

## Legion lich 81

### Chapter 81 Invading the forest

The next day, at noon.

Since fighting the mage slayers, Treevor has spent all his time inside the cave trying to fix the amber gem enough that he can flee beyond the reach of humans. According to his calculations, he would need only a week to reduce the energy leak enough to escape this forest, but where he would go and be safe was a mystery to him.

As he thought about where he was going next, Treevor felt something strange approaching the edge of the forest. It was a repulsive feeling that made him want to throw up, but he'd gotten used to feeling it in the last few days.

"Did that filthy undead return to the forest? But why?" Treevor wondered. He was in his elven body, not wanting to burden the willow unnecessarily. He touched the roots to the ground with his right arm, making him connect with the roots as if they were merged and his amber eye glowed, shifting his awareness to the edge of the forest.

What he saw was shocking to say the least. 4000 undead lined the edge of the forest, with those in front carrying torches in their hands. A skeleton wearing the mage slayers attire stood in front of them, mounted on a rock bear.

"Did that skeleton kill so many people in such a short time? Are human cities so weak that a few dozen undead can destroy it that fast? Also, he somehow managed to kill one of the invaders' survivors, so he must know about me and yet dare to invade my forest?" Treevor wondered in confusion, unable to understand how Athos had gathered so many skeletons in such a short time.

But that was it. He felt no threat from the skeletons, just surprise and a slight annoyance at having to deal with these skeletons when he needed to muster the energy to escape.

"Do they want to burn the entire forest? They must already know that I can control the forest from a distance and stop any fire. So what's the point of all this futile effort?" Treevor wondered, but didn't stop making preparations.

'I could attack them while they're still far from the forest, but I don't know how many undead he has and I haven't seen that lead skeleton yet, so these must be just a forward team, the real enemy must be watching from somewhere. I'd better let them burn the trees and enter the forest, then regenerate the trees behind them and kill them all at once.' That's what Treevor thought.

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He patiently waited for the skeletons to invade the forest, but strangely, all the skeletons stopped a few feet from the tree line, as if they were waiting for something.

'What are they doing?' Treevor wondered, as if the answer would simply fall from the sky. And a few seconds later, it really did. A strange liquid began to drip onto the tops of the trees where the undead were waiting, surprising Treevor.

He focused his attention on the sky, but all he felt was liquid being spilled. His ability to sense the surroundings of trees didn't mean he could actually see things, it was more akin to Athos' sensory field ability, allowing him to sense approaching objects, whether physical or magical in nature.

It also meant that anything above a few feet of treetops would go unnoticed by him. It was a happy coincidence for Athos, but an annoyance for Treevor. The latter returned to consciousness to his own body for a moment and looked up to the sky, immediately understanding the enemy's plan.

Skeleton birds were flying above the forest as they held canteens, spreading the liquid across the forest. Athos had ordered the skeletons to gather all the flammable oil in the city and put it in canteens, before ordering the birds to pour it over the forest.

One of the most expensive and best-selling products during the winter was flammable oil, used to heat homes, and there were whole barrels in the carriages of the wealthy merchants that Halt stole.

The skeletons moved in unison as the oil spilled into the forest, flinging the torches as far as they could. The flames came into contact with the flammable oil, igniting instantly. The fire spread quickly, burning half the forest. The heat wave spread so fast that even Treevor felt the heat in the distance.

'Intelligent. The oil won't be fully consumed right away, so even if I erase the heat, it will light up again. Smart, but not good enough.' Treevor thought, his amber eye releasing a pulse of energy that spread up his arm to the willow tree behind him. The willow leaves glowed with white light, absorbing the light element around them, before being amplified by the willow itself and spreading through the forest.

The light spread over the burned trees, but did not heal them, instead creating a thin layer of light over the trees. The layer of light did not allow air to pass through, smothering the flames until they died out. The temperature was still absurdly hot, but the cold of winter would make the temperature cool quickly.

'With that, he should charge with brute force or at least send the first wave-' Treevor thought, until he saw a second flock of skeleton birds approaching from the forest. They also carried something in their paws, but the bottles were glass this time. Treevor felt irritated, imagining the undead wanted a battle of resistance against him.

This time, they just dropped the glass bottles once they were above the forest. The glass bottles shattered when dropped to the ground or trees, releasing a viscous green liquid that immediately began to sizzle and melt anything it touched.

'Is that acid? Shit!' Treevor thought in confusion for a moment, before realization hit him a second too late. The acid wasn't just sizzling from corroding the floor, but also because it was evaporating from the high temperature. Athos had hunted the sewer slimes, gathering enough acid to melt an entire fortress.

Slime acid was extremely corrosive and had an even lower boiling point than water, evaporating easily in the heat of the forest. A corrosive fog quickly formed in the forest, corroding everything it touched. Even the protective light layer was useless. Even the protective layer of light was useless, only delaying the acid for a few seconds before disappearing.

"Fuck!" Treevor swore loudly, feeling the trees being destroyed in quick succession. He didn't have any defensive measures to deal with a corrosive fog, so he could only watch helplessly as his forest was

destroyed. as the cloud spread, his mystical senses grew weaker and weaker until he became unable to sense anything in the area near the skeletons.

“These bony bastards are smarter than I thought. I better prepare to fight just in case.” Treevor spoke, his tree arm breaking away from the roots before he touched the willow. The willow swung open as if it recognized it and Treevor entered, before quickly closing behind him.

The wooden face appeared at the base of the tree, before moving to the top to observe the corrosive cloud. On the other side of the cloud, outside the forest, two skeletons took a step forward before a black wind gathered around them. Both wore the order’s green cloak, but one of them was wearing an iron sword, while the other held a wand in his hands.

They conjured a gale that slammed towards the corrosive cloud, pushing it toward the center of the forest, where Treevor was.

“Now, attack!” Athos screamed, causing the undead to invade the forest now that there was no risk of being corroded.

‘Now, be aware and wait for an opportunity.’ He mentally ordered, causing Finn among the other skeletons to nod his head. The black skeletons advanced as fast as they could, the terrain now clear of impediments.

“You annoying son of a bitch...!” Treevor swore loudly, seeing the corrosive cloud being guided towards him and the hundreds of undead running close behind. He cast his glacial winter spell, lowering the temperature around the forest by -50oC. The acidic cloud quickly grew heavy and became liquid again, harmlessly eating away at the ground.

‘Partial assault form.’ Treevor thought, transforming willow tree upper part into its attack form. It was a necessary measure to save energy and prevent energy leakage from the gem. His body was approximately 8 meters, but his energy was much less than before and even more spread out, so his power dropped.

Treevor didn’t even summon the gem, purely using the power he naturally draws from the environment to supply the core’s own transformation and mana to cast spells. The willow needed to remain connected to the ground to extract world energy, making it an easy target.

The undead ignored the extreme cold and quickly reached the edge of the artificial cave. They looked down and glared menacingly at Treevor. Their absurd numbers completely surrounded the cave. Treevor sneered at them, as if he saw rats invading his backyard.

“Think you can kill me with those bunches of ants, undead? Know that no matter how many ants you gather, you’re just insects!” Treevor yelled, looking straight into Athos’ eyes. Now that he could look at the undead up close, his mystical senses showed how the souls of the dead were bound by black chains. The chains were attached to certain skeletons, but all chains ended in a single undead.

## Chapter 82 Purge

No, calling that thing undead would be a compliment. To Treevor’s eyes, Athos’ soul looked like a freak straight out of a psychopath’s nightmares. His body was pitch black, as if ink had been spilled all over

him. His right hand was busy holding two black chains thicker than his arm, while in his left he carried a bloodied sword.

His face had no features, eyes, mouth or anything else, but was covered in a grinning gray mask that clung to his head like a second skin and seemed to move on its own. Every now and then, he would tug at the chains on his right hand, causing the souls in chains to groan in pain. Every time this happened, the gray mask laughed at their suffering.

It was one of the most bizarre and terrifying things Treevor had ever seen. Unlike physical bodies, a soul's appearance was determined by one's state of mind, as well as how one saw oneself. So what kind of state of mind does one have to be in to see oneself in such a horrendous way?

'This thing is having fun. He is having fun while corrupting others. He came to kill me because he finds it amusing.' That's what Treevor thought, seeing the gray mask look at him the way a child looks at a new toy. The black chains smeared the souls with their darkness, like spilling black paint on a whiteboard.

As the souls darkened, the mask laughed before looking for new souls to taint.

"You really do have special senses. I shouldn't stand out from the other mage, but you found me anyway. How did you do that?" Realizing that Treevor was looking him in the eye, Athos stepped forward and stood out from the rest. His bare skull was covered in a mass of darkness before turning back to gray skin.

After his parting with Khali, Athos realized he could retract the skin with a thought, which would be useful for disguising himself among his skeletons.

"You're just as ugly on the outside as you are on the inside." Treevor said, understanding why Athos looked so bizarre. His soul was a reflection of his hideous body.

"And you look intimidating on the outside, but I'm sure you're soft on the inside. I'll be sure to open you up to find out." Athos said smiling defiantly, but he was extremely confused inside.

