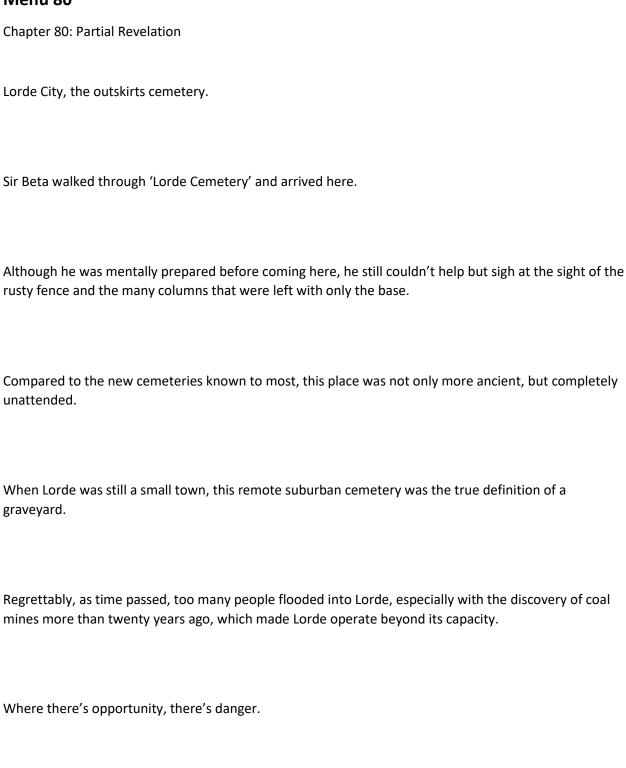
Menu 80



More and more accidents happened, and more and more people died.

Eventually, this overburdened remote suburban cemetery was abandoned.
A new cemetery emerged in a more appropriate place. And this place?
It only existed in the memories of a few old people.
For many others, it had become some creatures' 'playground'.
Caw!
A piercing crow's caw.
Several creatures with their limbs on the ground, long front legs, short back legs, tiny eyes, and mouths full of sharp teeth charged out, surrounding the old baron and launching an attack.
Roar!
With a ferocious growl, these monsters lunged forward.

The old baron was merely following the crow that made the noise, not even glancing at these monsters, and simply swept his long sword through the air.
Hiss, hiss.
The beasts in mid-air were cleaved apart, falling to the ground.
The old baron flicked his long sword, and the fresh blood on the blade was flung straight onto the ground, as he darted forward like an arrow released from its bow.
He spotted the crow.
Not far away, in a valley.
There was a tree at the entrance to the valley.
The crow perched at the top of that tree.
Facing the baron charging at it, the crow showed no intention of flying away, its blood-red eyes staring at the old baron, quietly waiting.

In a breath's time, the old baron had approached the valley.
Then, as the old baron saw everything inside the valley, his already somber face grew even darker.
One after another, the trees as black as ink, leafless, filled the valley.
These trees had well-developed branches, but they also bore a bizarre sense of withering decay.
Just like
The mummified corpses hanging from them,
Countless corpses, like wind chimes, shook and swayed with the breeze.
These,
were the missing bodies!
"Are you trying to provoke a war?"

The old baron looked up and asked the crow at the top of the tree in a stern voice.
The crow tilted its head, a hint of a smile appearing in its crimson eyes.
Yes!
A smile!
Anyone who saw this crow could feel that it was laughing.
"Caw!"
Another raucous cry.
The crow was about to take flight.
But the old baron was one step faster.
"Judgment!"

A low shout, and blinding radiance burst from the old baron.
"Caw-caw!"
The crow struggled in midair, flapping its wings but unable to take off, its cries now tinged with agony.
And the black trees filling the valley seemed to be affected as well, swaying from side to side, the corpses hanging from them tossed about wildly.
"Tell me!"
"Are you trying to provoke a war?"
The old baron asked again.
The crow's blood-red eyes smiled even more intensively.
Then

Bang!
The crow simply exploded.
The moment the old baron saw the smile in the crow's eyes once more, he sensed something was wrong, immediately retreating.
But as the crow exploded, some mysterious, terrifying, and indescribable presence descended directly.
Although it was merely a trace, an insubstantial, trivial notion,
For the old baron, it felt as if heaven and earth were collapsing.
The glow representing his own strength dissipated instantly on the old baron.
Spurt!
He spewed out a mouthful of blood.

