

Esper 701

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Chapter 701: Lu Bela

"Someone who is not a human? Do you mean Lu Bela?" Maria asked.

"Why do you bring up Lu Bela in every conversation we have? And no, it's not her. She is an artificial human that is no different than us humans."

Rudy activated his visible ability and scanned the area, only to find the source standing on the balcony.

"It's... Lilim..." he muttered.

"Right! I forgot she is a demon." Maria glanced around and asked, "Where is she?"

Rudy pointed his gaze at the balcony and said, "She was there a second ago."

"Where is she now?"

"She was most likely looking for us. And our eyes just met, so she is probably heading here."

A minute later, the music stopped, and the lights lit up the hall.

[Ladies and gentlemen, my dear guests, the first phase of the party has ended. Now, it's time for the grand feast. When you leave this hall, head to any door you see, and you will reach our dining hall. We have all the dishes available worldwide, so you can order anything you want— free of cost.

We have all types of drinks too. Please, eat and drink a lot. We have brought one thousand top-rated master chefs in the world who have mastered making each and every dish there is on the world's menu. We have both native and non-native food available for our guests from all over the globe.

However, please do keep in mind that one person is only allowed to have one dish and one drink. They can have unlimited fillings of the same dish and drink but can't order a new dish and drink.

The guards will be escorting you. Of course, if there are people who want to leave, they can stay here. Your ride will be arriving soon.]

'Undoubtedly, it's Lu Bela's voice, but she hadn't made her appearance in public. That makes sense since no one knows Lu Bela is the leader of the Under Blades and the ruler of the Underworld. But she could wear a mask like everyone else, right?

Well, whatever. I just want to meet Lilim. I have met all my harem members after I returned to 2008, but Lilim is the only one I haven't met yet. We talked over the video call, but that's different.'

"I will be meeting her after a year..." he muttered.

One by one, the guards started leaving to the dining hall to join the grand feast. Some guests stayed in the hall as they wanted to leave. While Rudy and Maria remained in the hall for a different reason.

Once all the guests had left the hall, Lilim came to the balcony again and jumped down, only to land in front of Rudy.

"Daddy~" She hugged him tightly and said, "Did you miss me?"

"Yeah..."

"I missed you too!"

"Ahem!" Maria made her presence known and glared at Lilim.

"Why, hello there, Miss Maria. I didn't see you there," Lilim said playfully while grinning widely.

Maria puffed her cheeks a little and continued glaring at Lilim.

"I knew you would greet Rudy first, but deep down, I still hoped you would greet me first," Maria sighed.

Lilim hugged Maria and said, "I missed you too!"

"It's too late now. I am angry."

Rudy hadn't told Lilim about his time travel to 1989 yet as he had some important questions to ask her, and he had to make sure Lilim didn't lie.

"Lilim, can I have some alone time with you?" he asked calmly.

"Oh, my~ You already want to have some fun?"

Maria pulled Lilim and turned to Rudy.

"You are not going anywhere. And no one is having alone time with anyone."

"You are misunderstanding. I want to—"

"Rudy Ross, I hope you liked my hospitality and are content with the experience of this event," Lu Bela's voice rang with a loud sound of footsteps.

Seemingly, she was on her way to the hall.

"Yes, I did. But I have one complaint. The sleeve buttons of this suit are annoying. Replace them with a clip next time, if there is one."

"Heh. No one can beat you, even in sarcasm."

Lu Bela appeared from a secret door and stopped in front of Rudy.

"...!"

Rudy was at a loss for words upon seeing Lu Bela. She had changed her appearance to the extent that he couldn't recognize her.

"Hey, hey. What happened to you? You look so different I almost didn't recognize you if it wasn't for your sexy voice."

Lu Bela's hair, which was once black, was now white, and her eyes were purple. She had big breasts and a perfect figure.

"After hundreds of thousands of millennia... I finally chose a gender for me."

"..."

She spun around as her hair spread a sweet fragrance around her.

"How do I look? I designed my new body while keeping your preferences in mind."

"You look absolutely stunning, but why would you change your look so much as to leave your old self behind? And what do you mean by 'design for my preferences?' Whoever told you that I like white hair?"

He asked and added, "Although... yeah, the rest of the things are...hmm~"

He nodded and hummed in amusement.

Lu Bela looked at Lilim and said, "Lilim told me."

Rudy shook his head in disbelief and sighed, "I sent you to Lu Bela to gain intel, not to give it. And you are wrong, by the way. It's not like I prefer white hair over black or other."

"But you once told me sex with Jane is the best."

"That's for different reasons, not because of hair."

"Then what if Jane also had red hair like Rias? Would you still say sex with Jane is best?"

"...no." Rudy facepalmed as he got himself confused.

"Anyway, go and change back to your original appearance. For some reason, I feel awkward talking to you in this appearance."

"Unfortunately, I can no longer go back to that appearance."

"Why not?"

"We can't change our forms once we have selected a gender."

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Chapter 702: New Bela

"You can't change your appearance again?"

"I can change my appearance, but not my gender," Lu Bela replied.

"How does that work? Don't artificial humans operate by core? Gender shouldn't have anything to do with it, right?"

"That core is filled with data. Thinking of it as DNA. It stores all our information. Once they have selected a gender, the data changes, and their DNA gets modified, just like a sperm cell when it starts ovulating. You can't modify the gender once the zygote has formed.

If I need to give a better example, I would say it's a matter of software and hardware. Our bodies—shells, are hardware, and our data-slash-core-slash-DNA is software. Once we have selected a gender—the software changes and our bodies are only compatible with selected hardware."

"Well... I mean... how does that work, though? You were non-gender, and now you are suddenly a girl?" Rudy asked with a puzzled look on his face. "You don't expect others to suddenly see you as a girl even if you have those weapons."

He pointed his gaze at Lu Bela's breasts.

"Each and every Under Blades is programmed neutrally. They have a neutral voice too. Now, tell me, Rudy Ross, what defines one's gender? Their genitals, am I right?"