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'Why isn't he moving?' No matter how strong and arrogant he is, standing around like a target is stupid at best.' Athos thought, looking suspiciously at Treevor with the vision of death, but finding nothing.

The willow was actually a glowing willow, a magical tree filled with the light attribute. Its leaves had healing properties even without processing them, and staffs made from its branches amplified light magic. It also meant that it was a white blur in Athos' eyes.

"You will pay for your arrogance, undead." Treevor said, white vein-like lines appeared all over the tree. The leaves glowed as they attracted the light attribute of the environment, further enhancing his body's physical ability and the power of enchantments. Even so, his power was not even half of what it was when he faced the mage slayers.

...but more than enough to eradicate weak undead.

"Begin!" Athos ordered, quickly retreating along with the first line of undead. Only a few skeletons remained at the edge of the hole and they took small sealed bags and opened them around their feet,

releasing the earthquake dust. The ground began to shake before collapsing, knocking them into the cave before they were crushed by rock and earth.

The collapse turned the walls of the hole into a steep slope, but enough for the skeletons to descend. The undead rushed like an avalanche towards Treavor, trampling their own companions if they tripped or were too slow.

Even in the face of the wave of enemies, Treavor didn't care. He lifted one arm as high as possible, making the light rise up his torso until his fist glowed like a second sun and waited until so many skeletons approached him before whispering.

"Sacred field." A wave of light spread from his fist across the hole, until it formed a dome of light. The undead had their movements slowed down as if they were walking underwater, with black smoke rising from their bodies. Holy Field was one of the most well-known anti-undead spells and was widely taught by the church of Eishin and the elven nation.

The spell increased the concentration of light in a certain area, passively healing any living being and decreasing the power of dark magic, including the energy released by the corrupted core to move a skeleton. Any undead, superior or not, would have their power reduced and suffer constant damage within the holy field.

"Die, this time for good!" Treavor screamed, the branches all over his body merging with his arms and turning into long whips. Translucent runes appeared on the whip's surface, before swinging its arms and sending shockwaves in all directions.

Dozens of skeletons were swept away by the shock wave, their bodies shattering into pieces and hitting other skeletons and knocking them over like bowling pins, but new undead quickly took their place. Treavor was about to crush them again, but sudden heat from above caught his attention.

A 10-meter-long spear of condensed black flame streaked across the sacred ground, aiming precisely at Treavor's head, where Athos assumed he was. The meteor spear spell was cast outside the holy field and moved too fast for the weakening effect to take effect.

Treavor coiled the right whip into a spiral above his head and activated one of the willow's enchantments, creating a shield of light on top of the whip. The spear hit the shield of light, causing large cracks before exploding, ripping off a good chunk of the whip, surprising Treavor.

'How is this skeleton's magic so strong? He wasn't like that when he left the forest!' Treavor wondered in shock, feeling the black flames scorch what was left of his whip and the darkness sapping his strength. Athos had poured half his mana into the spell, deciding that a strong attack would be more effective than prolonging the fight.

Treavor cast a freezing spell to put out the flames and a pulse of light to purify the darkness and regenerate the whip, but Athos didn't give him time to think.

"Corpse explosion!" Athos screamed, causing the shattered skeletons by Treavor's first attack to detonate the very core, creating a curtain of darkness within the hole. The holy field tried to purify the darkness, but dozens of cores were more than enough to overcome it.

“Tch!” Treevor clucked his tongue, conjuring a simple barrier of light around him to block the darkness’s advance, but the undead invaded like a swarm of locusts, slamming the barrier down with all their might. The barrier only lasted a few against the combined onslaught of the undead and the advancing darkness, but it was enough for Treevor.

The bud on her left shoulder blossomed into a beautiful white flower, but the amount of energy she was absorbing was frightening. The flower drained both magical and natural light so quickly that Treevor’s surroundings were obscured for a few moments.

Its remaining whip fell apart, the branches curling into a hollow cylindrical spiral inside, like a cannon, before the flower sent light energy throughout the Willow to be amplified and then filled the cannon’s interior.

“Swerve!” Athos shouted to the really important people among the skeletons, knowing that it would be impossible for the rest of the army to escape in time.

“Purge!” Treevor yelled, firing the light cannon. The beam of bright light pierced the curtain of darkness and the undead, vaporizing them before they could do anything. The attack hit the steep ramp, leaving a trail of destruction on the ground as it eradicated all the skeletons.

Treevor began turning the cannon, taking full advantage of the attack to kill as many of the undead as possible. He swept the cannon like a fan until it almost formed a semicircle, before the light began to fade and fade.

‘That was dangerous.’ Athos thought, cold sweat he didn’t even know he was capable of producing soaking his body. Treevor’s attack was devastating, killing approximately 1200 undead. He would have been one of them if he hadn’t run for his life.

‘But it was too early and it created an opportunity I can’t miss.’ Athos used death vision, realizing how weak Treevor’s body was after the attack. Previously, his body radiated light like a Christmas tree, but now it was weak, allowing Athos to notice a shadow on Treevor’s head. It was something small, a little bigger than a grape, but it was definitely there.

‘The main body is in the head. Get his attention and make him bow his head.’ Athos mentally ordered, receiving a chorus of nods in response. So far, the fight has been easier than he imagined. He invaded the forest with the determination to lose all 4000 skeletons with him, but Treevor was already faltering before half of them were killed.

Chapter 83 Cutting the good in the bud

Athos gave an evil smile when he finally realized. “You can’t use all your power, can you? There’s something wrong with your body preventing you from fighting at all.”

His voice was amplified by wind magic and spread across the battlefield, making Treevor frown, even though his wooden face should have been unable to do so.

This reaction was all Athos needed to know, before ordering the skeletons to resume their advance. Now that the real fight would begin.

Treevor tried to refute him, but his body was out of energy and he needed to save as much as possible for the fight. He hesitated whether to use the amber gem or not, but chose not to. The willow was already recovering, draining the light element from the environment to recover.

'I just need a few seconds to recover!' Treevor thought, feeling his wooden body weakened by the lack of energy starting to return to normal. He turned the cannon into a whip again, determined to keep the undead at bay long enough to recover.

Unfortunately for him. the undead were already closer than he thought.

A 20-foot stone spike grew out of the ground near the stem, hitting Treevor's unprotected right side where his ribs should have been. The light element in his body was in short supply, so the whip's regeneration was slow.

The thorn pierced his side, causing white sap to spurt in place of blood and showing how weakened Treevor was currently. Treevor frowned as he wrapped the broken whip around the thorn before twisting, breaking in half.

He was about to throw the broken thorn into the skeleton army, when a skeleton jumped out of the thorn. Caio had conjured the stone thorn and purposely made it hollow, so he could surprise Treevor.

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Caio drew a sword and stabbed Treevor to steady his fall, before throwing a glass bottle and a half-open leather bag into the hole made by the thorn, before using the impulse ability to kick Treevor's body and back away, the whip of Treevor hitting at the spot where he was a second later.

Treevor's whip shattered the glass bottle and leather bag, causing an explosion in the wound itself and worsening the damage. The bottle's slime acid was vaporized in the explosion, creating a corrosive fog inside his body.

"You bastard!" Treevor screamed in panic, trying to crush Caio with his whip, but the latter used the acceleration skill and retreated away. The hole in his side was smoking white smoke and refusing to heal. Treevor transformed the broken whip into a bark shield and covered the hole as a makeshift shield to prevent further damage.

Treevor easily crushed the approaching undead with his remaining whip, but remained vigilant, keeping one eye on Athos and the other on Caio. That was why he was slow to react to the attack from above.

A dozen arrow imbued weapon break rained down on his body from above, before exploding against his body, blasting several holes at once. Treevor looked back, seeing a unit of skeleton archers in the distance led by Halt.

Athos had gathered all the experienced mana users into two archer units and placed them at opposite ends of the hole. The unit led by the captain of the guard had been obliterated by the light cannon, but Halt's unit had not suffered any damage.

To make Treevor's situation worse, the skill's corrupted mana seeped into his body, rotting his wounds. Normally the light flowing through the willow would have purified the darkness, but it had taken so much damage that what little light element in the willow couldn't keep up.

Treevor was now so slow that even the slowest of skeletons could keep up with his movements. In desperation, Treevor decided to release the amber energy, even at the risk of the gem cracking. He decided it was better to cut the damage before it was too late.

The amber eye of Treevor's real body began to glow before sending half of its energy into the center of the wooden body. The amber energy quickly solidified into a gem, before sending pulses of energy throughout the willow tree. The various wounds caused by the arrows healed in an instant, the darkness being purified without resistance.

Treevor conjured a light layer of ice into the hole in its side, preventing the acid from corroding the willow and allowing the amber energy to repair it. His broken whip remained the same, but only because Treevor prioritized healing more important areas.

His body was filled with power, translucent runes appearing through his body, sending out a shock wave that pushed all nearby undead away.

He immediately looked for Athos, wanting to end the fight as quickly as possible, which wasn't too difficult. A skeleton with gray skin among black skeletons stood out like a sore thumb.

"Die!" Treevor used amber energy to cast his Sky Impact spell, causing three 5 meter rings of light to appear above his head, releasing pillars of light towards Athos.

