

Zompiewolf 541

Chapter 541 Xylopian Trouble (2)

The next day, Vimur, Laihud, and the rest of the crew stepped off the shuttle onto the rocky terrain of the alien planet. The air was thick with mist, and the sky was filled with strange clouds that glowed with a greenish hue.

The locals wished them the best and performed a ritual to ensure their safety, but otherwise did not help them in any manner.

The crew could hear the sound of rushing water in the distance, and the scent of the local flora filled their noses.

Laihud looked around, his eyes scanning the rocky forest. "This is definitely not like any other planet we've been to."

"Agreed," Vimur replied. "But we're not here to sightsee. We have a mission to accomplish. Let's scan the area and locate some Zoraxes. You got the other scanner, right?"

Laihud nodded while tapping the gadget strapped to his shoulder. Apart from capturing Zorax and taming them, the crew had been given another mission from the Tower.

A mission to gather information about the planet's resources, particularly a rare mineral that was said to be found in abundance in the area.

The crew's job was to gather as much information as possible without disturbing the planet's delicate ecosystem or angering the natives. Finding an energy-rich mineral was one thing, but to extract it, they would need help from locals.

However, if they knew the crew had alternate motives as well, they wouldn't have been welcoming to them. The Xylopians revered nature and would not take kindly to digging holes into nature's half of the planet.

Mining on the other side of the planet would be seen as the mercenaries trying to desecrate nature and might attack the crew without asking for explanations.

As such, Vimur and Laihud were the only ones who knew about the second part of their mission, as they were afraid the big-mouth newbies might leak the information to the Xylopians.

They began walking through the rocky forest, the sound of their boots echoing off the rocks. The terrain was treacherous, with sharp rocks jutting out of the ground and thick underbrush, making it difficult to see more than a few feet ahead.

As they continued on their journey, they came across a small stream. Laihud knelt down and scooped up some water in his hand, examining it closely.

"The water seems clean," he said. "We could refill our water supplies here."

Even though they had enough supplies to last them months, it was a good idea to scavenge some resources from nature, if possible.

Vimur nodded in agreement. "Good idea. We'll set up camp here for the night."

They knew they would be spending a lot of time in the rocky forest as the Zoraxes were not easy to spot, despite their size. Moreover, they often lived underground and only appeared when they needed something, like food or water.

The crew set to work, setting up their tents and starting a fire. As the night fell, they gathered around the campfire, eating a meal of ration bars and discussing their mission.

"I'm worried about the local wildlife," said Laihud. "We don't know what kind of creatures live on this planet or how dangerous they might be."

They had been provided with a detailed report that listed every known lifeform on the planet. But on a planet whose other side was rarely explored, anything could happen, and any creature could appear out of nowhere.

Vimur nodded. "We'll have to be cautious. But we can't let that stop us from completing our mission. Besides, if any creature dares to show up, we can always cook it."

Suddenly, they heard a rustling in the bushes nearby. Everyone tensed, reaching for their weapons. Moments passed as Vimur slowly headed towards the bush to check it out.

As soon as he got there, a group of small, furry creatures jumped on him before cautiously approaching the campfire. They looked up at the crew with big, curious eyes and then began sniffing around the camp's perimeter.

They were about the size of a housecat, with wide, curious eyes and large ears that perked up at the slightest sound. The creatures made chirping noises as they observed the crew's movements.

"Ratacules, herbivorous creatures that Xylopians also keep as pets," Laihud smiled. "Completely harmless. They're just curious about us."

Vimur was the first to approach one of the creatures, crouching down and holding out a hand. The creature sniffed at his fingers before nuzzling its head into his palm. Vimur laughed in delight and scratched behind the creature's ear.

"They seem friendly enough," he said, looking up at Laihud and the rest of the crew. "Maybe we should try to communicate with them?"

Laihud nodded in agreement, and they approached the rest of the furry creatures, trying to make friendly gestures. The animals seemed to respond well, chirping and trilling in excitement as the crew continued making arrangements for the night.

Vimur laughed. "I think we have some new friends on this planet."

"This is incredible," Jay said, looking around in awe. "I've never seen anything like this before."

Alina nodded a small smile on her face. "It's moments like these that make this job worth it."

As they continued working, the ratacules became more and more comfortable with their presence. They even started playing around the crew's feet, jumping and rolling in the grass.

The crew relaxed, watching the little creatures as they explored the camp. Ratacules proved to be genuinely lovable creatures, and they immediately took a liking to them. After all, who could possibly hate the snuggly animals?

As they settled in for the night, the ratacules kept them company by the fire. As they relaxed, the crew could hear the sounds of the alien forest around them, and they couldn't help but feel a sense of wonder at the beauty of this strange new world.

Unbeknownst to them, there was a reason why the ratacules had joined them. They were seeking refuge from a predator, one who was pissed because of the mercenaries invading its territory.

Chapter 542 Xylopiian Trouble (3)

The sun slowly began to rise on the alien planet, casting a warm glow over the rocky terrain. As the light grew stronger, the Ghosts emerged from their temporary shelter, stretching and yawning after a night of rest.

Vimur stepped out first, followed closely by Laihud. The air was crisp and fresh, with a hint of sweetness from the alien flora. They took a deep breath, savouring the unfamiliar scent.

The small furry creatures were already awake, scurrying about their business. Some were foraging for food, while others were chasing each other around the rocks. Vimur watched them with amusement, marvelling at their agility and cuteness.

As the sun climbed higher in the sky, the rocky forest was bathed in a golden light, casting long shadows on the ground. The crew gathered their equipment and set out to explore the planet, with the furry creatures scampering beside them.

Vimur led the way, using his advanced sensors to detect potential hazards or resources. Laihud followed close behind, his weapon at the ready in case of danger. The furry creatures seemed to sense their confidence and bravado and followed along with curiosity.

The crew moved slowly and deliberately, taking in the sights and sounds of the alien planet. The rocky terrain was unlike anything they had ever seen before, with towering rock formations and craggy cliffs jutting out from the ground.

As they continued their journey, the sun climbed higher in the sky, casting a warm and inviting glow over the landscape. The crew paused momentarily to take it all in, basking in the beauty of the sunrise.

Suddenly, one of the creatures darted off into the trees, making a panicked chirping noise. The rest of the creatures followed suit, and the crew exchanged worried glances.

"What's going on?" Alina asked.

Before anyone could answer, a loud rumbling noise echoed through the forest. The ground beneath their feet began to shake, and the crew realised they were in danger.

"Everyone, get to cover!" Vimur shouted, pulling out his weapon.

The crew scrambled to find shelter as the rumbling grew louder. Suddenly, a massive creature burst through the trees, its enormous claws tearing up the ground as it charged towards them.

