

## Legion lich 171

### Chapter 171 Athos vs Malti

As for General Malti, she was able to survive the Meteor Spear and the subsequent explosions thanks to her quick thinking.

Malti had conjured a wind barrier just as the meteor spear exploded, detonating the barrier and propelling it away. The following explosions sent her even further away, causing only minor burns that her armor protected.

Her magic bow was not only an enchanted tool, it also functioned as a magic wand, allowing her to cast her spells from it.

Malti tried to use wind magic to float while in the air, but a black flash flew straight towards her, forcing her to concentrate on her surroundings.

Athos noticed that the enemy leader had survived the explosion without damage, so he decided to deal with her on his own. He used the lightning impulse twice, accelerating absurdly and conjuring air platforms under his feet, reaching Malti in less than 5 seconds.

He conjured a corrupted mana sword and slashed at it in one sweeping motion with all his might.

Malti clicked her tongue and positioned herself in the air, conjuring platforms of air laced with mana to support her weight. She blocked the corrupted blade using the bow handle and let the blade slide harmlessly through the bow.

She too took impulse of Athos's momentum and spun, adding his momentum to her own and kicking him in the abdomen, before slamming her bow across his face as if it were a club.

Her bow had an enchantment that increased her brute resistance, allowing her to fight melee if the enemy got too close.

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Athos' speed worked against him here, making the blow twice as hard and sending him to the ground at the same speed.

His nose was splayed across his face as the face itself sunk slightly, only the timely use of the bronze body skill and his dark iron helmet saved him from having his skull crushed.

The wounds healed in seconds thanks to his body, but it still left him disoriented for a few seconds and unable to react to the fall. All he could do was maintain his bronze body ability and activate his armor's impact dispersion enchantments.

His body hit the roof of a building and went through it, before hitting the floor of the floor and continuing to the ground floor of the first floor, where his body formed a small crater in the shape of a spider's web.

His armor dented despite the enchantments and several of his bones were broken, but all the damage was healed, the only thing that remained bruised was his ego.

“That woman is probably below Emilia, somewhere in the fifth layer of life. Thanks to the mana body, I was always a few steps ahead of normal mages, so I had hopes that I could fight someone in the fifth layer, but it seems that I was very arrogant.”

Athos was not wrong to think of himself as superior to other wizards. The mana body allowed his core to store much more energy than an ordinary core and control much more energy, be it in the use of skills or spells.

Becoming undead only widened the gap between him and other mages. Her core grew stronger with every spark of life force absorbed, and with it her body. He could force his way through the walls of progression, rather than losing years or perhaps decades to each progress.

But it came with an unexpected price.

“I’m not used to so much power. My body and mind are out of sync. My body developed too quickly for my own good. How ironic.” Athos spoke while laughing.

“I didn’t realize until now why I only fought with weak enemies or with support from my servants, but I’m fighting like a complete amateur now.” With each self-deprecating sentence, Athos’ smile widened instead of diminishing.

“So let’s solve this problem the fun way, with pure violence and alone. No help from anyone, no alchemical items or cheap tricks, just me. This will be fun.” He stood up as he spoke, a wide smile spreading across his face.

He blew up the wall in front of him and jumped out, scanning the surroundings for Malti, but finding only fleeing soldiers.

‘Did she run away? It won’t be much fun if she runs away without a fight.’ He thought as he started to feel disappointed, but he caught the sound of something slicing through the wind and approaching him quickly.

Without even turning to look at what it was, Athos rolled to the side, an arrow of lightning hitting the ground where he was a second later.

Athos followed the direction the arrow came from, only to find wreckage with no sign of life.

Malti knew that the strange undead would not die in a single blow, so after landing, she hid and waited for the opportunity to ambush him, as if she had returned to her days as a hunter. She hoped that by killing him, she would kill the dragon as well.

“Let’s play cat and mouse before the real fight? That’s fine with me!” Athos shouted as he strengthened his voice with mana, making sure he was heard.

‘Simogo, stop wasting time with the wreckage and start hunting the fleeing soldiers. Good chase.’ Athos ordered mentally and stopped worrying about the situation in the fortress, his mind fully focused on finding and killing the damned woman.

He activated the sensory field and cold mind, throwing balls of black fire all over the place. Athos knew thanks to death vision that there was no one in the wreckage, but he pretended to fall into her plan.

Once again, he heard the sound of something slicing through the air and he turned, narrowly dodging a bolt of lightning aimed at his face. For just a second, Athos managed to catch a glimpse of Malti in an alleyway between two buildings, before she quickly escaped.

“Not so fast!” Athos screamed and dashed like lightning towards the buildings, a sword of corrupted mana appearing in his right hand. He crossed the corner in just over a second, making a huge mistake.

Malti had left bags containing explosive dust among the garbage bags in the alley, using the space between the alleys to hide the purple teleport lights. She was waiting for Athos at the end of the alley and as soon as Athos appeared she released magic arrows that detonated the alchemical items, blowing up the whole alley.

Athos didn't have time to flee, so he just threw the corrupted sword and changed its nature to a fire spell before detonating it. His own spell couldn't do him any damage, but the shockwave still pushed him away from the blast, saving him from any harm.

“Tch. You smart freak!” Malti screamed and shot several bolts of lightning at Athos as he tried to retreat. Despite his bow being able to be used as a club, his specialty was still ranged combat.

“It won't be so easy to get away this time!” Athos screamed as he fed the flames generated by the explosion with his mana, taking control of them and darkening them. Controlling natural flames was a skill he rarely used since it was inefficient in terms of energy, but it came in handy now.

The flames split left and right, creating a direct path between Athos and Malti. Lightning arrows flew towards Athos, but the latter dodged the arrows with minimal movements, thanks to the sensory field and cold mind.

Athos could feel the arrows perfectly thanks to the sensorial field and the cold mind made the arrows move in slow motion.

He closed the distance between them quickly, the flames from the explosion gathering around his arms as he passed.

‘How can he run so fast and still dodge all my arrows?’ Malti asked herself in frustration, seeing the distance between her and Athos diminishing little by little as all her arrows missed their target. Her bow had an automatic lock function, so it was absurd for her that the undead would be able to dodge it.

Athos' speed was also shocking to her. Even though she was running backwards so she could keep firing and her speed was lower than normal, it was still surprising that the undead could not only match her, but also surpass her.

‘This doesn't lead anywhere. I need to immobilize him somehow or at least gain distance and hide to prepare another trap.’ That's what she thought and stopped backing up for a moment, before stomping her foot to the ground. The movement released the spell she had been guarding, sending a wave of lightning crashing down on Athos.

Athos was taken aback by the sudden spell, but he reacted quickly, sending the flames building up in his left arm in a wave of fire along with a blast spell.

The wave of fire collided with wave of lightning for a second before it exploded, their powers almost equal and unable to overcome the other. The explosion also generated a flash that temporarily blinded both fighters.

“Great, with this I can-” Her voice changed to a startled scream as a second wave of fire came towards her. His eyes still hadn’t adjusted to the blinding flash, but Athos’s had and he took advantage of the gap to attack.

Chapter 172 Athos vs Malti Malti was able to detect the incoming attack thanks to his collar’s effect, sensitive winds. The enchantment allowed Malti to feel the air around him as if it were an extension of his body.

She threw herself to the side desperately, not having any spells ready right away. The wave of fire passed inches from his body, before the blast spell mixed with the flames detonated and engulfed Malti in flames.

Her skin burned as the flames covered her, preventing Malti from seeing or breathing. She activated her armor’s defensive enchantments and rolled across the floor to douse the flames.

Black smoke billows from her body as she stands up, only to see Athos’ left fist inches from her face. Athos didn’t stay still after releasing the wave of flames and rushed to cover the distance between them.

His fist connected with the side of Malti’s face, dislodging his jaw and sending his head spinning. She lost control of the spell she was casting, wasting mana and forcing her to start from scratch. The blow also knocked her off balance to the ground, her vision blurred and exposed for a second blow.

Athos’ right fist hit her in the chest and lifted her into the air, knocking all the air out of her lungs. Her armor protected her from harm, the supple leather completely cushioning the blow, but her human body still suffered the aftereffects of the blow.

‘I can’t let him keep hitting me like this. I need to distance myself and recover.’ Malti thought, activating her storage ring and releasing alchemical items between the two. She was confident that her armor would protect her from the blast’s effects, while the same could not be said of the undead in front of her.

Even if it didn’t affect him, the shockwave would push the two of them apart and buy the seconds of respite she needed.

Athos felt the threat of the alchemical items and tried to jump back, but he was a second too late.

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Malti grabbed Athos’ wrist with one hand and conjured a simple wind blade with the other hand holding the bow. The blade of wind ripped the bags, releasing the contents into the air.

Athos gritted his teeth, but all he could do was activate the armor’s magic dispersion and hope for the best.

The resulting explosion hurled the two in opposite directions, but Athos was clearly worse off.

While Malti was sent flying thanks to her superior position, Athos was knocked to the ground and rolled several meters. The gap in the quality of their equipment also contributed.

Athos' armor was made of dark iron, but it was not superior to ordinary iron in quality and despite Treevor's work, it was still inferior equipment and its enchantments only reduced a fraction of the damage taken.