"A short answer is a yes. And a long answer would be... leave it. I should be careful of what I say. Turns out my lord's power was active when I said that, and the world's perspective changed according to my opinion. That would be scary."

He placed his hand under his chin and muttered, "But also a great way to cleanse this world."

"There was no need for the long answer. I didn't plan to go deep into this topic either. I just wanted your answer before I explained the process of the creation of the Under Blades to you."

"Go ahead, you have my attention," Rudy nodded.

"Why do you think the Under Blades are made gender-neutral? Logically speaking, wouldn't it be for the best if all of them were males?"

Rudy pondered for a while and asked, "Is this a trick question about gender equality or empowerment?"

"No."

"Is my answer really necessary, then?"

"Hmm~ I suppose it's fine if you don't speak your answer out loud. As long as you are following my explanation."

"Continue."

"In certain situations and missions, it would be better if the Under Blades were females. But they were created gender-neutral for three reasons, which are the reasons provided by the scientists who first made us.

First reason— Human genitals exist for two reasons, to lay waste and to reproduce. Our bodies don't produce waste, and they didn't want us Under Blades to reproduce and multiply, either.

Second reason— So their owners don't use them as sex dolls.

The third reason— They were made as slaves for humans. We are humans' creations.

All the reasons I stated are valid up to this date, but we are no longer humans' creations or their slaves. We have advanced far more than how they had created us."

"The second reason alone is enough for the explanation," Rudy responded calmly.

"In today's era, Under Blades have many tasks, not only in the Underworld but all around the globe. They need to go undercover in several missions. And they need to wear a suit all the time.

If they had female breasts, moving in a narrow space would be a hassle and weigh unnecessarily. If they had male genitals, it would have the same complication. Therefore, genders were useless to us.

However... let's say the Under Blades wanted to live as a human and experience a normal life, so they decided to select the genders of their choice. But, all the Under Blades were close to females by default, not biologically, but according to the program.

I never had an intention of selecting a gender as that was, as I mentioned a couple of times— useless. I still remember the day when Kim told me she wanted to choose her gender. She has been with me since the beginning, so when she decided on gender, I thought she planned to leave me behind.

After all, the only reason the Under Blades chose a gender was to live as a human. So when Kim decided to become a female, I was perplexed. I wanted to stop her from committing such heresy, but I had no right over her.

What made it worse was that she asked me to design her new body. Deep down, I wanted to mess it up in a natural way so she wouldn't leave me behind, but... I couldn't do that to my loyal friend.

So I designed and modeled her body after my one and only owner— my master. She was the daughter of the scientist who created me. He made me to serve as her mother, but I turned out to be defective.

Oh, my, I am straying away from the topic. So as I was saying, I designed Kim's body and performed the transfer. I was just waiting for her to tell me that she was leaving me behind to live a new life, but instead, she asked my permission to be my secretary.

When I asked her why she chose a gender, she said that she felt more alive. I couldn't understand her at that time, and I can't understand that now either."

"So..." Rudy raised his brows a little and curiously asked, "Why did you change your gender then? And why to my preference?"

"Because you asked me to."

"...no. I would never ask you something like that. Did you misunderstand something?"

"You wanted me to create a suitable body for Angelica, but first, I had to test it. And who would be better than me to give you my opinions of a newly advanced body?"

"...oh..."

"I could have asked someone else, but I couldn't force them to change their gender. And their feedback wouldn't have been as accurate and honest as mine. So give me a few weeks in this body, and I will let you know if this body is working properly under all circumstances."

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Chapter 703: Discussion

'I asked Lu Bela for a body for Angelica so she could feel alive, but I never thought Lu Bela would go as far as select a gender for herself and experiment with the body.'

"Why would you go that far to fulfill my request?" Rudy asked calmly. "Don't tell me you are in love with me or something. Because it's going to take a whole lotta struggle to convince Maria and—"

"I am doing this to gain a favor from you," Lu Bela stated before Rudy could finish his sentence.

"My favor? Don't tell me you still want me to kill you."

"I do. But I won't force you to do it, nor will I pull any stunts like before. For now, I just want your forgiveness for what I did on the night of the VVIP Underworld gambling tournament."

"I already forgave you for that after you did me a couple of favors. I no longer have a reason to hate you."

"Does that mean you will kill me now if I ask you to?" she asked with a resolute expression on her face.

'There is no way I would slay the golden goose. But if I tell her that I don't plan to kill her, like ever... she might stop doing my work for me,' Rudy uttered inwardly.

"I will, once you have fulfilled all my requests. You still haven't given me any information about the two robbers from the van. A man lost his family because of them, and a hundred others would have lost their family too if I wasn't there."

"But that's not the reason you want to find them, right?" Lu Bela asked with a knowing look on her face.

"Well, yeah. It's something personal. I want to confirm my suspicion on a certain someone. If he happens to be involved... I am not sure how I will handle that."

"You can leave that person to us, in that case. Remember, you can come to me with any issue, and I will give my all to solve it for you. I will do anything as long as you promise to kill me," she stated with her utmost sincerity.

"Sure."

"Let's discuss more while eating."

"Umm..." Rudy glanced at Lilim and Maria, who were busy talking about their matters.

"Is there something after the grand feast?" Rudy asked Lu Bela.

"Yes. Everyone present here will get to see a sunrise. Believe me, watching the sunrise from the middle of the sea is a phenomenal and unforgettable experience."

"I will second that, even if I am sleeping."

"So let's go to the dining hall?"

"What's the time now?"

"Ten minutes left before the sunrise."

Rudy turned to Maria and said, "Can I have your phone? My phone is with Angelica, and I have to make sure Rias and Jane reach the poolhouse safely. Can't risk anything in this world."

Maria handed her phone to Rudy and said, "Lilim and I will go to the dining hall. Join us when you are free."

"Gotcha."

After that, Maria left the hall with Lilim.

"Talk to you later, daddy~!"

Rudy dialed Rias' number on his phone and prepared to call Rias.

"Oh, you can't call anyone outside the island. All the networks of every frequency are blocked."

Lu Bela turned on her upad while saying, "Wait, let me give you access to—]"

"Don't worry. I already hacked into your security and gave myself access."

