

## **Darkness 261**

### **Chapter 261 - Fourth Round**

4 DAYS LATER

Kahn and the company traveled to Bermin district, the birthplace of the industrial revolution in the Rakos Empire.

This district was famous for many reformative research and revolutionary inventions of known methods, applications related to the daily life of the citizens of the empire.

In the past millennium, most of the industrial research and machinery development were invented, discovered and then spread greatly from this district alone.

Most of the transportation and machinery made by integrating magical cores, formations and engineering skills were developed in this part of the capital. Making it the most advanced place in the whole empire in terms of technological developments.

And thanks to the sweet capitalism, currently it was the 3rd richest district of the empire.

As for the battle arena hosting the next round of the Emperor's Chosen competition, it was to be hosted in one of the main cities of this district namely..

The Mankester city.

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When Kahn finally reached and got into the allocated section of the arena through one of the entrances for his next match, he was stunned and surprised to see the overall span of the entire battle arena.

The entire structure spanned 5 kilometers wide altogether.

This time, there were only 5 battle rings, each having a length of 500 meters while the remaining space was used to make sitting arrangements for the audience in 7 floors that encircled these battle rings, facilitating over one and half million people all at once.

And unlike the prior matches where more than 600 small battles happened and hundreds of projection screens covered them live, now there were only 5 of such screens, each one allotted to a designated battle ring.

This round was going to be a battle Royale match where over 100 people will be put together and only the remaining 50 will qualify for the next round.

Here, people can gang up with others to selectively target and throw others out. In other words.. If you want to qualify for the next rounds.. You had only two options.

One was to ally yourself with others and deliberately fight and force out the other participants by either incapacitating them like previous matches or simply forcing them out of the arena.

Second choice was to be strong enough to defend yourself till the point where only 50 candidates remained, which was easier said than done.

But just like the format of the matches, the system for betting also changed.

From here till the sixth round, the odds will be 50:50 by default for all the contestants for the first match. And they will change only for the 2nd match between the remaining 50 combatants.

So using this method, only the strongest ones will remain till the 2nd match. Means out of the 100 combatants, only 25 will proceed to the next rounds while the rest will have to go home.

From here on, there was no qualifiers system that gave a second chance to the defeated.

But to Kahn, he would make it up with the amount of money he was going to invest in his matches since the stakes were already high. And he was certain that soon, a master rank individual won't be a relevant term in the competition.

Because even the peak master rank fighters under the age of 30 would have a tough time staying in the competition given the sheer number of people put inside the same battle ring. Whatever happened before was just a prequel.

The real battle would start now.

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When Kahn entered his allotted ring with others, the announcers finally decided to speak and explain the rules of the battle for everyone.

"Ladies and gentlemen! I welcome you all for the beginning of the fourth round of the Emperor's Chosen competition!" declared the announcer through a magical artifact that worked like a loudspeaker and his voice echoed in the entire arena.

"In each of the battleground, there are 100 combatants each and all of them are strong individuals of the younger generation of our empire.

But from now on.. We will see who the truly strongest are. For this round shall reveal the true might of theirs and only those who are the best of the best shall succeed!" spoke the announcer in a grandiose manner, his voice sounding as majestic and pleasant as it could be.

After all the rules were explained and how the elimination process worked, the matches officially started in front of this massive crowd.

Most of the audience was excited because this format also meant pure entertainment as it'd give to stories of friendship, betrayal and strategies to take on multiple enemies at once.

It was going to be a metaphorical bloodbath in a way.

When Kahn's battle ring was signaled to begin fighting, everyone had a cautious expression on their eyes as they were randomly selected and had no prior information about their opponents.

And the most tensed up were the ones standing in the middle since they were the easiest targets for anyone to attack.

One wrong move and you could be wiped out by a collective attack or a powerful spell by an opponent if you were unlucky.

Hence, extreme caution was the priority for most of them as many tried to create distance between each other.

But at this moment, something unexpected happened that completely shook the audience who paid attention to this ring and the participants who stood inside it.

YAWN!!

A young swordsman donned in black and golden longcoat and fighting gear yawned loudly as if he was tired to death.

Kahn who was situated at the southern corner of the battle ring, yawned and laid his back against the hard surface of the floor while he used his right arm to cover his eyes and used the greatsword he was using as a pillow for his head.

He spoke in a sleepy tone as his words reached the ears of everyone in the battle ring and the ones watching the projections screens...

"You know what.. I'm just gonna sleep on this one.

Wake me up when all of this is over."

### **Chapter 262 - The Sleeping Beauty**

Complete silence ensued in the battle ring and the ninety-nine combatants were stunned on the spot as soon as they noticed the swordsman in black and golden gear sleeping in the battlegrounds.

Most of the baffled audience also couldn't believe their eyes and found this ordeal completely nonsensical.

Kahn, the perpetrator of this commotion was sleeping on the floor and even used his greatsword as a pillow instead of getting ready to fight or be wary of the other people.

"That guy.. What the hell is he trying to pull off?" asked one of the fighters in mage clothes.

"Who cares. Just some tryhard acting like a big deal. He will be taken care of very quickly anyway." spoke an archer who stood closer to this mage.

Conduct like this was often taken as a bluff or someone trying to show off by many people. The competition has already reached a point where gimmicks didn't work and only the strong could succeed from this point.

Soon, a skirmish arose from the eastern end of this five hundred meters wide battlefield and many people started fighting amongst themselves to defeat and kick out others as only fifty individuals were going to be selected for the next match through this elimination process.

Kahn on the other end was quietly sleeping like Snowwhite and wasn't bothered to partake in quarrels.

Spells after spells and weapon skills after skills filled the battlefield as an intense yet organized battle started.

Majority of the people who knew that they were weaker individually, grouped up and targeted those who seemed stronger.

This round would only stop when there were only 50 participants left. It didn't matter if you made it to that point with your own talent or some borrowed strength so nobody felt guilty for their actions.

After the first 10 minutes passed, 26 people were either knocked out or thrown out of the battlefield at various ends while the remaining were now in a stalemate situation.

Yawn!

Kahn yawned again as he changed his side and still slept soundly as if he was inside a bedroom.

"That fucker.." said a burly wolfkin battleaxe.

"Let's kick out that pretentious bastard first!" said a demonkin archer.