The crew held their ground, weapons at the ready, as the creature closed in on them. But before they could even take a shot, the Ratacules sprang into action, swarming around the creature's feet and nipping at its heels.

The creature let out a roar of pain and frustration, thrashing around as the Ratacules continued their attack. The crew watched in amazement as they managed to bring down the massive beast, working together to take it down.

As the dust settled, the crew approached the ratacules, who were now chirping happily and bouncing around in excitement.

"Well, that was unexpected," Jay said, grinning from ear to ear.

"Who would have thought these cute beasts had such a savage side to them?" Someone else commented.

Meanwhile, Vimur turned to Laihud, whose eyes were wide in surprise, "They're harmless, eh?"

Laihud quickly snapped out of his dazed state before smiling awkwardly. "I meant they are harmless to us!"

"Yeah, right." Vimur teased him before instructing the others to salvage what they could from the enormous creature.

Although it had a lot of meat, consuming unknown creatures often led to disaster. As such, they would only collect the fallen beast as samples of the planet's fauna.

The Ghosts continued their mission, the small furry creatures following them excitedly. As they walked, they couldn't help but feel a sense of gratitude towards their new allies, grateful for the unexpected help in a time of need.

As the crew trekked through the rocky forest, they suddenly heard a loud growling noise coming from behind them. They cautiously approached the area and saw a strange creature emerging from a burrow.

The creature was unlike anything they had ever seen before. It stood about six feet tall, with four long legs that ended in sharp claws. Its skin was covered in thick, matted fur, which gave it an almost prehistoric appearance. Its head was long and narrow, with glowing red eyes that seemed to pierce through the darkness.

"It's a Zorax!" Laihud whispered with a sense of urgency.

As the Zorax emerged fully from its burrow, it let out a deafening roar, causing the ground to shake beneath its feet. The Ghosts immediately raised their weapons, ready to defend themselves, while the Ratacules hid behind their new friends.

Their hastiness caught the creature's attention as it charged towards them. The Zorax charged towards them, its eyes fixated on Vimur. It let out a deafening roar and leapt towards him, claws extended.

Vimur dodged the Zorax's attack and fired his laser rifle again, hitting the Zorax in the chest. The creature let out a bloodcurdling screech and stumbled back, but it didn't stop its attack.

It charged towards the crew again, but this time, Alina intervened. She quickly pulled out a small device and pressed a button, causing a bright flash of light to emit from it.

"What is that?" Jay asked, watching as she activated it.

"It's a disruptor," Alina explained, holding the gadget out towards the Zorax. "It should mess up its senses for a few minutes."

"Good job, Alina." Vimur let out a sigh of relief. "For a moment, I thought that was it for me."

The Zorax roared again and charged forward, but as it got closer, Alina activated the disruptor. The effect was immediate - the Zorax stumbled, shaking its head in confusion.

Using its dazed state to their advantage, the Ghosts trapped the creature with an electric net. The Ghosts were able to sedate it and transport it back to their ship for Laihud to examine the beast and find out why the Zoraxes were acting so hostile towards others.

On their way back, they realised the Zorax was injured and in great pain, even before Vimur shot it. It wasn't trying to attack them out of hostility but out of fear and desperation.

"Something is off," Laihud mumbled. "Zoraxes are supposed to be at the top of the food chain here, and it makes no sense that some other creature tried to hunt it down."

"Whatever it is, we'll take care of it. But first, let's get this beast some help." Vimur replied, gently patting the unconscious beast.

Chapter 543 Artificial Parasite

Laihud had never seen a Zorax up close before and was amazed by its physical characteristics. It had a thick, woolly hide that was almost impenetrable, and its limbs were strong and muscular. Its claws were razor-sharp, and its teeth were long and pointed.

"A creature bred to kill anyone and anything that steps in its way," Laihud mumbled into a recorder to keep a note of his observations.

Despite its fearsome appearance, Laihud couldn't help but feel a sense of fascination as he examined the creature. He ran his fingers over its skin, marvelling at the texture and how it seemed to shift and change in the light.

"The creature seems to have a multi-layered skin that changes appearance according to the type of light shone upon it."

As he continued his examination, he noticed something strange about the Zorax's behaviour. Usually, when a creature was sedated, it would remain still and unresponsive. But this Zorax seemed to be stirring as if it was trying to wake up.

Laihud quickly checked the sedation levels, but they were still within safe limits. He realized that something else must be causing the creature to wake up.

"It must be something about this place," Laihud mumbled and turned to call Vimur for help.

Just then, the Zorax's eyes snapped open, letting out a low growl. Laihud took a step back, but he didn't panic. He might be a healer, but he had dealt with dangerous creatures before and knew how to handle them.

He reached for a tranquillizer gun and aimed it at the creature. But before he could fire, the Zorax suddenly sprang up, its claws slashing at the air. Laihud dodged to one side, narrowly avoiding the attack.

"Oj, calm down, baby!"

The Zorax continued to lash out, its movements quick and unpredictable. Laihud kept his distance but knew he couldn't avoid the creature forever. There was only enough room there for the two of them.

Thankfully, one of the straps was still latched onto the Zorax's legs, giving Laihud enough space to dodge the incoming attacks. However, the belt would not hold forever. Laihud needed to think of something and fast.

He quickly assessed the situation and realized he needed to take a different approach. Instead of trying to subdue the creature, he needed to figure out why it was so agitated.

He carefully observed the Zorax's behaviour, looking for clues that might explain its hostility. As he watched, he noticed the creature's eyes darting towards a particular part of the room.

"The window!"

He followed its gaze and saw a small window in the corner of the medical bay. Through the window, he could see the rocky forest outside, bathed in the light of the rising sun.

Suddenly, it clicked. The Zorax wasn't just reacting to being sedated - it was responding to the unfamiliar environment of the spaceship. It was afraid, disoriented, and desperate to escape.

"Vimur... run a simulation of the area surrounding the ship." Laihud softly whispered into the radio to not get Zorax's attention.

"What- ok, got it." Viimur wasn't sure what Laihud was barking about, but he knew better than not to follow his words.

Within moments, the operating room was turned into the area where they had met Zorax for the first time. It took a while, but the creature calmed down enough for the sedative to take effect again.

Laihud let out a sigh of relief before being joined by Vimur, who had grown worried sick about Laihud's well-being.

"What's going on here?" He asked.

Laihud wiped the sweat off his forehead before responding, "That's what I'm trying to find out. What about the rest of the crew?"

"They are busy forming diplomatic relations with the Ratacules-"

"What they are doing is called... playing with cute creatures." Laihud shrugged his shoulders. "Take a few of them and start searching for what we are here for, ok?"

