

Chapter 73 Infestation

Kate listened to the groans and howls outside, another horde scouring the streets outside of an apartment building herself and Logan were hiding in. Her tremor sense had informed them early enough to get to safety.

How long are we going to have to hide?

She sighed, looking at her fist. She'd gotten so much stronger, had fought and killed so many of these monsters but there were hundreds of them left, hundreds she couldn't yet face directly. Overakar with scales she couldn't pierce with ease, Wyverns that could simply grab her, fly up, and throw her down to her death. It was frustrating.

Patience, she reminded herself, calming her breathing. She could feel her blood pulse, calling her to action but she told herself once more to be patient. Every kill mattered, every level mattered.

The horde passed and Kate breathed out. She nodded to Logan and got up, the two continuing on through the city, soon reaching their destination, Aathi already waiting, casually standing next to the double doors whilst looking at her nails.

The headquarters of the local police was an old flat roofed three story stone slab that looked like it had perhaps once been a merchant building. The windows were protected with grates, the main entrance open, blood and bullet holes visible on the broad wooden doors.

Kate listened and went inside, checking for anything she could hear. So far it seemed clear. She hoped it wasn't.

Headlamps turned on, the group quickly found and entered the receptionist office.

Logan found a map of the building before he went to check through the scattered documents.

Kate saw bullet shells on the floor, blood on a few of the walls. The only difference to Grenndorf was that there were no corpses here, taken by the orcs or undead scouring the streets or hunting out in the valley and beyond.

"You two should wait here, I'll have a look around for three minutes, ground floor to the right, come for me if you don't hear anything," Aathi said.

"Call out for help if you need it, I will likely hear you," Kate said.

"Will do, ma'am," Aathi said, a smile on her face as her form seemed to fold itself into the light. A moment later, she was mostly gone.

Kate could see slight distortions in the light of her headlamp and of course she heard Aathi's subdued breathing and heartbeat but a few seconds later, both were gone. *Around five meters and I can't perceive her anymore.*

Either my skills need to get better or I need enough Vitality and armor to withstand whatever someone can hit me with before I can react.

The thought added to her frustrations. Hordes of monsters, humans that could turn pretty much invisible, equipped with any kind of gun they could find. She sighed.

“You seem stressed,” Logan said as he moved one piece of paper to the back of the stack he’d collected.

“Perceptive,” Kate said.

“Angry too. Want to help me read through this stuff?”

“I want to kill something,” Kate said, her eyes going wide after the words had left her mouth. She made to say something else but didn’t know what. It was true, wasn’t it? They needed to deal with the undead, and to do that, she needed to fight and kill more monsters. But it wasn’t just that. She knew it and saying it out loud, she found that it felt right too.

“That bat wasn’t quite challenge enough for you, was it?” Logan said. “There will be more than enough fighting to come. If you’re angry, hit a wall or something. I’d normally not recommend it because people fuck up their wrists but you’re not exactly the same.”

“You don’t think it’s fucked up?” Kate asked.

“What?” Logan asked.

She looked up and met his eyes. “That I feel this way. I’m... I was supposed to help people, protect people. I still feel that way but...”

He relaxed in the office chair he sat in, setting aside the papers. “Kate. I don’t know how much all this magic is influencing how we think but we’re still human. If there’s one thing I’ve learned in all those years, it’s that you shouldn’t repress your emotions. Learn instead to understand where they come from, and figure out what to do with them. You’re angry? You want to kill monsters? Good. Then do that, and use your anger. Feel it and take it for what it is, don’t fear and repress it, or it will inevitably come to control you.”

“My magic is already...” Kate said and shook her head.

“Controlling you?” Logan asked.

“Sometimes feels that way,” Kate said. *And it also feels good. To let go. To...* She raised her brows and paused. “I think I see what you mean.”

“Take your time. You’re doing well. We... are doing well. I’ve not... had an episode in a while, despite all the fighting.” He shook his head. “Take it one day at a time. I’m trying the same.”