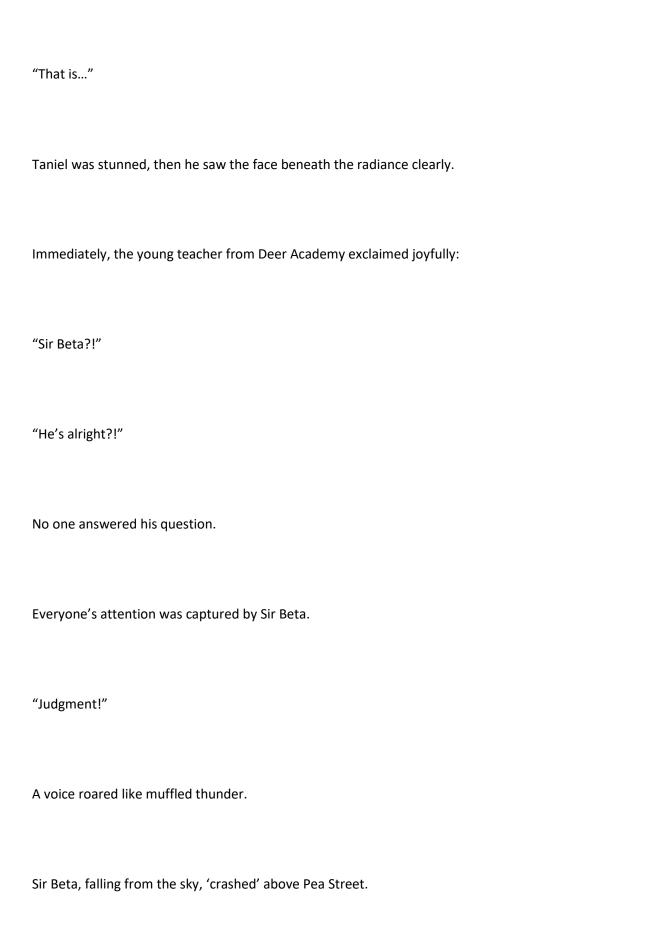
Despair was etched across the old baron's face.
He,
had been tricked!
It was all a conspiracy by the 'Shepherd'!
And he had stepped right into it, without noticing.
He,
ur
There was no room for turning the tide.
Even though he was Lorde's strongest, faced with this sliver of ideation, he had no space to resist.
The old knight felt unwillingness and despair at the bottom of his heart.

Because, he had come to know what the 'Shepherd' intended to do.
He stared with furious, wide eyes at the distant black tree that grew ever more robust with the arrival of that thought.
Looking at those dried corpses hanging on the black branches starting to
Awaken!
A moment ago, these dried corpses still had their eyes shut.
And now?
The few dried corpses closest to them had already opened their eyes.
Some had shriveled, murky eyeballs.
Some had deep, sunken eye sockets.

Then
Creak!
The necks of the dried corpses twisted, turning to face the old knight.
The old knight had an inkling of what would happen next.
He had mentally prepared himself.
But at this moment!
That sliver of ideation was 'jimmied'.
No!
It had its attention drawn away.
Without any hesitation, the old knight seized this opportunity!

Blinding white radiance once again appeared on the old knight, and he, like a shooting star, vanished from his spot in an instant, flying towards Lorde City.
The sliver of ideation faced the escaping 'sacrifice', and was stunned for a moment.
Then came the anger.
Roar!
Roar! Roar!
The awakened dried corpses emitted silent roars.
But,
Apart from the sound of breaking wind from the sky, there was no response.





Crack!
Like the sound of glass shattering, fissures spread across the sky, followed by $-$ breaking!
Snap!
Invisible fragments scattered everywhere.
The ominous presence of that force which terrified everyone had vanished.
The people of the Mystical Side felt immensely grateful as they looked at Sir Beta, who was pale and breathing heavily.
That included the advisor to the mayor.
Maimed and covered in scars, he quickly walked up to Sir Beta and bowed respectfully.
"Thank you, Sir Beta."

"You have saved Lorde once again."
"Are you alright?"
As he spoke, he raised his hand to help support the extensively drained Sir Beta.
"I…"
Sir Beta subconsciously wanted to refuse.
But,
An unexpected event occurred!
Thud!
Sir Beta looked down in disbelief at the dagger that had been thrust into his abdomen.