

Chapter 80: Future

The land above was a desolate landscape, filled with ashy stumps, desiccated leaves, and the corpses of forest critters sitting out in the open. Even as days turned to weeks and weeks eventually into months, life refused to return.

And, under the surface, a war was brewing.

Riza had ambitions and those ambitions required time.

Once things had settled down somewhat since Riza had returned after the training of Nussy, Jupy, and Ascles, she raised Gas tank again to accompany Harold, dispatching him from the nest to help carve out the tunnel for the *Fyllopoi*.

It was slow going but after enough weeks, the tunnel curved upwards and outwards, exiting into another forest in the province immediately west of Droya, Drakkor.

From all reports, their initial occupation went smoothly. There were no other tribes inhabiting there and the closest centre of civilisation was far enough away no one had a reason to venture out there so, hopefully, they'd be safe.

That would be the last Riza would hear from the *Fyllopoi* for a while. Gas Tank and Harold went about filling up the tunnel they had carved and after a couple more weeks of painstaking work, they were back at home base.

They had recovered Tiffany's body from the communication cave they had excavated for her during their journey to and from the bunker. For now, Riza couldn't spend the essence to raise her, even in a non-sapient form, so she was stored with the body of Gas Tank. The fog seemed to preserve their corpses perfectly, precluding them from undergoing decomposition.

Sanders had been quiet ever since Riza got back. Quieter than usual, even. Normally, he could be seen talking and hanging out with Daven but, lately, he was frequently alone, wallowing in his thoughts.

Riza didn't think it was anything unusual and likely wouldn't have even noticed if Andreyah hadn't brought it to her attention.

It was there that she learned one of the reasons why life users were dangerous and otherwise outlawed; the inevitable likelihood that they'd go insane.

Life, as Riza had speculated, was perhaps more aptly called 'soul' magic. The higher tier the skills, the less they interact with a tangible, understandable presentation of life and the more they interact with the intangible soul. Resurrection, after all, was possible.

And it was this interaction that so frequently drove Resurrectionists mad, apparently.

But Riza wasn't worried. Sure, Sanders was quiet, but he always was. And, she had a backdoor to his brain; the ability to demand absolute loyalty and obedience. She had avoided doing so so far but, if he proved dangerous, she was fully willing to utterly write agency out of his functioning.

She shuddered at the thought. *Hopefully, it won't be necessary.*

Even with Harold back, that didn't mean Daven no longer had any work to do. With a much larger pool of essence and unrivalled essence regeneration, he was their go-to worker for any large-scale renovation projects.

There was, of course, the expanding of the breeding pits as the new litters plopped out of their mothers' bodies. That was an exciting time for Riza, seeing potential visibly in front of her.

But there was, due to popular demand, something else; an arena, of sorts.

Meren had gotten all fired up from the trip to the bunker. She longed for combat, it seemed, and her skills did as well. They needed to be used to be levelled.

The arrival of Adewyn didn't help things. Officially part of the same group, Riza learnt what her level was. Thirty. Just three higher than Meren's twenty-seven.

Meren challenged her to a duel as soon as she found out. In theory, they'd be on even footing.

Sanders got to work right away, hollowing out a large room and heavily compacting and reinforcing the walls. Together, with his carpentry expertise and Riza's rudimentary knowledge of engineering, they did their best, making sure the room was stable and wouldn't collapse.

Ventilation tunnels led to the surface and the whole ceiling was pockmarked because of that.

The room was oval in shape, with a trench going around the outside where spectators could watch and only their heads would be at risk.

Only Riza and Daven could risk watching—both Lefie and Andreyra shared a fragility becoming of mages—and even then, Daven’s entire upper torso and head was coated in the thickest of rocks, like a half-human, half-rock monster.

The duel was... anticlimactic.

Meren held nothing back. All her thrusts sent shockwaves through the air, knocking away loose dust and pebbles.

Her stabs got faster and faster as Riza started to struggle to follow her movements.

And yet, Adewyn did nothing. The spear bounced harmlessly off her torso and only when Meren aimed for the head did it slide right off, only drawing a small scratch.

The entire time, Adewyn held her greatsword aloft, as if ready strike down at any moment. Her arms were tense and almost vibrating with energy and once Meren took a step back, as if to gain herself, the sword came crashing down, sundering the entire earthen platform in half.

A giant crack ran from the site of impact all the way between Meren’s legs and even climbing up the wall a bit before tapering off.

