

Zompiewolf 651

Chapter 651 Regret

Everybody seemed to hold their breaths as Mera and Donovan faced each other, their eyes locked in a fierce gaze. The air was tense as they prepared to engage in a battle that had been a long time coming.

Her stance fluid and confident, Mera dodged Donovan's erratic strike. But that wasn't all.

With a sudden burst of speed, she closed the distance between them, aiming a lightning-quick punch at Donovan's chest. Donovan, quick on his feet, deftly sidestepped the attack, narrowly avoiding Mera's strike.

"It didn't have to be like this, Donovan," Mera mumbled as Donovan gathered his footing.

"It didn't have to be like this?" Donovan said, his fists clenched as he stared at Ashton, enjoying their fight from afar. "What were you expecting when you chose him over me?"

"I didn't choose anyone, you moron!"

"Enough, I'm not here to talk. But to end this farce once and for all."

Having said that, Donovan retaliated with a powerful kick aimed at Mera's midsection. She blocked the blow with her forearm, feeling the force behind it reverberate through her bones. The impact sent her staggering backwards, but she quickly regained her footing.

The battle continued with a flurry of punches and kicks, each move calculated and precise. They circled each other, testing the waters, searching for an opening. Donovan's once-familiar face was now etched with calm rage, his eyes locked onto Mera.

Mera, knowing Donovan's fighting style well, anticipated his strikes. She ducked under a roundhouse kick and countered with a low sweep, aiming to take Donovan off his feet.

But he leapt over her, landing gracefully behind her, and attempted a quick jab to her back. Mera twisted in mid-air, narrowly avoiding the attack.

Their human forms were moving all around the floor with skill and strategy, a remembrance of the years they had spent training together.

Each strike and parry was a reflection of their shared history, the memories of their time as allies and friends mingling with the fierce determination of enemies.

As the human confrontation continued, Donovan realised he was at a disadvantage. Mera's skill and agility in her human form proved challenging to overcome.

With a fierce growl, he made a bold decision. His transformation into a werewolf would level the playing field.

In a sudden burst of power, Donovan's body contorted and shifted. Bones cracked, fur sprouted as he transformed into a massive, formidable werewolf. His size increased, and his muscles bulged with newfound strength. The entire floor trembled with the force of his transformation.

"You have grown stronger, I'll give you that..." Mera mumbled as a sad smile appeared on her face. "But don't forget who I am!"

Unfazed by Donovan's transformation, Mera allowed her werewolf form to emerge. Her body shifted and expanded, her bones changing shape as she embraced her true nature. She stood tall and powerful in her werewolf form, her golden eyes locked onto Donovan's.

The battle now took on a new level of intensity. The two werewolves circled each other, their growls filling the air. Donovan lunged first, his jaws snapping in an attempt to bite Mera's throat. She dodged the attack with a swift step to the side, her fangs bared in response.

Mera retaliated with a series of slashing strikes, her claws leaving deep gashes in Donovan's fur. He howled in pain but refused to yield, launching a barrage of powerful swipes and bites. Mera matched his ferocity with her own, their bodies clashing in a storm of fur and snarls.

The battle raged on, the moonlight filtering through the forest canopy above and into the destroyed base, casting eerie shadows on the combatants. Each of them stood determined to prove their dominance, to settle old scores and unresolved conflicts once and for all.

Mera's agility and precision were pitted against Donovan's raw power and resilience. They exchanged brutal blows, neither willing to relent. The entire area echoed with the sounds of their battle, a symphony of snarls and the clashing of fangs and claws.

After what felt like an eternity, Mera found her opening. With a lightning-quick manoeuvre, she lunged at Donovan, her jaws clamping down on his throat. Donovan let out a final, guttural growl, his resistance fading as he recognised his defeat.

Tears welled in Mera's eyes as she watched Donovan struggling beneath her claws. For a moment, she recognised the man he had once been and thought he would change if given another chance, but Donovan was having none of it.

"Argh... finish this already!" he barked at Mera, who closed her eyes as she didn't want to see what happened next... but she forced herself to do the opposite.

Mera held her grip momentarily, her golden eyes locked onto Donovan's. Then, with a powerful shake, she released her grip, letting his lifeless body slump to the forest floor. The battle was over.

Her werewolf form didn't fade away as Mera let out a mournful howl, a mix of victory and regret. She had won the duel to the death, but it had come at a heavy cost.

Donovan's lifeless form lay before her, a reminder of their shared history and the choices that had led them down different paths.

Donovan would never know how many times Mera had wished she could turn back time and change the choices that led them to this moment, but she knew it was wishful thinking and nothing else.

The forest above them remained silent as if holding its breath to let Mera mourn as she stood over Donovan's body. The moonlight bathed the scene in an eerie glow, casting long shadows that only reminded Mera of the old days when Donovan had always been like her shadow.

As the moon hung high in the sky, Mera, now back in her human form, stood alone in the clearing where the battle had taken place.

"It didn't have to end this way, Donovan," She spoke softly to Donovan's lifeless form. "You were like a brother to me once."

The forest offered no response, and Mera turned away, her heart heavy with the weight of their shared history and the choices that had led them to this point.

"I'll... take my leave," Mera mumbled, and Ashton nodded in response.

With that, Mera disappeared into the forest's shadows, leaving behind the memory of the fierce battle and the fallen friend who had once been her closest ally.

Chapter 652 Answers (1)

The aftermath of the battle with the Conundrum left the forest shrouded in silence. None of them were injured; it was an overwhelming victory, and it was time to look for Rose.

But before that, Ashton decided it would be better to bind the Conundrum fuckers so that none of them could escape. As usual, he handed that task to Ricochet, who sighed but obeyed the command without complaints.

However, as Ricochet got to the job, he noticed something. A few members were missing, and he knew Ashton wouldn't be pleased after learning it, but Ricochet had no other choice.

Eventually, Ricochet broke the uneasy silence. "Ashton, there's something you should know."

Ashton, still processing the events of the battle, rolled his eyes. "What now?"

"Not all the Conundrum members were here," Ricochet hesitated for a moment before delivering the news. "Looks like some managed to escape during the chaos."

"You've got to be kidding me... These fucks, they never learn, do they?" Ashton's eyes narrowed in annoyance. "As for you, you had one job, Ricochet, and you screwed it up! Maybe your joints have rusted after staying on Earth for so long."

"Boss, chill!" Ricochet smiled nervously. "Besides, I'm fast, but I can't be everywhere at once. They slipped through the cracks. It was a genuine mistake."

"Fine, it's not like it is solely your fault," Ashton sighed, realising the gravity of the situation. "That said, we can't let them regroup and come after us. As fun as it would be to toy with them, I don't want to waste my time on them. It's time to call in reinforcements."

With a wave of his hand, Ashton summoned the rest of his undead army. Skeletons and zombies emerged from the shadows, their hollow eyes fixed on their master. They were an assorted crew of creatures from various backgrounds, bound to serve Ashton in death.

"Find the Conundrum members who escaped," Ashton commanded. "They have to be somewhere in the forest. Hunt them down and don't return until they're dealt with."

Surprisingly delighted at the prospect of a new hunt, the undead army began to disperse into the forest, disappearing into the darkness. Their eerie silence was replaced with the rustling of leaves and distant groans as they searched for their quarry.

Meanwhile, the group turned their attention to Rose's rescue. Ricochet had discovered a hidden chamber deep within the Conundrum's base, where Rose had been held captive. As they ventured into the depths of the base, they found Rose, weak and fragile, chained to the wall.