Malti on the other hand, was wearing armor made from swamp crocodile hide and mitigated most of the blast.

"That bastard really got to me on that one." Athos cursed as he quickly got to his feet. His armor was in tatters, with several dents and broken parts. Several of his bones were broken, but had begun to mend the moment he was injured.

His body was much leaner now, his muscular body looking scrawny, even though it was still completely covered. His right arm was missing from the elbow, but his concern was elsewhere.

'Shit, it really is destroyed.' Athos thought, looking at his armor as he tried and failed to activate his enchantments. The armor's enchantments had their runes scattered throughout the set and with so much damage, some parts were destroyed, rendering the whole set unusable.

"Well, I just need to kill her without her being able to fight back from now on." He resumed running as he spoke, not wanting to waste any more time.

Malti on the other hand, was still trying to recover. His body hadn't suffered any serious damage from the explosion, but his face was still swollen and his jaw was dislocated.

She spat out the blood pooling inside her mouth along with several teeth, before taking a superior healing potion from the storage ring and drinking the entire bottle. Malti also forced his jaw back into place to prevent it from being wrongly healed.

Taking a deep breath to calm her mind, she began to cast spells as she drew back her bowstring, charging an arrow of lightning. The longer she held the arrow in the bow, the more mana it would absorb and the faster and more powerful the arrow would be.

The undead's reflexes were unnaturally fast, rendering even lightning arrows useless against him. She needed something stronger and faster if she was going to hit him.

She glanced briefly around to try and catch a glimpse of what was going on and immediately regretted it.

The fortress had been almost completely destroyed, while the area inside the inner wall was just rubble and corpses. Simogo had destroyed it in the few minutes that Athos and Malti fought.

The dragon was busy flying around the fortress, killing all the soldiers that tried to escape. The soldiers weren't stupid, and they tried to spread out to get away, but few were successful.

Simogo wasted no time descending, but he cast breath of darkness nonstop as he circled the fortress, killing hundreds with each attack. He mainly focused on the two gates, going so far as to release a second roar and pile corpses on the gate.

'I can save them if I manage to kill that son of a bitch.' Malti thought as she bit her lip in frustration, seeing Athos run towards her.

"You really are a pushy bastard, aren't you?" Malti screamed as she shot the arrow she had been readying, but Athos smiled grimly at her, not at all scared.

The arrow flew faster than Athos could react and traveled straight towards his chest, but his body simply exploded in all directions, letting the arrow pass harmlessly through the middle.

"What??" Malti screamed in shock as she tried and failed to understand what happened.

The truth was very simple. Athos noticed that Malti was charging a powerful attack and thought of a hilarious way to dodge it. He conjured a sphere of air into the empty space inside his body and exploded it just as Malti fired the arrow.

He undid the joints that controlled his body at the same time, scattering his bones in all directions. He used wind magic to gather himself again and rebuild his body, before running again.

Malti recovered from the shock quickly and tried to release the spell he held at the ready, but a crackling sound came from the side.

She didn't have time to react and a black bolt hit her from the side, freezing her in place. A second bolt flowed through Athos's remaining hand and struck her in the chest, sending her to her knees panting using her bow as a crutch.

Athos' missing arm was currently behind Malti and was responsible for the first lightning bolt. Athos had severed the limb at the moment of the explosion, as Malti gripped his arm like a vise and refused to let go until the end.

Athos had cast the lightning connection spell and used the first part remotely, catching Malti off guard.

"It's over!" Athos screamed and ran, cutting the distance between them in a few seconds. He conjured a corrupted mana sword and tried to decapitate her in one blow.

His sword quickly approached her neck, but she lowered her head at the last second, a playful smile spreading across her face.

"Thanks for falling for it!" Malti screamed as he kicked one of Athos' feet, making him lose his balance before hitting his chin with the bow. The lightning connection spell hadn't done any real damage to her, thanks to her equipment.

Swamp crocodile choir armor had a high resistance to fire and air, thanks to the material's abundant earth and water element. Malti had pretended to be injured and waited for Athos to approach to attack him with his guard down.

She didn't lose momentum and released the tornado of blades spell she'd been holding at the ready. A tornado made of blades of wind surrounded the two within a 2 meter radius, trapping Athos inside while Malti could move freely.

"You!" Athos screamed as he released a fiery breath at her, but Malti just conjured a wind arrow at close range and the gust of wind threw the flames back into her face.

The wind blast also pushed Athos against the tornado wall, where the wind blades ripped through his armor and back.

“See you later, undead!” Malti screamed as she exited the tornado area, leaving alchemical items behind. She reduced the tornado’s area of effect, before the alchemical items exploded in a lightning storm.

Malti was forced to look away from the intense flash, before a strong tremor knocked her off balance and black smoke billowed up. She turned again a second after the flash passed, finding a crater in the ground.

Malti took a step forward to make sure he had destroyed Athos before he remembered something.

“I won’t make that same mistake twice.” She muttered and fired several bolts of lightning at the severed arm, blasting it to pieces. Malti returned his attention to the crater, frowning deeply.

#### Chapter 173 Violent conclusion

“That was close. That crazy woman almost got me, didn’t anyone tell her that using alchemical items was against the rules?” Athos complained as he watched Malti from the top of a partially destroyed building, taking care to mix his presence with his surroundings and not be detected.

His body was half-destroyed, with all the bones in his lower body gone. All of his skin and muscle had been consumed to heal his cracked bones and replenish the mana lost in the fight, so he was bare bones.

“I was lucky my escape went unnoticed, or I’d be dead by now.” He said half relieved half furious at having lost.

Athos had survived thanks to his quick thinking and his ability to separate his bones. The moment the sensory field detected the leather bags, Athos felt the danger against his life and released the meteor spear spell against the ground, intending to use the spell as a shield.

The ensuing explosion of fire and lightning dissipated the tornado of blades and sent Athos flying, or at least what was left of him. He was thrown until he collided with the building he was currently in, his legs lost at some point in the explosion.

Luckily, it looked like Malti suspected he had escaped through the sewers instead of through the air, so he was safe for now.

“I’ll recover a bit and then I’ll be back for the second round.” Athos spoke in defeat and turned away, conjuring winds to get himself moving.

He crawled over to the nearest soldier’s corpse before draining him to dust. Athos spared nothing, using dark magic to regenerate himself and his magic organ. It would take time for Athos to manually regenerate his body’s mana, but it would still serve to heal him if he got hurt again.

Athos regained some of his mana, though the amount was not enough to fill his core. A single corpse wasn’t enough to restore the entire magic organ, but there were dozens around him and many more around the fortress, so there was no rush.

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'Simogo, how are things on your side?' Athos asked as he fed on the next corpse.

There was nothing left alive in the fortress except Malti, so Simogo had left the fortress, hunting the few who managed to escape. For all his speed, he was still one and the fortress was large, so a few humans escaped, though it only delayed the inevitable.

"He should be back in a few minutes. I better kill that woman before then." Athos spoke and ran towards the crater as soon as he finished recovering. He threw himself without hesitation, using wind magic to silence his arrival.

Athos looked around and quickly found Malti, as she hadn't moved away after going down. Malti tried and failed to find any trace of him inside the sewer, confusing her.

Athos took advantage of what Malti hadn't noticed, conjuring a shower of spikes of corrupted mana. It was a spell that Finn had used and Athos remembered it and secretly practiced it.

Malti felt the spell and turned using mana vision, being surprised by the unexpected and impossible to dodge attack. The sewers were narrow corridors and the thorns occupied the entire corridor, preventing escape.

She can only conjure a mana shield to defend herself, firing lightning arrows at Athos. The spikes of corrupted mana hit the shield all over, causing cracks here and there, but Malti kept feeding the shield.

But his resistance had a limit. She was consuming her mana to endlessly create arrows and cast spells, so her core was already reaching its limit. She was having headaches and suffering from a lack of mana, her movements getting slower and slower.

"You're not taking it anymore, are you?" Athos smiled maliciously, noticing Malti's slow movements. The arrows were so slow that Athos didn't even need the cool mind skill to dodge them.

Athos on the other hand, had absorbed the remaining energy in his magic organ and that of corpses, so his mana was half full, but it was enough.

He covered his fist with a corrupted mana gauntlet and punched the mana barrier, shattering it into pieces. Malti tried to hit her in the face with the bow as she approached, but Athos caught the bow easily before kicking her in the stomach.

Athos also conjured a small blast of wind through his foot, hurling it hard against the wall.

"This thing really made things difficult." Athos threw the bow away from them, disarming her while preventing her from using magic.

"Cough!" Barely coughing as he got to his feet, pulling a hunting knife from his belt and assuming a defensive posture, but that was just false bravado.

"You know, it's been a long time since I've had fun. Since becoming an undead, I've had many opportunities to torture my enemies, but I've always been too busy to play with my victims." Athos said and snorted in irritation.



“The most I could do was human experiments, but even that was just for work rather than fun. But you gave me a good spanking and I’m going to have fun returning the favor.” Athos spoke and pointed his palm towards, conjuring black lightning.

