

Chaos' Heir 451

Chapter 451 Resistant

Khan and Monica woke up at the same time, but the latter panicked as soon as she realized where she was. The two had ended up sleeping in Khan's flat, which looked terrible from a social perspective.

"Shit!" Monica cursed while straightening her back to sit on the bed. "Shit, shit! This shouldn't have happened."

Khan let out a sigh while glancing at his phone. Countless missed calls and messages had accumulated on the screen, but the time was reassuring. It was still early morning, so he had the entire day to handle his many tasks.

"Maybe we can erase the tape," Monica suggested. "Khan, you know the doorman. Can he-?"

Monica couldn't finish her line since Khan sat down and laid his head on her shoulder. Merely thinking about everything he had to do was exhausting, and the childish desire to cuddle a bit longer took over him.

The panic vanished from Monica's mind. She smiled while taking Khan's head between her arms. He rarely relied on her so openly, so the gesture filled the symphony with cozy feelings due to the affection they radiated.

"How are you feeling?" Monica whispered while leaving a loving kiss on the top of Khan's head.

"Body is fine," Khan reassured. "Mind is getting better."

"Stay here as long as you like then," Monica stated, and a giggle left her mouth when Khan took her waist to pull her onto his lap.

Another kiss arrived on Khan's head, but he continued to hide his face on Monica's shoulder. He held her tightly, and she did the same while leaving loving caresses and running her fingers through his short hair.

"My poor, tired captain," Monica muttered when Khan snuggled closer to her neck. "What can I do to lift your spirit?"

"Make the days longer," Khan groaned while his lips were on Monica's skin, "So I can stay like this for hours."

Monica could barely contain her happiness. She adored being at the center of Khan's attention, so she didn't hesitate to state her support. "Sure. I'll bend time for you."

Khan began to lift his head, rubbing his nose on Monica's neck until he finally reached her cheek. He pulled his face away at that point, but the two remained close enough to feel their breath.

"What is it?" Monica whispered, taking Khan's cheeks in her palms. "Is bending time not enough?"

"Nothing will ever be enough," Khan teased, "But you did get pretty close to it last night."

"Did I?" Monica giggled. "I guess I know what you like."

"You did get a lot of practice," Khan joked.

"Oh, shut it," Monica complained, pushing Khan down. His back fell on the bed, but his eyes remained glued to Monica's naked beauty.

Monica wanted to pretend to be angry a bit longer, but her plan crumbled under Khan's attentive stare. He had eyes only for her, and she knew how to retain that interest.

A smirk made its way into Khan's face when Monica completely turned to sit on his waist. Her hands ran over his abdomen, tracing the edges of his muscles until they reached his chest. Monica almost gasped when she felt Khan's reaction under her butt, but she held back to enjoy having him all caught in the spectacle.

"If you want," Monica eventually announced while slightly bending toward Khan, "We can spend the day here."

"Ooh?" Khan voiced as he began to straighten his back. Monica supported herself to his shoulders, wrapping her legs around him once he sat again.

"Though," Monica continued as some shyness finally touched her voice, "I want you to say it."

"What should I say?" Khan feigned ignorance while diving into Monica's neck.

"Say," Monica gasped to suppress a moan. "Say that you want me to stay. Say that you want nothing but me for the entire day."

"What happens when the day is over?" Khan teased once he reached Monica's ear.

"You say it again," Monica whispered while pulling herself slightly away to face Khan, "And I'll stay for another day."

"People will get suspicious if we hide in my flat," Khan pointed out.

"I don't care," Monica replied.

"What about your family?" Khan continued.

"I don't care," Monica repeated. "If you ask me, I won't mind dealing with the consequences."

"You must really like what we do when we are alone," Khan snickered, and his smile widened when a soft slap landed on his cheek.

"Idiot," Monica laughed before gulping. "It's not that."

"Don't you like it?" Khan wondered.

"Stupid!" Monica snapped and delivered another slap before hammering her fists into Khan's chest. "Idiot! Scoundrel! Donkey! Crook!"

Monica's fists slammed on Khan's chest whenever she voiced a new insult, but he eventually grabbed her wrists to make her stop. Monica tried to break free but gave in when Khan lifted her arms and put his forehead on hers.

"Unfair," Monica complained since she was trapped.

"Were you about to explain something?" Khan asked.

"No," Monica scoffed. "You don't deserve it."

"Can I earn it back?" Khan questioned.

"Ask me next month," Monica scoffed again.

"But I can barely go one day without you," Khan admitted.

"Really?" Monica used a sweet and honest tone.

"Imagine calling me unfair when you can be so cute," Khan sighed. "Can I at least get a kiss?"

"No," Monica pouted. "You give it to me."

Khan didn't dare to refuse. He let go of Monica as the two kissed, and the gesture soon brought them back on the pillows. Their passion was bursting, but an interruption eventually arrived.

Groans escaped Monica and Khan's mouths when buzzing noises filled the room. Monica's phone was on the floor, so they both turned toward the corner of the bed, where Khan's device was.

"Every fucking time," Khan cursed while lowering his head to dive into Monica's curls. She laughed while her arms and legs remained clung to Khan's neck and waist, but no words left her mouth. She limited herself to quick kisses on Khan's cheek to reassure him.

Khan picked up the phone only to discover that the number of missed calls had increased. He was getting three at the same time now, and he didn't even dare to look at the messages.

"What did you do now?" Monica asked when Khan threw his phone away.

"It must be about the third-level mage," Khan explained while returning to Monica's curls. "The Colonel updated my profile right before you barged in."

"That explains why I'm also getting calls," Monica exclaimed as her caresses started to convey something different from affection.

"What is it?" Khan questioned.

"I was thinking," Monica announced, "Maybe it's time I get another infusion. It should bring me closer to the third level."

Khan lifted his head to inspect Monica's expression. She was talking seriously, but her voice carried deeper meanings that Khan didn't fail to notice.

"You don't have to force yourself to keep up with me," Khan scolded.

"It was almost time anyway," Monica reassured. "Besides, you'll check on me, won't you?"

Khan smiled faintly before focusing on Monica's mana flow. He let go of the mattress to place a hand at the center of her chest, but he eventually put his ear there.

Khan's ears had gone through the same changes as his eyes. Somehow, he could hear the symphony and add those details to his sensitivity. Being so close to Monica gave him a clear idea of her state. Nothing was amiss. In theory, she could receive an infusion right away.

"Am I ready for the infusion, Doctor Khan?" Monica mocked once Khan lifted his head.

"I can't let you go until I perform a thorough check-up," Khan claimed, and Monica's giggle remained stuck in her mouth when a kiss sealed it.

.

.

.

Leaving the building was a hassle. With the update on Khan's profile, a new crowd of soldiers and reporters had gathered on the sidewalk, but someone always made sure to keep a path open.

Of course, leaving with Monica gave birth to wild gossip, but the couple was in no mood to care. They reached for their car without answering questions and separated after reaching George's building.

The separation was part of the couple's plan. As much as Monica and Khan wanted to stay together, they had many tasks to attend to, so they settled for half a morning in the flat before going on separate ways. Monica would study with George and Anita, while Khan would hit a training hall.

Having money to spend allowed Khan to catch up with his hobbies, and the training halls were one of them. The embassy's subjects were interesting, but he couldn't abandon his warrior side, and the fighting programs could solve that.

However, Khan didn't activate the programs even after sealing himself inside the training hall. A few issues still needed his attention, and he sat on the floor to attend to them.

'I might have underestimated the prices,' Khan cursed while scrolling through the many labels on his screen. He had opened Pandora's menu, and the situation looked far from good.

Pandora's menu had many sections which went over all kinds of things. Khan saw basic goods like booze and food but also complicated machines like cars and advanced projectors. Needless to say, many of those items crossed the million of Credits in terms of price.

'They want three million Credits for a single bottle?!' Khan shouted while his browsing continued. 'Rich people are crazy.'

The surprises didn't end there since Khan found more expensive bottles, and the situation worsened in other sections. The money people would need to afford some of those items was unfathomable, which made him wonder about the subscription's original price.

'This is pointless,' Khan eventually admitted defeat and moved to the non-elemental spells. He would still give everything a look, but not now.

The non-elemental spells followed a similar pattern as the other sections. Many items surpassed the price of a million Credits, which made them untouchable for Khan. However, knowledge had its value, so he read each description carefully and discovered interesting details.

The list had deep descriptions attached to each label. They went over the effects of the spells as well as their compatibility with humans, difficulty, and sheer power. A few claimed to be as strong as actual techniques, which Khan didn't find odd after witnessing Lucian's fight.

The inspection at the Elite's Refuge and Pandora's list ultimately confirmed Khan's suspicions. The non-elemental spells could enrich someone's arsenal in many ways, often in fields unrelated to battles. Their variety was their scariest feature since they could come in any shape or form.

'There is no such thing as getting an idea,' Khan eventually accepted. 'There are too many of them to predict what someone might have. I bet the descendants even have some spells commissioned to fit their styles.'

Princess Edna appeared in Khan's mind. He recalled the words she had spoken during their first meeting. She had compared herself to him while being a second-level warrior, which probably hinted at special techniques and spells owned only by nobles.

The study wasn't going anywhere, and the insane price tags worsened the situation. Khan wasn't only confused. His poor finances also limited his choices.

Nevertheless, the list had one saving grace. Khan could afford some of Pandora's weakest spells, but he wasn't thinking about them. A few items had extremely poor compatibility with humans, which greatly lowered their value, even if their effects were quite strong.

The topic was quite troublesome for Khan, but he couldn't ignore it, especially in that situation. He wasn't entirely human. He had actually never been farther away from humanity. The transformation might give him access to incompatible spells without needing modifications or research.

'This might work,' Khan realized. 'The problem is, which one do I choose?'

Truth be told, Khan's fighting style was quite complete. He had speed, deadliness, and reach. Trading with the Tors had already fixed his weakness, and his senses were a powerful asset that made many items on the list pointless.

Getting something similar to Lucian's sound attack was also useless. Khan had the Nele's arts, which could produce far more creative effects. He could even copy Lucian's spell if he put his mind to it.

'Did I waste ten thousand Credits?' Khan eventually wondered before putting away that idea. Knowledge alone was worth the price, and he could still ask for second opinions. Monica could add a lot to that list, and George might come up with battle-related advice.

Khan left Pandora's menu at that point. He had something in mind, but another task came first. The techniques and books purchased from Ace High needed study, and he would dedicate the rest of the morning to them.

'Dangers of spacewalking,' Khan read on his phone as he made himself more comfortable.

Before mana, humanity used spacesuits to survive in space. That dark environment was too cold for the human body and debris that flew faster than bullets could be deadly without protection. Radiations were also an issue, and the same went for oxygen.

However, mana changed the way humanity approached space. The smaller ships and teleports almost made spacewalking outdated. However, some jobs still needed it, and malfunctions could always happen, so the pilots replaced spacesuits with techniques and non-elemental spells.

The cold was easy to fix. The Global Army developed advanced non-elemental spells capable of enveloping the body in a layer of kinetic energy. Khan had the best on the market, and one look at it told him that it wouldn't be too hard to master.

The debris was a problem that often required an additional technique or spell. Yet, Khan had purchased something that could deal with it while keeping him warm, allowing him to save money and time.

The radiations belonged to the same field. They would often require more protections, but Khan's purchase dealt with them too.

In theory, pilots also explored a superficial version of the Nigols' control since they needed the mana to float around. Still, the energy necessary to push a body in an environment without friction was so little that Khan didn't even consider purchasing actual techniques. He only bought a general manual that confirmed his idea.

Only the oxygen issue remained basically unsolved. The mana could make bodies able to extract it from hostile atmospheres, but space didn't have any. There was no air to breathe in that blackness, and no spell could fix that.

'Every ship has emergency breathers containing up to three hours of air,' Khan read in the manual. 'However, they can suffer damage or get lost during a crash, so a quick response in creating a personal atmosphere can be the difference between life and death.'

The insides of the ships had artificial atmospheres that would vanish in case of a breach. Still, pilots could use their mana to seize some air and store it under their protective spells. The amount of oxygen depended on many factors, but even a tiny bit could prolong someone's life during a crisis.

'I guess I should give them a try,' Khan thought as he connected his phone to the floor and stood up.

Khan reviewed the details of his techniques before summoning his mana. A thin strand of energy left his body and expanded to create a layer meant to envelop him. He had never performed anything similar, so he took it slow and focused on building a stable barrier.

A faint purple-red radiance slowly covered every inch of Khan's skin, leaving no connection between him and the outside world. He was completely shielded from the training hall's environment, but that was the easy part.

Under Khan's control, the purple-red radiance began to shake. The mana had to generate enough heat to fend off the space's cold, so the tremors had to be quite intense. In Khan's case, they had to make the barrier almost too hot to handle since it had to perform multiple functions.

The menus kept track of Khan's performance and updated him on the barrier's temperature. He knew the level he had to reach, so he pushed his control to the limit while forcing his mana to follow his instructions. The chaos element liked to tremble but hated those limitations, and problems eventually arrived.

A short flare escaped the barrier and triggered a chain reaction that spread wild tremors all over its fabric. More mana burst out of the technique until everything turned into a bright cloud that left Khan's skin. His execution had failed, leaving a few burnt spots on his uniform, but he rejoiced at that outcome.

'I can master it quickly,' Khan confidently claimed. 'I just need practice.'

Khan moved to the next part of his purchases, the technique for the personal atmosphere, which turned out to be slightly easier. He still needed to create a barrier, but the latter only required firmness since it had to contain air.

The short tests proved that the techniques were nothing special for someone like Khan, but knowing how to cast them wouldn't make him pass the pilot's course. He needed responsiveness and fast deployment, especially when using both simultaneously.

Of course, Khan didn't need that level of mastery right away. The pilot's course still wanted him to complete twenty flights, which would take months. He had time to learn his new techniques properly, so he could use the rest of the day for another task.

Waiting to talk to Monica and George was a valid option, but Khan wanted to get his own ideas first. The transformation had changed him, and no significant battle had followed. He didn't know his limits, but the training halls existed to test them.

Khan moved his phone toward one of the walls before exploring the various fighting programs. He had money now, so holding back on important details wasn't an option. He could choose chaos-resistant opponents that countered his style and see how it went.

The mood changed as soon as Khan left the settings alone. Coldness spread through the training hall when he drew his damaged knife and looked toward the clanging noises. Something was happening behind a wall, and a faint smile appeared on his face once it opened to reveal its contents.

Many metallic arms released whooshing noises when they cut their connections with the ten training dummies inside the workshops. Synthetic mana ran through those metal puppets and activated their functions, making them step forward and line up before the closing wall.

Khan's eyes darted left and right. He could see the mana now. He could follow that synthetic energy running under and through the puppets' reinforced black metal, but the scene left him unsatisfied. Something told him that they wouldn't be enough to test him.

Stomping on the floor activated the fighting program and made the ten puppets shoot toward Khan. They were fast and nimble, and he let them get within five meters of him before making the first move.

Khan gathered mana in his right hand, giving birth to three glowing needles that he immediately threw forward. The attacks targeted different puppets, but the latter crossed their metal arms to block them.

The needles pierced the metal and exploded, but the event didn't stop the puppets' advance. The ten dummies' initial plan was to encircle Khan to use their numerical advantage, but he disappeared as soon as his spell detonated.

One of the puppets targeted by the needle saw a shadow covering its red bionic eyes. A knee slammed on its head before it could understand what was happening, and the attack destroyed three-quarters of that structure.

Khan straightened his position, using the puppet's shoulder as a foothold while summoning more needles. His attack was already over, but the dummies had just started to turn in his direction. Somehow, everything felt too slow, but that didn't apply to him.

Three needles flew to Khan's right while he jumped to his left. He reached another puppet before explosions could resound, and the latter delivered a punch to catch him in mid-air.

Yet, Khan rolled on himself, slashing down with his knife. His acrobatic gesture made him dodge the punch, and his glowing weapon cut the dummy's head in half while he was upside down.