Her eyes widened in disbelief as Ashton stepped forward. His demeanour changed entirely after seeing her for so long.

"Rose, it's me!"

She mumbled his name, her voice barely audible. "Ashton..."

Ashton rushed to her side, his heart aching at the sight of her frail form. Signs of physical torture were spread all across her body, and by her injuries, it was a surprise she was still alive.

[Damn... She doesn't look good, like at all.]

'She isn't in danger, is she?'

[Nah, her vitals are fluctuating, but she's safe. Still get her prepped for a check-up, just in case.]

'Got it!'

Ashton gently cradled her in his arms without wasting any time as the chains that had bound her clattered to the floor.

"Rose, for fuck's sake, how long have you been here?" Ashton whispered, his voice filled with relief. "I wasn't planning to before, but now I'll kill that fucking brother of yours. That's for certain!"

Rose managed a weak smile, her eyes filled with gratitude. "I knew you'd come for me."

The group gathered around, offering their support as Ashton carefully carried Rose out of the chamber. Her strength had been drained during her captivity, and she clung to Ashton as if he were her lifeline.

Verina's concern was evident as she spoke softly, "We need to get her medical attention immediately."

"She's been through a lot," Irina nodded in agreement. "We can't waste any time."

"Let's get her back to safety," Ashton nodded, his focus solely on Rose. "My summons are enough to deal with the remnants themselves."

With Rose in his arms, Ashton led the way out of the base, their journey filled with relief and concern. They had achieved a significant victory by defeating Donovan and the Conundrum, but the price they had paid weighed heavily on their hearts.

The forest was alive with the sounds of nature as they emerged from the base, a stark contrast to the chaos and conflict that had unfolded within its depths.

Around them, the undead army continued searching for the escaped Conundrum members, their eerie presence a reminder of the battles looming on the horizon.

Rose saw them and wanted to say something, but Ashton stopped her. "We can talk later. For now, keep your eyes closed and rest."

Rose nodded and smiled again before placing her head against Ashton's chest. It didn't take her long before she was asleep. Probably because she knew she was safe there.

Meanwhile, Ashton's allies followed him. Soon enough, Mera joined them and rushed to check Rose's status. The pain of killing Donovan vanished from her face momentarily as Ashton carried Rose over to their ship.

Rose was weak so she couldn't talk much and it wasn't like Ashton would let her do it either. She smiled again and clung to Ashton, obeying his every word.

The journey back to their ship felt longer than before. Ashton's undead army worked tirelessly to track down the escaped Conundrum members, disappearing into the depths of the forest like shadowy spectres.

The twins, Irina and Verina, kept a watchful eye on Rose while Ashton and Ricochet went to check whether the area surrounding their ship was safe.

They returned after a while with the ship hovering over their head. Ashton jumped from the ship, once again carrying Rose, while Ricochet landed the spacecraft as close as possible for them.

"It's going to be okay, Rose," Ashton reassured her, his voice strangely gentle and soothing. "We've got you."

Once Rose had boarded the ship, Ashton decided to stay back and ensure the Conundrum bastards were dealt with. Besides, there was something else he wanted to take a look at.

Chapter 653 Answers (2)

Ashton's return to the base was met with a chilling sight. The dimly lit chamber was empty except for one figure seated in the centre, bathed in shadows.

It was the leader of the Conundrum, the man behind all their schemes. His hands were bound with handcuffs, which Ricochet placed on him before leaving.

The leader's dishevelled appearance bore witness to the recent battle. However, even in defeat, he wore a twisted grin, his eyes gleaming with madness as he stared at Ashton.

"You may think you've won, Ashton," the Conundrum leader spat out, his voice dripping with deranged amusement. "But there's no victory for you here."

Ashton's gaze narrowed at the leader's taunting words. He had dealt with many foes and had grown accustomed to their threats and boasts, but something about this man's demeanour was different. At that moment, Ashton knew the fucker meant every word that left his mouth.

"Why are you so confident, even when you're on your knees?" Ashton asked; after all, he was genuinely curious how a third-grade being like him got so much confidence.

"Because I know something you don't. I know what's coming, Ashton," The leader chuckled, the sound sending chills through the room. "Your triumph here is a minor setback in the grand scheme. A plan where you'll be too helpless to do anything."

Ashton's patience was wearing thin. He had little tolerance for mind games, especially from someone who had caused much pain and suffering.

"Enough of your cryptic nonsense," he growled. "Tell me what you know, and maybe I'll go easy on you."

The leader's laughter grew louder, bordering on hysteria. "Oh, Ashton, you're in for a surprise. The real power... the real threat, is yet to reveal itself. You may have defeated me, but like me, you're a pawn in a much larger game."

Ashton clenched his fists, his frustration boiling over. He had come here seeking answers and probably gaining some intel, but the leader's cryptic ramblings only fueled his anger.

"You're not making any sense," Ashton retorted. "If you have something to say, say it clearly."

The Conundrum leader's laughter abruptly ceased, replaced by a cold, calculating expression.

"Very well, Ashton. I'll tell you this much since you're so eager to know. The Conundrum was just a facade, a front for a much more sinister organisation. They've been watching you, studying you, and they're slowly getting ready to make their move."

Ashton's brain turned into overdrive at the revelation. If he were to believe him, the Conundrum had merely been a pawn in a larger game, a means to an end.

The true enemy had been lurking in the shadows, waiting for the right moment to strike. Although it sounded like he was talking about the Cult, for some reason, Ashton believed there was someone other than the Cult after him.

The Conundrum leader's demeanour changed again before he could press for more information. His eyes bore into Ashton's with a newfound intensity.

"But you see, Ashton," the leader hissed, "they have something you'll never have—true power. And they're coming for you, for all of you. Everyone who had ever maintained contact with you is in grave danger."

Ashton had heard enough. His patience had run its course. He couldn't allow this madman to continue spewing threats and cryptic warnings. With a swift, decisive motion, he drew Balmond from his side and moved closer to the leader.

The room filled with tension as Ashton's blade hovered just inches from the Conundrum leader's throat. The leader's laughter had been silenced, replaced by a look of fear as he realised the gravity of his situation.

Ashton's voice was cold and unwavering as he spoke his final words to the leader. "You should have kept your mouth shut."

In one swift motion, Ashton brought the blade down, severing the leader's miserable existence. The room fell into a heavy silence, the air thick with the weight of the leader's ominous warnings.

Ashton stood there for a moment, his thoughts racing. What had the leader meant by 'true power'? What was this mysterious organisation lurking in the shadows, watching his every move?

"Well, there's a way to uncover the truth, isn't there?"

[Of course, there is.]

Ashton stood over the lifeless body of the Conundrum leader, his emotions a tangled web of frustration and determination. He knew he needed answers, and he had a unique ability at his disposal to extract them.

Drawing upon his vampire genes, Ashton felt the transformation sweep over him. His fangs elongated, his senses sharpened, and a newfound hunger stirred within him.

He bent down, lowered his head toward the leader's pale neck, and dug his fangs into the corpse without hesitation.

But as his mind delved into the leader's supposed memories, something was terribly amiss.

Unlike the usual clarity and coherence of a person's memories, what Ashton encountered was a hazy, fragmented mess. It was as if someone had intentionally erased or clouded the leader's recollections.

Frustration gnawed at Ashton as he struggled to make sense of the disjointed images and sensations that flickered in his mind. He had expected to find answers, to unravel the mystery that had been taunting him, but instead, he found chaos.