A thunderous boom resounded within the confines of the room, deafening everyone for a second or two.

As the dust cleared and everyone caught their bearings again, Meren was clearly shaken, her legs wobbly and defeat exuding from her.

Riza’s mind sparkled with wonder, replaying the attacks just before over and over in her head. She hopped up onto the battlefield and ran over to inspect Adewyn.

Sure enough, not a single scratch apart from the graze on her cheek.

“Fuck me. Barely a scratch,” Meren huffed out between breaths. “How the fuck... are you this strong?” She was leaning on the spear now, tiredness clearly seeping into her muscles after the workout.

Adewyn stabbed her greatsword into the ground with ease, leaning on it.

“There’s something Andreyra didn’t explain the other day,” She said to Riza.

“If a Guardian is promoted from within the forces here, they’re not only going to be weak because they’re new, they’re going to be weak because they fail to see into the future.”

Huh?

“Everyone who joins the Dominion or Chosen in this part of the Empire aren’t expected to live long. The paths of levelling that are provided for them seek to make them excel at every consolidation milestone. That means full effectiveness at level 5, then level 15, then level 25, if they ever reach that high.

“So, if there’s a skill or a boon or a decision that can be taken at level 10, for example, but is only good once they reach level 20, the paths of levelling don’t include such a decision.

“That wasn’t the case with me. I’m originally from the Seat of the Regent. Once I joined the Chosen, they had my whole path planned out for me, all the way to level 55.”

All of them expressed some level of awe at this information.

Does that mean Death...

“All of my boons and a lot of my skills I’ve taken just to maximise one skill in particular. It’s a 4th tier primordial strength skill called [Perfect Body]. Have you unlocked it?” She nodded towards Meren, who shook her head.

“I thought so. It’s exceptionally expensive and it’s hidden as well. You need level 10 in every previous primordial strength skill to even see it.”

That’s... woah.

“Is there a similar skill for primordial magic?” Riza couldn’t help but ask.

Adewyn shrugged.

“Better off asking Andreyra about that.”

“[Perfect Body]. What does it do?” Meren asked, unsurprisingly showing fervent interest in such a skill.

“It’s similar to [Knowable Power] but with a bigger increase and all four physical stats improve each other.”

“That... doesn’t sound that strong,” Meren said dourly.

Adewyn couldn't help but laugh. A strong, sharp laugh.

"It's unassuming, I'll give you that. It's not so much the skill itself but everything else that makes it strong. All the boons and other skills together."

"What boons do you have?"

"Nothing out of the ordinary. I only have [Source of Power] and [Source of Constitution]."

No hidden ones.

"Only two boons?"

"My stats aren't high enough for the rest yet."

"So you just have one boon in reserve you haven't consolidated yet? A fucking boon?" Meren asked incredulously.

Adewyn nodded simply, like it wasn't that big a deal.

"And you're already this strong. That's just not fair."

"Hey. This is only a recent improvement. If I was the same strength I was when Riza first met me, you could defeat me in an instant."

There was still one question looming in Riza's mind, one question that would point stuff in perspective.

"How much health do you have?"

"Just shy of two hundred thousand."

"What the fuck?" Meren instantly exclaimed and even Riza was stunned by that number. Daven had keeled over in disbelief long ago.

Two hundred thousand. Daven and Sanders have fifty thousand essence each and that's by putting every stat point into spirit.

And Adewyn isn't even at full power yet. She still hasn't spent a boon.

Just... just how strong are the Enforcers really? If Adewyn's a mere Guardian...

No. Stop that thinking. Jupy is strong enough. Five million is still five million-but armour! Damage reduction. Vim and constitution contribute to that. Fuck, I really don't want to hear but I have to.

“And-And what are your stats?” Riza asked, voice wavy.

“Power, constitution, and vim are all about five thousand but endurance is only one-thousand-five hundred.”

Five thousand. Five thousand. Five-fucking-thousand. And in three stats!

Sanders is the person with the highest single stat and that’s only three thousand!

By now, Adewyn’s cool demeanour cracked and she started laughing unrestrained, hunching over and really leaning on her sword.

“Five thousand.” Meren muttered under her breath.

Five thousand Constitution. That’s a flat damage reduction of five thousand. No wonder Meren’s attacks were barely hurting.

Then, combine that with the mysterious vim formula for percentile damage reduction, barely anything should be able to hurt her.

Could an Enforcer kill Adewyn?

