

## Evolution 168

Chapter 168: Where is My Refined Blood?

Meanwhile, the moment Ha'vek was killed, Lord Darius received the news... Their contract was voided immediately after he perished, erasing the mark on his soul.

"It can't be..."

Lord Darius's composure was almost strong, not broken by anything... But, as he reflected on this piece of damning news, his face showed a flicker of rage.

He could understand Plan A and B failure... But C? No, C was a guarantee. He sacrificed his agency for it; how could it not work?

It was the only thing keeping his composure intact throughout The Blood Hunters' expedition's shitshow.

"Go back!"

With teeth gritted and palms sweaty, Lord Darius rushed towards Ha'vek's nest. He had to find out what happened; he had to retrieve the Blood Marble... For he knew, he could not afford the consequences of two failures in a row.

It was so grave, Lord Darius didn't even care about keeping his recorded data clean... At this moment, nothing else mattered to him but the Blood Marble.

After a short while, Lord Darius was seen standing still in front of Ha'vek's headless corpse.

No Blood Marble in sight.

He had already searched everything, even the emptied-out treasury... Nothing.

Now, he was left to stare at the headless corpse for answers, but no one was there to deliver them.

'Was it Bishop Va'ren again messing with me? The same mysterious nightcrawler from last time? Or Feng Ling... finally caught up... Who?'

Lord Darius was left asking questions, knowing that even if he found the answer, nothing changed... He was a dead man, and he knew it.

Soon, he contacted Sir Alaric and shared with a grim tone, "Stay away from the region... We might have been compromised."

Alas... He was too late.

"Sir... I think we did."

Sir Alaric replied with a bleak expression as he kept his arms raised in surrender... What remained of his wounded party was all cornered by ten fearsome Daywalkers, clad in full black and wearing ghostly masks.

None was lower than the Warden rank.

They were crouching on top of trees, hiding in the shadows, or standing above Ravens in the sky.

The Midnight Slayers... were here to finish the job under direct orders of their vice-leader.

Upon hearing his right man's distressed tone, Lord Darius realized at last... His days as a Mole had finally caught up to him.

This meant...

"To send you after me... High Chancellor really doesn't want to take any chances... Madam Ysara." He spoke, his voice full of acceptance, having no plans to fight off his innocence in a trial.

He was caught red-handed; it was a done deal.

Ysara Blackthorn... Nurah's mother and the most fearsome assassin in the Northern District stepped into the light; her appearance was a mere walking shadow... Misty, silent.

"Darius... You have lost your touch." Madam Ysara spoke, her tone as low as a breeze in an abyss.

"Impatience does it..." Lord Darius showed a bitter smile, "I have waited for far too long; it seems I have become lax."

Lord Darius's spiritual radar spotted Ysara Blackthorn the moment she entered one hundred meters range, which said a lot about his spiritual prowess.

After all, Madam Ysara's camouflage skills were much greater than Feng Ling's.

This showed just how much damage Darius's splitting his focus between Demetris, Mantis, Grave'Maw, and such had done to him.

"You know me... I am a woman of few words. Will you be added to the list, or not?"

Madam Ysara summoned her peculiar signature weapon... Nightmare's Dagger.

Its surface wasn't metal or crystal, but a strange material that didn't reflect light or cast a shadow.

The blade always looked slightly out of focus, as if it were part of a fading dream.

The handle was wrapped in pale parchment strips, marked with constantly shifting names... names no one remembered.

"I will rather take my chances with the Bishop." Lord Darius said, smiling softly, "I will miss you guys... It's been fun while it lasted."

Then, he activated The Duskbound Order's brand, summoning the ghastly barrier and portal to his organization's branch or his pre-decided location.

"If you were to survive his wrath, it's best not to show your face again near our region..." Madam Ysara warned, her eyes chilling.

"My apologies, but that, I can not do..." Lord Darius replied indifferently, "Heliodor is mine, and shall always be..."

Madam Ysara watched him leave, not bothering to make a single move. She knew that not even her Dominion could break apart the brand's barrier...

As for striking earlier? Once spotted, her assassination attempt was foiled.

Suddenly, Madam Ysara smiled, an expression as rare as an eclipse... So rare, it caught Lord Darius by surprise, seeing her smile like this for the first time.

That's when he heard her utter one last time.

"By the time you come back... A new generation will await you. A generation with potential far surpassing the old guard... A generation..."

She paused, her smile widened creepily, resembling an evil shadow smiling...

As Lord Darius's ears were about to sink into the portal, it caught her fading voice.

"A generation, you have antagonized at their youngest..."

Swoosh...

The portal closed, and Lord Darius's environment changed from Ha'vek's throne chamber to the heart of Inverse Sanctum... The Bishop's throne chamber.

As Lord Darius opened his eyes, the Bishop was there awaiting him, his appearance hidden behind a dark cloak.

The first words that left his mouth were:

"Where is my refined blood?"

Lord Darius knelt down, his knee hitting the platform with a loud thud. He looked up, eyes filled with acceptance, and uttered, "I have failed you, again, master."

The Bishop stood up silently... No reaction, no extra breath.

"Let me see."

"As you command."

Lord Darius walked up, and as he lowered his head to allow The Bishop to touch his forehead for memories' extraction, he found himself flying backward into the wall.

Bam!

His back smashed, bouncing once, leaving cracks all over the wall. Lord Darius held his shattered rib cage with a deadpan expression... He was in hellish pain, yet none displayed.

He stood up and floated towards his master, falling to the same position... Once kneeling, always kneeling.

This time, the Bishop didn't hit him, touching his finger on Lord Darius's forehead.

It was like the entire exchange was law... unquestioned, unmoving.

In a few short moments, the Bishop watched everything that went down, from start to end. When he was done, he pulled his finger and sat down on his throne.

Then, he said, "So, what you are telling me is that you had a choice between safely retrieving the refined blood, and the exposure of your identity... You chose the latter?"

"..." Lord Darius remained silent.

He already knew the Bishop would see it this way the moment he gazed into his memories... He didn't bother to lie for a reason.

"How foolish..." The Bishop shook his head, disappointed, "I expected better from you... I had plans to recommend you as the New Bishop, the moment I get promoted in the Silent Convergence."



"My apologies... I was short-sighted." Lord Darius replied, not feeling a tint of regret.

He knew the Bishop was full of shit... He had promised him great things before, but even after putting his soul into helping him, Lord Darius saw no rewards, no benefits.

Even Levi's treasured eyes were a piece of intel he discovered by chance. Yet, did he see any reward? Nothing, just more orders to sate The Bishop's endless ambition.

"You have betrayed me... You chose your personal goal over mine; now all is ruined." The Bishop uttered, his voice low, but nothing could hide his buried rage.

"I shall accept any punishment." Lord Darius submitted.

"Your punishment is..." The Bishop pointed his finger at him and said, "Death."