The leader's entire memory appeared to be a jumbled puzzle, with missing pieces and blurred lines. Ashton tried to focus, to piece together any fragments that might lead him to the truth, but it was like trying to grasp smoke.

"What have you done to yourself?" Ashton muttered under his breath, his fangs retracting as he withdrew from the leader's lifeless body.

[You wanna do this?]

'I don't have any other choice, do I?'

His thoughts raced as he considered his next move. Resurrecting the leader using necromancy had crossed his mind, a desperate attempt to extract answers directly from the source.

But a strange sensation overcame him before he could even begin the process. The leader's corpse began to disintegrate before his eyes, turning into a fine, grey dust that scattered like ashes in the wind.

Astonishment gripped Ashton as he realised that someone, or something, was intentionally erasing any trace of the leader's existence... just like the first Deacon Ashton faced.

"No..." Ashton whispered, his voice tinged with disbelief. "This can't be happening."

The remnants of the leader's body disappeared completely, leaving no evidence behind. It was as if the fabric of reality had conspired to ensure that Ashton couldn't uncover the truth.

Ashton clenched his fists, his frustration boiling over. He had been so close to answers, so close to understanding the looming threat that had been lurking in the shadows. But it had slipped through his fingers, like sand through an open hand.

The room seemed to close around him, the walls echoing his growing anger. He knew he couldn't allow this setback to deter him. But he couldn't help but feel that way.

[You can always try and torture the living crap out of those your summons are hunting.]

"Damn it... I don't think anyone else knows anything about the organisation Rose's brother talked about."

[I don't think there's any harm in trying.]

'Fine.'

As he exited the chamber, leaving behind the remnants of the leader, Ashton's thoughts were consumed by a singular purpose—to unravel the secrets concealing the true enemy and protect those he cared about, no matter the cost.

But as he stepped back into the dimly lit corridors of the base, he couldn't shake the feeling that the shadows were closing in around him, and the battle ahead would be unlike any he had faced before.

Chapter 654 Mistake Or Blunder

The meeting room was cloaked in a thick, stifling silence. Ashton stood before a gathering of formidable figures, his head slightly bowed and the weight of his hasty actions pressing heavily on his shoulders.

He had hoped that hunting the rest of the Conundrum members would get something out of them regarding the people Rose's brother had mentioned before dying.

Unfortunately, even after intense torture, they didn't say a word. Not because of their loyalty but due to their cluelessness. No of them had any idea about what their leader had told Ashton.

Eventually, he gave up and returned to New Lycania, where he had just finished informing the others about his 'findings'.

In front of him sat Vulcan and Flintmace. Their expressions were a mix of sternness and disappointment.

Flanking Ashton were the twins, Lycaon and Frankenstein and Ricochet. Their faces mirrored concern and curiosity as they waited for Ashton to speak further. But there was nothing for him to say anymore.

Vulcan, known for his short temper and fiery disposition, broke the silence first. His voice rumbled like an approaching storm as he addressed Ashton.

"Sit down, Ashton."

Ashton obeyed, taking a seat at the long, oak table. He couldn't help but feel small under Vulcan's intense gaze. The twins exchanged a worried look but remained silent, understanding that this was a matter between Ashton and his masters.

Flintmace spoke next; his usually calm demeanour was nowhere to be seen. His voice starkly contrasted with Vulcan's, but it carried its own weight.

"Ashton, you acted impulsively in ending his life. I hope you at least know that much."

Ashton felt guilt wash over him as he admitted his fault.

"I did, Masters. I couldn't bear his taunting, and I wanted answers. I thought by consuming his memories, I could uncover the truth about the shadowy organisation he mentioned, so there wasn't any need-"

Vulcan's fiery aura flared, a visible manifestation of his anger. "And in your haste, you've potentially erased any chance of retrieving those answers. Do you understand the gravity of your actions, boy?"

Ashton nodded, unable to meet Vulcan's fiery gaze. "I do. I admit I was reckless, and I accept full responsibility for my impulsive decision."

The room fell into a heavy silence as Vulcan and Flintmace exchanged a meaningful glance. It was evident that both masters were deeply disappointed in Ashton's actions, and their disappointment weighed on him like a heavy stone.

Ricochet, ever the loyal follower of Ashton's, couldn't hold back any longer. He leaned forward, his voice filled with fervour.

"But he had to do something! The leader was taunting him, and he needed answers! Ashton made a difficult call, but it was necessary!"

At this point, the twins also wanted to jump in and give their count of things as they happened.

However, Lycaon and Frankenstein, who had remained silent until now, exchanged a disapproving glance. Frankenstein's deep voice carried a tone of reprimand as he addressed the twins.

"Silence. This is not your place to speak," Frank instructed the twins. "You are here not as a participant but as a witness. You will not speak until spoken to. Is that clear?"

The twins, chastened by Frankenstein's words, lowered their heads in acknowledgement. They had meant well in defending their friend, but they now understood it wasn't their place to do so.

"Ashton, your haste has not only cost us potentially valuable information but has also endangered everyone around you," Flintmace leaned forward, his expression grave. "The shadowy organisation the leader hinted at may now remain hidden and continue its operations."

Ashton felt a heavy weight settle on his chest. He had let down his masters, his allies, and himself. He had acted impulsively out of frustration, and the consequences of his actions were becoming painfully clear.

However, how was he supposed to know there was someone capable of remotely erasing memories as well as the physical forms of others?

Yes, he was in the wrong for doing what he did. But in his defence, he only did what he had been doing until now. He rarely took prisoners because he viewed it as a waste of resources and that killing them was easier.

However, regardless of the situation, Ashton knew he had to alter his ways and stop his killing spree.

"We cannot change what has transpired, but we must learn from it," Vulcan's voice softened slightly, though his anger still simmered beneath the surface. "Haste without caution can lead to dire consequences."

Ashton nodded, his voice filled with remorse. "I understand, Masters. I promise to be more cautious in the future and not let my emotions dictate my actions."

"Yeah... good luck with that," Vulcan scoffed.

[Wow, this bastard is quite hypocritical. I mean, look at him! When you told him about what happened, he lost his mind, yet he dares lecture you about 'getting a hold of your emotions'?]

'Not the time, Asta... besides, it's not like he's wrong.'

[Since when did you become an obedient child?]

'...'

[Look, I know you're experiencing something different for the first time, but it's alright to fail as long as you learn from it and use it to your advantage.]

'...right. Thanks.'

While Ashton conversed with Astaroth, he forgot that Flintmace could also hear their conversation. Since his senior was on Ashton's side, Flintmace had no choice but to support Ashton, and his expression softened as he placed a reassuring hand on Ashton's shoulder.

"We believe in your potential, Ashton, but you must learn to harness your emotions and act with wisdom," Flintmace smiled. "This lesson, albeit a harsh one, will serve as a reminder of the importance of patience and restraint."

Everyone also nodded. After all, a life without failures is not a life at all. But when you make a blunder... that's an entirely different thing.

"Don't be so lenient with the boy just because we have another way to find out about those 'powerful' enemies," Vulcan said sternly before smiling. "The girl you saved, she is our final lead."

Chapter 655 Cryptic Clues

The soft glow of lamplight bathed the room in a warm, comforting ambience as Ashton stood outside Rose's door. He took a deep breath, gathering his thoughts before gently knocking. The door creaked open, revealing Rose, her eyes brightening at the sight of him.