Kate nodded. “Thanks, Logan.”

He looked at her for a moment and returned to his documents. “Now come and help me with this.”

Aathi returned and reported that she’d not found any monsters, leaving again to scout the next section of the police station. All the while Logan and Kate went through the files to find anything that could be useful to them.

“Here we are,” Logan said. “A request for camera footage from military personnel in Falstadt. And there’s an address.”

Kate glanced over. “The next place to check out?”

“Yeah. And there we’ll likely find out if there are more military bases or reserves in the city.”

“Found something?” Aathi asked as she appeared in the doorway.

“Yeah. Yourself?” Logan asked.

“Upper floors are clear but there’s slight noise from the cellar.”

Logan glanced at Kate.

“Let’s see what that’s about,” Kate said.

“Yeah. I’ll just... stay a few meters behind you,” Aathi said.

“No guns, except when it’s absolutely necessary,” Logan said.

Kate stood with her axe at the ready, checked the floor map, and walked past the waiting woman. She heard Logan follow behind.

She heard the noise before even reaching the stairs but it seemed that whatever was fluttering about below was damn near as perceptive. The patterns changed and she heard several things moving up and in their direction. “Incoming,” she said and steadied herself, aware of her tremor sense in case there were more of the wall breaching bat creatures.

She activated Mindless Ferocity, her world narrowing right before she saw the massive gray butterflies rush around the corner ahead, illuminated by her headlamp. Beady insect eyes stared back at her, small mouths with protruding canines and a thin spiked tail whipping around as the creature rushed her way, the body itself as large as her torso.

She rushed forward too, charging with a vertical swing, her axe instantly stopping the momentum of the flying insect, its wings slapping left and right as Kate brought it down, ripping out her axe to see several more of the creatures flying into the hallway. She stood up and activated Blood Frenzy, rushing to meet the enemy with a shout of her own. Her magic slowed the creatures and she caught one of them in its side, wing clipped as she heard the others close now. Something glanced past her cheek, dull pain flaring up with more heat as Kate turned and ducked the spiked tail from another of the monsters coming right for her eye.

She stomped down, Blood Rupture flashing out around her, knowing that her allies were far enough back behind her. She heard sizzling and strange hissing, turning to swing at one of the fliers. She saw it flutter back to avoid the strike, another one of them grabbing onto her back with its insect legs, its mouth biting down on her neck and its tail cutting into her thigh. Kate reached behind herself and grabbed the creature’s head, ripping it out of her shoulder and slamming it down onto the ground. She stomped onto its skull, leaving a splatter of dark blood as its wings twitched a few more times.

Its tail still stuck in her thigh, she grabbed it and ripped it out, letting go of her axe to catch another of the monsters that flew straight at her. She caught her step and punched into the insect face trying to bite at her face. She heard its tail glancing off her wyvern scales, whipping around to strike at her head. Another punch cracked something as she caught the whipping tail, the spiked end digging into her arm but unable to pierce her skin. Kate grabbed the creature’s neck and pulled with her other hand, ripping out the tail including half its spine before she dropped both chunks of limp flesh.

The cuts and bite had flared up with pain and heat, radiating out from where her skin had been pierced. The pain was accompanied by something worse, a numbing feeling. Something was wrong but she could tell the intensity lowered after she’d killed one of them.

Kate heard the remaining monsters rush her, three of them, fluttering wings illuminated in the hallway. She ran forward, arm reaching back as she called for her axe. She felt the weight of it slamming into her hand and swung up and to the left with a shout, splitting the first critter in half. She didn't stop, using her charge to slam into the next one, ignoring its tail and bite as she brought it down with herself, pinning its wings with her legs. She held the long handle of her enchanted axe with both hands and slammed it down horizontally, squashing the head of the creature when she heard the last one fluttering onto her back. She let go of her axe, feeling power flow into her legs as she activated Reaper Jump.