“You coward!” Malti swore furiously and tried to roll away, but the black lightning followed her movements and hit her in the back. Her armor protected her from harm, but she still stumbled in her footsteps.

“Come on, come on, you can dodge it.” Athos fired lightning after lightning, aiming at her feet and forcing her to jump to avoid being hit.

“Go fuck yourself!” Malti screamed as she hurled the knife at him and ran towards the archway, but Athos stood in her way.

“You are not going to spoil my fun.” Athos spoke as he grabbed the knife thrown at him and stuck it in Malti’s thigh, making her fall to the ground.

She tried to cry out in pain as she fell, but Athos’ fist hit her full in the face and hurled her head back.

Athos grabbed Malti by the neck and knocked her hard to the ground, shooting lightning at close range. The armor didn’t protect Malti this time and she took the brunt of the lightning, convulsing to the ground as the darkness sapped her strength.

Malti grabbed Athos’ wrist and released alchemical items from the storage ring, intending to blow herself up and take Athos with her, but he stopped her.

“No more annoying tricks!” Athos grabbed her left hand where the dimensional ring was, before brutally biting her fingers off. He spat his bloodied fingers onto the floor amidst Malti’s screams of pain, licking his lips as he tasted the blood.

‘I’ve never tasted another person’s blood in my life. I wonder what human flesh tastes like. If I eat human flesh in my current condition, is it still cannibalism?’ Athos thought, tasting blood in his mouth.

He hadn’t realized it yet, but just like his vision, other senses had undergone changes after becoming an undead. His palate was now that of a predator, feeling immense flavor in the flesh and blood of any prey, even other humans.

“You freak!” Malti was now terrified, all her earlier bravado vanishing as she desperately struggled to get away from him. She removed the dagger from her own thigh and tried to stab him, but Athos grabbed her wrist and crushed it.

He shut her mouth so she wouldn’t scream and climbed on top of her, conjuring winds to levitate the alchemical items away, just to be safe

“Let’s start by getting rid of those annoying magic items.” Athos grabbed her hunting knife and cut the straps off the armor before removing any magic items he detected.

He left her half-naked before starting to heat the knife until the blade turned red and ran lightly across their ribs.

“You know, I feel like I’ve done this before. Torture, dark tunnels, helpless victims. It almost reminds me of childhood.” Said Athos nostalgic while suffocating Malti’s screams.

She writhed with tears in her eyes in an attempt to pull away, but without mana that would be impossible. Malti had spent everything she had left trying to blow herself up with him, so her core was dry.

Athos began to cut her body slowly, taking care not to get close to any vital areas. The red-hot knife cauterized all the wounds the moment they were made, preventing her from dying from excessive bleeding.

At the same time, he used wind magic to thin the air around them, causing Malti to suffocate. She gasped for air as her face turned red and changed to a shade of purple until she almost passed out, only then did Athos allow air to come in and she took another breath, only to start again.

In the end, it took nearly half an hour and over a hundred cuts before Malti was unable to take it any longer and died of shock.

“Huuuh...that was therapeutic. I think I lost all the accumulated stress. I feel like I could work non-stop or listen to Emilia’s scoldings for days without getting tired.” Athos sighed as he felt his head grow light despite the absence of lungs or a brain.

He lightly touched Malti’s chest and cast the raise undead spell. “Come on, it’s time to wake up. We both have a lot of work to do.”

Malti’s skeleton rose slowly and Athos could have sworn its empty eye sockets were quivering with fear as they stared at him.

#### Chapter 174 Fourth layer

The two left the sewers a few minutes later, as they needed to gather the scattered alchemical items in addition to her equipment.

As soon as they exited the sewers, a huge shadow fell over them and they looked up to see Simogo hovering over them. He landed in front of them, before looking at Athos as if expecting to be praised.

“You killed them all without letting any escape?” Athos asked as he walked over and patted his mist-like muzzle.

Simogo nodded in agreement, wagging his tail happily at being petted.

‘It looks like a puppy.’ Athos thought, but kept the comment to himself. He used death vision to check the dragon’s core and saw that both his dragon core and his core were below half in energy, although that amount was still a few times greater than Athos’ total mana.

“I have a new job for you, Simogo. I want you to help me turn the corpses into undead. I’ll teach you the spell for that and you spread it around the fortress. With your power, it should be possible to turn a few thousand into shortly.” Athos spoke while looking at a confused Simogo.

“Don’t worry, you’re naturally attuned to darkness, so it shouldn’t be difficult for you to learn the spell.” Athos said to reassure him and Simogo nodded in obedience, although he didn’t understand how to use different spells.

To Athos’ surprise, Simogo not only learned the spell, he did it in record time, besting all of his skeleton mages with decades of experience.

‘Is it Simogo who is a genius or are all dragons who are so powerful?’ Athos wondered, but there was no way to get the answer, so he dropped the subject.

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Simogo began circling the fortress, releasing clouds of darkness mixed with sparks of his life force, lifting dozens of black skeletons at once. Athos accompanied him as he raised as many undead as possible, but it wasn’t even a tenth of what the dragon was doing.

Athos felt the life force building by the hundreds, then by the thousands as Simogo spread through the fortress. Even with Simogo’s help, they still didn’t have enough mana to turn all the corpses into undead, but Athos hoped it would be enough to at least improve their core.

And he really did.

Athos began to feel that he was about to have a breakthrough, and the feeling only got worse with time, so he stopped raising skeletons and focused on the core itself.

He began to condense the mana from his core and form the fourth layer, the process was much simpler than the first few times. The pain was much worse than the first few times, but Athos didn’t care and continued condensing his mana.

In a few minutes of concentration and agonizing pain, Athos managed to form his fourth layer. He felt a surge of power spreading through his body, before he suddenly froze and fell to the ground.

Athos began to spasm and moan incoherently as his skin and muscles twitched like an insect with its head crushed. The empty space within his body began to be filled as the absorbed life force merged with the darkness and recreated all of his internal organs.

Athos fell to the ground because his nerves were being rebuilt and he was unable to control his movements for a few moments, making him squirm uncontrollably for a few moments.

So did his vocal chords and his brain, causing the convulsions and incoherent moans. It was possible to clearly see through his empty eye sockets the gray matter of his brain expanding until it covered the inside of his skull.

His eyes were recreated a second later, but they didn’t look human at all. The part of his eyes that should have been white was completely black, contrasting with his silvery irises. The only normal thing about his eyes was his pupils which were naturally black.

Among all the internal organs forming, the most important were the bone marrow and the heart. Unlike the other bodies, these started working as soon as they were formed.

The medulla began to produce a black liquid that the heart pumped throughout the body. The liquid was not really blood, but concentrated darkness that flowed throughout his body, giving Athos a vitality he thought he had lost.

His gray veins were slowly tinged with black as the darkness flowed through his body, making his dark veins stand out whenever he exerted himself.

As his insides filled up, his body that previously looked withered in places looked perfectly human now.

The external changes to her body were also extensive. His fingernails were dyed black, while his hair began to grow back to the length it had been in life. Athos never cared much about cutting his hair, so his hair was long and past his shoulders.

His hair color was a pristine white, making Athos appear almost monochromatic. The body hair on his body has also grown, creating a wispy beard on his face.

“Damn my head. Having a hangover without drinking is the worst.” Athos spoke when the changes in his body were finally over. He got to his feet with unsteady steps, feeling his mind slowly clear.

“Someone bring me a mirror or something. I want to see what I look like now.” Athos ordered and the surrounding skeletons split up to look for any that survived the destruction.

They came back a few minutes later with a cracked face mirror, the best thing they could get.

“Wow. I really got my body back, although it’s not exactly how I remembered it.” Athos murmured as he looked at all the details of his body, surprising himself with all the changes. He removed the armor and admired all the changes in his body, not the least bit embarrassed to be naked in public.

His white hair was what caught his attention the most. He had never imagined himself with light hair, although it didn’t look bad on him. His current appearance was exotic to say the least, but there was no denying that he was a handsome young man.

He suddenly remembered something and looked down, only to sigh. “Looks like I don’t have a beard yet. This shape is exactly how I looked before I died, so it’s likely I’ll never have one.”

Athos spoke without thinking too much about it, but then gasped in shock. His hair got slightly shorter while a thick beard grew on his face.

It wasn’t a surprise that he could reabsorb parts of his body and while increasing his hair length was a surprise, it wasn’t what Athos was concerned about. The surprise was that his hair decreased without him having to do anything.

They didn’t disappear because of his actions, but because of his desires, and that shocked him.

“I want a mustache.” Athos muttered and immediately touched his face, noticing that a mustache had slowly grown as his hair decreased. It looked like he had a fixed amount of mass and in order to grow one thing he would need to shrink another.

“This is awesome, I’ve always wanted a beard.” Athos absently looked at himself in the mirror, watching his beard grow. He spent the next half hour absentmindedly making small changes to his entire body as he recharged his body’s corrupted mana.

In addition to controlling hair growth, he could slightly change skin color. He couldn't change the gray color, but he could make it duller instead of shining like silver when his body was fully charge.

Athos also discovered that he was able to alter his appearance even further, turning all the fat on his body into pure muscle or vice versa, although this did not affect his actual strength, only his appearance.

