his father know about it? Ashton was about to ask it but ultimately decided to push the questions back and enjoy what could be the last moments with his father.

The father-son duo wordlessly kept walking, enjoying the silence and the beautiful forest scenery. However, the place was strangely void of any other living being apart from them.

Despite what his raging heart wanted to believe, Ashton had to remind himself whatever he was seeing now was true, but it wasn't the reality. Once he wakes up, his father will be dead, and he will be back in the cruel world that took Johnathan away from his family.

"Ah, I see you haven't gotten rid of that habit of yours." Johnathan chuckled.

"What habit?" Ashton questioned, confused by his father's comment.

"Thinking of trivial things that don't matter when you can live in the moment." Johnathan replied, "Your mother was the same, you know. Always thinking of the future or repenting for the mistakes of the past. She never enjoyed a peaceful moment, let me tell you that."

Ashton smiled, showing his agreement. Things went silent again until they reached a lake, and all the memories came rushing back to him.

"Where are we?" Ashton asked to make sure he was correct.

"You do know where we are, don't you?" The smile didn't leave Johnathan's face for all this time.

"But how is it possible? How do you know anything about planet Euphoria?"

"I guess it's time I revealed my secrets to you." Johnathan sat down and gestured for Ashton to do the same, "But to answer your question, I'm one of the three people who designed the artificial planet, and the forest behind us was where humans were supposed to live, The Garden of Eden."

Ashton was stunned into silence. He made sure his ears weren't ringing, and he heard his father correctly, yet his mind was having a tough time processing the information.

"But that'd mean-"

"I'm a Precursor."

"..."

"I know it's a lot to take in, but it's true." As Johnathan said those words, his smile finally disappeared from his face, "I was possibly the only precursor who took refuge on Earth. The rest either fled the galaxy or were killed by the Xyrans. But I don't think I need to narrate all that to you."

"But how..."

Ashton was at a loss for words. Never in a million years would he have thought something like this would happen. Although, in hindsight, everything would make sense if that was the case. However, the situation was still bizarre regardless.

If Johnathan indeed was a member of the godlike species, then it would make sense how he could foresee Ashton's life and set a stage for him, as Mera mentioned.

It would also make sense why the precursor pets recognised Ashton and how his body could absorb conflicting genes perfectly. A Precursor had created him! His unusual behaviour and power were all the result of Johnathan's abilities.

"That's where you are wrong," Johnathan replied as if he was reading Ashton's mind, "What I gave you were mere tools, and without a capable artisan, the tools are useless no matter how good of a tool they may be."

He continued, "Don't sell yourself short, my son. You're still young and more talented than I ever was. The feats you have achieved are yours and yours alone, no one else's. Remember that."

Ashton nodded, but he still needed clarification about everything. Millions of questions were running through his mind, but it seemed Johnathan wasn't going to answer any of them.

"Would you look at that?" He smiled wanly, "It seems my time's up."

Ashton had seen his father looking gloomy for the first time, and he knew it was the end. Until he remembered the Precursors could

reincarnate over and over till they have a soul fragment intact.

Unfortunately, Ashton destroyed the last fragment moments ago.

"It's not your fault. It had to happen for the sake of the future, your future." Johnathan comforted Ashton before getting up as the binary stars headed for a sunset, "But before I depart, there are some things I need to do. Would you mind opening your inventory for me?"

Ashton opened his inventory as he was told, and to his surprise, the inventory allowed Johnathan to do as he pleased. Something that shouldn't have been possible for anyone but Ashton.

As if that wasn't strange enough, Johnathan took out two things from the inside- The Staff of Eden and Grim Reaper's Scythe. Items that no one should have been able to touch without facing the consequences, not even Ashton.

"It's been a while since I had these. The blessing of creation in one hand and the curse of destruction in the other."

"You're the Grim Reaper too?" Ashton inquired, but he didn't sound surprised, not even a little bit, "It's so ridiculous, I'm not even surprised anymore."

"Well, let's get rid of the restrictions, shall we?" Johnathan beamed before focusing towards the weapons.

Following a bright light, Johnathan placed the equipment back inside the inventory. But then he also did something to Balmond because the trust factor the weapon had towards Ashton shot from 71% to 100%.

"Balmond will never leave your side, and you can use other weapons simultaneously without upsetting him," Johnathan replied, "Also, the Staff will no longer mutate its user in self-defence. I've made it so only Anna or you can use it.

"As for the Scythe, you can use it without fear of becoming 'Death'. However, you'll only be able to use approximately 50% of its power. If you want to use it to the best of its ability, then I'm afraid you will have to sacrifice yourself for it. There's no way around it."

Ashton appreciated his father's gifts more than he'll ever know. But then, it was time to say their last goodbyes to each other. The outcome still saddened him, but he was content with everything.

After all, he got to share a few precious moments with his father, which was the best gift he could receive. But before departing, Johnathan had a final piece of wisdom for his son.

"Remember, Ashton, while having allies and friends is important, it's also important not to blindly trust them, even the voice in your head."

Saying so, Johnathan became one with nothingness, leaving Ashton perplexed but also at peace.