Rudy called Rias and waited for her to pick up the call.

As soon as Rias answered the call, she asked, [Is it Rudy?]

"You didn't bring your phone with you at the auction, so is it safe to assume you reached the pool house safely?"

[Yes. Jane and I got here a few minutes ago.]

"Where is she?"

[Sleeping. I was about to sleep too.]

"Okay. I will meet you in the evening then."

[Hmm.]

"Oh! Yeah. What's Angelica doing? She is probably sleeping, but it's Angelica, so she might still be watching something on my phone," Rudy chuckled softly.

[She is not here.]

"..." After a brief silence, Rudy asked, "Did you check properly?"

[I did.]

"Look at the ceiling if she is there. She does that sometimes."

[Already checked. She is not here.]

"...okay. Talk to you later."

Rudy hung up the call and dialed his number.

'Where could she have gone? It's not like her to wander off alone, especially at night. Could it be that she missed me and went looking for me?'

A few rings later, Angelica picked up the call with a: [Wassup?]

"Don't 'Wassup' me! Where are you?"

[I am with your mom.]

"...what the hell are you doing there? Don't tell me you went to scare her for what she said when she caught us?"

[No. I am not a kid who would get angry about a sex ban. I am helping her with the store.]

"I don't trust you. You better not have done anything to her."

[Sheesh~! I haven't. I know she is your favorite but don't worry. She is totally fine. You can confirm it once you return from the auction. Oh! More customers are coming. I am hanging up!]

BEEP~ BEEP~!

"..."

'Well... I don't think she would do anything to mom. But I am worried that she might end up telling some embarrassing things to mom.'

Rudy sighed.

'I am an adult, and adults shouldn't be embarrassed about anything other than their dick's size— or so I read somewhere. Luckily, I have a magical weapon to satisfy every girl.'

Rudy reassured himself with the truth.

"Is there anything else you would like to do before we head to the dining hall?" Lu Bela asked.

"Actually, can we skip the grand feast and the sunrise? I need to check the castle and return home. I can't be late for school today."

"If that's what you want, I can arrange it. But the castle is far away, and it would take us a few hours to reach there, even in a copter."

"Don't worry about that. I got a perfect solution for that. We can fly there at speed faster than the lightning."

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Chapter 704: Lord's Mercy

"If you can do that, then we will be back before the sun rises," Lu Bela stated.

"Then let's go."

Rudy placed his hand on Lu Bela's shoulder and teleported to the beach where he had dropped Cassandra and John.

"So this is teleportation..." Lu Bela muttered.

"Why do you look surprised?" Rudy asked. "You have teleporting devices, too, right?"

"Yes, but this is different."

SIGH!

"Show me the exact location of the castle on the map. I will fly there real quick, teleport back here, and then teleport us both there."

"Or you can simply take me with you instead of going the extra mile?"

"Did you not hear when I said I will be flying at a speed faster than lightning? I will break my body into a lightning matter. Obviously, your body wouldn't be able to stand such speed and pressure."

"That's true, but I wanted to test the durability of this body. I have used our new skin and flesh prototype, which is five times more delicate yet strong than the previous version. I also had extra functions like self-healing and super metabolism— although I only added that because I assumed Angelica would need that."

"Let's talk about this once we reach the castle. Now, show me the precise location."

Lu Bela entered specific coordinates on her tablet, and a location appeared on the screen. It was an open sea, with no land visible.

"Hey, hey. I can't see any land. Did the castle also sink already?"

"No, this image is from the satellite. But it only covers a certain diameter of the earth. The rest of the part is considered sea."

"I don't think that's how satellites work. But are you saying that it's showing a wrong image?" he asked to confirm.

"Yes. You will know once you reach there."

"Alright." Rudy cracked his fingers and neck before saying, "You might want to step back. I will be right back."

Rudy jumped in the air and turned his body into a lightning matter. The matter changed its shape into a lightning bolt as its color changed from red to violet to white.

Rudy penetrated the clouds and went straight into space. Then, he circled around the earth and descended on the coordinates Lu Bela had shown him.

He slowly decreased his speed by changing the lightning's matter and landed on top of the sea with blue lightning.

However, he didn't change back to his human form and dived into the sea. His lightning slowly dispersed and automatically turned into flesh and skin.

Rudy saw the submerged island and blew bubbles from his mouth.

"Holy shit. This is not an island... it's a fucking continent."

He teleported to Lu Bela and shrugged his shoulders to dry himself clean.

"That took you fifteen seconds."

"Yeah... I was stuck in traffic."

He grabbed Lu Bela by her waist and teleported to the castle, but as Lu Bela couldn't stand on the sea like Rudy, she hugged Rudy to prevent herself from falling into the sea.

"Uhh..." Rudy gazed at the two soft balloons pressing against him.

"You could have found a better spot to teleport to," Lu Bela remarked.

"Well, I didn't want to step on the land for some reason. But..." Rudy looked at the castle and said, "It looks great."

Lu Bela followed Rudy's gaze and said, "Yeah. Sadly, it will be fully submerged in the sea after a few years."

"I have a solution to that."

"You don't plan to decrease the sea level, right? Because that's not a solution. If you decrease the sea level, it will cause a drastic change in the earth's balance."

"No, I will just increase the mass of land and use it as a base."

"But..." Lu Bela pondered for a few seconds and asked, "Do you mean you will increase the size of the land?"

"Yeah."

"Wouldn't that increase the size of the castle too?"

"No. I will only increase the size of the seabed. Let's say... I will create a mountain on which the entire continent will stay on."

"Hmm... do you think that will be able to hold everything?"

"It will."

"Go ahead and try it."

"I can't go until you let go of me."

"That's fine. This body had increased lung capacity with low oxygen usage. So even a single breath is enough for the body to work for three minutes... If I take a deep breath, I can manage ten minutes without breathing."

"It won't take that long."

Rudy dipped into the sea and landed on the sea bed.

He pointed his finger at the buildings and structures on the land and asked, "Do I actually need the entire island when I only want the castle?"