Kate charged it to the max, the jump adding a medium resistance to physical damage as her magically enhanced jump sent her rocketing up into the ceiling, cracks and a wet squelch resounding as all the air was punched out of her lungs, the creature on her back smeared against the ceiling.

Kate fell and landed in a crouch. Several wounds on her body pounded with pain, the numbing sensation slowly starting to spread again. She heard more enemies ahead, and started running, hearing the shouts behind her but there was poison in her body, and the remedy was just ahead.

Down the stairs and she found another of the flying critters. She clipped it with her first swing, bringing down her axe onto the fluttering creature. The pain lessened ever so slightly. She turned and saw the form of a massive maggot the size of a dog. It looked up and sprayed liquid out from its mouth. Kate raised her arm to protect her face and pushed on, finding the maggot and bringing down her axe. The cut was clean but as she shined her headlamp down the hall, she could see dozens of the creatures crawling on the floor, cocoons hanging from the wall and ceiling, fluttering movements visible in the back.

She gripped her axe and walked in, bringing it down onto the next creature in her way.

Aathi followed Logan, holding her pistol tight as she glanced at the cut apart and smeared nightmare butterflies. She'd considered shooting some to help Kate but the fight had happened so quickly. She was sure Kate had been overwhelmed, their tails striking at her time and time again. A few had climbed onto her back and bitten down on her neck but she'd just grabbed them, slammed them down into the ground, stomped them, ripped them apart. She gulped, seeing the carnage. It was insane. Like nothing she had seen before. Even Lewis didn't leave a mess like this behind.

Aathi understood now why the two of them wanted to fight alone. The small battles she had seen in the dungeon were nothing at all. Kate was a monster.

"Shouldn't we call for help? She's injured, or not?"

"Not yet," Logan said.

What do you mean not yet?

"She's still fighting. We'll see how injured she is once everything is dead," he said.

Aathi raised her brows. *She's really going to kill everything here. Can she not stop? Is that her magic or is she just fucked up like that?* Either way, she wanted to see it happen, following behind Logan who moved with smooth and methodical steps, sword in hand as he checked every corner and then went down the stairs and into the basement.

He stopped and Aathi did as well, her eyes going wide as she saw the disgusting slaughter before her. Maggots. She gagged, looking away for a moment and trying to ignore the stench. The air smelled like acid. She blinked her eyes and looked back, seeing the dark blood and writhing insects, butterflies and thick worms alike, cut to pieces by the Berserker in their midst. She saw Kate down the hall, wrestling with another butterfly before she stabbed a knife into its head several times, throwing it aside and reaching out her hand. The large axe she wielded flung out from somewhere in the carnage, straight into her hand before she brought it down again, slaughtering through the infestation without a care in the world, unstoppable by neither horror, smell, nor monster.

“Looks like she’s handling herself,” Logan said.

He’s used to it too.

“You two knew each other?” Aathi asked as she kept watching, Logan’s headlamp shining down into the corridor. She couldn’t help but wince at the sounds from time to time. Shooting things was one thing but the sheer brutality with which Kate fought was downright frightening. Fascinating too but Aathi couldn’t quite decide which feeling was more prominent.

“Before this started?” Logan asked. “No. We met at Keilberg Castle. We were looking for a safe place to get to.”

“We?” Aathi asked.

Logan only grunted.

She waited but didn’t press. It felt familiar. She’d lost people too. “I’m sorry.”

“We should get closer, kill the things that are still moving,” Logan said. “I don’t want to lose her in one of the side corridors.”

“I…” Aathi looked at the mess. The smell. She could see that the maggots were spitting something at Kate. Acid or venom.

“You can stay here and make sure nothing gets past. Your silenced pistol should be fine to use,” Logan said.