Vimur nodded and left the med bay, giving Laihud enough time to figure out the reason for Zoraxes' sudden strange behaviour.

As he scanned the creature's body with various medical instruments, he noticed a strange object in its flesh. It was small and metallic, with a series of wires and tubes extending from it.

"What the hell is this?"

Laihud carefully extracted the object, studying it closely. It was an artificial parasite designed to control the Zorax's behaviour and turn it into a weapon. Laihud had heard of such devices before but had never seen one in person.

He worked tirelessly to remove the parasite from the Zorax's body, carefully cutting and detaching the wires and tubes. It was a delicate and intricate process, but after several hours of work, he was able to remove the parasite altogether.

Laihud carefully extracted the tiny, wriggling object from the Zorax's body and placed it on a sterile tray. He peered at it through his magnifying visor, observing the little, intricate details of the artificial parasite.

With the parasite removed, Zorax's behaviour began to change. Its breathing became more even, and its eyes lost their wild and aggressive gleam.

Laihud continued to monitor the creature's vital signs, ensuring it was stable and healthy before getting it off sedatives.

"I need to inform the others about this parasite. Who knows how many creatures have been affected by this little fucker."

Moments later, Vimur was back inside the ship while the rest of the lieutenants were joined in via communicators. Everyone was there except Ashton and Vulcan, who were preparing for the prison break.

"What do you make of it?" Vimur asked, leaning over Laihud's shoulder.

"It's definitely an artificial construct," Laihud said, his voice tinged with curiosity. "It's designed to attach itself to a host's nervous system and manipulate their behaviour."

"That explains the Zorax's aggressive behaviour," Anna said, looking at the parasite with a mixture of fascination and revulsion.

Laihud nodded in agreement. "Without this parasite, the Zorax would be a docile, harmless creature. It has to have been implanted by an intelligent species, possibly even by the Xylopians... but I have a feeling something much deeper is going on behind the scenes."

"We can't deny the Cult's involvement either. That bunch can do things no one would even think of in their dreams."

"Whosoever it might be, they're using these parasites to control the wildlife on this planet," Otiga said, her voice laced with anger. "That's despicable."

Leon, who had been quietly observing the proceedings, spoke up. "I might be able to isolate the signal that the parasite uses to communicate with its host."

He continued, "Bring back as many parasites as you can back to the Tower. I'll run some analysis, and maybe we can track the culprit down using the parasite."

"No, that won't do it." Otiga intervened. "We don't know how the parasite works, and it may alert the culprits after being removed."

"So bring a few Zoraxes to the Tower." Anna chimed in. "We'll remove the chips here, and by the time the culprits would know about it, it'll be too late for them to do anything. I'll ask Mazton to send over a cargo ship to transport the creatures without trouble."

Laihud looked up at Anna, impressed by her presence of mind. "That's a brilliant idea. Let's get to work immediately."

Chapter 544 The Deacon (1)

As the sun began to set, the Ghosts prepared to release the now-healed Zorax back into the wild. Laihud carefully carried the creature in its cage while Vimur and the others watched from a distance, ready to intervene if anything went wrong.

The Zorax had only known Laihud for a few hours, but their bond was stronger than most of the crew. If he could, Laihud would have taken the creature in as a pet, but it wouldn't be the right thing to do.

As they approached the edge of the forest, the Zorax seemed to sense that it was being released. It began to squirm and whine as if protesting the end of its time with the crew. Laihud gently placed the creature on the ground and stepped back.

For a moment, the Zorax hesitated, looking back at the crew as if saying goodbye. Then, it turned and bounded into the forest, disappearing from sight. Vimur let out a sigh of relief.

"Glad to see it go," he said, "but I'm also glad we could help it."

Laihud nodded. "It was the right thing to do," he said. "And who knows, maybe we'll see it again someday."

Jay smirked. "Yeah, maybe it'll bring a whole pack of Zoraxes with it to thank us."

The crew chuckled at Jay's joke, feeling a sense of satisfaction knowing they had done a good deed. But little did they know, their adventure was far from over. They still needed to find the one infecting the creatures with the parasite, and they needed to do it before it was too late.

The Ghosts had been searching for clues for days, combing through the rocky terrain of the alien planet in search of any signs of life or civilisation. Anything that could help them figure out the identity of the one responsible for the weird behaviour of the creatures.

They had rescued numerous creatures along the way, nursing them back to health before releasing them into the wild. The cargo ship Mazton had promised was yet to arrive, so there wasn't any place the Ghosts could have kept the creatures, and releasing them was the only option they had.

Laihud, Vimur, Anna, and Jay were currently exploring a particularly dense area of the rocky forest when they stumbled upon the abandoned structure.

At first, they thought it was just another rock formation, but as they drew closer, they realised it was something else entirely.

The structure was made of a material they had never seen before, a sleek metallic substance that glinted in the light. The entrance was a vast, gaping hole that led into the darkness of the facility.

Laihud, ever the curious one, stepped forward to investigate. "Let's take a look inside," he said, motioning for the others to follow.

Anna hesitated, her eyes darting around nervously. "I don't know, Laihud. This place gives me the creeps."

"We can't just ignore it. Who knows what we might find in there?" Vimur stepped forward, his hand on his weapon.

Jay nodded in agreement. "We should at least look, see if there's anything of value or interest."

Laihud then remembered what the Xylopians had mentioned. They had never tried to develop the other half of the planet as it belonged to nature, and that's why a structure like the one in front of them was out of place.

He explained the situation to the others, and they all realised they had found what they had been looking for, for days!

With the decision made, they cautiously made their way into the dark, eerie depths of the facility. The air was musty and stale, and the silence was punctuated only by the sound of their footsteps echoing off the walls.

As they walked deeper into the facility, they began to realise what the place was. It was a research facility, and the crew doubted the Xylopians were aware of it.

Equipment lay strewn about, wires and cables trailing from the walls. A console flickered dimly in the corner, and a large chamber loomed ahead.

"The place seems to be powered," Vimur mumbled, pointing at the console.

Laihud approached the console, tapping a few buttons experimentally. The screen flickered to life, displaying a stream of data in an alien language.

"What is this?" he muttered, furrowing his brow in concentration. With a thump, several cyro chambers appeared before them.

Anna and Jay moved to one such chamber, peering through the glass to see what lay inside. Vimur lingered by the entrance, keeping a watchful eye on their surroundings.

Laihud joined Anna and Jay in front of the only pod that seemed to contain something within.

Suddenly, the door to the chamber opened with a hiss, and a figure stepped out. It was humanoid but with sharp, angular features and glowing eyes that seemed to pierce the darkness.

