

The Lustful Time Lord's Revenge

Chapter 56: Chapter 56 - Mindrender

I also bought a barrier that can protect me from sudden attacks. It is a thin chain necklace with a circular pendant set with a purple, star-shaped gem. Its name is the Aegis Pendant.

I bought it just in case someone attacks me and I am too slow to activate my [Time Stop] or [Mind Control]. It would be ridiculous to die just because I was careless for a moment.

I then opened my System Interface.

NAME: Adam Socheron

CLASS: Depraved Time Lord

LEVEL: 25

EXP: 90/350

<Strength: 25>

<Agility: 35>

<Vitality: 25>

<Charisma: 4>

<Libido: 40>

Available Stat Points: 15

SKILLS:

[Time Stop]

[Eye of Desire]

[Lustful Touch]

[Fertility Control]

[Mind Control]

ITEMS:

[Faceless Mask]

[Hymen Pill]

[Aphrodisiac Elixir]

[Mindrender]

[Dragonroot Rope]

[Aegis Pendant]

I rubbed my chin with a faint grin. Fifteen unassigned stat points... probably better to use them all right now.

[Strength: 25 → 30]

[Agility: 35 → 40]

[Vitality: 25 → 30]

Exactly what I need at the moment.

Then I opened the information of the three new items I had acquired.

[Mindrender

→ An A-Rank sword that shaves away the target's sanity with every swing. If the wielder's mind isn't strong enough, the blade will feast on their thoughts as well, slowly blurring the line between reality and illusion.]

[Dragonroot Rope

→ A mystical rope crafted from the roots of an ancient dragon's nest. Strong enough to restrain a weakened S-Rank Hunter. Once bound, it siphons the victim's energy and strength, leaving them helpless until the user decides to release them.]

[Aegis Pendant

→ An autonomous defensive charm capable of blocking three fatal attacks per day. Perfect for ambushes or any moment when the wearer loses focus. It can also be triggered manually if needed.]

I was quite satisfied with these purchases. The Aegis Pendant had nearly drained all my money. But was that a problem?

Of course not.

I smirked, thinking about how easy it is for me to earn money now. With Mind Control, the world is basically a walking wallet. No need for a job. All I have to do is whisper softly into someone's mind:

Give me your money.

Pay me more.

Make it look natural.

And they would do it with a friendly smile, as if the whole thing was their own idea. As if I were someone truly deserving of such a gift.

But of course, I have to be extremely careful and not push things too far. I also need to make sure I get paid in cash—if the duration of my [Mind Control] skill runs out, they might report it and track me down through bank transfer records.

I glanced at Ruth.

Her face remained expressionless, not bothered at all even though she had spent so much money on me. It seemed like she was very wealthy, and buying two Rank A artifacts for me was nothing to her.

After we finished our business at the market, we headed to the HGA office to take care of something. I needed to register to become a licensed Hunter.

The process at the HGA office was fast and clinical. Ruth had already prepared all my fake identity documents, from family records to medical history and academy data. Everything was neatly arranged.

I only needed to sit down, sign a few papers, take a photo, and it was done. I was now officially a Hunter candidate. I only had to wait for the test schedule.

The entire process was so smooth that it made me wonder if the registration was too easy. What if the Awakener applying turned out to be an agent from the Abyss Syndicate or some other criminal organization?

The HGA must have considered that. They would screen everyone thoroughly during the Hunter examination.

Hunter exams usually last from a week to a month. Which means I will not attend the Academy during that period.

The Academy? Yeah... like I care.

I once disappeared from class for three whole months when I shut myself in my room, drowning in depression. And yet, I remained listed as an active student. I heard the headmaster was close to my stepmother back then.

Maybe that is why so many people dislike me.

After everything was settled, we returned to Ruth's car. She had suggested using her hoverboard earlier to move faster, but I insisted on refusing. I did not want to end up in a pathetic situation like that again.

The result?

We were stuck in a sea of vehicles.

"Traffic jam..." I muttered as I stared at the long trail of red brake lights ahead.

Ruth sighed quietly, tapping the steering wheel in a restless rhythm.

"Why did you suddenly decide to buy a sword?" she asked, glancing at me. "Didn't you say swords remind you of... him?"

I fell silent for a moment.

Car horns, engines, the noise of the city became the backdrop of my thoughts as old wounds began to open.