Athos used the thunder impulse and began to run, the pillars of light burning the place where he had been a second ago. He jumped and rolled, running as fast as he could as the pillars of light drew closer and closer. One of the pillars of light was too fast for Athos to dodge and hit his left arm, vaporizing him from the shoulder down.

'I can't let this get to me or I'll be killed.' Athos thought, conjuring a barrier of corrupted mana around his body to avoid being destroyed. The pillar of light hit the barrier and broke it a second later, but that second gain was more than enough for Athos to escape.

They continued the game of cat and mouse, Treevor growing impatient. He lashed out with the whip nonstop, sending shockwave after shockwave against the attacking undead while blocking the arrows from a distance, but Athos continued to flee and circle the pillars of light, as if mocking him.

The rings controlled the direction of the pillars and they were difficult to move, allowing Athos to always run away at the last second. Treevor was growing impatient, feeling the amber energy leak out. He was expending 4 times more energy than would be needed with each attack, apart from the energy that leaked even if he didn't do anything.

'His attention is all on me. How long will it take to get ready?' Athos asked mentally, jumping away from the pillar after he broke the barrier.

'7 seconds and counting.' Caio replied. After Emilia made him a leader of 1000 skeletons, the chains crushed his mind and made him loyal to Athos.

'Great, let's get this over with.' Athos said, counting the seconds in his head. He stopped escape, instead running towards Treevor. As the distance between them decreased, the accuracy of the pillars of light increased and Athos was forced to spend more and more mana to maintain the barrier.



When Athos came within reach of the whip, Treevor swept the whip in a horizontal swipe, forcing him to either jump or be crushed. Athos jumped hastily, making Treevor smile inwardly. The three rings above his head focused on a single pillar and hit him in midair, where it would be nearly impossible for him to dodge. Seeing the pillar of light coming towards him, Athos gave up the defense and kicked the right side of his own barrier and broke the left side, throwing himself away from the attack.

Both of his legs were hit by the pillar of light and obliterated, but he was still alive. Athos created a gale with his remaining arm and propelled himself away from Treevor, a crooked smile on his face despite his precarious situation.

'I won.' That's what Athos thought, looking at a point behind Treevor.

Treevor also felt the mana coming from behind and turned around, only to see the skeleton wearing an overcoat flying towards him, almost reaching his head. Athos had ordered the mage skeleton to use wind magic to hurl Finn at Treevor's head, where they knew his main body was.

Athos had purposely caught his attention, sacrificing both legs just to keep Treevor's attention on himself.

Of course now that Treevor was back in his prime, he'd have no problem facing a mere skeleton. He didn't attack with the whip because of the distance, so he concentrated the light element in his amber eye to shoot out like a beam of light and finish off the skeleton in one fell swoop.

Seeing this, Finn grabbed a leather bag and opened it behind him, causing an explosion that propelled him forward, slamming into Treevor's helmet. The beam of light was fired from the amber eye, evaporating Finn's skull and neck bones, but his body still remained clinging to Treevor's helmet, just as ordered. His overcoat fell off, revealing a cloth tied between his ribs glowing with a purplish black glow.

The teleport crystal was originally purple, but it was dyed black when it was injected with Finn's corrupted mana. Surprisingly, he didn't reject the unbalanced energy and greedily devoured Finn's mana until he was completely dyed black.

#### [Chapter 84](#) Corpse explosion

"No!" Treevor had given up using mana vision on the undead, so he didn't notice the teleport crystal inside Finn's ribcage. He hurriedly tried to move his head back, but the crystal activated and his vision darkened.

A purplish black sphere with a radius of 2 meters appeared around his helmet, engulfing his head and Finn's body. The sphere immediately shrunk, ripping through space and generating a vacuum that drained the air for a second before disappearing. Treevor's whip dropped to the ground with a thud and his headless body stopped moving.

"He is dead?" Gaius asked, positioning himself in front of Athos as if to protect him, looking vigilantly at the half-transformed willow, as if he might come back to attack them at any moment. The crystal was only supposed to teleport them to a desired location, but the hole in space was totally unexpected and made him question.

“Unfortunately not, the second team has him now.” Athos responded by sitting on the ground, trying to focus on the second army waiting outside the forest, receiving confirmation of a black hole suddenly appearing and a giant wooden helmet falling to the ground.

‘Now it is no longer in my hands. I can only hope they succeed. I’m counting on you, Emilia and Sevenus.’ Athos thought, throwing himself backwards and lying on the floor. He felt mentally exhausted, but no one could blame him. Athos created a plan of attack based on the information that Emilia brought, but it proved to be totally incorrect.

He had to improvise on the fly, so he refrained from participating in the fight and just commanded. Originally, Treevor was supposed to slaughter all the undead that attacked him, while the archers, the skeleton mage, Caio and he drew his attention, for Finn to teleport along with half of Treevor’s body. His body must have been 4 meters tall so the teleportation would have taken some part of his body.

In the worst case scenario, the true body would have been left intact, but with half of the plant body missing its fighting ability would be greatly reduced. At best, they would have split the elf in half and the fight would have ended there. Athos panicked a little when he saw Treevor’s 8 meter form, figuring he hadn’t used all his strength against Emilia, but continued the attack anyway, betting everything he had on a chance to kill him.

A burst of darkness in the distance told him he’d won the bet.

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Outside what was left of the Faltra forest at, the same time.

The purplish black sphere appeared about 5 meters above the ground, releasing a gust of wind and Treevor’s wooden head before disappearing. Treevor was thrown into a new environment by the enemy, but he didn’t have time to think about it.

“ARGHHH!!” The head gave a cry full of pain, feeling a part of itself being lost. The moment the purplish black sphere disappeared, the connection between its amber eye and the amber gem at the center of the willow was severed, causing Treevor excruciating pain.

The shock forcibly disconnected him from the wooden helmet and he jumped to his feet while screaming. His amber eye was cracked as it gushed amber energy condensed like tears. He fell to the ground while holding the amber eye with both hands, screaming at the top of his lungs.

“Hey, sorry to interrupt, but could you stop this ugly demonstration and take a look around?” A female voice spoke, one Treevor was sure he’d heard before.

Treevor summoned all his strength and gritted his teeth before looking around in shock. He was completely surrounded by the undead. In shock, Treevor tried to say something, but Emilia spoke again, cutting him off.

“This is for my team, you tree-eating motherfucker.” Emilia spoke, before disappearing from the crowd. All the surrounding undead did as instructed earlier and detonated their cores, creating a gigantic blast

of darkness. The explosion generated by over 500 self-destructive undead was powerful enough to change the surrounding terrain.

The darkness devoured everything, spreading over 50 meters like an avalanche in all directions. The earth was turned upside down while the air turned into a toxic gas, unable to sustain living things.

“Was that really necessary? I believe 100 of them would have been enough.” Sevenus spoke, looking at Emilia in exasperation. Athos had given command of approximately 2,000 undead the day before, so now he could speak without any problems.

“It’s better to sacrifice a little more than risk him running away. Your limits are unknown, after all.” Emilia replied, looking at Sevenus. The two entered a sort of conquest contest and tried to point out flaws in each other.

Of course, they didn’t do any of that in front of Athos and they didn’t even try to sabotage the given tasks, they just had a war of nerves with each other. Emilia was more powerful than Sevenus, but the latter had already gained Athos’ trust (or he thought he had) and bragged about it whenever he could.

“My lord’s soldiers are not infinite, so you shouldn’t waste them.” Sevenus spoke, looking at the skeletons around them the way an adventurer would look at his potions. They shouldn’t waste them and only consume them when necessary.

“It’s not a waste, it’s-” Emilia was about to retort, when the fog of darkness began to disperse. A crumbling white barrier was revealed, showing that Treevor was still alive.

He had conjured up a barrier of light and fed her amber energy, even though it made him feel the pain of having his eye squeezed inside the socket. The blast was still violent enough to break the barrier, but he still survived, if only just barely.

His body was thin and with black spots all over his skin, while his plant arm was withered like a dry twig. His amber eye had lost all its color and was flickering weakly with the remaining amber energy. His white hair had disappeared while the vine leaves on the right side were brown and dry.

“\*\*\*\*\*, \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*!” Treevor glared at Emilia hatefully as he spoke with difficulty, but the undead didn’t understand a word he said. His pain and agony was such that he had forgotten to speak in the human language and ended up speaking in the elven language.

“Yes, yes, your mother is one too.” Emilia replied ironically, not understanding a word he said. She looked completely relaxed, even though the enemy was glaring at her.

“You filthy thing!” Treevor yelled, this time in human language. He was breathing heavily and looked like he was going to fall to the ground at any moment, but he held his ground somehow. He was desperately thinking of a way to survive and escape, but he couldn’t think of anything.

‘I don’t want to die, but I want even less to become one of them. I don’t know if that skeleton can turn someone like me into an undead, but I don’t want to risk it.’ Treevor thought. He resigned himself to the fact that he was going to die, but he needed to find a way to get out of this place first. Treevor began to drain what little energy was left in the amber eye, but Emilia didn’t give him time to act.

