

Once Human 311

Chapter 311

"W-who the fuck are you?"

Sadik stared at Arthur with eyes full of hatred and confusion . No matter how much he wrecked his brains, he couldn't remember seeing such a unique-looking man .

Arthur leaned closer to the burly man until only a few centimeters were separating the two pair of eyes . However, such a movement only made Sadik more fearful, what increased the dread, even more, is the wails of his subordinates, who were slaughtered one-sidedly by an expressionless Lucy, who didn't bat an eye even with all the blood and dismembered bodies .

As he was stared at by the scarred man, whose pupil was strangely grey, Sadik couldn't hold his courageous attitude anymore, the thick killing intent emanating from Arthur isn't something he could handle .

"F-fuck! Who sent you?!"

Arthur let out a long sigh and backed down before retorting

"Seriously, talking to you is like playing piano to a cow . "

Arthur activated a low-level Illusion which altered his appearance . His scar disappeared and his hair became shorter and changed from grey to jet black . In just two seconds, he regained his appearance from his previous life, the same one he had when they kidnapped him .

Once Sadik witnessed this change, his pupils contracted as he stared at Arthur with disbelief, even after seeing him in person, he still couldn't believe that he's still alive .

Sadik took countless jobs in the past but the highest-paid one is, without a doubt, the kidnapping of Arthur Bilgart . Although it was a simple task, the sly wife paid his group a mind-numbing sum that allowed them to enjoy themselves for a long while .

Sadik personally disposed of Arthur's corpse after he was tortured to death, he literally used acidic chemicals to turn the body into nothingness . The corpse melted into a disgusting liquid which was scorched soon after using fire, there were no traces left, which is why he's in total incredulity .

"A heartless man you are, Sadik . How can you forget the face of one of your victims?"

Arthur smiled coldly as he watched his target look at him with a shocked expression .

"How c-can you be alive? Who are you!"

Sadik still couldn't believe that this is the real Arthur . After Earth changed due to the System, a lot of things became easier for humans to do, so disguising himself into a past victim of his is plausible, or so thought Sadik .

"Why are you asking something when you know the answer?"

Before letting the burly man talk, Arthur added:

"Now, let me ask you another question . Why do you think I'm here?"

As he said that, Arthur reverted to his original appearance and glared at Sadik with piercing eyes . The temperature of the room decreased by a dozen degrees and the light coming from the windows disappeared as total darkness covered the mansion, blocking any light or sound .

Inside this room, which was full of coziness a few minutes ago, you could only hear the fast-paced breathing of Sadik, who finally realized his fate and started begging

"P-please spare me! I'll give you anything you want!"

Arthur played with a conjured dark dagger and turned to Lucy, who was standing behind him silently .

"He said anything I want, what do you think I want, my dear Lucy?"

A pair of blood red eyes landed on Sadik, making the latter shiver uncontrollably and bringing a freezing chill down his spines .

"Obviously, his life . "

Her voice was devoid of emotion and to the mercenary leader, it was like a death sentence from the devil .

"Please! I beg you! I, I was forced! Really! I was forced by that bitch . . . s-she threatened us and we had to o-obey, please spare me!"

Facing the bloodlust of Lucy, who didn't hold back anything like Arthur, and with the humongous difference in Realm and power . Sadik couldn't keep up a strong front and melted under the overwhelming murderous intent thus he started begging for his life and blaming Claudia .

It was apparent that he was making a bunch of excuses to be forgiven and even if he wasn't at fault and he was really forced, it's not like Arthur is going to spare him either .

Arthur wasn't going to interrogate him since the information he knows is too little and not beneficial to him . He held the dark dagger and was about to finish the kneeling man whose face was wet from tears and snot when a weak and soft voice was heard from the corner of the room

"Please spare him . "

As he looked at the source of the voice, Arthur saw a half-kneeling girl . It was the girl who he sent flying with a Telekinesis Blast . Since the difference in power is too big, such a simple attack which wouldn't affect a God, nearly killed the little girl .

She had a dark red hair and bronze skin, blood leaked from her lips and she was barely able to stand up using her axe as support .

What's surprising isn't her begging but the fact that she's standing despite receiving a blow from him . Arthur's eyes locked into the struggling girl, who was making her way toward him with unsteady steps .

Once she was around two meters away from the couple, she kneeled toward Arthur and begged again

"Please spare him . I'm willing to give my life for his . "

Indifferent to her begging, Arthur retorted:

"It's his life that I want, though . And begging isn't simply going to make me spare him . "

With her forehead pressed on the ground on the ground, the kid repeated

"Please!"

Even Lucy, who's usually weak against kids, didn't urge Arthur to think about it or spare him for the time being . She knew how important this revenge is for him and Sadik is considered an enemy, an individual which has to die sooner than later .

"Life ain't fair kid . I don't know why you value him so much but it isn't my business . "

As he said that, Arthur's hand blurred and by the next, Sadik's lifeless body fell on the ground with its head rolling some distance away .

Hul stared at this scene with hollow eyes and after she realized what happened, she shouted loudly and was about to attack Arthur but ended up being knocked unconscious instantaneously .

"One is down, I guess . "

With the girl's body on his shoulders, Arthur waved his hand, teleporting himself and Lucy out of this place . The mansion, which became bloodied due to Lucy's massacre, soon disappeared as dark red flames engulfed a part of it and in just a few minutes, managed to scorch this place and turn it into a big piece of land where there's nothing but black ash .

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Arthur and Lucy reappeared in Dark Moon's headquarters with the unconscious Hul hanging on Arthur's shoulder . Once she was put down on the cold ground, the teenage girl's eyelids slowly fluttered before she woke up from her unconsciousness .

Obviously, she wouldn't have woken up if not for Arthur, who quickened the process or else they would have waited a long time before she wakes up on her own .

At first, the girl was confused as she cautiously looked around her and the second her eyes landed on Arthur and Lucy, she forced her numb body to stand up and lunged at him with ferocity .

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She was enraged due to what happened to Sadik, who she valued dearly since he's the one who took care of her . It's true that he was a bad person but he was, after all, her benefactor, hence his death affected her more than it should have .

"I WILL KILL YOU . "

Despite being severely injured from the previous Telekinesis Blast, Hul ignored the condition of her body and mustered all her power to attack this grey-haired man, who already became her archenemy .

Seeing her leaping at him, Arthur remained motionless, gazing at her actions with total calmness .

The girl ferociously punched Arthur's chest, planning to land a fatal blow . She believed in her strength and she's rational enough to know that the disparity between the enemy and herself is too big yet she still attacked, wanting to exact her revenge .

Normally, such a punch would even cause a person wearing a sturdy Steel Armor to suffer considerable damage yet this seemingly powerful punch landed on its target but no-damage, absolutely nothing .

Hul felt as if her fist struck an unbreakable Iron wall, the man didn't even flinch . The attack didn't even cause his flutter . A cracking sound was heard causing Hul to groan in pain . The bones of her fist didn't break but it's apparent that they cracked a bit .

While disregarding her injured fist, Hul splendidly raised her leg and kicked his face but the results were the same .

Since she applied more strength in every hit, the damage to her leg was even more severe . The short girl bounced back and held her leg as she grunted from the agony .

The second attack rendered her unable to even stand up but she still kept glaring at him with reddened eyes, which contained unextinguishable anger .

"It's frustrating, right? To have a strong urge to kill someone yet being so powerless, unable to do anything . "

Arthur crossed his arms and stared back at this girl, who harbored nothing but hate toward him .

Hearing no response, he resumed speaking:

"That's exactly what I felt in the past . Being weak is never a sin but being foolishly reckless is . "

"I'll definitely kill you! I'll rip you into shreds . "

The girl yelled at him with a shrieking tone but Arthur remained unfazed . He squatted in front of her and met her gaze while he taunted:

"Big claims but empty words . You want to kill me? Then go ahead, do it . I'm not even retaliating, attack me, rip me into shreds, satisfy your thirst for revenge! COME ON! DO IT!"

As he shouted at her face, the girl could only tightly clench her fists and bite her lips as she glared at him . She was barely able to move, the enemy is in front of her but she's too weak to kill him, heck! She can't even injure him .

"You can't . In my eyes, you're nothing but a girl who mistook greed for sympathy and generosity but don't get me wrong, I'm not saying it's your fault, you were just unfortunate to be saved by the wrong person . "

"FUCK YOU!"

Hul cursed at the man facing him and even spat on his face . Arthur took a handkerchief and wiped off the spit without getting angry .

"Foul words and barbaric actions, that's all you learned from him . Do you even know how to read or write? How to count? I'm sure you know nothing . You were only taught how to fight and kill . "

"Shut up! What do you even know? You kill my family then want to prove you're in the right? Stop trying to justify yourself you're nothing but dogshit!"

Arthur burst out laughing when he heard her words .

