

Headquarters is a tall glass and steel building among other similar buildings. In the day, people come and go from it, just like the others. Amanda says that blending in is good. She doesn't mean me, but the building. She and Jason often disagree over what I need to do when not hunting.

This late, I know the sidewalk is empty; this area of the city stops around dinner time. Jason has told me why, because humans need to rest, but he has yet to give me a reason for why they all rest at the same time. He has tried, but I have yet to understand the logic of it. As far as I can tell, it's a human quirk.

The van enters via the underground parking, and from there I go down four floors to the labs, where the doctors there run more tests on me and ask me about the fight. It takes an hour, and then I'm allowed to go home.

My apartment is on the eighth floor. It's a simple place, as I don't need much—a kitchen, a living room, a study, a bedroom, and a bathroom. Jason wanted me to get something outside of headquarters, among the population, but Amanda disagreed. She is all for me getting to know the humans I'm protecting, but she also needs me close by to respond to any sightings. She got her way, as she does when it becomes a tactical decision. They didn't ask for my opinion, but I agreed with her.

There are paintings on the walls. One is of a field with flowers, another a scene of people sitting or standing by a river, and another a boat on a rough sea. They were there when I moved in; Jason told me my predecessor liked them, then asked me what I thought of them. I hadn't understood the question, so he explained how it should make me "feel" something. I didn't understand how or why a static image should make me feel anything. I expressed that. He sighed and talked about them being decorations, another concept I didn't understand, they could make the apartment feel "homey."

I had to look up the meaning of the word after he left—to make a place feel like home. Even knowing what it meant, I didn't understand why it mattered. This was my home, whether the pictures were there or not.

My confusion had puzzled him, and I'd looked at the pictures again, trying to feel something. I could tell the people apart in one, and the flowers in the other, but they meant nothing.

Jason spent ten minutes explaining why this was important, then Amanda joined us, and he had to stop. After more than a year, I still do not understand why the pictures are hanging on the wall.

The television comes on as I enter. "Another demon attack took place in the southwest district of the Alibar protectorate this afternoon." I have the computer set to record demon-related news while I'm away, then replay it when I arrive. It lets me build an image of their activities, while not having to endure news about things that have nothing to do with me. Human things. "The local hunter team intervened quickly, and all but two of the demons were killed. There were no civilian deaths during the attack, but twelve were injured when one of the demons brought down an apartment building during their escape."

"Cancel playback." The report doesn't give details; they never do. Amanda explained that it's to keep the population from being unnecessarily scared. Too much information just makes them nervous, she said.

There's been an increase in demon activity in the sector over the last six months. Not only in frequency, but also in size of the attacks. Young demons don't work well together; it takes older ones to keep them in check. The two that escaped were older. The report didn't mention it, but I can tell by their behavior. They created a distraction to help their escape, directing the younger ones. With demons, intelligence comes with age.

Alibar's southwest district's hunter team consists of four hunters. According to their files, they are a few months older than I am.

I don't have a team. My city, Junipor, isn't large enough to warrant more than one hunter. From what I can tell, demons are drawn to large population centers, like Alibar, Dresnonia, or Newyuep. Newyuep is so large that it has three teams.

Amanda has said that with the population increases here, she'll have to make a second hunter

in a few years. I sometimes wonder what it might be like to fight alongside another hunter, but it's fleeting. I won't live long enough to see a time when more than one hunter is needed here.

I grab fruits from their baskets and prepare myself a snack. I chop apples, oranges, bananas, kiwi, peaches, pineapple, then six containers of cherries. I eat that while drinking a quart of milk, then I'm ready for my shower and bed.

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It's seven AM when I wake up from a blank sleep. My sleep is always blank. I don't question it, even if Amanda considers it odd. She says I'm the first hunter she's made that doesn't dream, that was after she explained what dreams were. She still asks me about it every so often. Do I remember any of my dreams? Do I have a sense I dreamed, even if I don't remember them? I tell her what I've always told her: I don't dream. I can tell she's trying to understand if it makes me more, or less, effective.

Breakfast is the last four of the steaks in the fridge. Today is grocery day. I have the list of what I need written on the refrigerator door; Jason insists I write it myself each week. I don't understand why, but I do as he says.

I have heard some of the scientists describe Amanda and Jason as my parents. I had to have them explain what that meant. Amanda grumbled about people keeping their mouth shut. Jason explained that parents were those responsible for raising a new person. That does describe what they do, although I don't understand why they bother. It would be more efficient for them to implant all the knowledge I need like they did for my fighting, but Jason says that I need to learn some things the "old-fashioned way."

Another thing I don't understand. Humans are confusing, but still, they look after me and make sure I function properly. If the hunt hadn't been in the middle of the night, they would have been the ones to run the tests, but unlike me, they need a full night of sleep, which for humans means between seven to ten hours, I've noticed. Three hours are all I need.

I cook the steak following the recipe Jason gave me. Yet another thing I don't understand. Why cook the meat? Why alter the taste by using spices? I get as much energy out of them if they are raw, and the spices don't provide anything. I would much prefer going back to consuming the energy mixes I subsisted on after being created, but Jason insists that cooking is the human thing to do. I've pointed out multiple times I am not human, which made him uncomfortable, so I've stopped.

After eating, I put on my exercise clothes and go down to the gym. It's there for everyone in the building, and there are always many scientists and support personnel, but I have my own machines, built so I will feel my workout.

They stare at me while I run on the treadmill. Amanda insists I "warm up" before exercising, by running for twenty minutes. I ignore the stares, although I'm baffled by them. I know I'm not the first hunter to have used these machines, and they know we're faster and stronger than they are.

I then spend the rest of the two hours lifting weights, pushing all my muscles to the point I feel pain. Amanda doesn't like that—she worries I'll injure myself—but her fears are unfounded. I heal too fast, and this is the only way I can become stronger. I have to be the best I can be so I can keep them safe.

When I'm done, I go back to my apartment to shower. Jason had me shower at the gym initially, another of his human things to do, but the other men stared at me and became uncomfortable. They talked with Jason, and he said I should shower in my apartment. By the time I'm clean, dry, and dressed, my muscles no longer hurt.