“Corpse explosion.” Emilia said, causing Treevor to freeze for a second. There was nothing around them, just a barren, blast-torn earth, apart from the completely destroyed wooden helmet. That’s when he remembered the skeleton clinging to the helmet.

Treevor felt a shiver down his spine and tried to turn around, but Finn’s skeleton exploded in his back, smothering Treevor in a cloud of darkness. The bone shards hit his unprotected back like a frag grenade, as the darkness rotted the freshly made wounds and drained what little strength he had left.

Treevor fell forward, too weak even to scream in pain. The most he could do was shake his body, but even that stopped a few seconds later.

“Finally dead?” Sevenus asked, using death vision on him. The shadows were spread all over the body, but not evenly like on corpses.

“This guy is resilient, I have to admit.” Emilia did the same and was surprised that he was still alive, but that was it. She walked up to him and cut his neck on the human side, finishing him off. Interestingly, Treevor’s blood was light red, unlike human blood which was darker.

“There, now he’s dead.” Emilia spoke, before reporting to Athos. ‘I managed to kill him, master.’

‘Great, I’m already on my way with what’s left of the skeletons.’ Athos replied. A few seconds later, Emilia saw the skeletons coming out of the edge of the forest, or at least what used to be the edge.

Athos was ahead of them, riding the rock bear that Caio was originally using. He still hadn’t regenerated his legs, so there was no choice. His skin had been almost entirely consumed to heal him, but his shin bone was still half-heal.

“Master, are you okay??” Emilia screamed in panic when she saw his state, quickly approaching him.

“Yeah, I’m fine without both legs and an arm, so get out of my way and don’t ask stupid questions.” Athos nodded in irritation, before looking at his prize.

## [Chapter](#) 85 A strange phenomenon

Athos quickly cast the undead raiser on Treevor, being surprised at the result. Treevor’s body required twice the life force of Athos, something that had never happened before. His body tried to reject the darkness, but that was to be expected thanks to his affinity for light. What was a surprise was what happened next.

The extra life force moved into the amber eye, restoring the spherical shape of the cracked eye perfectly. As the corpse turned purely into bones, Athos’ attention was on the plant side of Treevor.

His plant arm has turned into bone just like the rest, but the bark has darkened to ebony, covering his forearm, shoulder, and right ribs like partial armor. The vine leaves that replaced her hair turned black with dark green tips, while her amber eye darkened.

The elven skeleton was just like a human skeleton, except there was a bony tip sticking out of the side of the skull where the ear should have been. The difference between the elven and plant sides was even more stark now than when he was alive. Its plant side has preserved most of its characteristics, suffering only minor changes in tone, at least externally.

The skeleton began to tremble and Athos felt the connection with him forming, as well as the incoming life force. The life force coming from the core was like any other, but the life force coming from the amber eye was unlike anything he had ever felt before. The moment she infiltrated her core, her core became visible to anyone around.

A black glow appeared all over his body, even where his missing limbs should have been. A white mask appeared on his face, while two black chains appeared in his right hand, linked to Sevenus and Emilia, while a bloodied sword appeared in his left hand. His soul briefly overlapped his physical body, something that should have been impossible.

The phenomenon was so strange that Athos froze in place, unable to react. And just as quickly as it appeared, it all disappeared again. Athos fell back in shock, looking at the members as if they could spring to life at any moment and turn on him.

“What the fuck was that?” he asked shocked.

“My lord/Master!” Sevenus and Emilia said at the same time, running to Athos and helping him back to the rock bear.

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“Did you guys see that too?” Athos on the other hand, was more concerned about the phenomenon that just happened than getting off the dirty floor.

“Yes, we have seen it too and we are as confused as you are, my lord.” Sevenus said.

Athos was about to babble and theory like a mad scientist, when Treevor’s skeleton began to shake and twist as if it was having spasms.

“Stop it and get up.” Athos ordered, but the skeleton ignored him and continued to tremble. Athos tilted his head in confusion, curiously watching the skeleton convulse. After a few seconds, a translucent Treevor leapt from the skeleton and only then did it obey Athos’ order and stop convulsing before standing up.

Treevor looked exactly the same as when he was still alive, except for his ghostly color and a black chain wrapped around his neck. He tried to get away from his own skeleton, but the chain pulled him back into his own body. Treevor tried to tug at the chains with his hands, but the chain tightened around his neck and pulled him harder toward his body.

In a last desperate move, Treevor tried to cling to the ground, but he only left a finger print on the ground, being dragged back to his body. As soon as Treevor returned to his own body, the skeleton fell to the ground, before convulsing again.

This was repeated three times and showed no signs of ending.

“What the fuck was that?” Athos asked shocked. He looked into Emilia and Sevenus’ eyes, only to realize that they were just as shocked as he was. He looked more than once at the fingerprints on the floor to make sure he wasn’t hallucinating.

At that moment, Treevor came out for the 4th time and looked at Athos menacingly before screaming.

“You bony motherfucker! Stop that shit at once!!”

“No, I’m not doing anything.” Athos looked stupidly as he raised his remaining hand, as if to prove he was innocent.

“Stop holding me to my body! Let me out!” Treevor screamed desperately.

“Okay, you can leave.” Athos easily agreed, after using death vision on Treevor. Surprisingly, his skeleton was only in the 5th layer of death, while his amber eye had the same energy as a newly formed core. The translucent body looked exactly the same, with or without death vision.

Athos only agreed to let him out, as he felt they were connected by the chains around Treevor’s neck.

“Finally that thing stopped squeezing me. Hey, you bony bastard, I swear if you don’t let go of me now, I- Gahh!” Treevor tried to threaten him to be freed, but Athos cut him off.

“Arrest him.” Athos spoke, causing the chain to tighten again and drag Treevor back to the body. Treevor had relaxed, so he was dragged along without resistance.

A few seconds later, Treevor came out of the skeleton again annoyed. “Why did you do that??”

“To let you know your place. I don’t know why you managed to get out of your own body like this, but I killed you and now you belong to me, so lower your voice when talking to me.” Athos glared at Treevor as he spoke.

“Who do you think you are-” Treevor was irritated by his arrogance, but Athos tightened the chain again forcing him back into his own body. This exchange continued for nearly half an hour, with Treevor cursing all of Athos’ ancestry for raising a bastard like him. but he was forced to give in in the end.

“Huff huff, okay, this isn’t getting you anywhere.” Treevor said as he panted heavily, though a soul doesn’t feel tired.

“Ready to talk now?” Athos asked, after returning from the forest. He had left Treevor struggling while Emilia watched over him and went to absorb the nutrients from the trees that hadn’t been destroyed to heal his legs and arms, as well as restore the skin all over his body. It might sound strange to someone who had gotten his skin less than a day ago, but Athos felt naked without it.

“Your...no, it’s nothing.” Treevor tried to curse him, but held back.

‘I gain nothing by fighting now. I need time to understand what this current is and how to remove it.’ That’s what he thought.

“Fine. I give you command of the entire army.” said Athos, forcing the thick chains that bound him to Emilia and Sevenus to Treevor’s body.

They curled around both of his arms, but it didn’t look like he’d surrendered.

“What the fuck is this? You didn’t want to talk?” Treevor asked irritably, seeing the new chains holding him even tighter than before.

“I’m sorry about that. I thought I might force you into submission, but it seems like that’s impossible. Let’s continue our conversation.” Athos spoke, not the least bit sorry for what he had done.

“You-” Treevor needed sheer willpower not to curse him. He took a few deep breaths before looking coldly at Athos. “What you want?”

“For starters, I want to know who you are and what you are, but we don’t need to talk in this wasteland. Let’s go to town.” Athos spoke and turned before he heard her answer. All the skeletons followed him, including his own body. Treevor tried to stay still and resist, but as soon as his body pulled away enough, he was forcibly dragged into the city.

Upon arriving in town, Treevor was disgusted by what he saw. Athos had taken a little over half of the undead, but all the rest were working incessantly. The main street was crowded with carriages and carts and the skeletons were loading it with all sorts of items.

“I am glad that...you are back safely...my lord.” A mage skeleton greeted them as they reached the town square. Like Emilia, Sevenus divided the skeletons he received from Athos among the Skeleton Mages and made them his direct subordinates.

“Keep up the good work. I’m having an important conversation with new guy, so don’t let anyone bother me. Also, make a count of how many undead were destroyed and how many alchemical and slime acid items were left.” Athos spoke as he patted him on the shoulder, before entering the house of some random wealthy merchant.

He entered what appeared to be the merchant’s office before sitting down on a couch and beckoning Treevor’s body to do the same. Emilia and Sevenus stood behind him, watching vigilantly into Treevor’s soul.

The soul sat beside the body, looking strangely at the situation.

“So start introducing yourself.” Athos ordered.

Treevor looked around as if looking for a way out before sighing and saying, “My full name is Treevor Evergreen Yggdrasil Elven, the exiled prince of the elven realm of Evergreen.”

It took some time for Athos to process this information. When he finally understood what Treevor said, he had only one reaction.

“...EH?”

## Chapter 86 The king of spirits

The reactions of Emilia and Sevenus, who had some political and geographical knowledge, were quite different.