"Justifying myself? I'm just stating facts about you . And I don't need justification either, what I did what purely out of revenge, payback for what was done to me . Slaughtering the mercenary group and Sadik, that was surely an evil act but I do not care for I never spare my enemies, whether they are innocent or not, weak or strong . The simple fact that they dared to hurt me or my family is enough for them to be considered as targets to be killed . "

This time, Hul remained silent while still staring at him with piercing glare . As he saw her unyielding attitude, Arthur let out a sigh and mumbled

"Perhaps it was wrong of me to spare you too . "

Hul flinched when hearing his words but didn't say anything, she didn't expect him to show her mercy nor did she want to . For her, he's her archenemy and she'll do anything to kill him .

"Arthur, let me talk to her . "

The silent Lucy finally spoke, she walked next to Arthur and nodded to him, indicating that she'll take care of this matter . Arthur shrugged his shoulders and backed down, letting them talk alone .

From the looks of it, the girl won't listen to his words so he left the room so she could focus on Lucy for a bit . Although he left, that didn't mean he wasn't able to listen to their conversation .

"What's your name, girl . "

Lucy spoke to Hul with a soft voice, she didn't sound threatening or cold like her usual tone .

Hul still didn't reply, although Arthur is her main target, it doesn't mean that she doesn't hate Lucy too, who's Arthur's accomplice .

"At this rate, you'll only end up dying with being able to do anything . Sometimes, one has to do anything he can to survive . "

Lucy paused for a second before she continued;

"Do you know why my husband spared you? Why would he kill everyone but only let you live? It's certainly not because you're powerful or have special abilities, after all, we have plenty of such people . It's also not because of pity, such a reason is too lacking the reason you weren't killed is because you reminded him of his past self . Trapped, powerless, unaware that you are used and consider the people around you dear when they are using you as a pawn, a disposable pawn .

You can think of my words as pure lies to trick you but it's unfortunately not the case . He could have killed Sadik without having you watch but he didn't, he needed you to have a reason, a reason to live and get stronger . If you lose everything and find yourself alone then you'll live your life carelessly . You're still very young so you still have a chance to wake up from your delusions and change, it is not too late for you, it's fine even if you use your hate toward us as a fuel to become stronger and when the

time, we'll wait for you to kill us, with open arms . So, what do you say, do you want to die or create a new path for yourself?"

Lucy silently gazed at the tanned little girl and waited for her even after the passing of several minutes .

"I, I want . . . "

In the VIP room of a hospital, a young man was standing in front of a very old man who was laying on his deathbed . The old man had many wrinkles and a very pale face, a lot of tubes were stuck into his body and his breathing was heavy .

"Arthur, you're the closest thing I had to a son *cough* *cough* you must be happy that you'll no longer hear this old man's rambling, right? Hahahahah*cough*ha"

The young man's eyes became teary as he stared at this old man, who's usually very energetic became weak and fragile, basically on the brink of death .

"Son, the greatest trick the Devil pulled was convincing the world there was only one of him . You're leaving me too worried you little bastard *cough* *cough* . "

The old man coughed some blood but he ignored it and stared at Arthur with eyes filled with complex emotions as he uttered his last words

"Remember this, son, see not the face, but the eyes . "

As he left Lucy and Hul in that place, Arthur teleported to A peaceful village South of China . More accurately, he appeared in a small graveyard, in front of a specific grave .

He kneeled in front of it and banged his head on the ground while saying

"Old man Gu, this student of yours finally understand your words . I will treasure them for eternity . "

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Arthur soon returned to the cave and found out that Lucy, some way or another, managed to calm down Hul . Although she was still glaring at him like usual, she wasn't as hostile as before . Still, if looks could kill, he would have died a dozen times already .

"So, are you done for today or have you got other targets?"

Lucy walked up to him while her three subordinates from before appeared from the shadows and took Hul, who was unwilling but was unable to struggle away from their grip .

"Mmmm I still have one person in mind but I don't know if he can be considered a target or not . "

Lucy jokingly pouted and retorted

"Tsk! And I was thinking about finishing what we began earlier . . . "

She was talking about their private time in her room here . It's been a long time since they did such a thing so they wanted to fully enjoy their time but sadly, her subordinates didn't take much time to procure information about the mercenary group, which existed no more .

While Arthur was away for a bit visiting the graveyard, Lucy had ordered two of the cloaked women to finish off the rest of the mercenaries, the ones who were busy with missions . They were no threat but that doesn't mean they'll be spared .

Hearing her sulking, Arthur smirked and lifted her chin, giving her a soft kiss then said

"Once this is done, we'll have plenty of time so you better prepare yourself . "

Dazed, Lucy nodded her head, from her actions, it seems she didn't even focus on what he said . Seeing such a behavior, Arthur chuckled and patted her head .

It has always been like this, short kisses would leave her dazed and wanting for more(not that this doesn't imply sex but just wanting more than a short kiss . Go away! Perverted minds!) .

Arthur closed his eyes for around ten seconds before he opened them again . He located his target and all that's left is teleport to his destination .

Using Space Magic, Arthur easily teleported himself and Lucy to the USA, more accurately, NYC . Unlike their usual routine, they didn't appear exactly next to their target, which left Lucy a bit confused .

"You're planning to go in normally?"

She uttered those words as she looked at the skyscraper before her . It was well over a thousand meters in height and definitely stood out from the nearby buildings, making it way too eye-catching .

As she saw the luxurious sign hanging at the wide front doors, Lucy furrowed her brows but didn't comment .

"'LobiSoft Entertainment', hehehe I guess a show-off never changes . "

Arthur nodded his head as he contemplated this skyscraper . Even in South Korea, Paris, or other cities, which are economically growing every day, finding such a building is very rare .

There's a Magic Tower that's being built, it is way taller than this building but since it isn't finished yet, it can't be considered as a skyscraper as there is the chance it gets destroyed due to unknown interventions .

Arthur was planning to take a good look at this Magic Tower, which is said to only be built using Medium to High-leveled magic . Massive amounts of money were spent on that project, from buying resources to hiring mages .

It is said that the Magic Tower would be a faction similar to the IHO but solely composed of mages, and talented ones at that .

However, Arthur knew that it'll just be made of egoistic mages who think they are above the others .

Now that there is real magic, it won't take long before the rise of new kinds of religions and powers and the fall of democratic policies, that is if not proper measures are taken and if Science doesn't improve

enough to be able to counter the Skills provided by the System, which isn't probably unless a catalyst is used to speed up the process .

After all, high-levelled skills can cause much more destruction and fewer resources than bombs and guns . For example, if one had enough Defense or special skills such as [Metal Body] [Stone Armor] [Fortify Eath], deflecting bullets is a simple thing to do .

Arthur wanted to come here for two reasons, to visit someone and to find out about the truth about Hell Gate . It just cannot be a coincidence that the game is played on Westia, more accurately, on the Westia continent .

"Shall we go?"

Arthur lifted his arm, indicating for Lucy to hold on to him, just like a couple . To not attract more attraction than needed, His and Lucy's appearances were changed . He resembled himself from the past, before the kidnapping, and Lucy changed into the appearance of an average looking women .

Not particularly ugly but not overly beautiful either . Although her real face was always hidden thanks to the mask, her silver hair was very unique so she'll be recognized immediately if appeared in public with her real appearance .

With intertwined arms, the couple entered the LobiSoft lobby, where they were faced with a neat and organized reception . The place wasn't crowded but there were some people tending to their work or managing some visits .

Arthur headed for the main reception, where a middle-aged woman with makeup was standing and waited for the guy before them to speak a few words with the receptionist before it was finally his turn .

"Hello, how may help you?"

The beautiful woman smiled friendly at them and spoke politely .

"Yes, we wish to meet CEO Josef . "

While still keeping her smile, she replied

"Yes, do you have a meeting with him?"

"No, but we still wish to meet him, please arrange that . "

Since he doesn't want to barge in, Arthur at least wanted to try to enter normally . However, knowing how hard it is to meet with the CEO, it probably won't work .

The receptionist's face stiffened as she seemed to realize something, she tried her best to not show any displeasure and said

"To meet the CEO, you must schedule a meeting . Unfortunately, I can do nothing about your request . "

The first thought she had was that it's a troublemaking couple . It isn't rare to see someone come to the reception and ask to meet the CEO but in most cases, they end up being thrown out by the guards .

Arthur and Lucy didn't make a ruckus and merely requested her politely so she didn't overreact and waited for them to leave or schedule a meeting .

Moreover, not every person can schedule a meeting, after all, they aren't meeting a farmer but the CEO of an international media and gaming company .

"I guess it can't be helped . "

Arthur shrugged and turned invisible along with Lucy thus leaving the receptionist dumbfounded . Her face became dumbfounded as she looked around searching for them but found nothing .

