

Zompiewolf 571

Chapter 571 Mythical Hunt (4)

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As the ship descended onto the barren planet, the team could see the lifeless terrain stretching out before them. Anna, Otiga, and Kass were all in the cockpit, with Kass piloting, while Ashton stood behind them, looking out the window.

The barren planet was a desolate wasteland, with a vast expanse of rocky terrain stretching out in every direction. The sky was a murky, rusty brown, with the occasional swirling dust storm.

"Looks like a real paradise," Ashton remarked sarcastically, earning a chuckle from the ladies.

"It may not be the most inviting planet, but it's where our target is located," Otiga replied, turning to face Ashton.

As the crew stepped out of their ship, they immediately noticed the lack of breathable air. The atmosphere was thin and filled with noxious gases. Anna, Otiga, and Kass quickly pulled out their respiratory gear, fitting the masks over their faces.

Ashton being a zombie, did not require any such gear, but on everyone's insistence, he also decided to equip the kit.

The air was filled with an acrid, metallic smell that stung the nostrils. The rocks under their feet were sharp and jagged, making it difficult to walk. The wind howled through the canyons and crevices, sending sand and pebbles flying in all directions.

The crew looked around, scanning the barren landscape for any sign of their target. They knew they had to be careful as the monster they were after was known for being elusive and dangerous.

The team gathered around Otiga as she pulled up the map of the area on her tablet.

"We believe it's located in the mountains," Otiga said, pointing to a range in the distance. "I have already informed you about how dangerous dealing with a Drakonian can be, so please be careful."

Ashton nodded before calling forth his summons. "Let's send these guys first, just in case."

Sven immediately went on his knees to greet his master. The rest of them followed suit. "Master, your command?"

"See those mountains in the distance?" Ashton pointed at the range. "A creature is hiding there; we need to take it out. Go now, kill the creature before we reach there."

"As you wish." Sven stood up, pointed at the mountains, and the horde of shadowy undead rushed to fulfil their master's desire.

"Poor guys..." Otiga mumbled, watching as the summons faded in the distance. "They have no idea how lazy their master is."

"Hey, don't blame me," Ashton replied. "I would rather conserve my stamina and strength for the actual fight rather than waste time looking for a dragon."

"A Drakonian." Otiga corrected him.

"Potayto-potahto, it's the same thing."

As they started their trek towards the mountains, the team remained alert, their weapons ready. The planet was eerily quiet, and the only sound they could hear was the crunch of their boots on the rocky terrain. The sun was beating down on them, and they could feel the heat radiating off the ground.

Once they reached the mountains, they saw Ashton's summons were hard at work, searching every crook and cranny for the Drakonian. However, they hadn't been able to find the creature yet.

"Should we help them?" Kass mumbled.

"I guess," Anna chimed in. "It'd be better than doing nothing."

"Fine. Spread out in groups of two. Since only Anna and I have fire resistance, we'll lead separately." Ashton announced. "Kass, you're with Anna, and I'll go with Otiga."

Anna and Kass headed off to the left, while Ashton and Otiga went towards the right. Ashton couldn't shake off the feeling that something was watching them as they walked. He scanned the surroundings, but there was no sign of the Drakonian.

"The fucker is hiding from us on purpose," Ashton mumbled. "I can sense it, but I can't pinpoint the location."

"I guess all we can do is look." Otiga shrugged as they continued onward.

Suddenly, Ashton's communicator beeped, and he heard Anna's voice on the other end. "Guys, I think Atlas found something. You need to come and see this."

"Got it. We're on the way."

Ashton and Otiga headed towards Anna's location, looking for any signs of danger. When they arrived, they found Anna staring at a large cave entrance.

Most of Ashton's summons had gathered there as well. However, Atlas and Dolos were missing.

"Those two headed inside, didn't they?" Ashton asked Sven, who nodded, clearly annoyed by their shenanigans.

"I heard something inside," Anna whispered. "It sounded like a growl."

"I heard it too. Celeste, Sven, you two are coming with me. The rest of you take care of the girls," Ashton took a step forward, his hand on his sword.

He turned to face Anna and continued, "Keep your radio on. I'll call for backup in case I need you."

"Got it."

Anna wasn't happy with Ashton's decision but knew to trust his judgement.

Ashton and his summons slowly made their way into the cave, and the darkness swallowed them. Thankfully, neither Ashton nor the summons had trouble seeing in the dark as they proceeded deeper inside the cave, navigating through the narrow passages.

The air was damp, and the smell of decay hung heavy. It was a smell Ashton was all too familiar with.

"Decomposing corpses. Where the hell this creature even found anything edible in this place?"

As they turned a corner, Sven spotted movement up ahead. "There it is," he whispered, pointing towards a large shadow in the distance.

Suddenly, they burst into a large, cavernous chamber. The walls were slick with slime, and the ground was covered in a layer of glistening black ooze. And in the centre of the section stood the monster they had been searching for, battling Dolos and Atlas.

The Drakonian was a massive creature, easily fifty times the size of a man. Its skin was a pale green colour, and it was covered in a thick layer of shiny scales. Its eyes glowed red in the dim light, and its jaws were filled with sharp, jagged teeth.

Ashton and the others readied their weapons, but the creature let out a deafening roar before they could attack. The force of the sound wave sent them tumbling backwards, disorientated.

At the same time, it swung its massive tail, hitting Dolos square in the chest, throwing him into the slime, which rapidly latched on him. Thankfully, Celeste used his shadowmancer skills to free him or else who would have known what could've happened to him.

"Alright folks, keep attacking the damned bastard till I figure out its attack patterns."

The summons nodded and, without hesitation, jumped to take down the beast.

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While the summons dealt with the Drakonian, Ashton took his time to focus on the gooey substance around them. At one glance, Ashton could tell it wasn't something natural and seemed to have a mind of its own.

Ashton's best guess was that whatever the slime was, it could suck the life out of anything that touched it by consuming the mana within them.

It didn't matter whether the thing latched on to it was alive or not. As long as it had mana, the slime could attack them. That was also why Dolos, an undead summon, was about to get absorbed by the goo had Celeste not intervened.

In the meantime, the battle raged on like never before.

Sven was the first to attack, darting forward with lightning-fast speed. He swung his sword at the Drakonian's leg, but it was like trying to cut through steel forged in the heart of the sun.

Celeste launched a volley of shadow bolts at the creature, but they bounced harmlessly off its scales.

Finally, Dolos charged forward, intending to take revenge for what the Drakonian did to him, his swords flashing in the dim light.

He slashed at the Drakonian's belly, but the creature twisted out of the way, its claws slashing at Dolos. The swordsman leapt back, narrowly avoiding the attack.

Suddenly, a roar echoed through the cave, and Ashton turned to see the massive Drakonian stumbling backwards. It seemed Atlas had had enough and headbutted the beast, pushing it backwards.

Atlas had now grown to match the Drakonian's height; hence his attack had had some effect on the creature. His fists were cackling with energy Ashton had never seen before.