"I think I need to face him again," I answered quietly. "I... want to make sure that when I hold this sword, my hands will not tremble like they did before."

Ruth did not press the matter. She did not ask further. She must have known pushing me would be pointless.

I took a breath and cracked the window open. The city air slipped in.

Suddenly someone from another car shouted, complaining loudly at an officer blocking the road. The officer replied through a loud megaphone, his voice echoing:

"A Rank B Dungeon has appeared in the middle of Meridia Boulevard. Traffic is being diverted temporarily."

A dungeon in the main road? So that was the reason.

The appearance of dungeons was random. It was not the first time one spawned in the middle of a highway, so the public did not panic too much.

A few minutes later, the cars began to move again. Ruth stepped on the gas slowly. I thought things were returning to normal.

I was wrong.

A louder scream burst from ahead.

Creatures, some the size of dogs and some as tall as a grown man's shoulders, rushed out from behind a collapsed road barrier. Lizards, or at least something that tried to be lizards, ran on two legs with sharp teeth glistening with saliva. Their dark green scales reflected the streetlights, and their yellow eyes burned wildly.

People panicked and screamed as they tried to flee.

Sirens blared through the loudspeakers, slicing through the chaos:

"Dungeon Break. Dungeon Break at Meridia Underpass. All civilians must evacuate the area. All available Hunters, assist with containment and evacuation immediately."

The announcement sent a jolt through my chest.

I lowered my gaze. A saber materialized in my right hand. Mindrender felt cold, but it pulsed faintly as if the blade were breathing. As if it was waiting.

I smiled. Just a small upward curl of my lips. "What a perfect coincidence. Looks like this is the right moment to test my new sword and warm up after years of not touching a blade."

I glanced at Ruth, who was still behind the wheel. "Aren't you going to help?"

"That is exactly what I am going to do," she replied.

We exited the car together.

Ruth summoned her hoverboard. The futuristic board floated beside her as she hopped onto it. In an instant, she darted forward with blazing speed. A young woman had fallen in the middle of the road, surrounded by three lizard monsters.

Before they could pounce, a massive hammer appeared in Ruth's right hand. With a fast horizontal swing, she crushed all three at once. Their skulls burst like rotten fruit, spraying blood and brain matter everywhere.

CRUNCH!

The sound of bone and flesh being smashed echoed through the uproar.

The young woman screamed in shock but was alive, trembling as she tried to thank Ruth. She did not get the chance. Ruth was already gone.

Her hoverboard accelerated again. She zigzagged through the monsters like a storm. The hammer in her hand kept shifting size, massive like a tombstone for crushing larger beasts and smaller for swift, precise blows.

CRACK.

CRUNCH.

SMASH.

Every strike meant death. Any monster that came close was turned into mangled remains. One lizard the size of a small truck leaped at her back, but Ruth spun midair and slammed her hammer into its ribs. Bones splintered. The monster was flung away like a broken doll.

Blood and flesh splattered everywhere behind her as she continued, an unstoppable whirlwind of annihilation. Her movements were elegant yet lethal, every action calculated, not a single motion wasted.

I watched, mesmerized by the spectacle. But I had my own business here.

A two-meter-tall lizard monster crawled toward me, saliva dripping from its jagged teeth. I raised Mindrender, feeling the blade respond to my grip like a living thing.

"Let's see what you can do," I whispered to the sword and stepped forward.

Chapter 57: Chapter 57 - Rusty Swordmanship

I glared sharply at the monster, then activated [Eye of Desire].

NAME: –

RACE: Lizardman

CLASS: Scaleborn

RANK: C

No name. Low-rank monsters usually didn't have one unless they were special. And despite being only a Rank C, I knew one thing very well: When it came to pure physical strength... monsters always outclassed humans of the same rank.

My heartbeat picked up, fear slithering into my chest, yet my body slowly remembered what close combat felt like. It had been so long since I last wielded a sword. It felt like digging up an old memory that had been buried for years.

The Lizardman let out a harsh hiss. Its sharp teeth scraped against each other, creating a screech that stabbed into my ears. In a blink, it lunged, claws aiming straight for my face.

I quickly shifted into a fighting stance my father once drilled into me. Left foot forward, body turned sideways, sword guarding my chest. But my movements were stiff... awkward... like my body had forgotten the proper flow of battle.