"Goodbye, dad..."

Chapter 484 Blinding Fury (1)

[Finally, you're back- What happened to you?]

"What?" Ashton groaned as he got back to his feet.

It took him a moment to realise his physique had altered yet again. Following his instinct, Ashton viewed his stats to see a shocking change, and all of his stats had shot up by 50 points.

But that wasn't all. Mana consumption of his skills and their respective cooldowns had been reduced by 40%. It was as if he had evolved without going through the system, which was why Astaroth was so surprised, why Ashton silently thanked his father for his final gift.

However, there were more surprises in toe. While Ashton's sudden growth was suspicious, it was downright ridiculous that he bypassed the restrictions Astaroth had placed on the scythe as an Admin.

After all, Astaroth had 'locked' the scythe away, and Ashton couldn't have retrieved it by his will as he did with the rest of his weapons. But Ashton was now holding on to the scythe as if there were no restrictions on it.

[Oi brat, mind telling me what happened to you? This- Nothing about this is remotely normal!]

In his excitement, Ashton opened his mouth and almost blurted out everything when his father's parting words resurfaced in his mind-

"Remember, Ashton, while having allies and friends is important, it's also important not to blindly trust them, even the voice in your head."

Ashton didn't ask Johnathan what he meant by it. After all, without Astaroth, he would've died a long time ago. It didn't make sense why Ashton couldn't trust him. But for now, he decided to heed his father's advice.

[So~?]

"I have no recollection of what happened." Ashton shrugged, "I feel like it was a dream. You know, one of those that one can't remember after waking up, but they know it was a pleasant dream."

[Hmm, yeah, that can happen sometimes.]

Ashton felt Astaroth was taking his word with a grain of salt, but there was nothing he could do about it.

[What about the corpse?]

"What about it?"

[I thought you'd-]

"You expect me to defile my father's corpse and raise him as an undead soldier?" Ashton's voice was as cold as ice.

[In my defence, you could use him as the medium and create a lich-]

"Drop it, alright? I'm not doing it."

[I'm sorry. I overstepped my boundary without caring about your emotions.]

"Hm..." Ashton hummed, not caring about his apology.

The shroud of silence was soon torn to shreds when alarms glared above.

"It took them longer than I expected," Ashton coldly mumbled as the smile disappeared from his face.

His father's mutated corpse was still in front, further fueling his fury. It was time the undead got to know the might of the Grim reaper. But before he could exit the basement laboratory, the sound of rushed footprints alerted him.

"Balmond," Ashton mumbled, and the black sword shot out of his inventory by itself and took its place by his side.

[Great, suddenly Balmond trusts you completely! I'm not even going to ask you how that happened because of your stupid amnesia.]

Ashton didn't bother replying, deciding to focus on the task at hand. The footsteps got closer and closer, yet he refused to take cover or charge. His father might be gone, but he had no intention of abandoning his corpse.

"Whoever comes down from there, slice their head off." Ashton whispered, "Can you do it?"

Balmond took a swing in the air as if nodding in agreement.

"Ashton!"

Much to Ashton's surprise, Anna walked out of the elevator. However, faithful to his master's command, Balmond raced towards the succubus to put an end to her life.

"Balmond, wait!" Ashton yelled just in time.

A second late, and it would have been disastrous. But at that moment, Ashton knew he would have to train Balmond not to hurt those he deemed close, like Anna and his mother. Otherwise, the mad sword could kill someone if he took their name in his sleep or something.

"What was that!?" Alina gasped as Balmond went back to Ashton's side.

"A Soul weapon." Viper mumbled, "Those are rare to come by, even for outworlders like me."

Behind them were half a dozen humans and Mikosh, who was still under Anna's influence. Meanwhile, Atlas tried his best not to make eye contact with Ashton as he had failed to complete Ashton's order.

Although Anna was a bit taken aback by Balmond's attack, she rushed to check in on Ashton. Apart from a flesh wound on his cheek, he was as good as a person could have been. Then, her attention shifted towards the corpse by Ashton's side.

"Is he..."

Anna couldn't even follow through with her question. Just the mere thought of it got her choked up. But Ashton understood where she was headed with her question and nodded.

"It's him," he lamented.

"It's alright. You did the right thing." Anna wept her tears before hugging him.

Ashton took in the warmth of her heart, but his rage wasn't ready to dwindle. Being in Johnathan's vicinity wasn't helping him either.

"I don't know what's happening, but I get it's sad." Alina cried out, "Entire facility would be on our asses at any moment! We have to get out NOW!"

Ashton nodded, "Sven, Celeste, Raven, come out."

Much to Alina's and Viper's surprise, two shadowy figures jumped out of their shadow, while the third miraculously appeared beside them.

"Master, your command?"

"Guide them outside. As for you, Atlas, take my father's corpse along, and this time, see it through." Ashton then turned towards Anna and gave her the Staff of Eden, "This is for you. Use it well."

"Wait, Ashton, you're not coming with us?" Anna trailed off as Ashton acted like he wasn't leaving with them.

Ashton shook his head.

"Look, dude, we don't have time to waste-" Alina tried reasoning with Ashton as she knew staying back was a death sentence.