"Yeah.. He's just putting on airs. So others will ignore him." spoke a swordsman.

The group of three quickly charged towards Kahn's direction as they decided to eliminate him next.

But as soon as they reached the 50 meter radius away from him..

SHRILL!!

A loud shrill filled the battlefield and specifically, the three people heading towards Kahn were dropped on the ground out of the blue.

War Dominance!

Kahn used this skill after so many months in a battle while his eyes and countenance were still that of a sleepyhead.

This also attracted a lot of other combatants who were engaged in fights of their own.

The three people who were forced to bury their faces in the floor were unable to move an inch while Kahn seemed as carefree as before.

"Grandmaster!! That guy's a grandmaster!!" shouted a participant at the southern end of the battlefield who slightly sensed Kahn's aura from his position.

GASP!

Dozens of people gasped at the same time after this revelation.

At this very moment, there was a druid class human amongst the contestants, donned in white and green robes.

He let out a helpless sigh and murmured under his breath..

"What's up with that guy... isn't it too early to show his rank in front of so many people?" he spoke to himself.

"Eh, that reckless fool should've waited till the next round at least." spoke a 28-year-old human swordsman who stood 5 meters away from this druid.

Both of them looked like they belonged to the same force based on their attire.

"You know I can hear you, right?" said Kahn but his voice landed only on their ears.

This duo looked like a normal combination of a DPS and Support class to others but Kahn could accurately gauge their ranks and levels because of his personal strength and skills.

Grandmaster... both these young men who were only a year or 2 older than him were also grandmasters.

Two wolves hidden between the sheep. And both of them had done a decent job masking their aura and ranks.

If Kahn wasn't above their rank, he too would've failed to notice them.

"Oye, sleeping beauty.. Just stay silent and hope we don't face each other in a match." said the swordsman in a hushed tone.

His voice also only reached the ears of Kahn, showing his mastery over his aura and mana.

"Yeah, yeah whatever. But you two should be careful. Others will think it's easy to pick on two harmless guys." said Kahn and went back to merry sleep.

Another bunch of people tried to target him in the next minutes but they too were forced to kneel on the ground.

And taking the advantage of this opportunity, other combatants used their skills and attacks to take these guys out.

BOOM!!

Soon, both the other grandmasters were also targeted by a group of 5 people and they too decided to release their aura of a grandmaster to fend off the opponents.

"Tch.. That guy jinxed us." spoke the swordsman in an irritated tone.

From there on, the druid sat in a meditative pose while the swordsman stood tall like a knight.

It was a better option to reveal their rank through their aura than actually fighting and showing off their skills to the opponents because in future matches, their rivals would know of their fighting styles and attack patterns.

And that was the main reason why Kahn had chosen to reveal his rank instead of fighting these bunch of weaklings.

War Dominance was already at a stage where Kahn could make every participant present in this battlefield faint on the spot, so using it only on selective people who approached him was an easy option for him.

He was defending himself without even lifting a finger.

Ding! Ding! Ding!

The referees announced the match to be over as soon as only 50 combatants were left in the battle ring and declared the first match to be over.

The next round would be these 50 individuals facing each other in a 1 vs 1 match. Now, the results will solely be decided by their own skills.

Kahn stood up from the battleground and stretched his body a little bit and spoke..

"Now I feel refreshed.. Let's see who's my next unlucky opponent."

### **Chapter 263 - Slithering Opponent**

After the first match ended and all the contestants went to their respective resting areas and had to wait for their next matches, the battle ring automatically changed itself into small sizes and soon, instead of five, there were twenty-five small battle rings.

Compared to the previous battle ring, each of these was only 50 meters long in radius but more than enough to hold a good battle for two individuals.

Although Kahn did not understand how it was done, he knew for sure that it was done by incorporating magic formations and some sort of automation mechanism.

After two hours, his turn finally came and this time only 5 battles were happening at once. So the organizers could prolong the battles and entertain people for more time.

And the bettings on each of these matches will obviously gather more money spent by the audience.

The time limit was 20 minutes for each match and the winner would qualify for the 5th round. The loser would also go home since there were no more qualifiers after this round.

As for the betting odds... it was 80:20 for his match. Mainly because his opponent was someone who displayed some amazing fighting skills and they belonged to a particular species that had an advantage in open ground battles by a huge margin.

And Kahn had very low odds because all he did in the previous match was to sleep without even unsheathing his sword till the end. So even with more than 50 thousand people from seven deadly sins organization betting on him only amounted to this much while the opponent was favorably looked on by the majority of the audience.

When Kahn stood inside the battle ring, his opponent finally came and he understood why his odds were so low.

In front of him, stood... more likely slithered a Lamia woman whose upper body had six arms, a head and everything below her waist was a body of a snake. In all of her hands were sharp and long swords that could easily cut through a man's body with a single slash.

"The next contestants are Kythra of the Melvan clan, one of the prestigious Lamia clans of the capital. And her opponent is..

Kahn of Rukon district! A young swordsman whose strength is unknown to this point.

Since everyone has already made their bets.. Let the battle begin!" declared the announcer.

The other four battle rings also had such announcements and their battles also began at the same time. But as soon as their fight began.. Kythra talked in an arrogant tone.

"I shall give you a chance to surrender, human. Leave now or you will only suffer humiliation at my hands." she warned.

To her words, Kahn only gave a light smirk and spoke...

"Looks like someone didn't get enough eggs and mice to eat today." he said in a sarcastic tone.

"You.. Dare to compare me and my race to wild snakes?! Preposterous!!" exclaimed Kythra.

She was a beginner rank grandmaster and so was her opponent. But given the physical and terrain advantages, she was most likely to win and hence, she offered a fair warning.

Yet, her opponent not only retorted back.. He degraded her by comparing her to normal snakes who fed on eggs and small animals like mice.

Boooo!! Boooo!!

Thousands of Lamia species individuals amongst the audience booed Kahn after hearing his words on the projection screens. This was often a stereotypical slander made against the people of this species so none of the Lamias and Snakekins among the crowd welcomed this sarcastic response.

Kythra's face instantly became enraged after Kahn's banter and she released her horrid and ominous aura and quickly slithered towards her opponent.

SHRILL!!

The six swords in her hands vibrated at high intensity and her green aura encapsulated her blades. Being a grandmaster, it was the stage where one could incorporate aura and mana into their attacks based on their class and also add an element to it depending on their affinity, so her blades glowed green.