The other puppets chased after Khan, with two of them ready to welcome his landing. One thrust its arms forward while the other lifted its leg to deliver a kick. Khan saw attacks flying toward his face, chest, and torso, but they remained slow.

Khan was still rolling on himself, and the two puppets had even chosen an advantageous position. His legs were between the attacks and the floor, which theoretically made them useless. Yet, Khan only needed the faintest touch.

Khan's left leg rose to meet the incoming kick. He was in no position to stop the attack, but his figure vanished as soon as his foot touched the black metal. He had walked on flames, so that solid surface was more than enough to generate momentum.

The second round of needlers had exploded by then. Two had destroyed the upper part of a dummy, while the other could only damage a metal arm. Still, that created a structural weakness that the shadow passing through it didn't hesitate to exploit.

The puppet with the damaged arm saw its torso splitting in half, but Khan didn't deign him a single look. He rushed toward the next dummy, and his senses had already warned him about the mass of mana accumulating in that position.

The following dummy had a rifle instead of an arm, and a red bullet shot from it as soon as Khan reached it. Yet, he raised his free hand to make the attack land on his palm, and the [Blood Shield] took care of it. As for the puppet, half of its head fell in the next second.

The remaining five puppets tried to establish a new battle formation, but Khan was too fast. Those dummies could use mana to fuel weapons or enhanced attacks, but they paled before Khan's speed, deadliness, and destructive power. He often crushed them before they could even show their abilities, leaving nothing but metal corpses in his path.

Khan didn't know what to think when he found nothing else to attack. The ten puppets had turned into broken rubble, ready to go back to the workshop. The fighting program had failed to be a challenge for him.

The menus confirmed Khan's old guess. He was beyond humans now. Standard training programs meant for third-level warriors and mages were beneath him. He would need something extreme to test his limits, but that would require more Credits.

'My fighting style is good,' Khan exclaimed in his mind while scratching his head with the knife's handle. 'I really can't think of anything right now.'

Having the knife so close made Khan notice the new damage. Cracks had spread through the holes in the dark metal, threatening to shatter the entire structure. Many came from the clash with the fabric of superior quality and power, but he knew his mana had helped in worsening the situation.

'It might not hold another fight,' Khan sighed as he stored the knife. 'I guess I'm stuck at rehearsing my foundation.'

Khan almost made up his mind about the matter when another idea appeared. He studied the training hall before retrieving his phone to do some research. The Harbor was famous for many things, and the network claimed that its structures were state-of-the-art.

'Maybe I can try it here,' Khan wondered while recalling the clicking growl heard with the Princess. The cloud spell was true to the chaos element, so it could show him something he had yet to realize. Besides, he had to see if he could make any progress with it.

.
. .

"You know who I am," Headmistress Holwen coldly announced to the crowd of curious bystanders. "Make a path, or I'll have all of you arrested."

A few rumors spread and went silent in a matter of seconds. The Headmistress' coldness was something that the crowd sensed very well, and a path soon opened on the sidewalk.

Headmistress Holwen kept her gaze straight as she headed toward the building containing training halls. She crossed the entrance and searched for the number mentioned by Khan, but that became pointless when she noticed him sitting in front of a door.

"Captain Khan," Headmistress Holwen called while approaching Khan. "Your relationship with the Princess doesn't give you the authority or privilege to summon me without sharing any relevant detail."

Khan stood up and performed a military salute. Part of him wanted to joke about the fact that the Headmistress had answered his call so quickly, but he held back. It was better to keep her in a good mood after his actions.

"So?" Headmistress Holwen exclaimed. "What's this urgent matter that requires my presence?"

"Well," Khan cleared his throat while eyeing the door next to him. "Maybe it's better if you see for yourself, ma'am."

Headmistress Holwen hated that prolonged mystery, but the Princess liked Khan, and he was also part of the reason behind yesterday's shopping session. Khan had done an incredible service to the embassy, so she decided to play along and approach the door by herself.

Khan cursed in his mind as soon as he felt the tremor in the Headmistress' presence. The latter had opened the door, and destruction had unfolded in her vision. The once perfect training hall now had channels dug into its walls, floor, and ceiling, with wires and sparks coming out of its deeper holes.

The menus were no better. The interactive floor had been thoroughly damaged, and the same went for the workshops behind the walls. The training hall had lost at least thirty percent of its functions, and the culprit didn't even try to hide.

"In my defense," Khan coughed when the Headmistress glared at him, "The hall claimed to have chaos-resistant materials. They weren't that resistant."

Chapter 452 Nippe 2

"Captain," Headmistress Holwen announced, "It's time for those details."

"My trust in the training hall was misplaced, ma'am," Khan stated.

"I'm in no mood for games," Headmistress Holwen pressed on.

Khan didn't know what to say. He had messed up, but not on purpose. The cloud spell's power had surpassed his expectations, and taking it down had forced him to fight seriously, which led to the hall's destruction.

Headmistress Holwen's intense glare remained on Khan, but the sizzling and creaking noises from behind eventually made her turn again. The training hall was truly a mess. It felt almost unreal that a third-level mage could cause so much damage.

As the amount of damage grew clearer in the Headmistress' mind, a silent realization arrived. She knew how resilient the training halls were. The fact that Khan had been able to destroy so much confirmed his prowess, which deserved praise.

"This isn't your first time, is it?" Headmistress Holwen eventually asked. "You created a similar mess on Reebfell."

'And Milia 222,' Khan thought before saying different words. "That's correct, ma'am. Though the problem was different there."

"Was it?" Headmistress Holwen scoffed. "I see the same results. You are a liability around training halls."

Khan's eyes widened. He knew where that conversation was going. Headmistress Holwen sounded one step away from forbidding him access to the training halls, and he couldn't allow it to happen so soon.

"Headmistress, ma'am," Khan muttered while dropping his jokes. "I promise I'll be more careful, but I need the training halls."

"Do you have any idea how much the reparations will cost?" Headmistress Holwen questioned.

"No," Khan admitted.

"Do you have the money to fix all of this?" Headmistress Holwen pressed on.

"Probably not," Khan remained honest.

"Why should I allow you into a training hall again then?" Headmistress Holwen asked.

Khan opened his mouth to speak but closed it right afterward. The Headmistress was right. He was dangerous, but stopping wasn't an option, and he told her exactly that.

"Ma'am," Khan cleared his throat. "I know myself. If I can't use these halls, I'll turn my flat into a training ground."

Headmistress Holwen initially dismissed those words, but only a second had to pass for her to realize what could happen. Her gaze snapped back to Khan as terrible thoughts ran through her mind. Khan had almost destroyed a training hall. If something similar happened in his flat, the entire building risked crumbling.

Khan could sense the doubt inside the Headmistress. Truth be told, he felt a bit guilty for putting her in that position. However, his training had priority.

Headmistress Holwen diverted her gaze, and an unusual awkwardness accompanied her voice when she spoke again. "Do you promise to be careful from now on?"

"Yes!" Khan promptly shouted. "Of course! You won't hear anything similar from me ever again!"

"Somehow, I doubt it," The Headmistress cursed. "Still, I guess I can close an eye due to your services. Make sure this doesn't happen again."

"It won't, ma'am," Khan promised.

"Get lost now," The Headmistress ordered while stepping inside the training hall and pulling out her phone.

"What about the reparations, ma'am?" Khan wondered since he feared the Global Army would make him pay something.

"I said get lost," Headmistress Holwen repeated while peeking at Khan past her shoulder. "Unless you want to wait for me to change my mind."

Khan wore a shameless smile and performed a military salute before hurrying outside the hall. He almost couldn't believe that he had gotten away with it, but his happy mood vanished as soon as he saw the crowd waiting for him on the sidewalk.

The people outside the building instinctively moved aside when the entrance opened, but seeing Khan on his own filled them with confidence. Shouts and requests soon left their mouths, but confusion followed when they noticed the poor state of Khan's uniform.

The battle against the cloud had been rough. Khan didn't only attempt to talk with it. He also had to unleash his best abilities to put it down, and his uniform had paid the price.

Khan's sleeves had basically disappeared. They had turned into a mess of burnt and torn rags that hung from his elbows. The same went for his trousers. Anything under his knees was in the open, and even his shoes had disappeared.

The holes covering Khan's uniform distracted the crowd only for a few seconds. The shouts soon resumed, but Khan had disappeared by then. The soldiers realized what had happened when he had already turned the closest corner.

Khan kept running until he felt sure to have reached a safe block. A simple message made a car arrive, and he jumped inside while giving precise directions. It was still early afternoon, so he planned to spend the rest of the day inside George's flat.

The situation was no different in the second district. Khan found a crowd in front of George's building, but soldiers were there to keep a path open. Khan could leave the car and cross the sidewalk safely without addressing any of the shouts coming in his direction.

"Do you know how many problems you are causing me?" George shouted as soon as Khan entered the main hall. "I can't take a single step outside without someone asking me about you."

"Are you worried someone might find out about your secret businesses?" Anita complained.

"I have no secret businesses!" George snorted. "I told you already."

"Welcome back," Monica announced.

Khan smiled when he inspected the scene. Monica, George, and Anita were on a couch, partially hidden by holograms coming out of the table in front of them. They were reviewing the International Regulations' notes, and Khan knew he would join them soon.

"What happened to you?" George commented when he peeked past the holograms and noticed the poor state of Khan's uniform.

"I might have overdone it in the training hall," Khan revealed while heading toward a free couch. "Come here for a bit. I need your help."

The three exchanged a glance before reaching Khan. Monica and George took their places at his sides while Anita looked at his phone from behind the couch.

"I want to buy one of these," Khan explained while browsing through Pandora's menus to reach the non-elemental spells. "What do you think?"

"Can you even afford them?" George wondered.

"I can lend you some money if you need it," Monica added.

"You don't even try to hide it anymore," Anita teased. "Mind telling me why you didn't come here last night?"

"I had things to sort out in my flat," Monica lied. "Also, I thought you two wanted to remain alone."

"This lost cause has to work another year for that," Anita scoffed.

"It didn't look like that last night," George commented, and Anita promptly delivered a slap on the top of his head.

"I blame you for this," George glared at Khan while pretending to be hurt.

"Don't make more problems for Khan," Anita scolded. "He already has a lot on his plate with my girl and the Princess."

Monica was in no mood to address the joke, especially after the previous night and the following morning. She remained silent but still grabbed Khan's torn sleeve while adding a questioning look.

"Can we go back to the topic?" Khan questioned. "I was thinking of going for items with bad compatibility with humans to save money, but I don't know what to choose."

"Ideally," Anita exclaimed, "Non-elemental spells are perfect for utility. They can boost perception, for example."

"Khan doesn't need any of that," George stated. "Do you need new attacks?"

"No," Khan replied. "I'm more than fine there."

"Go for defensive spells then," Monica suggested.

"But I probably have the best one already," Khan pointed out.

"Do you mean that one?" George asked, making sure to remain vague.

"Yes," Khan confirmed. The two didn't need anything else to know that they were both talking about the [Blood Shield].

"These two and their secrets," Anita cursed. "Monica, we need to stick together against them."

"Guys, the list," Khan called.

"You should get something with a wider range," George suggested. "See if the filters help you."

Khan tinkered with the menus until he isolated all the defensive spells. The list had shrunk greatly, but he still had many options, especially on the expensive side.

"How much do you have?" George couldn't help but ask.

Khan sighed before changing the filters again. His recent shopping spree had taken less than fifty thousand Credits from him, but he still had to hear from Master Cansend. Also, he would rather avoid going broke.

"Two hundred," Khan revealed. "Maybe a bit more if the spell is worth it."

"That's not much," Anita admitted.

"It's worse than I thought," George continued.

"I should be able to ignore some compatibility issues," Khan explained. "I might even modify the spell if needed."

"Give me that," Monica eventually ordered while leaning on Khan's shoulder.

Khan complied, and Monica's expert thumbs brought the phone to a different menu, which strangely had affordable prices. Yet, a second look revealed that the numbers next to the various items were starting bids. Monica had opened Pandora's imminent auctions.

"Monica, I understand wanting to help Khan," Anita exclaimed, "But this can't work. Pandora's last auction reached twenty-three million, and it was about wine."

"It will work for Khan," Monica stated. "No one will try to raise the price once he shows interest in an item."

"Oh, that's smart," George exclaimed. "It might really work."

"I didn't think about that," Anita gasped. "Your mother truly taught you well."

"What am I missing?" Khan asked, glancing left and right to inspect his companions' faces.

"Khan, the entire Harbor wants to establish a good relationship with you," Monica explained while browsing through the imminent auctions. "No one will bid against you over a non-elemental spell."

"Oh," Khan understood Monica's thinking. "Are you sure? Am I that famous?"

"You don't know the half of it," Monica commented before pressing on one of the items. "This sounds promising."

Everyone gathered closer to inspect the item's description. Monica had chosen a non-elemental spell capable of releasing a spherical shield that could theoretically deflect any incoming attack. Its starting price was also one hundred thousand Credits, which was in Khan's range.

'Low compatibility with humans,' Khan read while taking the phone from Monica's hands. 'High consumption of mana. Even a suitable element might fail to provide the desired effects.'

"With your control," Monica announced, "You should have no problem making it work."

"It is quite good," George added.

'The mana consumption isn't a problem,' Khan thought while rereading the description. 'My mana anomaly should also help. I wonder how strong it actually is.'

"The auction is in two weeks," Anita exclaimed. "You wouldn't even miss the trip on Nippe 2."

"Right, the trip," Khan recalled. "Is the Princess still set on coming?"

The advanced courses weren't only about studying. They also involved trips and tests in specific locations, and the first would come next week. As for Nippe 2, it was the orange planet near the Harbor.

"She can hardly contain herself," Monica sighed. "She isn't here today because of the many preparations her family requires."

"What about you?" Khan asked while glancing at George. "Did you gain access to the advanced classes?"

"Sadly," George cursed. "I'll be drowned in homework like all of you next week."

"Don't be lazy about your future," Anita scolded.

Khan wanted to add a joke, but his phone began to buzz. The Divine Architects was calling him, and he didn't dare to refuse it.

"Hello?" Khan exclaimed.

"Captain, I hope I'm not disturbing," Master Cansend's voice came out of the phone.

"Not at all," Khan reassured. "Is this about the project?"

"Correct," Master Cansend confirmed. "I have the estimate you asked me about. I'm afraid I can't go under ninety-five thousand Credits. Is it acceptable?"

"It is," Khan stated. "How should I proceed to the payment?"

"I'll send a message with the necessary instructions," Master Cansend explained. "As for the knife, I'll get to work on it immediately. It might arrive before the end of the month."

"That would be great," Khan exclaimed. "Thank you, Master Cansend. I can't wait to see your creation."

"You are too kind, Captain," Master Cansend replied. "Have a nice evening."

"You too," Khan responded, and the call ended.

"New gear?" George asked once Khan reopened Pandora's menu.

"I needed to change my old knife," Khan explained while drawing his weapon to show it to George. "It's full of cracks already."

"You forgot the holes," George laughed. "What did you even do to it?"

"Milia 222," Khan explained shortly. "My element is troublesome too."

"You might be able to sell it," Monica suggested while reaching for the knife. "There has to be a collector among your fans."

"Why would anyone want a broken knife?" Khan asked.

"Because it belonged to you," Monica explained. "The weapon that defeated the Nak's hand. It should be a good selling point."

"Oh," Khan realized as his eyes met Monica's. "I knew consulting you was a good idea."

"I'm the best g-," Monica smirked before interrupting her line. She lifted her gaze and found Anita looking at her in confusion and surprise, which made sense considering her position.

Monica was basically lying on Khan's arm. She didn't seem to mind how her chest pressed on his shoulder, and their faces were also quite close. In theory, a wealthy descendant should never put herself in a similar situation.

"We wasted enough time," Monica cleared her throat as she turned to face the holograms and left Khan's arm. "We still have much to study, especially with the imminent trip."

"And this couch is far too crowded," George scoffed while standing up and glancing at Anita. "Care to join me on the other?"

