

The two-week journey to [Miktlan] began under a sky draped in ominous clouds as if the world itself sensed the darkness we were walking into. The path ahead was flanked by forest and towering jagged rocks. As we walked down the road, a sense of unease clung to me because of the sound of monsters echoing from the forest's depths. I grew up in a village surrounded by the forest, so I was no stranger to the sight of creatures lurking among the trees. But here, the atmosphere felt different—more threatening. The roars that filled the air weren't just from one or two beasts but seemed to be a chorus of hundreds, each more menacing and massive than the last. Worst of all, it was not only in the forest. Monstrous creatures with wings also prowled the skies, forcing us to be alert at all times to avoid being surprised by an air attack. Even Sunshine, who is always flying around, is sitting on my shoulder, looking at the skies with worry.

"This place is creepy," Sunshine muttered, her voice a faint whisper over the howling wind, "Even the birds wouldn't dare come here."

"Those are birds, too. Why don't you go play with them?" Namy chuckled softly, the sound almost lost in the wind.

"R-Really? I'm tired today, so I will give them a break..." Sunshine responded, believing the obvious lie Namy said.

"You'll need to toughen up, little Fairy. [Miktla] isn't kind to the weak." Namy answered, smiling.

As we venture deeper into the demonic territory, it is hard not to notice that the number of monsters lurking around has increased, besides their size and ferocity far surpassing those in human lands. I can't help but wonder what someone with the power to control an army of these monstrosities could accomplish. Duke Vanth possesses that very power, and once we reach Miktlan, that power will be within my reach. If I could steal his skill, I could control one of those winged monsters and ride it straight to where Zaine is faster.

"What are you thinking about?" Usofra asked, snapping me out of my thoughts.

"Huh? Nothing," I replied, trying to sound casual.

"Don't tell me you're still considering that crazy idea of stealing Duke Vanth's power," Usofra pressed as if reading my mind, "It's insane, if not outright suicidal! There's no way you could get close enough to Duke Vanth to steal his skill. And we don't even know if you can steal a demon's skill to begin with. I've told you countless times—demons and other races are very different."

"My sister's right," Namy chimed in, "To reach Duke Vanth, you'd have to get past his army of monsters first. And even if you somehow manage to get close, if you're unable to steal his skill, you'll be trapped with no way out. Please remember, if you die, we'll have no way of finding Zaine."

"What's more, apart from his army of monsters, Duke Vanth also commands a legion—a massive force of demons—and you can bet he has more tricks up his sleeve than just controlling beasts," Usofra continued.

"From what I learned in the village, Duke Vanth's legion is one of the three stationed on the border, fighting against the humans, so we don't have to worry about that," I added, "Think about it carefully. Even if we manage to rescue Zaine, we'll likely be discovered afterward. What will we do then? With a skill like Duke Vanth's, not only could we reach Zaine faster, but it would also help us deal with the Demons that come after us."

"Are you sure that's the real reason you want to confront Duke Vanth and steal his skill?" Usofra asked, her voice tinged with skepticism. "In my opinion, you're only seeking revenge for what he did to your village."

"Revenge, justice... call it what you will," I replied, my tone as cold as the icy wind that whipped around us, "What he did to my village cannot be forgiven. If stealing his skill is what it takes to bring him down and save Zaine, then so be it. If I can steal Duke Vanth's skill, we will have a chance not just to rescue Zaine but to protect her from any threat that comes our way."

Namy and Usofra exchanged a glance, their expressions hardening. It was clear they were not going to let this go easily. Namy stepped forward, her voice firm but with a trace of concern that she couldn't entirely mask.

"Darx, listen to me," She began, her tone more assertive than before, "I understand your anger, but you need to think about this rationally. We're in this together, which means making decisions that are best for all of us. What you are trying to do is reckless. It puts everything we've worked for at risk."