Aathi gulped, then narrowed her eyes. There would be more ammo here for her pistol. “No. I’ll join you,” she said and activated her magic, feeling the world quiet around her. As always, it felt like stepping into a pool of water. “Let’s go,” she said and took the first step towards the mess.

Kate checked another corridor, finding only a few cocoons. Ripping them down one by one, she hacked them apart, making sure none of the larvae would survive. *Fucked up butterflies*, she thought, hearing movement nearby. Her allies.

The searing hot pain had lessened with all the killing, Kate and her allies clearing out the last few hallways and rooms before the only sounds remaining were their own.

The battle was over. But Kate knew that out there were many more monsters. Stalking through the city, hunting her. It pissed her off. Hunting her? Why was she hiding then? Wasn't she supposed to hunt and kill them instead? Wasn't that why they'd come here, to this city?

She found herself confused. The hordes were too many still, too dangerous, too strong. She growled, her magic slowly waning. The next fight would come but it wasn't now.

Kate closed her eyes at the carnage around her, her breathing picking up as she smelled everything. Her right arm hurt and pulsed, a small cut she saw, her veins protruding around it, her skin red with infection.

"Healing?" Logan asked.

"Let's try conventional means first," Kate said and walked to a nearby closed door. Either the maggots and butterflies hadn't been able to open up all of the locked doors or they didn't understand the concept, simply using the room that they'd had. She was sure that the entire police station would've been swarming with the creatures given enough time.

She kicked in the door and went into the storage room, checking for any monsters but finding none.

Logan followed her in and opened his pack, getting out the first aid kit before he checked it.

"That doesn't look good," Aathi said as she became more visible.

"Some kind of poison," Kate said. "Hurts pretty bad."

"It looks like it's eating away at your skin," Aathi said.

"Very slowly," Kate said, watching close. She felt a little confused. Just seeing how it looked, she expected the pain to be much worse but it felt manageable.

"I'll clean it out first," Logan said, drenching a piece of cloth with disinfectant. "Ready?"

Kate nodded, watching as he pressed the cloth down onto the three centimeter long cut. She found herself not even wincing, the coolness of the rag and the burning sensation providing relief if anything. "That's good," she said with a sigh.

Logan glanced at her before he removed the cloth and added a bunch of the disinfectant directly to the wound. "I'll close the wound with magic at least," he said, his hand starting to glow in a near white and golden hue.

Kate wasn't happy about the itching sensation but then she supposed she shouldn't have gotten hit by that last butterfly.

"Let me know how you feel. If any pain remains or if the area swells up and reddens again, we should probably find Alexander," he said.

"Feels fine," Kate said. "I'll check my messages and then we search through the place. Might want to start collecting the butterfly corpses. I have a feeling our alchemist could use them."

“That’s gross,” Aathi said, her eyes almost sparkling. “I will start immediately.”

“She seems to like you,” Logan said when the woman had left.

Kate grunted, then smiled to herself. “I’m not sure if that’s a good thing.”

“Me neither,” Logan confirmed and paused. “I’ll try to open the other doors, see what we have. No other monsters nearby? Seeing your magic isn’t active anymore.”

“You should be good,” Kate said.

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Hophiak]’

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Hophiak]’

...

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Zeruvian Maggot]’

‘ding’ ‘Omen of Vengeance reaches lvl 31’

Stat points +2

Vigor +1

‘ding’ ‘Blood Frenzy reaches 2nd lvl 20’

‘ding’ ‘Vengeful Charge reaches 2nd lvl 12’

‘ding’ ‘Reaper Jump reaches lvl 17’

‘ding’ ‘Blood Rupture reaches 2nd lvl 4’

‘ding’ ‘Blood Rupture reaches 2nd lvl 5’

‘ding’ ‘Blood for the Living reaches 2nd lvl 19’

‘ding’ ‘Blood for the Living reaches 2nd lvl 20’

‘ding’ ‘Fury of the Unarmored reaches 2nd lvl 16’

‘ding’ ‘Fury of the Unarmored reaches 2nd lvl 17’

‘ding’ ‘Two Handed Weapon Fighting reaches 2nd lvl 19’

‘ding’ ‘Unrelenting Carnage reaches 2nd lvl 7’

...