"Someone has to make sure that you are paying attention," Anita stated and began to follow George, but she still shot a meaningful look at the couple.

Khan feigned ignorance and turned to show a smirk when George and Anita weren't looking. Still, Monica had the same idea and used that chance to give him a quick kiss before focusing on the holograms.

"Needy girl," Khan whispered but soon eyed the holograms. He had handled most of his problems, so it was time to study.

Chapter 453 Heavy

Having George in the advanced classes didn't change their atmosphere. The Princess' presence always filled the lessons with faint tension no one could ignore. Khan's relationship with her had improved, but even he had to remain polite and distant in public.

Things obviously changed whenever the group returned home. The atmosphere in George's flat was always cheerful, and Anita soon got a piece of that. Ron could only praise another well-mannered descendant, so she had no problem joining the Princess.

The week went by quickly. The immense amount of homework kept everyone busy, and Khan had it worse than his peers. The Princess, his studies, training, and relationship harshly affected his sleeping hours. He had to wait until after his flying lesson to get any decent rest, and even that was short-lived due to the trip.

On the morning of the second free day, the students of the advanced classes gathered in one of the Harbor's hangars to wait for their rides. The group barely reached forty people, so a couple of ships could be enough.

"I never got the chance to say this," Zoe announced while approaching Khan, "But that third star looks great on you."

"Zoe, at least try to hide it," Anita scolded.

"You can't have a say in this," Zoe complained. "You didn't hesitate to catch George as soon as the Princess got close to him."

"Actually," George began to explain, but Anita's glare made him stop.

"Thank you, Zoe," Khan exclaimed among the laughs Anita's gesture had caused. "Sadly, I'm still too busy to grant a dinner to anyone."

"You don't have to explain yourself," Lucian joined the conversation. "Still, my offer remains. I can provide a PR expert to help you in this difficult phase."

"Monica would get jealous if I listened to anyone but her," Khan joked, and Monica pulled his elbow to get closer to his ear.

The group couldn't hear Monica's whisper, but they felt awkward when Khan straightened his back and fixed his eyes on her. The couple had begun to be more open about their affection, and holding back while the Princess and the Professor had yet to arrive simply wasn't an option.

"Just announce it already," Zoe pouted. "It's obvious anyway."

"I was only reminding Khan of his homework," Monica feigned ignorance. "I didn't want to bore you with those topics during such a joyous occasion."

"Anita, help me out," Zoe called while reaching to Anita and taking her hands. "You must know something."

"I won't say anything," Anita chuckled while winking at Monica, "So you can tell me what is going on."

Similar chats followed, but the topic rarely shifted from Khan. The absence of the Princess gave those wealthy descendants a chance to improve their relationship with him, and they didn't dare to waste it.

The arrival of four figures into the hangar put that relaxed moment to an end, and the entire group turned in their direction to perform military salutes. Even the wealthy descendants had to abide by those political rules when dealing with a noble.

"Captain! Monica!" Princess Edna exclaimed while hurrying toward the couple. Of course, Ron and Jack remained at her sides the whole time.

"Princess," Khan called.

"Edna, I hope you slept well," Monica added.

"Let's not waste time," Princess Edna stated. "Ron, where is the ship?"

"Princess, Professor Leelli still has to make her speech," Ron scolded.

"It's fine, sir," Professor Leelli reassured. "The Princess can skip this briefing."

"Anita, George," The Princess called, ignoring Ron and the Professor. "You'll come with us."

"It would be our honor," Anita declared.

"Thank you, Princess," George added.

Princess Edna disregarded those polite replies to question Ron again. "The ship?"

"It's on its way," Ron explained while shooting a meaningful smile toward the Professor. "Professor Leelli should have the time to perform the briefing in the meantime."

Khan held back a smirk. Ron had probably delayed the ship's arrival on purpose, and the Princess didn't seem to mind that. In theory, the trip was part of the advanced courses, so she stopped causing problems.

"Alright, gather up," Professor Leelli shouted while tying her long golden hair into a bun. "First, I want to repeat what I already said during my lesson. This is no holiday. The trip is an active part of your education."

"As such," Professor Leelli continued as her glare fell on George, "I expect utmost seriousness. I don't want any pubescent flirting on the field."

"Understood, ma'am," George declared. "It won't be pubescent."

"Unbelievable," Anita cursed, but the group still exploded into a laugh at the sight of that familiar interaction.

"Order," Professor Leelli shouted. "Second, I've talked to Professor Parver, and he agreed to use your experience on Nippe 2 as part of his test."

A few groans resounded, but nothing too serious. Khan and the others would have to study Nippe 2 for Professor Leelli's course already. Adding the topic to the alien environments' lessons wouldn't change the amount of homework.

"It's six a.m. right now," Professor Leelli continued when she looked at her phone. "We'll be back by eight p.m. Try to learn as much as you can in these hours since there might be trick questions in my test."

The students nodded, and the arrival of three vehicles ended the briefing. Khan recognized the Princess' half-circular ship together with two vessels big enough to carry all the students.

"Let's split into two groups," Professor Leelli ordered as the ships landed in the hangar. "Princess, I wish you a good flight."

Princess Edna didn't bother to nod at the Professor. She took Monica's hand and began to head toward her ship, but someone interrupted her rush.

"Miss Virrai," Lucian politely called while stepping on the Princess' path, "Can I have a few seconds of your time?"

"Lucian Hencus," Ron explained before the Princess could question him.

"I remember," Princess Edna replied. "Anyone from the Hencus family is a friend."

"I'm flattered," Lucian half-bowed and continued before the Princess could lose interest. "I know Miss Solodrey and Captain Khan are keeping you company during these nights. I was wondering if you could grant me the same honor, maybe at one of my parties."

"Mister Hencus," Ron tried to intervene, but Lucian already had an answer.

"I've prepared everything according to Protocol N12, sir," Lucian declared. "I'll send you every detail and an administrator account so you can check for yourself."

Khan had followed Monica and the Princess, so he was in the perfect position to inspect the scene. His senses felt superfluous there. He understood Lucian's intentions even before he finished voicing his offer.

The Princess was a political shield but also an endless source of interest. Many wouldn't dare to approach her due to the sheer difference in status, but the wealthy descendants were different, especially in Lucian's case.

In less than two weeks, Lucian had developed and employed a plan to approach the Princess. Khan didn't know what Protocol N12 was, but Ron's face told him it had hit the mark.

"When is the party?" Princess Edna asked.

"Tonight," Lucian explained, "Right after our return to the Harbor."

"Will it be fun?" Princess Edna questioned while turning toward Monica.

Monica was at a crossroads. Involving Lucian in that strange relationship with the Princess could cause many problems. It would be safer to keep her in George's flat, where she couldn't expose anything. However, going against Lucian for no apparent reason might endanger her connection with his family.

"Lucian's parties are famous," Monica smiled. "I'm sure you'll have fun."

"We'll have fun," Princess Edna corrected before turning toward Lucian. "Fly with us."

"It would be my honor," Lucian replied, but the Princess resumed walking toward the ship before he could finish his line.

Ron and Jack also crossed Lucian without addressing his words. Instead, Khan, George, and Anita showed helpless smiles. They knew how the Princess behaved, and Lucian had just tasted it first-hand.

The group made itself comfortable inside the ship, with Princess Edna claiming Anita and Monica for herself. Jack and Ron stood by her sides, leaving George, Khan, and Lucian together on opposite seats.

Khan wanted to kill time, but the situation wasn't ideal. Monica, Princess Edna, and Anita had immersed themselves in a topic he couldn't touch. Jack was Jack. Ron was busy reviewing reports on the ship's screens, and Lucian wasn't exactly a friend. Actually, things grew quite awkward since George was also there.

"Aren't we setting off?" Khan eventually asked since the ship was still in the hangar.

"Security first," Ron said without diverting his gaze from the screens.

"Ron, I want to see Nippe 2," Princess Edna stated.

"I'm sorry, Princess," Ron responded. "The ship won't leave the Harbor until everything is set."

Strangely enough, the Princess gave up on trying to convince Ron. It seemed that she had no power over those matters, and her attention quickly shifted to another topic.

"Anita, you are so beautiful," Princess Edna exclaimed, "But you aren't glowing like Monica. You should tell George to learn something from Khan."

A violent cough took control of George's lungs while chaos spread throughout the area. Pure shock invaded Khan and Monica while confusion surged inside Anita and Lucian.

"Princess," Khan called as his entire experience in lies and pretenses made him come up with something believable. "That was a secret shared in confidence."

"Right!" Princess Edna exclaimed. "Still, Anita is your friend, and George should be up to the task."

Anita had seen how Khan's group behaved inside George's flat and in the Princess' presence, so dots began to connect in her mind. An idea appeared, and the sole thought made her widen her eyes in embarrassment.

Lucian was an outsider there, but nothing escaped his attentive eyes. Khan and Monica were doing a decent job at hiding their reactions, but their relationship had been a famous gossip for weeks.

Moreover, George's overreaction and Anita's following embarrassment were clues that added to Lucian's hypothesis. He reached a conclusion in his mind but feigned ignorance anyway.

Of course, Khan vaguely guessed what was happening inside Lucian. He couldn't sense thoughts, but the shifts in his emotional state described a partially clear picture. Still, before Khan could think about the situation any further, Monica came up with an excuse.

"Khan learnt a special massage technique on Milia 222," Monica lied while pretending to be embarrassed. "I request his services sometimes, but my mother doesn't know about it. I hope you can keep this secret."

Khan didn't even need to look at George to know he was dying to crack a joke. He could almost hear the words running through his mind. Luckily for him, nothing escaped his mouth, and Lucian played along to make the lie stick.

"Captain, you are always so full of surprises," Lucian praised. "No wonder Monica grew so attached to you. Working on her beauty must be a straight path toward her heart."

"Monica has always been beautiful," Khan chuckled. "I barely did anything."

Lucian kept his eyes on Khan, but Anita didn't miss Monica's loving expression. For once, she began to consider that the two might be a couple, and problems inevitably appeared in her thoughts. Monica's face made Anita desire to be happy for her, but she knew what issues that relationship could cause.

"I definitely agree," Lucian laughed and exchanged a fake smile with Khan. The two reached a silent understanding, and the sudden set-off of the ship gave them a chance to change the topic.

"Is everything set now?" Khan asked.

"I still advise against this trip," Ron replied as he finally turned to face the group. "One week is too short to prepare for every eventuality."

Ron hoped to claim the Princess' attention, but she had already made Monica and Anita look at her phone to go through her shopping list. Ron could only suppress a sigh and hide it behind his cold face.

"How long does it usually take?" Khan questioned to prevent the arrival of dangerous topics.

"That's classified," Ron stated.

"Usually, no less than a month," Princess Edna revealed. "Still, knowing my family, I probably won't last here that long."

"Princess!" Ron scolded.

"You have to get these shoes," Princess Edna stated while pulling Anita's sleeve.

"What about Protocol N12?" Khan continued.

"It's an approved safety measure involving soldiers and other security methods," Lucian explained.

"We'll study it soon enough."

Khan nodded, and his gaze inevitably fell on Jack. Security measures sounded pointless when that fearsome man was around, but anyone attempting at a noble's life probably had similarly powerful assets at hand.

"How many soldiers did they even deploy on Nippe 2 to protect the Princess?" Khan wondered.

"I hope you'll also join the party," Lucian rekindled the conversation. "It might be a good moment to address the many social events waiting for you."

"Attending is part of my duties," Khan joked.

"It is," Lucian confirmed. "Maybe I'll get the chance to give some advice. Who knows? I might become your PR guy."

Khan and Lucian fell into a long stare that George didn't hesitate to join. Everyone knew that there was more at stake than mere dinners there. Only Anita was unaware of key details, but the evident tension told her enough.

The flight didn't get any better after that point, but Khan appreciated the awkward silence that filled most of it. Monica did her best to keep the Princess focused on her shopping list to avoid dangerous revelations, so Khan only had to endure until the ship got close enough to Nippe 2.

The appearance of the orange planet on the ship's window attracted everyone's attention and retained it during the descent. The darkness of space soon disappeared, replaced by shades of that bright color that revealed their nature once the vehicle got close enough.

Khan and the other descendants in the advanced courses had studied Nippe 2 in the past week. They knew its structure, composition, and purpose in that solar system, but witnessing the entrance into such a strange atmosphere fueled Khan's curiosity and almost made him open his mouth in amazement.

The orange color opened, splitting into gales that moved due to the ship's passage. Thick but soft winds enveloped Nippe 2 in a dense atmosphere capable of radiating light during the darkest nights.

Metal particles blew alongside those bright rivers and tried to scratch the vehicle, but the latter's shields kept everything away.

The dive could become dull for many after a few minutes. The different shades of orange were spectacular but boring. However, Khan saw far more than that, and the desire to jump into that bright sea almost overwhelmed his rational thoughts.

The winds were soft but contained enough mana to be a scary power. They appeared ready to unleash their might on the ground far below and the space on the other side, but they remained calm, almost still. They were a warm layer that kept Nippe 2 illuminated without leaving a single spot uncovered.

The scenery changed after the ship crossed the denser winds. Visibility was scarce, but the vehicle's scanners granted a better read of the view. The gales thinned, revealing tall volcanoes and deep canyons engulfed with orange smoke. Sandy and sterile ground encircled them, creating a desolation that spanned as far as the eye could see.

Before mana, humanity would have seen Nippe 2 as a dead planet, but that couldn't be more different from the truth. Nippe 2's core had never been livelier. The vast amount of energy hidden beneath the surface pushed metal and other heavy materials into the atmosphere, creating endless winds that carried no violence.

Khan knew that balance was bound to crumble. Nippe 2's winds leaked materials into space, effectively losing part of the planet's energy. Eventually, Nippe 2's core would exhaust its fuel, and its heavy atmosphere would collapse. Yet, for now, that marvelous spectacle endured, and Khan felt lucky to be able to witness it.

As the ship neared the surface, immense structures became visible. Tall and vast dark buildings grew from the edge of a seemingly bottomless cliff, covering hundreds of meters both in height and surface. Factories that the Global Army had planted years ago extracted metal from the ground and sent it away, accelerating Nippe 2's inevitable downfall.

Nippe 2's metals were one of the Harbor's main resources, and, as such, Professor Leelli included them in her classes. She taught interplanetary regulations, so seeing how humanity handled those materials could give her students an idea of all the rules involved in the subject.

The ship landed near the southern factory, but Ron didn't allow anyone outside. While Khan and the others played with the scanners, he kept checking the screens.

Visibility had gone down again due to the fumes escaping the cliff, but the ship could ignore the issue. Khan and the others could see the entirety of Nippe 2's desolation, and part of them remained captivated by that harsh environment. The air was heavy and made eyes burn, nothing could grow on that ground, but the scenery remained beautifully pure.

Two more ships descended while Ron checked the reports, but they didn't wait to unload their cargo. The many descendants and Professor Leelli stepped onto the sandy ground and gathered under the Princess' vehicle. Khan noticed some of the weakest students coughing due to the heavy air, and many rubbed their eyes due to the dust entering them.

'Truly hostile,' Khan thought as his curiosity increased. The desire to be among natural mana surpassed any worry about the atmosphere's safety. Besides, he wanted to experience Nippe 2 with all his senses, and the chance eventually arrived.

"We can get down," Ron announced as the screens in front of him went dark. "Still, we can't approach the factory yet. We must wait for the reinforcements from the canyon."

"Let's land for now," Princess Edna exclaimed as she approached the ship's exit.

Ron and Jack instantly reached the Princess' sides, and the exit opened. A metal passage stretched toward the orange ground, and the trio trod it to join the rest of the descendants. Khan and the others followed right after, and Nippe 2's atmosphere finally showed its hostility.

Nippe 2's air felt heavy to breathe. Khan didn't experience any discomfort but noticed the difference with the Harbor's atmosphere. Yet, coziness soon arrived due to the overwhelming presence of natural mana.