"Looks like he learned a new skill." Ashton smiled. "I was planning to step in, but maybe, they got it after all."

Dolos charged at the creature, slamming his massive fists into its side. The Drakonian roared in anger and lashed out with its claws, catching Atlas across the chest.

Using the distraction, Sven jumped off Atlas's shoulder, his sword flashing in the dim light and leapt onto the Drakonian's back, his sword plunging into its reverse scale.

Dolos followed a similar manoeuvre and landed beside Sven, attacking the reverse scale again.

Meanwhile, Celeste and Atlas kept striking the creature from all sides. Most of their attacks were useless, but they still served the purpose of distracting the beast while Sven and Dolos did all the damage.

As the Drakonian roared in a fury, Atlas continued to pummel it with his massive fists. The creature staggered, its wings flapping wildly as it tried to regain balance. In the process, Sven got knocked off the creature's back.

"Not yet!" Sven yelled and launched himself back into the fight.

He sliced at the Drakonian's underbelly. Dolos followed suit, his twin blades whistling through the air as he landed several quick strikes on the reverse scale.

Celeste hung back, her eyes closed in concentration as she summoned tendrils of shadow to entangle the Drakonian's limbs, rendering it unable to dodge Atlas's punches or hurt Dolos or Sven.

The creature thrashed, trying to break free, but Celeste's hold only tightened. It let out a piercing screech that echoed through the cave, and for a moment, it seemed as though the fight was over.

But then the Drakonian's wings unfurled, and it began to rise into the air. Atlas jumped to try and grab it, but his massive frame was too slow.

The Drakonian was about to smash Dolos between its back and the cave wall when the undead jumped off the Drakonian's back.

The Drakonian soared upwards, its claws scraping against the cave walls as it tried to gain altitude. Sven and Dolos both leapt after it, but they were too late.

It was then Ashton noticed something weird. The slime didn't even try to attack the Drakonian. In fact, the goo retracted from where the Drakonian's feet touched.

Suddenly, there was a loud cracking noise, and the Drakonian let out a pained roar. Ashton had finally decided to join the fight as he flew right next to the Drakonian. The creature let out a deafening roar as it lunged towards him, its sharp teeth bared.

Ashton dodged the attack with ease, somersaulting in the air and coming down with a powerful strike from his sword. The Drakonian recoiled but quickly regained its footing and countered with a swipe of its massive claws.

Ashton narrowly avoided the blow, ducking and twisting in the air. He could feel the heat radiating off the Drakonian's scales as it roared in a fury, its eyes locked on him fiercely. He knew he couldn't afford to make any mistakes if he wanted to come out of this alive.

"Who am I kidding? That thing ain't killing me."

As the Drakonian prepared for another attack, Ashton launched towards the creature. The Drakonian was caught off guard by the sudden movement, and Ashton used the opportunity to strike. He plunged Balmond deep into the creature's side, eliciting a deafening roar of pain.

"Celeste, I hope you're ready!" Ashton roared as soon as Balmond hit the creature.

But the Drakonian wasn't finished yet. It reared up, lashing out with its claws and sending Ashton flying backwards. Ashton struggled to regain his balance in the air, his wings beating furiously as he fought to stay aloft.

As the Drakonian prepared for another attack, something weird happened. Not one or two, but thousands of shadowy tendrils shot out of the ground and wrapped themselves around the creature, slamming it back to the ground.

Without wasting a second, Sven charged forward, his sword blazing with energy as he attacked the Drakonian head-on.

Celeste summoned dark shadows that enveloped the creature's eyes, causing it to flail and roar in confusion. Dolos charged in from the side, striking the Drakonian with lightning-fast strikes from his sword.

Ashton swooped in from above, his sword gleaming in the cave's dim light as he landed a solid blow on the creature's head, causing it to roar in pain and fury. The Drakonian fought back with renewed vigour, lashing out with its wings and tail in a desperate attempt to defend itself.

The fight raged for hours, each side trading blows and struggling to gain the upper hand. The cave walls trembled with the force of the combatants' attacks, and the gooey substance that covered them seemed to writhe in anticipation.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, the Drakonian let out one final, pitiful roar. Its body went limp, its massive wings falling uselessly to its sides. Ashton hovered in the air, watching as the creature breathed its last.

"Finally..."

Ashton slowly lowered himself to the ground, his wings folding back into his body as he landed. He felt a sense of exhaustion and relief wash over him, knowing that he had emerged victorious against such a formidable foe.

As he turned to his summons, he saw they, too, were weary from the battle. But their eyes showed a sense of pride as they regarded him, knowing that they had fought bravely and with great skill.

"Great job, guys," Ashton smiled towards them like a proud father. "I couldn't have done it without you-"

~ROAR~

Ashton and his summons just wanted to celebrate their victory over the Draconian when they heard a lot of roaring from the outside and saw something none had expected to see.

"You got to be kidding me!"

Chapter 573 A Taste Of Seraph's Power

Ashton and his summons rushed out of the cave, their bodies still pulsing with energy from their recent victory over the Drakonian. They were ready to celebrate their triumph and bask in the glory of their accomplishment.

However, their jubilation was short-lived as they were greeted by a sight that sent a shiver down their spines. A loud roar forced them to leave the cave and investigate what was happening outside, and what they discovered was utter chaos.

Standing before them was a Drakonian, unlike anything they had ever seen. It towered over them, its massive wings spread wide, casting a shadow over the entire clearing.

Its scales were darker and more menacing, shimmering with an ethereal glow. This Drakonian was a true force to be reckoned with.

Ashton's heart sank as he took in the sight. He knew their previous victory had been merely a prelude to the actual challenge that lay before them.

"Don't tell me the Drakonian we fought and killed was this fucker's child or something," Ashton mumbled, his eyes fixed on the massive creature. "If that's the case, then it'd make sense why the creature from before didn't use its signature fire attack against us."

This new Drakonian radiated power and malice, and it seemed to relish the opportunity to face off against these brave warriors who had dared to defy its kin.

The new Drakonian let out a thunderous roar, the sound echoing through the clearing. Its eyes burned with a fiery intensity, fixed upon the lowly insects below who dared to kill its baby.

Ashton raced towards the site where he knew Anna, Otiga, Kass, and his summoned creatures were battling the enormous Drakonian. He could see the fierce fighting from a distance, and it was evident that the battle was intense. He felt the adrenaline pumping through his veins as he approached the battlefield.

Most of Ashton's skeletal soldiers were useless against the Drakonian, as only those equipped with ranged weapons like Energy rifles and the mages under Celeste's guidance could attack the creature in the first place.

Anna was flying around the Drakonian, trying to find a weakness, while Otiga and Kass supported her from below. However, it wasn't an ideal situation at all.

"Numbers don't mean shit when there's a massive skill gap between them."

Ashton's heart sank as he saw the condition of his friends and the creatures. The Drakonian was much stronger than he had imagined, and it had them cornered. The battle was taking a toll on everyone, and it was only a matter of time before they were overwhelmed.

He quickly assessed the situation and realised that the Drakonian had some sort of impenetrable armour around its scales. Any attacks made by the group's weapons would have little effect on the beast.