"Looks like you finally got the time to visit me," she greeted with a warm smile, her voice still carrying traces of exhaustion from her recent ordeal. "Come on in; I don't remember you being a shy guy before."

"What can I say? I turn that way in the presence of someone as beautiful as you," Ashton joked while shutting the doors behind him.

"You and your silver tongue," Rose mumbled as she rolled her eyes.

Ashton stepped forward. Rose's hospital room was an exact replica of her room at the academy.

It was probably Mera's idea to have it arranged as it would provide her with a sense of familiarity and could help Rose recover faster.

It had been a rough time for her, and she had missed their interactions and the bond they shared since their days at the academy.

Ashton felt the same as she had once been his mentor, guiding him through the complexities of the supernatural world. It was safe to say that he wouldn't have made it this far without her help in the early stages of his life as a tribrid.

The memories of their time together flooded back as Ashton settled into a chair beside Rose's bed. He recalled the countless lessons, the late-night conversations, and the friendship they had developed over his time at the academy.

"You're looking better," Ashton remarked, his gaze softening as he studied Rose's face. Her cheeks had regained some colour, and her eyes, though tired, held a spark of life, unlike when he found her shackled.

"Well, thanks to all of you, I'm on the mend," Rose chuckled softly, a hint of her former strength shining through. "Had it not been for you, who knows what-"

"Relax, no need to get all sentimental on me now." Ashton laughed while pouring a glass of water for her.

"God, I never thought you, of all people, would turn out to be a gentleman like this," Rose chuckled.

Their conversations had always flowed naturally, a testament to the bond they had forged as a teacher and student and, later, as allies in their world.

Ashton's thoughts briefly drifted to their days at the academy, where Rose had been his mentor. She had guided him through the intricacies of magic, the history of supernatural beings, and how to maintain the delicate balance of power among his genes.

"You know," Ashton began, a fond smile tugging at the corners of his lips, "I still remember those late-night study sessions you used to force me into. Though I was a bit annoyed about it back then, it proved to be very helpful to me."

"Of course, you found it annoying," Rose chuckled, a fondness in her eyes. "You were a talented but stubborn student, Ashton. Someone who only lived to fight. Thanks to that, I had to ensure you lived up to your potential."

"You taught me more than just abilities and history, Rose," Ashton leaned back in his chair, a sense of nostalgia washing over him. "You taught me about survival, the importance of geopolitics, and most importantly... trust."

"And look how far you've come, Ashton," Rose's gaze softened as she regarded Ashton. "You've grown into a formidable man, and I couldn't be prouder. Look around you; you managed to change the world for the better and did it by yourself."

"Oh, come on, I had lots of help-"

"People don't help someone out of mere kindness anymore, Ashton," Rose interrupted Ashton, taking his hands in hers. "They saw something in you... For them, you became a leader and a symbol of excellence. Someone whom they could put their trust in. So do not put yourself down ever again."

Ashton was quiet for a while, but then he smiled. Maybe Rose knew he was having a rough day, or perhaps she didn't. But at that moment, her words meant the world to Ashton.

The trip down memory lane was comforting. But the purpose of Ashton's visit weighed heavily on his mind, and he knew he should probably get down to the topic.

"Rose," Ashton began hesitantly, "I need to discuss something with you. It's about your brother and the Conundrum."

Rose's expression shifted, a mix of emotions crossing her face. She knew it was only a matter of time before someone began asking her questions, and she was glad it was Ashton because she didn't think she would be able to open up to anyone except him or Mera.

"I'm listening, Ashton."

"Before he died, your brother mentioned something," Ashton cleared his throat, his voice gentle but resolute. "He spoke of an organisation, people with unimaginable powers, and while he didn't reveal their name, I was hoping you had some idea about it?"

Rose's brows furrowed as she tried to recall the snippets of conversation she had overheard during her captivity.

"He was always secretive about his dealings with anything related to him," she began, "But I do remember him saying a few things while he extracted my blood for himself, though they didn't make much sense to me."

"Anything you remember could be valuable to us," Ashton leaned forward, his interest piqued. "Please, Rose, try to remember what you can."

Rose closed her eyes for a moment, focusing on retrieving the memories of her brother's 'cryptic' words.

"He often mentioned something about 'the key to the hidden path,' and then there was 'the guardian of whispers.' I'm not sure what any of it means, but he used those phrases almost daily while mumbling to himself."

Ashton scribbled down the phrases on a notepad he had brought with him. "Anything else that you remember?"

"Ashton, I wish I could provide you with more information, but my brother was always so secretive," Rose sighed before shaking her head, her gaze distant. "I never truly understood the depths of his involvement with the Conundrum or this organisation."

Ashton placed a reassuring hand on Rose's shoulder. "It's all right, Rose. We appreciate any information you can provide. I'll deal with this mess when the time's right. For now, you should focus on recovering."

"I have faith in you, Ashton. Always had..." Rose gave him a small, appreciative smile. "You've grown so much since your days at the academy. I know you'll do whatever it takes to protect those around you."

Ashton nodded and thanked Rose again. Although he wasn't sure what the phrases meant just yet, it was better than having nothing.

"Take care, Rose," Ashton said with a warm smile as he rose to leave. "We'll get to the bottom of this, I promise."

"I'll be here, Ashton, ready to help in any way I can," Rose smiled. "And remember, you're not alone in this. You have allies who believe in you, including me now!"

Chapter 656 The Quest for the Whisperer's Medallion (1)

Upon meeting with Rose and getting some intel from her, Ashton headed towards the town hall meeting room where Flintmace and Vulcan were waiting for him.

Though they weren't all that hopeful that Ashton would find something from Rose, they were surprised when Ashton revealed the two phrases to them.

The clues provided by Rose were the key to unravelling the mystery of the shadowy organisation. They needed to decipher the meaning behind "the key to the hidden path" and "the guardian of whispers."

Unfortunately, none of them had the slightest idea of what those words meant. Ashton had hoped they would know something after all; they were literally over a thousand years old and should have known about long-forgotten secrets.

However, Ashton didn't speak his mind because they were in that situation because of him. Even if they weren't, he was standing amongst his masters, and that alone meant he couldn't treat them as he used to treat those working under him.

After hours of wasteful research, Flintmace was the first to break the silence.

"I know that we must decipher these phrases quickly as time is of the essence, but I'm afraid we are merely wasting time on these... phrases which could mean nothing!"

Ashton nodded in agreement, but his words didn't match his expressions. "Agreed, but it's not like we have any other clue or anything else to do on Earth. So we might as well try and decipher the meaning."

"The 'key to the hidden path' could refer to a literal or metaphorical key," Vulcan leaned forward, his sharp eyes focused on the notepad containing the phrases.

He continued, "It might unlock a doorway, portal, or access to knowledge. But I don't think the Precursors needed things like portal keys because they could always construct portals with a wave of their hands."

Flintmace tapped his fingers thoughtfully on the table. "Indeed. The thing about precursors aside, the phrase could be signalling towards being a physical artefact or a symbolic representation of a hidden truth. We should explore both possibilities."

While Vulcan and Flintmace pondered about their theories, Ashton took a backseat. What they were doing there was similar to blindly shooting arrows in the dark, hoping it would strike the mark... when they didn't even know if a mark existed!

If it was a competition of coming up with random theories, he could have even participated and probably won. If they needed to learn more about what "the key to the hidden path" and "the guardian of whispers" meant, they needed someone with knowledge of the entire galaxy.