"In that case, you should get going." Ashton emotionlessly replied.

"What will staying back in this kill box accomplish?"

Whether she wanted to admit it or not, she was eternally grateful to Ashton and did not want to see him lose his life based on his clouded judgement.

Alina looked towards Anna, her eyes pleading for help. But Anna knew it was too late. After living with Ashton, she knew one thing about his personality. Once he sets his mind to something, no one can change it.

"What can you possibly do to an army of undead and human hybrids?"

"What I should have done from the beginning," Ashton replied, holding his scythe as over a thousand shadow soldiers appeared behind him, "If you don't want to witness the worst calamity this land had ever seen, I suggest you get going. I will not ask you a second time."

Chapter 485 Blinding Fury (2)

Fright City's cityscape tells the residents' story in colours, from the neon rainbow lights to the golden kitchen glows. Like a constellation of architecture, as calm and peaceful as heaven for its residents.

The usual vibrant sky often complimented the city and added to its beauty. But not tonight. No longer did the sky make the town look lovelier. No longer was the atmosphere vibrant. No longer was Fright City the city of advancements. Because a devil had been forced to awaken from his slumber. All because of the foolishness of a few.

Even nature couldn't help but falter under the influence of one man- no, he wasn't a man anymore. He hadn't been one for a long, long time.

The night was darker than ever before, crying for the innocent souls that'll be lost tonight. Earth cowered under his feet with every step he took. The wind was careful not to touch the man should his rage befall it.

Rain poured down from the heavens, trying to take his rage, his pain away from him. The rain had always been man's favourite part of nature, and the rain has always consoled him like the father he lost.

The rain once again wanted to touch him, console him and beg him not to punish the innocent for the mistakes of a few. But in vain, the droplets evaporated even before they could touch the man. The rain became more intense, soaking everything inside the city. Everything except the one person it wanted to.

As Ashton walked out of the basement lab, the sight of hundreds of undead and human-hybrid greeted him. Within moments, the courtyard was littered with corpses that rose again to contribute to their killer's mission.

In a hidden corner of the base, Mikosh's second-in-command, Hana, saw the atrocities one man was committing. At first, she thought the intruder would be taken care of instantly. After all, walking into Tartarus was equivalent to walking into hell.

But much to her dismay and horror, Ashton ripped through her best soldiers like tissue paper. Nothing could stand in their path as the wave of death came crashing to her door.

"M-Ma'am! I'm afraid we cannot hold the position anymore!" A soldier barked through the radio, "That man is unstoppable- He's here! GO, GO, GO! We have to- ARGHHH!"

Only silence followed the soldier's horrific scream. With every kill, the gap between Ashton's forces and their own grew wider and wider, and there was nothing Hana could have done to stop it.

"Activate Ghost protocol." Hana sighed, her face buried in her hands, "Transfer all the data to the President's private cloud server and prepare to evacuate personnel with Tier-01 to Tier-04 clearance."

"Please input the password." The AI replied.

Hana got up and dropped a drop of her blood onto the scanner, followed by a retinal scan.

"Orders confirmed. The facility will self-destruct in t-minus 2 minutes. Please proceed to an evac-bubble in the meantime." The AI answered before going offline itself.

"Evacuate? Even if I do that, the President will kill me." Hana shook her head, "I'd be lucky if he gave me quick death, though I'm sure that wouldn't be the case."

Unlike the scientists living in the facility, soldiers like her were expendable. As a soldier, it was their duty to fight till the last breath. Although, more often than not, they didn't sacrifice themselves for a sense of responsibility and instead did it to have an easy death.

In Tartarus's history, there had been many who attacked the facility. But only some of them were successful, thanks to the masterful construction of the facility.

According to their calculations, it would take at least twenty thousand soldiers to break through the defences. Even then, there wasn't a guarantee whether they'll be successful or not. However, all the reasons couldn't do shit against Ashton's forces.

As she poured the drink into her body, she heard some noise. Not any noise, but a bloodcurdling scream.

"Just what are these morons doing now..." Hana said and made her way towards the window, pushing the curtains aside.

She was expecting the guards to be fooling around like usual, but she saw something completely different. The glass slipped out of her hands and fell on the floor, shattering on impact.

The rate at which Ashton was moving, it should have taken him an hour or so to reach the central tower. Unfortunately for Hana, the reaper's forces were already there for her.

Right before her eyes, flames as high as the mountains raged around them and rose higher and higher into the night as if they were challenging the heavenly rain.

The downpour couldn't even dent the fire as it consumed everything. The smoke emanating from the fire shrouded the entire facility. Alarms had been triggered a long time back, but the President didn't intend to send backup to aid them. They were on their own.

The elite soldiers were being slaughtered right before her eyes, and there was nothing anyone could have done to stop it.

"Why... why... why..."

Hana kept biting her overgrown nails, wondering what they could have done to anger someone so powerful. A moment later, a couple of guards entered her chamber to get Hana out of there, only to find her shaking uncontrollably.

"Shit! The bitch is already out of her mind! What should we do now?" One of the guards barked at the other.