Laihud spun around, his hand going to his weapon.

"Who are you?" he demanded, his voice low and steady.

The figure didn't answer, instead lunging forward with lightning speed. Laihud barely had time to react before it was on him, grappling him to the ground.

"Fire! Fire!"

Anna and Jay rushed forward, their weapons drawn, but the figure was too fast. It ducked and weaved, dodging their attacks with ease.

The creature grabbed Laihud by his waist and began climbing the walls, dodging the incoming barrage of bullets in its direction. It appeared Laihud was knocked unconscious by the creature's swift movements.

"Stop firing!" Vimur yelled. "You might hurt Laihud instead."

Much to their surprise, the creature calmed down as soon as they stopped shooting at it. Taking advantage of the situation, Vimur knocked the beast down, his muscles bulging as he grappled with the figure.

Finally, they managed to subdue it and awaken Laihud. Vimur was still holding down the creature as Laihud examined it more closely. He found a small device attached to the back of its neck, the same kind of artificial parasite they had discovered in the Zorax.

"What the hell is going on here?" Anna breathed, staring at the device in horror.

Laihud's eyes narrowed as he studied it.

"I think we've stumbled onto something big," he said slowly. "Something very dangerous."

As they gazed around the abandoned research facility, they knew that they had to find out more about what was happening there. And they were determined to do whatever it took to uncover the truth.

However, as they were leaving the facility, they saw something that wasn't there before. A phrase written over the walls with what seemed to be blood...

"The Deacon is watching."

Chapter 545 The Deacon (2)

The Deacon sat in his dimly lit room, hidden away from the rest of the research facility. The only light came from a small flickering lamp on the desk, casting eerie shadows across the walls.

The air was musty and thick with the scent of incense, the source of which was unknown. The walls were adorned with dark tapestries depicting strange symbols and rituals.

The Deacon watched through a hidden camera as Laihud, Vimur, Alina, and Jay made their way out of the facility. His eyes narrowed as he observed their movements, analyzing their every step.

"They are sharper than I thought..."

The Deacon knew that they were onto something, that they had discovered the truth about the research facility and his involvement with the Cult.

He sat back in his chair, his mind racing with plans and contingencies. He knew he had to act fast to prevent the crew from exposing his true nature and the Cult's plans.

"The Bishop would be furious if our plan failed here." The Deacon whispered, massaging his temples. "Even after years of service, one minor mistake would be enough to get thrown out of the Cult."

He stood up, his tall and lanky figure casting a long shadow across the room, and approached the door. As he walked, he muttered to himself in a low voice, almost as if he were reciting a prayer.

A Prayer to give him strength and curse the enemies. His hand brushed against the rough fabric of his dark robes, feeling the weight of the Cult's symbol hanging around his neck.

As a loyal servant of the gods, it was his duty to protect the Cult's interests at all costs, even if it meant sacrificing those who stood in his way. And with his loyal soldiers, doing so would be easier than fooling the Xylopians.

The Deacon emerged from the room, his eyes scanning the empty corridor for any signs of the crew. He knew that they were still close, that they could still pose a threat to his plans. He took a deep breath, his mind focused and his senses sharp, ready for whatever lay ahead. The hunt was on.

"So, what do you think it means?" Laihud asked, breaking the silence.

They were back on the ship and had contacted others about their discovery. But everyone was as clueless as the person next to them.

But they all agreed on one thing, not informing the Xylopians about what they found as they might be involved with it and turn hostile against the Ghosts.

Vimur shrugged. "Could be anything. Maybe some local gang leader or a rival corporation."

"That's unlikely," Otiga chimed in. "The Xylopians are known to preach non-violence. As such, there are no criminals in their midst... at least there shouldn't be any."

Anna looked up from her tablet. "Or it could be a religious title."

Laihud stopped pacing and turned to Anna. "What do you mean?"

"Well, the term 'Deacon' is often used in religious organizations. It's a title given to someone in the church who has a leadership role," Anna explained.

Jay chimed in, "So, it could also be a cult, right?"

Everyone's mind went off simultaneously. So far, the involvement of the Cult behind the irregularities was just a theory, but now they were confident that was the case.

"Now I remember, while we were on Occuna, I heard someone mention something about the cult's hierarchy." Laihud pushed his head into his hands, trying to recall what he had heard. "The Deacon could be a low-ranking official of the cult!"

This was the chance they were looking for! Someone who might actually have some information about Cult and their whereabouts.

"I have to inform Reaper about it." Anna got up and left immediately, not even bothering to disconnect the call.

Well, no one could blame her. This was a once in the lifetime kind of opportunity. If they played their cards correctly, they just might put an end to the Cult and its debauchery.

"Laihud, Vimur, listen to me carefully. The Deacon knows about you and won't hesitate to stop you at any cost. You have to be prepared and defend yourselves until Reaper comes up with a plan." Otiga warned the duo.

Laihud rubbed his chin thoughtfully while Vimur clenched his fists in frustration.

"What can we do, Otiga?" Laihud asked. "God knows how many creatures are under the Deacon's influence, and to make matters worse, we don't know where this Deacon is hiding."

"I suggest you fortify your position and ensure you have enough weapons and ammunition," Otiga replied. "And keep your communication lines open."

She continued, "I have faith in Reaper, but it may take some time before we come up with a solution. I would have asked the Xylopians for assistance, but I doubt they'll be helpful."

"Be careful, Laihud and Vimur," Leon said, his voice laced with concern. "The Deacon is not to be underestimated. We don't know what kind of tricks the fucker is hiding under his sleeves."

Laihud nodded. "Understood. We'll do what we can."

As the video call ended, Laihud turned to Vimur.

"We need to take Otiga's advice seriously," he said with urgency. "We have to fortify our position and ensure we're prepared for any attack."

Vimur nodded grimly. "I'll gather the soldiers and make sure we have enough weapons and ammunition. You take care of the fortifications."

Laihud nodded in agreement and set to work, ordering the soldiers to gather building materials and set up barriers around the ships. He made sure to position the soldiers strategically and set up traps to catch any unwary attackers.

The Ratacules also helped them in their own way. They holed up in the trees and grass, acting as perimeter alarms that squeaked whenever unwanted guests appeared.

As night fell, Laihud and Vimur stood to watch over the ships, their eyes scanning the darkness for any signs of movement. The air was thick with tension, and the sound of rustling leaves and twigs seemed louder than usual. The Deacon's threat hung over them like a dark cloud, and they knew they were in for a long and challenging night.

Chapter 546 Fury Of The Jungle

Laihud and Vimur stood watch over the camp, scanning the dark forest for any signs of movement. They knew the Deacon's creatures were lurking in the shadows, waiting for the perfect moment to strike.