Khan couldn't help but close his eyes and smile. The calm winds washed away the synthetic mana lingering on him and enveloped him in Nippe 2's natural energy. Compared to the Harbor, that atmosphere felt alive, and he could hear its colors clearly.

The immersion in Nippe 2's atmosphere couldn't last long since a cough distracted Khan and forced him to turn. Monica stabilized her breath quickly, but a tear still fell from her right eye while her body grew used to the new environment.

Khan instinctively reached for Monica's cheek to wipe the tear away. Many could see him even among that low visibility, but he didn't care. Still, only George noticed him since everyone else was busy dealing with the new atmosphere.

"It's blurry," Monica commented once her eyes grew used to the air. "Well, sort of."

Khan could only agree. It was impossible to see distant areas, and those nearby suffered from similar problems. The metal in the air distorted images, making it hard to judge how close someone actually was to another person.

Of course, Khan had more than eyes for that, so he had no problem adjusting. He even helped Monica through the metal passage while she continued to get used to Nippe 2, and their walk ended when they reunited with the Princess.

"The extraction of metal should be interesting," Princess Edna stated at her companions' arrival. "I've never seen a similar factory."

"The Virrai family owns quite a few like this," Professor Leelli explained. "I'll do my best to show you around, Princess."

"Thank you, Wendy," Princess Edna smiled. "Ron?"

"They are on their way, Princess," Ron revealed.

Khan continued to inspect the desolate area while Monica remained clung onto his elbow, but Anita ended up approaching them. She even kept her voice down to prevent people from overhearing.

"You two," Anita whispered. "We'll talk once we get back."

Anita was using her serious face and tone. Questioning her about her intentions was also pointless. She obviously wanted to address the conversation that happened on the ship.

Khan and Monica had to decide how to handle Anita, but the appearance of four big shapes in the distance distracted them. Everyone eventually fixed their eyes on those huge figures making their way through the fumes and growing more visible as they approached the group.

"The escort is here," Ron declared, but his faint smile disappeared as soon as Jack stepped forward to put himself in front of the Princess.

"Protect the Princess!" Ron promptly shouted, but his warning arrived one second too late.

A series of missiles flew through the heavy air and reached an area above the group to detonate. Khan had felt them, but dodging wasn't an option, so he remained in his position when the explosion unfolded. The weapons didn't release any destructive power. Yet, Khan's senses went dark anyway.

Chapter 454 Equipment

The silence of darkness wasn't something Khan could experience. Nightmares always afflicted his nights, so his consciousness never stopped working.

However, the missiles put Khan into a state many would link to deep sleep. He couldn't sense or think, but the nightmares didn't arrive. He was immersed in complete darkness, with nothing but faint coziness trying to spread through his fainted mind.

That darkness was short-lived. An almost silent clicking growl began to echo among Khan's thoughts and grew louder with each passing second. The cry intensified until it transformed into a deafening noise that split the blackness apart and allowed the arrival of Nippe 2's orange shades.

Khan felt the urge to throw up as his shambled senses crashed on his consciousness and made him aware of his state. Nippe 2's light blinded his eyes, a ringing noise assaulted his ears, and tremors ran through his body in an attempt to make everything fall apart.

Yet, a louder noise spread through Khan's senses and forced him to remain on his feet. Khan found himself with his mouth open and pointed at the sky while the clicking roar came out of his throat.

In a different situation, Khan would have interrupted his monstrous cry. Still, he had no control over his body. Only his urges existed, and they made him roar.

A few seconds had to pass before Khan finally closed his mouth. He lowered his head in an attempt to study his surroundings, but everything continued to shake. He felt dizzy, his head spun, and the orange shades were too blinding for his eyes. Yet, he slowly improved, and everything eventually became clear.

Khan was still next to the Princess' ship, near his group and the other students. However, everyone was in an awful state. Monica, George, Princess Edna, and the others were either on the ground or on the verge of falling. Some of the weakest descendants had directly fainted, and foam leaked from their mouths while they convulsed in the sand.

The nature of the surprise attack became evident as Khan's messy senses gathered information from himself and his surroundings. The missiles had affected the mana, even inside the soldiers. Those

weapons had turned that incredible energy into a wild and chaotic poison that attacked its hosts, making their bodies useless.

That effect seemed only temporary and far from deadly, which explained how Khan had managed to recover so quickly. His mana had suffered from the explosion, but his element wouldn't let foreign chaos take control of him.

Nevertheless, the faint stability enforced by Khan's chaos didn't bring him back to his top shape. The poison had affected him for many seconds, so his senses were still a mess, but that didn't make him powerless.

Khan instinctively reached for Monica. She had remained on her feet, even if her eyes were closed and her ears couldn't hear anything. She didn't feel when Khan took her into his arms, and tremors continued to affect her while her body tried to stabilize.

Monica wasn't Khan's only worry. George was also in a similarly messy state. He barely had the time to cover Anita with his body before falling prey to the nasty explosion, which left him unable to move.

Khan stomped his left foot in an attempt to quicken his recovery and move toward George, but something managed to reach his senses and forced him to turn. He wasn't the only one able to move. The Princess' guards were also showing their skills.

Ron had his right hand on the Princess' forehead. His mana was far from stable, but he was using the little control in his grasp to improve the Princess' condition.

Meanwhile, Jack stood before them, like an unmovable mountain waiting for the enemies to arrive. The four huge shapes had gotten closer while Khan had been out, and he could identify them as cargo ships now that the fumes didn't hinder his vision too much.

The cargo ships continued to get closer until the fumes couldn't hide most of their features anymore. They were rectangular vehicles that showed their long sides to the group of students. Their doors were also open, and many different auras leaked into the symphony to create a fearsome scenery.

Khan was still fighting against his sensitive eyes and his ringing ears but saw enough to be worried. The cargo ships had an entire platoon on them, and each soldier wielded rifles or guns. That wasn't a force he could handle on his own, especially with the weapons those vehicles carried.

That wasn't the end of it. As the ships grew even closer, Khan became able to see more of the attackers' equipment. They wore black body armor that covered them from head to toe, and visors that leaked green light hid their eyes.

A scary conclusion appeared in Khan's mind. Those enemies didn't only match the number of descendants on the ground. They also had equipment meant to counter Nippe 2's hostile environment.

The ships had reached Khan's group by the time he finished his inspection, and the soldiers on them didn't hesitate to open fire. Azure bullets rained on the ground, threatening to kill anyone in sight. However, a giant figure flew in their way to act as a shield.

The pilots on the descendants' ships had suffered due to the missiles, but the Princess' vehicle had the auto-pilot, which involved safety protocols. When the enemies fired, it put itself in the bullets' trajectory to block the incoming azure rain.

Khan used that chance to lift Monica and reach for George. His steps were still weak, but he had enough strength to kick his friend to the ground. George was covering Anita, so she also fell.

A vast surge of mana forced Khan to turn again. He couldn't see due to the half-circular ship blocking his view, but the detonation that resounded was impossible to miss. Something had crashed on the other side of the vehicle, and sparks flew in every direction due to the damage it had suffered.

The Princess' ship showed its value by remaining in its position, but the platoon didn't let it be an obstacle forever. Ropes fell from the cargo vehicles as the enemies decided to land, and bullets flew again once they regained the line of sight.

The shots couldn't be precise, but some fell on the descendants, hitting a few in the process. Gory holes opened on those almost-unconscious students, and Khan even saw a leg fly.

The situation was more than clear in Khan's mind. He couldn't hope to fight against that platoon. Things would have been different if he were alone and in perfect condition, but his friends' presence didn't give him many options.

The descendants' ships could offer some protection, but that was a temporary solution. Instead, the factory nearby could turn the tables of the battle and keep everyone safe. Reaching it was the only problem.

"Go!" Ron shouted as he spread his arms to act as a meat shield for the Princess.

Many enemies had landed by then, and they had even lifted their rifles to aim properly. However, Jack jumped at the center of their formation to slam both arms downward.

Khan had seen fourth-level warriors in action, but the scene that unfolded in his eyes forced him to reevaluate his experience. Jack's descending blow hit one of the enemies, squashed him into the ground, and created a crater that sent sand in every direction.

Even the ground shook under the might of Jack's attack. He didn't use anything special, but his sheer physical strength had been enough to put fear in the enemies' minds.

The sandstorm unleashed by the attack didn't stop the enemies from firing blindly. Azure shots soon shone among the orange gales and flew toward the descendants. Yet, Ron stopped limiting himself to a human shield.

Mirror-like circles left Ron's hands and flew in the shots' trajectory, acting as shields that absorbed the mana in those bullets. Then, in the next second, they sent that energy back to their source, and cries resounded among the hovering sand.

Another shockwave followed and dispersed the sandstorm. A maimed body flew in the distance as Jack became visible again. He was right in the middle of the enemy platoon, but only blood and gory corpses encircled him.

Jack didn't hesitate to jump toward his nearest enemy, and sand rose again. Khan's sensitivity allowed him to keep track of what was happening, and shock took control of his mind. He could sense bullets crashing on Jack, but nothing seemed able to stop him.

Khan remained in a daze only for an instant before snapping back into action. Ron and Jack were giving him an opportunity he didn't dare to waste, so he reached George and mustered the entirety of his control to lift him.

Monica and George ended up occupying Khan's shoulders as he bent one last time to grab Anita's right foot. Carrying three people in that weakened state would be impossible for a human, but Khan managed to stride forward while aiming for the descendants' ships.

Khan couldn't be fast, but the ships were nearby, so he reached them after the battlefield went through three more shockwaves. He hurried behind them and let Anita's foot go before lying George and Monica on the ground.

A louder explosion resounded, forcing Khan to peek past the ships. Dark smoke had begun to come out of the Princess' vehicle, but it remained in the air. Instead, the ground showed a far different spectacle.

Jack had killed more than fifteen people in those short seconds, but a worthy opponent had joined the field. A five-meter-tall robot piloted by one of the enemies had left the cargo ships to deal with that monstrous guard.

The robot had thick arms and legs, with long rifles on both shoulders. A reinforced cabin stood at its center, allowing the pilot to see everything from a safe position. That machine contained enough synthetic mana to put fourth-level warriors to shame, and its offensive was strangely fast.

Jack lifted his arms when the robot waved a hand in his direction. To Khan's surprise, Jack remained on his feet and even stopped the attack after sliding for a few meters. Yet, the machine had another limb that quickly descended toward him.

The robot's left punch slammed on Jack's head, but he remained straight. Blood flowed on his cheek while he used his right arm to push away the second mechanical limb.

Khan felt in awe of Jack's strength and resilience. The huge robot was trying its best to squash Jack, but he was keeping its arms away through sheer physical prowess. Still, that wasn't enough to defeat the machine. Actually, the attackers could achieve their goal during that stalemate.

Bullets continued to fly back and forth. Ron kept everyone safe and hit a few enemies, but the latter advanced during the opening created by the robot. Many shots rushed toward Ron at that point, forcing him to release more circular mirrors.

Still, the attackers had more than simple bullets. While Ron focused on protecting himself, three metallic spheres rolled at his feet and unleashed a series of lightning bolts that pierced his shields.

Ron tried his best to endure the lightning bolts, but more spheres arrived, and the sixth ended up making him fall to his knees. Those weapons had even affected the Princess since she was behind him, leaving her unconscious.

The attackers hurried toward the Princess and lifted her before a couple of them pointed their rifles at Ron's head. They were ready to execute him, but a robotic arm crashed into them before they could take the shot.

Terror leaked into the symphony when the attackers turned toward Jack. The robot had lost one of its arms while the other was on Jack's back. It was pinning him on the ground with its weight, but he tried to crawl toward the Princess anyway.

The attackers gave up on executing the Princess' guards when they saw the robot budging. They hurried back to their ships and grabbed the ropes still hanging from them to leave in the direction of the huge canyon. Even the robot's pilot left the cabin to depart with the platoon's remains.

The situation didn't calm down once the battle ended. Ron was still trapped among lightning bolts, and the robot used the auto-pilot to keep Jack pinned down. Cries also resounded as the descendants started to awaken. That scenery was the embodiment of defeat, and Khan had first-row seats for it.

A tremor ran through the symphony and made Khan turn in time to grab Monica's stretched arm. She had reached for him as soon as she awakened, and he crouched to hold her.

"Khan," Monica weakly groaned as she rubbed her eyes, "Is the Princess safe?"

Khan opened his mouth, but no words came out of it. He could feel Monica's panic. It was her duty to protect the Princess, and he knew what she would try to do if he told the truth.

"Fuck!" Khan loudly cursed while gently pushing Monica down and straightening his position. He was fine now. His senses were slightly off, but his top shape was only seconds away.

Monica shot a confused glance toward Khan, but he looked at George. The latter had begun to straighten his position, and his head performed an instinctive nod when he noticed Khan's serious face. The two only needed that to understand each other.

"Wait, Khan!" Monica called and began to stand up when Khan turned to leave, but he ignored her. She would only put herself in danger if she tried to help in her condition.

Khan's sensitivity had been in a good spot for a while now. He knew exactly in which ship the Princess' was and could also keep track of their speed. Those cargo vehicles weren't too fast. He could theoretically catch up with them.

Purple-red lights flashed in the orange environment. Bright needles fell on the metal spheres around Ron while a glowing spear crashed on the robot's remaining arm. Explosions soon followed, and Ron broke free of the lightning bolts only to notice a figure sprinting in the distance and leaving sandy winds on his path.

Chapter 455 Order

Nippe 2's atmosphere fought against Khan's acceleration. The metal carried by the sand and soft winds transformed into sharp blades due to his high speed, and scratches soon covered his exposed skin.

Nevertheless, Khan only cared about going faster. The symphony and his senses worked together to make his steps more efficient, bringing him to levels of speed he had never touched before. His sprint left proper sandstorms behind him, but his eyes looked forward, toward the departing ships.

Khan didn't have a plan, only problems to overcome. Jack and Ron had killed many attackers, but the ships still had almost twenty of them. Moreover, those vehicles were in the air outside Khan's jumping range. The canyon was also getting close, and Khan couldn't win against that.

Nippe 2's atmosphere was Khan's sole advantage. The cargo ships definitely had scanners capable of piercing that heavy air, but Khan was alone, and his sprint was causing a mess of sand and gales. He could go unnoticed if he were lucky enough.

'I can't stay hidden, can I?' Khan cursed in his mind.

A surprise attack would work in Khan's favor. However, he needed to reach the ships first. Flying wasn't an option, so he had to create a passage.

'Fuck,' Khan cursed again while accelerating even more to catch up with the ships. The Princess was on the second-last, and he waited until he was right below it to summon his mana.

The soldiers on the ship were mainly thinking about leaving the area. The factory had vehicles that could intercept them, so they had to put as much distance as possible from the battlefield before moving on with their plan.

The casualties suffered during the assault also left the attackers without enough manpower to perform every duty. A small squad was surveilling the Princess. Another was checking the path ahead and the factory, while a third was tending to the injured. No one was scanning the road behind since the presence of threats sounded unreal.

That changed when an explosion unfolded under the second-last ship. The attack didn't touch the vehicle, but the purple-red pillar that followed was too eye-catching to miss. Also, the chaos element's annoying properties messed up part of the equipment, forcing the soldiers to scan the area.

The attackers quickly found Khan, but a second chaos spear flew their way and replicated the previous offensive. The spell couldn't reach the ships, but its explosion was violent enough to give birth to worry, which triggered a response.

The symphony confirmed that Khan's plan had succeeded. He sensed a series of figures peeking past the ships' doors, and their magazines full of synthetic mana told him what was about to arrive.

Azure lights flashed among Nippe 2's orange air. Bullets rained toward Khan, with many aiming directly at him. Those shots even tried to predict his advance, which blocked the path ahead, but he had no intention of going forward.

When the bullets entered Khan's range, he jumped and used his light steps to leap from one mass of mana to the other. The attackers realized what was happening soon enough, but they stopped firing when it was already too late. Khan had his path now.