She panicked and called for the guards, informing them of the strange occurrence . With the appearance of the System, seeing a couple vanish isn't an impossible thing but usually, when it happens, it's certainly a bad omen .

There were many cases where a few robbers who gained a special invisibly skill or item, would assault a bank and leave unscathed just by disappearing from everyone's view .

Meanwhile, Arthur and Lucy had already teleported to the top floor, where there was nothing but an extravagant office that belonged to the CEO and his secretary .

Currently, there were two middle-aged men shaking hands with a smile on their faces . They appeared at ease and a bit worn-out since they passed the past two hours discussing a long-time contract, which will be beneficial to both parties .

At the corner of the room, Arthur and Lucy waited for the extra guest to leave while keeping their invisibility .

In fact, a person like Arthur has countless ways to turn invisible . Possessing a beast that can blend with the environment, high ranked Wind Magic skill [Subtle Invisibility], but the best invisibility is, without a doubt, the one using Space Magic .

It literally creates a small space for him where no one can see him or sense him . One has to be an expert in the God Monarch Realm to sense him and that is if he's only using Space Magic without the few Shadow Magic and Dark Magic passive skills that can turn him into nothing but air as if he never existed .

After a few minutes passed, the guest finally left and was replaced by an expressionless secretary that brought some tea to the CEO Josef

As he let out a sigh and savored this hot tea, CEO Josef happened to glance at a corner of the room where there a bit of shadow due to its location .

At first, he glanced for a split second and shifted his vision to the thin yet immensely large windows but after two seconds passed, he seemed to have realized something so he hastily turned his head again only to see two figures emerging from those shadows .

One was a woman and the other was a tall middle-aged man with short dark hair .

As he stared at the man, CEO Josef pupils contracted, he even forgot about the cup of tea, which he had subconsciously let go hence resulting in it spilling on the expensive carpet floor .

With a gaping mouth and a flabbergasted look, the man said

"Mother . . . fucker "

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Stupefied, the middle-aged man stood there with an expression filled with total disbelief .

After some time has passed the man seemed to have calmed down . He took a few deep breaths and spoke again:

"Freaking hell! I knew it!"

He got closer to Arthur while closely inspecting him from head to toe . For some reason, he didn't even doubt for a second that it's a trick or some kind of hallucination .

"No corpse, no conclusive evidence about your death . . . I fucking knew it!"

After gazing at Arthur for who knows how long, he shifted his attention to the woman next to him . Average appearance and an expressionless face, her presence here is a complete mystery for him yet he tried to come up with some scenarios on his own .

"It's been a long time, Josef . "

Arthur smiled as he stepped ahead and extended his hand for a handshake . However, the man didn't follow with the courtesy and instead went it for a sudden hug .

"Man . . . I just knew it! You couldn't have died like that . A heart attack? Motherfuckers don't even know how to lie!"

He whispered those words excitedly as he hugged Arthur, who didn't push him away or show any displeasure .

The short-lived reunion ended quickly, the man held Arthur's shoulders tightly and said

"Come come! This is gonna be a long afternoon!"

He gestured for Arthur and Lucy to stand on the comfortable chairs that are facing his desk while indicating for his secretary to go away only to find out that she already read the mood and understood that it's going to be a private conversation .

When all three people were seated, the man curiously threw some glances at Arthur and said

"I know you as a lonely man, so who might this lady be? Wait wait! Let me guess!"

He assessed Lucy for a bit more and resumed

"I say she was your savior! Some kind of dramatic encounter where two fates were bound together, right? There's no way you can find a girl by yourself, much less a proper partner, after all, you're a loser in romance hahahaha"

He banged the desk as he mocked Arthur, who had a weird grimace on his face . Josef seemed to have hit the nail in the head but he didn't need to say the last part, or so thought Arthur .

"Indeed, she's my savior . You're still good at coming up with random yet correct assumptions . "

Arthur tapped the table with his finger, a bit nervous that Josef would utter some embarrassing moments from the past .

"My name is Lucy MoonStar, his wife . "

Lucy calmly introduced herself but her words only made Josef stop mid-laughter and stare at Arthur dumbfoundedly . To avoid any unnecessary explanation, Arthur waved his hand and added:

"It's complicated . Let's change the subject, shall we?"

"A-ah yes yes, I want to hear the details!"

Josef changed into a serious look and listened to Arthur, who briefly explained what happened and the events that led to his death . Obviously, anything about Astria and the reincarnation were omitted .

Going back in time for a few years, Arthur and Josef were close friends . Josef was probably one of the few friends Arthur had . They weren't best friends, neither were they simple acquaintances, in a way, they are more like business partners than friends but their relationship deepened with the passing of years .

Although Arthur wasn't sure of all the people who helped Claudia, he was at least sure that Josef is definitely not amongst them . Actually, the reason is really simple, he didn't have any reason to kill him or steal his money .

Josef is a businessman richer than Arthur by a lot, he had political power, a powerful backing and multiple companies with LobiSoft being the main one .

Going to such lengths as to torture him and get him assets wouldn't benefit Josef that much since he didn't really need them . Moreover, Josef, this man, is a sly person that would use tricks to win over many wealthy people but he had never backstabbed people . He's more of a direct person, a few people could handle him when his foul-mouth goes on a rampage, they would hear all kinds of insults .

Of course, there's no way to tell that he's the kind to backstab or betray his comrades or not but Arthur believed that he is a rather honest person compared to others, like Claudia .

"That snake bitch! All those tears I've seen were nothing but fart!"

Josef let out a long sigh when Arthur finished telling him the short version of his death . Although he kind of expected that Arthur was killed, he didn't think it'll be this horrific .

"So what are you gonna do?"

This time, it wasn't Arthur who answered but Lucy

"We're going to clean up the trash, obviously . "

"That, I know . But going straight at Claudia isn't an easy thing, the guards around here are no joke . "

Arthur chuckled and retorted

"Can those guards stop this?"

As he said that, he pointed to the center of the room where a jet black pit appeared . In an instant, a Death Knight more than two meters tall appeared, with an expressionless face, dark-clad armor and a greatsword on its back .

It was the embodiment of death, just looking at it brought chills to Josef, who was flabbergasted for a few seconds before he snapped out of his daze .

"I can't see its Level . . . "

Arthur shrugged and said

"It's because it's over a thousand . "

"A-A thousand?"

His expression became exaggerated but instead of cowering in fear, Josef darted next to the Death Knight and started examining it, going through the armor and the weapon, without touching it, of course .

"I've heard rumors of some people acquiring the Necromancy skills but I knew they were nothing but dogshit . But . . . shit! This is the real fucking deal!"

Suddenly, the Death Knight looked at Josef thus causing the latter to flinch and take a step back but the look of curiosity never disappeared from his eyes .

"Can you summon more than one?"

"If I go all out then I can summon forty . "

"f-forty one is more than enough to decimate all the Heroes on Earth . "

"Yes, but I don't want to decimate anyone, I just want to pay back some debts . "

Arthur seemed uninterested and summoned the Death Knight back . Josef took some time to collect himself and calm his fastly beating heart before he took his seat again .

Some time passed while the two talked about some minor things until Arthur asked about what's intriguing him from this morning

"By the way, that game your company created, Hell Gate, was it? Mind telling me more about it?"

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"Yeah, it's an amazing game, right? What about it?"

"That's not what I'm asking . Being the CEO of its company, I'm sure you know things beyond what's public, way beyond . . . "

Arthur's gaze penetrated Josef, trying to discover any clues from his expression but the latter kept a smiling face without flinching whatsoever .

After a few seconds, Josef said

"Arthur . . . you look exactly the same as five years ago but I can feel you're different, much more different . "

Arthur shrugged and retorted

"Feel huh . . . isn't that thanks to your title?"

It was only at this time that Josef had a truly shocked expression yet he recovered quite fast and added:

"Hahahaha how can I best you!"

Usually, inhabitants of Earth can use a simplified Appraisal skill but it's easily negated by acquiring the skill book [Status Lock] . There are a few exceptions where special individuals have a higher version of Appraisal but those are few and far between .

Arthur's Appraisal is beyond what anyone can imagine . Not only does he get detailed information on the skill's target, but it also gives their titles, a small summary about them . Upon further inspection, he found out that he can see what the effects of the titles are and the powerful skills of his target .

It was definitely worth investing a skill point on such a skill . When he first saw Josef, he obviously activated [Appraisal] and carefully read what was displayed .

Josef Le Orn [Race: Human] : Lv27

Age : 37

Title : The Watcher

Top skills : [Observation Lv24] - [Foul Mouth Lv11] .

Short Summary: Josef Le Orn, born from a wealthy British family, managed to gain the favor of his father and inherited the several companies owned by his family . Successfully built LobiSoft Company from scratch and became one of the top fifty richest people on Earth four years ago .