"Like hell do I know!" The guard replied, "We must get out of here first. Get the information out and-"

"We might have a way to save ourselves..." He smiled, but it was a defeated smile, not a joyous one, "I'm sure whoever is attacking us is doing so because of this bitch. His rage should subside if we hand her over to them, and we'll be saved."

However, before they could act on their master plan, someone came knocking at the door.

"Death home delivery service! How would you like to live your last moments?" Celeste licked her lips, feeling the ecstasy of fear on the guards' faces, "And before you ask, death by snu snu isn't an option."

Chapter 486 Blinding Fury (3)

The soldiers having no way out, jumped Celeste, only to be impaled by shadow spikes. The lusty witch was about to do the same to Hana when she realised who the woman was. The Master wanted this person to be delivered to him unscathed.

Why did Ashton want Hana unharmed? Celeste never bothered to ask useless questions, especially when her Master wasn't in a jolly mood. The only objective in her life was to blindly follow Ashton's command, nothing else.

Hana had already lost a couple of screws, and witnessing her soldiers' death only worsened her situation. However, being undead, Hana couldn't go crazy as it was a horror reserved for mortal souls.

"Take me to your Master. That's what you're here for, aren't you?" Hana calmly inquired while raising her hands, surrendering to the shadowmancer.

"Ah shit, you're no fun!" Celeste pouted, "I was thinking of torturing you, but that's not going to happen now. Ugh, fine, come along. At least the Master will be pleased I found you first."

Ashton was standing in the courtyard, admiring the carnage his summons were causing. Tartarus was completely ablaze, and the labs had been utterly destroyed.

The ground was littered with mangled corpses and blood. Screams from the enemies slowly began to die out. It wasn't because his troops had to retreat but because not many people were left to kill now. It was hell... No, even worse than hell with the grim reaper in the centre of it all.

Balmond was also having the time of his life. Going around the campus, finding and killing anyone that came into his sight, was a wonderful feeling.

On the other hand, Mikosh's experience of the event was completely different. As soon as Anna left, her influence on Mikosh faded, and he regained control over his body and mind.

However, he could only wish he had never awakened after witnessing the sight in front. His soldiers were getting slaughtered right before his eyes, and he couldn't do anything to stop it.

It wasn't like he didn't try; he did. But what possibly could he have accomplished against someone of Ashton's calibre? The sole reason he was left alive was that he was deemed insignificant to kill.

Whether Mikosh lived or not was none of Ashton's concern. Although surprisingly, the latter enjoyed the fear-stricken look on Mikosh's face. It calmed Ashton's nerves a bit. Sadly, it wasn't enough to quell his rage.

In an attempt to save his butt, Mikosh gave Ashton some classified information. One of which was about Hana, who was one of the president's adopted children.

"Adopted, you fuckers can't even get an erection to pop children of your own. Doesn't that makes all your children 'adopted'?" Ashton absentmindedly mocked the chief.

The undead had a method of 'procuring' their children outside the norm. They did it by biting and transferring genetic material to humans. Thus the human became the undead's 'natural' child.

However, in an event where an undead invited an already existing undead into their family, they became an 'adopted' or 'illegitimate' child. Due to the nature of 'adoption', an adopted child was usually stronger than their 'natural sibling'.

"That's why we call them by different-" Mikosh was busy explaining more about the undead society when Balmond pointed toward his throat.

"For an undead, you talk too much." Ashton took a deep breath before a smile replaced his grim expression.

While Mikosh was busy yapping about their society, the news Ashton had been waiting for finally reached his ears. Celeste had found Hana, and they were on their way back.

Ashton then connected himself to the rest of the summons, "Everyone, gather those who are alive and fall back. We got what we came here for."

As his voice boomed over Tartarus, Mikosh had conflicting feelings. Were they going to end their rampage now, or was something even more sinister about to happen now?

Sadly, he wouldn't live long enough to know the answer.

"Is there anything else you want to tell me?" Ashton calmly asked Mikosh while placing his hand on the latter's shoulder.

"I-I don't think there's anything I-left for me to say, noble one!"

Mikosh replied, putting the most charming smile on his face that he could. Unfortunately, there was no mirror for him to review his god-awful rizz one last time.

"Then you have overlived your usefulness. May you rest in chaos now."

Ashton nodded, and Balmond impaled the undead's chest without skipping a beat. Rotten blood splurged everywhere like a broken faucet just as Celeste returned with Hana on her toes.

At the same time, the rest of the summons and skeletons returned with eleven undead soldiers. Much to Ashton's surprise, Jwayne was one of them.

"Good, everyone is here," he mumbled while stomping on Mikosh's corpse, "I didn't think so many of you would be alive. Maybe I overestimated myself. Either way, congratulations on making it this far."

He continued, "Unfortunately for you, I don't like to be wrong. Since I was expecting three people to remain alive by the time I was done, we'll be sticking to that number. Which means... nine of you have to go."

The summons giggled, enjoying the misery of the weak ones. Usually, Ashton would have let the soldiers go as they were only doing their duty. However, that was far from the truth.

No matter whether they were soldiers or high-ranking officials. All of them were equally guilty of participating in gut-wrenching experiments on humans.