At the last second, I stepped aside and slashed Mindrender across its chest.

SHLAASSH!

Dark green blood splattered out. The monster roared furiously, staggering from the impact. But of course, that wasn't nearly enough to bring it down.

It came at me again, fiercer than before. Its scaled arm slammed the asphalt, cracking it. I jumped back, breath catching in my throat, striking a quick cut at its arm.

CLANG!

Like hitting stone. Its scales were insanely tough. The strike only left a light scratch.

I kept darting in and out, dodging its brutal swipes. My breathing grew uneven. The sword felt unfamiliar in my hands, heavy and rigid. Each movement felt wrong. Too late or too early. My swordsmanship had rusted badly.

The Lizardman grew even wilder. Its breaths came in short bursts. Its eyes bulged wide... I saw hatred, hunger, and an unstable frenzy swirling within them.

Was that Mindrender at work?

I wasn't sure... maybe I was just imagining things. Monsters like this always looked hungry enough to devour you alive.

It slashed toward my throat. I dropped into a crouch instinctively, nearly losing my balance. Panic shot up my spine. But... I saw an opening. The earlier wound across its chest was still wide open. Scales torn apart.

A chance.

I tightened my grip. Then thrust forward with everything I had.

Stab!

Mindrender pierced through scale, flesh, bone. The Lizardman's body froze. Its blood gushed over my hand and blade. Its eyes widened then dulled slowly as its tongue slid free and its weight collapsed, almost crushing me.

I pushed the corpse away, panting.

A notification flashed into view.

[Successfully killed Scaleborn Lizardman]

[Received 30 EXP]

I stared at the number... and a small smile tugged my lips. "Not bad."

If I could use this opportunity to kill a few more, I could clear part of my Weekly Quest before entering the Dungeon later.

But I didn't get the luxury of enjoying that victory.

RAAAARGHH!!

Two more Lizardmen suddenly leapt out from behind an overturned vehicle. Their claws stretched forward, jaws gaping. Another one jumped to my side with an ear-splitting growl.

I yanked Mindrender out of the earlier corpse, green blood still dripping from its edge.

"You guys just do not want me to breathe, do you?"

The first monster's claws came swinging.

CLAAAANG!

The blow slammed into Mindrender so hard my grip almost slipped. The second monster rushed behind me, its talons reaching for my spine. I rolled forward, scraping my skin against the rough asphalt and feeling a sharp sting everywhere.

"Damn..."

I rose to my feet, breath ragged. They refused to give me even a moment.

The nearest Lizardman lunged again, jaws wide enough to bite my entire head off. I twisted to the side and slashed horizontally.

SLASH!

The blade struck its waist, but its scales barely gave. The minor wound only enraged it further. A claw strike whipped across my arm.

"Agh!" Warm blood dripped from the torn skin. Why didn't the Aegis Pendant activate? Was it because the attack wasn't lethal enough? Or did it require a death blow to trigger?

I staggered back. Each retreating step made my legs weaker. It was painfully obvious how flawed my technique was. I was making too many mistakes.

If this was how I looked against low-rank monsters... how could I possibly clear a Dungeon alone?

That thought ignited a fire inside me.

Three Lizardmen circled me in a half-moon formation. Their low hisses rumbled in their throats, saliva hanging from jagged teeth, claws gleaming under the trembling streetlights.

I swallowed hard.

"I'm not losing over something this trivial."

I rushed forward again.

One of them launched first. Its claws nearly grazed my cheek as I swerved left, slipping almost embarrassingly on monster blood. I countered with another fast swing, only scratching its scales.

The second attacked from the right. I raised my sword in time to parry. The impact jolted all the way up my arms.

Shit.

The third went low. I stepped back half a pace, yet its talons still tore into my thigh. Heat shot through the wound, my breath shaking. But stopping wasn't an option.

I counter-attacked. My footwork was stiff, strikes rough. My father would scream at me if he saw me fight like this. But instinct kept my sword moving, fueled by survival.

I batted away a claw swipe aimed at my shoulder and thrust straight forward.

Mindrender drove into the left ribcage of one Lizardman.

Its shriek was shrill. The monster writhed violently. I yanked the blade free, black blood splattering over my face. As it dropped, the remaining two came at me even more viciously. Maybe Mindrender was messing with their minds. Or maybe they were simply enraged.