Slash! Slash!

Kahn sidestepped and quickly dodged the multiple streams of aura blades.

Sizzle! Sizzle!

A sizzling sound came from the floor where the aura blades landed and Kahn could finally feel the lethality of these attacks.

[So she's using her species and bloodline advantage.] thought Kahn because the blades that attacked him definitely had some venom incorporated in them. And Kahn could easily guess how the Lamia opponent was using her kin's specialty to add these elements and effects to her attacks.

Slash! Slash!

Clang! Clang!

Kahn was forced to retreat after parrying and evading multiple of her sword attacks. But even despite limiting his stats and rank.. He should've had some advantage.

Yet, the 3 meters tall and 10 meter long opponent was incredibly fast and her reaction speed exceeded twice that of a normal beginner grandmaster.

Naturally, this was her species advantage and because of her physical structure that gave her speed and momentum in every strike, Kahn had no choice but to take a few steps back.

Plus, the six swords were also hard to defend against at once as the one facing them would eventually leave an opening for the Lamia to strike.

Kahn understood that Kythra was indeed a hard opponent to fight in a fair and square battle. So he had to acknowledge her.

Kahn kept jumping, sidestepping, sprinting and countering all of her attacks hurriedly.

"Time for you to pay for mocking me and my kin!" shouted Kythra and the next second, her mouth opened three times wider than usual and a burst of green fog was released towards Kahn's direction.

Cough! Cough!

Kahn coughed after getting surrounded by this sudden green mist and used his Heat Sense skill to locate the enemy's exact position to avoid getting attacked out of nowhere. Suddenly, both of his hands felt their grip loosening over his sword.

But just then.. He heard a notification from the long-dormant system after many months..

[Warning! The host has been poisoned!]

### **Chapter 264 - Putting Up A Front**

After nearly two months, the system finally spoke again as it relayed the warning about Kahn being poisoned by the Lamia opponent through this green mist.

Since Kahn had limited his rank and stats to that of a beginner rank grandmaster, he quickly felt his senses and strength dulling in a dozen seconds. Even the grip on his sword felt loosened at this point.

[How long?] asked Kahn to the system.

[The host will require only 1 minute till the toxin is nullified and the host becomes immune to this form of poison.

The host is advised to not make too many physical movements during the nullification process.]  
reported System.

Even with the grandmaster rank poison immunity, a minute was needed for him to become completely immune and unaffected by this poison; indicating that this poison spewed out by the opponent was just below the rare rank poisons.

And from the effects, he could feel that it was more of a paralyzing agent than something which could mortally harm him.



Shadow Walk!

Kahn quickly used the shadow walk skill and hid inside the shadow created by this dense mist since the system suggested to not move for the upcoming minute till the poison was detoxified.

Kythra slowly slithered towards Kahn who was surrounded by the mist and barely visible to her and the audience. But as soon as his aura completely disappeared, she was put on a guard and wanted to find him.

Being a Lamia, a subspecies of the noble Naga bloodline, she already had plenty of scent and heat-sensing skills yet her opponent's sudden disappearance that she couldn't even sense instantly alarmed her.

As she came inside the green mist that had filled half of the battle ring at this point, she tried to search for Kahn who suddenly absconded into thin air.

A minute passed and yet, she couldn't find her opponent. And since the referee hadn't declared anything, meant that Kahn hadn't left the battle ring either.

Swoosh!

Kahn quickly exited the mist from the eastern end as soon as he recovered his senses, his body was now fully immune to this type of toxin.

Kythra also sensed that her opponent also appeared on the opposite end and prepared for another onslaught.

But when she exited the waning mist, her expression turned that of joy as she gazed at the opponent.

Kahn looked like he was... drunk.

Barely managing his footing and the body movements were erratic as if he would fall on the ground any moment from now on.

[Hmph! He's already affected and barely holding on. I'm going to enjoy humiliating him.] thought Kythra as her long snake tongue revealed itself.

Kahn on the other end was barely supporting himself using his sword as a stick.

"Take this you despicable human!" she shouted and launched herself in his direction while making a vertical slash attack from all of her six swords covered in the dense aura.

BOOM!!

A loud banging noise resounded in the arena as the collective sword attack shook the entire battle ring. And as soon as the aura attack dispersed, the figure of Kythra was revealed from the dust cloud.

Hiccup! Hiccup!

"Ah.. What's happening. I feel like I'm dreaming." said a man in black and golden longcoat who stood very close to the six swords of the lamia opponent as if he barely missed the attack by an inch.

Kahn moved backward as he fell on the ground and tried to create some distance.

He looked at the opponent with a smile on his face and spoke in a gibberish tone.

"Whewy lawdy... you're shoo preettyyy."

[What the.. This isn't how my poison is supposed to work. Does he have a special kind of disposition?] thought Kythra but then regained her posture.

Swing!

Clang!

She haphazardly attacked Kahn with quick and repeated swings of her swords but every single time, Kahn evaded them by an inch in a microsecond despite looking like a drunk man.

His body movements and facial expressions varying from time to time as he would either slip on his feet or roll on the floor while evading her attacks and use the sword to parry her thrusts in the last second.

Despite having speed and agility on her side, she wasn't even hitting her supposedly drunk opponent.

At this moment, Kahn was fighting Kythra just like Jackie Chan from the Drunken Master movie. His movements made no sense and seemed completely unpredictable to the opponent.

10 more minutes passed and Kythra used her poison skill two more times but the results were same. And this stage, she was getting exhausted with all her heavy and powerful attack skills being used frequently.

But her opponent was easily dodging and parrying them like a seasoned swordsman fighting a newbie. This was already raising her temper as she wanted to put Kahn in the ground.

"Just stand there so I can beat you!" she shouted in an exasperated tone.

To the audience.. It seemed like she was an incapable fighter who couldn't even hit her opponent who was already struggling to stand properly. On top of it, Kahn had a merry smile on his face while he was praising her appearance from time to time.

He was publicly teasing her while she struggled to land a fatal and decisive blow.

"Damn you! I didn't want to use this.. But you've thoroughly pissed me off!" exclaimed Kythra and the next second, her black iris turned yellow.

Flash!

A yellow flash was revealed from her glimmering eyes.

Paralysis Gaze!

Kythra used one of her kin's special techniques!