Riza looked at the cackling woman. Even hunched over as she was, she was still taller than Riza.

But this is an opportunity. By the time Sanders and Daven reach level 35, their spirit will probably be around 5000. Adewyn can show what raw stats can do, a 5000 benchmark for each of them.

Riza’s eyes traced the crack on the ground. It ran at least two metres deep, maybe more, and stretched on for tens of metres further.

Raw power. She said [Perfect Body] requires level 10 in all previous primordial strength skills and it’s a tier 4. That’s 4 tiers worth of skills she needs to take.

Up to tier 2 includes 9 skills. Say that tier 3 brings the total up to 15 skills necessary, that’s only half her total skill points dedicated to attaining fucking perfection.

[Perfect Body]. It incorporates all four physical stats but not the magic ones. It doesn’t sound that perfect.

Surely, there’s a skill, or a boon, that incorporates all six stats. An ultimate body, perhaps.

If it's a separate skill, it'd surely stack with [Perfect Body]. Then, you'd even have the necessary stats to use [Essential Leech].

All hypothetical, and I don't even know if it exists, but there's potential. I haven't even begun to delve the depths of what's possible.

Deep breaths. Riza calmed herself down before her mind ran off down that train of thought.

Back to what began it all. Stats.

In front of her was a prime example of five thousand in three stats. She could use that.

Once everyone had collected themselves, and Daven took the time to repair the arena—a task that seemed like could become a frequent thing for him—Riza took Adewyn aside to talk about some tests.

Way back in the bunker, when Riza first rediscovered the damage reduction capabilities of constitution and vim, she'd always wanted to investigate the formula or even the potential of vim but never had the opportunity to do so.

This was the best chance she had. Sure, she couldn't obtain a large sample size but it was at least some perspective on the formula.

And, it'd also show how the flat and percentile damage reductions interacted with each other.

But, before she could do all that, she needed to train with Jupy.

While everyone was doing their own thing and in between sessions of meditation where Riza attempted to unlock the use of the rest of her skills, she headed on down to the arena with Jupy to familiarise herself and him with his skills.

After the first session, Riza was in love. Lefie was no longer the vessel for her love of big damage numbers, replaced by Jupy. She practically jumped for joy for how much easier it was to watch, observe, and adjust when she had direct access to the skill interface.

No one running numbers through the mind of Lefie, and her interpreting the imprecise language used in her skills. Jupy ran off Riza's interface, retaining all its scientific precision.

That made things so much easier.

The first thing to establish was procedures, presets. When faced with a beast demon, there was no need to blast it away with a nuke-level of damage.

Instead, a simple thousand points of damage would do.

Riza walked through Jupy over the numbers, the different levels of [Maximise Mastery] and [Seeker Mastery] needed with [Range Compression] to achieve certain levels of damage.

[Maximise Mastery] and [Seeker mastery] presented two options for improving the damage of a [Lightning Bolt].

Say, hypothetically, there's a target 20 metres away. [Lightning Bolt]'s range is 20 metres. By increasing the range to 80 metres and then compressing it back down to 20, that's a 600% damage increase. 100 damage turns into 700 damage for only 4 times the cost of the skill.

Then, you compare that with [Maximise Mastery]. That would achieve only a damage increase of 300%, a total of 400 damage, for the same cost.

While [Maximise Mastery] is simple, [Range Compression] would frequently result in higher damage for the same cost.

Riza pounded that into Jupy's skull, to always be aware of the ranges involved.

The same way Riza could access his stats and skills, she could also see the changes in real time as metamagic was applied to a skill.

This led into what was eventually an exam. Riza would shout out a range and damage and Jupy would alter the metamagic to achieve said effect and he was startling good at it as well.

For as inhuman his mind may have been, it had a firm grasp of numbers.

Once Riza felt he had a strong enough ability to use his skills flexibly, that's when the real testing began.

The arena once again repaired, which Daven had complained about so much it was now Harold's duty, Adewyn and Jupy stood at opposite ends, facing each other.

First, a simple test; a completely unaltered [Lightning Bolt].

Base damage of 120. Damage reduction completely exceeds it. Expected outcome: 0 damage.

The bolt flashed from Jupy's hand, shooting through the air in a split-second before hitting Adewyn's torso and dissipating.

"5 damage," Adewyn reported in a cool, calm tone.

Unexpected. 4% of the original damage. Coincidence?

Next test. 1000 damage. Expected outcome: 40 damage.