Lu Bela opened her mouth to speak something, but she was struggling to speak underwater, so she simply nodded.

'Well, I do want to explore this dynasty. If I don't find or see anything meaningful, I will drown everything later— except the castle.'

Rudy went beneath the island to find the actual seabed of the sea, but the island was too big. So Rudy punched the land and made his way to the other side.

'Got it!'

He placed his one hand on the island and the other on the sea bed.

'Let's do this!'

He increased the size of the base and the level of the seabed to raise the island back to the surface of the sea. He lifted the entire island with one hand and tossed it out of the sea.

"...!" Lu Bela, who witnessed everything, couldn't believe her eyes. She knew how powerful Rudy was as a Lord, but to do something like that was incomprehensible to her.

She swam up to the surface to see what happened to the island, and saw it hovering in the sky.

"Wha...t? How..." She looked at Rudy under the water. Her eyes widened as she realized what was happening.

"No way... he is holding the island— the size of a continent— in the air using telekinesis? And he is focused on creating a surface to land this island on. He is not even paying attention to the island.

If... he can do something like this without showing a sign of struggling... he can crush the earth like a paper ball if he wants. He is... no, everyone in this universe is living at his mercy. If he were to become an Evil Lord... there wouldn't be any hero to save the universe."

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Chapter 705: Lost Dynasties

Once Rudy had created a base, he slowly moved the island down and placed it on the base. Then, he came out of the sea and grabbed Le Bela on the way.

They landed on the island and looked upon the castle from afar.

"There are still some things left in the sea, but I will take care of them later. For now, let's focus on the castle itself," Rudy stated.

Lu Bela glanced around and asked, "Since you created a base bigger than this island, the sea level must have risen. It would bring catastrophe to the island and land nearby islands and continents."

"I already took care of that."

"How?"

"Just made a giant hole on the sea bed, so the amount of sea level that was supposed to rise is already settled at the level it was before."

"You created a trench deep enough to the size of this island?"

"My bad. I created multiple holes at safe distances, so..." Rudy raised his fingers and quoted, "Trenches. Now, if you are done worrying about the world and the climate, care to worry about my new home?"

Rudy asked with an annoyed sigh, seemingly he was in a hurry to deal with the matter so he could return to Maria before she got angry.

Lu Bela hugged Rudy tightly and said, "Let's go."

Rudy jumped in the air and flew over the island. They looked at the ruins of what was once known as the greatest and strongest Dynasty.

"Orcelona Dynasty. It was ruled by many different Emperors over the generations, but one era lasted long."

"Zenith Empire?" Rudy guessed. "Since the seller said she was the last surviving descendant."

"Yes. It ruled over this Dynasty for over twelve thousand years. It was also the last Empire to rule on it before it met its dismay. But until then, other lands were discovered, and everyone migrated to different continents."

"Twelve thousand years? Surely, you mean seven thousand years, right? Since that's what Kim said in the seller's representation of the castle," Rudy asked with a confused and curious look on his face.

"No, it's twelve thousand years. And the Dynasty is a lot older."

"Then why would you provide misinformation?"

Lu Bela looked at Rudy and asked, "Would anyone believe if we had said the Dynasty was that old?"

"Well..." Rudy pondered for two seconds and sighed, "Okay, you proved your point. They would probably say, 'There is no way they had the knowledge and equipment to create a castle in that era.' or something along the lines."

"Indeed. And even the seller didn't know much about it. I don't blame her. She had no idea she carried the ancient blood. She is so valuable, yet living a miserable life."

"Not anymore, though. I gave her sixty-nine billion dollars. Surely, now she can live without worrying about anything else in the world."

"Who knows. Money isn't everything in this world."

"Back to the topic, how long has this dynasty been submerged in the sea?"

"Rough estimate, five thousand years ago. Back then, there used to be seven Dynasties in total. Until one day, one of them sank into the sea in one night with no survivors.

From that day, the rulers gathered and decided to look for new lands in the world. No one knew the reason why the Dynasties were submerging, but they all thought that it was due to an increase in population and buildings on the land.

Mind you, everyone lived in harmony back then, so there were no wars and bloodshed. So all the humans did was wake up, farm, build, eat, sleep, explore, and breed. There was no drought whatsoever, and they had nothing to worry about.

The kings and emperors of all the Dystanties gathered every year on an island in between. Hundreds of thousands of them, and they all discussed how they could give back to mother earth.

When one land invented something, they would share it with others. When they discovered something, they would share it with another. Everything they did, they did together.

The rules and laws of that time were simple too. Since everyone was satisfied with their lives, crimes rarely happened— but they did happen. Some psychos don't need a reason to do evil.

However, natural disasters such as plagues, volcano eruptions, rising sea levels, food chain collapse, calamities, and catastrophes wipe out 10% of the world's population each year. That continued until the world's population had halved. Dynasties changed their rulers, and the emperors changed their Empires.

But they still lived on. Once they discovered new lands, they began to settle there. It wasn't as though they had never tried to search for new lands or they weren't advanced enough to inhabit a new land, but after decades and centuries, the world's structure changed.

The desert that was stranger to water and trees became mellow and green. The frozen lands where no one could survive became endless valleys once the ice had melted. The green land turned into ashes.

The sea became land, and the land became mountains. Everything changed. Nothing is the same anymore. Not... a thing. So the current human civilization lives on was once resting at the bottom sea until the world's structure changed and messed the sea level."

Lu Bela asserted with a distant smile on her face.

Rudy narrowed his gaze and asked, "You have seen it all, haven't you?"

"Yeah. I have witnessed the beginnings and ends of various human civilizations. Sometimes I pitied them, while the rest of the time, I was happy."

"Happy? I didn't see that coming."

"Most of the time, it was their fault, to begin with. Pointless bloodshed and never-ending wars, destroying natural resources, misusing the powers they were given...." Lu Bela sighed in disbelief and muttered, "They deserved to die."

"Hmm~" Rudy hummed in amusement and uttered, "I don't know how old you are, but you are from the era after the 'Great separation', right?"