Also, unlike the Drakonian he had fought, the one in front did not have any visible reverse scale, which made matters much worse. Ashton knew he had to act fast and devise a new strategy to defeat the monster.

However, his presence did not go unnoticed by the creature, who immediately identified the scent of its fallen child lingering all over, Ashton.

Moreover, he had consumed the creature's flesh and blood, which immediately angered the Drakonian. It bared its teeth and let out a deafening roar, ready to attack.

With a thunderous roar, it unleashed a scorching hot fire towards Ashton and his companions. Those unfortunate enough to be in the creature's vicinity were immediately incinerated. Thankfully, Anna was towards the Drakonian's backside, so she was safe.

As the flames grew closer and closer, time seemed to slow down for Ashton. He could feel the intense heat radiating from the Drakonian's fiery breath. Instinctively, he knew he had to act quickly to survive and protect everyone from the creature's assault.

Ashton's eyes widened with determination as he glanced at the Seraph's crystal embedded in his palm. It pulsed with vibrant energy, resonating with the power of fire that lay dormant within it.

Without hesitation, he extended his hand towards the blazing inferno, calling upon the crystal's ancient power.

"This Xyran crystal better not disappoint me now!"

[Just wanted to let you know I take no guarantees if this will work or not!]

Ashton gritted his teeth as this was the first time he was willing to exploit the crystal's ability. The crystal glowed brighter, and Ashton felt a surge of warmth coursing through his veins.

With a focused gaze, Ashton extended his hand further, stretching his palm towards the fiery onslaught. As the flames engulfed him, he absorbed them into the crystal, harnessing their destructive energy.

At that moment, he became one with the element of fire. His connection to the crystal allowed him to manipulate the flames, to bend them to his will.

"Woah..." Otiga mumbled as Ashton's palm ate away the fire which had begun to melt her gear away.

As for Kass, she was too stunned to put her thoughts into words. The moment the Drakonian let out its fiery breath, she thought it was game over for them, but Ashton appeared out of nowhere to say them.

The air crackled with anticipation as Ashton channelled the absorbed fire back into the palm of his hand. The flames danced within the crystal, swirling and intensifying. His eyes glowed with an ethereal light as he moulded the fire, shaping it according to his desires.

In an instant, Ashton unleashed the fire he had absorbed. It erupted from his palm and transformed into a concentrated scorching beam. The fiery stream collided with the Drakonian's onslaught, creating a mighty clash of elements.

"Anna, get back!" he yelled, and she immediately flew to safety, watching the fiery battle advance to ground-breaking limits.

The battlefield was engulfed in a dazzling display of fire and smoke. The intense heat radiated outward, causing the ground to tremble beneath their feet. Ashton's companions shielded themselves, their eyes wide with awe and disbelief at the spectacle unfolding before them.

Ashton stood at the epicentre of this fiery battle, his body illuminated by the brilliance of the flames. He could feel the power surging through him, the fire responding to his every command. With a deft flick of his wrist, he redirected the concentrated fire towards the Drakonian.

The beast let out a deafening roar of pain as the flames ravaged its scorched scales. Its mighty form thrashed and writhed, unable to withstand the intensity of Ashton's assault.

Ashton's eyes blazed with determination as he continued to manipulate the fire, directing it with precision and purpose.

It might have been impossible to find a specific weakness of the Drakonian, so Ashton decided to bathe the entire creature in hot flames, hoping it would be enough to either kill the beast or make its weakness easier to identify.

The battle soon reached its climax as the Drakonian let out one final, agonised cry. Its once-mighty form crumbled under the force of Ashton's fire manipulation before being reduced to a charred and lifeless husk.

The flames subsided, leaving a trail of smoke and ash in their wake. Ashton stood amidst the aftermath, his chest rising and falling with exertion. His companions stared at him from a distance, with their expressions mixed with fear, awe and reverence.

Chapter 574 One Step Closer To Evolution (1)

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As the fiery battle came to an end, Anna, Otiga, and Kass rushed towards Ashton, their faces etched with concern. They found him standing amidst the smoke and ashes, his breathing heavy but a triumphant smile on his face.

Kass grinned, her eyes sparkling with mischief. "I must admit, Ashton, you know how to make an entrance. Fire and all."

"Hey, big hero," Anna said, her voice laced with sarcasm. "You think you could've saved some fire for the rest of us? I didn't even get to toast a marshmallow."

Otiga playfully nudged Anna's arm. "Come on, Anna, give the guy a break. He just took down a Drakonian. I don't think anyone has ever killed one before--"

"Two," Ashton mumbled, finally smiling as the danger had been averted. "There was a smaller one in the cave. I had to take care of that as well."

"Jokes aside, are you really fine? That was quite a battle." Anna's tone softened as she looked at Ashton, concern evident in her eyes.

Ashton nodded, wiping sweat from his brow. "Yeah, just a bit worn out. But we did it; we took down the Drakonian."

"We barely did anything," Otiga replied, staring at the Drakonian's charred corpse. "But I'm glad you arrived at the nick of time. Otherwise, we'd be sharing the same fate as that."

The group surveyed the aftermath of the fight. The once-majestic Drakonian now lay charred and lifeless on the ground. Its massive wings, once a symbol of power, were tattered and torn. Smoke billowed from its motionless body, mingling with the haze in the air.

Otiga approached the fallen creature, a mix of awe and curiosity on her face. "It's hard to believe that this colossal beast caused so much chaos."

"Honestly, I'm surprised it didn't do more," Anna replied, picking up a lone scale. "We should gather as much of this as we can. It'll come in handy while creating new gear."

"You just read my mind," Ashton replied and snapped his fingers before turning his attention to his summons.

"Everyone," Ashton called out, his voice filled with authority. "We need to scavenge everything we can from these Drakonian corpses. Search for any scales, flesh, or other materials that may be useful to us. Don't leave anything behind. Is that clear?"

His summoned creatures nodded in understanding and immediately set to work. With Raven's help, Sven used his keen eyes to locate the intact scales that covered the Drakonian's massive body. With swift, precise movements, he skillfully removed them, careful not to damage the valuable material.

Dolos called forth his minions to help him and focused on extracting the fangs and claws of the fallen beasts. With his expertise in weapons and combat, he knew that these sharp appendages could be fashioned into formidable weapons.

At the same time, Atlas used his immense strength to tear through the tough hide and collect the sinewy muscles and tendons. He carefully separated them from the Drakonian's body, aware of their potential use in creating sturdy and flexible armour.

Since he had spent most of his life on Euphoria, he knew which kinds of creatures had unique flesh that could be utilised in many ways.

Meanwhile, Celeste, the Shadowmancer witch, employed her magical abilities to extract the essence of the Drakonian. She delicately collected its residual energy, storing it within small vials for further study and potential use in future spells.

Gokung and Drakon left to fetch the corpse of the Drakonian that Ashton had defeated inside the cave.

At the same time, the Skeletal soldiers did what they did best, an extraordinary amount of manual labour. They sorted every scale and every bone they could get their hands on in neat piles, preparing them for transportation.