Small changes could also be made to her facial structure, but that part was more difficult. It was difficult to change her face without looking like a freak. Athos hoped that with practice, he could change shape freely.

"It seems that's the limit of what my body can change. It won't be very useful in combat, but it's nice to know that I can change my look whenever I want." Athos thought when he felt that his body was full of energy and could not bear any more.

'The amount of energy I can maintain has increased dramatically. It's almost two-thirds of my core now.' Athos thought as he measured the amount of energy in his current body and compared it to before.

'My coming to this fortress was definitely worth it and I'm not leaving until I've taken everything I can from this place.' Athos thought as he called Malti. He ceded control of all the skeletons in the fortress to Malti and made her loyal to him.

"I have some orders for you." Athos spoke when she was about to kneel.

"Yes Master!" She responded enthusiastically.

"First, I'm going to teach you the spell to turn corpses into undead and I want you to use it on all the corpses here. If you take more than 24 hours they will become useless, so don't delay."

"Secondly, I want you to gather all the useful resources in the stronghold and load any carriages and wagons you can find. Priority will be whatever metals and magic resources you have, as well as the mithril plaques that surround the stronghold and alchemical items buried as a defense against demihumans."

"Once you're done gathering everything, lead the undead to the platinum fist fortress to the east. I'll be waiting for you there." Athos finished giving the orders and turned around, but Malti grabbed his wrist and stopped him from leaving.

"What is it? I'm sure I made myself clear." He asked irritably, not liking being held at all.

## Chapter 175 The return

"I beg your pardon, but I had to ask. Are you going to leave yet? There may still be survivors or we may need your help for something." Malti spoke uncertainly, not knowing what excuse to use to keep Athos.

"If any problems arise, it's your job to fix them. Don't waste my time again." Athos said coldly, before starting to teach her the spell. Once he was sure she had learned the spell, Athos whistled for Simogo to approach and climbed onto his back.

Both quickly departed, leaving a stunned Malti behind.

Malti continued to watch until Athos disappeared from view, before turning to the surrounding skeletons and starting to bark orders.

“You rotten bones, you heard your orders! I want you to gather all the corpses that haven’t been transformed in front of the inner wall gate. After that we’ll work on removing all the mithril plates.” Malti yelled at all the skeletons.

She was extremely hard on her subordinates, commanding them with an iron fist and strict discipline. Malti was a defender of the people, but strictly strict with the soldiers, to the point of being nicknamed the ‘little devil’.

Malti quickly organized the undead and they began combing the fortress wreckage for corpses and mithril plaques. She was organizing things as quickly as possible, wanting to leave to join Athos.

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“You can travel slowly, Simogo. I know you’re exhausted, so don’t force yourself.” Athos stroked Simogo’s head as he spoke.

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Using death vision, he realized that Simogo’s two cores were almost empty. The dragon nodded and flew at its highest speed without improving its body.

It took them over 18 hours to reach the platinum fist fortress and spent most of that time focused on regenerating their own mana.

“Hmm?” The view from the fortress was strange, however. The outer walls were completely demolished, as were any buildings in the outer area. The inner wall and fortress still remained, but Athos could see that the skeletons were destroying the wall.

This was to be expected, as he himself ordered this. Athos planned to completely destroy the fortress, so the humans would have nothing to recover after they were gone.

The humans would take a huge toll and be forced to rebuild the fortress stone by stone so as not to create a hole in the defense of their border. The strange thing was who was doing this.

Athos could see some skeletons smaller than human skeletons working to tear down the walls. Initially he thought they were goblins, but their bones were too large, so it was probably the dwarves that Emilia went to investigate.

There were a few hundred of them at a rough count, probably from a village in the mountains, but Athos found it strange that they had already attacked. Usually, he was the one who forced the undead to go to war, while the others hesitated for their safety.

Athos considered the possibility that the skeletons would not be so apprehensive without Athos around, but the questions could wait. He saw that the skeletons had noticed his presence and were coming out of the fortress to welcome him.

“Land in some open area.” Athos ordered and Simogo landed where the training area was formerly.

“Boss, welcome.” Treevor was the first to arrive and greeted him, only to gasp in stuned.

Athos’ changes were really shocking, but he hadn’t expected such an extreme reaction.

“The fortress of the golden bow was enough to form a new layer and my magic organ evolved along with it. I was finally able to complete my entire body.” Athos explained the changes to Treevor thinking his shock was about his change, but he was wrong.

“You should get dressed.” Treevor looked away, his skull burning with envy.

“Oh.” Athos looked down and realized that he was still naked. He had removed his armor to see every detail of his body, only to forget his broken armor in the golden bow fortress.

‘Well I was feeling the nice breeze while flying in Simogo. I hope that undead remembers to bring my armor.’ He thought a little uncomfortably, but he didn’t look for clothes.

Athos liked the feel of the wind on his body, so he wanted to enjoy it a little more.

The other high ranking skeletons gathered one by one around him and Athos started questioning them.

“From what I can see, you found the dwarves on the mountain and have already attacked. Give me a report of what you found.” Athos ordered.

Emília stepped forward as the leader of the investigative team and reported everything that happened when they investigated the mountain. She spoke slowly and calmly, thanking the heavens for her empty eye sockets that allowed her to look around without being discovered.

Athos was shocked to discover that there was an entire kingdom within the central mountain range and congratulated Treevor on his decision.

“So, how did the attack go? I can see from the new skeletons that you were successful, but I still want the details.” Athos asked curiously.

“Well, we...” Treevor began to narrate the invasion of the dwarven village.

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A few hours ago, in the middle of Keirasa Mountain.

“Is here.” Emilia spoke when they arrived at the scene. They were in the same place the queen had ambushed the dwarf sentries.

All the high-ranking skeletons were standing around vigilantly, fearing an ambush from the dwarves.

“This is strange. Something is interfering with earth magic. It’s like the mountain itself is rejecting my magic. Are you sure there aren’t any spells interfering with magic here?” Gaius asked the dwarf Durui as he tried and failed to use earth magic.

He felt that he could use magic if he spent more mana, but his power would be less than half of usual.

“That’s normal...dwarves can...manipulate the earth itself...and mix their energy...with that of the mountain...making our...earth spells more powerful...and disrupting the ..earth magic...enemy.” Durui explained as he took a step forward.

The skeletons had brought him so that he could open the passage and serve as a guide through the labyrinth.

Durui placed his hand on the earth, half in doubt if the mountain would still recognize him. Not only had his energy signature changed, so had the energy he used, so it wasn't certain if he would make it.

He activated one of the dwarven racial abilities, earth son, and was overjoyed when the mountain answered his call. The skill allowed the dwarves to feed the land with their mana, increasing the mana density in the land.

This would not only strengthen the power of the dwarves' spells, but also allow them to manipulate the earth later without consuming additional energy.

Durui didn't need to use his own mana, so the earth was manipulated as if it were an ordinary dwarf using it. A six-foot hole opened in the ground before Durui stepped forward and led the way.

The hole descended nearly twenty meters deep before they entered a narrow tunnel. The narrow tunnel had several branches, so they had already reached the labyrinths.

"Whats the way?" Treevor asked as he bent down to fit into the tunnels. Even at his human size, the tunnels were still too small for him and all the skeletons that came with them, as they were created with dwarf size in mind.

The tunnels were six feet at most, so most were forced to bend over to avoid hitting the ceiling.

"Come this way." Durui ran without hesitation, knowing the tunnel like the back of his hand.

They ran for nearly ten minutes at top speed, with Treevor even carrying the dwarf to move faster. For their plan to work, they needed to reach the village as quickly as possible.

"The attack is coming!" Treevor cried out in alarm, his mystical senses detecting changes around him. The surrounding temperature began to rise several degrees to the point of becoming unbearable for living beings.

The undead initially ignored the heat, but over time the heat became unbearable even for them. Holes appeared in the walls and lava began to pour out, increasing the temperature even more.

"There is still much??" Treevor asked impatiently, casting his ice age spell to try and lower the temperature.

The tunnels were covered by a layer of ice and solidified lava, but the ice was melting rapidly. Lava was also oozing from other parts of the tunnel and flooding them, making the skeletons hurry up.

"We are almost there." Durui said hurriedly, manipulating the surrounding earth to close the holes that were pouring lava. It would only work as a temporary measure and it would erupt eventually, but they would be long gone by the time it did.

The tunnel ahead suddenly began to descend, before Treevor in front raised his hand to order them to stop.



Right in front of him was a 15 meter wide chamber with a pool of boiling lava. Lava constantly flowed down the walls, increasing the size of the pool. Treevor noticed a metal door on the other side of the pool, six feet above the level of the lava.

“What do we do now?” Emília’s voice came from behind her asking for orders, but there was only one thing to do.

“Create a bridge for us.” Treevor ordered Durui, before unleashing Ice age again.

#### Chapter 176 Hidden village

The original spell was supposed to cover a large area, so its effects were much stronger in an enclosed area, lowering the temperature until it became bearable. More and more lava was flowing into the chamber, but Treevor kept powering the spell to keep it from melting in the heat.

Durui quickly built a land bridge for them to cross, though the size was questionable and only allowed one skeleton to cross at a time. Treevor looked at him resentfully, but the dwarf just shrugged.