And Kahn froze on the spot the very next second.

"Arhhh..." groaned Kythra in pain as she covered her eyes and grabbed her head that felt like it suffered an intense shock.

Clearly, an aftereffect of using this bloodline skill.

She quickly activated her sensing skills and swung her sword to land a finishing blow on Kahn.

Clang!!

However, all her swords were blocked by the opponent's blade and he flicked them all high up in the air like they weren't swords but some lightweight sticks.

Kythra looked at Kahn in disbelief as soon as she recovered but the next second, Kahn's eyes also flashed yellow like lightening for a second and it was her who was paralyzed on the spot this time.

Kahn put his sword's tip close to her heart and spoke in a tyrannical voice that petrified the Lamia opponent...

"Weakness disgusts me."

### **Chapter 265 - Fifth Round**

As soon as Kahn won by taking the enemy by surprise, the referee declared him to be the winner. Not many understood how the scenario changed in the last second but they all could see that he won fairly.

"Fuck! My money!"

"Bastard! I lost a fortune!!"

Thousands of people shouted and berated Kahn as he won the match despite the adverse betting odds.

This round had only people with considerable wealth making bets in millions while some bet billions of gold coins on these matches. The poor beggars had already been ousted because of the minimum betting amount rule administered by the government. So this was indeed the beginning of the big leagues.

Kythra had a horrified expression on her face because not only Kahn had overwhelmed her in battle in many ways.. He used a similar same skill as her which spelled her defeat.

After experiencing it firsthand.. She was certain that the skill Kahn used was leagues above the Hypnosis Gaze, her innate skill of the Lamia species.

Kahn's Executioner's Gaze skill came from two different hypnosis and paralysis skills so it was indeed far more effective and powerful than the one used by the opponent.

Her skill didn't work on Kahn at all and he allowed her to attack him to catch her by surprise.

At the exact moment on other battle rings, the two grandmasters he met in the first match also won against their respective opponents.

Kahn didn't pay any attention to them because soon, he will be meeting more grandmasters from the next stages. So remembering them was hardly worth it.

After winning and qualifying for the next round, Kahn took his new registration token and left the battle arena in a different disguise. He had no interest in watching other people's matches at all.

Using a flying ship transportation service, he returned to Rukon District and reached his mansion at late night.

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TWO DAYS LATER.

The three subordinates in charge of managing the money came with the reports.

The first round had 1:1 odds by default so when Kahn qualified for the 2nd match, the one trillion gold they bet on him using more than 50 thousand of their people became two trillion.

And the 2nd match had 4:1 odds for Kahn so their money was quadrupled after he won against Kyhtra. And now they earned 8 trillion from this round since many influential business enterprises and noble clans were already involved and people spending billions was nothing out of the blue.

This was a similar scenario for the other top 10 districts that also held these rounds in their respective battle arenas. Although the winners got quite the sum, Kahn was certain that the government was earning dozens of trillion on daily basis from the money that was lost by the people as well.

So it was a win-win situation for everyone except the unlucky folks.

"Master.. After you left; another announcement was made. And it has been spread to the citizens by the government as well.

They are changing the rules for the next round again.

It won't follow the battle royale format for the next round." reported Omega.

"What the... Why are they changing the rules again and again? This competition never had its rules changed this many times in the past. It feels like they're rigging the whole competition itself.

Aren't they afraid of public outrage?" spoke Kahn in an exasperated tone.

"It's as if they are changing the rules so that a particular type of competitor would win and progress to later rounds." he iterated.

"Yes, master. We felt the same. And from the next round... It will be a 5 vs 5 team battle.

The side that eliminates at least 3 members of the opposition first will win the match and their entire team will progress to the next round after winning two of such matches." spoke Ronin in a solemn tone.

Kahn was already good with numbers so he quickly grasped the reason behind this sudden change of rules by the government.

"I see. So they want people to lose more money through the betting system and rip off the common folks.

For team battles, the odds will be decided upon the total strength of the team and battle records of the team members. So if 3 or 4 high-ranked fighters are put in a team together, people will obviously bet on them." he said and took a pause.

"If anyone doesn't know the strength of the participants, they will bet on the ones they know about. This is subconsciously controlling the odds of the matches without even people noticing.

And that way, if the team with the least odds wins.. The losses will be immeasurable for the people. The gains will be many times than what they'd lose.

These bastard nobles and their factions working as the government are indeed good at controlling everything from behind the shadows.

What an evil scheme indeed. And I thought I was the one being too greedy." he explained.

"What will you do now, master? If you're put together with a bunch of weaklings.. You'd lose the competition without even being at fault." said Oliver.

"I guess I will have no choice but to reveal my strength a bit and carry the whole team if such a situation arises." replied Kahn as he sighed.

This was bad for business in his case. So all he could do was hope that his team members for the upcoming round wouldn't become a liability for him.

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A week passed and the fifth round officially began. And on the fourth day of the week, Kahn traveled to a new district where his matches were to be conducted.

After going through the whole ordeal of procedure and stuff, he was introduced to his teammates for the next round.

"Impossible.." spoke Kahn as he saw the four new team members.

But what surprised him the most was two of the crewmates for his next match.

These two men were only a couple of years older than him.

The surprise on their faces was no different than his own and all three of them pointed their fingers at each other like the Spider-Man meme and spoke in unison.

"You gotta be shitting me!"

### **Chapter 266 - Three Tigers**

The three people gazed at each other with a baffled expression as they pointed their fingers at the opposite party. Even Kahn found this coincidence hard to believe.

"What are the odds.." spoke Kahn softly.

"Hey.. Why is this guy in our team?" spoke the dual swordsman clad in black armor made from a monster's body parts. His swords had claw like edges on them, made to rip off his enemies.

"To think that we'd be paired with this showoff.." spoke the druid in green and white robes. In his hand was a purple orb that his class used for spells and skills.

Their appearance looked different than before as they were no longer wearing the clothes of their force or clan but proper gear for a battle.

"Arshh.. Why are you two here? Shouldn't we be in different teams?" asked Kahn to the grandmaster duo he met in the first battle royale match.

"Tch!.. Looks like they put all the winners of that batch in the same team. And if we are here.. Means others who won that day are also put together in teams if my assumption is correct." said the druid.

The three of them let out a sigh and accepted their unexpected fate instead of quarreling like little children.