Ashton watched his summoned creatures work with a mixture of pride and gratitude. Their combined efforts ensured that nothing went to waste, maximising the resources gained from the fallen Drakonians.

Once the scavenging was complete, the group gathered around the collected materials. The ground was littered with scales, claws, and other remnants of the formidable creature. Ashton surveyed the scene, contemplating the possibilities that lay before them.

"We've gathered quite a haul," Ashton said, his voice filled with satisfaction. "These scales can be used for armour and shields, providing us with increased protection. We could even create a set of armours exclusive to the Ghost lieutenants."

"The fangs and claws can be fashioned into deadly weapons, while the muscles and tendons can be used to reinforce armour or craft durable equipment."

Anna stepped forward, her eyes gleaming with excitement. "And the essence collected by Celeste... I'm sure we can find beneficial uses for it in our magical endeavours."

Ashton nodded in agreement. "Indeed, the essence holds great potential. We'll need to study it further and determine its properties, which could be the key to unlocking new spells and abilities."

"Not to mention the value these materials hold. In the right markets, they can fetch a hefty price. We can use the funds to finance our future operations and ensure our continued success." Otiga, being the ever-practical businesswoman, added.

As the group surveyed the scene, the planet's second star began to rise, casting a warm glow over the battlefield.

The aftermath of the fight against the Drakonians held both triumph and opportunity. They had emerged victorious, and now they possessed the means to strengthen their arsenal and further their goals.

With renewed determination, Ashton turned to his companions. "Let's gather these materials and return to the Tower. We have much to do, and with these resources, we are one step closer to achieving our objectives."

His summoned creatures nodded in agreement, and together, they began to collect the gathered materials, carefully packing them for transportation.

While they were packing the intact corpse of the fallen Drakonian offspring, Ashton stopped them. Killing the Drakonian and consuming their flesh might have completed a couple of evolution tasks Ashton had lying around, but there were a few more he needed to take care of.

"This one belongs to me."

Chapter 575 One Step Closer To Evolution (2)

Ashton's gaze shifted to the lifeless body of the baby Drakonian lying amidst the remnants of its fallen kin. It stirred something within him—a glimmer of compassion and curiosity. His mind raced with possibilities, and he felt compelled to take a different approach.

"No need to touch the little one," Ashton called out, his voice filled with conviction. "Leave the baby Drakonian as it is, as I have another plan for it."

His summoned creatures exchanged curious glances but trusted in their master's judgment. They stepped back from the small, motionless beast, giving Ashton space to work.

With a focused expression, Ashton extended his hand towards the baby Drakonian's lifeless form. He tapped into the depths of his necromantic powers, drawing upon the ancient magic that coursed through his veins. A dark aura enveloped him as his power surged.

Whispers of incantations left his lips, invoking the ancient rituals of resurrection. With his fingertips, he wove intricate patterns in the air, channelling his energy into the creature before him.

The space reverberated with the echoes of his incantations, creating an eerie atmosphere.

Slowly, the baby Drakonian's body began to twitch. It gasped for air, its eyes fluttering open with a mixture of confusion and anger. It took in its surroundings, its gaze fixating on Ashton with an intense ferocity.

Everyone else backed away, but Ashton stood his ground, meeting the creature's fiery glare with unwavering determination. He extended a hand towards it, his voice filled with a calm yet commanding tone.

"Easy now. I am not your enemy. I gave you another chance at life and am here to guide you."

The baby Drakonian let out a guttural growl, its scaled body coiling in anticipation. It launched itself at Ashton with startling speed, claws extended, and fangs bared. The attack was swift and relentless, fueled by the creature's confusion and rage.

Ashton's reflexes kicked in, honed by countless battles and years of training. He sidestepped the oncoming assault with fluid grace, narrowly evading the lethal strike. He refused to fight back, knowing that violence would only exacerbate the creature's anger.

With a calm but commanding presence, Ashton continued to speak to the baby Drakonian, his voice unwavering amidst the chaos of the battle.

"I understand your anger. But I offer you something more—a chance to forge a new path, away from the violence and hatred that consumed your kin."

The baby Drakonian paused momentarily, its eyes locking with Ashton's. There was a flicker of recognition—a spark of curiosity amidst the turmoil of its emotions. It hesitated, seemingly torn between its instinctual rage and the possibility of a different future.

Ashton extended his hand again, this time offering a gesture of trust. "Join me, and together, we can find a way to coexist. Your strength can be tempered, guided towards a purpose greater than blind destruction."

The baby Drakonian's demeanour shifted. Its body relaxed, and its aggressive stance softened. It cautiously approached Ashton, curiosity now mingling with wariness. It sniffed at his outstretched hand, the tension in the air palpable.

With a steady touch, Ashton made contact with the creature, his energy intertwining with its own. He sensed its thoughts and emotions, a maelstrom of anger, confusion, and a glimmer of longing for something more.

In that moment, Ashton's powers of persuasion and connection to the necromantic arts melded. He whispered words of reassurance, planting seeds of trust within the baby Drakonian's mind.

Gradually, its aggression subsided, and a sense of understanding replaced its initial fury. The baby Drakonian allowed Ashton to guide it, their connection deepening with each passing moment. Together, they forged a bond—a fragile alliance that held the promise of a different fate.

As the rest of Ashton's summoned creatures observed the unfolding scene, their initial wariness gave way to curiosity and acceptance. They recognised the power of their master's abilities and respected his decision to take a different path.

With the baby Drakonian now tamed and its aggression subsided, Ashton gently ran his hand over its scaled head, eliciting a low, rumbling purr from the creature. He could sense the bond forming between them, a connection that transcended their differences.

Anna watched the scene unfold, her expression serene. This was not the first time she had witnessed Ashton's ability to resurrect and tame creatures. Over time, she understood the depths of his powers and the compassion that guided his actions.

Otiga and Kass, who had been observing the scene with astonishment, couldn't contain their surprise any longer. They approached Ashton cautiously, their expressions a mix of disbelief and curiosity.

Kass, her curiosity piqued, leaned in closer. "But what made you choose to resurrect this Drakonian? For all we know, it could go berserk at any chosen moment, and we'd be helpless to do anything."

Ashton's expression turned thoughtful. "Indeed, Drakonians have a fearsome reputation. But that's what makes them so valuable."

Anna nodded while the others kept looking at what Ashton had to say next.

"I believe there's potential for this Drakonian to be a valuable ally," he said softly, his voice laced with satisfaction and hope. "With time and training, it could become a powerful asset to our cause. Especially if the Cult has some creature like it for themselves."

"That's true. With Aegis for defence and this Drakonian for offence, it'd certainly be difficult for anyone to last long against you!" Otiga's eyes widened with realisation.

Ashton nodded, his gaze never leaving the tamed Drakonian as it nuzzled against his hand. "That's the plan."

The tamed Drakonian purred contentedly, its eyes reflecting a newfound sense of peace. Ashton's touch seemed to calm the creature, soothing its inner turmoil and opening the door to a future untainted by unnecessary violence.