Suddenly, a low growl echoed through the trees, causing the two men to tense up. They quickly glanced at each other, silently communicating their readiness for a fight.

Within moments, a pack of vicious-looking creatures emerged from the underbrush, their eyes glowing in the darkness. The animals, each one more bizarre than the last, growled and snarled as they closed in on the camp.

Laihud and Vimur raised their weapons, ready to defend themselves and the rest of the crew. The creatures circled the camp, their growls becoming louder and more threatening.

Alina and Jay woke up to the commotion, quickly realising what was happening. They grabbed their weapons and joined Laihud and Vimur, forming a defensive circle around the ships with the rest of the crew.

"What the hell is going on?" Alina exclaimed, her eyes scanning the perimeter for any signs of danger.

"Looks like we're going to have some unwanted visitors tonight," Vimur took a deep breath and steadied his aim, scanning the area for the most immediate threat.

"I hate it whenever Otiga is correct about something," Laihud replied, his pulse racing with adrenaline. "But for now, we need to stay alert and ready for anything."

The creatures kept circling, their menacing presence making the air tense. Suddenly, a massive creature emerged from the shadows, its huge jaws snapping with fury, aiming straight for Vimur. He dodged out of the way, firing his weapon in response. The creature howled in pain, but it didn't retreat.

The creature lunged forward, its teeth bared, but the crew managed to fend it off with their combined firepower. However, the animal was only the first in a long line of creatures that continued to emerge from the shadows throughout the night.

The battle had begun. The crew fought with all their might, taking down one creature after another.

But as soon as they dispatched one, another one would take its place. The creatures seemed relentless, driven by an insatiable hunger for violence.

"This is insane," Alina muttered, her heart pounding in her chest. "How are there so many of them?"

Laihud gritted his teeth and fired a shot straight at a creature's head. "It doesn't matter how many there are. We must keep fighting until we find a way out of this."

Laihud and Vimur barked out orders, trying to coordinate the defence. Alina and Jay fired their weapons with deadly accuracy, never missing a shot. But despite their efforts, the creatures kept coming.

As the night wore on, the crew began to feel the weight of exhaustion and fatigue. They had been fighting for hours, and their resources were dwindling. It seemed like the creatures would never stop.

The hours ticked by, and the crew fought on, their nerves frayed, and their energy depleted. But as the sun finally rose on the horizon, the animals began to retreat back into the forest.

But the damage was done. They lost over a dozen soldiers in one night, the highest loss ever for the Ghosts.

Vimur let out a sigh of relief. "Thank god that's over," he said, wiping the sweat from his brow.

But Alina was less optimistic.

"I don't think we've seen the last of them," she said, her eyes scanning the treeline for any signs of movement. "We need to be ready for whatever comes next."

"Contact Otiga," Laihud instructed. "We cannot handle the onslaught for long, maybe a day or two, but not more than that."

The Deacon watched the chaos unfold from atop the back of a massive creature. He smiled as he saw the alien animals attacking the crew's camp with ferocity.

The Deacon's eyes gleamed in the darkness as he watched the creatures closing in on the crew, their teeth bared and claws extended.

"Ah, yes. Let them feel the true power of my creations. They are nothing but weaklings against my beasts," he said, his voice filled with malevolence. "They should have known better than to come here. This planet belongs to the beasts, and I am their master."

He raised his hand, and the creature beneath him roared, sending a shockwave through the ground. The other animals stopped their advance, looking up at the Deacon in fear and awe.

The Deacon chuckled to himself, relishing his power over these creatures. He knew the crew was no match for his army of beasts, and he planned to use them to his advantage.

He paused momentarily before continuing, "But there's more to this than just destroying them. The Ghosts could be useful to us, to the cult."

As the night wore on, the Deacon continued to watch the battle from his perch. He felt no remorse for the crew, only a sense of satisfaction as he saw them being taken down one by one.

"Perhaps I can capture them and use them as leverage against Reaper," he mused. "Or maybe I can recruit them to our cause. They seem resourceful, and their technology could prove valuable."

The Deacon's thoughts were interrupted by a growl from his mount. He patted its side reassuringly, "Don't worry, my friend. We'll have our chance soon enough."

He looked out into the forest, plotting his next move. The Deacon knew that the crew would be on high alert now, and he would have to be careful if he wanted to catch them off guard.

Finally, as the sun began to rise over the horizon, the Deacon signalled for his creatures to retreat. They obeyed without question, slinking back into the darkness of the forest.

The Deacon sat atop his beast, still smiling as he watched the crew's camp burn to the ground. He knew that they were now vulnerable and that he could strike at any time. The Deacon was in control and intended to keep it that way.

Chapter 547 Numbers Advantage

Laihud and Vimur had set up a perimeter of defences around the crew's camp, hoping to deter any further attacks from the Deacon's creatures.

They had spent the day repairing the damage from the previous night's battle, fortifying their defences and preparing for another onslaught.

Vimur sighed, "Hope you're ready for tonight."

Laihud nodded grimly. "Do I have a choice?"

Alina and Jay, who had been resting nearby, overheard their conversation and approached them.

"What's the plan?" asked Alina.

"We will set up traps around the camp," replied Vimur. "We need to be one step ahead of them."

Jay nodded in agreement. "I can help with that. I have some experience with traps."

Laihud looked at them, "Good. Alina, you and I will keep watch while they set up the traps. Tell the rest to follow Jay and do the same on the other sides."

As night fell, the crew settled in for another long and tense night of guarding their camp. They were on high alert, their weapons ready, scanning the darkness for any signs of movement.

The night passed slowly, with nothing but the sound of rustling leaves and the occasional growl in the distance. As the hours wore on, the crew began to feel increasingly on edge. They knew the creatures were out there, waiting for the right moment to strike.

Suddenly, a howl pierced the air, followed by the sound of pounding footsteps. The creatures had returned, and they were more aggressive than ever. The Ghosts braced themselves for the onslaught.

Laihud and Alina took up positions, their weapons at the ready. Vimur and Jay stood by the traps they had set up, waiting for the right moment to activate them.

The creatures began to circle the camp, their eyes glowing in the darkness. Laihud and Alina fired their weapons, trying to keep them at bay. But the creatures were relentless, their hunger for violence driving them forward.

Vimur and Jay activated the traps, causing several creatures to fall into them. But the others kept coming, their numbers seemingly endless.

This time, they were more aggressive and coordinated. They seemed to have learned from their previous encounter and were now more determined than ever to take down the crew.

The creatures were everywhere, lunging and snarling, their teeth bared. The crew fought with all their might, but they were starting to tire. One by one, they began to fall, their screams echoing through the night.