I stepped in and out rapidly, barely dodging a strike that could have taken my head. Chaos and adrenaline blurred each breath.

A tiny opening showed itself. Just enough for a tight swing toward the neck.

The Lizardman's head flew, rolling across the pavement.

One left.

It tackled me full-force, its reptilian weight slamming me into a car hood. Pain exploded down my spine. The monster gaped, fangs inches from my face.

For fuck's sake! Why wasn't the pendant working?! Was I scammed?!

I held its jaws open with one hand, but its strength was overwhelming. My left arm trembled uncontrollably under the pressure. Panic clawed up my throat, but I forced myself to stay focused.

My right hand moved. Quick thrusts. One. Two. Three.

On the fourth stab, Mindrender pierced its skull.

The monster went still. Its limp body collapsed onto me.

I shoved it aside, barely managing to stand. My body throbbed with cuts and deep slashes, warm blood soaking my clothes. My leg screamed with pain every step I took.

Then more notifications flickered into view.

[Successfully killed Scaleborn Lizardman]

[Received 30 EXP]

[Successfully killed Scaleborn Lizardman]

[Received 15 EXP]

[Successfully killed Scaleborn Lizardman]

[Received 15 EXP]

60 EXP in an instant.

I gasped for air, my hand shaking. Small wounds burned all over my skin. Sweat and blood mixed, dripping from my chin.

"Kuh..." I straightened up. "I can... still move..."

But before I could take even a single calming breath—

GRRAAAARRRGHHH!!

A thunderous roar erupted to my left. I spun around and spotted more Lizardmen sprinting toward me, their scales catching the streetlight. Some swung chunks of metal and concrete like makeshift weapons.

One. Two. Three. Four. Five.

Enough to tear me apart if I slipped even once.

I raised Mindrender.

The sword pulsed again, like a living thing with its own hungry heartbeat.

Pain, fear, exhaustion. Everything blended together.

Yet beneath all that was something stronger.

A desire to survive.

A desire to grow stronger.

I really had changed.

"Damn it..." I hissed, breath unsteady. "Where the hell are the other Hunters...?"

Chapter 58: Chapter 58 - The S-Rank's Might

It wasn't just Ruth and me fighting in that area. A handful of other Hunters were trying to hold the line, but the number of monsters pouring out of the Dungeon Gate was completely overwhelming. Screams, clashing steel, and dying cries blended together into a suffocating chaos.

Even so... Ruth stood out among all of them. She was clearly holding back, hiding most of her real power. Yet even while suppressing herself, she was like a storm sweeping away anything that dared to stand in her path.

The hoverboard under her feet shot forward, cutting through the air and leaving a trail of blue light behind. With a single swing of the hammer that appeared in her right hand, a Lizardman the size of a bus exploded like a balloon filled with blood. Thick green liquid splattered everywhere, painting the asphalt.

She kept pushing forward toward the source of all this madness: the Dungeon Gate.

A Rank B Dungeon.

That gate should have been a neat circular shape with a cloudy sapphire glow. Instead, it looked like a jagged tear in reality, towering ten meters high. The edges shivered like torn cloth forced open. Monsters marched out without end, their reptilian footsteps and feral roars shaking the air.

Then the world seemed to tremble.

A massive creature stepped out of the portal, standing five meters tall with glossy black scales. Twisted obsidian horns curved from its skull, and blood-red crystals jutted along its spine. Every step rumbled like a miniature earthquake.

Lizardman Overlord. A Rank A monster. And without a doubt... the Dungeon Boss.

Its eyes burned like embers as it glared at the intruder standing alone before it. The pressure pouring out of the monster was enough to make nearby Hunters collapse to their knees.

Ruth never slowed down. Her hoverboard raced along the slope of broken buildings, launching her airborne at an impossible angle. She climbed even higher. The wind whipped her long blue hair behind her, making her look like a thunder knight about to tear open the sky.

Then she jumped.

The hoverboard spun backward, left floating aimlessly. Ruth dove with her hammer raised. The weapon suddenly expanded into a colossal mass of steel, as large as a pillar. Blue lightning shot across the air around it, roaring like thunder falling straight from the heavens.

The monster lifted its arm to block, releasing a hateful roar that shook the ruins.

Too late.

BAAAAANG!!!