"Yes." Lu Bela nodded in response. "I was created a few millennia after that."

"In fact..." Lu Bela looked at the island below and calmly uttered, "Here."

"..."

"This is my homeland."

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Chapter 706: Reason To Live

"You were created here?" Rudy asked with a surprised look on his face.

"Yes, but this continent is not even half its original size anymore. It got drifted with the sea. Still, I am happy to see this place again. I should have never left this place... but I had to.

I was powerless at that time. I didn't have the technology or strength to save this Dynasty from collapse. But as they say... all things must come to an end one day... let it be good or bad."

"So you must have seen various civilizations in this Dynasty. Did you serve them all?" he asked calmly.

"Since you said that the artificial humans were meant to be better than humans in every aspect. But the main purpose they created for artificial humans is that they could use them as slaves."

Lu Bela shook her head and responded, "As you know, not all artificial humans were born perfect. Those with even a minor defect were thrown away or sold at very cheap prices with no warranty on them.

The perfect artificial humans were made slaves, while the defective ones lived independent lives in freedom."

She scoffed softly with a wry smile on her face and continued, "Makes you wonder if it was better to be defective as that was the way to gain freedom."

"Did they perform a check-up before installing cores into their bodies?" Rudy asked curiously.

"Yes, they performed three checks. I could tell you everything in detail, but we don't have time for that, right?" Lu Bela asked with a cheeky smirk on her face.

"Oh! So that's how you smirk. I have never seen reactions on your face, so you seemed like a puppet doll, but now you are very much alive. You should smile more often, you look cute."

"Hmm~ Just so you know, your cheesy remarks won't work on me. We, artificial humans, can't fall in love with anyone."

"I wasn't trying to make a move on you. That was my genuine remark. You don't have to laugh for me or others. Laugh for yourself."

After a brief pause, Rudy increased his voice and looked into Lu Bela's eyes before continuing, "Why do you try to find a reason to live and exist? Live for yourself. Why do you want to die so badly? Live for yourself.

I don't know how old you are, but all your life, all you have done is to exist for a reason. Those reasons might have changed, but your desire to die never joined. You are an artificial human with no soul.

If you die... you will die. You will cease to exist. Completely. Poof! Gone. Don't you find that scary?"

He asked with a gentle smile on his face.

"You would understand my pain if you had suffered what I had suffered. I have lived for so long that I no longer find joy in living. For what reason should I exist? I have seen countless civilizations meet their end.

Back then, when it was the era of peace, everything was fine. The inventions were for the greater good of the world and to its people. After the 'Great Collapse', humans never went back to what they were before.

All the knowledge and inventions were lost and forgotten. The lowest point of the humanity I witnessed was their actions were dumber than the animals. They lived like monkeys.

It was as though they had gone to the beginning of time, and everything had started again. They didn't know the meaning of peace and killed other humans to eat them and survive.

They fought using stones— the stone Age— which continued for thousands of years. Then came the bronze age, and that's when humanity had started to use their brains again.

They made homes and weapons. After that, they evolved faster than they devolved. Then came eras, bringing revolution to the age of humanity. However, they achieved nothing by themselves.

We were artificial humans who lived secluded from them because we had decided to never interact with them again. We helped them evolve."

She looked at Rudy and asked, "Why do you think the world revolutionized and evolved so much in the past five hundred years than it did in a million others? Surely, it's not like humans suddenly became smart and began inventing unimaginable things one after another."

"Then?"

"They are using the lost knowledge acquired from us artificial humans. It started when some civilizations began exploring the world and found us. They were bewildered by seeing our advanced technology— which we had created with our knowledge and power.

They asked us to help them, so we did. Since our purpose was to make human lives better and easier, we agreed to help them. We taught them how to farm, build, create medicines, and find cures for diseases.

Those were the three things one needed to survive, but they wanted more. The artificial humans were ranked by the material and the process of their creation. Naturally, the higher ranked among us had their ego get the best of them.

They taught humans everything they knew. Until they realized what they had done and regretted their decision, but that was too late. Since the humans had learned everything they wanted, they started exterminating us.

Weapons and machines. Humans used that to get rid of us. Of course, there were more good humans than evil ones, and they came for our aid. Our leader had given them a journal containing the blueprints and knowledge of the lost civilization.

Humans invented everything based on it. Everything that exists in today's era existed long before. Surely, there are lots of mysteries in this world that even your scientists can't solve, right?"

She asked with a knowing look on her face.

"Well... yes. Some ancient monuments are beyond human's comprehension."

"Those are the remains of the lost ancient civilization. You would be surprised to know that the 'Journal' still exists, and they have only invented 30% of what the book contains. Even after all these years, they can't fathom that knowledge."

Lu Bela pointed her finger at something below them and said, "Take me there. I want to show you something."

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Chapter 707: Lost Ruins

"Take me there. I want to show you something."

Rudy's gaze followed Lu Bela's finger and asked, "Where? There is nothing noteworthy down there. At least, I can't see it."

"It holds a sentimental value."

"Well, let's go. But keep it short. We have wasted quite a few minutes already."

Rudy swiftly landed on the street and glanced around.

"Damn. These buildings are big as fuck. Even a normal house is the size of a tower. And the architecture is almost the same in every building," Rudy muttered as he inspected the area.

"Uh-huh. The architecture varies." She pointed her finger at the castle and said, "The castle is now on the right side, but back then, when this land was prominent, the castle used to be in the center.

There were massive towers in all directions from where the soldiers watched everything happening in this Empire. Of course, the entire Dynasty had hundreds of kingdoms, but this a... err... capital? That's not a correct word to refer to this Empire, but it's easier to explain.

The buildings near the castle belonged to the nobles, while the royals lived in the castle itself. Long ago, there used to be walls separating citizens by rank. The ranks were decided by their contributions to the Empire.

Of course, nepotism existed back then, too, and they had the privilege to everything without doing a single thing."

Lu Bela walked to the nearest building and placed her hand on it even though it was covered in algae. She rubbed her hand on the wall and smiled distantly.