"My name is Elijah." said the Druid.

"I am Niklaus." spoke the dual swordsman.

"I am Kahn." he introduced.

"So Kahn.. Let me get straight to the point.. We're both brothers and know how to fight together very well. I reckon you can hold your end as well, right?" asked Elijah.

Kahn shrugged his arms and replied with a bored expression as he responded..

"As long as no one burdens me, I'm all good."

"Hey, you three! Do you think we're not here?!" shouted a peak master rank centaur templar with a shield and a lance in his hand.

Behind him, was a thrall mage donned in white and blue robes, an Ice Elemental expert mage who leaked a chilling air from his body. He too was a peak master individual.

"Shut up, deadweight!" retorted Niklaus and released his aura of a grandmaster on the two teammates.

Suddenly, Kahn decided to meddle in and spoke.

"I have experience in commanding people in a group battle. So in case we are forced to team up.. I shall be calling the shots." proposed Kahn.

"Yahh! As if I'm listening to a twat.." said Niklaus in a mocking tone.

"Control yourself younger brother... We're not here to fight among ourselves.

As for your proposition.. I am well versed in commanding an entire squadron myself. So I should be doing it myself." spoke Elijah.

"Alright, suit yourself." said Kahn and decided to wait for their turn to come up.

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After an hour-long wait, their team finally entered the 50 meter wide rectangular battle ring.

Their whole team's odds were only 75:25. 25 being their odds.. Mean the opposition was stronger on paper at least.

This was a small space for this type of battle involving 10 people at once. But the whole purpose behind this limited space was to put them in a corner and force them to fight as soon as possible.

But as soon as they saw the opponent team's members enter the battle ring.. All three of them suddenly had wrinkled faces because of the sheer irritation.

"Ah.. We're screwed!" spoke Kahn.

Because based on the aura released by the opposition team members.. They had 4 grandmasters while the combatant who walked in the middle was an intermediate rank grandmaster.

The issue wasn't that they were weaker. Kahn himself was more than enough to take out the whole team with just a bitchslap.

But what worried him was that he couldn't do it without revealing himself as at least a peak grandmaster individual. Which was too early in the game for him and would definitely cost him a lot of money he could be making.

"So who wants to be the leader now? Decide quickly before they ring the bell." spoke Kahn.

With 3 out of 5 votes, Elijah was selected as the chosen leader while Kahn was embarrassed after voting for himself.

"The centaur should act as a defense, I'll keep healing and buffing him. The mage should be mid-range support.

This way, we can protect our numbers and last longer in the battle. As for you two.." said Elijah as he quickly adapted and came up with a battle formation on the spot.

"Go and break their legs." said the druid.

Kahn and Elijah gave each other an understanding gaze as if they had fought beside each other before.

Both of them were battle-worn veterans in a way so they too had no issues accepting and then cooperating.

Winning the match was more important than their egos so all of them got into a formation as instructed by Elijah and everyone got ready for a battle.

Kahn and Niklaus took both sides, the Centaur took the middle while the thrall ice mage and Elijah stood at the back.

The opposition team had one archer, two mages, a battleaxe user and a healer. And they already looked at Kahn's team with a contemptuous gaze, displaying their intentions to decimate their opponents.

"Begin the battle!" declared the referee.

Kahn and Niklaus charged at the enemy team from the left and right side respectively as they faced a grandmaster opponent of their own.

Kahn's target was one of the archers while Niklaus aimed for the mage. The Centaur teammate raised his shield and braced for the incoming long-range attacks while the ice mage started incantations for the long-range and high damage skills.

Elijah on the other end quickly cast shield and team buff skills for the three of them while leaving the two swordsmen to fight on their own without any supporting skill.

He too knew that none of them needed in the first place.

Shoot! Shoot!

Kahn dodged a volley of fire arrows that were launched at him by the archer target while Niklaus dodged the fire spells that blew up after he evaded them.

Elijah, the Druid class brother and their current team leader couldn't only heal but also use crowd controlling skills like root bind, team shield, attack buff and enforcement skills for the whole team.

An intense battle ensued in just a minute but unlike their previous expectations..

The centaur and the ice mage fell like pebbles while facing the onslaught and in just five minutes, only the brothers and Kahn was left on their side.

If one more of them was defeated.. They'll lose the match and it will be the end for them.

The three of them quickly took a defensive stance and protected each other as they attacked with long-range skills, creating an impasse between them and the enemy team.

"I know you guys are hiding it as well. But how about we take our chances. It's not like we have any other choice." spoke Kahn as he deflected a mage spell.

"Fine. But let's hide our ranks and fight without revealing too many of our skills." spoke Elijah.

Niklaus on the other end nodded in affirmation.

And the next second.. All of them revealed their mountainous aura all at once that made their opponents shudder in fear.

Because the remaining opponents from their team were actually tigers in disguise. All three of them were..

Peak Grandmasters!!

### **Chapter 267 - The Teamwork**

The three men who were encircled by the opposition quickly decided to act on the situation and finally revealed their strengths of peak grandmasters which caught the opponents off guard.

There was no insurmountable pressure released or any grand super-saiyan burst of aura moves by the three tigers who were choosing to be the prey for reasons unknown.

They specifically targeted the members of their opponent team without letting the audience feel any changes in themselves. But even with the aura they released, the opponents got a gist of who they were fighting against.

Now, what remained was how the three combatants were going to take down the enemy without revealing too many of their skills and combat techniques.



"You two fight like you always do. I'll take down the weak links first." said Kahn.

The brothers weren't even surprised to find that Kahn was on the same level as them. But they were already used to facing other peak grandmasters so both of them didn't mind it either.

"Just don't get yourself caught in a pinch. We might not be able to help on time." said Niklaus.

"Alright, go! I'll support you both." spoke Elijah and cast a yellow mana shield around all three of them.

The next second, he cast a root vine spell that created hundreds of massive and thorny vines coming out of the ground. These vines quickly covered them from all the sides in a 20 meters radius, creating a wall of defense but only leaving the front side open.

[Leading the enemy by the nose.. These guys are good.] thought Kahn as he quickly understood the strategy.

Since they were outnumbered and the enemy side didn't have any assassins, making them come to you one by one in an enclosed space with just one opening would provide them offense and defense at the same time.