Khan had plenty of options. Enemies from all the ships had fired at him multiple times, creating a series of azure platforms he could use to go wherever he wanted. The doors of the second-last vehicle soon entered his vision, and surprise filled the symphony due to the emotions leaked by his enemies.

'Six,' Khan counted while another part of his mind remained immersed in the symphony. 'Two third-level warriors and four second-level warriors.'

The enemies couldn't help but lift their rifles to aim at Khan, but he used the last bullet in his range to leap toward the ship. To the soldiers' surprise, he didn't target the empty areas. Instead, he charged directly at the left side, where two third-level warriors were guarding the Princess.

The trip to Nippe 2's was part of the lessons, so Khan didn't have his damaged knife with him. Part of his fighting style was unavailable, and he couldn't go crazy either due to the Princess' presence. Still, no hesitation appeared in his moves.

Three purple-red needles grew from Khan's right hand while he flew toward the ship. He threw the spell at the four second-level warriors right before his left foot touched the ship's metal floor, but bullets also came in his direction.

Explosions resounded on Khan's right when the needles met the bullets. Only the shots fired by the third-level warriors remained, and one of them scratched his cheek when he dodged to the left. His sprint brought him onto the metal wall, which he used to fling himself toward the two enemies next to the Princess.

Khan was faster than average third-level warriors, but the two enemies next to the Princess had protective gear and weapons. Their visors allowed them to keep up with Khan and made them lift their rifles to counter his incoming assault.

Truth be told, Khan had no special interest in the Princess. He had gotten to know her better, but they weren't actually friends, not yet, at least. He would have normally let her go to prioritize George and Monica.

Yet, different emotions appeared now that Khan was deep into that reckless mission. The blood, the injuries, and Monica's suffering face flashed in his vision, and his mana boiled. Since he had decided to save the Princess, he would go all out.

Dots connected inside Khan's mind without ever turning into proper thoughts. He had no real plan, but his thoughts were one with the symphony, and that gave birth to a tactic.

The third-level warrior targeted by Khan lifted the rifle to use it as a shield. The weapon was sturdy enough to be a reliable defense. However, a purple-red light pierced its metal and flew toward the visor. The soldier only had the time to recognize fingers enveloped in clotted blood vessels before his vision went dark.

A cracking noise resounded when Khan stabbed his right hand in the man's head, and sharp pain followed. Something had broken, but that only made his mana rage louder.

The intense emotions allowed Khan to ignore his injury and land safely on the metal floor. The second third-level warrior pointed the rifle at him, but he did the same with the hand inside the enemy's head, and his Wave spell ended up being faster.

The straight version of the Wave spell destroyed the pierced head and flew toward the third-level warrior, engulfing the upper part of his body in its violent power. The rifle and the body armor gave the enemy enough time to retreat, leaving Khan alone with the fainted Princess.

"Shoot him!" The third-level warrior shouted while pieces of his body armor fell off.

Khan couldn't help but be surprised when the second-level warriors fired their guns. He was standing right next to the defenseless Princess. Bullets could easily kill her, but those soldiers had attacked anyway.

Time wasn't on Khan's side. He could dodge, but that would leave the Princess exposed, so he crossed his arms to protect his head and chest and summoned the [Blood Shield].

The alien technique covered Khan's arms and the exposed parts of his torso before the bullets could crash on him. His skin shattered under the attacks, but the [Blood Shield] endured. Still, the enemies kept firing, locking him in his position.

The third-level warrior didn't stay still. Khan's attack had broken his rifle, but he had spells. His mana started to move while Khan remained under fire. It really seemed that those enemies were willing to sacrifice the Princess if necessary.

Thoughts were a luxury Khan couldn't afford. Developing plans wasn't an option when a spell was about to fly at him, so he pointed his right arm at the metal floor and released another straight version of the Wave spell.

The gesture left Khan exposed for an instant, and a bullet flew through his right shoulder before the [Blood Shield] could protect it. More pain joined his thoughts, but his emotions continued to cover it, allowing a perfect execution of the spell.

The purple-red light crashed on the metal floor and dug through it until a proper hole appeared. Khan didn't stop there. He expanded the range of the spell until the entire surface risked falling apart.

The soldiers kept firing while retreating, and the third-level warrior unleashed his spell. A first-sized, dark-green sphere flew toward Khan, carrying enough mana to alert him. The [Blood Shield] would probably break under that attack, so he ducked and interrupted his offensive.

The spell flew past Khan and hit the wall behind him, piercing the metal and advancing toward the pilot's cabin. Smoke also came from the melted edges, and a sizzling noise joined it. The attack was still corroding those surfaces, and an explosion soon resounded.

The soldiers couldn't sense it, but Khan only needed his ears to know that the engine had gone dark. Another explosion even resounded behind him, and the ship suddenly spun to its right, turning its open doors into the new floor.

The sudden turn didn't give Khan a chance to react. He lost his foothold and fell through the open door. He ended up in the orange air, but no sand stood under him. The ships had already reached the canyon.

Something touched Khan's senses before he could think about his situation. He turned his head only to see the Princess jumping from the broken floor to fly in his direction. She fell into his arms, and her calm face filled his vision.

"What are you doing?!" Khan cursed.

"Leaving my kidnappers," Princess Edna calmly replied before glancing at the bottomless canyon. "Are we going to die, Captain?"

Khan didn't answer. His thoughts ran at full speed to find a solution, but the situation seemed hopeless. Nippe 2's air was quite dense, but it still couldn't enable Khan's flight.

Requesting the mana's help sounded like Khan's only option, but another presence touched his senses before he could attempt that technique. He glanced at the canyon's edge and found Jack staring at him, but the latter diverted his gaze after a few seconds.

'Isn't he worried about the Princess?' Khan wondered.

Khan was close enough to see Jack, but that wasn't a distance people could jump. Even Jack's monstrous physical prowess couldn't cover that space, let alone reach the other side of the canyon.

Still, a complete lack of interest sounded wrong. There had to be something else to Jack's gesture, and Khan soon found an answer.

'He doesn't see death,' Khan guessed as his eyes fell on the canyon's depths once again.

Khan was sure that no one could survive that fall. The canyon probably was kilometers deep. His transformation was incredible, but that was simply too much.

The fumes coming out of the canyon couldn't help either. They were too soft for Khan's Lightning-demon style. The gales at Nippe 2's edges could have worked, but the air past them was too thin.

'Will I succeed through the Nele's arts?' Khan wondered as his study of his surroundings went deeper.

The symphony was everywhere. Khan could feel it, hear it, and even see it. He recognized every strand of mana running through the air. That energy was so real that being unable to touch it almost felt impossible.

'It's right here,' Khan exclaimed as his thoughts grew silent. 'It has always been here.'

A tinge of Khan's mana left his body and fused with the environment. He didn't voice any request, but the energy around him began to move in his direction.

Nothing special happened. Some gales grew denser but still failed to meet Khan's requirements. Yet, he lowered his right foot anyway, and something solid eventually arrived.

The Princess had to cling to Khan's neck due to the sudden upward acceleration. He rose through the orange air before kicking a soft wind under him to repeat the process.

A mocking laugh escaped Khan's mouth when he pushed himself upward a third time. He couldn't believe that the solution had always been in front of his eyes. He had simply been unable to recognize and seize it until now.

"It has always been here," Khan laughed as he stomped both feet on the air to push himself even higher. A sense of freedom enveloped him, and the desire to test himself showed its presence, but the Princess distracted him.

"Good job, Captain," Princess Edna exclaimed. "Now, go after my kidnappers."

"What?" Khan almost shouted.

"That's an order," Princess Edna declared.

Chapter 456 Hunter

"Princess, I-," Khan tried to say.

"My kidnappers are getting away," Princess Edna interrupted.

Khan instinctively glanced in the direction of the ships. Three of them had almost reached the other side of the canyon, but the damaged one was struggling to fly straight. Smoke also came from the cabin as the vehicle lost height.

"Did I misjudge you?" Princess Edna wondered, noticing the hesitation on Khan's face. "Odd. I thought you would be mad because of Monica."

The Princess didn't need to add anything else to convey her idea. Khan had almost been ready to fight Jack for Monica, and that was just to keep his relationship a secret. The kidnappers had done far worse to her, so the Princess believed that Khan wouldn't hesitate to go after them.

Khan was obviously livid. His mana alone echoed angry screams whenever Monica or George's suffering faces appeared in his vision. Yet, there was a difference between protecting someone and going after people who hurt his loved ones.

In theory, Khan had saved the Princess. He had no reason to pursue the kidnappers, and revenge wasn't part of his character. Still, the Princess' words stirred his already intense emotions, fueling his dark sides. If the Princess wanted to see the monster, Khan wouldn't hide.

"Princess, do you have defensive techniques?" Khan questioned as his tone lost every trace of emotion.

"Yes," Princess Edna casually answered.

"Use them," Khan ordered.

Princess Edna showed a knowing smile and joined her hands before summoning her mana. Energy flowed out of her palms and expanded to cover her body. That was another non-elemental technique, but even Khan had to acknowledge its power.

Khan let himself fall while the Princess completed her technique. His speed increased and made him aware of his many injuries. He was far from good, but his mana fused with his desires and forced words inside his mind.

'Flow,' Khan heard in his own voice. 'Fly. Freedom.'

Khan's falling speed increased while he remained immersed in his thoughts. The canyon drew him inside its depths, but worry couldn't appear in his mind. After all, gravity didn't exist anymore.

A slow stomp flung Khan toward the departing ships, and another put him at his top speed. Something told him he could go faster, so mana leaked out of his body as he stepped harder into the air. His technique had every right to fail, but Khan accelerated anyway.

Questions managed to resound among Khan's messy emotions. He didn't know why or how he had succeeded in flying. He underwent no revolutionary change during the chase but still accomplished a long-desired feat.

Khan's transformation, general experience, or dangerous situation could explain that breakthrough. Probably all of them and more were to blame for his sudden improvement. A singular answer didn't exist. Khan had simply understood that the air had become a suitable platform.

The reasons were unknown, but that didn't apply to the result. Khan knew exactly what had happened. He had stepped into the advanced proficiency level for the Lightning-demon style.

"Enlightenment," Khan whispered as confidence built up inside him and put more power into his moves.

Each step was better than the previous one. Khan wasn't new to that ability, but he still had a lot to learn, and the chase allowed him to test his limits. Some eagerness also appeared as he saw the damaged ship drawing closer to the ground. Another battle was about to unfold, and Khan couldn't wait to put his new proficiency level to use.

The ships had reached the other side of the canyon, but it was clear that one of them couldn't fly anymore. The damaged vehicle crash-landed on the ground, sliding for a while and creating a mess of sand and smoke before finally stopping.

Seven figures came out of the crashed ship. The soldiers that Khan had fought, a pilot, and a wounded woman landed and regrouped while another vehicle descended toward their position. Ropes fell from the open doors, and the team worked together to bring everyone to safety.

The symphony kept Khan updated on the kidnappers' situation. The wounded woman was slowing them down, giving him enough time to catch up. Yet, they still had a ship, which was a problem he had to handle right away.

The Princess shouted a few complaints when Khan reached the canyon's edge and threw her on the ground. She probably wanted to join the battle, but he didn't care. The incoming battlefield was his training ground.

Getting rid of the Princess allowed Khan to push his speed even more. He soon entered the ship's range, causing shouts to come from its open doors. The kidnappers were warning their companions about his arrival, but their visors didn't help when they didn't know where to look.

Khan ran higher and higher until he arrived above the ship's cabin. A bright sword grew out of his left hand as he let Nippe 2's gravity do its work. His figure ended up upside down, and he stomped his feet to generate a violent acceleration.

The kidnappers were on the verge of bringing everyone on the intact ship when the pilot's cabin made a loud noise. The vehicle didn't budge, but the woman at the steering wheel had to close her eyes due to the falling glass shards.

Khan entered the cabin through the hole dug during his landing and planted his bright sword on the pilot's chest. His arm pierced her torso and reached the ship's floor, where cracks immediately appeared and expanded.

Various explosions resounded after a few seconds. The chaos claws unleashed their effects, destroying anything in their range and inflicting critical damage to the ship. Pillars of smoke flew in every direction as the vehicle lost height, and everyone jumped out once the crash became inevitable.

More shouts resounded and mixed with the explosions coming out of the ships. The kidnappers did their best to regroup and create a battle formation, but their visors seemed useless. They looked left and right but only noticed the Princess in the distance.

The second ship had three soldiers, with a single third-level warrior among them. The landing had even forced them to forsake the wounded woman, leaving only nine figures on the sand. That was no weak force, and weapons also increased their battle prowess.

Still, before the kidnappers could create a circle, a figure crashed on the third-level warrior with the damaged gear. Khan used his insane momentum to deliver a descending kick on the soldier's head, which remained intact even when it landed on the ground.

The sandstorm generated by Khan's landing didn't hide his figure. His offensive revealed his position, making the remaining eight kidnappers turn toward him. Weapons moved in his direction, and mana started to accumulate. Attacks were bound to arrive in the next seconds, but he still stomped his right foot to deliver a killing blow on the third-level warrior.

Khan had calculated that the kidnappers wouldn't have the time to fire, but the remaining third-level warrior surprised him. The latter released a beam-like spell from her right eye, and its speed forced Khan to resort to the [Blood Shield].

The spell crashed on Khan's left shoulder, burning his skin and dispersing the sand. The attack didn't carry much power, but it still hurt and made smoke come out of the charred flesh.

The scene stunned the kidnappers. Their visors gave them a perfect view of Khan, and pure terror inevitably leaked into the symphony.

The upper part of Khan's uniform fell off, revealing an array of clotted blood vessels. He had one foot inside the gory remains of the third-level warrior's head, smoke came out of his back, and his eyes almost shone when they looked at his enemies.

The visors' green filter worsened the mental blow the scene caused. Khan's current state was barely human. He resembled an alien beast sent to hunt them down.

"Monster," One of the kidnappers muttered before breaking the circular formation to retreat toward the crashed ship. The other soldiers did the same, but none dared show their backs.

The retreat forced the second-level warriors to adjust their aim, but their stronger companion didn't need that. She seemed ready to unleash another beam, and Khan couldn't waste time defending, especially in his injured state.

"Help my legs," Khan whispered while turning toward the kidnappers and sending some mana into the environment.

The third-level warrior didn't lose track of Khan for even a second. Her spell didn't hurt her visor, so the sand didn't hinder her. Her mana moved quickly, accumulating in her right eye to launch a beam aimed at Khan's head, but darkness abruptly filled her vision.

The second-level warriors almost missed the event due to how quickly it had unfolded, but their position made that outcome impossible. They were behind their stronger companion, so they saw a figure teleporting on top of her. They even noticed Khan's knee replacing her head.

Khan felt on fire. The sudden acceleration generated by Maban's technique made his injured skin scream in pain, but his mana continued to be louder and only allowed the arrival of warnings.

The second-level warriors' fear quickened their reactions. Multiple rifles moved in Khan's direction, ready to fire whenever he touched the ground or jumped again. However, Khan had long since stopped playing by those rules. His movements weren't something those kidnappers could predict or keep track of.

Some bullets flew toward Khan's position, but he stomped his feet in the air to disappear far above the battlefield. The kidnappers tried to search for him, but he ricocheted left, down, and right to deliver a spinning kick on one of them.

Cracking noises joined the sand as the kick shattered the armor and broke the kidnapper's neck, leaving Khan in mid-air. In the past, he would have used his opponent as a foothold to jump or push himself onto the ground. Yet, the air offered countless better options, and Khan didn't hesitate to seize them.

Khan went all-out, letting his raging emotions and the symphony in his senses dictate his moves. He jumped everywhere and delivered kicks without ever touching the ground. The Lightning-demon style transformed into an aerial art, and those second-level warriors couldn't do anything against it.

One of the kidnappers gave up when his last companion died in front of his eyes. He dropped his rifle and fell to the ground, almost waiting for death to arrive.