“The surrounding rocks... are melting as...I need to divide...my focus on...keeping the rock solid...and building the bridge...with just my...willpower ...this bridge is...the best I can...do.” Durui spoke, but the skeletons were already moving across the bridge without waiting for his reply.

The first to advance were the twins Roy and Ruy. They weren’t wearing their usual equipment, as they hadn’t been corrupted yet, but Treevor had given them weapons made from the corrupted willow tree, the same ones that Athos found in Treevor’s laboratory.

The door was only 1.50 meters high and had no handle, opening only from the inside, just as Durui had explained while planning the invasion. Even the dwarf could not force his way in here, as the door and the land around it were enchanted to resist its effects.

Which is why the twins planned to force their way here. They drew the wands Treevor had given them, conjuring waves of heat and cold. The metal door creaked as the temperature rose and fell rapidly, cracks appearing everywhere as the metal expanded.

Despite enchantments increasing the door’s strength, the metal’s durability has dropped dramatically. After that it was easy work for the twins to destroy the door with corrupted mana bullets.

They burst into the small passageway, only to hear the voice of an angry dwarf.

“Fire!” The dwarf screamed before they could do anything and a hail of fireballs and stone bullets hit them.

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The dwarves began to evacuate just as the skeletons began to climb the mountains, but they realized that they would not be able to retreat in time.

The village chief had been informed that their presence on the mountain had been discovered and they had started to prepare the villagers to retreat, but their preparations were not fast enough.

They started to flee in panic, but the village head knew they would be unable to evacuate everyone before the undead invaded the village. Even triggering the defenses and releasing lava through the tunnels didn't slow them down, so the village guards stayed behind to buy time for the others to flee.

Most of the elderly also decided to help buy time to ensure that the younger ones could escape the village. They formed a small army of nearly 50, using enchanted equipment to compensate for their weak bodies.

They waited in front of the village's only entrance and unleashed a barrage of fire just as the skeletons broke through.

The twins weren't able to fend off the attacks in time, but Treevor behind them was. He cast a shield of corrupted mana in front of the skeletons, protecting them from attacks.

"Don't just stand in front of the door, we need space for everyone to pass through. We'll be dead if they attack us before we get through!" Treevor ordered them forward, feeling his shield crack under the barrage of attacks.

He sensed that the barrier was about to break, so he detonated the barrier himself, sending the shock wave towards the dwarves. The shock wave also pushed the flames towards them, forcing the dwarves to stop attacking and defend themselves, giving the undead precious seconds.

The twins backed away from the door and ran into the recovering dwarves, clearing the way for the others.

Treevor was next to pass and immediately attacked, its vines swaying in all directions as it released blades of aura. The aura blades hit all of the dwarves, but their enchanted shields withstood the blow, receiving only a scratch.

'Their equipment is powerful, but the dwarves themselves are no big deal.' Treevor thought, using death vision to size up the dwarves. He noticed that several of them had slight shadows across their bodies, probably from illnesses brought on by old age.

"Don't let them out, keep pressing them!" The leader of the village guard shouted for the dwarves to attack again, but it was a second too late.

The dwarves unleashed a fresh barrage of fireballs and stone bullets, but the skeletons responded with their own spells.

Half of them were responsible for defense, while the rest fought back. The undead were outnumbered, but they worked together to cast a defensive spell together, successfully fending off the dwarves' attacks.

Treevor continued to fire dozens of aura blades per second, pressuring the dwarves and preventing them from organizing themselves. There were mages among the dwarves, but they focused on defending the other dwarves rather than attacking. His mission here was to buy time, not eliminate the threat after all.

Despite the skeletons' best efforts, they ended up in a stalemate, with neither side doing enough damage to bypass the other's defense. Who ended up breaking the stalemate were the twin skeletons.

Roy conjured a jet of pressurized dark water and doused the dwarves. The latter just raised their shields and defended, not considering the attack a real threat. A serious mistake on their part.

Roy fired lightning at the dwarves, who bypassed their magical protections thanks to water. They were electrocuted as darkness spread through their bodies. The bodies of the elderly dwarves were not able to withstand the spells and fell to the ground in a faint.

The younger sentinels managed to stay conscious but still fell to the ground, before the black aura blades inflicted deep wounds on them.

The tide of battle turned to the undead from here. Astrus conjured the sword of judgment and swung it horizontally, sweeping the dwarves away.

Emilia, Caio, and Orus followed, engaging the dwarves in hand-to-hand combat.

“I’ll leave this one with you, I’ll go after the rest.” Treevor spoke loudly on purpose, drawing the dwarves’ aggression towards him. He took off at full speed and the dwarves tried desperately to give chase, turning their backs on the undead who promptly killed them.

With no dwarves to buy his attention, Treevor can finally get a good look at the dwarven village.

The dwarven village was in a cave approximately 500 meters wide and 15 meters high. All buildings were made of stone extracted from the mountain itself and had no windows, looking like large cubes of stones.

The streets were narrow by human standards, with the exception of the main street that cut through the entire village. The cave was gently sloping and the skeletons had invaded from the lowest part, so they would have to go up from there.

‘Looks like dwarves don’t suffer from claustrophobia. I would go crazy if I had to spend more than a week here.’ Treevor thought as he walked up main street.

He saw a lot of stuff lying around in the street, probably belongings of the dwarves that they were unable to carry and ended up leaving behind. The dwarves quickly fled after learning of the attack, taking with them only what they could carry on hand.

‘I found them.’ Treevor thought, noticing a crowd of dwarves overhead.

“Are here!” Said random dwarf 1.

“Hurry up and escape through the tunnels!” Said random dwarf 2.

“Someone stop him from approaching!” Said random dwarf 3.

At the end of the cave, there were three emergency escape tunnels and the dwarves were crowded together as they tried to escape.

‘Shit, they’re already running away. We need to hurry.’ Treevor spoke through the mind link, alerting the skeletons that remained behind.

They had already finished killing the sentries and were following the same path as Treevor down the main street.

“Let the women and children enter the tunnels first. Men, help me buy time!” The village elder shouted and half the men made room for the women and children to step forward.

They formed a line as if they wanted to protect the tunnels with their bodies, before crouching down and touching the ground with their hands.

‘I have a bad feeling about this.’ Treevor thought and he was right.

The dwarves activated their racial abilities all at once, manipulating the stone floor and turning it into a gigantic wave of mud. The wave of mud descended thanks to the slope of the village, increasing in volume as it engulfed the stone houses.

“I wasn’t told they could do this!” Treevor screamed as he tried and failed to control the earth to form a shield. ‘I have no choice.’

Treevor thought and began feeding a small teleportation crystal trapped inside the ribs of his real body. It was one of the crystals that Emilia had retrieved from the wreckage of the anomaly, and each of the skeletons had been given one for an emergency escape.

They were much inferior to the crystal that Emilia had, but they would still cover a few hundred meters and would be useful for situations like this.

Treevor fed the crystal its core energy and amber energy, quickly filling it. A purplish black orb that was barely able to cover his entire body appeared, before teleporting behind the elder.

‘All of you, use the teleportation crystals to escape the mud wave. I’m going to kill the boss now.’ Treevor spoke and quickly attacked the ancient.

#### Chapter 177 Dwarf skeletons

The ancient had fallen forward in the sudden wind, so he had no chance to react to Treevor’s surprise attack. Its claws pierced the ancient’s back and impaled his heart, bypassing his clothing’s defensive enchantments and killing him instantly.

The other dwarves barely had time to process what happened before their surroundings disappeared. All dwarves had items enchanted with night vision since they lived underground, but even those were useless.

Treevor activated the field of the dead after killing the wyrm, before unleashing blades of aura on those closest.

The dwarves couldn’t see anything, but tried to activate their weapons’ enchantments as a desperate measure, finding it impossible to use them. In desperation, they tried to manipulate the surrounding land to defend themselves, but the aura blades were faster, inflicting deep cuts and killing the unlucky ones.

Unlike the dwarves who chose to stay behind, these younger ones weren’t wearing armor, just plain clothes that offered no protection from Treevor’s attacks.

Other purplish black spheres appeared around and the undead left one by one, easily ending any hope of survival for the dwarves that stayed behind.

“Was it really necessary to use the field of the dead here?” Emilia asked as she used death vision to find and exterminate the dwarves.

“The women have already fled through the tunnels and I don’t want to waste any more time here.” Treevor responded with a shrug as he deactivated the field of the dead, not wanting to waste any more mana.

“Split up and chase them. I’ll take the middle tunnel.” Treevor added and ran without hearing their answers. The skeletons split into the remaining two tunnels and relentlessly chased all the dwarves.

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There were no more warriors among the fleeing dwarves, so they couldn’t even fight back before dying.

‘I’m done here. How is it on your side?’ Treevor asked for the mind link, turning all the corpses into undead before exiting the tunnels.

‘We’re done here too. We’re heading back to the cave now with the dwarf skeletons.’ Emilia answered from the leftmost tunnel.

‘Done. we found only a few dozen here.’ Astrus answered from the third tunnel.

They all exited the tunnels and huddled together, doing a skeleton count to make sure they didn’t let anyone escape.