Usofra nodded in agreement, her eyes narrowing as she fixed me with a serious stare, "We didn't come this far to lose you to some misguided vendetta. You're strong, Darx, but Duke Vanth is in a league of his own. You must understand that we can't afford to make a mistake here. If you die trying to take him on, it's over for all of us. Zaine included. So stop!"

I could feel the tension in the air, but I had already made up my mind.

I met their gazes steadily, "You're right—we're in this together," I said, my voice steady as I spoke, "And that's exactly why I'm not backing down. As you said, we've been through too much to turn back now. You two helped me control my demonic energy, and we've gotten this far together. But don't try to boss me around or try to give me orders. Don't forget that you can tell me what to do."

Namy and Usofra's eyes flashed with frustration and shock, but she remained silent, letting me continue.

"I know the risks, and I know what's at stake," I went on, "Our goal is the same—we all want to save Zaine. And the best way to do that is by giving ourselves every advantage we can. If that means confronting Duke Vanth and taking his power, then so be it. I'm not saying we'll be reckless. We'll plan, we'll be smart about it. But once we get to Miktlan, I'll be looking for any opportunity to steal his skill. If you're with me, we'll do it together. If not... I'll do it on my own."

There was a heavy silence as my words hung in the air. Namy and Usofra exchanged another glance. Finally, Namy sighed, her shoulders relaxing slightly as she relented, "Alright, Darx," She said, her voice softening, "We'll help you. We'll find a way to steal Duke Vanth's skill."

Usofra nodded in agreement, though her expression remained stern. "We'll support you, Darx. But remember, this isn't just about revenge. It's about saving Zaine and getting out alive. We won't let you throw your life away."

I nodded. Namy and Usofra finally seemed to relax, though the tension still lingered in the air. We continued our journey toward Miktlan, traveling by day and camping at night while we dealt with the bad weather. Since we were camping on the forest's edge, we had to take turns guarding ourselves from the monsters that, on more than one occasion, tried to attack while we were sleeping. But finally, exactly two weeks later, we spotted the city of [Miktlan] in the distance. It was a sprawling city with black stone walls rising like fangs from the earth. The [Miktlan] was located at the edge of a massive chasm that split the land, a gaping wound in the earth that stretched beyond what my eyes could see. As I took in the scene, I understood why we had to travel here to continue our journey. There is a large gap between the rocky mountains divided by the chasm, and [Miktlan] was likely the only place with a bridge to cross it, allowing us to continue east.

"So this is [Miktlan]," Namy said, her voice tinged with something that might have been amazement.

"We should proceed with caution," Usofra's voice cut through the eerie silence, her eyes scanning the surroundings, "This territory is known to be treacherous, and it is known that Vanth's hold over the city is formidable."

Sunshine shivered, landing on my shoulder, "It's even worse than I imagined," She whispered, her usual bravado gone.

"You'll get used to it," Namy spoke with a touch of sarcasm, "Or you won't. Either way, you're here now."

"Please enter the medallion," I said to Sunshine. Sunshine immediately obeyed without complaining like she usually does.

We kept moving forward until we reached the city gate. Once there, looking inside, the first thing that struck me was that the architecture of the buildings was unlike anything I had ever

seen—dark, much more elaborate designs than the most simplistic ones seen on the streets of [Riledo], dripping with an ominous elegance that both awed and unnerved me. The stone was black as obsidian, and every building seemed to be adorned with grotesque stone statues of monsters frozen in mid-roar, their eyes gleaming as if they might come to life at any moment. The city had an unsettling symmetry as if it had been meticulously crafted not by hands but by a mind that understood the deepest fears of those who might walk its streets. Demons went about their business much as humans would in a bustling city, yet there was an unmistakable air of danger. Their forms were varied—some humanoid, others more monstrous—but all shared an aura of power that was impossible to ignore. For a moment, I could only stare, overwhelmed by the sight. The city was both beautiful and terrifying.