If anything Mikosh revealed was true, they took pride in torturing and killing humans... including his father. Ashton didn't even want to know what kinds of bastardly things they had to have done to turn his father into the monster he became.

"Hand them some weapons." Ashton announced, "If they want to live, they can fight for their survival."

Twelve skeletons readily offered their weapons to the prisoners. However, Ashton pulled Hana out of the competition. After all, how was he supposed to get into the president's head if she were to die?

Chapter 487 Brewing Storm (1)

Ashton might have said he wanted the rest to fight for their survival, but he had no intention of waiting for them. He gave the signal as soon as they lunged to kill each other, and the skeletons jumped into the fray, tearing the undead to shreds.

Hana watched on in horror as their cries for help slowly died down. However, killing them wasn't enough. The summons and the skeletons had to recover their lost appetite.

"Go ahead," Ashton mumbled, "Make sure not one corpse remains intact."

[It's a bit much, don't you think?]

Astaroth had been silent throughout the ordeal as he didn't know what Ashton did, thanks to his father. However, things were getting out of hand now. Sadly, Ashton disagreed.

'A bit much, you say?' Ashton scoffed, 'Limits to their cruelty don't exist, but I should show mercy to them? If the situation weren't serious, I'd have thought you were joking.'

[Cruelty should have a limit for the sake of your peace, not to show mercy to the doomed. I don't know what has gotten you all riled up, but toying with the weak-]

'You know you're the last person who should be lecturing me on playing with weak ones. Do you need me to remind you what your people did to mine?'

[I have committed mistakes and learned from them. That's the entire point we are having this conversation right now! If you detest Xyrans so much, then why the hell are you so hell-bent on becoming like US?]

'You saw what they had done to my father. Do you expect me to let them go after what they did?'

[No, but I expect you to punish the ones who deserve it, not the innocent ones who had no idea what was happening here in the first place!]

"Innocent? INNOCENT!? Who gets to decide who is innocent and who isn't?" Ashton asked, his voice shaking with rage, "Certainly not me, since I'm the reincarnation of rage in your eyes, and it sure as hell isn't you!"

Ashton couldn't see Astaroth's face, but he could feel the disappointment in his voice. But his disappointment was of no consequence to the former. He had made up his mind to punish anyone and everyone involved in Tartarus's creation.

But Astaroth's words were helpful as they gave Ashton a new point of view. Mindlessly killing everyone would become a chore, not to mention having the undead on his side would prove more useful as they were the most advanced beings on Earth.

Instead of complete destruction, selective elimination was a better option as it would take less time and resources. Also, a secret coup would work better in the long run than establishing a new rule from the ground up.

"Bring her here," Ashton took a deep breath as the skeletons brought Hana to him, "I want the names of everyone involved in these experimentations. For your sake, I hope you won't miss a single one of the bastards."

"What makes you think I'll obey you-" Hana retorted, only to be smacked across the face by one of the skeletons.

However, a slap wasn't enough to eliminate her sudden bravado. As the second in command of Tartarus, Hana had already lost everything she could. But she wouldn't lose anything as the President's daughter and a loyal soldier to her nation.

"I don't know why I was wasting my time like this," Ashton shook his head before promptly forcing Hana under his control, "Useless fucks like you should know when to start wagging their tail to their new master. Now, KNEEL!"

"I..."

Suddenly Hana lost all her will to oppose the enemy. Her mind became clouded with thoughts of absolute submission as if nothing mattered to her but her loyalty towards Ashton.

In an instant, Hana was more than happy to reveal the darkest secrets about her family and nation to a stranger. No, it felt as if something was compelling her to do so, and she was powerless to fight it.

"Hiroshi Miyamoto, Jacob Green, Nicolette Shenya, Zakir Memon, Joseph Elcid, and the current President are behind anything related to Tartarus." Hana revealed while hugging Ashton's knee, "The President should know anyone else's involvement."

"Good," Ashton replied before kicking her away, "Now be a good daughter and inform your father about his death. I want him to know why death will greet him at his doorstep; I want to see fear in his eyes like no one has ever seen before; I want him to beg for forgiveness when there'll be none."

Hana didn't make a sound as she crawled back towards Ashton. Grim Reaper's influence over the undead was mystical, and taming the strongest zombies was merely a joke.

Nirvana wasn't aware of the fact, but it was already under a new ruler's thumb. It was only a matter of time before the President was overthrown and the Reaper would take his place.

But before all that, there was one thing Ashton had to take care of as a son.

"One month... let it be known those bastards have a month to live their lives as ordinarily as possible." Ashton snarled, "Tell them to live while the Reaper grieves. After a month, death will come for them, but not like an old friend as they would have wished."

Before Hana had the chance to respond, the skeletons dragged her away. She had a task to fulfil, to ensure that everyone heard Ashton's words loud and clear.

Once done, Ashton decided it was time to head home. Avalina had been waiting for news about her husband and son. The only thing was... her husband was long gone.

Even though it was expected, deep in their hearts, everyone was hoping Ashton would find John alive and healthy. The mere thought of his mother's grief-stricken face made Ashton's blood boil again.