Khan noticed the lack of danger from his last opponent and decided to land. He stopped before him and took a single step forward to plant his foot on his chest. A mere pressure from Khan would kill that kidnapper, but the arrival of a familiar presence made him stop.

"Wait, Captain," Princess Edna called while reaching Khan. "I want to hear what he has to say."

Khan kept his foot on the kidnapper as the Princess reached his side. His emotions finally began to quiet down to open the way for curiosity. He wanted to know more about the force that dared to attack a noble.

"So, you are Captain Khan," The kidnapper scoffed while laying his head on the sand. "You sure accepted the Princess' leash quickly."

"Talk," Khan threatened while applying pressure on the kidnapper's chest. "Who are you? How did you know about this trip? How did you plan to escape?"

"What a disappointment," The kidnapper mocked as resolve replaced his fear. "We kept track of you, you know? You are even better than we thought!"

"Who is we?" Khan continued.

"Well, there is time," The kidnapper laughed. "You'll eventually join us. Don't worry. We won't make it too hard on you."

"Who are you?" Khan shouted, performing a stomp that pushed the kidnapper deeper into the sand. The attack was far from deadly, but the second-level warrior felt it.

The kidnapper coughed, but his smile returned as soon as he managed to speak again. "We are the Hive, and we are everywhere."

Khan suppressed a frown. The name didn't mean anything to him, but intense mana flared inside the kidnapper and brought his attention back to him. Something moved inside the man's head, but everything ended before Khan could react.

"A restriction," Princess Edna commented. "Boring."

The mana inside the kidnapper told Khan what had happened. An explosion had unfolded inside his brain, killing him on the spot.

Chapter 457 Hive

The stillness of death filled Khan's vision, leaving him speechless. That extreme gesture was a clue he couldn't ignore. The kidnappers couldn't be a random force if their members were willing to trigger deadly restrictions to avoid getting captured.

Khan's perspective had broadened after the events in Reebfell's Slums. He knew about organizations that defied the Global Army's leadership. Still, he didn't expect that resolve from their members.

Creating a secret lab to make extra money was reasonable. Yet, the attack on the Princess carried something Khan didn't completely understand. The kidnappers were ready to accept death. In a way, they were better soldiers than most of those enlisted in the Global Army.

'What does it take to have this kind of resolve?' Khan wondered while looking at the dead kidnapper. 'What were they trying to achieve?'

"How long is this taking?" Princess Edna complained. "I want to see the factory."

"They are coming," Khan revealed as his eyes remained on the corpse. He didn't need to turn to sense the arrival of a few ships.

Questions continued to resound in Khan's mind when the Princess turned toward the canyon. He wanted to know more about the Hive and those kidnappers, but Ron and the others probably wouldn't give him answers.

"What is the Hive?" Khan decided to ask in that moment of privacy.

"A terrorist organization," Princess Edna explained, uncaring whether Khan had the clearance to learn about the topic.

"Terrorist?" Khan questioned, but the Princess ignored him since the faint shapes of three ships had appeared in the distance.

"Princess, I deserve to know more," Khan pressed on.

"Right!" Princess Edna exclaimed. "You did rescue me. Thank you, Captain."

"Princess, the Hive," Khan reminded.

"I'll tell Ron to brief you," Princess Edna promised while patting her military uniform. "I'm all sandy."

"I don't know if I can learn that information," Khan finally diverted his gaze from the corpse.

"It's even in my hair," Princess Edna complained while continuing to inspect herself.

Khan couldn't find the strength to curse. The Princess was impossible to deal with, and trying wouldn't get him anywhere. He could only hope that Ron would handle the task.

The incoming ships moved fast, especially the one in the lead. They took less than a minute to reach Khan's position, and two figures jumped out of them before they could complete the landing.

"Princess!" Ron shouted right before landing on the sandy ground. Jack was with him but remained silent and hurried to the Princess' side.

"I want to see the factory," Princess Edna declared, and Ron completely ignored her to check up on her state.

The Princess was still a bit dizzy, but her body lacked any injury. She wouldn't even need to rest to recover completely, and Ron heaved a sigh of relief when he confirmed that.

That moment of peace was short-lived. As soon as the Princess' well-being became a certainty, Ron moved his glare at Khan, and a scolding followed.

"Why didn't you bring the Princess to safety immediately?" Ron questioned. "The scanners saw you chasing after the ships with her."

"Don't start," Khan groaned as he sat on the ground. "I was only following the Princess' orders."

"Captain Khan's performance didn't disappoint," Princess Edna added, "But he shouldn't have left me so far behind."

"Told you," Khan continued. "Completely innocent here."

The pain made its way into Khan's mind now that the situation had calmed down. The injuries suffered during the assault and chase showed their presence, and Khan closed his eyes to focus on moving his mana.

"Captain," Ron didn't let the matter go. "What you did was incredibly irresponsi-?"

"What is the Hive?" Khan interrupted without opening his eyes.

Ron went silent when the word "Hive" resounded in the orange air. He quickly hid his reaction, but Khan sensed his surprise anyway, confirming the topic's importance.

"Brief the Captain," Princess Edna ordered. "I promised you would tell him."

"Princess," Ron muttered, but the Princess didn't give him the time to finish his line. All the ships had landed by then, and she hurried toward one of them. Of course, Jack remained at her side the whole time.

Ron didn't need to follow the Princess' order. He had higher authority on matters that involved her safety. Yet, comparing her perfect state to Khan's injuries told him how much he had done to protect her.

"Did you hear that name from them?" Ron asked, eyeing the corpses in the area.

"They even told me I'd eventually join them," Khan half-joked.

"One more reason to keep you in the dark," Ron snorted.

"This secrecy might push me on their side," Khan responded. He couldn't be bothered to pretend to be polite in that situation.

Ron shot another glare at Khan but eventually gave up. Khan's feat deserved rewards, not punishments. Also, telling him about the Hive could help keep him on the Global Army's side.

"The Hive is a terrorist organization," Ron announced.

"That much I learnt from the Princess," Khan commented.

"Its goal is to change the current ruling system," Ron continued. "Taking down the noble families is only one of its targets. The Hive wants the very Global Army gone."

"Why?" Khan asked.

"The reasons are unclear," Ron sighed. "Different factions have different theories, but investigating properly is impossible. Every member has restrictions, and they don't follow a set pattern. They can be mere guards or nobles."

"Even nobles?" Khan couldn't help but open his eyes.

"The running theory is that the Hive has existed since the creation of the Global Army," Ron explained, ignoring the question on purpose. "It probably was an extremist faction made of all kinds of figures who ended up splitting from the main government."

"What is it now?" Khan asked.

"The main internal threat to humankind," Ron replied. "You probably ran into some members in Reebfell. They simply didn't approach you back then."

Reebfell's matters were classified, but a Princess' guard could obtain detailed reports. Ron probably knew more about the hidden lab than Khan since he couldn't gain access to the rest of the investigation.

"Are they planning to overthrow the Global Army with secret labs?" Khan scorned.

"That's the problem with the Hive," Ron explained. "It has many separate cells. Some might not even know that they belong to the Hive. The lab you found probably had nothing to do with it, but its members had to be on the scene."

Khan had to reevaluate what he saw as the truth. Suddenly, the two specialists, Madame, and any soldier involved in the investigation became suspects. Even the Slums' common citizens didn't escape that idea.

"Were you one of their members?" Khan asked when he gave up on finding suspicious behaviors in his memories.

"I found out my cult had something to do with the Hive only after joining the Princess," Ron revealed.

"Cult?" Khan repeated.

"That's the kind of faction I joined," Ron sighed and took off his broken glasses to rub his eyes. "I told you. The Hive has many cells, which can take different forms. You can't predict their behavior or identity unless you have someone on the inside."

Khan wasn't getting the answers he desired, but Ron's explanation helped him understand the situation a bit better. In short, the Global Army and the families had powerful enemies with great reach, and they could work in Khan's favor.

The idea of going against the Global Army had been in Khan's mind for a long time. He knew he would probably have to fight it to uncover the secrets he sought, and the Hive could be a valuable path.

Still, those revelations complicated Khan's mental picture of Earth's government. There always seemed to be more secrets waiting for him. Everything started with his doubts about the First Impact, but he had reached proper conspiracies now.

"Did they offer you to join them?" Ron asked while Khan was immersed in his thoughts.

"Not really," Khan chose to be honest while remaining partially vague. "Still, you were right. It sounded like I was a candidate."

"That's what they do," Ron confirmed. "They find valuable figures, approach them, and unleash a suitable indoctrination."

"What would be suitable for me?" Khan scoffed.

"Your mutations," Ron uttered. "The Nak, the Impacts. They won't hesitate to draw you in with those topics."

Khan believed his mental fortitude to be strong, but Ron had a point. Even Khan would falter in front of those topics. They weren't enough to make him switch sides, but they definitely stirred his interest.

"You," Ron continued but hesitated to change his initial line. "Captain Khan, I'll make sure the network gets words of your deeds."

"Thank you," Khan limited himself to say.

"No," Ron performed a military salute. "Thank you."

Khan showed a faint smile and nodded before a team of doctors left the ship to hurry toward him. Their arrival confirmed that the Princess was okay, so Ron rejoined her while those soldiers took a look at Khan.

The injuries weren't too severe but required attention anyway. Khan was scraped all over, especially on his face and hands. His arms carried traces of the bullets, and his left shoulder had burns due to the beam-like spell.

Those were superficial wounds that an ointment could fix in a few hours or a day. Instead, Khan's right hand and shoulder were worse off. His fingers hurt whenever he tried to move them, and the hole dug by the bullet wasn't any better.

The doctors patched Khan up on the spot, probably worsening his appearance due to all the bandages they used. Once they were done, Khan found himself with both arms, a cheek, and his forehead wrapped in white cloth. A few metal bars also kept his right hand straight, and a brace held his shoulder still.

"Captain Khan," One of the doctors called when Khan stood up, "Make sure to visit the medical bay once you are back in the Harbor. They need to redo all the bandages."

"Is it necessary?" Khan casually asked.

"Nippe 2's air tampered with these bandages," The doctor explained. "You risk an infection without clean ones."

"Alright," Khan gave up. "Thank you."

The doctors performed a military salute and remained at Khan's side while he approached the ships. The Princess' vehicle seemed off-limits for now, so he entered a different one, and the escort never left him.

"Do you have people with the descendants too?" Khan questioned once the ships began the set-off.

"We deployed all the factory's medical teams to handle this emergence," One of the doctors reassured. "Mister Ron also contacted the Harbor. Reinforcements should already be on their way."

"I believe they won't only stick to doctors," Khan guessed.

"That's correct," The doctor confirmed. "It is my understanding that the reinforcements will have battleships too."

Khan nodded and dropped the topic. Nippe 2 would probably become off-limits for a while due to the necessary investigations that would unfold. After all, the kidnappers wanted to bring the Princess somewhere. They had to have an escape plan in mind, and the Global Army had to close that path.

The doctors were tense due to Khan's presence, but he was in no mood to ease their flight. He had too much on his mind, and it wasn't all bad. Actually, the recent fight had brought a few happy outcomes.

The advancement to the next proficiency level was the best news. Khan could finally bring his fighting style to new heights. He would require a lot of training to perfect it, but that was fine.

The knifeless execution of the Divine Reaper had also brought decent surprises. Clotted blood vessels couldn't replace metal yet, but Khan didn't destroy his hand like the last time. One day, he might be able to forsake weapons and still retain his deadly martial art.

Saving the Princess was another important outcome. Khan could already imagine the new wave of articles and offers that would reach his phone. He wasn't a fan of his fame, but it was bound to help him during his imminent purchases.

Still, helplessness lingered in the back of Khan's mind. He had achieved a lot, but the discoveries made him feel exhausted. Humankind's social and political environment had just gotten far more complicated, showing once again how much he didn't know about the topic.

'The Hive,' Khan thought as the ships crossed the canyon and descended toward the first battlefield.

The many thoughts that afflicted Khan grew silent once the landing began. He stepped onto the sandy ground only to notice that the battlefield had turned into a busy medical bay with soldiers guarding every tent.

The sky also showed surprises. Almost twenty ships crossed Nippe 2's thick atmosphere and spread out in different directions. Five descended toward the medical bay while the others went looking for the kidnappers' traces.

Khan couldn't believe how used he had gotten to those scenes. He had seen so many medical bays built on battlefields and similar locations that the scenery almost felt nostalgic. Luckily, the assault didn't kill any descendant, but the Headmistress was bound to catch hell for that mess.

The Princess' ship remained closed, and three of the five vehicles descending into the area isolated it to create a private medical bay. The others unloaded a platoon of soldiers and doctors, who immediately attended to the various tents, improving the efficiency of those teams.

Khan didn't go unnoticed even in that mess. Many turned in his direction while he roamed among the various tents. His injured state was partially to blame for that unwanted attention, but something told him that rumors had already started to spread.

The unwanted attention couldn't make Khan falter. He inspected the medical bay and nodded at familiar faces, but his focus remained on three sources of mana on the other side of the area. Khan had to cross one of the descendants' ships to reach them, and the scene that unfolded in his vision made him smile.

Two tents had appeared where Khan had left George and the others. Doctors were also running left and right to provide medication and check-ups, but a figure refused all of them to continue his vigilant watch.

George stood before the tents with a metal slab held firmly in his right hand. He had yet to receive any medication but had no intention of accepting them until his friend gave the okay.

"You are the best," Khan praised as George finally let go of the metal slab to sit on the ground.

"Did you jump into a fire or something?" George mocked at the sight of Khan's many bandages.

"Those doctors have exaggerated," Khan chuckled while waving his right arm within the brace's limits.

"You don't have to convince me," George shook his head before they both turned toward one of the tents.

"Khan, is that you?" Monica called as soon as she left the tent, but thoughts abandoned her mind when she saw Khan. Her eyes widened in surprise, and the emotions Khan never wanted her to experience built up inside her.

Anita peeked from another tent, but Khan didn't even look at her. He went straight for Monica and pushed her inside before giving orders to nearby soldiers. "No one gets inside."

The soldiers performed military salutes, and Khan sealed the entrance behind him without adding anything else. Anita remained stunned and searched for answers on George's face, but he pretended not to see her and summoned some doctors to avoid talking altogether.

Chapter 458 First Love

Monica let Khan do as he wished. His obvious gesture was bound to create more annoying rumors, but she didn't care. She simply couldn't when so many bandages filled her vision.

Khan sealed the tent and went straight for the bed inside. Pain and mental exhaustion fought to get a monopoly over his mind, but he remained full of energy. He wouldn't be able to sleep even if he tried.

Monica wanted to reach for Khan, but the many bandages scared her. She couldn't see the full extent of his injuries, so she decided to stay away altogether.

Khan had far different intentions. He stretched his hand as soon as he sat on the bed, and Monica obediently took it. Khan pulled her onto his lap, and her careful fingers began to trace the edges of his bandages.

"Look what they did to you," Monica muttered. "I'll get the infusion and help you the nex-."

Monica couldn't finish her line since Khan seized her nose and pulled her closer. Monica's mood immediately improved due to the gesture, but not in a good way.

"I was so worried," Monica pouted while her nose remained between Khan's fingers. "Tell me where it doesn't hurt so I can hit you."

"What about a kiss instead?" Khan chuckled, and Monica didn't dare to refuse. She carefully wrapped her arms around Khan's neck, and her lips fell on him when he let go of her nose.

A groan soon escaped Khan's mouth. His face was scraped all over, and kissing rekindled those injuries. He wanted to explain his situation to avoid getting Monica worried, but she pulled him on her chest before he could speak.

"My tired, injured Captain," Monica cuddled Khan with as much care as possible. "What even happened out there?"

"I got the Princess," Khan explained, "But she asked me to chase after the ships. It was messy."

"She will hear from me," Monica snorted before doubts forced her to ask questions. "How did you reach her? Did you hijack a ship?"

"My martial art reached the next proficiency level," Khan summarized. "I can fly now."

Monica felt the urge to tighten her hug but held back at the last second. She was ecstatic. Khan didn't only perform an incredible feat. He had also gotten stronger, and she was happy for him.