[Oh yeah? How many people like those do you know?]

'...you?'

[I'm talking about your summons. Maybe they can help you with it?]

'That's... hm, alright. I get it. Thanks for the assistance.'

Ashton had a plan... well, it was more like a thought, but he considered it a plan.

"We'll divide our efforts," Ashton mumbled while looking at Vulcan. "Master, search our archives for references to hidden paths, keys, or guardians. Meanwhile, Master Flint should reach out to our contacts in the supernatural world. Someone among them might have encountered similar phrases or have information about this organisation."

"And what will you do? Laze around?" Vulcan retorted.

"Master Vulcan... give the kid a break," Flintmace interjected before turning towards Ashton. "But what will you do?"

"I'll do my own inquiry..."

As soon as Vulcan heard that, he rolled his eyes. But then Flintmace reminded Vulcan that Ashton had ONI's support and they might find out more about their unknown enemies with Otiga's help.

With a plan in place, the trio set to work. Vulcan delved into ancient texts and scrolls, scouring the archives for any mention of the cryptic phrases.

Flintmace, on the other hand, reached out to his network of contacts. He contacted seers, historians, and supernatural beings with knowledge of the past and present. He shared the phrases with them, hoping to uncover any leads.

Even Otiga and the ONI had dedicated themselves to the task. But there seemed to be little hope for them to uncover anything substantial without alarming the godforsaken organisation they were up against.

Days turned into weeks as they pursued their research, their determination unyielding. The cryptic phrases remained an enigma, stubbornly refusing to reveal their secrets.

One evening, as the trio gathered to share their findings, Flintmace was the first to speak. "I've contacted several sources, but none of them have encountered these phrases before. It's as if they've been carefully hidden from the supernatural world."

"Our research hasn't yielded much either," Otiga sighed, frustration evident through her holographic self. "We've found references to hidden paths and guardians but nothing that directly connects to our situation."

Vulcan slammed his hand on the table, his impatience reaching its peak. "This is maddening! We're chasing shadows, and time is slipping away."

Just as their frustration threatened to overwhelm them, a soft knock echoed through the chamber. The door creaked open, revealing a cloaked figure with an aura of mysticism.

"I believe I may be of assistance," the figure spoke like a gentle breeze.

Everyone was confused about who the lady was and how she entered the meeting room without permission. Flintmace got up to ask her those questions when Ashton appeared behind her.

"No need to be alarmed; I'm the one who invited her," he said, revealing the woman as Seraphina, a foreseer of great renown.

Seraphina possessed an ethereal beauty that defied earthly standards. Her luminous skin shimmered with a pale, silvery hue, resembling moonlight cast glow on a human form.

Slender, graceful, and adorned in flowing robes of iridescent fabric, her features were delicate yet captivating. Large, almond-shaped eyes, with irises resembling swirling galaxies, held a profound wisdom that hinted at her ageless existence.

Silver tendrils of hair cascaded down her back like liquid metal. Her presence exuded an aura of otherworldly grace, leaving an unforgettable impression on those who encountered her.

At first, it didn't click Flintmace who the lady was, but when Ashton introduced her, he immediately went to his knees. Vulcan and Otiga were confused as to what was happening.

After all, it wasn't every day one would see a Xyran greeting someone from a different race with such respect and reverence.

"Am I missing something?" Vulcan mumbled to Otiga.

"I was hoping you'd tell me..." Otiga replied, shrugging.

"No need for pleasantries, O' great Xyran~" Seraphina's mystic voice echoed through the room.

"I am, but a soldier, Madame..." Flintmace replied before getting back to his feet and turning towards Vulcan. "Madame Seraphina is an Oracle, the one who predicted the downfall of the Precursors."

He continued, "She is also known as the Lady of a Million Mysteries who lives inside the Astral plane and only appears before those who are truly desperate for guidance."

At that moment, Vulcan wanted to know how Ashton was about to contact someone who had ascended to the Astral realm. However, he knew it wasn't the time for that, so he embraced silence as usual.

"You praised me too much, young one," Seraphina smiled as she approached their table, her presence imbued with ancient wisdom. "I couldn't help but overhear your disciple talking about your predicament.

While that alone wouldn't have gathered my attention... this kid happens to be the child of someone who I held dear once and couldn't reject his plea for help."

[Was your dad banging her or something?]

'...I don't think so.'

[Just to be safe, don't mention her in front of your mom.]

'Let's focus on our work here first.'

[Don't say I didn't warn you~]

Ignoring Astaroth's words, Ashton leaned forward, his eyes filled with hope. "Can you help us, Madame Seraphina? Can you solve the mystery behind these phrases?"

"The answers you seek come at a cost," Seraphina nodded, her gaze focused as she studied the notepad containing the phrases. "I can provide insights, but it will require a sacrifice."

Flintmace's brow furrowed with concern. "What kind of sacrifice are you referring to?"

"I must relinquish a part of my gift, my ability to see the hidden truths," Seraphina's eyes held a hint of sadness. "It is not a decision I take lightly, but since I am indebted to you, father... I'll happily sacrifice myself."

"I-I don't know how to thank you," Ashton spoke with gratitude, understanding the gravity of Seraphina's sacrifice.

Seraphina nodded, her decision made. With a solemn air, Seraphina closed her eyes and began to chant in a language that resonated with ancient power.

"Wait, that's-" Vulcan got up from the shock of hearing the words of a forgotten civilisation.

"The language of the Precursors." Flintmace smiled wanly.

As Seraphina got to work, the chamber seemed to come alive with an ethereal energy, enveloping the trio as they watched in awe.

After what felt like an eternity, Seraphina's eyes fluttered open. But her legs gave away before she could speak anything, and Ashton rushed to grab her.

Like madame Seraphina had predicted, she had lost a significant part of herself and was too weak to speak properly, let alone stand.

In her weak state, she slowly gestured for Ashton to get closer to her. Ashton leaned in, eager to hear what Seraphina had uncovered.

"The 'key to the hidden path' refers to an artefact known as the 'Whisperer's Medallion.' It possesses the power to reveal hidden paths and gateways to other realms," Seraphina whispered slowly.

Vulcan and Flintmace exchanged intrigued glances. The mention of such an artefact held the promise of unlocking new avenues in their quest.

Seraphina continued, "As for the 'guardian of whispers,' it signifies the protector of this artefact, a being with knowledge of its secrets."

"Where can we find the Whisperer's Medallion and its guardian?"

"It's... on planet Euphoria..."

Chapter 657 The Quest for the Whisperer's Medallion (2)

As soon as Madame Seraphina took Euphoria's name, Ashton and Flintmace were shocked. But for different reasons.

While Flintmace was a bit taken aback by the presence of an unknown artefact on a planet under Xyran's control. Ashton was a bit taken aback because of the emergence of a new trial on the world and the history the planet shared with Precursors.

After all, he had been tasked with completing all the trials Euphoria had to offer. At least, he thought that was all the planet had to offer, but now he was sure that wasn't the case.

Back to the connection Euphoria, or as his father called it, the New Eden, had with the Precursors. The planet was supposed to be a haven for humanity before the Xyrans attacked and took it over.

Considering how humanity was like a golden child to the Precursors, it made sense if the overlords of the galaxy left a gift for their beloved children on the planet that was supposed to belong to humans.

But with the revelation came a plethora of problems. Despite being the owner of the fourth seat of Euphoria, Ashton had been exiled from the planet forcefully by the first seat, who also happened to be a fallen Xyran like Flintmace.