Laihud and Vimur fought back to back, their weapons firing in unison. They were determined to protect their crewmates, but the creatures were getting closer and closer.

Suddenly, Laihud was knocked to the ground, his weapon flying out of his hand. A creature was on top of him, its jaws snapping dangerously close to his face.

Vimur reacted quickly, firing a burst of shots at the creature. It let out a pained howl, and Laihud was able to scramble to his feet. The two men stood back to back, surrounded by animals on all sides.

As the crew fought with all their might, they began to feel the weight of exhaustion and fatigue. They had been fighting for hours, and it seemed like the creatures would never stop.

"Damn it! At this rate, we won't last for long!" Jay exclaimed, continuously firing his weapon.

"Just hold on! We got this!" Alina encouraged her crewmates.

Just when they were about to give up, they heard the sound of engines in the distance. A massive spaceship emerged from the darkness, hovering above the chaos below.

The ship fired a laser-based weapon, cutting through the creatures with ease. The crew watched in awe as the animals were decimated one by one, their bodies turning to ash in the intense heat of the weapon.

Laihud and Vimur breathed a sigh of relief, grateful for the timely intervention. They watched as the ship landed nearby, its engines still humming with power.

A door opened on the ship's side, and a figure stepped out. It was Reaper! He strode confidently towards them, his powerful physique outlined against the ship's lights.

"Hey guys!" he called out, waving at them. "Did you miss me?"

Alina rolled her eyes, "You wish."

Ashton approached them with a goofy grin, stretching out his arms and legs.

"Man, it feels good to stretch after a long flight!" he exclaimed, wincing as he massaged his shoulder. "I thought I'd never make it in time!"

Vimur clapped him on the back, "You arrived just in the nick of time, my friend. We were really starting to feel the pressure."

Reaper's goofy side was a welcome sight to the crew, reminding them that even in the face of danger, there was always a glimmer of hope. But as soon as he saw the remaining creatures, his playful demeanour vanished, and he became focused on the task at hand.

"Alright, let's take care of these guys," he said, opening the gates to [Valhalla].

As he spoke, Ashton raised his hand and summoned his army. The crew looked on in amazement as dozens of shadowy figures emerged from the darkness surrounding them.

"Allow me to show you how to use numbers to your advantage," Ashton said, his voice filled with confidence.

The creatures let out a roar, charging forward towards the shadow army. But they were no match for Ashton's power. The shadows enveloped the animals, pulling them down and holding them in place.

The crew watched in awe as Ashton's army of shadows decimated the creatures, taking them down one by one. It was like watching a dance, a beautiful and deadly display of power.

The shadow army moved in sync with Ashton's commands, striking the creatures with deadly precision. The animals, caught off guard by the sudden appearance of the shadow soldiers, were quickly overwhelmed.

As the last creature fell, Ashton released his hold on the shadows, letting them return to the darkness. He turned to his team, a smile on his face.

The crew cheered, relieved that Ashton had returned to their rescue. They were battered and bruised, but they knew they were safe now that Reaper was with them.

Chapter 548 Deacon's Downfall (1)

The Deacon paced back and forth in his lair, frustration etched on his face. He had hoped that the creatures he sent would be enough to take down the Ghosts, but the arrival of the Reaper had thrown a wrench into his plans.

He had seen firsthand the Ghost's resistance and how they had managed to fend off his creatures with surprising skill and tenacity. But the Deacon had been confident in his power, thinking he had enough under his control to overcome any obstacle.

"This was not supposed to happen," he muttered to himself, clenching his fists in anger.

Now, with Reaper on the scene, he realised how wrong he had been. The Deacon knew that the Reaper was a force to be reckoned with, a skilled fighter with training from various masters under his belt. He had read the reports of face-offs against the Reaper before and knew firsthand how dangerous he could be.

But the Deacon refused to be defeated. He had come too far to let a mere human stand in his way. He clenched his fists, his eyes narrowing as he thought about his next move.

"I will not be defeated by this... this Reaper," he muttered to himself. "I will find a way to crush him and his crew, no matter what it takes."

The Deacon looked out into the darkness, watching as his creatures prowled around the edges of the forest. He knew that he needed to devise a new strategy, one that would allow him to take down the crew once and for all.

But for now, the Deacon would bide his time, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. He had faced many challenges in his life, and he knew this was just another obstacle to overcome.

The Deacon took a deep breath, his mind already working on a new plan. He was not one to give up easily, and he was determined to emerge victorious in the end.

"Just wait, Reaper... this planet will soon be your graveyard. Mark my words."

Ashton sat in the command centre, listening intently as Laihud, Vimur, Alina, and Jay relayed everything they had discovered about the Deacon and the abandoned facility in the forest.

He listened intently as they recounted everything they had discovered about the Deacon and the abandoned facility in the forest, nodding along, taking mental notes and piecing together the information they had gathered.

"So you're saying that the Deacon is using the facility to conduct experiments on the local wildlife?" Ashton asked, his brow furrowed in thought.

Laihud nodded. "That's what we think. We found evidence of genetic manipulation and breeding programs, all aimed at creating the ultimate predator."

Ashton rubbed his chin, deep in thought. "And what about the facility itself? Have you been inside?"

Instead of replying, Laihud played footage from their trip into the abandoned laboratory. Ashton leaned forward, his eyes not leaving the screen till the footage ended.

"So, what did you find?" Ashton asked, his voice steady and firm.

Laihud cleared his throat before speaking. "We explored the facility but didn't find any concrete evidence. It was as if everything had been wiped clean like the Deacon was covering his tracks."

"We did find some old equipment and files, but most of it was outdated and useless. We couldn't find anything to help us figure out the Deacon's plans." Vimur chimed in.

Ashton leaned back in his chair, deep in thought. "Hmm. That's not good. But we can't give up. We have to keep digging. There has to be something that we're missing."

Alina nodded in agreement. "We could try to track down the Deacon's movements, and maybe there's a pattern or a clue that we can follow."

Ashton shook his head. "I don't think Deacon is going to be that careless. If he can destroy evidence inside the lab, he can also easily erase his presence."

Jay added, "Then how about we try to gather more intel from the surrounding area. There might be other people or factions that have encountered the Deacon before."

"I doubt it." Laihud interrupted. "The Xylopians are quite reserved species. Even if they had their suspicions or knew about something, it's unlikely they'll open up to strangers."

Ashton stood up, his eyes gleaming with determination.

"Here's what we're going to do," he said his voice firm. "We're going to use everything we've learned to take down the Deacon and end his reign of egotistical stupidity."

"So, what's the plan?"