“An exiled prince? You must have been a pretty mad bastard to be exiled by a race like the elves, who value their bloodlines so highly.” Sevenus said with a sneer, wondering what kind of atrocities Treevor had committed.

“I remember you calling yourself a descendant of the spirit king, but I thought you were just bluffing.” Emilia exclaimed in surprise.

“Hush, both of you.” Athos spoke, hushing the murmurs. “Please continue.”

“I was exiled 75 years ago, so it’s a long and sad story, but if you want to hear it, it’s up to you.” Treavor said before taking a deep breath, remembering old stories from before he was even born.

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The realm of Evergreen was a nation of dark elves, elves, high elves, and spirits, which occupied the east of the continent. The nation was founded over 1000 years ago and was surrounded by a sea of trees of over 50,000 square kilometers. The trees that grew in the sea of trees were colossal, averaging 40~50 meters tall, depending on the species.

The elves lived in harmony with nature, molding the insides of trees to make them habitable. Its capital was in the center of the sea of trees, where the bud of Yggdrasil resided. Despite being called sprout, it was over 300 meters high, its roots spreading throughout the capital’s underground.

The realm of Evergreen was ruled by the sprout avatar of Yggdrasil, the spirit king Kastil Yggdrasil, as well as a duke of each race. The spirit king was an honorable being who ruled justly, at least on the surface. The truth was, he considered himself a god and didn’t care what happened to the citizens, so most of the leadership was in the dukes’ hands.

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His spirit form, or avatar as it was called in Evergreen, was that of an elven man in his mid-twenties, with a perfectly shaped body, without excess skin or fat. His skin as well as his hair was green and both eyes were amber. He was 1.90 meters tall, tall compared to elves who averaged 1.70 m tall

Despite the fact that his position as king is only symbolic most of the time and his arrogant attitude causes constant headaches, none of the dukes dared to express any dissatisfaction. His power was so absurd that it silenced any opposition.

The dukes were fully aware that even if they gathered all their military might, they would be unable to defeat him. No, it was doubtful if they would be able to muster their strength in the first place.

Normal spirits could only spread their senses through the trees a few kilometers away at most, but Kastil was different. Like a divine spirit, his senses were spread throughout the sea of trees and he could see and hear perfectly, rather than just feeling like others. There was nothing that happened inside Evergreen that he didn’t know about.

Furthermore, he could transmit his spells and abilities through any tree, making his power absolute within the sea of trees. Every tree that made up Evergreen’s realm was its eyes, ears, and especially fists.

This feeling of omnipotence and omnipresence only inflated his ego and caused him to cause countless incidents that the nobility was forced to cover up to keep their face.

90 years ago, a certain particularly remarkable incident took place among the nobility, but the truth of the incident was hidden from the people and remained only in the memories of those involved.

The King of Spirits has fallen in love with the young Duchess of the High Elves, Selena Elfeldis Elven. Despite being only 100 years old, she was one of the most powerful mages in the nation, as well as one



of the most beautiful elves in the entire realm. In addition, she also had the body of mana, something rare among elves, though not as rare as among humans.

Kastil made numerous attempts to approach her, but Selena politely refused him each time. This hurt Kastil's pride, especially when he saw her walk away and sigh in relief after refusing him.

But the situation only got worse from there, when Selena fell in love with another man. Kastil felt humiliated seeing the woman he loved being taken away by another man, a man he considered inferior to himself achieving something he couldn't.

He watched closely the dates they had, envy and jealousy taking over his mind every time he saw the happy smile on Selena's face and remembered the polite but cold smile he received. The love Kastil felt slowly turned into obsession with Selena, but the trigger for the incident was yet to come.

Selena officially announced her engagement to your family, causing Kastil's envy to reach a peak. He felt that if he didn't do something now, he would lose Selena forever. In his desperation and madness, he made the decision to take her by force.

He invited her to the sprout of Yggdrasil, which was also used as a royal palace and where important meetings were held, with the excuse that a messenger from the wild people nation had visited and they needed to discuss the contents of the message. Selena was surprised that Kastil even bothered to set up a meeting, but she went anyway.

She arrived at the Yggdrasil sprout, but the government officials who would normally be working were nowhere to be found. The only time they would be let go is when an extremely important meeting took place or when Kastil had a tantrum when things didn't work out as he wanted.

Selena figured it was the first option and advanced to the throne room, but she was confused to enter and not find any of the other dukes. There was no one in the hall, only Kastil sitting on his throne. Selena felt a shiver as she looked into his eyes and saw only madness and desire in them.

She tried to turn and run, but the roots sealed the hall doors, as well as any visible windows or exits. Kastil rose from the throne at that moment and walked slowly towards her.

Selena didn't try to argue with him, just cast her strongest dark sun spell, but nothing happened. All the energy around the world was under the control of Yggdrasil's sprout, so the magic was completely ineffective.

Kastil released a small fraction of his aura on her, forcing her to her knees, covered in cold sweat. He lightly touched her cheek tenderly, but the madness in his eyes only increased.

"Why did you choose him? Why did you choose that lesser man when you could have had a God on your side?" Kastil asked, the anger and madness in her voice causing an earthquake throughout the capital, but not a single hair on Selena's was affected. Realizing that she wasn't responding, he remembered that his aura was still impeding his movements.

"I'm sorry honey, I ended up pushing you-" Kastil suppressed her aura again and offered her hand to help her up, but Selena jumped up and kicked her in the face with all her might. The blow sent shock waves through the hall, but it was a futile effort.

Kastil held her ankle with a single hand gently, blocking her attack without even using force. He touched her ankle tenderly, but Selena was unable to pull her leg back, no matter how much force she put into it.

“Let’s stop this little game. You can’t beat me, so just answer me honestly. Why did you choose him and not me?” Kastil released her ankle and shoved her lightly, hurling Selena against the wall at the speed of a cannonball.

A white flower was conjured on the wall to dampen his body, before roots made of light trapped all of his limbs. Selena fought with all her might, but the roots didn’t budge. Even so, she glared at him defiantly, refusing to give in.

“If you don’t tell me, I’ll be forced to use force.” Kastil said with a crooked smile as he snapped his fingers. The flower left the wall and moved to the floor, before Kastil climbed onto it. He slowly placed his knee between her legs, chuckling every time she shivered despite her spunky facade.

Kastil ran a hand lightly over her garment, ripping it piece by piece, enjoying the moment. Her dress was actually a magical artifact with a defense superior to a fortress, but it was just a slightly sturdier piece of cloth in Kastil’s hands.

“It’s much better up close.” He let out a pleasant sigh after completely ripping Selena’s dress. The smile on her face only intensified when he realized that her eyes were wet with tears.

“If you’re scared, just say what I want to hear and I promise I’ll be kind.” Kastil whispered sweetly in her ear as she removed Selena’s underwear. The latter responded by spitting in his face, causing Kastil’s face to twist into a grimace of rage.

“You know what? Fuck what you think.” Kastil’s last shred of patience was cut and he didn’t care about anything else. He shut Selena’s mouth tightly, before removing his own clothes. For the next few hours, Kastil violently raped her, not caring about anything else.

Selena struggled with every second, but it only spurred on Kastil and made him even grosser. Regardless, she refused to stop fighting. Selena had arrived at the bud at around 8:00 am and it was almost dusk when Kastil lost interest.

When he finished, Selena was semiconscious, with bite marks and bruises all over her body, a pool of blood forming in her groin.

“If you had done what I told you, it would have been as good for you as it was for me.” Kastil spoke, smiling cruelly at her. With a single thought, his avatar was squeaky clean and he got dressed, before waving his hand and healing all of Selena’s wounds.

“You can go now. But if you tell anyone what happened here, that fiancé of yours will pay the price.” Kastil said, dispatching the semi-conscious Selena.

## Chapter 87 Trauma

After somehow making it back home, Selena broke down in tears. She tried to look brave in front of Kastil, but she was scared to death inside. She destroyed everything inside the house in a fit of rage, kicking out all the staff while venting her frustration and helplessness on anything she could reach.

After venting her anger until there was no furniture left in the house, Selena ripped off the clothes Kastil had given her, staring at her naked body in a shard of glass in a mirror.

There were no marks of what had happened on her body, as Kastil had perfectly healed any wounds, but she still felt hurt. She ran into the shower and tried to clean off dirt and marks that weren't there. Selena cried as loudly as she could, rubbing her own skin until it drew blood. The bath water began to redden, mixed with her own blood and tears, until a white glow came out of the tree and healed her wounds.

It reminded her that she hadn't yet escaped the grasp of Kastil's, that he could still reach out and violate her whenever he wanted. The thought of being at his mercy scared her to death. She ran to her room and hid, not allowing anyone to approach her.

Selena crouched naked in the corner of the room with the lights off, while curling herself into a ball to make herself as small as possible. She could almost feel Kastil's disgusting hands approaching her and his sick voice whispering in her ear. She was shivering with cold and fear, as if Kastil might appear at any moment.

Home staff were confused when they were suddenly evicted and contacted the family as soon as the destruction began. Her family members arrived half an hour later and entered the house worried about Selena. Her family found her in the corner of her room and her father rushed to help her, only for a kick to the stomach to send him flying to the other side of the house.