Moreover, from what Ashton had uncovered during their brief encounter more than a year ago, the first seat had saved the second seat holder, who had been working with the Cult.

It could be said that the first seat was also a cult member, making things a lot more complex. Besides, if the first seat was indeed working with the Cult, then it was safe to assume some Xyrans had united with the Cult and were working undercover under his guidance.

A similar train of thoughts was cruising inside Flintmace's head, which

caused him to question the circumstances. How could a Xyran be willing to work against themselves?

After all, the Cult's hatred towards the Xyrans wasn't hidden from anybody aware of the Cult's existence. If what they were thinking was true, it would mean stepping into Euphoria was akin to walking into hostile territory.

"What if the Cult has a base there?" Ashton mumbled and immediately regretted saying it because Astaroth and Flintmace got eerily quiet.

Despite being betrayed by the Xyrans, they were still part of their proud race. If another Xyran did something wrong, they naturally felt ashamed and responsible for not stopping the person from bringing shame to their race.

If the first was indeed doing something wrong, they must stop him. Ashton also wanted to stop the first but for different reasons.

However, he also knew the first must have gotten stronger since their last meeting and fighting him head-on as such was the worst decision he could take.

After all, that fucker was on the verge of breaking into the S-grade a year ago. So, it was safe to assume the first was a full-fledged S-grader now.

In the meantime, Ashton still needed to convert two more people into werewolves to proceed with his evolution and achieve A-grade throughout his genes. Which would effectively make his cumulative levels ascend into the realm of S-graders.

The only issue was that he was short on time, and there weren't any capable candidates whom he would want to convert and invite into his werewolf family.

But there was a silver lining amongst the dark clouds. The distance between Euphoria and Earth would not be a problem because he owned one of the fastest spaceships in the galaxy.

It meant he could spend some time looking for suitable candidates on Earth and then evolve. Also, Flintmace and Vulcan could train him on their way so that he could get acquainted with his new strength before engaging against a seasoned warrior.

"Looks like we have no time to waste," Ashton stated.

On the other side of the galaxy...

In the dimly lit chamber of the Cult's underground sanctuary, the Cardinal sat upon a raised platform, draped in crimson robes adorned with intricate symbols.

Before him were two Archbishops, their faces obscured by hooded cloaks, knelt in solemn reverence. Behind them were hundreds of cultists eagerly waiting for the Cardinal to deliver a momentous proclamation.

"Brothers and sisters of our sacred order, the time has come to set our grand design into motion," With a voice that resonated like an ominous chant, the Cardinal began, "We stand on the precipice of ultimate power, and our destiny beckons."

The Archbishops' hearts, filled with hunger for vengeance, listened intently as the Cardinal continued, "We have discovered the first half of the final key—the key that will grant us dominion over all realms. With it, we shall unlock the gateway to the resurrection of the lords, the Precursors!"

A hushed murmur of reverence spread through the chamber as the cultists absorbed the gravity of the Cardinal's words. The resurrection of the Precursors was the ultimate goal, a feat that would reshape the galaxy itself.

"Archbishop Lucius, Archbishop Sena, you shall lead our forces to Planet Euphoria, where the first half of the final key awaits," The Cardinal's gaze bore into the Archbishops, his intensity unwavering. "It is guarded by ancient protectors whom you must surpass."

Archbishop Lucius, his eyes burning with passion, bowed low. "We shall do your bidding, Cardinal, and secure the half of the key. With it, our power shall be unrivalled."

"Yes," Archbishop Seraphina, a figure of enigmatic grace, nodded in agreement. "The protectors of Euphoria shall bow before our might, and the key will be ours."

The Cardinal's voice grew more ominous as he continued, "Once you possess the first half of the key, rendezvous with our brethren from the other sanctuaries. Mobilise every cultist under your command. Our ascension is nigh."

The Archbishops rose to their feet, a shared resolve etched upon their faces. They were the vanguards of the Cult's unholy mission, and the weight of their duty pressed upon their shoulders.

"We shall not falter, Your Holiness," Archbishop Lucius spoke with unwavering determination, "Planet Euphoria will be ours, and the final key shall be complete."

Archbishop Seraphina's voice held a mesmerising cadence as she added, "The resurrection of the Precursors will herald a new era of darkness, and our order will reign supreme."

With a final, reverent nod to the Cardinal, the Archbishops turned and departed the chamber. The cultists, their faith unwavering, watched them go, knowing that the destiny of their order was at hand.

A chilling smile crept across his lips as the Cardinal remained alone in the dimly lit chamber. The final key was within their grasp, and the resurrection of the Precursors drew near.

The galaxy would soon tremble in the face of their power, and nothing would stand in the way of their dominion.

"Once we have the keys, all we'd need is that succubus..." the Cardinal smirked. "Soon... the galaxy will feel the desperation we have been living in for millenniums!"

Chapter 658 Arrival

The landing platform on New Lycania was bustling with activity as Anna's ship touched down. She gazed out at the thriving city, her eyes widening in surprise.

Lycania had grown far beyond her expectations. Who would have thought a rural area like Lycania would have its skyline adorned with towering buildings and bustling streets? She couldn't help but marvel at how much it had evolved.

As she disembarked from the ship, her excitement was noticeable. She had missed this place and the people who had become like family to her. Among them, Ava, Ashton's mother, held a special place in her heart. Anna couldn't wait to catch up with her.

Ava, being the personification of warmth, approached Anna with open arms. "Anna, my dear, it's been too long."

"Ava, you look as stunning as ever," Anna complimented as she embraced her future mother-in-law warmly. "And look at this place! It's incredible. What's been happening here? Otiga informed us about advancements, but this is... I don't even know what to say!"

"It's all thanks to the investments that you, Ashton, and the Ghosts team brought to Earth," Ava smiled proudly, her eyes sparkling with joy. "Technological advancements, trade, and interstellar commerce have transformed New Lycania into a hub of improvement."

Anna's heart swelled with pride. She had been a part of something truly remarkable, and the positive changes were evident all around her.

"I'm so glad to hear that, Ava. But speaking of Ashton, where is he? I was hoping to see him as soon as I landed."

"Where else would he be?" Ava chuckled at Anna's eagerness and pointed toward the distant arena. "That son of mine only has two things in his mind. Work and training. He is more of his father's son than mine... hehe."

"The arena?" Anna's eyes followed Ava's gesture, and she could hear the distant sounds of combat and the crowd's roaring cheers. "Right, I remember Otiga telling me something about it."

"He's been spending a lot of time training and sparring with his masters, Vulcan and Flintmace," Ava nodded. "Lately, they've been pushing him to the limits. Once, I had to stop them because they had been going at it for over thirty hours!"

"He couldn't even spare a moment to come to the ship to greet me?"

Anna's lips curved into a playful pout. "He's in for a scolding."

Just then, the twins appeared there. They had changed so much that it took a while for Anna to get acquainted with their new appearance.

"Well, well, if it isn't our favourite succubus," Irina said playfully. "Long time no see, Anna!"

"God, you look great!" Verina chimed in with a mischievous grin.

"I hope so," Anna playfully remarked. "Can't let you beauties sway by beloved's heart, can I? Besides, I saw your encounter with him, and I hope you two didn't do anything stupid afterwards?"

"Just a little bit." Verina sheepishly mumbled.

"Okay, maybe more than a little." Irina winked. "Enough talk. Let's get to the arena, or else we won't get any seats!"