The impact was like a meteor slamming into Earth. The Overlord's massive arm shattered, scales and bone exploding outward. The hammer kept driving down into its chest, slamming its body into the ground with a force that could kill mountains.

BRRRAAAKK!!!

The street split open, asphalt rising in violent waves. The monster was pinned deep into a crater, its body crushed beyond recognition. There was no final roar. No resistance. Only blood and dust erupting into the sky.

Done.

Ruth stood at the center of the new crater. Black dust drifted around her. The giant hammer shrank back to its normal size in the blink of an eye. Her breathing was steady. As if that entire battle hadn't drained her in the slightest.

The remaining monsters watched their king die.

Fear instantly clouded their reptilian eyes.

Some still tried to attack.

That was the worst mistake of their lives.

Ruth moved without sound. Only the flash of her hammer and the crunch of breaking bones marked her presence. Each strike was an execution. Even the ones that tried to flee did not make it far. Within seconds, dozens of Lizardmen were scattered across the ruins, blood pooling beneath their lifeless bodies.

The survivors... finally broke. They scattered in panic, desperation twisting their movements.

They didn't get far.

The Dungeon Gate began to convulse. The rip in space shrank, folding into itself like wet fabric being wrung tight by invisible hands.

In a matter of seconds...

It vanished entirely.

The Dungeon Break was over.

I was still stuck far behind the main battlefield. From behind the cracked façade of a half-collapsed building, I could only catch flashes of blue lightning and hear the distant thunder of Ruth's hammer crushing something I could not see. Her power felt like a monster in human skin, and even without seeing her directly, my heart hammered in my chest.

But I didn't have the luxury of awe.

Five Lizardmen noticed the bodies scattered around me and launched themselves forward, their screeches ripping through the air. They came at once, claws aiming to tear me apart like fresh meat left out for wolves.

"Please work..." I hissed while slamming my hand against the Aegis Pendant.

A burst of yellow light erupted around me, forming a dome of shimmering energy. The monsters crashed into it in a single violent wave.

BRAAANG!

The shock popped their skulls against the barrier, teeth snapping and crooked snouts smashing flat. Green blood sprayed across the transparent wall as they stumbled back in confusion.

I stared at the glowing shield around me.

"So it does work... Why the hell did it refuse earlier? Does it only activate manually?" I cursed inwardly.

No time to think.

While they were still stunned, I stepped forward.

Mindrender slid into my grip like it had been waiting for the taste of flesh.

I drove the blade through the first one's throat before it could lift its head. Hot green blood splashed across my cheek, sizzling on the skin like acid. The sword vibrated... like it was laughing.

The second monster tried to crawl away, screeching low like a dying snake. My boot crashed into its knee. Bone snapped backward with a gut-twisting crack. As it collapsed, Mindrender plunged through its chest and out the other side.

The third attempted to retreat, panic twisting its movements. Too late. One swift slash opened its belly. Guts spilled onto the shattered asphalt with a wet, slapping sound. It kicked weakly... then went still.

Two left.

They rose again, eyes burning with rage and stupidity. They sprinted toward me at once, claws tearing up the ground.

I rolled between them, feeling claws slice through the air just inches from my face. Before my body even stopped moving, Mindrender thrust upward. The blade punched into the fourth monster's eye and shattered through its skull.

A humid snarl hit the back of my neck.

The fifth was already behind me, breath dripping with hunger. I stepped to the side, pivoting with the monster's own momentum. Mindrender swept across its throat. The roar died as its voice box split apart. It collapsed with a choked hiss.

One by one.

Dead.

Notifications flickered in front of my eyes:

[Successfully killed Lizardman]

[Received 15 EXP]

My chest burned. My arms shook. Sweat mixed with monster blood until I could no longer tell which was mine.

But the monsters never stopped coming.

More surged in from every ruined street. Even with Hunters finally arriving to reinforce us, we were being drowned in bodies.

I found myself surrounded again. Six of them. A circle of snarling maws and gleaming talons.

"So this is it... I'm done?"

I clenched my hand. One thought blasted through my mind.

Use [Time Stop]. Now.

But then...

Cold.

A breath of winter crawled up my spine. My skin prickled. I knew that sensation. Every nightmare flashed back into my mind like lightning.

GRRRRRSHHHHHHH!!!