The Watcher: The user's senses are slightly enhanced, he sees more than just the exterior of his target and is able to sense the mood of others .

25% chance to resist mental attacks on this list : [BloodLust] / [Seduce] / [Fear] .

3 . 5% chance to gain [Calm Mind] for one minute .

"I'll cut through the chase and tell you what I want . Who built those helmets and who invented the world of Hell Gate . "

Still smiling, Josef calmly replied

"Are you asking as a friend or as a . . . ?"

"As an old friend, obviously . I'm not going to press you, one way or another, I'll uncover the truth, it's just a matter of time . "

Josef chuckled and stared back at Arthur for an unknown amount of time then gave his response

"It would be unpolite of me to not answer you after all what you've shown and told me . "

The middle-aged man got up from his seat and walked to a specific corner of the room then tapped his foot twelve times while stopping two seconds each three taps .

When the last tap occurred, the luxurious carpet and the ground under it opened and a jet black vault could be seen . There wasn't a place to write a password or the usual fingerprints mechanism .

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Using his senses, Arthur easily bypassed whatever Josef put around the vault to protect it and was able to see what's inside . A bunch of files clustered on top of each other, there wasn't money or anything like that .

There was also a special box where even his sense couldn't see through which made him slightly astonished . Even Lucy was startled as she tried the same thing but no matter how many times she tried, the mysterious blocked everything, from the God Sense to Arthur's Sixth Sense .

The couple patiently waited for Josef to open the vault . Surprisingly, Le Orn took out a transparent rectangular object from his pocket and took out a thin hair that could barely be seen . As he did so, he explained

"Japan, 1985 . The military was about to execute a notorious serial killer and an international criminal named Wolfram Sakimoto . They were about to execute him in a secret military base situated in a desolate mountain range when, suddenly, an earthquake with an aptitude of 3 . 4 occurred . It wasn't too devastating but it still caused damages, the problem, however, was the disappearance of this criminal . He literally vanished from the face of the earth, in such a high-guarded base where there was a soldier every two meters, there's no way he would have escaped, so they presumed he died even though the matter was unusually odd . "

Josef took out some documents and journals that have some details about the earthquake and the old military base which is no longer usable in the present .

"The people in high power and many politicians were stubborn and insisted that the military should keep searching for the body and the matter became problematic even when more than a year passed after his disappearance . Upon further investigation and lots of money spent, I managed to dig out some information about Wolfram, mind-blowing truths and conspiracies that could bring down more than a few dozen politicians all over the world . What I did not find, however, is Wolfram's life before he was thirteen years old, literally, nothing was found, no record, no nationality, absolutely and utterly nothing, the man popped up from nowhere .

I dug even further but wasn't able to find his true origins but I discovered that he was by no means normal . He excelled in the field of assassination and stealth, had strength stronger than the average human and was a freak in combat, doesn't that ring a bell?"

"You mean he had the System thus enhanced his basic stats?"-Arthur

"That's my theory but it's unlikely, after all, we never saw him fight so maybe the old records were exaggerating like many old legends . The man was a mystery in every sense of the word, he worked for several underground organizations and assassinated more than ten politicians that had significant influence in their proper government . "

Arthur pondered for a second then said

"What does he have to do with what I asked?"

"Absolutely everything! Wolfram disappeared but he left things behind . To be more specific, he left a pendant, a ring, and a small object that couldn't be deciphered by the people of the past . The ring and pendant were normal hence they were hidden away, however, the small object which was similar to a chip was thoroughly studied by the scientists for more than a decade . They tried their best to unlock it or try to figure out its purpose but the technology was just not advanced enough, albeit the large amounts of money poured in this research . Time passed and no results were met even after twenty years so they abandoned it due to insufficient funds and sold it for a moderate price . The chip traveled from one hand to another until I acquired in an underground auction seventeen years ago . Little by little, I started hiring scientists, experts from all over the world to try and decipher even a bit of it, I even offered a hundred million dollar as a prize for anyone who manages to uncover something about the chip .

Fortunately, eleven years ago, a group of four scientists deciphered a code from the small chip . In fact, it was only composed of numbers but upon further inspection, they found out that this set of numbers is coordinates, for what? We did not know . Another year passed and we were met with other fruitful results . The chip is some kind of storage, it contains countless information, most things were incomprehensible due to language barrier or insufficient intelligence, anyway, the four scientists successfully translated a minuscule part of the chip which allowed my company to expand and create Hell Gate "

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"The chip is essentially a super hardware filled with a mind-numbing amount of information that we couldn't decode . However, the four scientists were lucky enough to uncover some of the mysteries revolving around Wolfram's chip . Although the results were scarce, they were, nevertheless, satisfactory . After fixing some of the problems encountered mid-way through the creation of Hell Gate, we managed to successfully release a complete and working version of the game . "

Arthur carefully listened to Josef's explanation . He was surprised by the origin of this game, which is not really what it seems to the public . The players think they are just equipping a headset and starting a fantasy adventure inside a popular VRMMO, however, it's likely that, one way or another, they are transported to Astria .

Actually, Arthur wasn't sure if they really are transported there or if it's just their souls or consciousness, or even how this whole process works but it's not just some simple coincidence .

Probably, this means that the party he stumbled upon when searching for the 'office' on the Westia continent, is players from Earth, or so speculated Arthur, which means that the inhabitants of Astria are considered NPCs to the players, this applied to himself too .

If that's the case then the youth who he handed to the black sword to is surely living on Earth, that is, if his theory is correct .

"The implementation of the System on Earth wasn't done just to empower to its inhabitants . I think it's either to defend from an invasion or protect it from some disaster . The ones controlling the System

highly value Earth due to how fast its humans are evolving despite the inability to wield Mana or use Magic . From what I have heard from your friend, the System may have existed for a short of time on Earth but only one person could use it . There is also a high probability that he transmigrated from another world within the System's universe since he had one before being transported here . You need to know that the addition of the System to a world or a planet is a huge event and it isn't to be taken lightly as it can lead to either the prosperity or the destruction of said world . They surely had a goal in mind to suddenly apply their leveling System to earthlings, as for what it is, this I do not know . Anyways, see if you can get your hands on that chip, maybe I'll be able to discover something from it with the help of the ARK . "

The copy shared his opinion as he, too, was curious about the strange events that occurred in the past .

"If the chip is so precious then why don't the System take it back? Don't tell me they can't locate it . "

Intrigued and confused, Arthur asked his copy .

"The System is a very complicated thing, Arthur . It isn't a living thing and although there are some living beings in high power in its echelon, ultimately, it's the main core of the System that gives orders and handles things . It's a very strange entity made from pure technology without the use of any outside force such as Mana or any kind of energy . Maybe it's doing this on purpose or that it simply is unaware of the location of the chip, no one knows . It's useless to ponder about things and whatever this whole matter it, it's better not to meddle too much, just watch from the fence and try to excavate some information if possible . Having the System as an enemy is worse than some powerful faction from the Cloud Sea Universe because if it's something that the System doesn't lack then it's definitely manpower and numbers . "

Josef handed Arthur the documents and records about the earthquake and some pictures of the old military base . He also retrieved the brown box and carefully put it on the table .

Again, Arthur tried to use his sense and see what's inside but to no avail, whatever the materials this box was made of, it totally negated both his senses .

"The situation has become quite chaotic after the sudden appearance of monsters and dungeons . Just after Hell Gate was released, I halted the research and hid the chip from the prying eyes . The Royal family of Britain and even its government contacted me seeking the chip but I flatly rejected their offers which led to some complications that were easily solved with money, of course . "

"The way I see it, the chip isn't that well hidden . Anyone with enough destructive power could break in and take it . "

Hearing such words, the CEO smirked and retorted:

"There's many precautions and alarms set to avoid such unfortunate situations . Despite the harmless look of this office, it is tightly guarded . "

The sly grin of Josef disappeared within seconds and his jaw dropped in shock . The reason for this dumbfoundedness is a sudden change in the temperature of the room which resulted in the appearance of two-grey cloaked figures that had more half of their bodies frozen beginning from their feet up to

their abdomens . This two hooded couple were startled and retaliation threw several daggers embedded with poison;

The reason for their retaliation is because they sensed their life withering due to the ice that almost reached their hearts . The moment it freezes their heart, it would be their doom . Although they were high-leveled and experts in fights and stealth, they couldn't break off the solid ice that is chilling their bodies and immobilizing them .

As for the daggers, they didn't even travel half the distance before becoming frozen and disintegrating into nothingness in a split second .

"If by precautions you mean this then it's really not enough . "

Obviously, Lucy didn't completely freeze the two of them completely . She just did that to show Josef that they have been aware of their presence since the very beginning .

Arthur easily discovered them with his sense and Map, which shows any living being as long as it's within its range .