Irina and Verina grinned, their vampiric wings extending gracefully. Anna took the hint. Without hesitation, she unfurled her succubi wings, their iridescent shine reflecting the sunlight. She hovered a few inches above the ground, a playful smirk on her lips.

"What are we waiting for then?" she said.

"Just you, slowpoke!" With a synchronised movement, the twins took off into the sky, Anna trailing behind them.

As they soared over New Lycania, Anna couldn't help but marvel at the beautiful city it had become. She looked down at the town and saw busy streets and tall buildings. It looked like a beautiful picture of a place full of life and progress.

The distant roar of the arena grew louder as they approached, and Anna could hear the reverberation of thousands of voices. The arena was huge and showed how well New Lycania was doing.

Anna's eyes widened in amazement as they descended to the arena's entrance. The place was packed with spectators, a diverse assembly of vampires, humans, werewolves and other species. They all had gathered to witness the epic duel between Ashton and his formidable masters.

The arena trembled with the power of the duel as Ashton faced off against his masters, Vulcan and Flintmace.

Their battle created a mesmerising spectacle that had the entire audience on the edge of their seats. The deafening roars of the crowd reverberated through the colossal arena, drowning out all other sounds.

Ashton was wholly absorbed in the fierce battle, his focus unwavering as he deftly countered Vulcan's fiery attacks and parried Flintmace's earth-shaking strikes.

Amidst the chaos of combat, Anna had entered the arena unnoticed. "Do they do this often?"

"Pretty much every day for the last couple of weeks," Verina replied.

"I think they are preparing for something, but no matter how many times we ask, they don't divulge any information." Irina shrugged.

Anna nodded, wondering what it could be as she returned to watch the duel before her eyes.

His fiery mane blazing like an inferno, Vulcan hurled a barrage of searing flames at Ashton. The fire twisted and writhed, forming a scorching tornado that threatened to engulf him.

Ashton countered with flames of his own creation, summoning a protective barrier that absorbed the fiery onslaught.

But while he was occupied with Vulcan, Flintmace appeared behind him. With a thunderous roar, he sent shockwaves racing toward Ashton, each impact threatening to send him sprawling.

Ashton responded with remarkable agility, his werewolf reflexes allowing him to evade the powerful blows.

Then, in a split second, Vulcan seized an opportunity. With a swift kick, he sent Ashton hurtling across the arena, the force of the blow propelling him through the air. Ashton crashed against the arena wall, temporarily stunned.

Anna, witnessing the kick and Ashton's subsequent collision, couldn't contain her concern. She leapt to her feet and shouted, "Ashton!"

The sound of her voice reached Ashton's ears, cutting through the chaos of the battle. He turned his head to see Anna in the stands, her eyes fluttering with worry.

A small smile tugged at his lips as he made eye contact, a silent acknowledgement of her presence.

At that moment, something within Ashton shifted. He knew he couldn't afford to falter, not when Anna was watching.

"I can't lose in front of her, can I?"

[As if you'd win, fucking cringelord.]

"Lend me Raphael, will you?"

[Are you serious?]

"As serious as I've ever been."

Chapter 659 Unravelling Secrets (1)

The crowd's cheer died down as Ashton slowly rose to his feet. His crimson eyes were fixed on Vulcan and Flintmace, who wondered what their disciple's next move would be.

Suddenly, he reached into his inventory and withdrew a pair of gleaming soul blades. Balmond and Raphael were itching for a good fight, just like Ashton.

The mere sight of the soul blades drew a knowing look exchanged between Vulcan and Flintmace. They understood that Ashton was getting serious and was aware of the immense power within those blades.

"Raphael, eh? You're pulling out all the stops, kiddo." Vulcan raised an eyebrow, his voice tinged with curiosity.

"Using two soulblades is no small feat. Let's see if you can handle it."

Being a Xyran, Flintmace knew how difficult it was to wield one soul blade, let alone two. However, he was also aware of Ashton's tendency to make the impossible possible and looked forward to the fight.

Without further ado, the duel began. As the three rushed towards each other, the arena erupted in cheers.

Vulcan was the first to make a move. With a sweep of his hammer, he conjured flames that spiralled around him like a living inferno. With a mighty thrust, he sent a wave of fire hurtling toward Ashton.

He knew the fire wouldn't harm Ashton in the slightest, but it would be enough to make him move, which was what he wanted.

Ashton met the fiery onslaught with a calm demeanour. He deflected the fiery wave with his sword's swift and precise motion, sending it harmlessly into the sky.

Flintmace seized the opportunity presented by Vulcan's assault and stomped the ground, causing a series of earth tremors that rippled toward Ashton. The ground cracked and fissured, threatening to destabilise his footing.

Ashton, however, remained unwavering. He leapt into the air, his movements fluid and graceful. With the twin soul blades in hand, he carved through the earth, creating a platform for him to land safely.

"He's getting serious," Vulcan grinned, his fiery aura intensifying. "This is going to be interesting."

"Let's see how far he's come." Flintmace nodded.

It was Ashton's turn to go on the offensive. He let out his own fiery assault on his masters, forcing them to defend themselves.

But Ashton wasn't finished yet. With a burst of speed, he closed the distance between himself and his mentors, launching a relentless assault that pushed Vulcan and Flintmace backwards.

Flames erupted from one blade, while the other held the power of poison. Ashton's crimson eyes remained locked on his mentors as he continued his onslaught.

Vulcan soon got tired of being pushed back and decided to give Ashton a taste of his own medicine. He summoned a searing inferno, attempting to engulf Ashton in a blazing storm.

"Same move again and again..."

[Yet you keep falling for it every time!]

"...watch me."

However, Ashton twirled Raphael with unparalleled finesse, creating a vortex of air that extinguished the flames and sent them spiralling into the sky.

Just then, Flintmace rushed forward. Ashton was prepared to face his sword, but to his surprise, Flintmace dropped the sword and lunged at Ashton with his bare hands, trying to subdue him the old way.

Despite the surprise attack, Ashton managed to turn the tables on Flintmace and suplexed him into the ground. But while Ashton was at it, Vulcan swung his warhammer in a massive arc.

"I'm not falling for this trick again, master." Ashton confidently replied.

Unable to defend himself in that position, Ashton used Flintmace as a shield, making him take most of the brunt force of Vulcan's attack.

"This cunning brat!" Vulcan exclaimed and proceeded to unleash innumerable expletives in Ashton's direction as Flintmace was flung away.

The duel reached a crescendo, with elemental forces clashing in a spectacle of raw power. The arena's spectators were enthralled, their cheers and applause filling the air.

The next moment, Vulcan rushed at Ashton. As Vulcan swung his Warhammer, Ashton parried the blow with all his strength, sending the dwarf staggering off balance.

At the same time, Flintmace attacked him from behind. Ashton sidestepped Flintmace's incoming strike, allowing the fallen angel's sword to collide with Vulcan's armour.

The impact sent sparks flying and momentarily disoriented the two mentors. Ashton seized the chance and launched a powerful counterattack. With a furious flurry of strikes, he disarmed Flintmace, sending his sword clattering to the ground.

The crowd erupted in a deafening roar of astonishment, witnessing Ashton's incredible manoeuvre. But the battle was far from over.

Vulcan, undeterred, swung his Warhammer with even more ferocity. Ashton danced on the edge of Vulcan's range, his movements fluid and calculated as he parried Vulcan's blows.