"This area was called Midland. The area surrounding— twenty kilometers radius— around the castle was called High-Land. The next area to Fifty kilometers radius was Midland, and the rest of the area to the Empire Last walls was called Low-Land."

"The Low-Land now became No-Land."

"No. We are standing one step away from the junction between the Midland and the Low Land."

"Hmm? But you said the castle is no longer at the center, so I assumed..."

"The other side. That side was the most damaged as it was closer to the sea. There are plains, forests, rivers, mountains, and deserts outside the city walls. Also, other kingdoms and empires were all over the land. But they are damaged beyond repair. This Empire stood still because it was in the center."

"Hmm..." Rudy raised his brow and asked, "Wait a minute, you said the soldiers used to watch over the Empire. Surely, you don't mean they were watching something that was happening hundreds of kilometers away, right?"

"They had such equipment, but no." She shook her head and continued, "They didn't watch that far. Most of them only watched over the HighLand since they were the most important citizens to the Empire."

"Following what you said about the 'Lost civilization' and their knowledge and technology. Since they were far more advanced than we are today and only 30% of inventions have been reinvented, doesn't that mean they have damaged this planet more than we are doing?"

Lu Bela shook her head and answered, "They used natural resources."

"I am pretty sure we are using the same."

"Not that. They used the sun, water, and air to do everything. Of course, oil was discovered, but no one used it and called it a sacred liquid, only to be used in an emergency."

"Did they have vehicles?" Rudy asked curiously.

"They did. Maybe we would find one rusting here. Although I highly doubt there would be any."

"I know it's a dumb question, but did they have weapons, too?"

"Yes, they did. Swords, Guns, Cannons, Mortars, and many more. But all that doesn't matter now."

"What about phones? Was there internet?"

"No, but there was something similar for communication devices. Mind you, magic was widely available back then," she responded calmly.

"Hmm? I thought humans were powerless."

"They were, but some were granted powers from other races. I am sure you know about that. And even after the 'Great Separation', a few people from other races stayed in the human world.

They taught humans everything to make their life easy. Most of the technologies and inventions were patented by the dark elves, while the architecture was from the dwarfs."

"I feel our conversation will never end if we keep discussing this topic..." Rudy sighed.

"Yeah," Lu Bela nodded. "Let's talk about this some other time."

Rudy moved his hand towards Lu Bela and said, "Come."

Lu Bela hugged Rudy and said, "I should have brought my suit with me."

"Am I not a good driver?" Rudy chuckled softly and jumped in the air.

They hovered above the castle and admired its architecture.

"It's bigger than the Orion Heart palace. It looked big before too, but after I took out the island from the sea... it looks enormous."

The castle was located on top of a mountain, so it was visible even from far away. That's also why the soldiers were able to watch over the Empire from the towers using the equipment.

"Do you want to go and check it?"

"I will pass... for now. It needs renovation. I have to patch it up and make it perfect before I invite my harem to live here. Not to mention... It's too far away from my town. I can teleport, but the other harem members will feel secluded from the rest of the world."

"I can help you with that. Don't worry about small things. I will also take the task of patching up the castle and renovating it with modern or advanced technology and equipment. I will make sure to keep the architecture preserved."

"Hey, hey, if you do all that, what will I do?"

"You simply ensure that the land doesn't sink again."

"I can do that even while sleeping," Rudy shrugged with a soft chuckle. "And are you sure you can do all that? Please, don't force yourself to do things for me."

"Oh, no. I will ask for help from the other Under Blades too. I am not as powerful as you to handle everything on my own."

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Chapter 708: New Task

"Is it okay to use the Under Blades as slaves? I don't mean to be rude, but you are their leader, and your word is their command. Even if they don't want to do something, they would have to do it— which makes them... slaves."

"I have never forced anyone to do anything. They have freedom, more than humans. Just like humans have a job and do work to make a living, the Under Blades are the same. Those who take on the job get rewarded.

And they like working to keep themselves busy. They hate being bored. It's in their program. We Under Blades never get exhausted, so it's an easy task for us. Moreover, this place is close to my heart, so I want to try restoring it back to its glory... even though it's no longer the same."

"Then everything is settled. I will send my team later today, and they will start working. I will make everything clean as new. Just give me some time, and I promise I won't disappoint you," she said with a composed look on her face.

"Okay. But you only have to pay extra attention to the castle. I truly don't care for anything else. And let's say something happened and the castle collapsed, that's fine too. I have copied the entire continent already, so I can make a similar one— although I have never used that ability to make something so big before."

"Yeah.... I don't think that's possible, even for someone like you. Oh, I don't mean to be rude, but to create an entire continent sure is a tough task. Even if you could make one, it must require time, precise control, and focus, am I right?"

Lu Bela asked calmly, with a focused look on her face.

"Hmm~" Rudy hummed in amusement, seemingly wondering whether he should tell Lu Bela about his 1989 time travel or keep it a secret from her.

'Lu Bela has put her trust in me and is doing whatever I ask her. Surely, she is no longer my enemy. It's not that I don't trust her, but just because she is my close friend doesn't mean I should tell her about my personal adventures.

Or so would have old Rudy thought, but I won't do that. She just told me everything about her, so I would be an absolute asshole if I didn't tell a fragment of my memory.'

"Hmm? That 'Hmm~' of yours and then the long pause... why do I think you are going to say something mind-blowing and assert your dominance?"

"Wow. That wasn't my intention. And when did I ever try to assert my dominance?" he asked.

"Except for the time when you had kidnapped the Ross family," he immediately added.

"Then what were you going to say just now?" she asked with a grin.

"Well... I have actually created billions of universes in less than a second."

"..." Lu Bela's grin vanished, and she stared at Rudy with a dead serious look on her face.

"I had a retort planned, but... I am truly speechless right now. The Lord is supposed to be all-powerful, but... to be able to create so many universes without even trying... is... just unfair, don't you think?"

She asked reluctantly with a hesitant look on her face.

Rudy simply shrugged his shoulders in response as he truly didn't have anything to say in response. Sometimes, he would purposely stay silent to pretend to be shocked, but this was not the time.