"Only you two would be able to easily take the chip . I don't think anyone else would be able to defeat my two guards this easily . "

Josef forcefully calmed himself and signaled for his two guards so they don't do anything reckless . It's apparent that Lucy didn't want to kill them and only did this to prove her husband's words .

"Now that things have come this far, I think a proper explanation would be for the best . "

Arthur stated as he stared at Josef with a serious yet calm gaze .

In response, Josef smiled back and replied

"Well, you know I'm the curious type and I'm eager to know how powerful you two are but I'm not reckless enough to dig for the truth behind your backs . If you wish to tell me then I won't refuse . "

From the previous display, Josef knew that Arthur wasn't just a Necromancer . Lucy seemed to be an extremely powerful mage too . He didn't associate her with the masked woman that follows Claudia because the appearance was different, furthermore, Lucy only used fire or magma in public and never displayed her Yin powers .

"Alright, then care for a small trip?"

In response to Arthur's invitation, Josef took the box and nodded while motioning for his two guards to back off . When he made sure the CEO was ready, Arthur waved his hand, creating a middle-sized tunnel, there were no spacial turbulences and the destination was known only to its caster .

Lucy already guessed where they'll go, as for Josef, he stared at this tunnel which resembled a spatial tear and hesitated for a second before he mustered his will and followed right after Arthur .

To protect it from the strong pressure of the interior of this tunnel, Arthur created a large Dark Barrier that protected Le Orn .

During this short trip was took only a few seconds, the two parties exchanged no words . Josef was anticipating where they'll land and Arthur was asking his copy a few things .

"If the players of Hell Gate are transported to Astria then how come the game's system overwrites the one they had on Earth?"

"The Levelling System of Astria is way superior to the one on Earth so it's normal that it can overwrite the latter . Basically, when they enter the game, the game's System overwrites the users' own system temporarily . When they leave the game, they regain their original system . Honestly, it's the first time I saw something like this . "

"Then what if an earthling travels to Astria via a spatial tunnel instead of using the headset, will the System be overwritten?"

"Most likely, but they'll still keep their skills and level they gained on Earth . There is even a strong chance that the level will fuse with the one they gained in the game, which will empower them even further . "

"Is that even possible?"

"I don't know, I'm just speculating . I'm sure this wasn't part of the System's plan . Anyways, we'll see if my theory was correct or not once your friend arrives on Astria . "

The short trip finally came to an end as the trio appeared on top of the High Tower of the MoonStar sect . The second they appeared, Anastassia and Jakob were already on the roof . Although the tunnel they took from Josef's office wasn't big, the one that appeared on top of the tower was easily noticeable .

Anastassia was alarmed for a second but upon seeing who arrived, she broke into a smile and greeted them . Josef, the one who was kept in dark, gaped as he looked at the view in front of him .

He wasn't foolish enough to think that this was Earth, the flying bone dragons in the sky and the buildings didn't match the civilization on Earth .

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"W-where are we?"

"Astria, the world of Hell gate to be more precise . "

Even when he heard those words, Josef wasn't able to understand what's happening until more than a minute passed .

Lucy ignored the shocked Le Orn and walked up to Anastassia and gave her a hug . It's been a long time since they saw each other and the Vice-clan leader was very happy to see the safety of her friend .

Obviously, she didn't hug Jakob but she still greeted him friendly .

"Welcome back, Lucy . "

Anastassia smile as she welcomed Lucy and led her inside . Since Arthur wanted to show something to Josef, Lucy decided to spend some time with Anastassia and co and see what's become of her and

Arthur's sect . She noticed how the sect prospered and how bustling it became, full of life and devoid of the blood stench and vulgar tribes that had roamed this area in the past .

In just five years, the sect transformed from a barbaric tribe to a grand city that had almost impenetrable defenses and filled with all kinds of Races, even demons, despite their minority .

Arthur didn't even let Josef comprehend the situation before he teleported them both far from the sect . They appeared North-West of the Demon Continent, right outside of the illusion barrier protecting Westia .

Arthur noticed that Josef seemed to be reading notifications as his gaze kept wavering . Using appraisal, he saw that Le Orn's level rose from 27 to 82

"As expected, your level rose . Did you gain your skills of Hell Gate too?"

His Level didn't rise by much but that's probably because Josef didn't play much of Hell Gate . He just played it rarely to try a few things or relax, so the significant increase in Level didn't occur .

"Is there any kind of Game Masters in Hell Gate?"

Arthur's questions caused Josef to finally shift his attention from the notifications back to him .

"Unfortunately, no . There is a main AI that created itself the second we finished the game, it handles the System and we weren't able to increase our stats to act as GMs . We tried many times but there isn't a way to bypass its firewall and increase our stats to a limitless amount . "

Hearing this, the copy laughed from within the ARK and mocked

"Of course that's not possible . If it were, then they can make themselves Gods within a few minutes . The System believes in progress rather instantaneous gain in power, which is why it created the leveling and skill System . "-copy

"A-anyway, where are?"

Josef Le Orn stared at the fog in front of him and the sea below him, he was uncomfortable as it's the first time he was flying . He stared at the calm Arthur, who raised his hand and unleashed a streak of dark lightning from his hand, which totally freaked out the CEO .

"Beyond this illusion is the Westia Continent . "

Josef frowned and said

"What?"

"It's the same continent as the one in Hell Gate . I know it's hard to believe but shortly, you'll know the truth and hopefully, you can explain a few things to me, in more details if possible . "

Arthur spoke with a serious tone, unlike his usual nonchalant-ness . This problem that popped out of nowhere isn't as simple as it seems . Though the appearance of the System didn't bring much harm to the Earth's society, the game may disrupt the balance and if the System discovers about this, it can become rather complicated .

In all honesty, Arthur couldn't care less what happened to Earth but Astria is another matter . It's true that the Westia Continent is far from his sect and the other continents but that doesn't mean it won't be affected by the game sooner or later . Maybe the chip can bypass the illusion around the continent and allow players to travel beyond it .

"After all I have seen today, I doubt I can be more surprised than this . It's one shock after another, spare me, please . "

While massaging his temples, Josef uttered those words in a tired tone . From Arthur's appearance and the truth behind his death, his unusual power, the existence of this world and so on, it's truly too much for a human who has been living a comfortable life until today .

As the duo proceeded into the illusion with the Demonic Lightning paving a way for them, Arthur's could help but think about Wolfram, who is the center of everything that is happening .

'Just who the hell is this person?'

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Not long after Arthur paved a way through the illusion, the duo appeared on the Westia Continent . For Josef to recognize this place, Arthur used Space Magic to take them to a more popular place yet devoid of living beings as to not attract attention .

With merely two teleports, they arrived at their destination . From what Arthur heard and saw, there are five big main cities on Hell Gate and one of them have a distinguishable black mountain near it .

The moment they appeared mid-air, merely some distance separating them from this unimaginably tall mountain, Josef stared with surprise at the sight before him .

Although he expected Arthur's words to be true when he heard them a short while ago, he was still feeling surprised over the fact that he was inside his company's game without resorting to the headset .

"You understand the severity of this matter, right? It's not some game but reality!"

Arthur's words caused the middle-aged man to snap out of it and gulp some saliva unconsciously before he took a moment to compose himself and then reply:

"It really exists . . . but even if it is exactly like the continent on Hell Gate, it doesn't change anything . "

Arthur's next words caused Josef to feel as if a bucket of cold water was thrown at him

"That's not the problem . The issue is the players, they aren't just playing a game but are somehow being teleported here, not physically, of course . "

With the use of his sense, Arthur was able to discover countless humans and other Races wandering in this bustling city . It was filled with 'NPCs' and 'players' . Most of them were low-leveled and even the strongest one is still considered weak from his point of view .

"Teleported? Are you even sure about this?"

Josef didn't seem to totally believe Arthur about this matter . It seemed to incomprehensible, or over-the-top matter .

With the addition of the System, many theories and speculations were created about the existence of other worlds .

'Where were the monsters born from?'

'Who spawned those dungeons?'

'Where did the Goddess come from?'

Such questions were frequently asked thus many people believed of the existence of life beyond the milky galaxy, or perhaps even in it, these people included Josef, too .

This is why, despite being really shocked, Le Orn was still able to cope with his sudden appearance on Astria . However, for a game his company created to be able to transfer its players to this place in an instant, it seemed too far-fetched, at least that's what Josef thought .

"I'm 50% sure . We can prove if I'm right quite easily, though . "

Josef pondered for a moment and then said

"Yeah, if we can find one of the popular players then I can recognize him but the continent is to-"

His stopped mid-sentence as he seemed to remember that Arthur had unfathomable power . He didn't know what happened when they warped but he caught a glimpse after the first teleport and realized they were at the center of the continent and one second later, they appeared near Black Mountain City .

'To cross such a distance in a split second . . . just how strong is he?'