Frost exploded outward from the far end of the street. Ice swept beneath the Lizardmen like a tidal wave of death. Their claws froze mid-movement, their screams trapped under their own tongues. Crystalline chains locked every limb in place.

Their fear froze before their hearts did.

The road fell silent.

Then...

CRSHHHHHHT!!!

The ice beneath their feet shifted. It sharpened. Hundreds of frozen spikes thrust upward, skewering the trapped monsters from below. Green blood sprayed but froze instantly into shimmering shards.

I stood there, breath caught in my throat.

"What... the hell..."

My eyes darted through the frost-filled air.

And there she was.

Far down the road. Beside an open car door.

Cold mist wrapped around her like a cloak spun from winter storms. Her short white hair danced in the breeze, and her pale eyes bore into everything with the promise of death.

Yukie Iceblood.

The person I despised more than anyone in this world.

Chapter 59: Chapter 59 - From Burning Rage to Frozen Heart

I froze the moment I saw her.

Not because of the cold from the ice she created, but because of the rage boiling inside me, rising like a volcano finally cracking open.

Yukie Iceblood.

Just the sound of that name is enough to ignite hell in my chest.

Dark thoughts swarmed my mind. Should I take my revenge... right now? I could stop time. Beat her senseless. Drag her to some place no one would ever find. Tie her down with [Dragonroot Rope] until she couldn't even twitch a finger. And after that... the real revenge would begin.

My heart pounded out of rhythm. My breathing turned harsh.

But before I drowned myself in that violent fantasy... Yukie closed the car door without sparing even a glance in my direction.

And then... she left.

The tires screeched against cracked asphalt as the car pulled away, swallowed by the mist trailing behind it... disappearing at the corner of the street.

All I could do was stare blankly in the same direction. Even when the car vanished, my eyes stayed fixed on the emptiness it left behind.

"She's the last..." I muttered to myself. I would save Yukie for last—after I destroyed the rest of them one by one.

Before my anger fully settled, a man's voice suddenly came from beside me.

"Hey... you saw her too, right?"

The voice snapped me back to reality. I turned slowly.

A man in scratched-up armor stood next to me. I had seen him fighting earlier, he moved efficiently. Definitely a licensed Hunter.

"That was the Winter Knight's Princess, right?" he said, pointing toward where Yukie disappeared.

"I've only seen her on the news and academy posters. But seeing her in person..." He chuckled, shaking his head in disbelief. "Even from a distance, she looks way prettier."

I stared at him for a moment, giving no response. My lips still felt sealed by the last bits of rage.

But the guy didn't seem bothered by my silence.

"You know," he continued, stretching his stiff neck, "she's still in school, but with power like that... Why bother staying at the academy? She could go straight into a top-ranked Hunter position."

His eyes drifted to where the portal had vanished.

"With what she just showed... she could reach SSS Rank like her father." He let out a long sigh. "Man... life's just unfair. I train until my body feels like breaking, yet I've been stuck at Rank C for years."

There was no bitterness in his tone, only surrender and exhaustion.

I listened... without saying a word.

He eventually realized I wasn't responding. He turned... and gave me a friendly smile, completely unbothered.

"You were impressive too back there. You look pretty young, but I've never seen you before. What's your name? Which guild are you from?"

He extended his hand, then as if remembering manners, introduced himself first.

"I'm Red Slash from the Luminex Guild."

I looked at his hand for a moment before shaking it.

"Freyden," I replied briefly.

Then I met his eyes.

"Crimson Dawn."

His smile widened.

But my thoughts were still tangled around a white-haired girl who drove away... carrying the past I had yet to take revenge on.

Meanwhile, inside the sleek black car slicing through the fog... Yukie Iceblood sat silently, her gaze fixed straight ahead without a hint of emotion. The air around her felt colder, as if her presence alone lowered the temperature.

Beside her sat a woman with a completely opposite aura.

Naomi Iceblood's ebony hair fell smoothly down her back, glossy like spilled ink under streetlights. Her downturned brown eyes gave her a soft, sleepy charm—yet there was something dangerously captivating about her.

Her black dress hugged her mature figure perfectly. A deep violet sash wrapped snugly around her waist, emphasizing every curve—especially her chest, full and firm, rising and falling in a slow, hypnotic rhythm whenever she spoke or breathed. A true noblewoman... and very much a seductive milf without even trying.