Again, a flash of light, followed by Adewyn's announcement of the number.

"45 damage."

4.5%. Maybe a rounding error?

1200 damage. Expected outcome: 50 damage.

"54 damage."

Definitely seems like a rounding error. 4.5% of the total damage. Is that a damage minimum for any attack?

"What's your constitution?" Riza called out. She had primed Adewyn on the importance of precision.

Matching constitution, base damage of 5533. Expected outcome: 248 damage.

Flash of light, readout of damage, Riza was correct. 248 damage was inflicted to Adewyn's person.

I'm not sure if that's comforting or threatening. With 5,000,000 damage, that's a guaranteed 225,000 damage regardless of your defences.

High damage reduction isn't enough by itself; you'd need the health for the excess damage.

Which means Jupy can kill Adewyn, here and now. That's... A shiver ran down her spine. Not something I want to think about.

Next test. Exceed constitution by 1. Base damage 5534. Expected damage: 249.

Received damage 249. So far so good.

Next, let's exceed it by double. Base damage 11,066. Expected damage: 497.

Received damage 497.

Still not high enough to get past the 4.5% barrier. That's incredible.

"How are you holding up?" Riza asked, checking on her subject.

"It barely tickles." Adewyn goaded.

Okay then. Let's go for 50,000 damage this time. Expected damage: 2250.

Received damage 16,967. Yes! A discrepancy! This is getting interesting.

Like that, Riza ran through the numbers, testing every possibility that came to mind.

Adewyn had [Fortress of Flesh] so the calculations Riza did would only apply to those with the same skill as well but anyone with a sufficiently high constitution or Vim likely had the skill anyway.

With a flat and percentile damage reduction, the order they executed was important.

That original 4.5% damage minimum Riza had discovered wasn't actually the case. It was actually the interaction of two percentiles.

With a vim of 5182, that meant Adewyn passively reduced all damage by 65%. So, if 1000 damage hit her, it was reduced to 450 and then constitution reduced to what Riza believed was the global damage minimum of 10%. AKA, 45 damage total.

Vim always went first and constitution was a flat reduction of whatever was left over by the vim and it could never reduce damage below 10% of its damage after vim.

All in all, great that Riza finally learnt this stuff, terrible for how indestructible all her enemies inevitably were.

But once Riza ran the numbers, maybe they weren't as indestructible as she thought.

The max amount of damage Riza could produce in one second was 25,672 through a maximised [Leech] with its range reduced to 1 metre. Being more realistic, that's 23,000 damage a second at 10 metres.

After the damage reductions on Adewyn, that was about 4800 damage a second. 40 seconds to kill her.

The more she discovered, the more unbalanced everything seemed in her eyes. Jupy was perfection. If you wanted to kill something with high physical stats, you wouldn't opt for a skill that did damage over time, like [Leech], nor a group of skills that dealt damage through many individual attacks, like Lefie's [Lightning Bolt]. Instead, you'd want one singular, instant source of damage, like Jupy's [Lightning Bolt].

Or, perhaps not. Maybe this was just a quirk due to Adewyn having both an impossibly high constitution and an impossibly high vim but if she was an example of what was yet to come...

Riza shook her head.

Once she had finished the tests, she freely shared her information with the rest of the group. It was quite uncommon to know just how much damage was incoming so Adewyn was quite happy at finding out just how much her stats were benefiting her.

Riza did later follow up with Jupy and Nesity, getting some numbers where only constitution was in play, and it confirmed all the data she had obtained earlier. Once Riza had someone with only high vim, she'd repeat the experiment again.

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"A miniature explosion?" Lefie asked, curled up on one side of the bed, back against the wall.

It was barely a bed; a rocky pedestal covered in a blanket, but it was the best they had.

Riza was sitting on the other end, idly playing with the demon spawn on her lap. She saw herself through its eyes, looking upwards.

"Yes. When it's in a tube with no way to go but one direction, all the energy from the explosions is transferred to the bullet and it shoots out at a really high speed," Riza explained. They had stumbled onto the topic of what Riza was doing before she came to this world and, naturally, then developed into Riza explaining the topic of guns.

"But, doesn't that just blow up?"

"It's a really small explosion."

Lefie shook her head.

“I don’t understand. I think I’ll stick with lightning bolts.”

“It’s not like you have an option. *Guns* don’t...” Riza trailed off, a thought coming to mind. “*Guns* don’t exist yet.”