Josef was very curious but he kept all these thoughts to himself . Arthur changed from the past, he wasn't that easy-going like before, in fact, despite the way he acts nonchalantly right now, Josef still felt some kind of wall that was blocking him from becoming friendly with Arthur like before .

'Then again, it's to be expected after what had been done to him '

"Exactly . Is there any player with a specific level you want me to search for?"

As if he expected such a question, the CEO replied immediately

"Yes, it's my niece, a mage called Ramachelge, Level 155 . "

Arthur nodded his head and closed his head for more than half a minute before he finally opened them again . Since his target was a low-level and this place was crawling with them, it took a bit more time than usual . Moreover, Westia Continent was larger than the other continents .

"I found someone matching your description . A female with a fox mask and blonde hair, around 173Cm tall . "

"Yes yes, that's her!"

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Arthur waved his hand and the two of them, yet again, teleported a long distance and appeared on top of a volcanic mountain, which seemed about to burst at any second .

This place was at the Central East of the continent and apart from the human mage Arthur sensed, there didn't seem to be other players .

"I really don't get it, instead of adventuring in the game, why not do it on Earth, at least you'll become stronger and gain money . "

Arthur voiced his thoughts as his gaze penetrated the fog surrounded the peak of the mountain and landed on the robbed female mage who was waving her staff and firing magic skills at her opponents .

It would be logical for people to play this game before the System appeared as they want to immerse themselves in a fantasy-like world with skills and too . But reality became exactly similar to this game where only the environment is different yet here they are doing their best to increase their Lvl here instead of doing it in reality, where it really matters .

Although it's a bit ironic, Arthur, who owned a company that managed games and multimedia, he wasn't much of a player . He was very interested in developing games, but playing them is another matter .

This doesn't mean he never played, in fact, he played a decent amount to be able to understand the point of view of gamers, however, he didn't immerse himself too much .

"It's difficult . Leveling, I mean . The game helps the players a bit and dying in it doesn't really kill you, you can also lower the pain level so you don't get traumatized but the reality is different . A single stab from even a goblin could kill a low-level citizen or cause him to become a cripple, the risk too high . There's also the perspective of wealthy and politically powerful people, they have strong guards to protect them so why would they waste their time to empower themselves when others could do that, then work for them . So, with much free time, they usually tend to play the game to unleash their desires, which can be twisted in most of the cases . A gentle lady from a wealthy family could become a sadistic player killer in the game For them, the game is a way out to escape what's happening on Earth . "

Josef paused for a second, took a deep breath, then resumed his speech

"Many see the change that occurred to Earth and something that could lead to our evolution . Something incredible that happens once in a million years but facts say otherwise . From destroyed homes, obliterated cities and massacred villages and towns . Not once or twice did a genocide happen due to the spreading of unknown magic caused by the creatures inside a dungeon . Without batting an eye, the government will order for a massacre, leaving no soul alive, even newborn babies weren't spared .

What evolution? The creation of new types of firepower or the discovery of Magic? Then what about the human population, which decreased by 22 . 4% . More than one billion people perished yet the people in high-powers are laughing with joy now, utterly ridiculous, I'm very eager to see what happens when a real catastrophe appears and they are pushed to a corner!"

When he finished talking, Josef slumped his shoulders and sighed . As if he took out a huge load off his heart, he smiled at Arthur and said added one last thing

"My apologies, I got a bit agitated . What I want to say is that a game like this could save more lives than one could imagine . Sometimes, The believability of virtuality is often superior to the unrealness of reality . "

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From their current position, only Arthur was able to witness what's happening at the peak of the volcanic mountain . The distance was too far for Josef to see his niece, moreover, the fog was quite dense so the visibility was lessened even more .

Slowly, Arthur brought Josef and himself closer to the mage while using Wind Magic to push away the nearby fog . Soon enough, they were only around thirty meters away from the masked woman, who was busy fighting some monsters called [Fire Devils] . They were quite powerful considering the point of view of players and even the mage was having difficulty taking them down for she was a fire user too .

Although they were close enough to be noticed, thanks to Space Magic, they were hiding in a separate spatial dimension, allowing them to pass as unnoticed and remain invisible to outsiders .

Le Orn only needed a single look at the mage to recognize her, he took a deep breath as he was lost in thought while staring at his niece .

After some time has passed, he said:

"If bringing me here without the headset caused me to power-up and obtain the skills I have in the game but what about the opposite?"

Arthur smiled as he expected such a question and replied:

"I was wondering the same too, however, It's too early to test it out . I need to bring a trusted person for such an experiment as the consequences could be fatal . "

Arthur was thinking about doing it himself, however, once he enters the game, he'll lose his powers due to the overwritten System . There is also the possibility of that not happening since his System was originally from Astria .

"Hmm, does that mean you trust me? Hehehe"

Josef chuckled as he glanced at Arthur . For his old friend to bring him to Astria and tell him what happened in the past, he must have at least trust him a bit .

"I may not be a good judge of character but at least I know who to and to not trust . "

Josef remained silent for some time as he absent-mindedly gazed at Arthur then said with a weird tone

"I may be a money-hungry motherfucker but by no means am I blind or idiot . The way I see it, you somehow managed to come to this world a couple of years ago, which is why no one found you or your corpse . This also explains your current power but I still don't understand how you got THIS strong, it's absurd . "

Hearing this, Arthur laughed and didn't deny Josef's words, instead, he added to them:

"Although I was in the fool in the past, not all people I befriended were complete bastards huh . . . "

In response, Le Orn scratched his head and smiled awkwardly while maintaining his silence . After all he had seen, along with Arthur's powers and how he can teleport from Earth to Astria this easily, Josef presumed that his powers could match the Goddess on Earth if not stronger .

Of course, to ascertain that, he needs to see them fight, not like it'll ever happen, though .

"So, what do you intend to do?"

After a long silence and when the battle blow was getting more heated, Josef asked out of curiosity . With his meager power and low-level, he can do nothing and will definitely keep what he saw to himself but he was still intrigued by what Arthur's plans were .

"I suppose asking you to get rid of all the headsets is impossible . For now, I'll keep investigating and deal with Claudia first, then I'll see how to proceed . As long as nothing urgent happens then there's no need to rush things as I'm busy with other matters . "

Josef nodded his head as he agreed with Arthur while speaking

"Do you need my help? I may be a CEO of a gaming company, I still have a lot of connections . "

Arthur waved his hand and retorted

"Josef, connections are temporary . With enough power, you can do anything you want and no one would stop you . Do you think I don't have the power to capture Claudia without anyone finding out? I can do it in the blink of an eye yet I won't . It won't be satisfying, I have to do it the right way, the way it should be done . "

As he listened to Arthur's words and stared at the latter, Josef felt chills down his spines, his body shook against his will and he could feel a suffocating pressure that overwhelmed him . Thankfully, this lasted for a split second before it disappeared .

The duo didn't linger on the Westia Continent any longer, with a few teleports, Arthur and Josef appeared at the MoonStar Sect . The roof was empty as Anastassia were welcoming Lucy and enjoying a short moment of relaxation .

.....

[Level up]

Although Victoria's face was hidden, under that mask there was a totally dumbfounded expression, one she never had for years . Just a half a minute ago, she was fighting a group of five Fire Devils and she barely managed to destroy three of them only for a High Fire Devil to appear out of nowhere . She knew she would die so she mustered all her powers to slay another one to gain a bit more experience, however, the unexpected happened which led her to stand there, dazed and shocked for more than a minute .

Out of nowhere, the three remaining opponents lifelessly fell on the burning floor and never got up again .

She didn't know what exactly happened and when she took a closer look at the corpses, she still was unable to comprehend how exactly did they die .

Fortunately, the loot was bountiful and the experience allowed her to give up yet the woman didn't feel her usual sense of satisfaction after a tough fight, she just felt startled and a sense of emptiness .

...

Arthur and Josef entered the High Tower of the MoonStar sect and met with Lucy and the rest at a wide room beautifully decorated and filled with tables which had all kinds of delicacies . Currently, Sonia and Mary were chatting with Lucy, who seemed happy to meet them .

Unlike her usual indifferent attitude, she was actively talking with the two girls and even softly smiling every now and then .

"I didn't expect you to go back this early, what happened?"

Jackob appeared out of nowhere, his muscular body and naked upper half outlined his refined muscles and sturdy figure . He was covered with sweat as he was training a short time ago and only appeared late because no one informed him of the return of Lucy until a few minutes ago so he rushed here immediately .

"It's complicated but it's nothing threatening so don't worry about it and focus on your duties . "

Arthur waved his hand dismissively to reply to Jackob and signal him not to come hug him as apparently, the latter had the intentions to do so .

Only now did Jackob notice Josef, since the CEO was shorter than Arthur and kept silent, no one noticed him at first but when Jackob talked, all pairs of eyes landed on Le Orn except Lucy and Arthur .