"You're getting old, master," Ashton chuckled, annoying Vulcan even more.

"You brat, you're lucky we are holding back, or you wouldn't last a moment before us!"

"That's the point, isn't it?" Ashton replied, parrying another one of Vulcan's blows. "It should be easy for you to take care of someone like me without using the extent of your abilities, yet you're struggling."

"Alright, let's see if you can handle this!"

With the momentum in his favour, Ashton pressed his advantage. He closed in on Vulcan, his twin blades a blur of motion. Vulcan's Warhammer clashed with Balmond and Raphael, the resounding clashes echoing through the arena. But the advantage didn't last for long.

Ashton's skill and determination were undeniable, but the Vulcan's strength was relentless.

Ashton knew he was reaching his limits. The battle had taken a toll on him, and he was running out of energy. Soon, Vulcan's Warhammer struck with the force of a battering ram, sending Ashton sprawling to the ground.

The crowd fell silent, their breaths collectively held. Ashton struggled to rise, his body battered and bruised. Vulcan stood over him, his Warhammer raised for the final blow.

"Any last words, my beloved disciple?" Vulcan smirked.

"Quit flexing on the kid," Flintmace shook his head. "We should have won this long ago, but he held on till now and pushed us to the limits. Heck, if he was facing one of us at a time, we wouldn't have won in the first place."

"Tsk, you're right," Vulcan mumbled, offering Ashton a hand. "You did well, kid. You forced me to use my true strength, which only Flintmace had been able to do till now."

"You can save your praises for later... I kinda need to fix my bones now," Ashton mumbled while grabbing his chest. "Three broken ribs... yup, it has to be worse than how I feel."

Chapter 660 Unravelling Secrets (2)

The twins exchanged knowing glances as they watched Anna's reaction to the duel.

"Impressed, Anna?" Irina teased her.

"How can I not be? I know Vulcan and Flintmace were holding back, but still going against two S-grade beings is no joke," Anna nodded, her eyes reflecting how proud she was of Ashton. "He's incredible."

Verina chuckled softly. "He's been training relentlessly, so it's a given that he's performing so well."

As the crowd's cheers continued to echo, Anna couldn't wait to embrace Ashton and congratulate him on his remarkable achievement. Besides, it had been over a month since they had seen each other face-to-face, and her Succubi urges were just about to get out of her control.

"Come on, let's wait for him around the exit," Verina suggested, and the girls immediately headed to greet Ashton.

Soon, Anna and the twins made their way to the arena's exit. They could see Ashton approaching, his crimson eyes filled with warmth and love as he spotted Anna among the spectators.

As they finally met, Anna threw her arms around him in a passionate embrace, their lips meeting in a fervent kiss. The world around them seemed to fade away as they held each other, lost in love and desire.

Ashton pulled back slightly, his voice filled with affection. "Alright, alright, I've missed you too."

"Of course you did. We are connected, remember?" Anna's eyes sparkled with adoration as she gazed into his crimson orbs. "Joke's apart, you were incredible out there."

"I had to put on a show for my favourite audience." Ashton grinned, his fingers gently caressing her cheek. "Excluding you two, of course."

"Tsk, I never expected a guy to treat us right after seeing us naked, but this is too much!" Irina blabbered, only to realise no one was pleased with her poor attempt at comedy.

"Leave it to Irina to turn a romantic moment into an awkward one," Verina shook her head before forcefully dragging her sister away. "You two enjoy yourselves. I'll make sure she doesn't disturb y'all."

As they left, the couple was left staring at each other as if they had met after a lifetime.

"Did you hear everyone going berserk?" Anna laughed softly, trying to change the topic.

"Nah, my eyes were busy looking at you," Ashton mumbled, realising how cringe he sounded for a moment.

[L rizz, my man. L rizz.]

'You're the last person who should be talking about rizz,' Ashton mentally rolled his eyes. 'Can't you make yourself scarce like the twins did?'

[Fine, listening to your cringe would've killed me either way.]

As Astaroth's presence faded away, Ashton's mind wandered over to the Conundrum and the medallion. He remembered he hadn't told Anna anything about it either.

However, Ashton didn't need to say anything as Anna sensed something was on his mind and looked at him curiously. "Is there something on your mind?"

Ashton took a deep breath, his crimson eyes filled with determination. "Anna, I had an encounter with the Conundrum, and you wouldn't believe what happened!"

Ashton then told her everything about the Conundrum and how they discovered the Whisperer's medallion. Anna was interested in knowing how Ashton found someone like Madame Seraphina, to which Ashton replied that he didn't.

He explained to her that Seraphina had come looking for him, saying how his father had helped her once, and she wanted to return the favour by helping him and how she disappeared after assisting them.

Anna was a bit taken aback by the tale, but she was even more surprised when Ashton told her he was planning to visit Euphoria despite their history.

"I know it's important, but Ashton, it's not safe for us to return to Planet Euphoria after what happened in the past," Anna's expression shifted to one of concern. "Are you sure it's a good idea?"

"I understand the risks, but we can't let go of the only lead we have," Ashton nodded solemnly. "We'll take precautions, and I promise nothing wrong will happen.

He continued, "Besides, Vulcan and Flintmace would be with me there. Not to mention, I would have the equivalent strength of an S-grade being, too!"

Anna's gaze softened, her trust in Ashton unwavering. "I may be sceptical, but I trust you, Ashton."

"What about Vimur and Laihud? I thought they were coming with you?" Ashton inquired as he suddenly remembered their presence was crucial for his evolution.

"They should be arriving tomorrow," Anna replied.

"Good," Ashton replied with a nod. "I hope they accept my proposal, or else I would have no choice but to include weaklings into our werewolf family."

In the heart of a desolate and ancient chamber, hidden deep within a forgotten realm, a lone figure stood surrounded by relics of a bygone era. The room, bathed in an eerie light, was filled with mystery and timelessness.

The figure was a Precursor, an enigmatic being with knowledge that spanned aeons. His eyes were like orbs of ethereal wisdom, scanned the chamber's dimly lit corners, searching for something long sought after.

So much so that he staged a prison break just to get his hands on the item left by his brother. The treasure of the Precursors.

Among the artefacts and alien technology that filled the chamber, the Precursor's gaze fell upon a peculiar object—a shimmering crystal, radiant with an inner light that defied explanation. It seemed to pulse with ancient energy as if it held the secrets of the cosmos.

With deliberate care, the Precursor reached out, his hand hovering over the crystal's surface. As his fingers made contact, a surge of knowledge and memories flooded his consciousness.

Visions of a distant past, a once-thriving civilisation, flashed before his eyes and how they were wiped out...

"I knew I would find you," the Precursor whispered, his voice echoing through the chamber. "It has been so long, but I have waited patiently."

The crystal seemed to respond to his presence, emitting a soft, melodious hum. The visions continued to unravel, revealing the history of the Precursors and their connection to the cosmos.

"And now," the Precursor murmured, his eyes locked on the crystal, "I shall wait for him—the son of Jo'Han, my brother.

The Precursor continued as he sat on the throne that once belonged to his brother, "He carries the legacy of our people, and he will come seeking answers... If not, I will force him to look for me before taking everything away from him."

As the chamber's enigmatic aura enveloped him, the Precursor knew that the mysteries of the past were on the verge of being unveiled.

The crystal held the key to a destiny that spanned galaxies, and he would patiently await the arrival of the one who would unlock its secrets—Ashton, the son of Jo'Han and the bearer of their shared legacy.