"Go!" spoke Elijah and Kahn dashed out of the encirclement from the opening. Niklaus quickly covered the 5 meter wide entrance as he prepared to face the incoming battleaxe wielder and one fire mage.

In mere moments, both of his swords released a burst of fire and made a revving sound. The claw-like edges on his swords turned bright red as if they were heated to extremely high temperature.

A red aura leaked from his body as he pointed the left sword towards both the enemies and asked with a smirk.

"So which one of you wants to be roasted alive?"

-----

On the other side of the vine wall, Kahn had successfully approached the enemies from the left side and his opponent was a peak master rank archer.

Shoot! Swoosh!

Kahn used the Side Hopper skill after half a year and successfully evaded the numerous arrow strike skills from the enemy.

Since Kahn couldn't openly use his S Rank skills or Saint rank skills related to swordsmanship, he was using the basic movement skills like the side hopper, one he frequently used in the past.

Boom!!

Multiple explosions happened wherever the arrows landed as Kahn sprinted towards his target while evading and parrying the arrows from the opponent.

And just as soon as he came 10 meters close to the target, Kahn's greatsword shone bright blue with sparks coming out of it.

Lightning Flash!

He made a lightning elemental slash attack towards the opponent when he was caught off guard.

ZAP!!

The archer was zapped after getting struck by this strike and fainted on the spot. His straight and electrocuted hair stood like tall grass.

But instead of feeling victorious, Kahn quickly dashed towards the healer of the opponent side.

Niklaus on the other end launched multiple swirling sword aura blades made of fire elemental and burst attacks towards their opponents.

Elijah quickly casts a sleeping and stun spell on the mage opponent simultaneously while Niklaus faced the battleaxe wielder head-on using this opportunity.

BOOM!

Just as Kahn was about to reach midway towards the healer, an ice spear landed in between the path and the second mage of their group revealed himself.

The beginner rank grandmaster mage cast dozens of ice elemental spells and launched a volley of spikes, spear and AoE skills.

Bang! Shrii! Clang!

Kahn attacked with lightning flash and windcutter skill as he rolled sideways to avoid the last AoE attack that would've frozen him on the spot.

He then jumped high up in the air and launched himself towards the mage who was in the middle of chanting his next spell.

But as soon as he looked at the somersaulting enemy, he was paralyzed on the spot after Kahn's eyes flickered yellow.

ZAP!!

Kahn zapped this mage as well by using Executioner's Gaze and knocked him out.

The healer quickly cast a holy shield and then a protection barrier around herself. Because they just went from being the hunter to becoming the prey.

As soon as three members of their team were taken out, they'd lose the match.

BANG!! SHING!!

Kahn used two waves of lightning flash skill and quickly broke the barrier and holy shield in succession.

Swoosh!

But before the healer could recover from the backlash of getting her skills destroyed, Kahn suddenly appeared behind her and spoke in a menacing voice.

"Owari da.."

Zapped! The female healer was zapped the next moment and smoke came out of her mouth as her black hair stood straight like Vegeta.

"My power level is over 9,000." spoke Kahn.

DING! DING!

"The first team has won the match!" declared the announcer.

"Whoa!"

"Awesome!!"

"What a fight!!"

Nearly three hundred thousand people who paid attention to their match cheered in support as soon as Kahn, Elijah and Niklaus won the match by taking down the 3 opponents from the enemy team.

Kahn walked toward the duo of brothers who was also close to taking down their opponents; just that Kahn was faster.

"You're welcome." he said.

"Hmph! You were fighting three weaklings while we faced two grandmasters, one of whom was an intermediate rank.

Fighting both of them without using our most powerful skills was much harder. So no need to brag." spoke Niklaus as he put both of his swords on the back.

To his retort, Kahn only replied with a smile..

"I missed the part where that's my problem."

### **Chapter 268 - Pleasant Surprise**

After they won the match and all three of them officially qualified for the next round, the three peak grandmasters left the battle ring.

"Let's not meet each other again." said Kahn as he bid farewell to the brothers.

Kahn was certain that both of them had a very powerful background as they were also peak grandmasters despite being under 30 years old.

Definitely one of the top 15 strongest combatants in this competition if his estimations were right. And hence, getting mixed up with them wasn't a situation he hoped for.

Apart from this coincidence, he didn't wish to form any friendship or enmity with the brothers either.

Even though they also used low-rank skills to fight just like Kahn.. He could sense that both the brothers had a lot of experience in real-life battle since they could come up with a viable strategy on the spot and fight accordingly while hiding their true rank, skills and combat prowess.

Getting mixed with them would entail him being targeted by someone he didn't even know of. So cutting ties this early was a better idea than regretting later.

Now, Kahn only had to fight and win the sixth round to qualify for the quarter-finals. Another step towards his final goal.

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The subordinates reported back after 3 days while Kahn had been carrying on his daily routine as the next round was on the way.

He knew that just because he was a semi-saint, didn't mean that he was allowed to slack off. Even those with the same rank as him would be training hard day and night and unlike them, he had no teacher or any form of guidance.

His blessings helped him master skills and combat techniques at a faster pace and all the knowledge he was getting about combat skills and techniques came from the books and records he found in the archives that were left in the training facility by the previous owner of his mansion.

So being ignorant would spell his imminent defeat while facing these individuals as the protagonist halo or plot armor didn't always help in a real world like this.

If he wanted to win.. He had to work for it like a real warrior.

At the night when Kahn held their usual meetings...

This time, there was a whole cache full of high-grade space rings.

"Are the numbers same as I expected?" asked Kahn.

The five subordinates Omega, Ronin, Jugram, Oliver and Ceril nodded in response.

"Our total earnings are 24 Trillion after the last match." reported Omega.

The odds for their battle were 75:25 and Kahn had told them to bet all their fortune after seeing the odds.

Given the 3:1 ratio, their earnings were tripled from 8 trillion to 24 trillion after his people had bet on him in the previous round.

At this point, it was so much money that his people have been running out of high-grade space rings to collect all that wealth. And the medium-sized cache they brought was filled with more than a thousand of such space rings.

"Master... our current wealth is more than enough to establish ourselves in 7 more districts in the capital and rule the business worlds there no matter which field we choose.

And if we were to factor the underworld organizations there.. We can easily control these districts since there are no saints involved in the play." spoke Ronin.

Kahn gave it a thought and spoke after a minute..