Curiously, passing the gate checkpoint was relatively easy once Namy gave the guard a few coins. After the initial awe of the city's architecture wore off, we made our way deeper into [Miktlan]. The streets were narrow and winding, designed almost like a maze, with dark alleys that seemed to stretch into nothingness. We passed by shops selling strange wares—potions that bubbled with a sickly glow, weapons forged from blackened steel, and amulets crafted from bones and adorned with strange symbols. The Demons here moved with a casual arrogance, their eyes flickering with a dangerous edge that reminded me to stay on guard. Navigating the twisted streets of [Miktlan], we eventually stop outside an Inn tucked away in a quieter part of the city. The building was smaller and less ornate than others, with fewer demonic statues leering from its walls. Its sign was faded, almost blending into the dark stone, which might have been a blessing considering we wanted to stay out of sight.

"We should lay low for a while," Namy suggested, her voice low as her eyes swept the surroundings, "We don't want to attract too much attention. After all, it is possible that demons here know about the betrayal of my sister and me. If the Demons on top put a price on our heads, there will surely be Demons looking to capture us to collect the reward."

Usofra nodded in agreement, "We need to blend in as much as possible now that we will spend time in the city instead of just passing through. Three rooms in different Inns should suffice—one for each of us. It'll make us look less suspicious."

I considered her suggestion for a moment, "Makes sense. The last thing we need is to stand out while we look for information on how to get to Duke Vanth."

"Also," Usofra continued, her tone more serious, "We should have minimal contact for at least the next three days. We'll each gather information about Duke Vanth—where he is, what his movements are, and most importantly, if there's a reasonable way for you to steal his skill. We can regroup after three days in your room, Darx. By then, we should have enough intel to form a plan."

I nodded, "Agreed."

"Darx," Namy said, looking at me, "You can stay in this guild. Usofra and I will go find other Inns. Just like my sister said, we will meet in your room in three days to share what we have found."

I assisted with my head, and then both Namy and Usofra walked away, taking each their own path. I entered the Inn and walked up to a desk where a demon seemed to be, which, from her appearance, I assume is a succubus. She eyed me warily but said nothing as I approached the counter.

"One room," la said, sliding a few coins across the counter, "I will stay for a few days."

The innkeeper nodded, her eyes lingering on me longer than I liked, but she didn't ask any questions. After handing over the key, she gestured towards a staircase that led to the upper floors. I walked upstairs and entered the room. The room was sparse but serviceable—just a bed, a small table, and a single window that overlooked one of the city's darker alleys. I let Sunshine out of the medallion. She immediately started hovering in the air with a worried expression.

"Darx, this place gives me the creeps," She whispered, her voice barely audible, "Are you sure about this?"

I sighed, sitting on the edge of the bed, "Don't worry too much. Although it doesn't seem like it, I have become stronger, and if things go wrong, I am confident that I can get us out of trouble.

Thanks to Namy and Usofra, I have learned to control my demonic energy even better. Not a single night has passed where I did not train in the world of darkness. And in case it's not enough, I can let my demonic energy take control of my body and hope for the best.

Sunshine nodded, "O-Okay, Dox. I believe you."

With that, I leaned back on the bed, my mind racing with what to do next. I suppose I'll start by investigating the two places I heard about in the village—both supposedly owned by Duke Vanth. There's the zoo, where he keeps monsters on display, and the brothel, where it's rumored that monsters have been transmuted to resemble demon women. With a plan in mind, I closed my eyes and fell asleep.

The following day, I woke up with the first light filtering through the small window, casting a dim glow on the room. Sunshine was floating nearby, her wings fluttering softly as she awoke from her slumber. After getting ready, Sunshine entered the medallion, and we prepared to investigate the famous zoo.

I stepped out into the bustling streets of [Miktlan]. The city was a labyrinth of narrow alleys and towering buildings, the looming structures casting dark shadows that seemed to swallow the light around us. I started walking through the streets aimlessly, ensuring my eyes were covered with my hood. After a long while of asking around and navigating through the streets, we finally

arrived at the entrance to the zoo—a foreboding structure with twisted iron gates that creaked ominously. The zoo's facade was adorned with grotesque gargoyles and eerie carvings of snarling beasts.