“If we add up the corpses we left at the entrance and these elderly people here, we must have killed them all.” Emilia spoke after she finished counting, happy that the mission ended without major problems.

“Fine. Let’s collect the corpses that were buried and see if we can find anything useful in this sea of mud, although I doubt it.” Treevor spoke and set all the dwarven skeletons to work.

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“And that’s what happened. The invasion of the village was a success and we managed to kill all the dwarves without letting any escape.” Emilia finished the report.

“I see, good job everyone. Did you manage to find anything useful inside the cave? If the dwarves had large-scale spells, they should have plenty of magic metal to enchant it.” Athos asked with a greedy glint in his eyes as he finally got dressed, much to Emilia’s chagrin.

Treevor couldn’t stand looking away any longer and ordered the skeletons to bring some clothes to Athos. He received a nasty look from Emilia, but he pretended not to notice as he answered his questions.

“We brought all the weapons and anything of value we could recover, but there wasn’t much magic metal to recover. The dwarves used the energy they injected into the mountain to maintain the spells, using a minimal amount of metal just to control the spell.” Treevor spoke with disappointment.

A dwarven skeleton approached them and handed a mithril hammer to Athos. The hammer felt small in his hand, as it was not a war hammer but a forge hammer, but Athos could feel that the hammer was a very powerful tool.

“So they use a separate tool to control spells? That’s way better than human technology that needs to build control rooms. I could control large-scale spells from anywhere, instead of creating a fixed target for enemies attack.” Athos could already see the possibilities that this new technology would bring.

‘I may not gain much in terms of materials, but I will gain a lot in terms of knowledge. It’s a fair trade for me.’ Athos thought to himself, a greedy smile spreading unconsciously.

“And then? It’s your turn to tell us about the attack on the fortress. We want all the details.” Emilia asked as she tapped her left foot against the floor, practically demanding an answer.

She knew she couldn’t force Athos to tell the truth, but she still wanted to express how worried she was about him.

Athos agonized over whether to tell the truth, thinking of the heartache that would come when Emilia learned that he attacked the enemy general alone, but still spoke the truth in the end. The fortress army would arrive in little more than a week anyway.

He could force the newly arrived skeletons to keep quiet about what happened, but that would be too much work just to avoid a headache.

Athos told the truth and as soon as he finished, he felt Emilia fighting against the control of the chains to strangle him with rage.

“Master, you really fought a general alone and unarmed? Why the hell would you do that??” She asked furiously, but Athos shrugged.

“Fun? It’s been a while since I’ve fought with my life on the line and I’ve learned a lot in my fight. I’ve depended a lot on all of you to fight and that’s been making me accumulate a little stress.” Athos could almost feel her fuming with rage.

“Okay, okay. There’s no use arguing with the boss. He’s crazy and no matter what we say, he’s going to stay that way.” Treevor placed himself between the two to prevent Emilia from complaining further.

“How are the preparations for our departure going? Have you finished loading all the carriages for us to leave?” Realizing that tempers had calmed down, Athos tried to change the subject.

“We’re almost done loading everything. We filled the carriages with concrete mixed with Divine mithril and the mithril plates, but we didn’t have enough space to carry spare weapons or other less valuable metals, so we used the skeletons as charge beasts.”

“Aren’t we leaving anything behind? I hate waste.”

“No, we managed to carry everything, although most of the beast skeletons are occupied right now. We also recovered some destroyed weapons from among the wreckage and are taking them for metal value. A few extra pounds of mithril or adamant won’t be a problem.”

“We’ve also gathered over 100 teleportation crystals. The actual number is higher, but many were destroyed inside the anomaly. All that’s left is to finish destroying the fortress and we’re free to go.” Emilia explained with an irritated snort.

“About that, it’s still going to take at least a week for the undead I left at the golden bow fortress to get here, so we’ll have to wait until then.” Athos informed her suddenly, increasing her irritation.

“So what? What do we do until then? Are we just going to stare at each other’s skulls?” Treevor asked innocently, but bitterly regretted it later.

“What are you talking about? We have a lot to do. You’ve collected dozens of weapons from the dwarves that need to be corrupted before runesmithing again, in addition to the enchanted weapons we obtained from the human army.”

“You have a lot of work to do Treevor, so don’t worry about getting bored.” Athos said in a gentle voice that sent shivers to everyone who heard it.

“The boss will also help, right? Even if I just corrupt the weapons and leave the rest to the runesmithing mages, it will still be hundreds of magical equipment!” He tried to beg for help, but Athos was relentless.

“I have my own work to do. I’m going to use the corpses you’ve separated for me and strengthen Hecatonchires. Besides, I still have some experiments to do with the prisoners, so-”

“About the prisoners, they are all dead. We forgot about them inside the prison and they died when the field of the dead was activated. We turned them into undead and mixed them among the rest of the army.”

“Well, one less task for me then. I’ll help you as soon as I’m done with the bone abomination. As for the rest of you, I want you to attack other dwarven villages within the range.” Athos spoke as if it were no big deal.

“There are other mountains nearby that may contain hidden villages. If we’re lucky, our presence isn’t known to the other dwarves yet and we can ambush them the same way they did the last village. We can use some of the mages among the dwarves as guides to guide us the other mountains.”

“I agree that it’s more productive to attack other mountains than to do nothing, but we still need to confirm whether the mountains are inhabited or not. Also, you seem to be excluding yourself from the mission, which is new coming from you.” Emilia was suspicious of Athos’ meek attitude.

“Invading these underground villages seems boring. The dwarves don’t seem to be individually strong and despite having strong equipment, once you get close or bypass their defenses they drop like flies. From what you’ve told me, the biggest difficulty in the attack was achieved them, rather than the combat itself.”

“I’ll be much more useful working here with Treevor and the runesmith skeletons.” Athos spoke rationally, making all the skeletons’ jaws drop in unison.

“But how are we going to make up for Treevor’s absence? Without him, we would have melted into lava and no other skeleton has power comparable to his.” Emilia asked after putting her jaw back in place.

“Use the mage slayer units. They have 30 mages and all in the fourth layer, so there must be at least 5 capable of using water magic.” Athos replied after thinking for a while.

The skeletons nodded their heads excitedly and began to prepare to leave again, with the exception of one of them.

“So I’m going to have to go back to that hellhole again?” Treevor muttered in desperation, his empty eye sockets gleaming in desperation, but none of the surrounding skeletons cared for him.

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A week passed in the blink of an eye for the busy skeletons.

Emilia and Astrus had divided the high-ranking skeletons and mage slayer teams between themselves before raiding the closer mountains in search of more dwarves. They decided that with such large numbers, it would be a waste to move together.

They managed to destroy a total of 2 villages each, gaining nearly 2500 dwarf skeletons. In total they would have over 3000 new skeletons and hundreds of them were runesmithing. The skeletons tried to invade other villages after that, but they were all abandoned, so their attacks had been discovered.

Fearing retaliation or volcanoes erupting, the skeletons decided to retreat while still winning.

Athos also successfully upgraded Hecatonchires. They had separated 50 corpses, doubling the size of the abomination. Athos retained the appearance of the skeleton, only increasing its overall size and the number of skulls at the base of its neck.

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Hecatonchires was now a 20 meter monster, easily dwarfing its peers.

The weapons corruption was also completed in the meantime, much to Treevor’s relief. With the burden split between Athos and Treevor, they finished all the weapons in less than two days, before turning it over to runesmithing mages all over again.

They had previously copied all the equipment runes, so it was an easy but time-consuming job.

The skeletons spent the rest of the time training and fighting each other, not only as a form of training, but also to show off their power to Athos. Everyone knew that Athos didn’t care about any of them and only cared about their skills, so the only way to secure a position for himself was with his own skills.

They had an army of over 40,000 undead and that’s not counting the thousands that would soon join them, so more than a few could be promoted to important positions.

No one dared challenge Treevor as second-in-command, but Astrus and Emilia were challenged by nearly every high-ranking Skeleton. Even if they were defeated, Athos could still recognize their abilities.

All were obviously beaten until almost all their bones were destroyed, much to Athos’ surprise. He was particularly looking forward to seeing Ruy fight, but even he was defeated by Emilia in the end.



Equipment aside, Emilia's fighting skill was the best of all skeletons. Furthermore, Emilia was in the top half of the sixth layer, almost reaching the seventh layer. Its core was also higher than average, although the difference wasn't as big as Athos'.

Several challenges later, Athos finally managed to reorganize the army. He kept Emilia and Astrus as generals and added Ruy and Vanilla, putting 10,000 dead under each's controls.

Vanilla also challenged Emilia even though she was still in the fourth layer of core, but a minotaur's core was far superior to that of a human, so she was as powerful as Emilia or Astrus, despite not being able to use magic.

Below the generals were unit captains and each would receive 1000 undead as servants, but Athos agonized over who to select for those positions.

Undead like Orus, Caio, Roy e Olivia would be obvious choices, but there were still many positions that needed to be filled. Vanilla stepped forward as he thought about how to fill the vacancies and suggested they use the same method.

She caused the minotaurs and orcs under her command to fight and the winners were chosen as her captains, there were 4 minotaurs and 6 orcs.