Naomi turned to her daughter with a warm smile.

"You were wonderful back there, Yukie. Really... that ice spell saved a lot of people."

Her voice was soft, almost playful, and full of pride.

Yukie stayed quiet, tightening her white coat around herself, as if trying to contain the fury still coursing through her veins.

If her mother hadn't forced her to help, she would've done nothing. She would have told the driver to take another route and left the chaos to other Hunters. She didn't care.

Naomi wasn't giving up.

"Your father would be proud," she added, still smiling.

Yukie finally looked up, her eyes sharp and cold as blades.

"He wouldn't care. He never does."

Naomi inhaled slowly, her chest rising a bit more prominently than necessary.

"You're becoming more and more like him," she sighed. "In looks... and in that untouchable personality."

There was longing—mixed with bitterness—in her voice.

"Though you weren't always like this," she tried again with a gentler tone. "You used to be so adorable. You would cling to me every time it thundered... always tugging at my dress whenever you wanted attention."

For a brief second—so brief almost anyone would miss it—Yukie's eyes flickered.

Naomi noticed.

She smiled, sensing a crack in the ice.

"You've always had trouble getting close to others. Other kids were scared of you."

She played with a lock of hair, her tone turning sly. "But there was that boy, right? Adam."

The name dropped into the car and altered the atmosphere.

"He was the only one who didn't run when he saw you. The only one brave enough to approach you and invite you to play," Naomi sighed. "Then you suddenly pulled away from him. It was strange. I still remember how you used to watch him quietly like—"

Yukie's jaw tightened slightly.

"You two are in the same class again now, aren't you?" Naomi continued, leaning in so her curves pressed lightly against the seatbelt. "I wonder what he's like now. He must've grown up, maybe even turned into a handsome young man. You're treating him well... right? Or maybe—"

"Mom." Yukie cut her off—quiet, but with a freezing warning behind it.

Naomi chuckled, unbothered, her chest gently bouncing with the motion.

"What? I'm just curious. A mother is allowed to be curious, no?"

Yukie turned her face toward the window, refusing to say another word.

Naomi only watched her daughter, a small knowing smile on her lips.

In the reflection of the car window, Yukie's silhouette stared back—cold, distant...

Yet beneath that ice, for the first time in a long while... a tiny fracture appeared.

And through that crack... a name slipped silently into her thoughts.

Adam.

The past she froze once upon a time... was finally starting to thaw.

Chapter 60: Chapter 60 - The Ghost in the Steel

Ruth finally finished all the required reports regarding the Dungeon Break incident. Hunters had already dispersed, government officials were closing their files, and the chaos that once turned the highway into a battlefield was now nothing more than cracked pavement and the faint metallic scent of blood lingering in the air.

She headed toward her car—her black SUV, now slightly scratched from all the flying debris. The moment she opened the door, she saw Adam.

He was fast asleep. His body slumped weakly against the seat, covered in bruises, cuts, and scrapes as if he'd just been thrown out of a warzone. Dried monster blood clung to his skin and clothes, marking every harsh moment he had survived today.

Ruth stood there, silent, simply watching him.

Before she forced her way through, all the way to the Dungeon's entrance, she had seen Adam fight. There was nothing impressive about him. But then... that same man took down the Goblin King right in front of her, snatching the kill that should've been hers.

Without her noticing.

Without her understanding how.

Without any logical explanation.

The questions had been gnawing at her since then. What is this man hiding?

Ruth climbed into the driver's seat, quietly closing the door so she wouldn't disturb him. The cabin fell silent—only Adam's uneven, pained breaths filled the air, like his body was still desperately trying to recover from agony.

She glanced at him from the side.

This man... was her best investment.

Not only to play the role of the Iron Knight she needed. More than that, Adam had explosive potential. Especially considering his father was the Sword Saint, a Hunter of SSS Rank.

If he grew into a force that shook the world, then the greatest triumph would belong to her guild. Every bit of support and resource she poured into him now... was just a small down payment for a future worth a thousand times more.

Her hand reached toward her belt. From there, she drew a slender vial—a crimson liquid swirling inside. A high-grade regenerative potion. Very expensive.

She didn't hesitate.

Unscrewing the cap, she leaned in toward Adam. Her left hand gently lifted his chin, tilting his head back just enough so his lips parted slightly. His brows twitched for a moment, restless... but he didn't wake.