"And who's this?"-Jackob

"A friend from Earth . "

The two women and Jackob were staring at Josef as if he was some kind of alien . Their gaze contained curiosity, they inspected him from head to toe which led to the middle-aged man feeling uncomfortable .

He wore a black tuxedo and had a refined look, this made him look a bit similar look to the nobles of Astria and although they couldn't determine his exact Lv, they knew he was much, much weaker than them .

With the additional skills Josef obtained a while ago, he obtained the Human Language, which allowed him to understand Jackob's words . Instead of being able to talk Astria's common human language, he was able to hear it translated to English thanks to his System .

"Pleased to meet you, I am Josef Le Orn . "

Jackob was the friendly type, he walked up to Josef and shook his hand while introducing himself . The two girls respectfully did the same too and resumed talking with Lucy while Jackob wrapped his arm around Le Orn's shoulder and brought him somewhere, excited to show him many things .

Arthur wasn't too interested in that so he sat on a corner and enjoyed some of the laid deserts . He took out Zodiak's notes and carefully re-read them .

He was planning to complete secure Astria and isolate it from any outside interferences, not only to protect the World Tree, which he made an oath with, but to also be able to live a peaceful life once everything ends .

'4th Peace Era, year 183 11th month, 29th day .

I successfully found the ruins of an ancient elven Race that perished during the Titan War . It was mostly filled with defensive formations but I was able to find a secret room that had a high-level Spatial formation that I was able to resist . Against my will, I was sent back in time to the time during the war, it was a weird as only my consciousness was sent but I was still able to demonstrate my powers even without my body . I saw the perishing of this Elven Race, unfortunately, I wasn't able to remain there for a long time and was only able to get my hands on a formation scroll . Although I wasn't able to obtain the item I wanted, the scroll was still precious, however, I wasn't able to completely decipher it due to my weak Space Magic .

Matters got worse when a Guardian appeared and attacked me on the spot . I defeated it after a bitter struggle but didn't kill it, requesting some answers about the scroll in the exchange for its life . I was flatly rejected and thrown out of the ruins when the Guardian activated the last layer of defense of the ruins . '

'4th Peace Era, year 7514, 2nd month, 1st day .

I managed to decipher the whole scroll but the formation inside couldn't be cast by me, I was inadequate and the materials are too extravagant . The formation is a defensive one, highly-effective against anyone that attacks it from outside . It has three functions, the first is to completely defend whatever is inside of it, the second one is absolute isolation from the rest of the world . Upon further research, I discovered that most of the secret Realms and worlds out there have a similar formation that prevents people from finding them unless a set of requirements is met or if it's destroyed by brute force, which is a very rare occurrence . The third function only applies if one material is added before it is cast, the heart of a fully mature Space Dragon . If the heart is added then the formation becomes able to send whatever is inside of it in the past, the time they are sent to can be adjusted, however, the downside is that they cannot go back, once you go, then there's no return .

I was unable to believe this even after spending five thousand years deciphering this scroll, playing with time is always dangerous and to send back people or worlds in time goes against the balance '

Arthur stared at these words then looked down at the blank pages with confusion . Zodiac's notes were always complete but this one seemed to be missing some part of it . He wondered about this since the first time he saw it and tried injecting Dark Magic into the paper or do different things but no words appeared as per his expectations .

Curious, Arthur asked his copy

'Is traveling back in time really possible?'

He heard a chuckle resound inside of his ears which was soon followed by his copy's voice

"Why? Do you want to try it? Maybe fix some past mistakes or avoid being kidnaped?"

'No, I know it's not that easy to distort what happened . '

" . . . 'not that easy'? More like impossible . You can't change the past, the consequences will lead to things you can't even imagine . First of all, Time Wraiths won't let you off once you break the balance and travel back . "

'Time Wraiths? Then why didn't Zodiak mention them?'

"That's because he didn't literally travel back in time . His consciousness was sent back and although he acquired the scroll, he didn't affect what happened in the past . Time Wraiths will chase after you if you travel back in time with your body, consciousness, soul, and everything else . Don't you know the Butterfly Effect?"

'I know it but what if you're able to get rid of the Time Wraiths?'

"Not possible . "

The copy's reply was immediate and confident as if he was certain such a thing can never happen .

'How can you be so sure? What if it was Death itself, or the Joker, for example . '

"Look, you're misunderstanding something . These people are unimaginably strong and perhaps have no equals, but there's a big difference between existing beings and non-existing things . Death exists, has a form, a beginning, and an end but things like Time, or Time Wraiths which are born from the former, are not materialistic things, they are Laws that make the Multiverse . Unchanged Laws that cannot be broken . "

Arthur kept his silence for a few seconds before he retorted

'You still haven't answered my question . '

Right after that, he heard a long sigh come out of his copy's mouth .

"No, they can't get rid of the Time Wraiths . To begin with, they won't try to travel in time, they are wise enough to understand there's nothing good from doing that . And if by chance, they attempt to do so, then they must be prepared to cease existing as Time is an unforgiving thing . "

Chapter 319

Arthur for coming to Astria today, the first was to show Josef the truth and try to figure out about the chip . The second is simple but necessary to do his vengeance the way he wants it to be .

Anastassia, who was away for a short while to take care of a few things related to the sect, came back with Robin, who greeted him and hurried over to Lucy .

He motioned for the Vice-leader to come and said with a low voice that only the two of them could hear

"I wanted to inquire you about something?"

Anastassia frowned and answered

"Yes, what do you want to know?"

Without beating around the bush, Arthur bluntly asked

"Do you know any expert torturer?"

The woman's frown deepened and after pondering for a few seconds, she replied

"We have a few of them in our sect but they aren't exactly torturer . They are just proficient at extracting information from their victims . "

Hearing this, Arthur shook his head and added:

"No, I'm searching for a good one . Of course, I need him to be blind and deaf when needed to, he just needs to obey Arthur and ask no questions . "

Arthur wasn't going to let off his target off easy, most of the main ones will, without a doubt, receive inhuman torture . He didn't care if it's an evil act or not, it's something that needs to be done and having a veteran torturer will make things more . . . pleasurable .

"If I'm not mistaken, that boy is good at things like that, or at least, used to be . "

She glanced at Rey, who was accompanying Robin and silently munching on the delicious food . He was part of an evil black mage cult that experimented on humans and from what Anastassia had investigated, she found out that he did such things in the past when ordered to .

"Is that so~~~"

Akin to a hunter finding his prey, Arthur gazed at the little boy with an interested gaze . Having one of his own do the job is better than finding an outsider . Rey, the person in question, felt Arthur's strange gaze and turned his head to stare back at him only to feel uncomfortable and shift his eyes away, acting as if he noticed nothing .

Unfortunately, Arthur wasn't going to do the same and ignore him . He thanked Anastassia and called for Rey, who's back shuddered when he heard Arthur calling him by his name .

He did his best to delay his response, however, he knew that sooner or later, he'll have to face this man . In all honesty, he didn't hold any favorable impression of Arthur, the person who captured him .

He even feared him, the man seemed like a real demon, his mere gaze caused him to feel the chills .

'Tch! How come a woman like her married such a devil!'

Rey inwardly cursed Arthur and walked up to the latter while trying to keep up a tough front as to not feel intimidated .

Arthur was softly smiling as he watched the boy's figure stroll toward him . He signaled for the youth to sit next to him then handed him some of the delicious white cake near him .

Such actions can only be considered as friendly, however, Rey was inexplicably feeling uneasiness as if this is a bad omen that cannot be avoided .

"You enjoying your time here?"

Arthur nonchalantly asked as he munched on an apple .

"Yes . "

The boy didn't try to lengthen his reply and gave a short but quick answer . He knew that this is only the appetizer for what's about to come .

"I see that you became a bit stronger but at this pace, everyone will surpass you . You're still young and it's the perfect time to build a solid foundation for yourself, don't you agree?"

" "

Rey gave no response and merely stared back at Arthur, who had a sly grin hanging on his face . As he heard no response, Arthur continued his speech

"I can give you an opportunity to become much stronger but grasping it is up to you . "

Rey maintained his silence for a bit more before speaking

"What's the catch?"

Arthur laughed and stated

"Obviously, nothing is free in this life . I heard you had quite the amazing 'job' before I found you, I want you to use your skills in that field . "

Rey furrowed his brows and tilted his head in confusion, unable to understand the meaning behind his words .

"What do you mean?"

"Simple, I want you to torture a few people for me . Quite easy, right? The simplicity of the task doesn't match the reward I'll give you but I'm still willing to hire you . "

The boy's eyes narrowed for a second before they returned to normal . He had tried his best to forget about his dark past and aim for a brighter path which is why he had such a reaction .

Arthur patted the youth's shoulder and calmed him down by saying

"Of course, this will be a secret between us . Nobody needs to know . "

As he uttered those words, Arthur glanced at Robin, who was busy chatting with the other girls . She begged him to spare the boy in the past and did her best to raise him into a rightful young man .