"Laihud and Vimur, you two will lead the initial assault. Alina, Jay, you will lead the rest of the crew and provide cover fire. I'll take care of the flanking manoeuvres," Ashton said, his voice firm and confident.

The crew nodded in agreement, knowing that they had to work together to take down the Deacon and uncover more information about the cult.

"We need to be careful," Laihud said, his voice low. "The Deacon is powerful, and he has an army of creatures at his disposal. We can't let our guard down."

"We also need to make sure we capture him alive," Vimur added. "He's the only link we have to uncover more about the cult and its plans."

"I'll make sure he doesn't get away," he said, a determined look on his face.

The crew spent the next few hours fine-tuning their plan, going over every detail and possible scenario. They knew they only had one shot at this, and failure was not an option.

Ashton led the final briefing, going over the plan one last time. "Remember, our objective is to capture the Deacon alive. We don't want to kill him unless it's absolutely necessary. And we need to be quick and precise. Any mistakes, and we could all be dead."

The crew nodded in understanding, ready to carry out their mission.

Ashton took a deep breath, feeling the weight of responsibility on his shoulders. He knew that this mission would be dangerous, but it was necessary. The cult had to be stopped, and the only way to do that was by capturing the Deacon.

Chapter 549 Deacon's Downfall (2)

Laihud watched with concern as a group of Xylopians gathered near their camp, their voices raised in protest. He knew that the locals were wary of outsiders, but he had hoped that they would be more understanding of their situation.

The Xylopians were angry at Reaper and his undead soldiers, whom they saw as a threat to their peaceful way of life. They also blamed Reaper for the recent strange behaviour of the local animals.

Laihud walked over to the group, his hands raised in a peaceful gesture.

"Please, we mean no harm. We are here to investigate the abandoned facility in the forest and to capture the Deacon, and we have no intention of causing trouble to any of you."

One of the Xylopians stepped forward, his eyes narrowed. "We have heard enough lies from outsiders like you. You bring nothing but trouble and destruction."

Laihud took a deep breath, trying to remain calm. "I understand your concerns, but we are not your enemy. We are here to help, to find out what is happening on this planet."

The Xylopians murmured amongst themselves, still looking sceptical.

Laihud continued to speak, trying to reassure them. "We are willing to work with you and respect your ways. We do not want to cause harm to anyone or anything on this planet. But we need your cooperation and understanding."

The Xylopians remained unmoved. They shouted and gestured wildly, their anger growing with every passing moment. One of them, a tall, lanky creature with sharp claws, stepped forward and lunged at Laihud.

Laihud quickly dodged the attack, raising his weapon in defence. But he didn't fire as he knew violence would only worsen the situation. The Ghosts jump into action as well, but Laihud instructed them to stand down.

"Please, calm down," Laihud said, his voice calm and steady. "We are not your enemies, and we are here to help you deal with your problems!"

But the Xylopians didn't seem to care. They continued to shout and protest, their frustration boiling over. Laihud knew that they had to diffuse the situation before it got out of hand.

He signalled to his crewmates to fall back, hoping the Xylopians would follow suit. But they didn't. They advanced, their claws glinting in the sunlight.

Laihud had no choice but to raise his weapon and fire. The Xylopians recoiled at the blast, but they didn't retreat. They continued to advance, their anger and fear fueling their attack.

"What's going on down there?" Ashton called out. His annoyance was evident in his voice. He had been in the middle of a much-needed nap when the commotion had started.

Ashton flew above the group of Xylopians, using his vampiric wings to hover in place. He watched as the aliens glared up at him, their eyes filled with anger and suspicion. Weirdly enough, some of their eyes resembled that of the controlled creatures.

[This can't be a coincidence.]

'Nothing ever is...'

One of the Xylopians stepped forward, gesturing towards the undead soldiers behind the crew. "Your soldiers are evil! They are causing the animals to act strangely and attack us!"

Ashton rolled his eyes, feeling a surge of frustration. "They're not evil; they're under my command. And as for the animals, we're dealing with the issue as we speak. Now, what's the real problem here?"

The Xylopians continued to mutter and grumble amongst themselves, clearly not satisfied with Ashton's response. Laihud stepped forward, trying to calm the situation yet again.

"We understand your concerns, but we're not here to harm anyone. We're simply trying to stop the person responsible from causing more harm. Please, let us do our job, and we'll be out of your way."

The Xylopians weren't listening, as if they were in some sort of trance. They started to advance towards the crew, their movements aggressive and hostile. Ashton narrowed his eyes, his patience wearing thin.

"Alright, that's enough," he said firmly, his voice echoing across the clearing. "We're not here to fight, but we won't hesitate to defend ourselves if we have to."

As soon as he said those words, Sven and Dolos jumped in front of the Ghosts, ready to slaughter the natives. The Xylopians hesitated for a moment, seemingly considering their options.

But Ashton didn't waste any time. He swooped down, landing gracefully on the ground. The crew followed suit, forming a protective circle around him as they prepared to face the threat.

"Although I appreciate the sentiment, there's no need to get protective over me, guys." Ashton joked as he approached the Xylopiian leader. "now for you..."

He took a step forward, his vampiric wings unfurling behind him. The Xylopians backed away, clearly intimidated by Ashton's imposing figure.

"Something's not right here," Ashton muttered to himself. "Looks like you're not yourself. Someone's controlling you, and you're unaware of it."

The Xylopians scoffed at Ashton's words, but he was undeterred. He stepped forward, his eyes glowing with an eerie light. He extended his hand and focused his energy, tapping into his vampiric powers.

The best way to free someone from mind control was to bombard their brain with a foreign aura. And just so it happened, Vampiric aura was the best option for the procedure.

Suddenly, the Xylopien leader's eyes widened in shock. He stumbled backwards, clutching at his head.

"What...what's happening to me?"

Ashton continued to channel his energy, breaking the Deacon's hold on the Xylopien leader. The Xylopien leader shook his head, looking dazed and confused.

"What...what's going on?" he muttered again.

"The Deacon has been manipulating your leader's thoughts," Ashton declared, turning to face the rest of the Xylopiens. "He's been using him to turn you against us."

The Xylopiens looked at each other, clearly shocked by Ashton's revelation. Laihud stepped forward, backing up Ashton's claim.

"We've seen the Deacon's influence firsthand. He's been using his creatures to attack us and manipulate the animals in the forest. He's the real enemy here, not us."

?1--coM Ashton turned back to the leader, who was now staring at him with wide eyes.

"I don't blame you for what you did under the Deacon's influence," he said, holding out his hand. "But next time, be careful who you're up against. Not every mercenary is as forgiving as yours truly."