She pressed the tip of the vial to his lips and tilted it slowly. Drop by drop, the red liquid flowed into his mouth. She controlled the pace carefully—not too fast, not too much—making sure he swallowed without choking.

Soon, changes began to show. The pale, grimy skin regained color. Bruises faded as if someone gently painted over them. The cuts sealed shut, skin knitting back together like time itself was rewinding. His breathing softened. His sleep eased into something peaceful.

Ruth watched in silence.

Only when the potion was fully emptied did she release his chin.

Drip... Drip... Drip...

I couldn't clearly remember the shape of that room. Just a shadowy blur—dark, cold, and silent as though the world had stopped spinning. The walls might've been stone. Or old wood. I couldn't tell. But the floor... I remembered the blood on it. Sticky. Warm.

I was only eight years old then.

A boy with stone-gray hair and violet eyes...

Holding a sword.

My hands.

The sword was heavy. Far too heavy for a child. Yet somehow, its edge was already wet, thick drops of crimson sliding down the steel.

I didn't know what kind of expression I had. Was I blank? Terrified? Confused? My head felt split in two. I wasn't sure if I was even capable of thinking.

Everything was like a nightmare that felt disturbingly real. I saw the world from two angles at once—one version of me gripping that sword, another version watching helplessly from behind fragile glass.

A man lay in front of me.

Large body. Hair just like mine: messy, stone-gray strands that never behaved. His eyes were violet too... but the light was gone. Empty. His mouth hung slightly open, like he had been trying to speak his final words.

Blood poured from his chest, flowing between floorboards... creeping toward me... toward those small feet.

Warm.

I could feel it. The blood touching my skin made everything more painfully real.

I did not cry. I did not scream. I did not run.

I just stood there... barely breathing... staring at the last traces of life draining away.

And then—

The door opened.

Light from the hallway flooded in. A woman stood there. Her hair flowed like strands of sunlight—golden. Her eyes too, glowing gently like stars.

But when she saw what lay inside...

That golden light dimmed.

As if the stars shattered inside her.

"Adam—?"

Her voice cracked and died. She stumbled inside, gaze locked on the sword in my hands... then followed the trail of blood... until it reached the man's lifeless form.

Someone she knew.

Someone I knew.

Someone who should've still been alive.

I just stared at her.

Maybe I was already sick and broken from the start.

I woke up gasping for air.

My chest heaved violently, as though that nightmare dragged me back into that room. Cold sweat coated my skin, dampening my hair and sticking it to my forehead.

For a few seconds, I forgot who I was now. I still felt like that boy. Still felt the warm blood crawling along my leg.

My hands trembled slightly.

"Fuck..." My voice barely escaped.

Swords...

I hated swords.

They always dragged me back to him.

But that was exactly why I needed to keep using one.

I had killed him once in the real world. Now I had to kill him again... inside my head.

Once my mind finally came together, I noticed something:

This wasn't Ruth's car.

I scanned the room. It was too comfortable. White walls, a soft round light on the ceiling, and a faint lavender scent from a diffuser placed neatly in a corner.

And the subtle smell of... leather.

I lay on a neatly made bed, thin blanket half folded aside. All the injuries I had—the bruises, the cuts—gone. Only dried blood remained to prove any of it happened.

Ruth must've brought me here.

I inhaled deeply, trying to focus.

How long was I out? Why bring me here?

Questions churned in my head as I instinctively opened my System.

[WEEKLY QUEST]

OBJECTIVE:

Kill 41 Rank D or higher monsters.

TIME LIMIT: 3 Days

REWARD: 200 EXP

FAILURE: The System and all acquired abilities will be permanently lost.

I had killed nine monsters earlier, so the total dropped from fifty to forty-one.

Great.

I muttered to myself under my breath.

"Three days... for forty-one Rank D or higher monsters?"

I stood up from the bed, feeling strangely reinvigorated, better than before the fight. I rolled my shoulders, twisted my wrists. No pain. Perfect.

I grabbed the doorknob and opened it slowly.

The hallway was quiet. Warm yellow lights glowed along the walls, giving the apartment a calm and elegant atmosphere. Everything looked spotless—minimalist yet luxurious.

Then I stopped moving.

Someone appeared right in front of me.

A woman wearing nothing but a towel.