Unfortunately, it's not that easy when Rey passed most of his childhood near the lunatic black mages, who only care about their magic and experiments .

"I refuse . "

Rey flatly rejected without batting an eye . Sure, he was promised a good reward but he wanted to forget about his past and move forward . Bringing back past memories and torturing people will only bring back his old nature, which he worked hard to contain .

Arthur wasn't dejected when hearing such a reply . He tapped his finger on the table and added:

"Are you sure? This is a one-time offer . "

"Yes . "

A long sigh came out of Arthur's mouth .

"You know, I'm just curious . What were your contributions to Robin since the time I captured you?"

Due to the sudden question and his inability to answer it even when he was given a few seconds to think, Rey could only give a long silence as his answer .

"What? Nothing, seriously?"

Arthur feigned a dumbfounded look as he looked at Rey .

"I protect her from any danger . "

Rey finally gave a resolute answer but was immediately retorted by Arthur

"Really now? Protect? From what danger? To be honest, I can't see you protecting her . Will you perhaps use your Blood Magic or your superior physique? In my eyes, your power is inferior to an ant's . Believe it or not, my daughter, who's younger than you, is ten times stronger than you, if not more . "

Rey became triggered as his face became red from anger and embarrassment but he still remained calm and didn't throw a ruckus . However, his glare became savage as it was pointed toward Arthur, the cause of his anger .

"S, Shut up!"

Arthur ignored him and resumed

"What are you stuttering for? I say it's because you know that my words are true . Heck! you won't be able to protect yourself, much less a person you hold dear . Stop kidding yourself and open your eyes . "

Arthur paused for a second and then continued:

"Basically, you're not worthy to protect her yet . I know you want to change and forget about your sins and that is understandable . However, forgetting isn't the right way to go . You must overcome it, I'm not asking you to feel proud about you did nor am I forcing you to torture people when you don't want, I just want you to understand that power comes at a cost . You claim to protect but you're simply blinded, trying to avoid your retribution by doing some good deeds and playing the nice little kid to appeal to others . Perhaps Robin is a fool to think there's hope for you . . . but she does . "

Arthur spared the boy no more glances, he finished the apple and left after saying the lost final words

"Think on that, boy . "

Chapter 320

After a bit more than two hours, Arthur went to Earth accompanied by Lucy, Josef, Sonia, and Mary, who decided to tag along and experience the life in an advanced world .

By the time they arrived there and appeared in their apartment, Saly and Lolitta were already there .

The human AI was still busy inspecting the capsule with a serious look on her face while Saly meditating silently .

Though, the meditation was cut short when Arthur and co arrived . The little girl happily greeted the new guest and threw herself in her father's arms with a sweet smile hanging on her face .

"Daddy! When are we going Dragon-hunting? You promised yesterday . "

Indeed, Arthur promised the little girl to take her to one of the dungeons on Earth and let her hunt a dragon . Since Randuin intervened last time, she couldn't fulfill her wish which is why she pleaded him to take her instead .

While softly caressing her fluffy ears, Arthur chuckled and answered:

"Don't worry your mother and I will take you at night . We still have a little matter to attend to then we'll go, alright?"

"En!"

Saly nodded her head and snuggled closer to Arthur . Although she passed most of her time with him yesterday, she was still missing him .

The apartment became a bit crowded with the addition of three people so Lucy decided to move to another place, more spacious and comfortable .

Sonia and Mary were fascinated as they stared at the TV with a dumbfounded look . Their eyes were glued on the moving images and their quality . Such a technology didn't exist on Astria, their expressions deepened when they saw the skyscrapers beyond the windows .

Although Lucy very much wanted to accompany them, she didn't as going with Arthur was more important .

For the next hour or so, the group chatted about various things . Saly showed her superior knowledge about Earth to the two ladies while Arthur closed his eyes and sat cross-legged as he was searching for a specific location on Earth which was a bit hard to find even with his current stats and Realm .

Miya was absent as had matters to attend to today while Delia was still engrossed in cultivating the Holy Art Chapters . She didn't come out of her room since the second Arthur handed her that book .

It was only after 90 minutes did Arthur open his eyes at last . Earth wasn't big compared to Astria but to search for a place that he had a vague memory of, still took more time than expected .

Nonetheless, his search bore fruit and he found what he was looking for . As he slowly got up from the ground, Lucy walked up to him and asked:

"Did you find it?"

"Yes, well-hidden, I must say . "

After informing the others, Arthur teleported himself and Lucy far from their apartment . A second later, the couple found themselves inside a dark and cold place .

It resembled a medium-sized toilet but it was very old and the stench was nauseating, to say the least . Blood marks were all over the place and at the very center of this godforsaken room was a metal chair that had countless thin bronze threads wrapped around it .

As he gazed at this place, especially the chair, Arthur's gaze wavered for a second before it quickly recovered when Lucy held his hand .

"Now that we've reached this far . Let's start devising new ways of bringing our enemies to sudden, gagging, writhing, agonizing deaths . "

Lucy knew what was on her husband's mind and instead of calming him down, she decided to utter those words as it's the words he would like to hear the most right now .

"You know, although it's been a long time, I still remember those memories more clearly than ever before . The pain and suffering, in the past, I considered those to be unfair punishment coming from the Gods but right now, I don't think that's the case . Rather than punishment, I consider it to be a blessing that allowed me to change and meet you . Now that vengeance is at hand, I'm barely able to hold back my excitement, the things I'm going to do to them, no devil will be able to do the same . "

His tone was calm and his face didn't have any kind of evil expression whatsoever . It actually had a peaceful smile that is rarely shown . He wrapped his arms around Lucy and tightly hugged her while adding

"Please help me overcome this final obstacle . "

"En! I'm always by your side . "

. . . .

A while later, the husband and wife were staring at a jet black list that was floating mid-air . On it was exactly five names, they were the main perpetrators behind Arthur's kidnapping .

There are a few more unmentioned individuals but compared to those five, they weren't equally important, just like the ex-mercenary group that was annihilated by Arthur .

"So, who's first?"

Lucy asked Arthur, who shook his head and replied

"There is another person who needs to be killed first . A person foolish enough to show his face to me and enjoy his time torturing me . "

.

An African man was holding a long whip filled with small but dangerous-looking nails on it, was viciously whipping a chained man . A devilish grin was hanging on his face as he was using all his strength to hit all parts of his victim's body . He would moan every now and then from excitement . From the way he only hit fragile parts which will hurt like hell when hit, it was apparent that he was a veteran in this field and to make matters worse, he was an extreme sadist .

"How do you like that? *Whip* Ah! Isn't exhilarating to receive the end of my lovely whip! Come on, say something my cute doll!"

After spending more than fifteen minutes whipping the unresponsive victim . The man switched his torture tool . He took out three-inch long nails that were thicker than the usual ones and squatted in front of his victim then said

"I have never enjoyed my job more than right now . The feeling is heavenly! I always wanted to play with one of you, those filthy rich bastards who look down on everybody!"

"P-please s,stop . . . *cough* *cough*"

The chained man tried to talk but he was badly injured and every time he forced his lips to move, mouthfuls of blood will follow . It was a miserable scene but the African man seemed to enjoy this sight very much .

"I, I w-wi wil"

Unfortunately, the man couldn't maintain his consciousness, much less talk . He didn't even finish his word before his head became dizzy, obviously about to faint again .

The torturer wasn't going to let that happen . He held one of the needs and without hesitation, stabbed under one of the nails of the victim's stretched and bound hand . It is said that specific location is connected to one of the main nerves so the pain was truly agonizing, enough for the poor victim to sober up and yell loudly . It's a shame though, nobody was going to hear his pitiful yells, apart from the demon in front of him .

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH"

He kept wailing as the African main stabbed the needle even deeper until the yelling became hoarse . However, the torturer wasn't going to stop, he grabbed another needle and proceeded to stab another finger .

.....

A few days later, the type of torture changed . The African man stabbed part of the chained man's thigh, which caused massive amounts of blood to gush out . Obviously, this wasn't the end . After doing so, he placed some weird looking mix of food and something else on the wound then happily retrieved a plastic container and took out disgusting looking worms from it .

With a red face that indicated his excitement and while ignoring the sad shouts of his victim, he placed the worms on the wound and left the room after making sure the worms were eating the food and the flesh, making the wound look more horrible .

After approximately twenty-four hours, the infection spread and the victim's thigh became a mix of disgusting flesh and blood .

It no longer looked like a thigh but a bulging mass of flesh that could make anyone vomit upon a single glance .

The chained man was vomiting blood and some white liquid that had a foul stench, there was even a mix of living and dead worms in that vomit . And due to his position he was put into, his vomit landed on the injured thigh-injury .