But now wasn't the time to let his rage flow. The turn to avenge the fallen would soon be upon him, but till then, Ashton had to bide his time.

"Enjoy your peace while you can, Nirvana. For inevitable chaos is upon you."

Chapter 488 Brewing Storm (2)

The sound of roaring engines disrupted everyone's sleep. The alert guards rushed out, weapons in hand, to deal with the enemy, only to find a familiar ship heading their way.

"Captain is back early?" Ricochet whispered, "Someone alert Madam Avalina! Everyone else, take your positions! It could be an enemy attack!"

Before departing for Nirvana, Ashton had mentioned it might be three months before he was back. But seeing as he was back earlier than expected, it could either be a blessing or a curse, and Ricochet wasn't going to take any chances either way.

'Hopefully, it's the former, but it's better to be prepared for the worst. I don't want to see that man rage ever again.' Ricochet thought as he was reminded of what happened back on Occuna.

Little did he know the anger Ashton had felt back at Occuna was nothing compared to his current raging eyes.

Everyone gathered around the ship as soon as it landed, with Avalina standing in front. While everyone else was excited regarding their lord's return, Avalina's motherly intuition insinuated something was terribly wrong, and she wasn't wrong.

The smiles and laughs disappeared when the ship's doors were flung open. Anna led the group out, and her glum expression was all it took to let everybody know something was off.

Following Anna was a group of unidentified people. Surprisingly, no one bothered to ask who they were and what they were doing with Anna. To tell the truth, it didn't seem like anyone even cared about them. Instead, everyone held their breaths, waiting for Ashton to exit the ship.

The moment finally arrived, but Avalina fell to her knees as soon as she saw her son. Ashton did not exit the ship alone; a carefully draped corpse was in his arms. No one knew who it was, but Avalina did... her worst fears had become a reality.

It had been years since she had made peace with the thought of Johnathan's death, or so she had been fooling herself. Deep in her heart, Avalina had been waiting for Johnathan to return so their family would finally reunite. Sadly, her dreams were shattered.

"Everyone, leave."

Ashton's voice was colder ice, void of any emotion. Despite being worried about their lord's well-being, everyone followed his command, leaving him alone with Avalina.

All of them had their guesses, but none voiced them. For now, silence and peace were valued more than answers. Silence... that accompanied a storm.

Mera was the last to leave. The guilt of her crimes was gnawing at her from the inside. Even though she knew Johnathan had planned everything, including his death, she couldn't help but blame herself for sending him off to his doom.

Despite wanting to stay and support Avalina, she knew it was better to leave before causing them any more grief.

As for Anna, well, she could only try to comfort the man she had sworn her life to, but from a distance. After a devastating loss, Ashton and Avalina needed some time to grieve first.

Following everybody's departure, Ashton walked up to Avalina, placing Johnathan's corpse in front of her. Avalina's blank eyes went back and forth between her son and her husband. Her mind still trying to deny the bare truth.

After a while, she finally gathered enough courage to unveil Johnathan's fabric coffin. Ashton tried to stop her, but all his strength faded once he saw the pain on her face. No matter how bad Johnathan looked, Avalina had the right to see his face... one last time.

Ashton could only embrace his mother as her heart was shattered to pieces. Dealing with a beloved's death was already painful enough, but watching their disfigured body was unimaginably worse.

There was no solace for them, only pain. Avalina screeched in distress; her cries were loud enough to be heard by the residents, who could only imagine their ever-so-happy leader's pain.

Ashton kept hugging Avalina, not knowing how to comfort her. However, no tears streamed down his face. There will be time to cry after exacting his revenge.

For now, he had to be the pillar to support his mother through the pain she was living through and ensure she didn't do something to herself.

"They'll pay, ma. I swear on my life... they'll pay for this. Every one of those bastards." Ashton kept whispering in Avalina's ears until she stopped screaming.

The next morning.

"How is she?" Anna mumbled, placing her hand on Ashton's shoulder.

"Mera's medicine worked," Ashton replied, kissing her on the forehead, "she's resting now."

Avalina passed out from shock while grieving last night. It was a surprise for Ashton as he didn't know vampires could pass out like that. Thankfully, Mera arrived to help him before anything happened to her.

"Sir, we have placed your father in a cyropod for preservation." Ricochet diligently reported.

Ashton nodded in acknowledgement but otherwise had his attention on Avalina's sleeping form.

"Also, I'm sorry for your loss, sir." Ricochet whispered.

"Thank you," Ashton replied, "Apart from that, how is the expedition going? I hope you didn't forget about your assigned task?"

"It's going smoothly, sir. The squad would reach Contingency by tomorrow and set up a makeshift portal. I'll be heading there within the hour, along with the incendiary device."

"Good, I'll be joining you."

Ashton's words came as a surprise to everyone. Given Avalina's condition, everyone had assumed he would be there by her side. However, now it made sense why he instructed Ricochet to store Johnathan's corpse in a cyropod rather than performing the last rites.