"Don't come close!" Selena screamed as she cried, looking fearfully at everyone around her. In her mind, everyone around her had Kastil's face and it terrified her.

"Daughter, it's me! What happened?" His father cried out in concern, his eyes filled with worry as he held on to a broken rib. He had been a retired warrior for over 150 years, so his body was no longer used to pain.

"Stay away from me!" Selena continued screaming, releasing blasts of elemental energy that forced the others to either back off or die. A wave of darkness drained the tree's strength as a wave of heat ignited the room. A pulse of orange energy made the whole place shake and threw everyone off balance.

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'She's not thinking clearly. I need to knock her unconscious before she hurts anyone or herself!' His father thought, the wooden ring on his right hand growing and changing into a staff one meter long. He conjured a mist of cold air that smothered the flames while spreading the element of light to protect the tree from darkness.

Finally, he conjured small platforms of light and approached Selena, ignoring the tremor.

"No!" Selena screamed seeing 'Kastil' approach her. She tried to increase her mana output while forming a mana barrier around her, but her mental state did not allow her to focus on the barrier properly.

Her father broke the barrier with a blow using the back of his hand, before lightly touching the end of the staff to Selena's forehead. The staff emitted a soft glow as it cast a calming spell. Selena immediately fell asleep and her father took her in his arms.

“You can rest my daughter, your father is here to protect you.” He whispered softly as he stroked her hair, but his eyes were cold. He cast a diagnostic spell, noticing all the self-inflicted wounds and healing them, all the while wondering what could have happened to her for Selena to be in such a state.

“Order all employees not to divulge what happened here. Also, retrace your steps and find out where she was during the day.” The father ordered, causing the rest of the family and the guards with them to nod.

An investigation was made from there and they easily discovered that Selena had received a letter from the sprout summoning the dukes, but Kastil denied having invited anyone to the sprout. No messengers had arrived at the border and none of the other dukes had received any invitations, so Selena’s father assumed she received a fake letter and someone attacked her on the way.

Kastil had knocked all the guards who were supposed to be guarding the sprout unconscious and then manipulated their minds into believing they were working normally and that none of them saw Selena. Investigations continued, but they quickly reached a dead end. Kastil followed the investigation closely, sabotaging it whenever they got close to the truth or began to suspect something.

To make matters worse, the only person who knew the truth was mentally incapable. Her father took her to his house to recover, but she only got worse.

The moment she woke up, she would start screaming while pointing at the walls, as if there were an invisible enemy that only she could see. Selena cast magic and tried to destroy the house, accusing them of being monsters trying to violate her, even her family was unable to calm her down.

With no other choice, they kept her sedated, applying drugs to keep her under control, but her magic-enhanced body and decades of training made most drugs and meds ineffective in the long run. His father was forced to administer large dozens of medicine, but this came with a side effect.

Selena remained in a groggy state most of the day, having panic attacks whenever the effects of the meds began to wear off. His family hired every alchemist in the country and tried numerous medicines, but none of them had any positive effect. In fact, some meds had harmful effects on your mind, but they didn’t realize it because of their already weakened state.

The elves were about unaware of mind-affecting spells, as it was something created by the order of magic and they kept the secret to themselves.

Her fiancé also tried to talk to Selena, but it was useless. She reacted strongly to his presence, screaming incoherently as she tried to push him away, making him a suspect in her father’s eyes. Selena was just trying to warn him of the danger and tell him it was dangerous for him to be around her, but it ended up having the opposite effect.

Her father called off their engagement on the grounds that she was unable and there was nothing he could do about it. At the same time, he ordered a secret investigation to be made into the fiancé.

Kastil was glad the engagement was over, but knowing that the groom was being investigated gave him an idea. He used his powers to plant evidence where none existed and interfere with investigations, throwing little crumbs for investigators to follow, all pointing at him.

Soon, investigators found traces of poorly cleaned Selena's blood in his house and magically enhanced poisons, so he was arrested and taken to the Elven house. Selena's father personally tortured the fiancé for answers, but he swore he had done nothing.

Selena overheard what happened to her fiancé overhearing the employees' conversation in one of her few lucid moments, going internally into despair. That's when Kastil whispered in her ear.

"Your fiancé will be moved to the roots of the damned in a few days. I will come heal you the day after he is taken and then you will become mine. Resist and he will pay the price." Kastil said, a flash of light curing all the effects of the drugs and restoring his mind to perfect condition.

The convicts' roots were an underground prison in the capital where the country's worst criminals were taken. It was between the sprout roots and there was no guard, but only because it wasn't necessary. Kastil was their personal jailer and made sure none of their stress-relieving toys got away.

"P-Please leave us alone..." Selena started to cry as her voice shook, but Kastil just laughed at it. A branch sprouted from the smooth wooden wall and touched Selena's face, gently wiping the tears from her face.

"There is no 'you' anymore. That man's life ended the moment he dared to lay his hands on you. But you can decide how he will die. Spend the next few centuries in pure suffering, or die peacefully. It's your decision." The whisper became more distant, the effects of the drugs making her body lethargic, to the point where she was unable to control her limbs or her own mana.

But his mind remained steady. The trauma was still there, but Selena could still think clearly. It was the final gift Kastil left for her to think, but there wasn't much she could do.

'If I can save him, sacrificing myself is a small price to pay.' Selena thought, but her body didn't stop shaking in fear of approaching that monster again. She internally said goodbye to her fiancé, while praying that Kastil would keep his word.

## Chapter 88 Wounded ego

Kastil was true to his word, visiting Selena the day after her fiancé was taken. A stagecoach escorted by over 100 royal guards, the army responsible for guarding the sprout, stopped in front of the tree where Selena's father lived. The chariot was made of the finest quality wood that could be found within the sea of trees, its intricately carved surface depicting the sprout of Yggdrasil and elves kneeling to it.

4 pairs of unicorns were pulling the carriage smoothly, or more accurately, they were just strolling around. The carriage was enchanted and could move by itself, the unicorns were for show only. The moment the carriage stopped in front of the tree, a carpet of red flowers began to grow from the edge of the carriage to the entrance of the tree, where Selena's father was waiting for him, along with all the staff on their knees.

The royal guards surrounded the tree before turning, releasing an aura so strong it chilled Selena's father, despite him being a former general. He made a rough measurement and each of the guards was at least at the 13th layer of life, a height most warriors and mages the world over could only dream of reaching.

The carriage door opened and Kastil descended slowly, savoring every shocked look she received. He walked pompously across the carpet of flowers, his back straight and nose raised, an aura of majesty that would naturally make others kneel around him.

“It is an honor to welcome you to my home, your majesty.” Selena’s father said kneeling, looking down at his feet, not daring to lift his head.

“It’s definitely an honor for you to be in my presence, but I didn’t come here just to state the obvious. I heard about Selena’s condition and I even came to heal her, so lead the way.” Kastil wasted no time and ordered to be guided to Selena. Selena’s father didn’t miss the clingy tone that Kastil spoke Selena’s name, but just nodded and guided him to her room.

He didn’t know that Kastil was proficient at treating minds, so it never crossed his mind to ask the sprout for help. In their eyes, he was just an arrogant bastard with immense power, but who only used it for his own pleasure. He suspected that Kastil had some interest in Selena, but he never imagined that he was to blame for everything.

“It must be difficult for you, isn’t it? Having to return to the position of duke after having already retired and still having to take care of your daughter in such a state.” Kastil spoke suddenly, as they climbed the stairs to the top of the tree. Selena’s room was in the treetops, because her father thought that fresh air and having a view of the entire city would help her even a little.

“Going back to work isn’t a big deal, I was almost dying of boredom after retiring anyway. What worries me is my daughter’s current state. Knowing that that bastard I welcomed home as a member of the family was able to hurt her, I should have killed him the moment he walked through that door.” Selena’s father spoke, clenching his fists so tightly his knuckles turned white.

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‘You definitely should have killed him.’ Kastil thought.

“We can’t go back to the past, so it’s no use dwelling on past mistakes. Let’s focus on healing Selena for now.” he really said.

“We’re here. It may seem impolite, but I ask you to wait here for a moment. She tends to get aggressive once the effects of the meds wear off.” Selena’s father bowed his head for a second before entering the room.

‘Stop wasting my time and let me take what’s mine soon.’ Kastil thought irritably, but only nodded. He intended to maintain the appearance of a benevolent person, at least as long as someone was around.

Selena’s father entered the room and after confirming that she was drugged, spoke quietly for him to enter. Selena was sitting on a chair, looking vaguely at the landscape through a gap between the branches. Her eyes were unfocused and she made a few sounds now and then, but nothing coherent. She was wearing a loose yellow dress and was barefoot.

“Daughter, you have a visitor. Her Majesty has come here to treat you.” His father stroked his hair as he spoke slowly. Selena stopped making any sound at this point, her eyes getting a little more focused.

“Well, let me see the extent of the problem.” Kastil placed his hand on her forehead, releasing a glow that spread across Selena’s head. The glow was just a gimmick to entertain the audience and cover up the temporary mental bond and allow them to communicate without others noticing.

‘Good morning, darling. Have you made your decision?’ Kastil asked mentally, her sickening voice sending shivers through Selena’s mind, but she didn’t let it show.