"This Drakonian deserves a new name—a symbol of its rebirth and the path it now walks alongside us." Ashton turned to his companions. "Unfortunately, I'm out of ideas..."

"How about Ember?" Anna suggested. "A name that represents the fiery spirit within the creature and you."

"That's a great idea!" Ashton proclaimed, his voice carrying a sense of reverence. "From this day forth, you shall be known as Ember. Do you like it?"

Ember blinked its large, reptilian eyes, seemingly acknowledging the new name with a subtle flick of its tail. Ember emitted a soft, rumbling sound as if in agreement.

Its violent nature now tamed, it recognised Ashton as its guide, willingly embarking on this new journey of redemption and purpose.

Chapter 576 One Step Closer To Evolution (3)

As the scene unfolded with Ember, Ashton noticed a tinge of sadness in the eyes of Drakon, his loyal summoned undead Chimaera.

The creature had faithfully stood by his side throughout their battles, and Ashton couldn't help but empathise with its desire for growth and strength.

"Don't worry, little guy," he said. "I have not forgotten my promise yet."

With a warm smile, Ashton raised his hand, signalling the skeletal warriors to halt their scavenging. The sound of clattering bones ceased, and an eerie stillness settled over the battlefield.

"Drakon," Ashton addressed his summon, his voice filled with understanding. "I see the longing in your eyes, the hunger for power. I won't deny you the opportunity to evolve and become stronger. Take what you need from the fallen Drakonian. But don't take too much. Everyone else needs some as well."

Drakon's skeletal form shuddered with a mixture of anticipation and gratitude. Its skeletal wings unfolded, casting a shadow over the scorched earth.

With graceful steps, it approached the lifeless body of the adult Drakonian, which had been torn to shreds, its hollow sockets fixed on the available resources.

Everyone watched Drakon as he went around in circles around the scavenged goods. But Ashton was especially interested in what Drakon had in his mind.

Ashton watched with fascination and excitement as Drakon examined the fallen creature. The undead Chimaera's skeletal claws delicately sifted through the scales, its bony talons gliding over the leathery skin.

It was searching for specific components, driven by a keen instinct for its own metamorphosis.

After a few moments of contemplation, Drakon's clawed finger pointed at a cluster of vibrant scales along the Drakonian's spine. They shimmered with an otherworldly luminescence, hinting at their potential power.

Ashton nodded approvingly. "Those scales will serve you well, Drakon. Take as many as you need. They will aid in your evolution and grant you the strength you seek."

With a swift movement, Drakon's skeletal claws sliced through the scales, freeing them from the Drakonian's spinal cord. They clinked together in a macabre melody as they were collected and held securely within Drakon's grasp.

Ashton extended his hand towards his summoned Chimaera, offering guidance and encouragement.

"Now, Drakon, absorb the essence of those scales and the spinal cord. Let their power intertwine with your own. Allow yourself to evolve and grow stronger."

Drakon's hollow sockets gazed at Ashton with determination and gratitude. It understood the opportunity presented before it—the chance to transcend its current form and ascend to greater heights.

With a surge of necromantic energy, Drakon began the process of absorbing the essence within the scales. The iridescent power pulsed through its skeletal frame, filling the empty chambers where flesh and sinew once resided. The transformation was underway.

Ashton stood by Drakon's side, his presence a source of reassurance and support. He watched as the skeletal Chimaera's wings expanded, veins of ethereal energy pulsating along their tattered edges.

Drakon's form shifted and solidified, gaining a newfound strength and substance.

A radiant glow enveloped Drakon's skeletal body as it completed its evolution. Where there once stood a creature of death and decay now stood a majestic undead Chimaera, reborn with enhanced power and potential.

Ashton couldn't help but feel a sense of pride and fulfilment at Drakon's transformation. The skeletal creature turned its bony head towards Ashton, a gleam of gratitude shining within its sockets. It let out a deep, resonant growl, an expression of newfound strength and loyalty.

Ashton reciprocated the gesture with a nod, a silent acknowledgement of their shared journey.

"You've grown, Drakon. Embrace your newfound power, but never forget the purpose for which we fight," Ashton said, his voice infused with determination. "With your evolved form, we shall face our enemies with even greater strength and resilience, and you will be there to conquer my enemies."

Drakon, now radiating a sense of confidence and power, let out a guttural roar that echoed through the battlefield. Its wings spread wide, casting a long shadow over the scorched earth.

The skeletal warriors, sensing the transformation of their comrades, raised their weapons in a show of unity and respect.

Ashton's gaze swept across the battlefield, taking in the scene before him. He couldn't help but feel a surge of hope, knowing that together they were a force to be reckoned with. Their bond, forged through countless battles and shared triumphs, had grown even stronger.

"Drakon, you are no longer bound by the limitations of your previous form," Sven declared, his voice projecting strength and purpose. "You are an embodiment of power and resilience. Together, we shall face whatever challenges lie ahead."

With a newfound sense of purpose, the group gathered their collected resources and prepared to leave the battlefield. Drakon, leading the way with its commanding presence, signalled the skeletal warriors to follow.

Watching the scene unfold was funny as it was the first time Drakon ever commanded the skeletons, and they were confused. But with Ashton's approval, they followed the creature's lead.

Ashton walked alongside Drakon, his eyes filled with admiration.

"Your evolution is a testament to your unwavering determination and the depths of your potential," Raven remarked. "Remember, strength alone is not enough, and it is tempered by wisdom and compassion. Use your newfound power for the greater good."

Drakon inclined its skeletal head, understanding the weight of Raven's words. It had been granted a second chance at existence and was determined to prove its worth. The skeletal warriors marched in unison, their footsteps resonating with a newfound sense of purpose.

As the group made their way towards their base, the sun began to rise over their heads, casting a warm glow over the horizon. The victory against the Drakonians and Drakons' evolution marked a turning point in their journey.

Together, they would face the challenges that awaited them, armed with strength, unity, and a renewed sense of purpose.

As they disappeared into the distance, the remnants of the fallen Drakonians lay scattered on the battlefield, a stark reminder of the struggles they had overcome.

But even in death, their sacrifice had served a greater purpose, fueling the growth and evolution of those who remained.

The winds whispered their stories, carrying echoes of battles fought and victories won. And amidst the fading light, Ashton, his team and his summons forged ahead, ready to face whatever trials lay in their path, fueled by the strength of their bond and the unyielding spirit of their shared journey.

Chapter 577 One Step Closer To Evolution (4)

As the spaceship soared through the vast expanse of the starry sky, Ashton found himself seated in the quiet confines of the vessel, lost in thought. The hum of the engines provided a comforting backdrop as he immersed himself in the tasks that lay before him.

His eyes focused on the holographic display before him, the system interface that housed the list of remaining tasks he needed to accomplish before he could achieve his long-awaited evolution.

There were only four tasks left, each a crucial step on his journey towards becoming something extraordinary.

Ashton's finger hovered over the interface, scrolling through the tasks individually. The holographic symbols flickered, illuminating his face with a soft glow as he pondered the challenges ahead.