"Even though money is no longer an issue.. We still lack manpower, connections and most importantly.. Strength.

So unless I become a saint myself; we really shouldn't be ignorant and bite more than what we can chew." spoke Kahn with a serious countenance.

"Besides... If things go the way I have planned, we might need all of the money in the future after this competition is over." he explained.

Step! Step!

A set of footsteps resounded in the room and a man donned in white and green robes walked inside. In his hands, was a big and intrinsically designed book.

Thud!

Armin, the pathfinder class subordinate placed this book on the table.

"Master, I finally found it! Here are all the records about the places chosen as fiefdoms by the previous winners of the Emperor's Chosen competition.

And I also looked for the places that met the conditions you stated yesterday. I think I have found a perfect match." spoke Armin.

Kahn nodded at the subordinate and opened the book and a particular page Armin had already bookmarked.

"Just as I thought... the government was indeed hiding this fact from the public since a century now.

This definitely has something to do with one of the previous Heroes of some God." said Kahn as he read the contents of the page.

Kahn had already told the subordinates about being a chosen Hero of God of Darkness. So aside from his previous life, they knew about everything else.

"Master.. There are two more places but I don't think they have anything to do with the Heroes of the past or your predecessor, the 8th Hero of Darkness.

I have already marked them." said Armin after taking a seat.

Kahn spent half an hour reading the noted pages and finally reached a decision.

"Although they are immensely useful in terms of monetary gain.. I don't want to die after the competition.

It would be too careless of anyone who isn't backed by one of the three factions to choose these two areas. Even if I were a bonafide saint.. I still wouldn't dare to be this ambitious.

And most importantly.. We have different needs." said Kahn and informed all the subordinates including Rudra and Blackwall who were hidden in his shadow about his future plans.

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4 DAYS LATER

Kahn traveled to a district named Edo, the 9th most successful district in the capital, where his match was to be held in a city named Otose.

For this round, it was going to be 3 vs 3 battles. But this time, the team that defeats all the members of the opposition first would be declared as the winner.

After reaching the battle arena in a city in this district, Kahn was introduced to his new allies.

He was suddenly elated after looking at his new teammates and subconsciously let out a content smile as he spoke in a joyous tone...

"Omoshiroi..."

### **Chapter 269 - Admiring Beauty**

In front of Kahn, stood two females. The reason why Kahn felt elated was because of how beautiful and drop dead gorgeous both of these women were.

[ O' Heavenly god... have mercy on my soul.

This is too much beauty for me to handle. And there's two of them!] spoke Kahn in his head.

In this new life, he had seen some incredibly beautiful and gorgeous women but he still wasn't able to recover from the trauma from the past life when it concerned the opposite gender.

And that was one of the reasons why he had surrounded himself with mostly men when it came to comrades or allies. For some reason... he just couldn't find a woman trustworthy and would eventually end up questioning their motives. So he had been avoiding them to not waste his time on dealing with the issue.

Maybe in the future, if he had a good relationship with a woman, he'd try to go past his psychological barrier but for now... there was no need to.

"Huh.. What a pervert!" spoke the blonde female elven archer teammate. Her well-proportioned body under the white and yellow armor was a sight to behold for any normal and straight man. Even her annoyed expression made her look extremely cute in a way.

"Hey, if admiring a woman's beauty is a crime... then I plead guilty." said Kahn in a mischievous tone as he raised the right hand in the air.

Despite the remark, Kahn was still happy because at least for this round, he won't have to fight beside men again or end up beating women as an opponent.

"Ha ha! I like this guy. He's very handsome and honest. Only if he was of my species, I would have liked to go on a date with him." spoke the second team member.

The other teammate was a female Naga Summoner.

From the books Kahn read about different species inhabiting this empire and their origins back in the day when he still lived in Flavot city; Nagas were a higher bloodline species above the Lamias.

They looked like normal humans but had snake scales here and there over their bodies, unlike the latter whose lower half was that of a giant snake. Yet, in terms of strength and bloodline purity, they were deemed superior in every way.

The naga summoner had a long green python slithering around her shoulders and waist while her alluring figure in green silky clothes only complimented her beauty.

She started walking towards Kahn, who was donned in his usual black and golden epic rank fighting gear for swordsmen with steady steps and gently pressed her forefinger against his chest.

"But are you really a human though? Why do I feel a sense of kinship from you?" she asked in a friendly tone.

[Wait a minute.. I think she's referring to my Basilisk Bloodline. After all, Nagas are descendants of the basilisks with low bloodline purity if I'm not wrong.]

[As if! She's referring to me, human. I feel a sense of connection to her as well, albeit very negligible.] spoke Rudra in his tyrannical voice inside Kahn's head.

[Oh, you woke up as soon as there's a female snake in front? How convenient.] thought Kahn.

"Who knows.. Maybe we're meant to be." said Kahn with a chuckle, trying to shift the topic.

"Hmph! We don't have much time. So let's introduce ourselves first and create a battle strategy.

The rules say the one to wipe out the other team first will win. So all of us have no choice but to fight as a team." spoke the elven archer.

"Fine then. I'll begin first." said Kahn as he sat on a sofa in the room.

"I'm Kahn. I fight with a greatsword and I'm an intermediate rank grandmaster swordsman. What about you two?" he asked after the introduction.

"I am Elaine of the Elfenheim clan. I am also an intermediate rank grandmaster archer. I excel in wind and light elemental attacks and I have learned some A Rank archery skills as well." spoke the elf girl.

Baffled! Kahn was caught off guard.

[Elfenheim... she must be from the same clan as Solomon.] thought Kahn.

"Wait a minute... How come I didn't see any elf individual in the competition before? Don't your people age differently?" asked Kahn out of curiosity.

Sigh!

Elaine sighed in an exasperated manner as if she was fed up with this question already.

"Because my mother is a human. So I age normally like your species. Happy?" she replied.

"I see. My bad. Then what about you?" spoke Kahn and then his gaze shifted towards the naga summoner.

"Cattleya Culebra. I'm also the same rank as both of you and I'm a summoner. But unlike her, I'm a pureblood." revealed the woman.

"Ah.. You want to say something to me, you conservative fanatic?!" spoke the suddenly riled up Elaine.

"I'm sorry, I don't have time to waste words on a halfbreed." retorted Cattleya as both women came close to each other and started a staring contest.