‘I’ll go with you. But I want to make sure you don’t go back on your word.’ Despite her horrible situation, Selena was still thinking about her fiancé.

‘Do you think you are in a position to demand something? If you don’t do as I say, I’ll make sure your family and all those close to you have a miserable life.’ Kastil said irritably, not liking Selena’s sass.

‘If you do, I’ll just kill myself and you’ll never have me. Detonating my core and dying an agonizing death is still better than the hell that awaits me if I go with you.’ Selena responded without giving in.

‘...Tsk. What you want?’ Kastil decided to give in here and listen to her. He would have all the time in the world to discipline her when she was his.

“How is she your majesty?” Selena’s father asked, feeling anxious at the delay.

“The mind is a difficult thing to manipulate. I can’t force my way with brute force, or I risk crushing her mind irreversibly. Selena has hidden in the deepest parts of her mind, so I’ll take some time to get her healed.” Kastil spoke the lie he had prepared beforehand.

‘The discomfort has already subsided. And then what do you want?’ Kastil thought, chuckling inwardly at the sight of Selena’s father nodding like a dog with a cookie in its nose.

‘I want you to let me visit my fiance-’ Selena tried to impose her conditions, but Kastil cut her off.

‘Denied. You will never meet him again.’ Kastil’s voice grew incomparably cold as he said this.

‘Then release him out of the sea of trees-’

‘Denied again. He had some influence in the army and I will not allow him to run away and share information about our internal logistics.’ Kastil said, making a logical excuse for once.

Selena wanted to scream in frustration, but she held back. ‘At least...at least give him a painless death.’

‘That I can promise. I don’t give a damn what happens to him as long as I have you to myself. I will finish the treatment now, follow my script.’ Kastil agreed to her conditions before explaining the little theater they would have to do.

He closed his eyes and for the next 15 minutes pretended to be in deep concentration. When he finished and opened his eyes, Selena’s gaze was focused again. She struggled to her feet, pretending to be confused. Selena stumbled forward, but Kastil quickly caught her.

“You’re fine now, you don’t have to worry about anything else.” Kastil gave a charming smile, but Selena felt only revulsion at the sight of him. She swallowed the retching she felt just by touching him and flowed mana through her nerves to calm them and stop the shaking.

“Thank you, your majesty.” She bowed so the others wouldn’t see her expression as she thanked them, tears of sadness streaming down her eyes, but to the others it just looked like she was emotional.

“Selena! Glad you’re better! Tell me, what happened to you?” Her father hugged her with emotion, before taking her face in his hands and asking seriously.

“I don’t...don’t want to talk about it right now, Dad.” Selena spoke while biting her lower lip, but for different reasons than her father imagines.

“Don’t worry my daughter, that man will never come near you again.” Her father looked at her with pity, but decided not to delve further into the matter.

“Yes, he’s right, Selena. He’s going to be stuck in the roots of the damned, it’s impossible for him to hurt her now.” Kastil said in a gentle tone, making Selena want to rip the avatar to shreds.

“Well, my work here is done.” Kastil said and turned to leave, but Selena grabbed his arm and stopped him from leaving.

She took a few deep breaths to calm herself and said the lines Kastil forced her to speak: “I cannot allow your majesty to leave without rewarding you in some way. Is there anything I can do?” Selena pleaded.

“Having the gratitude of such a beautiful young woman is more than enough.” Kastil spoke in a seductive tone, lifting Selena’s chin and forcing her to look him in the eye. He almost couldn’t hold back a laugh as he saw the barely contained anger in her eyes.

He intended to force her to run after him like he did, returning all the humiliation and embarrassment he’d gone through. He didn’t give a damn what happened to Selena, but he couldn’t leave her alone until he healed his bruised ego.

#### Chapter 89 Kastil’s Ambition

“Your Majesty, I believe this kind of behavior is inappropriate for a woman who has just recovered. My daughter is still confused and needs rest.” Her father pulled her close to him.

“Your father is right, rest well and resume your position as Duchess as soon as possible. Your old father needs to go back to his retirement after all.” Unlike what the others imagined, Kastil agreed with him and backed off, causing a question to appear in Selena’s father’s mind.

“...Yes. I’ll be back.” Selena spoke before saying goodbye to Kastil. After he left and Selena was left alone with her father, she collapsed on the floor and started crying compulsively.

“Daughter, what happened? Are you feeling worse?” His father asked confused, thinking that Kastil’s cure hadn’t completely worked.

“No, it’s not that. Just hug me, please.” Selena threw herself into her father’s arms before he could say anything, crying loudly as shook. Her father thought the trauma had returned and just hugged her silently, holding back his own tears.

Selena cried herself to sleep, finding temporary peace in her father’s arms.

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A week later.

Selena finally mustered up the courage to go back to the bud and retake her position as Duchess. Kastil had given her a week's deadline for her to come back to him and Selena used until the last second to try to think of a way to save herself, but she couldn't think of anything.

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As she walked towards the bud, her footsteps were heavy like a convict walking towards death row, but she knew her fate would be even worse. The guards around the bud, the employees around, everything was working normally.

She greeted the guards and headed towards the throne room, where Kastil was waiting for her. As she was removed from her position due to mental issues, he needed to make sure she was able to return. None of the other dukes questioned that thought, the only thing they questioned was Kastil's ability to judge someone, but they didn't express that thought.

Upon entering the throne room, Selena froze for a second to see that there was no one in the room, only Kastil on her throne, but she forced her legs to move anyway. She walked to the front of the throne and knelt down, before speaking in a voice so cold it would be impossible to match with ice magic.

"I came as promised. Take me to him." Selena didn't bother to keep up appearances and just demanded that he fulfill his end of the bargain.

Kastil snapped her fingers and the roots in front of Selena split open, revealing her fiancé's unconscious body. He was a young elf in his 150s, with blond hair and brown eyes. As a member of the army, he naturally had a trained body, but lean like most elves.

Selena used mana vision and realized he was fine, just unconscious and tried to run towards him, but Kastil released a fraction of her aura and forced her to the ground again.

"I told you I would give him a painless death, I never said you could say goodbye." Kastil didn't bother rising from his throne as he spoke. With a snap of his fingers, a thin layer of -200°C ice covered his skin, the extreme cold draining all the heat from his body and killing him instantly.

"There, I kept my promise. You've already confirmed the death, so now it's your turn to fulfill your part." The roots engulfed his body before Selena could start crying over his death. Kastil suppressed her aura again, expecting in anticipation that Selena would fall to the floor in tears, but she boldly stood up and faced him.

"You will pay for this. I swear I will find a way to destroy your life." Selena glared at him, her surroundings distorting slightly as the fire, dark and earth element in the world energy were drawn into her body.

Before she had time to cry and understand her fiancé's death, Kastil had already disposed of the body, demanding that she give herself to him. Selena didn't have time to feel sad, so the anger that followed was twice as strong. She stopped caring what happened to herself, just wishing she could rip that damn tree to shreds.

“It would be fun to see you try, but I’m going to kill a familiar of yours with every attempt, still want to play?” Kastil asked chuckling, her smile widening at the sight of the world’s energy calming down and Selena gritting her teeth in frustration.

“Good. Now let me explain what’s going to happen from now on. You’re going to retake your position as duchess and you’re going to fall in love with me for healing you. You’re going to move into the bud next and then you’re going to be mine. The stupid riffraff will applaud and wish us well, while the slightly smarter ones will just look down and do nothing.”

Kastil didn’t care if Selena agreed with him or not, thinking only of how fun the next few centuries with her would be.

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The next few months passed quickly. Selena was forced to follow Kastil’s script, pretending to be in love with him and soon they made their relationship official. A celebration was held across the country as the few who knew the truth felt sorry for Selena. His family was shocked by the news and tried to intervene, but to no avail.

Before Kastil could do anything, Selena personally persuaded them to stop interfering. She didn’t explain the actual situation for fear of getting them involved, but she made it look like she had really fallen in love and intended to use that chance to get closer to him. Her family was surprised by her actions, but Selena was always a passionate person and looking back on what happened to her, it’s actually possible that she fell in love with Kastil.

Most were satisfied with this explanation, but their father was not among them. As the former duke, he knew Kastil’s true personality, so he tried in every way to convince her to give up, but Selena didn’t give in. He had no choice but to sigh and accept, but he kept an eye on the inner workings of the bud.

Selena’s life after moving into the bud wasn’t the hell she imagined. Kastil considered the entire sea of trees to be her domain, so he didn’t care what she did as long as she came back in the end. He still took it at night, but Selena stopped worrying about herself after a while.

She struggled for the first few months, but after a while, it lost its meaning. No matter how hard she fought, Selena was unable to overcome Kastil’s power. Escape was also impossible. There were no teleportation crystals in Evergreen, as Kastil considered them impure things as they did not originate from this world.

The flame of hate in his mind also faded. The impotence and lack of care for her own body made Selena stop caring what happened to her. Selena went into a deep depression and the feeling of emptiness she felt only increased.