But what if they did. Swords and spears have skill trees. Would guns do as well?

Lefie gently kicked her, drawing her out of her head.

“What about your friend? The one who helped you?”

“Who? Cynthia?” A nod.

“What was she like?”

“She was... amazing. She had a smile that could light up a room and, I swear, the first time I saw her, I fell in love instantly.”

“You fell in love?”

Riza smiled, buried memories resurfacing in her mind.

“Not then. It was just infatuation, but the more time I spent with her, the harder I fell. She was inhumanly kind and had the patience of a saint. The group she was with—it included her family and a couple other families—was never that fond of me but she welcomed me instantly, as soon as I showed up on her doorstep. She always batted for me.”

“Huh. Kind of like you with me.” Lefie commented, causing a stirring warmth in Riza’s chest.

“Maybe. You know, she was the funniest person ever. She could see the humour in anything and you’d say something innocuous and then the next second, she’s twisted that in such a way you’re laughing at the absurdity.

“I guess that was something else I loved. She was *smart*. So much smarter than me. She reminded me of my sister, that way.

“You’re smart too.” Lefie rubbed Riza’s arm with her foot. An amusing, but gentle, gesture.

“I’m nothing impressive. Just lucky, really. Things went well for me and, well, now we’re here,” Riza’s arms flopped up, lazily gesturing around her.

“But, man, you would’ve loved her. You and her were alike in many ways, some of them annoying.”

“Hey!” A not-so-gentle poke.

“She-she was...fuck,” Riza failed to start, feeling herself tear up as she trawled across the many happy memories.

“Sometimes, in my darkest moments, I wondered if anyone would miss me. If I would miss anyone if I just went away. I know, it’s ridiculous, of course people care about me and would miss me but it’s not exactly a rational fear.

“And now it’s really happened. And it’s only once you’ve lost something do you realise just how much you’ve lost.” Riza sniffed hard, prompting Lefie to get up and crawl over to her, displacing the critter in Riza’s lap with herself.

Riza’s hand quickly went to playing with Lefie’s hair, soothing herself with the familiar comfort.

“It’s... hard. Knowing that I left her. What is she feeling? How sad is she? How does she cope?

“And everyone else, as well. I doubt my parents gave much of a shit but I destroyed my sister. She never stopped trying to find me, to the last moment before I left. It was-it was stupid of me. Selfish. I shouldn’t have done it.

“But then, I wouldn’t have met Cynthia.” A heavy sigh.

“And, in the end, none of it mattered. Now I’m here. And they’re not.”

“I’m glad you’re here,” Lefie whispered.

Riza smiled ruefully.

“Sooner or later, I’ll leave you too, just like I did them.”

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Huddled around the war table, everyone barring Sanders looked over the map carved into it.

Splashes of differently-coloured stone were inserted, marking key positions. Their nest, their headquarters, was the brightest one.

“Killing an Enforcer is akin to a declaration of war, right?” Riza asked, looking over towards Andreyia, who gave a nod in return.

Arms stretched arm, Riza was hunched over the map, looking at it intensely.

“This is serious. No half-assed plans, everything is laid out before we even make the first move.” She leaned back, standing straight.

“Death is in Trotton. Regardless of how strong he is, I am confident that we can kill him. However, once we do, there’s no going back.

“A declaration of war invites the whole army, their strongest forces, on top of us. There are only three outcomes: we die, we topple the Empire, or we reach a peace agreement. The first option is obviously not desired, and the second is just too unlikely, which means the third is what we are aiming for.

“When negotiating peace, concessions are made. That is the entire point of this war. If all we get out of it is that they are no longer hunting us, we’re back where we started from.

“No. What we want, is *sovereignty*. Our own land, our own population, our own city.”

Riza pointed at Trotton and then Rensenfeld.

“People die of old age all the time. Even if [Heal] and [Cleanse] was widespread, people would still die. Having a city means a constant supply of future soldiers, repurposed in life after death.

“The Dominion would never agree to that,” Daven interjected.

“Hence, *sovereignty*. Once we have our own land, we make our own rules. New laws. But that’s in the future. The basic goal for now, until future discussions, is obtaining a city and being at peace with the Empire. Once we have a city, we can grow in power without being at odds with the Empire.

“And just how do we take a city with, what, just the six of us?” Meren asked.

“It’ll be easier than you’d think. Your town of Litchendorf was owned by a Lord. Do you know who that was?”

“No. That was never important.”