The other generals followed suit and forced the best among their undead to fight each other.

Among Emilia's army, Caio, all three mage slayer captains, and six of the mage slayers.

Ruy did the same, but secured a position for his brother and Olivia. The other eight slots were filled from among the skeletons of adventurers, most of whom were leaders of their own teams.

Astrus had the hardest time deciding his subordinates. His subordinates weren't very strong individually, so he would have to look for good generals among his mages or ask his new comrades to give him good skeletons, but that would be a shame.

He filled the ranks with his brother Orus and the bishop, as well as the best mages he had at his disposal and three dwarven mages who proved to be good fighters.

"I think that's it. My army is more or less organized now, although I'll still need to reorganize when that undead gets here. By the way, how much longer will it take?" Athos wondered as he called the queen of the hive hawks.

Athos had ordered the bird skeletons to watch the path between them and the golden bow fortress to look for any trace of the undead army, but still no sign of them.

"Master, the journey from the fortress to here is a long one, so it's normal for it to take so long. Don't forget that the undead who were left behind would still have to finish organizing and gather all the useful materials before leaving." Emilia came to his side and tried to reassure him.

"I'm not really worried, just bored. There's not much I can do now other than watch the view and train. Even brewing potions or alchemical items like I used to when I got bored is impossible now. I'm afraid my skills as an alchemist are rusty after not working for so long." Athos sighed wearily.

'Something is approaching us.' Trevor's voice rang in his head suddenly, interrupting the conversation.

Athos quickly looked through the eyes of the hawk in the sky and noticed a cloud of dust rising on the horizon.

The skeletons went on guard against the possible threat, hastily surrounding Athos' position and the carriages with valuable materials. They were in an open field with only ruins around them, so they were open to attack.

"Wait, this isn't an enemy attack. It's the undead we've been waiting for." Athos spoke after the dust cloud had come close enough for the hive hawks to see the skeletons.

"Why are they running in such a hurry?" Emília asked confused while watching the same scene.

"I think they followed my orders to run here as quickly as possible." Athos spoke with an ironic smile, but still came out of the defensive encirclement to receive them personally.

"Master, I have finally arrived! I brought everything that could be and made the undead run day and night to arrive as soon as possible!" Malti shouted in front of the army, before dismounting his horse and kneeling in front of him.

"Then we can finally leave. Come on, I'll introduce you to the others. By the way, I don't know your name yet." Athos ordered her to stand up and guided her to where the high ranking undead were and ordered the new carriages to catch up with the others.

Athos and the other skeletons had decided to move in a pentagram formation, with the carriages and wagons in the center of the formation where it would be safest. Athos would also be traveling in the center, along with the runesmith mages and dwarves.

Each general would stand at one end of the formation, ensuring that nothing reached the center. It would be more effective to move in an arrow or spear formation, but they were carrying a lot of useful materiel, so defense was more important than mobility.

"It's Malti, master. Nice to meet you." She said as she walked beside him. "And yours?"

"Athos. Only Athos." He said coldly and briefly introduced Malti to the other skeletons and ordered her to her assigned position. He wanted to leave soon, taking advantage of the fact that the sun had not yet risen to an epic match, when he remembered something.

"Emilia, give me your teleportation crystal." Athos approached her and demanded, a playful smile spreading across his face.

"What do you intend to do?" Emília knew that that smile was not good news, but she handed over the crystal anyway.

"It's my last parting gift to humans. You said that your father has a portal network of his own and only he has the coordinates of your crystal, didn't you? So he must come to us as soon as he finds out about your death. This should cause a second anomaly and destroy another portal network."

"I want a hundred skeletons to stay behind along with a mage skeleton. The skeletons will buy time while the mage skeleton feeds the crystal, before teleporting to the portal. Do you understand the orders?" Athos asked as the undead gathered around him.

Athos handed the crystal to the skeleton mage, before retrieving all the skeletons' weapons. They were suicide soldiers, so they didn't need equipment.

"Are we finally ready?" Treevor asked beside him as he crossed his arms.

"Yes, we're ready. Let's go to the demihuman empire!" He shouted excitedly, seeing the army begin the march towards a new world.

## Chapter 179 God Eishin

Continent Adula, Holy Empire of Caria.

The Holy empire of Caria occupied all of the north of the continent and was exclusively human, every other race had been hunted to extinction. Even enslaving other races like the Makima empire was unacceptable to them.

Caria was the birthplace of the Eishin religion and had it as its official religion. They followed religion fanatically and believed in Eishin's teachings. Like the church, its view of magic was warped, placing the element of light above all other elements.

They had developed the light element to its limits, even the order of magic and the Makima empire couldn't match them when it came to researching the limits of the light element.

The Caria empire had implemented the element of light in all its national projects, from agriculture, civil construction, national defense, runesmithing research and obviously public health.

Despite the cold climate that surrounded its entire territory, the Makima empire had the most fertile land in the world, its agriculture so developed that its farms produced crops every month, ensuring an abundance of food for all the empire's citizens and the citizens of the empire and exporting food to the neighboring empire.

The empire also excelled in the treatment of disease, with most diseases currently known to be cured or treatments being developed.

Its capital was called El Dorado and had almost a million inhabitants, being one of the most populous cities in the world. The city got its name thanks to the walls that surrounded the entire city.

They were walls of more than 50 meters built with white stones infused with light elements, which glowed golden in the sunlight.

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The citizens of the Caria empire had a characteristic that differentiated them from any other people. The territory of the Caria empire received Eishin's blessing, allowing all children born within the territory to have an affinity for light.

Not everyone would be able to use mana, and even fewer could use magic, but everyone who took the affinity roll would discover an affinity for light, however slight.

The citizens of the empire were fanatical about Eishin and were incredibly grateful for all the blessings they received. No citizen dared to disobey the teachings and the few who did were killed by the people themselves for heresy.

There was a reason the people were so fanatical. They didn't believe in a conceptual God or something distant that they were unable to understand. All they would need to do to confirm the existence of God was look up.

A few kilometers in the sky above the capital El Dorado, the divine palace where the God Eishin lived floated on top of a cloud, giving all the proof the citizens needed of the existence of their God.

The palace glowed with the same golden glow as the walls, but it wasn't dependent on sunlight, Eishin's light was more than enough to illuminate the entire palace.

Eishin himself showed his divine presence to the population whenever something threatened the empire, ensuring that no threat reached them.

Despite calling themselves an empire, there were no emperors or royal families, just a pope chosen directly by Eishin who relayed God's words to the population.

The pope had no real power, he only acted as a mouthpiece for God. Eishin was the true ruler of the entire empire, as well as its greatest guardian.

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In Eishin's Divine Palace, at the same time that Athos left for the Demihuman Empire.

An emergency meeting was underway to discuss the damage that the loss of the portal network would cause. Just like the Makima empire and the Caprio continent kingdoms, the Caria empire had quickly become dependent on them.

The throne room was 40 meters high and made of the same white stone as the entire palace, but of a much higher quality than everything else.

There were massive pillars on either side of the throne room, with a red carpet embroidered in gold, guiding guests from the throne room doors to the divine throne, where the few guests who had been honored to be in the presence of God would prostrate themselves in respect.

A staircase made of pure gold separated the guests from the throne, ensuring that Eishin would always be above them all.

The pope prostrate in front of the staircase, touching his forehead to the ground as he tried and failed to keep his voice calm. Despite his position, he knew he meant nothing to the being in front of him.

A man was sitting on the throne, looking at him with a bored look. He was approximately 1.86 meters tall and appeared to be in his early 30s. He had blond hair and sky blue eyes, with a full, perfectly trimmed beard.

His icy gaze fixed on the pope for a few seconds, before losing interest and looking away. This was the Eishin God, the being at the top of all mankind. The pope was shaking with fear just being here, but his fear was not directed at Eishin.

Guards stood in front of the pillars and closely watched the guest's every move, further increasing their tension. What scared him wasn't the equipment made of divine adamant on the same level as a national treasure or the murderous gazes that stabbed his back, as if they considered him an inferior being who didn't deserve to be here.

What scared him to death was the nature of the guards. The guards had two pairs of white wings, folded behind their backs like a white cloak. They wore no helmets, just a golden hood, but the pope only shivered when he tried to peer inside their hoods.

They had no face, their face was a mass of pure light that made the pope shiver. They were angels, soldiers of God.

"I understand." Eishin spoke as soon as the pope finished reporting. "It's a temporary loss for humanity. It may take a few months for the portals to become active again and some projects have been temporarily stalled, but the human losses will be minimal. I'm more interested in the new species of undead that has emerged on Caprio."

A hologram appeared in the air above their heads and displayed the battle of the undead invading the fortress. He restarted the hologram as soon as he was done, stopping at a specific scene that interested him.

"Look." He spoke to his guards, the only ones who had any value in his vision and stopped the hologram at the scene where Treevor teleported to the fortress.

"That undead spirit is the supposed leader of the undead army, but I have my doubts. Corrupted spirits shouldn't be able to create undead that easily. I'm pretty sure this is the true leader of the dead-alive." He shifted focus from Treevor to Athos.

He ruled out Emilia and Caio as possible leaders, as they did nothing useful in the battle.