She left her position as Duchess, despite numerous problems and the power vacuum her departure would cause. Selena locked herself inside her room in the sprout, robotically eating anything the servants brought her. A few weeks later, Selena started to get sick and nauseous, so Kastil used a simple diagnostic spell, but the result made him freeze.

Selena was pregnant. This should have been almost impossible, but it happened. She was in the third month of pregnancy, with a child from the Yggdrasil bud. This fact had major implications at national

levels. Spirits were normally born from magic trees that accumulated mana and gained consciousness, but they could still breed with other species, although the chances of success were incredibly low.

The different biologies would cause miscarriages most of the time, but it was still possible for the fetus to survive, although the cause was still unknown. The baby born between this couple would be of the race of one of the parents, in the case of the spirits, they would be born treants or dryads.

Treants and dryads were born like normal babies with green skin and developed plant characteristics as they grew. They were considered the beginning stages of a spirit and lived on average to be 100 years old, before their body completely turned into a tree and could not move anymore and they learned to project their souls out of the body as an avatar, if becoming true spirits.

But that had never happened to the Yggdrasil sprout before. If the baby was born an elf, he would be immensely powerful, but if he was a treant or dryad, he had the potential to become a god like Kastil.

The thought of having another Sprout of Yggdrasil sent Kastil's expectations through the roof. His plans for expansion and dominance that had been stalled for the next few hundred years could finally be realized.

Kastil had long worked to take the entire continent for himself and subject all other races to him, so he used the power of Yggdrasil's sprout to expand the sea of trees to the size it is today, but that came with a price. The land they were on was not able to support the rapid growth of the forest and became poor in nutrients, forcing Kastil to stop so as not to lose everything he had built.

#### Chapter 90 Birth

He used the racial ability of Yggdrasil, pillar of the world, to absorb large amounts of the world's energy and transform it into nutrients before injecting it into the land, preventing the trees from dying and its entire territory from turning into a great desert. This happened over 1000 years ago, when the sprout was not yet as powerful as it is today.

The sprout even younger than it is today was not able to bear the burden of using the pillar of the world on such a large scale and this affected its growth. To make matters worse, the races that lived in those lands invaded and tried to destroy the sea of trees, forcing it to further improve the natural defenses to contain the advance of the barbarian races.

The sprout's growth has remained slow ever since and even 1000 years later, it was still in the early stages of its growth. The elves who lived in Evergreen thought that this was normal and that his growth period was really slow, but Kastil knew that after 1000 years he should have reached a height of at least 1 kilometer.

A new sprout would solve all these problems. They could share the burden of maintaining the forest once it grew big enough.

"It was really worth taking you, Selena. You're going to help me fulfill my ambitions. Even if it doesn't work out now, we can just keep trying." Kastil smiled imagining himself as the king of the entire continent. The baby was still the size of a grain of rice, so he would have to wait a little longer before knowing the baby's race.

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As the pregnancy wore on, Selena gradually recovered. She now exited the room regularly to bathe in the sun as her body demanded. The baby drained his body of vitamin D quickly, making Kastil's expectations soar.

He hasn't touched her since he found out about the pregnancy, allowing her to slowly recover her psyche. Of course, she didn't go back to the kind and cheerful personality she had before, but she became completely obsessed with her own baby. In her mind, the baby became the priority and everything else was irrelevant.

Whenever felt hungry, Selena had panic attacks believing that the baby was malnourished and ate uncontrollably until she started feeling sick or the maids stopped her from continuing. His emotions fluctuated like a roller coaster, causing sudden bursts of crying and spontaneous laughter, making the employees question his sanity.

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Kastil kept the pregnancy a secret from anyone except Selena's family, who had a mixed reaction of surprise, shock and anger. They wondered if the baby would be a yggdrasil spirit like Kastil and wondered what kind of power and influence his family would have once he was born.

The only one who wasn't overjoyed was Selena's father, who saw the deplorable state she was in when he visited her in the sprout. He felt tremendous anger at the sight of his daughter's condition and he started planning a way to get Selena out of the sprout.

Kastil forbade Selena from leaving the safety of the sprout and remained by her side most of the time, ensuring nothing came close to her investment.

He focused all his attention on Selena and the baby, ignoring the world. Kastil was unable to discover the baby's race, as the diagnostic spells would be dangerous for the fetus. The light element of the spell could poison the baby while they were still in the womb and cause a miscarriage or premature birth. The only thing they could find out without hurting the baby was that it was a boy.

He was forced to wait until the baby was born, so when the water broke and Selena started having contractions, Kastil was the first to appear at his side. He immediately called the midwives he had been on call since he learned of the pregnancy.

The delivery took a long time, even with the use of light magic and use of potions to increase Selena's vitality, it took more than 12 hours for the child to be born. Selena passed out as soon as the baby came out, making the midwives fear the worst, but they sighed in relief as they realized that Selena was fine, just exhausted.

The midwives stared at the baby with strange faces before wrapping him in a cloth and calling Kastil to see him. He became too anxious waiting for the baby to be born and interrupted the midwives more than once, so they asked him to leave and not come back until he was finished.

"So, is he a treant?" Kastil formed his avatar in front of the midwife as soon as she started talking about him. Kastil looked expectantly at the baby wrapped in the midwife's arms, like a child opening his Christmas present.

“I’m sorry your majesty. He’s like that.” In contrast, the midwife’s expression was a mixture of pity and sadness. She unrolled the cloth from the baby’s body, making Kastil stop her arms about to catch him.

The baby’s right side was green, just like a Treant should, but the right arm was shorter than normal, its right ribs were deep, the baby seemed to be breathing hard because of this. The right side of the skull was deformed and deep, Kastil suspected that the baby had mental problems. His right eye was a small brown sphere and appeared to be blind. Little green spikes protruded from her head where her hair should have been.

The baby had the characteristics of both a high elf and a treant. The truth was that two sperm had fertilized Selena’s egg, one of them inherited her mother’s genes and became a high elf and the other kept her father’s genes as a spirit. The spirit’s sperm died during the first week and was absorbed by the high elf.

“What is it?” Kastil asked as she looked in disgust at the baby now in her arms. The midwife mistook Kastil’s pause for him hesitating not knowing how to pick up the baby properly, so she carefully placed the baby in her arms.

The baby started crying in her arms and Kastil frowned at that. He felt only disappointment as he looked at him. The baby seemed to choke at times, its only lung unable to withstand the constant crying.

‘It’s a failure, huh. Well, I would have to be very lucky to get it right the first time. I just need to keep trying.’ Kastil dismissed the baby as useless and began to think about how long it would take Selena to recover and have another.

The baby’s constant crying started to bother him and disturb his thoughts, so he cast a calming light spell to make him sleep, but the effect was surprising. The baby’s green skin absorbed the light generated by the spell and the baby immediately stopped crying, his breathing returning to normal.

‘Photosynthesis? It looks like the plant side is still functional, even if it’s incomplete. It might be worth keeping it in reserve if I don’t get another one anytime soon.’ Kastil re-evaluated the baby from a failed product to an emergency measure.

“Well, I should think of a name for you. How about-” Before Kastil could continue, immense pain hit him, followed by the sound of an explosion and a tremor that shook the entire bud.

“What??” Kastil felt a deep pain in her true body and immediately began to expand her senses to search for the culprit, at the same time she began to heal. He’d focused so much on the baby, he’d forgotten to keep an eye on his real body.

2-3 meter purple orbs appeared at the top of the sprout, high elves wearing black uniforms and carrying wooden crossbows with loaded ebony arrows shot the sprout leaves, before starting to fall to the ground.

The arrows were hollow and filled with a black liquid that was released the moment they hit the leaves. The liquid was an alchemical poison created from the condensed element of darkness. The magical poison poisoned the bud’s leaves, weakening it while inhibiting the sprout’s natural ability to absorb world energy.

“You motherfuckers!!” Kastil screamed angrily, the aura emanating from his body crushed all the midwives around him into a paste of flesh, but he still had the mentality to protect Selena and the baby in her arms. His amber eyes lost their glow, before most of the energy the avatar had flowed into the sprout, which then released an aura that crushed the air elves against the ground like flies.

The spirits possessed two sources of energy, the mana core and the energy they naturally absorbed from the environment. But contrary to what most humans believed, the energy absorbed from the environment did not stay in the avatar, but in a crystallized form in the spirit tree that would act as a second core, like an amber gem, a golden fruit and the like.

When spirits separated their consciousness from their physical bodies, they could send all or part of this crystallized energy, obtaining bodies made of energy that they could physically interact with. An avatar’s physical prowess depended solely on how much energy they had.

Of course, as the second core was physical, it could be forcefully separated from the spirit, reducing its strength and causing the excruciating pain of having a part of itself ripped out.

A pulse of amber energy purified all the concentrated poison and the naturally drawn energy began to heal him. But the expression on Kastil’s face did not soften. The royal guards flew around the bud looking for enemies, so when a second wave of purple orbs appeared, they immediately fired their spells at them.

Unfortunately for them, the second wave was just a decoy and the spells passed harmlessly through them.

Kastil spread his senses across the capital, finding where the culprits were hiding. He found high elves carrying teleportation crystals hidden in strategic places where newly hatched trees were growing and therefore their senses would be weaker.