“Exactly. If the Lord changed throughout your life time, you’d have no idea. What if the Lord for a city changed to me, or one of you. The average person wouldn’t even notice.”

“Cities are a little different to villages. They’re kept in order by the Chosen and Dominion, not a rag-tag group of patrol men,” Adewyn said.

Riza pointed at her, acknowledging what she said.

“Yes, so that could be another concession. We’d continue the operation of the Chosen and Dominion in our city as normal. They’re technically separate from the Empire, right?”

“It’s a bit more complicated than that,” Andreyra added.

“But they can operate independently just fine?”

“I suppose, if it’s required-.”

“Good enough. We can take a city, and hold it. All we need is to get concessions from the Empire through peace negotiations.

“The issue then is to want the Empire to desire peace through negotiations rather than outright killing us and that is a show of strength.

“They’re fighting a war right now, with demons. Any personnel they send to us is not only a temporary loss of strength but a permanent one as well if, if we kill them,” Riza hesitated towards the end, composing herself. *All for the greater good.*

“So, all we have to do is convince them that agreeing to peace is less expensive than trying to kill us.”

“And that’s why you want to kill Death,” Meren said.

“Yes. Ideally, we kill all three Enforcers at once. That’d be a sign they’d need to divulge a *substantial* force to even hope to take us on and they’d need to give up even more to be certain they’d win.

“And if they don’t agree to negotiations?”

“They won’t straight away. They’d send someone and we kill whoever they send. The point is, war with us becomes too costly to continue.”

“Are we even capable of this? If they’re half as strong as Adewyn-“

“Yes. Jupy, already, is strong enough to take on Adewyn and-“

“That demon? He barely tickl-“

“He could kill you in one shot,” Riza stared hard at Adewyn. Gasps and murmurs abound, a sudden chill descended upon the room.

“Really?” Adewyn replied, voice full of confidence.

“I’ve calculated the numbers. With 200,000 health, your vim basically increases that to 500,000.

“Jupy, at level 18, can deal 5,500,00 damage with only one attack. And he can do that ten times over.” Wide eyes all around.

Adewyn’s voice lost its cockiness but her tone remained serious.

“Don’t place everything in his hands. Not all of them are like me. There are ways to defend yourself against magic. Enchanted items, weapons, and anti-magic skills. Sure, Jupy may be able to kill me but remember, I’m *not* an Enforcer. They are specialised. Once the Empire learns of yours—his—capabilities, they’ll send someone immune to [Lightning Bolt]s or capable of anti-magic or so stacked with enchanted gear he’s barely a threat.

“Dont. Underestimate. Them.” Adewyn finished, tone ice cold.

Riza shrunk back, the look in her eyes scaring her, as well as the confrontation itself.

Her heart was racing. She felt light-headed.

Shifting [Meditate] to her ears, she took a precious few seconds to compose herself.

Calm. Calm. I am calm.

“You’re right.” She admitted. “I got caught up in the numbers. Jupy isn’t enough by himself.

“Five million and he isn’t enough,” Riza could hear Meren mutter.

“Which is why I need more demons.

“This leads to the stage of the plan before even fighting the Enforcers.”

Riza’s finger traced from the nest all the way up to the quarry.

“You’re going back?” Lefie asked.

Riza nodded.

“We left it mostly untouched comparatively. This time, we’re picking it clean. Every humanoid demon, every greater demon. We want bodies, not levels. There’s something there, I can feel it.”

“We’re declaring war on the demons as well?” Meren asked.

“Just the bunker. Once we hit that, we target nothing else. It’s purely for the extra bodies.”

“And how do we increase their level caps if we can’t target other nests?”

“Harold’s working on that. We can’t supply corpses to produce our own humanoid demons but I killed an elder greater demon and got a level cap of 29 so it should be possible even without humanoid demons.”

Meren nodded, seemingly satisfied with that answer.

“When do we strike?” Andreyka asked.

“Not for a while. My demons are still low level. It’s a waiting game. Harold’s handling the breeding well and I don’t want to eat into that unless necessary. Being conservative for now will pay off later.”

“You want us to sit on our asses for, what, another month or two?” Daven asked.

“Not quite. You’re going to be training and getting better at what you do. We can’t rush this otherwise history will repeat itself.”

“Fine, fine. I guess I’ve got nothing better to do.”

“Good. That’s the gist of it, everyone. If you have questions ask me or Andreyka. I guess, that’s everything?”