The pope didn't understand his words and looked at the confused hologram, but didn't dare to ask more.

"He's probably some kind of lich, though I've never seen one with black bones in all my millennia." Eishin was mildly interested in this new species, wondering whether he should make a quick visit to another continent just to exterminate it.

There was no hatred in his eyes as he looked at the image of Athos, he considered Athos too small for that. Eishin possessed more power in his little fingernail than all the black skeletons put together.

"Hum..." He started thinking seriously about going to the Caprio continent, but an emergency alarm started ringing around the palace, catching his attention and narrowly saving Athos' life.

The hologram showing the battle disappeared and in its place appeared a second hologram, showing scenes of a port city. A fleet of ships was appearing on the horizon.

There were hundreds of ships in the fleet, but it wasn't their numbers that scared the city lord into calling for emergency reinforcements. It was the ship's crew that did it.

All the sailors were undead, which means it was an attack from the Nytrer continent. Ships weren't the only enemies. In the midst of the fleet, thousands of undead sea beasts swam alongside the ships.

“Is it that time of year already?” Eishin didn’t seem the least bit surprised by the undead fleet, leisurely asking one of the guards.

“I believe so, my lord. These plagues attack us regularly every year.” The nearest angel answered him.

“Should we immediately send reinforcements, or let the city fight alone? It would be problematic if the port cities became too dependent on us.” A second angel spoke, but Eishin’s response was different from what they expected.

“You can all relax. I’ll handle this myself. If I just keep sitting here and doing nothing I’ll end up getting rusty.” God Eishin got up from his throne and began to stretch, causing all the surrounding angels to panic.

“M-my lord, please don’t be reckless! We cannot allow you to be in any danger!” The nearest angel screamed in panic, but Eishin was no longer listening.

With a wave of his hand, the walls of the throne room and several other rooms opened, making a corridor straight outside. A second wave of his hand and a teleportation crystal floated into his hand.

Eishin fed the crystal with his holy mana, making the crystal emit an ever-increasing white glow. Its white core was filled with so much mana that with just a few fractions of its energy, the crystal was already filled.

#### Chapter 180 Emperor Makima

“I will be back in a few minutes.” He spoke quickly, ignoring the desperate pleas of the angels around him.

The teleportation crystal in his hand activated, releasing a white glow that covered his entire body. Eishin took a step forward, disappearing from the palace and covering the distance of tens of kilometers in an instant.

The crystal didn’t teleport him, but it reacted differently to his holy mana. Unlike regular mana that teleported or corrupted mana that ripped space, holy mana contraction the space between Eishin and his target, decreasing the gap between them.

With every step Eishin took, he covered tens of kilometers at once. He moved slowly, not feeling rushed at all. The port city would not fall immediately, so he had no reason to rush.

Unlike his relaxed state, his movements were causing chaos around him.

For those watching from the outside, all they saw was a flash of light, before a sonic boom and a shock wave. Its speed surpassed the speed of sound several times over, its movement ripping through the air and creating a trail of vacuum.

Clouds were pierced and scattered by the ensuing sonic boom. Luckily he was in the sky when he activated the crystal, so there wasn’t much damage to his surroundings.

He reached the city in less than two minutes, a powerful flash of light and a sonic boom announcing his arrival and making the city’s citizens applaud his arrival.

“...” Eishin paid no attention to them and looked at the approaching fleet on the horizon. The speed of the fleet was extremely fast and they were already almost within gun range of the city.

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But Eishin noticed that most of the sea beasts had already advanced underwater and were almost reaching the bay and the defensive ships.

“Let’s start with them then.” Eishin spoke and raised his right index finger. Holy mana began to build up in his fingertip so fast that the port city’s citizens thought that a second sun had appeared on top of the city.

It was a simple holy mana bullet spell, but its raw power enhanced the spell until it surpassed an ancient dragon’s magic.

Eishin charged the spell for just a few seconds before firing. The mana bullet broke the sound barrier and hit the surface of the ocean, exploding in a wave of light that swept across the sea, the undead monsters, and anything too close.

The explosion also generated a wave of twenty meters that sank the ships stopped on the pier, but the nearest water mages controlled the water and rescued the ships.

“Amazing...” one of the water mages muttered incredulously, struggling to soften the effects of the waves.

“I thought these undead could resist at least two spells, but it seems to be in vain. Eishin muttered in disappointment.

Several sonic booms and flashes of light appeared around him, but Eishin didn’t care about them. “I’m going back to the palace. Finish with them.”

The angels around him barely had time to nod before Eishin activated the teleportation crystal and disappeared in a flash of light.

“Haah...” The angels only sighed in exasperation at their God’s irresponsible attitude, before focusing their attention on the undead below and take out your frustration on them.

“Should I visit those undead? No, they are irrelevant. They would be killed even faster than those sea monsters.” Eishin yawned as he considered whether or not to attack Athos, but gave up in the end.

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On the surface of the moon, at the same time.

“Is that lazy God moving? What happened?” A woman wondered suddenly, looking at the surface of Elbon. She was able to see the glow of the explosion and knew that the only thing that could cause an explosion on the adula continent would be Eishin.

She had long black hair that reached down to her waist. Her face was beautiful and perfectly framed, looking like a work of art. Her white skin didn’t have a single visible blemish and contrasted with her black, almond-shaped eyes.

The woman was approximately 1,74 meters and appeared to be in her early twenties, with a body that bordered on perfection.

“Probably boredom. Eishin has reached a power so great that we can count on our fingers how many beings in this world can face him head on and it is suspicious if they would pose any threat to him.” A male voice came out of the woman’s mouth suddenly, answering her own rhetorical question.

“I know that. I’m just worried that it might break the oath of non-interference.” The woman voiced her concerns. She mentioned an ancient oath taken by the world’s most powerful beings, which forbade them to directly interfere in the affairs of ordinary people.

This agreement was created millennia ago, when there were no established countries and all races brutally warred with each other. Beings as powerful as Eishin fought among common men, their sheer power wiping out entire species and changing the geography of the planet.

The planet was on the brink of collapse and could no longer withstand the destructive power of the gods colliding with each other, so the most powerful beings in the world made that deal and left the world stage.

“I don’t believe a little interference like that is enough to break the agreement. He only fired a single spell, so I doubt the others will make much of a fuss about it. In fact, I think Eishin would be happy to break the agreement. just to have someone to contend with.” The male voice spoke again, sighing in irritation.

“That’s impossible. Despite appearances, Eishin’s love for humanity is as strong as his hatred for dragons and the extinct giants. He would never do anything that could harm humanity.” The woman denied his assumption.

“Let’s put that matter aside for now. What do you think of the dark elder’s situation? Do you believe he actually sabotaged the tower, or worse, caused an accident due to his own stupidity?” The male voice changed the subject and the female snorted.

“Don’t even mention it, Calan. Because of that brat, most of my projects have been put on hold with no return date. Look around! Our new moon base is half done!” The woman started stomping her foot angrily, treating an elderly elder like just a child.

Just like she said, her surroundings were half-built buildings, showing that the base was still incomplete. The only thing that was already built were four pillars arranged in the four directions, forming a dome that maintained a bearable atmosphere for human beings.

“Will you get rid of him then, Eirin?” The male voice, or rather Calan, asked while laughing. He thought it was hilarious to see Eirin frustrated

“No, I’ll just excommunicate you for a few decades and force you to share some of your knowledge to regain your position. Despite your precarious power, your knowledge of necromancy and alchemy is too useful to get rid of it.” Eirin spoke irritably, not liking being teased at all.

Her wristwatch began to chime, making both voices sigh at the same time.



“Our time is up. You have work to do, brother.” Eirin spoke and relinquished control of her body to her brother.

Her body changed shape and a man appeared in her place. He had the same black eyes and hair as his sister, but his height was approximately 1.85 meters tall.

Calan was a muscular man, as perfectly proportioned as his younger sister.

He stretched to crack the bones, but frowned the next moment.

“Shit. Why does she have to wear such tight panties? She could use a little more consideration for me and change clothes before changing shape.” Calan complained as he hurriedly changed his clothes. He took a teleportation crystal and teleported away, appearing in a throne room.

The throne room was the same as Eishin’s divine palace, but it was made of enchanted marble and had tapestries with the order’s emblem on the left side and the country’s flag on the right.

His guards were only human as well, rather than angels, but their powers were among the best of humanity, most being at the fourteenth layer.

The guards in the throne room greeted Calan as he appeared, not at all surprised by their leader’s sudden appearance. He conjured an ice mirror and hurriedly fixed his disheveled hair, checking his appearance before sighing in relief.

Calan took a deep breath and sat on the throne, a royal valet announcing the arrival of guests a second later. The guests were the ministers of finance and internal affairs, as well as their assistants.

They knelt in front of the throne’s staircase before saluting in unison. “It is a pleasure to see you in such good health, Your Majesty Calan Makima.”

‘Useless old men.’ Eirin’s voice rang in the back of his mind, but Calan ignored it and returned the greeting with a polite nod. He gave them permission to speak, at the same time sneakily conjuring a spell of silence in his ears so he wouldn’t waste his time listening to whatever they wanted to say.