However, an idea appeared in Monica's mind when she pictured Khan flying toward the ships. She could guess what had happened, and jealousy arrived.

"Wait," Monica gasped as her voice grew louder. "Did you carry the Princess? Did you have your first flight with her?"

"She literally jumped on me," Khan laughed. "I couldn't let her fall into the canyon."

"You went out of your way to fly with another woman!" Monica almost shouted.

"I'll fly with you once I get better," Khan promised while leaving Monica's chest to look into her eyes. "We can even go now if you want."

Monica couldn't remain angry in front of that honesty. She pouted again and tried to divert her eyes, but Khan's gaze kept making her turn toward him.

"You'll have to work hard to earn my forgiveness," Monica eventually scoffed but still accepted the incoming kiss.

"I should meditate for a bit," Khan whispered once the kiss ended.

"Yes," Monica agreed. "You need to recover."

"No, I just want to kiss you without hurting," Khan half-joked, but Monica went full girlfriend mode at those words.

"Get better quickly," Monica voiced as her warm breath blew on Khan's face, "And I'll give you another gift."

Those words awakened memories that fueled Khan's desires. He suddenly stopped hurting, and his mouth reached for Monica, but she placed a finger on his lips before they could kiss.

"Get better first," Monica smirked. "I'll make it worth the wait."

"You have gotten so naughty," Khan teased while diving back into her chest.

"It's your fault," Monica complained, and warmth joined her voice once she resumed cuddling Khan. "So, take responsibility when you get better."

.

.

.

A few hours went by. The Harbor's forces expanded the encampment until they had guards alongside the entire perimeter. Meanwhile, the doctors attended to the various injured, even sending the most critical ones back to the moon to get better medication.

Khan spent those hours meditating inside Monica's tent, and she remained by his side the whole time. No one disturbed them either, so they could preserve their intimacy as long as they liked.

Still, as lunchtime approached, the couple felt the need to get something to eat. Monica offered to take care of the task for Khan, but they eventually decided to leave together to start addressing the rumors.

"It sounds strange," Khan commented while approaching the tent's exit.

"You know how much I hate lies," Monica scolded. "I never heard about the Hive."

"Your family should know," Khan pointed out.

"Definitely," Monica agreed. "They might be forced to update me now."

Nippe 2's orange illumination shone on Khan's almost intact face as soon as he left the tent. His shallow injuries had healed in the past hours, leaving only the bandages on his right hand and shoulder on him. He was still hurting, but the annoying part had passed.

"It was about time," George exclaimed when Khan and Monica appeared in his vision. He was sitting next to the ship before the two tents, and a smiling Anita was at his side.

Anita's smile vanished as soon as she noticed the couple, and some embarrassment arrived. She couldn't help but think about the previous scene and the conversation inside the Princess' ship. Still, something else also fueled that feeling.

"I told you he is trustworthy," Khan smirked. Anita had finally gotten a piece of serious George, and her mana said how much she liked it.

"So," Khan announced. "What did we miss?"

"The Princess and a few ships went to the factory," George revealed. "She got a private tour."

"Do we have orders?" Khan wondered.

"No," George stated. "Only sand and food. It's a pity they didn't bring anything to drink down here."

Anita glared at George but remained silent since Monica laughed at her reaction. They even exchanged a meaningful glance, and Khan didn't ignore those clues.

"George, let's get something to eat," Khan suggested. "We'll bring something for the girls too."

"Sure," George stood up and eyed Anita. "I'll see you in a bit."

Anita nodded, and words remained stuck in her throat again when Monica sat next to her. It was clear that they needed to talk, and Khan quickly brought George out of their way.

A stupid smile appeared on George's face as soon as he and Khan crossed the ship. Pride leaked out of his mana, and an old line eventually left his mouth. "We are the luckiest men in the universe."

Khan coughed and half-turned to show his state. His recovery had been quick, but his right hand and shoulder were still a mess.

"Hey, you are getting laid," George stated. "Don't complain."

"Anita looked pretty caught too," Khan pointed out.

"What can I say?" George sighed. "My charm was bound to get to her at some point."

"You could have just tried harder from the beginning," Khan suggested.

"Khan, Khan," George shook his head and patted an intact part of Khan's back. "You have your married man approach, and I have my tactics."

"You are an idiot," Khan laughed.

"But I'm right," George exclaimed. "By the way, is Anita about to know?"

"I'll let Monica decide that," Khan replied.

"Do you trust her?" George questioned.

"You should tell me that," Khan rebuked.

"I'll believe anything she says as long as I get my sweet time," George proudly declared.

"No wonder they get so angry at you," Khan chuckled before returning to the serious topic. "It should be fine. If it isn't, we'll find a solution."

"I can't imagine her going against Monica's interests," George claimed and reassured Khan. "It will be fine."

The encampment had been quite active in the past hours. The reinforcements had taken away the many corpses, and Nippe 2's winds had dealt with the puddles of blood. The area was by no means clean, but it didn't resemble a battlefield anymore.

George shot glares left and right whenever Khan's presence attracted the soldiers' attention. He wasn't trying to send warnings, but Khan's injuries put him in a protective stance.

The two crossed the encampment until they arrived at a big ship with large open doors. Various goods rested inside, and Khan's eyes lit up when he recognized one of them.

"I can't believe it," Khan muttered as he shot toward the ship and grabbed two cans.

The general attention attracted by Khan made many descendants leave their tents to inspect the scene. They found him sitting next to the ship and gulping down one of the cans, which barely survived a few seconds.

Khan immediately grabbed the second can, and George joined him on the ground. By then, a few descendants were heading toward them, and Khan felt no surprise when he sensed Lucian's presence.

"You have an appetite," Lucian exclaimed while reaching Khan with Zoe and other familiar faces. "That's a good sign."

"You never forget your first love," Khan joked before emptying the can and poking George to get another.

"First love?" Lucian frowned.

"Spicy chicken!" Khan laughed and held the new can high as soon as George handed it to him.

Some laughs resounded, especially from George. As for Khan, he barely lifted his gaze since the food captured most of his attention.

"Then, is Monica your second love?" Zoe couldn't help but ask since Khan had mentioned the topic.

"Training halls," Khan corrected and emptied the third can. George already had a new one ready for him by then.

The answer left everyone speechless, especially since they wanted to hear more about Monica and Khan. Yet, the descendants couldn't push Khan too much there. It wouldn't be polite, and his injured state would worsen everything.

However, someone with the ability to enforce her authority on Khan existed in the encampment, and her presence soon entered his senses' range.

"Captain Khan, "Professor Leelli called from behind the group around Khan. "A word?"

Khan emptied his fourth can and stood up. The descendants opened a path for him, allowing him to leave with the Professor and reach an isolated area behind a tent.

"Mister Ron updated me," Professor Leelli revealed. "Captain, words can't express how proud the Harbor is to have you as a student. Even the Headmistress wished to praise you in person, but problems are keeping her on the moon."

"Thank you, ma'am," Khan replied, performing a military salute with a single arm.

"We received orders to keep the attack a secret for now," Professor Leelli continued. "The Harbor will make an official announcement, but only after completing the investigation on Nippe 2."

Khan nodded. He had already told Monica everything, but the Professor didn't need to know that.

"Lastly," Professor Leelli exclaimed, "The Harbor will provide suitable rewards for your feats. The Headmistress is also willing to sit with you to discuss specific matters."

Khan couldn't pretend to be surprised. He had expected something similar to happen. It seemed that money wouldn't be a problem in the imminent future.

"Is this all, ma'am?" Khan asked in front of the Professor's silence.

"There is one matter with no connection to the Harbor," Professor Leelli stated. "The Virrai family expressed the desire to meet you after learning about your feats."

Surprise finally arrived. Khan knew his feat had incredible political relevance, but meeting with a noble family still felt too much.

"You would only meet a representative," Professor Leelli explained to clear Khan's surprise.

"Princess Edna would still be more important."

"Oh," Khan gasped. That was good news, especially if he could get the Princess to attend the meeting.

"When is the meeting?" Khan asked.

Professor Leelli's expression grew complicated, and her green eyes fell on Khan's remaining bandages. She appeared hesitant, but her duty eventually made her speak.

"Tonight," Professor Leelli revealed. "The representative is already on her way."

Chapter 459 Representative

Khan couldn't help but frown. It made no sense for a representative to be already near the Harbor. Actually, that behavior was suspicious in light of recent events.

"Ma'am," Khan called but hesitated to speak. The matter was problematic since it involved a noble family, and he didn't want to overstep or sound impolite.

"How," Khan continued, "How can she be already here? Does the Virray family have estates nearby?"

Professor Leelli didn't initially understand what Khan was implying, but a realization soon arrived and made her chuckle. "Noble families have access to private teleports. Don't worry about it."

"Oh," Khan exclaimed. "Thank you for your honesty, ma'am."

"It's no secret," Professor Leelli explained. "Anyway, a ship will fly you up soon enough. I talked to the doctors. I know you must visit the medical bay, but be clean and ready by seven p.m."

"Military uniform?" Khan questioned.

"Yes," Professor Leelli confirmed. "Finish your lunch now, and try to take a nap. You must be exhausted."

Khan wore a fake smile and performed another military salute before leaving the isolated area. Multiple shouts welcomed his return to the ship with the goods, but he headed directly for George due to the change in his schedule.

"I have new orders," Khan explained while seizing two more cans from the ship. "I'll leave soon."

"They didn't waste time," George announced, jumping to his feet. "Political meetings?"

The Professor didn't tell Khan to keep the meeting a secret, so he made the matter public to increase his fame. "A representative of the Virrai family asked for me."

Lucian and the other descendants remained surprised, and murmurs immediately resounded. Still, Lucian recovered quickly enough to say something before Khan could leave. "Captain, you are truly putting all of us to shame."

"I just have more experience in these situations," Khan dismissed the praise as his gaze wandered into sad memories. "There is nothing lucky about that."

The audience remained captivated by Khan's sad and mature answer. He had always been a hot topic in the Harbor, but his recent feat, his shirtless state, and the incoming meeting enhanced his status, making most women consider him a potential partner.

What had started as a partial joke was a proper option now. Having the backing of a noble family would remove Khan's only social weakness. His poor background was bound to disappear, making him the perfect man to catch.

"I'll talk to my family," Lucian continued as Khan left the scene. "I'm sure I can find a job worthy of your expertise."

Khan turned to nod but didn't add anything. He left the area with George and returned to where Monica and Anita were staying. The two women were still on the ground, leaning on the ship's side, and his appearance made silence reign.

"So," Anita exclaimed while standing up, "You two were truly hiding something."

"I hope you can understand," Khan stated.

Anita looked at George before voicing another question. "You also knew, didn't you?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," George coughed.

Anita's look turned into a glare that no one took seriously since Monica smiled. Anita also noticed her at some point, and a complaint escaped her mouth. "Don't expose me so soon."

"Khan needs a break," Monica declared, "And only I can tease him."

"You lost your head so thoroughly," Anita giggled as her gaze returned to Khan. "I knew something was up, but I didn't expect you to have actually caught her."

"I tried my best to stay away," Khan sighed. "I really tried."

"Ooh?" Anita's eyes lit up in curiosity as she took Khan's left elbow. "So, it was my girl who pushed you into this."

"It's entirely her fault," Khan claimed.

"Hey!" Monica pouted.

"Monica Solodrey!" Anita announced. "This hottie made you so shameless."

"Let him go already," Monica scoffed while also standing up.

"And jealous," Anita laughed while leaving Khan alone. "Everything is clear now. I'm surprised you let him go to parties."

"Those sluts," Monica cursed while crossing her arms. "They never left him alone."

"What did you expect?" Anita teased. "Good looks, talent, and potential. He was a nice treat even before today's events."

"I'm still here," Khan pointed out.

"It would be hard to miss you," Anita joked. "My girl surely didn't."

Anita looked at Khan from head to toe without hiding her appreciation for that fit body. Still, her gesture made Monica step in the way of her inspection, and George coughed to claim her attention.

"What?" Anita asked. "Are you also jealous now?"

"Of Khan?" George wondered. "Never. I know you only have eyes for me."

Anita shook her head, but George reached her back to put an arm around her waist. She diverted her gaze to avoid giving him any satisfaction, but Khan and Monica laughed at that cute gesture.

"Don't believe for even a second that I'm done with you two," Anita complained. "I don't want secrets anymore."

Khan and Monica rolled their eyes. Part of their intimate life would never hit the public, and Anita gasped when she understood that point.

"You are a shameless coup-!" Anita interrupted her line when she realized where she was. Some soldiers were nearby, so she couldn't speak too openly.

"I'm feeling a bit tired," Khan voiced a blatant lie. "I think I'll take a nap."

"Me too," Monica played along. "Captain, do you mind following me in my tent? We need to discuss something."

"How could I refuse?" Khan stated, and the couple showed meaningful smiles at Anita before heading for Monica's tent.

"She took it well," Khan exclaimed once inside the privacy of the tent.

"Anita is a good friend," Monica revealed. "Though I think she has yet to accept everything."

"Everything?" Khan wondered. "What did you tell her?"

"The truth," Monica claimed. "How you couldn't stay away from me on Milia 222. How you can't stop thinking about me. How I'm your entire world."

Monica exploded into a laugh when Khan hugged her from behind. She would usually fight back, but Khan's injured state made her immediately give in. She let Khan hold her and turned her head to exchange a kiss.

"I'm glad Anita knows," Khan whispered while throwing the cans on the bed to focus entirely on Monica. "You needed a friend."

"You just like to have someone else covering for us," Monica joked.

"That definitely is an advantage," Khan pointed out, making Monica laugh again.

"Come," Monica muttered while escaping Khan's hug and taking his hand. "Let me take care of you."

The two ended up on the bed, with Khan resting on Monica's lap. Monica wanted Khan to sleep, but learning about the incoming meeting with the representative made her start a useful lecture.

Monica's knowledge in those matters helped Khan get an idea of what waited for him. Thanking Khan for his feat was the easiest explanation, but Monica came up with different ideas. One even saw an offer to join the Princess' guards.

The two kept talking until a ship came to pick Khan up, and Monica joined the flight without meeting any resistance. The couple soon returned to the Harbor and headed straight for the medical bay since Khan needed new bandages.

The doctors in the medical bay gave Khan a better brace and changed the metal structure keeping his right hand still before sending him off. The couple then headed for his flat, and Monica couldn't be bothered by the cameras when he needed her help.

"Remember your manners," Monica warned as the couple entered the flat. "You can't risk ending up on the Virrai's family bad side."

"I saved the Princess," Khan exclaimed. "They should just praise me."

"Noble families aren't so simple," Monica explained while gently pushing Khan onto the bed to inspect his bandages. "They might deliberately insult you to see where you stand."

"Stand how?" Khan asked.

"Think about what Ron said," Monica replied. "You might have reassured the Virrai family on that topic, but nothing stops you from becoming an advisor for other nobles. Actually, your relationship with the Princess makes you a perfect candidate."

"What do they expect me to say?" Khan scoffed. "I can't refuse their orders anyway."

"That's why an invitation is plausible," Monica stated. "The Princess' guards have restrictions. Her family might consider applying a few to you."

"No one is putting foreign mana in me," Khan cursed.

"Don't be stupid!" Monica scolded. "If a noble family wants you to have restrictions, you'll get them."

"I told you," Khan rebuked. "I'm not joining the guards. You know I can't."

"What if they have something to do with the Second Impact?" Monica questioned. "What if they know about your nightmares? What if they want to keep the matter a secret?"

"I'll use Princess Edna to get out of the situation," Khan said.

"Yes," Monica approved. "Princess Edna will be your greatest ally, but the representative must know ways around her character."

Monica finished checking Khan's bandages and took his hand to pull him inside the bathroom. To Khan's surprise, she went to her knees and pulled down his pants before moving to his shoes.

"Monica?" Khan called.

"Buy yourself time until the Princess arrives," Monica continued while taking out Khan's shoes.