"Why don't we go for a round before the match." challenged Elaine as she faced Cattleya's face while standing very close to her.

[Oh damn.. They are from the Demi-Human & Pureblood Faction I see. No wonder there is so much tension between them.] spoke Kahn to himself.

But instead of trying to meddle or stop the two wild women.. Kahn was still happy about how things were turning out.

Because at this moment, both of their mountainous bosoms were touching each other's. And Kahn on the other side was enjoying watching God's greatest creations in a faceoff with a red tinge on his face.

"Yeah Bwoi.." said Kahn with a wide grin as he had no intentions to stop this quarrel anytime soon since the show was so blissful.

-----

After an hour passed, Kahn and his new squad entered the battle ring. Their odds were 50:50 for this match based on the expected ranks of the combatants.

But as soon as Kahn saw the opponent team and their gear.. He quickly reacted.

For the first time in this competition, Kahn decided to bring out the black and red greatsword with crimson veins that leaked blistering heat.

In his hand was...

LUCIFER!

### **Chapter 270 - Just As Planned**

Inside the 100 meter wide battle ring, six combatants were ready to face off against the opponent team. Nearly half a million people comprised of different races and species had their eyes glued towards their match as everyone was expecting an intense and entertaining match.

On the other end of this battle ring, stood a dual swordsman tengu who was clad in golden armor from head to toe. Even the dual swords in his hands glowed bright indicating they both were at least epic rank weapons.

The other members of this team were a female demonkin mage and a female enchantress who seemed to be a hybrid between Leshen & Succubus species based on her physical appearance.



All of these opponents were intermediate rank grandmasters and coincidentally, their lineup also matched with Kahn's team as both crews had a male who was a swordsman while two females, one of whom was a pureblood while the other one was a halfbreed.

As soon as Kahn laid his eyes on them, he was slightly taken aback and had no choice but to take this match seriously.

Because the swordsman had some top-grade armor and weapons. And since Kahn himself dealt in weapon manufacturing business, he knew how top-notch quality goods they were.

In his opinion, the tengu swordsman was definitely an heir of some top clan or had backing from a formidable force if he could be so well geared.

As he looked at his current rare rank sword, Kahn felt like the current weapon in his hand won't even last 20 strikes in a head-on clash based on the quality of the opponent's gear.

"I will fight the swordsman. Elaine, you handle the mage and Cattleya, you take down that enchantress.

This is the best way for us to level the playing field instead of giving them an advantage." spoke Kahn in a serious tone.

"What are you saying? I should face that tengu swordsman. He can fly and I can counter him perfectly." said Elaine in a surprised tone.

"Given his armor and equipment, do you think your arrows and skills can harm him before he knocks you out?" asked Kahn as he rolled his eyes.

"That.." spoke Elaine but her words stopped as soon as she noticed the tengu swordsman's armor and swords.

She knew her skills well and given the current predicament, even her best offensive skills would only do some minor damage and the armor won't even be destroyed.

"Alright. I'll handle the mage then." she complied after giving it a thought.

The next moment, Cattleya spoke as well.

"An Enchantress vs a Summoner.. I like a good challenge." she said with fired-up eyes after gazing at the hybrid succubus.

Kahn was relieved to see that his new teammates weren't some good-for-nothing pretentious girls but actually good fighters with a brain. Both of them had no problems fighting based on their circumstances and readily adapted to win the match without causing a fuss.

[I guess I have no choice then.] he thought.

The next second, a black and red greatsword with crimson veins that leaked blistering heat appeared in his hands.

For the first time in this competition, Kahn decided to bring out his best weapon of choice so far. And that was..

Lucifer!

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Ding! Ding!

As soon as the match started, the enemy side got into a defensive formation. But instead of getting ready to face the opponents with their own formation, Elaine and Cattleya quickly ran to the left and right sides respectively.

Kahn stood in the middle of this 100 meter wide battle ring and his teammates picked a side of their own.

However, this already surprised the opponents.

"What the hell are they trying to do?" spoke the demonkin mage.

"Be careful. This feels more like a trap than an opportunity to attack and take out the enemy team's members. I think they're trying to bait us." said the tengu swordsman in the front in his mature and rustic tone.

"I can cast some defensive formations and create barriers if you want. But my range will be limited." said the mixblood succubus.

But after both Elaine and Cattleya took one side and took control of one side of the battlefield, they looked at their respective opponents as per their previous agreement.

And what Kahn and the two beautiful women did surprised not just their opponents but the whole crowd that paid attention to their match.

Middle finger!

Kahn, Cattleya and Elaine gave a middle finger to their opponents after they directly looked into their eyes.

Smirk!

All three of them smirked and challenged their respective opponents as if saying 'fight me if you dare' with a condescending expression.

GASP!

Thousands of onlookers were were surprised by this impolite gesture by Kahn's team.

"These bastards! They're looking down on us!" spoke the tengu swordsman in an angered tone.

This was a publicly open challenge to their team.

And now, if they ganged up and defeated their enemies one by one, their reputation as warriors would be thoroughly damaged in the public eye. And would also affect their reputation in the eyes of their respective forces.

"I will be looked down upon in my clan if I let that bitch challenge me like this and I don't beat the hell out of her." spoke the female demonkin mage. Her eyes turned wrathful as she looked at Elaine.

"How dare that bastard challenge me.. I am the chosen representative of my clan in this competition. Even my armor and weapons are made by one of the best blacksmiths of the empire. And yet he doesn't seem to be scared at all.

I will turn into a eunuch if I don't put his head under my feet!" declared the dual swordsman.

"Ah.. That slut thinks she's better than me because I'm a halfblood. I can see it in her eyes.

I don't know about you two but I'm not going to swallow this insult." said the succubus enchantress with furious eyes.

"Fine then. Let's put these trash in their place." said the tengu and all three of them separated from the formation and headed towards their respective provocateurs.

After all, none of them were some no names. All three came from distinguished family backgrounds and reputed forces. And this was a slap in their face.

After the tengu swordsman came 20 meters close to Kahn, he spoke in an aggravated tone.

"You.. Prepare yourself to eat dirt. I'm going to make you pay for provoking me."

To him declaration, Kahn asked with a calm demeanor and a benign smile on his face.

"Since when were you under the impression that this wasn't part of my plan?"