—

Werewolf evolution task(s):

>> Fight and defeat 10 B-grade beings (10/10)

>> Turn 2 creatures into Werewolves. (1/2)

>> Add new members to your pack of werewolves. (Currently have: 2/7 werewolves in the pack.)

Vampire evolution task(s):

>> Consume fresh blood of 2 B-grade beings. (2/2)

>> Consume fresh blood of a legendary creature. (0/1)

>> Add a new member to your family. (Turn another creature into your slave) (1/1)

Grim Reaper evolution task(s):

>> Raise a Lich. (1/1)

>> Create and Tame 10 summons. (Currently have: 8/10 summons)

>> Consume the flesh of a mythical creature. (1/1)

—

"Getting more summons shouldn't be a tough task," Ashton mumbled to himself. "But raising a pack of werewolves, on the other hand, was a bit... troublesome."

So far, Ashton only had two werewolves in his pack. One was Anna, and the other was Viper since he was a vampirewolf. Which meant he was supposed to bring five more werewolves into his 'family'.

"If I convert Tarek, I'd still need four more companions. Finding capable people isn't tough, but convincing them to evolve into a werewolf... is a bothersome task."

Ashton's mind buzzed with uncertainty, his heart pulsating with a mix of excitement and worry. He had come so far, fought countless battles, and honed his skills to near perfection. Now, the culmination of his efforts was within reach.

With a determined resolve, Ashton closed the system interface, his eyes lifting to gaze out the window at the stars that dotted the vast cosmic canvas. He drew a deep breath, letting the weight of his mission settle upon his shoulders.

"I've come a long way," he murmured softly. "The remaining tasks should be easy to accomplish, other than the one which requires slaying a Legendary creature."

"It took Otiga months to locate a Mythical creature. Who knows how long it'll take us to find a legendary creature. Then again, even if I did, what are the chances I'd be able to win? After all, Legendary creatures are much stronger than the Mythical ones."

Ashton slumped into his seat. The only reason he could defeat the Drakonian was the Seraph's crystal, and they would have been gone for good if he did not have that.

"At least I defeated Ember without using the crystal. That must count for something, right?"

[Yeah, I'll give you credit for that. By the way, what powers did you get from consuming the Drakonian's flesh and blood?]

"Can't you see them yourself?"

[Where's the fun in that?]

"This lazy motherfucker admin." Ashton sighed and toggled his status page.

The interface displayed a comprehensive overview of the abilities he had acquired by consuming the flesh of the fallen Drakonians.

His fingers hovered over the controls, navigating through the intricate web of information. The system interface responded to his touch, presenting him with a series of menus and options.

Each ability was intricately detailed, outlining its effects, limitations, and potential applications.

Ashton's mind delved deep into the complexities of his newfound powers. He was aware of the immense responsibility of harnessing such formidable creatures' abilities.

With every scroll and tap of his fingers, he sought to understand their potential and how they could aid him in his journey.

The first ability on the list was "Draconic Resilience." Ashton's eyes flickered as he read the description.

The consumption of the Drakonian flesh had fortified his own body, granting him enhanced physical strength and endurance. He could now withstand powerful blows and heal rapidly from injuries.

[Draconic Resilience] coupled with the [Regeneration] ability allowed him to heal from even the most grievous wounds. This newfound resilience would enable him to face even the most formidable adversaries with unwavering determination.

"I guess I don't have to worry about dying from one attack."

[You're the Emissary of Death. Dying should be the last thing on your mind.]

"Yeah, yeah, I get it."

Moving on, Ashton explored the second ability: "Draconic Breath." The description indicated that he now possessed the ability to unleash a devastating stream of fire from his own mouth, mimicking the Drakonian's fiery breath.

The destructive potential of this ability was awe-inspiring, capable of scorching enemies and decimating obstacles.

However, there wasn't much excitement in Ashton's eyes this time. Mainly because he already had a similar skill in the form of [Scorching Rain]. But he wasn't complaining as any ability was useful.

Finally, Ashton's attention turned to the final ability: "Draconic Sight." The consumption of the Drakonian flesh had enhanced his vision, granting him the ability to perceive the world with extraordinary clarity.

He could now see through the darkness of the never-ending space and analyse different types of cosmic radiations, detect hidden objects and beings, and even perceive magical energies. Something he had some trouble doing before.

A smile crept across Ashton's face as he pondered the implications of this ability. With his enhanced vision, he would become a master tracker, uncovering hidden paths and secrets concealed from others.

It would serve as an invaluable tool in his quest, guiding him through the shadows and aiding him in his search for knowledge and power.

Moreover, if he used [Draconic sight] with his enhanced vision granted to him in his werewolf form, he could mark countless enemies with [Wolf's Mark].

Lost in his thoughts, Ashton marvelled at the abilities before him, and they represented a significant step in his journey towards self-discovery and mastery.

Chapter 578 Invitation

The ship docked smoothly at Kernel Tower's hangar bay, and the engines shut down with a hiss. Ashton let out a sigh of relief as he unbuckled his seat belt and stood up, stretching his arms and legs. It felt good to be back home, even if it was just for a short while.

As the doors slid open, the victorious team led by Ashton walked out. They stepped out one by one, their presence commanding attention amidst the hustle and bustle of the docking bay.

He walked over to the loading ramp and found Leon already there, waiting for them.

"Welcome back, boss," Leon said, saluting Ashton.

"You're not going to stop doing that anytime soon, are you?" Ashton asked. Clearly, he had had enough of Leon's shenanigans. "Either way, how's everything been here?"

"Pretty good, all things considered. We've been busy with the usual stuff, but nothing too crazy," Leon replied, shrugging. "Vimur and Viper have been diligently training the newbies."

"That's good," Ashton nodded and then turned to the rest of his team. "Alright, everyone. Let's get to work. We've got a lot of materials to unload and sort through."

The team got to work unloading crates and sorting through the spoils of their recent battle. Ashton watched as they worked. He wanted to assist them, but his team didn't support his sentiments.

In their opinion, he had worked the most, so he deserved a rest, and none of them wanted to hear otherwise. So Ashton made his peace by watching them work.

Leon stood at the forefront, ready to assist as they unloaded the materials they had gathered from the fallen Drakonians. Vimur arrived just in time to help them.

With his muscular physique and unwavering dedication, he swiftly organised the process, ensuring that the valuable resources were handled carefully, as anything relating to the Drakonian was impossible to come by, even in the black market.

Ashton glanced around, taking in the familiar surroundings of Kernel Tower. The towering structure floated through the space using high-powered thrusters.

Its sleek design was a testament to the power and influence of the organisation it housed. And thinking about one day it would belong to him made Ashton unnerved.

Just as the team finished unloading, a familiar figure approached, followed by a couple of security guards. Mazton strode towards them with an air of authority. His sharp suit and confident demeanour conveyed a sense of professionalism, though his eyes sparkled with genuine admiration.