"Ashton, you can't be serious!" Anna retorted, "You should stay to help-"

"Anna... Ma would be getting up any time soon." Ashton murmured, "The medicine Mera used had a side effect that put her in some sort of an induced coma. It'll be over a month before she wakes up."

Ashton caressed Avalina's cheeks before continuing, "Just enough time for me to rain hell upon those undead bastards, both here and in Nirvana."

Chapter 489 Failed Battles

"Again!" Ashton roared in a fury.

The cold rage within Ashton had subsided a bit. The reason behind it was extensive training. It was okay, as he was used to surplus training, but that wasn't the case for his recruits.

Continuous training for twelve hours wasn't a herculean feat for metahumans. The problem was they weren't training against each other but against Ashton's summons!

It wasn't just the metahumans who were in a pickle; the Giholos were in the same boat. Following their blind faith towards the 'flame god', they decided it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to train with their revered lord.

The aliens knew that their *lord's* training regime would be challenging. However, they had not expected to shed blood, tears and sweat simultaneously! Had it not been for their blind faith, most of them would have collapsed in a matter of minutes.

"He sure is angry." While watching everybody train from the sidelines, Nora scoffed, "I hope he doesn't tire out my little guy too much."

"You're supposed to be my clone, but thoughts couldn't be dissimilar." Mera retorted, "We should be thankful he's using his rage positively, or else, it would have been a sight none of us would want to witness."

"Pfft- you think too much, sis. That aside, I heard the expedition party was forced to retreat before they could reach Contingency?"

Mera sighed but didn't say a word. The expedition squad's failure was half the reason why Ashton was forcing everyone else to their limits. No one had ever taken out their anger on an innocent party like Ashton was. Regardless of the reason, strict training was beneficial for everyone.

"A war is on the horizon; everyone needs to be prepared," Mera mumbled, gazing towards the rising moon, "There's no holding him back now."

At the same time, Nirvana was thrown into chaos. Silence shrouded the President's chamber. Moments ago, Hana had reported back to her 'father' with nothing but praise for the ones who uprooted Tartarus in a matter of hours.

Hana had always been the President's favourite, but praising the enemy was an unforgivable offence. Even then, Hana would have been safe if she hadn't taken it upon herself to do something worse.

"Never in a million years would I have imagined one of my children threatening me."

The President's love for Hana didn't allow him to kill her, but it wasn't enough to stop him from imprisoning her. However, silencing her wasn't going to rid of the issue at hand.

"One month, huh?" He whispered, "Never in my life have I seen someone so brazenly announcing the death date of their enemy."

Although the President didn't want to admit it, he was impressed by Ashton's confidence. The last time someone dared to do so, they ended up as Tartarus's most prized test subject.

"Sadly, that bastard was killed in the attack." The President thought while calmly sipping Vermillion tea, "At least the replacement would be here in a month. All that's left is to capture the moron and make up for the lost time."

Suddenly there was a rap on his door.

"Come in."

Short and diminutive, the tan-skinned man had a depressed feeling about himself. Despite being a member of the upper echelon of society, the man preferred to remain faithful to his roots and rarely, if ever, let his presence known to others.

"Father! I heard-"

"You heard right, Roman." The President interjected, "The facilities in the west have been reduced to dust."

"Huh, no wonder," Roman replied, brushing his overgrown beard, "About time a loose screw appeared out of your mental facilities."

Roman was the only one amongst his siblings who could freely speak his mind in front of their father, and there was a good reason for it.

While the President might be seen as the strongest in Nirvana, it was far from true. In fact, four of his children were far more competent and stronger than he ever hoped to be.

Thankfully, they all loved their father more than anything in the world, or else the 'President' wouldn't have been the President for long.

"What do you want us to do?" Roman yawned.

"Gather your siblings and prepare for battle-"

"Yeah, that ain't happening. The Twins are in seclusion for some reason. Elder bro is busy playing with his toys, and as for 'her', well, no clue where she is."

That was different from the answer the President was expecting to hear. Without the monsters he had nurtured, his hope of 'overwhelming' victory dwindled considerably.

The victory would be his no matter what, but it wouldn't come to him as effortlessly as he had imagined.

"However, who says we need to fight with the forces we have with us?" Roman mindlessly murmured.

"What do you mean?"

"Father, sometimes your stupidity makes me want to disown myself." Roman shook his head, "Unlike the rest of the world, we have an unparalleled force to abuse. We can hire outworldly mercenaries to aid us!"

"Continue," the President said with a serious look on his face.

"As long as we can pay them, we'll have the strongest soldiers in the galaxy on our side. No matter how strong our enemy might be, they can't be stronger than the mercenaries from space. You know it as well!"

The President got quiet, processing Roman's words. What his son said was true; no one on the planet could compare to the might of the outworlders. However, calling mercenaries for help had its own set of problems.

First and foremost was the finances. Just hiring one mercenary could empty a tenth of Nirvana's financial reserve. As if that wasn't enough, there was no guarantee the mercenaries won't abuse their strength on them instead.

After all, powerful beings naturally want to abuse their strength over the weak. Just like the undead had been doing with the humans. Inviting mercenaries over was like telling a starved undead to protect meat.

In other words, it was a recipe for disaster, but at the same time, it would also ensure their victory.