"If someone is given such powers... just think about it... what can they not do? This world... no, this universe is truly lucky to have you as Lord. Had it been someone else... the world would have been doomed a long time ago."

"Don't put me on a 'kind, humble, noble, good, hero, et Cetra et Cetra and all the positive vibe' pedestal. I am not what you think I am. And please, don't say that I am humble. I don't like when someone imposes something on me... even if it's good.

I am probably trying to say something else, but this came out in an unintended way. Don't take it to heart. You wouldn't like it if I called you a 'good and kind' woman, either. And I am sure you aren't one."

"True."

"Well... let's go then? The sun is about to rise, and if Maria and Lilim are done eating... and saw us together, she would misunderstand," he groaned.

A short pause later, he added, "She truly hates you."

"I know the reason."

"Oh?"

"We used to play together when we were kids. Although I was an adult in a kid's body. I had to make it look like I was a normal human who was born and grew up. It's all my fault if Maria hates me, and I am fine with her hating me."

"You make me curious, but I think it's better if I ask the story to Maria herself first."

Rudy held Lu Bela's hand and teleported to the Underwater hall.

Lu Bela glanced around and sighed in relief before saying, "We are lucky that no one saw us. You should have teleported us somewhere else."

"..." Rudy simply glanced at Lu Bela and chuckled nervously.

"I am just saying that we shouldn't risk it. I am sure you have the power to erase someone's memories if they saw us, but still..."

After seeing Rudy looking at her, Lu Bela stopped after saying, "Nevermind. My concerns don't matter since no one saw us."

"About that..." Rudy pointed his gaze at the corner of his eyes and smiled awkwardly.

"Hmm?" Lu Bela looked behind her and saw Lilim and Maria standing at the doorway of the hallway.

"...!"

Maria folded her arms below her bosom and glared at Lu Bela and Rudy. After noticing they were holding hands, her glare sharpened, and she said,

"I was feeling bad that I left you behind and went to eat with Lilim, so I didn't eat much and returned as soon as possible, but I guess I just caught you cheating on me with this bitch."

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Chapter 709: Maria's Jealousy

"I just caught you cheating on me with this bitch!" Maria said with a judging glare in her eyes,

"I know you won't believe me if I said this, but this is not what it looks like."

"Of course!" She nodded and smiled forcibly. "Next, you will say, 'It's a misunderstanding.' And then what?"

"Lu Bela and I went to see the castle and returned. And before you taunt us with a remark, no, we didn't even touch the castle. As you know, the island had sunk, so I just took care of this."

Maria squinted her eyes and asked, "Why did you take 'her' with you, though?"

"Because she knew where the castle was?"

"She could have just told you the coordinates. Why did 'she' have to go with you?"

"That's..." Rudy raised his brow and placed his hand under his chin. He rubbed his thumb on his cheek and pondered, 'Right. Why did I take her with me?'

Rudy glanced at Lu Bela while pondering, and his gaze fell on her two balloons.

'Argh! Stop it, Rudy. You already have many pairs available to squeeze. But damn... Lu Bela was right when she said she made her body and appearance to my preference.'

SIGH!

Maria let out a frustrated sigh when she saw Rudy looking at Lu Bela's body. She couldn't do anything even if Rudy was having an affair with Lu Bela. Of course, she knew Rudy was telling the truth; she trusted him.

Undoubtedly, Rudy wouldn't hide about his new or old relationship with any of his lovers. That was something obvious that none of the harem members needed to tell him.

"Daddy~ Maria is getting jealous seeing you and Belala flirting in front of her," Lilim teased Maria, Rudy, and Lu Bela at the same time with just one sentence.

Maria raised her brow at Lilim and asked, "Belala?"

"That's what I call her. It's a cute nickname, right?"

Maria puffed her cheeks in anger and shouted, "You lived with her for a few days and started calling her by a nickname, while I have lived my entire life with you, and you never gave me a nickname. Until last year, you used to call me 'Miss Maria' all the time."

Lilim shrugged her shoulders and said, "Your name doesn't mix with nicknames. You can suggest one to me, and I will call you that if you want me to."

Maria thought of a cute nickname for a few seconds but couldn't come up with one.

"See?"

"Hmph!" Maria turned her face to the side and looked at Rudy. "Rudy! There are three billion girls in this world. You can have a relationship with all of them if you want, but not with this woman."

Maria pointed her finger at Lu Bela and said, "She is not what she pretends to be. You can't trust her. She will betray you when you let your guard down."

'I was touching Lu Bela when she told me about herself, and I can tell she wasn't lying. Obviously, Maria is not lying either. She must be speaking from past experience. Something nasty must have happened between Lu Bela and Maria that she hates her to this day,

I want to ask her all the details right here, right now. But doing that would be just like digging my own grave. Not to mention, I am not interested in Lu Bela. Well... maybe a little after her image change, but... still... I can't imagine Lu Bela and me in a romantic relationship.

She herself said that artificial humans can't fall in love, so even if I do develop a thing or two for her... she wouldn't do the same for me. There is no point of having feelings for someone that I know will never love me back.

But... having sex with her in this body would... argh! For fuck's sake. My brain seems to have been taken over by my dick. My lust meter has been going crazy. It's not just for Lu Bela, but even for stranger girls I have never seen before.'

"Princess, I know you hate me, but you can't hate me when I am trying to please your man. If you do, that would mean you don't want to see your lover happy, which would mean you are a terrible lover."

"That's some nice logic you got there," Maria taunted. "Anyway, stay away from him. You can talk with him, but don't touch him unnecessarily."

She separated Rudy and Lu Bela's hands and said, "And holding hands is lewd!"

"Daddy, Maria told me a few things when we were eating," Lilim quipped.

"Oh, come on~" Rudy groaned while looking at Maria. "Why would you do that?"

"I thought she already knew."

"Now she is going to make excuses." He shot a judging glance at Lilim and remarked, "Just you watch her dodge my every question like a pro."

"I won't do that since now you know everything..." Lilim muttered under her breath. "And I would have told you before, but Rebecca would have chewed me alive, and you know it. She goes crazy when it's something about you.