"Congratulations, Reaper," Mazton said, extending his hand in a firm handshake. "You and your team have accomplished a remarkable feat. The Kernel Tower is proud to have allies of your calibre."

Ashton reciprocated the handshake, a sense of gratification warming his heart. "Thanks, but what's with the official tone all of a sudden?"

"It's because of this," Mazton's eyes flickered with appreciation before he reached into his pocket and retrieved a sealed envelope. "On behalf of the Orion Empire, I have been tasked with delivering this invitation to you and your Lieutenants."

"Invitation from the Empire? What for?"

"Sorry, I'm not allowed to read the contents myself."

"Fine..."

Ashton took the envelope, his curiosity piqued. He recognised the seal of the Orion Empire, an emblem of prestige and power. Breaking the seal, he unfolded the letter and read its contents.

"It seems the Orion Empire wishes to extend an invitation to a formal reception," Ashton remarked, a note of intrigue lacing his words. "They acknowledge our victory over Phantom and the Drakonians and wish to honour us."

"Hm... isn't that interesting. The Orion Empire recognises your potential and the significance of your accomplishments." Mazton nodded. "Attending the party will be an opportunity to forge alliances, deepen connections, and gain further support for your cause."

He continued, "Moreover, it would be a great opportunity to look into the Cult, as I'm sure those fuckers won't sit idle for long. They might even be hiding amongst their ranks as we speak."

"That's true," Ashton mumbled. "From what I know about the cult, they aren't ones to not take advantage of a situation like that."

Ashton's eyes gleamed with anticipation. He understood the importance of such events—moments where political and strategic ties could be formed.

"We shall attend the party, Mazton. Please convey our gratitude and acceptance to the Orion Empire."

Mazton smiled, his approval evident. "I will make the necessary arrangements. You and your Lieutenants will be well-prepared for the occasion."

It is a chance to showcase the strength and capabilities of the formidable team you have assembled and strike fear in the heart of those Cultists."

"Of course, thanks for the help, as always."

"Oh, before I leave, I heard you had quite the adventure out there," Mazton said, smiling.

"It was definitely an interesting trip," Ashton replied, returning the smile.

With that, Mazton and his security guards left the hangar bay, leaving Ashton and his team to finish unloading their materials.

The team continued their diligent work, unloading crates and carefully organising the spoils they had acquired from the Drakonian battle. The hangar bay was abuzz with activity, the clatter of equipment and the occasional exchange of instructions filling the air.

As they worked, Anna approached Ashton, her brow furrowed with curiosity.

"So, what's in the letter?" she asked, her eyes glancing towards the envelope.

"It's an invitation from the Orion Empire," he replied, handing her the letter. "They want us to attend a formal party as guests of honour."

Otiga chimed in, her voice filled with playful anticipation. "Well, if we're going to attend a fancy party, we must ensure we're prepared. We'll need the perfect outfits to match our status.

Kass, who had been silently observing the conversation, smirked. "I don't care if I have to go there wearing a bikini as long as they provide free booze."

Ashton couldn't help but chuckle at their banter. Despite the intense nature of their missions, moments like these reminded him of the comradeship he had found among his team. They had become more than just colleagues; they were like family.

As the conversation concluded, Leon approached, his steps purposeful. "The materials have been safely secured, Ashton. They will be taken to the designated storage facility for further processing."

Ashton acknowledged Leon with a nod of appreciation. "Thank you, Leon. Oh, and could you tell everyone to be prepared for a royal feast?"

Leon smiled and nodded. "Rest assured, I'll teach everyone the proper code and etiquette they'd need to follow."

"You're a lifesaver."

Chapter 579 Preparations! (1)

Ashton sat in his private quarters at Kernel Tower, surrounded by holographic screens displaying various data and information about the Orion Empire. The room was dimly lit, casting an ethereal glow on his face as he delved into his research.

The holographic screens flickered with images of majestic star systems, sprawling cities, and regal figures adorned in opulent attire. Ashton's eyes scanned the vast wealth of knowledge before him, seeking to understand the power and influence of the Orion Empire.

"What part of the phrase: abridged history you don't understand, Malekith?" Ashton shook his head as countless more screens loaded with information popped open before him.

"Sure, compiling the history of thousands of years old civilisation can be done in a mere page, right?" Malekith responded. "The Orions are pretty sensitive about their culture and get easily upset if someone gets the smallest details wrong."

"Fine... shorten it a teeny bit, then?"

"Here you go!" Malekith shook his head, and half of the screens disappeared.

"Thank you!" Ashton replied as he began reading through the screens.

According to the data, In the vast expanse of the Milky Way galaxy, where stars sparkled like distant promises, lay the Orion Empire—a dominion of power and influence that stretched across multiple solar systems and encompassed the majority of the Orion belt.

The Orion Empire stood as a shining beacon of civilisation and strength, its glory radiating far and wide.

At the heart of the empire was the formidable Orion Military, a force renowned for its unwavering loyalty and unparalleled might.

"I wanted a document, not a documentary..." Ashton sighed, skipped through the introduction, and jumped into something more interesting.

According to the data Malekith provided, their armies, comprised of highly trained soldiers and advanced weaponry, were deployed across the empire's vast reaches, ensuring its domains' safety and stability.

From the disciplined legions that patrolled the outermost reaches to the elite special forces that conducted covert operations, Ashton could see the Orion Military was a force to be reckoned with.

But military strength alone did not define the Orion Empire's supremacy. As its power extended beyond the battlefield and resonated through its economic influence.

The empire boasted a vast network of trade routes, spanning solar systems and connecting the farthest reaches of its domains. From valuable resources mined from distant asteroids to advanced technologies crafted by brilliant minds, the Orion Empire held a firm grip on the economic arteries of the galaxy.

In the bustling markets of the empire's capital, towering skyscrapers reached for the heavens, each a testament to the wealth and prosperity that thrived within.

'Again, with this monologue...'

Countless corporations and financial institutions wielded immense influence, fueling the empire's growth and ensuring its economic dominance throughout the galaxy.

The Orion Empire's currency, known as Stellar Credits, flowed through the veins of commerce, lubricating the gears of the empire's economic engine. Some said Stellar Credits was the only thing stopping intergalactic currency like Yenos from taking over the entire galaxy.

But power was not solely held by the military and the wealthy elite. The Orion Empire prided itself on a well-structured governmental system led by a council of wise and experienced leaders.

Working under the Emperor, the High Council, composed of representatives from each solar system within the empire, made decisions that shaped the destiny of their dominion.

Under their guidance, laws were enacted, policies were formed, and justice was upheld, ensuring that the empire functioned smoothly and efficiently.

The empire also had a vivid influence on the realm of culture and the arts. The Orion Empire was a melting pot of diverse traditions and creativity.

Museums and galleries displayed breathtaking works of art, capturing the beauty of the cosmos and the myriad experiences of its inhabitants. The empire's citizens revelled in the richness of their heritage, celebrating festivals that showcased their vibrant cultures and traditions.

Beyond its military might, economic prowess, and cultural achievements, the Orion Empire had another formidable strength—the unwavering loyalty and dedication of its citizens.