‘ding’ ‘Unrelenting Carnage reaches 2nd lvl 9’

‘ding’ ‘Terrifying Presence reaches lvl 11’

‘ding’ ‘Terrifying Presence reaches lvl 12’

‘ding’ ‘Roaring Pursuer reaches lvl 28’

Brutality +1

'ding' 'Thunderous Shout reaches 2nd lvl 2'

'ding' 'Thunderous Shout reaches 2nd lvl 3'

'ding' 'Sound Perception reaches 2nd lvl 10'

'ding' 'Echo Awareness reaches lvl 16'

'ding' 'Heavy Charger reaches lvl 4'

Fortitude +1

...

'ding' 'Heavy Charger reaches lvl 7'

Fortitude +1

'ding' 'You have unlocked the active skill: Weapon Throw – lvl 1

Active: Weapon Throw – lvl 1

Use 10% of your stamina to enhance the throw of a heavy weapon. Accuracy of all weapon throws is increased by 5.5%.

Thought I was doing that already. She wondered how much stronger her throws would be now that it was an actual skill. Ten percent of my stamina is pretty steep as well. Suppose with Blood for the Living, it shouldn't be much of an issue.

'ding' 'Bound Weapon Return reaches lvl 4'

'ding' 'Heavy Weapons Expert reaches lvl 4'

...

'ding' 'Heavy Weapons Expert reaches lvl 6'

Kate put her two new stat points into Strength, now up to twenty seven. She checked her arm but found no sign of the infection or venom or whatever it was still present, slightly annoyed that the creatures had been able to pierce her skin in the first place. *I hope Allison has something new for me soon. Otherwise it's going to take me a whole lot more to face an undead horde than a few more points in Vitality.*

Kate Lindgren

Unspent stat points: 0

Class: Omen of Vengeance – lvl 31

- **Active: Mindless Ferocity** – 2nd lvl 20
- **Active: Blood Frenzy** – 2nd lvl 20
- **Active: Vengeful Charge** – 2nd lvl 12
- **Active: Reaper Jump** – lvl 17
- **Active: Blood Rupture** – 2nd lvl 5
- **Passive: Blood for the Living** – 2nd lvl 20
- **Passive: Fury of the Unarmored** – 2nd lvl 17
- **Passive: Two Handed Weapon Fighting** – 2nd lvl 19
- **Passive: Unrelenting Carnage** – 2nd lvl 9
- **Passive: Terrifying Presence** – lvl 12

Support class: Roaring Pursuer – lvl 28

- **Active: Thunderous Shout** – 2nd lvl 3
- **Active: Reverberating Charge** – 2nd lvl 3
- **Active: Aura of Silence** – lvl 16
- **Passive: Sound Perception** – 2nd lvl 10
- **Passive: Echo Awareness** – lvl 16
- **Passive: Tremor Sense** – lvl 17

Support class: Heavy Charger – lvl 7

- **Active: Bound Weapon Return** – lvl 4
- **Active: Weapon Throw** – lvl 1
- **Active:**
- **Passive: Heavy Weapons Expert** – lvl 6
- **Passive:**
- **Passive:**

Status:

Vitality: 40

Vigor: 16

Fortitude: 7

Endurance: 24

Perseverance: 15

Strength: 27

Brutality: 13

Dexterity: 8

Intelligence: 7

Wisdom: 12

Serenity: 15

Equipment:

Torso: Patchwork Scale Armor [Common]

- Low grade Acid Resistance

Legs: Splintered Bone Armor [Common]

- Low grade Fire Resistance

Trinket: -

Food: Mushroom soup [Duration 2 hours]

- Stamina regeneration +10