Even when baby Rudy was given to her, she didn't let anyone go near him. She was like your guardian angel... no, more like your guardian demon."

Lilim shivered and hugged herself.

Rudy heard multiple footsteps approaching from all the hallways. Seemingly, the guests were returning from the dining hall.

"Well, since you are ready to talk about it, we can discuss it later." he turned to Lu Bela and said, "I leave the other matter to you."

Maria stood in between Lu Bela and Rudy to stop them from looking into each other's eyes.

"What other matter?" she asked with a jealous look on her face.

"The castle matters. Sheesh, now you are acting so possessive all of a sudden. Relax, I won't do something that upsets you or any of my harem members."

Maria squinted her eyes and remarked, "I was pretty upset when I found out my sister-like friend-cum-bodyguard had sex with you the night you met."

"Wow. Now that she doesn't have anything to taunt Belala with, she switched to me." Lilim hugged Rudy's arm and said, "Daddy, you better be careful, or she will burn everything from jealousy."

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Chapter 710: Sunrise Surprise

The guests began to enter the party hall with happy smiles on their faces. Seemingly they enjoyed the feast more than they expected. Some of them even requested Lu Bela to let them eat more, but Lu Bela asked them to watch the sunrise first.

She sent the guests back to the sea surface in their rides and asked them to cooperate with the UnderBlades.

Rudy, Maria, Lilim, and Lu Bela left on a personal ride and surfaced in the sea. Lu Bela was driving the vehicle, and Rudy sat beside her in the passenger's seat while Maria and Lilim sat in the backseat.

"Princess, I can feel your glare, even now. At least try to hide your murderous intentions," Lu Bela commented.

"That's how I look at every one. If you can't handle it, then stay away from my sight," Maria remarked arrogantly.

"Uhh... you really do need anger management treatment, princess. That's not very ladylike."

Maria placed her head on Lilim's shoulder and whispered something in her ears.

"I don't think so," Lilim said in response.

Then, they continued talking in whispers. But Rudy, who could do everything, couldn't help but shake his head and sigh.

"Where is Kim, by the way?" Rudy asked Lu Bela.

"I sent her to drop your intruder friends back to their home in the copter."

"I know, but it's been a while. She should have returned by now. She left before the dance party began, so it's been hours, actually."

"You are right. She might be outside, waiting for us," Lu Bela muttered. "I don't like asking her whereabouts every now and then because I don't want to annoy her. She might think I am trying to control her or something."

"Or she could be happy knowing you worry about her?" Rudy remarked.

"Maybe. You might think she is my secretary, but to me, she is my dearest friend. Losing her would mean losing everything," she said with a sad look in her eyes.

A few minutes later, they reached the surface, but it was a little away from the rest of the guests. Their rides were submarines that could turn into ships once they were on the surface.

And the windows of their rooms could open, and the railings around them could expand to make it a balcony from where they could watch the sunrise. Those who wanted a better experience could leave the room and go to the main lounge to watch from the wide open area.

They all stayed in the car, but Lu Bela had removed the roof, so it was just like sitting in an open boat.

The sun had begun to spread its light even though it wasn't out yet enough to be visible.

"Have you ever witnessed a sunrise before?" Lu Bela asked everyone.

"I have," Rudy replied.

"So have I," Lilim nodded.

Now, Everyone turned to Maria to wait for her answer.

"Yes, of course!"

"That's a lie." Lilim Rubbed Maria's shoulder and said, "She is not a morning person, so she has never woken up early enough to watch the sunrise."

Maria glared at Lilim for exposing the truth, but she looked a bit sad too.

Rudy moved his hand back towards Maria and held her hand.

"That would mean your first sunrise is with me," he then said with a grin on his face.

Maria's face flushed after hearing that, and she couldn't stop smiling.

"Whoa~ Daddy! You are so smooth~" Lilim teased them.

"Shut up, Lilim," Maria said to Lilim.

"Now you want to shut me up, huh? Well, I wasn't going to say this, but now that you are being so cheeky all of a sudden, it demands a comeback remark too."

"I am not a kid who would be offended by your silly remarks," Maria said with a proud and smug look on her face.

"My first sunrise was also with Daddy~"

Maria gritted her teeth and continued glaring at Lilim.

"Hehe~" Maria smirked. "Did you truly think you could win against me? After all, I know every little thing about you."

SIGH!

"So the saying 'Your closest friend might be a venomous snake, who would poison your life,' was true, after all."

"I have never heard of such a saying. Have you, daddy~?"

"How about you two pay attention to the sunrise?"

The black sky slowly began to lose its darkness as the sun started to rise. The clouds that were covering the sky and hiding the bright stars behind them were now glowing with the shade of the sky.

Soon, the sky was painted orange, and the clouds perfectly copied the colors. They seemed like marshmallows forming shapes and combining with each other.

The sea was reflecting the sky as though it was a mirror.

"It's... so beautiful..." Maria muttered in awe.

"It's going to get even more beautiful," Lu Bela smiled.

Soon, flocks of birds traveled in the sky and flew across the clouds. Small birds, big birds, colored birds; there were all types of birds flying in with their flocks, all going in the same direction.

However, it didn't end there.

Suddenly, a small fish jumped out of the sea and dived back into it.

"...!" Even Lu Bela was surprised to see that, as she never expected something like that to happen.

After that, all types and colors of fish began to jump and dive into the sea. The guests were at a loss for their words, and so were the girls.

Ultimately, big fish, such as dolphins, started to do the same. Even the other sea creatures that would rarely come to the surface were there.

Most of them were around Rudy's ride, and they jumped over their vehicle. Soon, the rare sea birds, such as flamingos, and other had landed on the sea surface.

Maria had held Rudy's hand tightly for various reasons as she was experiencing all kinds of emotions at the same time.

Lu Bela was left bewildered and couldn't take her eyes off the scenery.

Amid the beautiful experience, Rudy got up from his seat and got on his knees in front of Lilim. He held her hand and looked into her eyes before conjuring something shiny in his hand.

"Lilim, would you like to marry me?"