That was why, despite being in existence for roughly over a thousand years, the capital, Orion Prime, had never been under the threat of being taken over by hostile forces, be it internal or external.

The empire fostered a sense of unity and pride among its people, instilling a deep belief in the empire's ideals and a commitment to its prosperity. From the bustling metropolises to the humble farming communities, the spirit of the Orion Empire burned bright in the hearts of its inhabitants.

As the empire expanded its borders and its influence reached further into the cosmos, the Orion Empire's power continued to grow. Its dominance in the Orion belt was unchallenged, its presence felt in every corner of its expansive domain.

In the tapestry of the galaxy, the Orion Empire stood as a shining star, illuminating the darkness and inspiring awe and respect. From the might of its military to the depth of its cultural heritage, the empire was a force to be reckoned with—an empire that ruled over the Orion belt and left an indelible mark on the annals of history.

"Find anything interesting, Ashton?" she asked, her eyes darting across the holographic displays.

"Good timing, come watch this boring ass documentary with me!" Ashton gestured for her to join him.

"I think... I'll pass on watching the documentary. But I can join you." Anna leaned closer, her gaze fixed on the holographic images. "What about their military capabilities? Do we have any information on that?"

"You don't wanna know. Believe me," Ashton sighed, tapping into the relevant data. "The empire boasts a highly advanced military, equipped with state-of-the-art technology and formidable warships. Anyone even thinking about declaring war on them has to be a massive moron."

"No wonder the Cult didn't directly challenge their authority," Anna mumbled as she sat on Ashton's lap. "That said, the vastness of the Empire makes it easier for the Cult to go undetected as they slip through planets, causing havoc."

"By the way, did you know to ensure that their Emperor is neutral, the man is not supposed to have direct contact with anyone except his ministers and the High Council?" he said. "Imagine having all that power and still not being able to do whatever the fuck you want. Couldn't be me."

"Well, I wanted to tell you Leon has gathered everyone for debriefing, and he wants you there," Anna replied, jumping off him. "So, let's go!"

"Alright. Malekith-

"Yeah yeah, I got it." The annoyed AI replied, frantically closing all the screens.

Chapter 580 [Bonus] Preparations! (2)

The room was bathed in a soft, warm glow, the lighting casting gentle shadows on the faces of Ashton's lieutenants.

The atmosphere was charged with anticipation as they all took their seats around a large, polished table.

Sitting by Ashton's side, Anna was calm and composed, her eyes surveying the room. Ashton cleared his throat, his voice steady and commanding.

"Thank you all for gathering here today," he began, his eyes meeting each lieutenant's gaze. "As you know, we have received an invitation from the Orion Empire to attend a formal event.

This event presents us with an opportunity to strengthen our position, forge alliances, and gather valuable information regarding the cult."

The room filled with a murmur of excitement and whispers as the lieutenants exchanged glances, their curiosity piqued. They knew this invitation was significant for their image and the future of their mercenary group.

Anna stood beside Ashton. She looked at each lieutenant, her gaze firm yet encouraging.

"As Reaper mentioned, his event presents us with an opportunity to showcase our strengths, forge connections, and gain valuable information. It is a chance to further our cause and solidify our position in the galactic landscape. So I don't want anyone of us messing things up!"

Vulcan, his arms crossed, nodded in agreement, his face displaying determination and focus. Otiga leaned forward; even though she already knew about the announcement, she wasn't any less excited.

Leon's stoic expression revealed his readiness for any challenge that lay ahead. After all, his job was to get muscle-brained individuals like Vimur in line for the event.

Vimur, the ever-clueless warmonger, didn't care about the delicate situation and could only think about three things: Women, food, and booze. Kass shared the same opinion... at least for the latter two options.

As for Laihud, he immediately smiled as it was his moment to shine. After all, in the academy, he grew up to be a healer; they were taught everything about etiquette that needed to be displayed before royalty.

Although, once he became a mercenary, he never thought he would get an opportunity to put his skills to the test. Last but not least came Viper, who ever so silently kept absorbing every piece of information thrown his way.

"As a team, we have proven our abilities time and time again," Ashton continued. "We have faced countless challenges and emerged victorious. This event presents us with an opportunity to showcase our strength, both in combat and diplomacy."

He continued, "We must seize this chance to make a lasting impression, to demonstrate that we are a force to be reckoned with."

The room hummed with adrenaline as Ashton's words sank in. Each lieutenant understood the significance of this moment and the responsibility they carried. They were more than soldiers; they were ambassadors of their cause.

"Our preparation begins now," Anna declared, her voice resonating with conviction. "Research the Orion Empire—its customs, traditions, and key figures. We must show respect and adapt to their ways. Let us embody the values that have brought us this far: courage, loyalty, and unwavering determination."

"I have already compiled enough information to get you started. Learn about the Orions like they are the back of your hands." She concluded.

The lieutenants nodded in agreement, their collective resolve palpable. The room seemed to crackle with the weight of their shared purpose. Ashton's gaze swept across the room again, his eyes meeting each lieutenant's, conveying a silent understanding.

"We have spent years honing ourselves physically, and now is the time to prepare for something better," Ashton announced with a smile. "I know most of us aren't used to the political scene, but hey! Let's try and do our best!"

A collective sense of determination settled over the room as each lieutenant recognised the magnitude of the task ahead.

They knew that the upcoming event was not just an opportunity for networking and diplomacy but a chance to showcase their unwavering strength to Orion Empire. However, Otiga had a thing two to say.

"You do know other mercenary groups have also been invited there?" She asked Ashton. "What if we encounter opposition or resistance during the event? After all, not everyone is pleased with our sudden rise to power and fame."

Ashton's lips curled into a determined smile. "If anyone tries to pull some crap on us, we face them head-on. If I'm being honest, I lowkey want someone to pull a stunt on us. What better way would there be to show our strength to the spectators?"

Everyone in the room smiled while Anna and Laihud silently shook their heads. Ashton might behave practically in most situations, but deep down, everybody knew he was a much bigger warmonger than Vimur.

But unlike him, Shinon preferred not to fight without reason, so there was that. So, until and unless someone plans on doing something to them, the banquet should go without a hitch.

Leon, his usually stoic expression softening, spoke up. "We stand by your side, captain."

"Bold words from a twerp's mouth," Vimur playfully teased Leon, as he was the weakest team member regarding combat experience.

"Thank you," he said, his voice filled with genuine appreciation. "With all of you by my side, I have no doubt we will rise to this challenge and make our mark on the Orion Empire."

As the meeting concluded, the lieutenants dispersed, their minds buzzing with preparations and research. Each one carried a sense of purpose and determination, ready to face the trials and opportunities that awaited them at the upcoming event.

Ashton remained in the room, his gaze lingering on the holographic displays. His mind was already formulating strategies, considering every possible scenario. The weight of their mission settled upon his shoulders, but he embraced it, knowing that they had come too far to falter now.

"There are way too many things I need to get a hold of now," He mumbled. "But for now, I should take care of things in the tower. Starting with Tarek."