"You're excused now." The President mumbled, "While I think about your suggestion, try to get in touch with your siblings."

"Fine~ Don't expect much, though. Those bastards are as selfish as they come."

Chapter 490 Unascertained Reasons

"I suggest, rather than focusing on the war, we should focus on the cause of such aggression towards us."

Dressed in a white suit, the man was addressing the makeshift war room. Being the President's assistant was challenging, especially in such tense times.

However, Jady was doing his job excellently. Unfortunately, the war room or the parliament was more interested in the war than removing the blinds covering their vision.

"I mean no disrespect to you, Jady. But what good will wasting our resources do to us?" Barry Denver, the defence secretary, interrupted, "There's a war upon us. If anything, we should be working to strengthen our defences!"

Most of the cabinet supported Barry, who proudly flashed his rotting bald head in Jady's direction. Unlike what the rest of the world believed, the undead were cursed by an unquenchable thirst for war. In reality, they would even put the werewolves' warmongering nature to shame.

That's why most of the war room wanted nothing more than to push the agenda of a battle. After all, they had been developing weapons for decades, and a conflict would be the best opportunity to test them in a practical situation.

The undead were confident in their technology. Until and unless alien forces appeared on the battlefield, their success was more or less guaranteed. So what was the point in delaying the conflict?

"It seems like you're forgetting something, Mr secretary." Jady asserted, "All the weapons and technology the cabinet is boasting about were present in the facilities that the terrorists effortlessly destroyed. If a mere group could do the unthinkable, what do you think would happen when there are thousands of them?"

Silence had never been louder in the parliament than at that moment. Thirteen top-notch facilities with all their 'revolutionary' equipment were demolished in hours.

Since most of the cabinet had royally invested in those facilities, their destruction was a sore topic among them. Jady knew it very well and decided to bring it up to knock the fools off their high horses.

Fixing his eyeglasses, Jadyd stared at the faces of the cabinet members. Not one of them had the look of confidence on their faces anymore. The iron was hot, and it was the right time to hammer the shit out of it. But there was a splinter stuck in the middle.

"Taking down an unprepared foe isn't a sign of strength or bravery." Barry scoffed, "Our enemy is skilled; there's no denying that. But if they were stronger than us, they wouldn't need to use cheap tricks to-

"Wars are not won by demonstrating strength or bravery only," Jadyd interjected, "A body without a mind is nothing but unprepared dinner for your enemy. Taking down one's enemy when they are most vulnerable requires skills you meatheads will never possess."

Jadyd's words had angered everyone in the room, but none of them dared utter a word against him. After all, Jadyd was one of the President's closest aides, and nothing good will come from unnecessarily angering him.

"By exploiting our weakness, those terrorists have shown they are capable, unlike most freeloaders present here." Jadyd took a shot at the 'warmongers' by referring to them as 'freeloaders'.

"This is the arrogance that led to the destruction of our facilities. When will you learn to acknowledge an enemy's strength and treat them as a proper threat!"

With each word that came out of his mouth, Jadyd was crossing his limits. Ultimately, everyone feared the President and his children, not Jadyd himself. The latter shared the stature of a pawn compared to the rest of the cabinet had it not been for the President.

That said, Barry wasn't like the rest of them. He, too, was quite close to the President; that's why he was the only one who could openly oppose Jadyne.

"Fine, let's do this your way then."

Barry's words came as a surprise to everyone, even to Jadyne.

"What? Did I say something I shouldn't have?" Barry taunted, "Certainly, Jadyne has a plan, or else he wouldn't have suggested to dedicate ourselves to finding out the 'motivation' behind the workings of a terrorist organisation. Am I wrong?"

'So that's how you want to play?' Jayden thought.

Since Barry knew he wouldn't win against Jadyne when it came to a battle of minds, he shifted his tactics to using his words against him and then build up on it. It was a clever move, if not a bold one.

"Let's be honest with ourselves for a moment," All of the attention was now on Barry, "We have made enemies with everyone on this planet. let it be by infiltrating the land of those bloodsuckers or by causing havoc over at the kingdom of those wolves."

He continued, "Do you still think we need to focus on finding a cause? Just ask me; I can name plenty!"

The cabinet began whispering amongst themselves. It was true they were no saints. From attacking Lycania to secretly invading Vania, the undead had employed every dirty tactic to weaken their former allies.

This also meant there were plenty of reasons for someone to attack them. In other words, it was useless to consider finding a 'cause' and start working from there.

"That might be true," Jadyn responded, "however, do you think those primitives would ever be strong enough to destroy not one or two but thirteen research establishments?"

Jadyn's question was met with utter silence from the cabinet.

Barry's logic was sound, but so was Jadyn's. After everything the undead had done to sabotage the other species, there was no chance they could ever pull off something so daring against them. Who else could it be if it wasn't the vampires or the werewolves?

"Something more sinister than we think is happening in the shadows," Jadyn went on, "Although it's a bit of a stretch, I think we shouldn't exclude the possibility of outworldly species involved in this farce. The question is, why would someone of their stature involve themselves with an insignificant planet like ours?"