I know Duke Vanth won't be here, but I can't help but be curious about the extent of his power. What kind of monsters would he keep in a place like this? Looking around, the zoo seemed oddly safe, with Demons coming and going as if it were just another day. Once inside, I noticed that the paths twisted and turned, flanked by enclosures housing all manner of monstrous creatures. The first enclosure I passed contained a massive monster with scales as black as night, its glowing eyes locked onto me as it let out an eerie hiss. I could feel its predatory gaze tracking my every move. This monster is powerful. I'm certain that dealing with something like this would require at least a party of several B-Ranks.

I ventured deeper into the zoo, each step filling me with a mixture of dread and curiosity. The creatures within the cages varied from monstrous to pitiful—a menagerie of beings trapped for the entertainment of others. Some paced back and forth, their eyes filled with a primal madness. However, they didn't seem to have any intention of escaping, even though I am sure more than one has enough power to do so. I guess that's thanks to the Duke's power.

I continued walking, and almost at the end of the route, I saw creatures that seemed to be a fusion of different monsters—a grotesque display of Duke Vanth's power and perversion.

I think now I understand the reason for this place. This place is a constant reminder to the Demons of Duke Vanth's power over these monstrous. From what I gathered in the village and from observing the Demons here, none of them seem to hold a favorable opinion of Duke Vanth. Yet, despite their disdain, no one dares to criticize him, fearing they might end up like the creatures trapped in these enclosures.

With nothing more to see here, I took to the streets again in search of my next destination. The brothel that is also supposedly owned by Duke Vanth.

The thought of what kind of twisted establishment the brothel under Duke Vanth's control would be made me shudder. The rumors circulating about it indicated that it wasn't a place for mere pleasure but a den where one's darkest desires were twisted and realized. Unlike the zoo, finding information about this brothel was more difficult. Still, I found out the brothel is known as the "Red Lotus" and is situated in a part of the city known for its darker establishments, shrouded in an air of secrecy.

The atmosphere shifted as I made my way through the area where the brothel was located. Once there, asking for directions was unnecessary since the establishment was a massive building with a lot of lights to attract the attention of those who passed by. Secret place, my ass. It is impossible not to notice it.

Upon reaching the brothel's entrance, I hesitated momentarily, steeling myself for what I might find inside—pushing the heavy wooden door open. Unlike the zoo, the brothel exuded an air of subtle luxury, with red lanterns hanging over the entrance, plush furnishings, and elaborately embroidered tapestries adorning the walls. Soft candlelight flickered, casting a warm glow over the decadent furnishings and masked figures that moved sensually through the corridors.

As soon as I entered, I felt a firm hand on my chest, motioning me through, "Hey, Hornless Trash! This place isn't for Demons like you. Do you even have any money?" A muscular demon that looked like some kind of guard told me.

"We don't cater to your kind here. Best turn back before things get unpleasant for you," A second guard who was next to the other added.

"I have more than enough coin to cover my expenses," I replied, grabbing the demon's hand and removing it from my chest with ease, which surprised both guards, "See?" I took out my coin pouch and gave it a shake, letting the coins rattle inside.

The guard's expression shifted, a flicker of uncertainty crossing his features before they stepped aside, allowing me to pass, "I-I see... Still, you better not cause any trouble."

I just walked through, ignoring them. Instantly, the sweet scent of incense and perfume hung heavy in the air, mingling the countless moans heard everywhere.

"Looking for a good time, handsome?"

I turned to see a demoness, her eyes glinting in the dim light, a suggestive smile playing on her lips.

Is she a monster transformed into a demon woman? Looking around, there are a lot of naked women. I managed to recognize some lady demons with wings that seemed to be succubus. And I guess the women who are three meters tall or those who have four tits are the transformed ones.