The leader looked up at Ashton, accepting his hand, but confusion and fear etched on his face. "I...I had no idea. I thought I was doing what was best for my people. I...I would like to apologise for my unbecoming behaviour."

Ashton's expression softened slightly. "I give you my word as a warrior. We are not here to harm you or your people. We are here to stop the Deacon."

The Xylopiian leader seemed to be reassured by Ashton's words. He turned to his people and spoke in their native language, and they listened intently before nodding in agreement.

Ashton turned to face the Xylopiian leader, his arms folded across his chest, his voice stern. "So, are you with us or against us?"

The Xylopiian leader hesitated, looking around at the gathered crowd. The other Xylopiians murmured amongst themselves, unsure of what to do. Finally, the leader spoke up.

"We will work with you, Reaper," he said, his voice firm. "We have seen the truth of what you say and believe that the Deacon must be stopped."

"Good," Ashton nodded, a small smile crossing his face. "We'll need all the help we can get."

Laihud stepped forward, a relieved expression on his face. "Thank you," he said to the Xylopien leader. "We appreciate your cooperation."

"We may not agree on everything," The Xylopien leader nodded in response, his eyes meeting Laihud's, "but we can agree that the Deacon is a threat that must be dealt with."

"That's all that matters," Ashton said. "Now, let's get to work."

Chapter 550 Deacon's Downfall (3)

Laihud and Vimur led the way as they entered the rocky forest, flanked by a group of Xylopiens. The crew had spent the better part of the week teaching them how to use the weapons they had brought, and they caught on quickly.

Alina and Jay followed closely behind, keeping watch on their surroundings. The rest of the crew was stationed at the perimeter, ready to provide backup if needed.

The rocky forest was quiet, almost unnaturally so. The air was thick with tension as they made their way deeper into the forest, the Xylopiens scanning the area for any signs of danger.

The Xylopiens had agreed to help, but they were understandably wary of the undead soldiers that Reaper had brought with him. Laihud and Vimur had done their best to reassure them, but the Xylopiens kept their distance, only following them because of their Leader's wish.

As they walked deeper into the forest, the tension in the air grew thicker. Laihud knew that the Deacon's humanoid soldiers were way worse than any creature the planet had to offer and could be lurking around any corner, ready to attack.

After several minutes of walking, they reached a clearing in the forest. The ground was littered with debris and broken branches, signs of recent activity. The Xylopians were on edge, their borrowed weapons at the ready.

Suddenly, they heard a rustling in the bushes up ahead. Laihud signalled for everyone to stop, and they all tensed up, ready for a fight.

But instead of humanoid creatures, a group of animals emerged from the bushes. They looked different from the ones they had seen before, more aggressive and dangerous.

The Xylopians backed away in fear, but Vimur and Laihud stood their ground. Inspired by them, the Xylopians broke their vow of non-violence against the creatures as they knew they had to take out the animals before they could proceed.

"Everyone, cover Master's allies!" Sven roared, and the summons quickly formed a defensive circle around the others.

Vimur was right behind the summons, with Alina and Jay taking aim from the rear, leading the rest of the crew. The creatures attacked relentlessly, but the Ghosts fought back with everything they had.

The Xylopians watched in amazement as the humans and undead soldiers fought side by side, their movements coordinated and precise.

Finally, after what seemed like hours, the last creature fell. The crew let out a collective sigh of relief, but they knew they couldn't let their guard down.

They continued deeper into the forest, with the Xylopians now fully committed to the mission. Laihud and Vimur shared what they knew about the Cult and the Deacon as they walked.

The Xylopians couldn't believe someone as dangerous as the Cult had established a hold over their precious planet.

The Xylopians listened intently, and their Leader, who had previously been hostile towards Ashton and the crew, now seemed to have a newfound respect for them and their work.

"If you master wills it, some of us would like to join your ranks." The Leader said, while his followers nodded aggressively.

It seemed the Xylopians got excited after their first time using weapons and wanted to have more such experiences.

While Vimur was more than happy to welcome new allies, Laihud was conflicted as the once peace-loving Xylopians were now preaching violence.

By the time they reached the Cult's base, they were fully prepared for what lay ahead. With the Xylopians at their side and Alina and Jay covering their backs, Vimur and Laihud led the way into the heart of the Deacon's lair.

As the crew approached the entrance of the abandoned facility, a sense of unease began to wash over them. The building was old and decrepit, and it was clear that no one had been there in years. But the Ghosts knew it was far from true.

Laihud glanced over at Vimur and could see the nervousness etched on his face. Alina and Jay were busy checking their weapons, ensuring everything was loaded and ready to go.

Even though they hadn't seen Ashton since separating, they knew he was doing his job because no other creatures had attacked them so far.

Laihud turned to them and said, "Alright, everyone. Stay sharp. We don't know what's waiting for us in there."

The crew nodded, but the apprehension in the air was palpable. They had been on dangerous missions before, but something about this place made them incredibly uneasy.

As they entered the facility, the darkness swallowed them whole. The only light came from their flashlights, which illuminated the damp, decaying walls. The floorboards creaked with every step they took, making them feel as if the whole structure could collapse at any moment.

Suddenly, a deafening screech echoed through the halls, causing the crew to jump and spin around, weapons ready.

Before they could react, the creatures descended upon them, moving with inhuman speed and agility. The crew fought back with all their might, firing rounds and swinging their weapons in a desperate attempt to fend off their attackers.

"Damn it! Just one of these humanoid bastards was a pain in the ass, and now there are so many!" Vimur cursed loudly, firing non-stop at the creatures.

The creatures proved to be formidable opponents, their bodies twisted and contorted into grotesque shapes that made them difficult to hit. They moved with an unnerving fluidity, dodging attacks and launching their own strikes with deadly precision.

The Ghosts had been trained to face the worst the galaxy had to offer, but nothing could have prepared them for this. Each creature seemed to be able to take down dozens of mercenaries with little effort, and the crew knew they were in serious trouble.

"Haha! Foolish bastards! I can't believe I was scared by people of your kind!?"

The Deacon laughed maniacally from a podium as he watched the crew struggle against his creations. He revelled in their misery and suffering, finding it all so amusing. Suddenly, his laughter was cut short when he was kicked to the ground by someone.

The Deacon stumbled back, the wind knocked out of him. He gasped for breath as he looked up to see who had attacked him, and his eyes widened in shock and fear as he saw Reaper standing over him.

Reaper's eyes glinted in the dim light, and his mouth twisted into a cruel smile.

"Well, well, well," he said. "Look who we have here. The great Deacon, brought down by a little kick. I'm glad I didn't use more strength, or I'm afraid my leg would have ripped through your innards. Now then, shall we play a game?"