"Maybe mix some honesty with your lies. Even the representative will have to buy them."

Monica finished taking away Khan's pants once the shoes weren't in the way anymore. He remained in his underwear, but she barely looked at him and began to prepare a warm bath.

"You can also use your injuries as an excuse if the situation gets rough," Monica suggested. "Just don't get on their nerves and pretend to be willing to do anything they say."

Warm water soon filled the bathtub, and Monica kept checking the temperature until she felt satisfied. She moved to Khan's underwear at that point, but he grabbed her hand before she could pull it down.

"Monica," Khan called again, but his tone clearly expressed his intentions now.

"M-," Monica muttered as shyness took over her voice. "My mother taught me how clean I must be before a meeting with nobles. You also need help with your injuries."

Monica pulled Khan's underwear down and pretended not to notice his reaction. She hurried on her feet and pushed him inside the bath, but he didn't immerse himself in the warm water just yet.

"Not a word," Monica warned as she unbuttoned her military uniform. She got naked in seconds before joining Khan inside the bathtub.

"Scoundrel," Monica pouted as she put a plastic cover around Khan's brace before pushing him into the water. He let her do as she wished, and his gaze only intensified when she sat on him and wrapped her arms around his neck.

"Don't move," Monica whispered to Khan's ear. "I'll take care of you."

.
. .

A few minutes before seven p.m., a ride came to pick up Khan at his apartment. He was clean and ready by then, and Monica had even helped him wear the upper part of his uniform, so he could leave right away.

The ride wasn't a terrestrial vehicle. It was an actual ship that gave Khan an idea of the meeting's location, but he held back any questions during the flight. Only a pilot was with him, and he didn't disturb him.

The ship crossed a few domes until it reached one of the hangars. The vehicle eventually left the Harbor, confirming Khan's initial guess, but the scene that unfolded afterward still managed to surprise him.

A big, circular ship was waiting past the moon's orbit. Khan's vehicle flew toward it, and a docking area opened once the landing was imminent.

Khan's ship entered the circular vehicle, and the pilot waited to open the doors until the docking area closed. No orders resounded, so Khan seized the initiative and crossed the exit on his own.

A long corridor unfolded in Khan's vision. Bright white light illuminated the area and the soldiers guarding every door on its sides. Only the entrance at the bottom of the passage was open, and Khan slowly advanced toward it while letting his senses roam free.

All the soldiers in the corridor were third-level warriors who reeked of battle experience. Moreover, an even stronger presence came out of the room at the end of the passage. The atmosphere was inevitably tense, but Khan could only advance.

The soldiers performed military salutes whenever Khan crossed them, and that pattern continued until he advanced through the corridor. At that point, he found himself in a circular room, with a beautiful middle-aged woman waiting for him at one end of a metal table.

The entrance closed behind Khan as soon as he entered the room, leaving him alone with the woman. The latter was a fourth-level warrior who reminded him about Christal. Her beauty was undeniable, but the coldness leaked by her mana made her almost unapproachable.

"Captain Khan," The woman announced. "Take a seat."

Khan complied and sat in front of the woman, who stretched her right arm forward. Khan didn't initially understand what she wanted, but the gesture that followed made him put his hand on hers.

"We'll start now," The woman exclaimed. "Relax. Anxiety can affect the inspection."

Mana came out of the woman and enveloped the table before Khan could ask any question. He found himself immersed in that chilling energy, and the representative even placed her fingers on his wrist to keep track of his heartbeat.

Khan couldn't help but give a second look at the woman. She had brown hair tied into a ponytail on her left shoulder, and her bottomless black eyes never left him. Her entire focus was on Khan, and her mana echoed that behavior.

Khan's eyes darted left and right since he could see the symphony. The woman's mana trembled whenever he moved and grew softer to adjust to his natural aura. That technique probably wanted to prevent lies.

"You have keen senses," The woman said in a robotic voice. "Did you gain them from an alien species?"

"Yes, ma'am," Khan confirmed, and the chilling mana remained still. It seemed that the truth wouldn't cause any reaction.

"Why did you chase after Princess Edna?" The woman questioned.

"I-," Khan didn't expect that sudden question, but the woman spoke again before he could sort out his thoughts.

"The Second Impact tainted you, didn't it?" The woman asked.

"Yes," Khan replied. "That's public knowl-."

"Why did you chase after Princess Edna?" The woman repeated.

"It was my duty," Khan declared, but a tremor ran through the chilling mana. That was a partial lie, and the woman's technique didn't miss it.

"What's the color of your hair?" The woman asked.

"Blue," Khan responded.

"Why did you chase after Princess Edna?" The woman repeated once again.

"Everyone else was injured," Khan explained. "I didn't want my friends to jump into a dangerous mission."

The chilling mana didn't react now. Khan had still kept something hidden, but the woman's technique let it slide.

"What's the color of your eyes?" The woman questioned.

"Blue," Khan uttered.

"Where does your loyalty lie?" The woman continued.

"I don't understand the question," Khan stated without showing the slightest hesitation.

"What's your rank?" The woman asked.

"Captain," Khan replied.

"Where does your loyalty lie?" The woman repeated.

"I'm not sure how to answer that," Khan admitted.

"What's your element?" The woman questioned.

"Chaos," Khan stated.

"Where does your loyalty lie?" The woman repeated once again.

"With myself?" Khan wondered, and the chilling mana remained still.

"Yourself," The woman finally slowed down before picking back up at full speed. "Saving Princess Edna added an incredible feat to your profile. In a way, the attack benefitted you."

"I don't have the connections to plan something like that," Khan declared.

"But you are surrounded by people who have them," The woman pointed out.

"I would never make innocents suffer," Khan declared. "I know that pain far too well."

The chilling mana grew softer after that reply, but the woman remained emotionless and continued with her questions. "Your tragic experiences can give birth to hostility toward the Global Army."

"I've kept bleeding for the Global Army even after all my tragedies," Khan uttered while bending to his left to show his brace.

"We've seen similar pretenses in the past," The woman revealed. "You aren't the first putting his life on the line to get to the nobles."

"I simply follow orders," Khan explained. "Also, with all due respect, becoming a noble guard has never crossed my mind."

"We wouldn't be able to hire you for that anyway," The woman stated.

"What?" Khan gasped.

"We know you learnt about the Hive," The representative said. "How does it make you feel?"

"Confused?" Khan wondered while his mind remained on the previous topic.

"Order is necessary for the current state of the universe," The woman declared. "The Global Army is far from perfect but remains a necessary evil."

"Wait," Khan decided to address his doubts. "Why can't you hire me as a noble guard? Why are you telling me this?"

"Because it benefits the Virrai family," The representative replied.

"How?" Khan questioned.

"Every word exchanged here is classified," The woman ignored the question. "Revealing the contents of this meeting is akin to an action against the Virrai family."

"Ma'am?" Khan called because he was struggling to follow the conversation. Yet, a door on the other side of the room suddenly opened, ending the meeting.

"That's not good, Ella!" Princess Edna scolded while entering the room. "I told you to skip this part."

"We were just having a nice conversation," The representative smiled, replacing all the coldness coming out of her body with warm feelings. She even retracted the mana that had enveloped the table.

"Ron, handle this," Princess Edna ordered, and Ron stepped into the room to bow in front of Ella. The latter let go of Khan and stood up before disappearing behind one of the exits.

"Come on, Captain," Princess Edna giggled. "My family pulled me out of the Harbor, but I still have this night. I have enough time for one last story."

Chapter 460 Questions

The Princess led Khan into a different part of the circular ship, where she made herself comfortable to listen to his stories. Jack and Ron obviously were with her, and drinks never failed to arrive.

"So," Princess Edna exclaimed, "They truly are big snakes."

"I was surprised too," Khan admitted. "It's easy to deal with humanoid aliens, but the Tors are different. Milia 222 is special in that sense."

"It sounds exciting," Princess Edna announced. "Ron, prepare a trip for Milia 222."

"Milia 222 is off-limits after the recent crisis," Ron explained. "You must also get off the grid until new security measures come online."

"I want a beauty treatment," Princess Edna changed the topic.

"I'll tell the family estate about your wish," Ron replied while picking up his phone to send a message.

"Captain, keep Monica beautiful," Princess Edna ordered. "I'll take her with me otherwise."

"I'll take good care of her," Khan promised. "It's a pity your stay in the Harbor was so short. You two were getting close."

"Right!" Princess Edna recalled something. "I should get back at my family for that."

"Princess, please," Ron begged, but his words rarely reached the Princess.

"I'll answer one of your questions before going back to the stories," Princess Edna stated.

"Captain, you know the Princess' character," Ron warned. "Don't abuse it."

"You were curious about the Nak's mutations, right?" Princess Edna continued. "I should know things the Harbor doesn't teach."

"Princess, you are talking about classified information," Ron scolded, trying to appeal to the Princess' better side. "Captain Khan might get into trouble for listening to you."

"Ron, learn to live a little," Princess Edna laughed.

"This goes beyond national security," Ron pressed on. "Even you might face some trouble."

"So, we won't tell anyone," Princess Edna announced, revealing her excitement. She seemed to like breaking the rules.

"Princess," Ron tried again.

"I have higher authority on these matters," Princess Edna smiled. "Besides, Captain Khan saved my life. A lesser man would have refused after your constant harassment."

"I was only worried about your safety," Ron claimed.

"Captain, the question," Princess Edna ignored Ron, "Before I change my mind."

Khan didn't expect that sudden turn of events. He knew he wouldn't get another chance like that, but the matter was troublesome. He shouldn't gain access to that information.

Curiosity was one thing. Khan could suppress it when it came to his safety, but the opportunity was too juicy. He could have a noble clearing some of his deepest doubts.

Khan opened his mouth but closed it immediately. The mutations were a pressing matter, but he had something else in mind, something even deeper than that.

"The Nak," Khan voiced. "What do you know about the Nak?"

"You must be more specific, Captain," Princess Edna suggested. "I know many things about the Nak."

"Are they still around?" Khan questioned. "Where are they?"

"I have no idea," Princess Edna exclaimed, destroying Khan's hopes. Still, her following words turned his world upside down. "Though, my family always talked as if they were alive. I wouldn't be surprised if the Global Army had a few on Earth."

"What?!" Khan gasped. "On Earth?"

"Why not?" Princess Edna wondered. "You have seen a hand on Milia 222. It stands to reason that a full Nak can be on Earth."

"That's enough, Princess," Ron scolded. "Captain Khan already is a risky profile. We don't want to push him against the Global Army."

"The Captain will do anything he wants anyway," Princess Edna lectured. "So, are we done? Can I get more stories now?"

"Anything you want, Princess," Khan voiced, doing his best to keep the shocking revelation in the back of his mind. He would think about them, but only after taking care of the Princess.

.
. .

Khan could barely keep track of the ship's flight. He had said his goodbyes to the Princess to head back to the Harbor, but his mind generated troublesome thoughts that made him unable to focus on his surroundings.

Learning about the Hive had already changed Khan's view of the universe. Humankind had a big enemy he might be able to exploit. Still, that remained a superficial topic compared to what the Princess had revealed.

'Nak on Earth,' Khan cursed. 'Is this a joke?'

Finding a broken hand on Milia 222 had already been a revolutionary discovery. Yet, according to the Princess, Earth might have a few Nak.

'Is it so unrealistic?' Khan couldn't help but think.

Raymond patched up a Nak's hand on a lawless zone, so the noble families could theoretically do far more in their domain. They also had almost five hundred years of unchallenged rule on their backs, so it didn't sound unreal for intact specimens to exist in secret labs or similar structures.

Khan had always believed in the existence of a grand conspiracy but had never truly thought past that. Still, he couldn't stop his mind now, and hypotheses piled up.

After the First Impact, Earth had turned into a hell of mutated creatures and infective mana. Debris from the Nak's spaceships had also been there, so it made sense for the actual Nak to end up in the nobles' hands.

As for their state, Khan couldn't possibly know. The Nak could be dead, alive, in stasis, or in multiple pieces. All those options could be valid. He wouldn't be surprised if they were all true simultaneously.

Another matter made its way into Khan's mind once the Nak stopped being a priority. Ella had revealed something important during her interrogation. He couldn't become a noble guard, and his family was probably to blame for that.

'It can't be,' Khan cursed as a wild idea made its way through his thoughts. Considering that option felt crazy, but the clues seemed to fit.

Khan's thoughts couldn't get anywhere. He was in no position to reach conclusions. He had simply learnt something that had once again complicated his idea of the universe.

That acceptance annoyed Khan a bit. He was the youngest Captain in history, but the valuable secrets of the Global Army continued to escape his reach. He didn't lack patience, but he wondered when he could actually start finding answers to his many doubts.

The annoyance was short-lived since the return inside the Harbor finally distracted Khan from his messy thoughts. It wasn't too late, and Monica was already studying in George's flat with Anita, so he planned to join them. Yet, the ship headed directly for the embassy, changing his schedule.

Khan didn't question the pilot. He knew why the ship was heading for the embassy, and he felt no surprise when he saw the Headmistress waiting for him on one of the roofs.

"I'm sorry for the sudden summon," Headmistress Holwen announced once Khan left the ship. "You must be exhausted."

"I believe you have it worse than me, ma'am," Khan stated.

"It's just paperwork," Headmistress Holwen reassured. "Come, let's talk in my office."

The black wall opened when the Headmistress turned, and Khan followed her inside the large room before waiting for further orders. Headmistress Holwen sat behind an interactive desk, and her following gesture made Khan occupy a chair on the other side.

"I'm sure Professor Leelli already conveyed my praises," Headmistress Holwen exclaimed. "Still, allow me to reiterate them. Captain Khan, the Harbor is honored to have such a capable and talented soldier among its rank."

"I was only doing my job," Khan played it humble.

"A job that even the Princess' guards failed to accomplish," Headmistress Holwen rebuked. "We were lucky the Hive didn't take you into consideration."

Khan remained silent. He didn't expect the Headmistress to mention the Hive so openly, and his reaction spoke loudly.

"Mister Ron updated me," Headmistress Holwen explained. "I know what happened down there, and the public will soon learn most of it since the investigation is over."

"Did you find the other ships?" Khan questioned.

"We found the ships," Headmistress Holwen revealed, "And the disposable teleport those kidnappers used to escape. Sadly, it was already too late when we got there."

'Disposable teleport,' Khan repeated in his mind. He still had so much to learn, and the Harbor was the perfect place to fill the gaps in his knowledge.

"The network will have no mention of the Hive," Headmistress Holwen continued. "As such, you won't tell anyone about it either, understood?"

"Yes, ma'am," Khan promised, even if he had already broken that vow.

"Good," Headmistress Holwen sighed while tapping on the interactive desk to open countless reports. "We got lucky this time. This incident could have had untold political consequences."

"Won't it?" Khan wondered. No one died, but many descendants suffered injuries. He couldn't imagine their families being happy about the Harbor's security.

"The Virrai family will take most of the blame," Headmistress Holwen explained. "Princess Edna's character is no secret. It was her recklessness that gave the kidnappers an opportunity."

"Won't that still cause political issues?" Khan asked.

"On the contrary," Headmistress Holwen exclaimed. "The families of the descendants involved in the incident can't wait to use the event to their advantage. Having leverage on nobles is a rare occurrence."

Understanding dawned upon Khan. The descendants were definitely important, but even they paled before the relationships with the nobles. Those families probably wished their members suffered harsher injuries.

"Now," Headmistress Holwen announced, "I have a lot of work to do, and you need to rest. Let's sort out the last details before sending you off."

"Ma'am?" Khan feigned ignorance.

"I know your kind," The Headmistress stated. "You and Norrett are similar idiots, so I'll get straight to the point. What do you want?"

"I believe the money part is already handled," Khan guessed.

"You believe correctly," Headmistress Holwen confirmed, "But that's not enough. Ask something that only I can grant."

Khan could hold back to remain polite, but the annoyance from before returned. He was advancing too slowly, so he would seize all the benefits he could get.

"I want a flat in the second district," Khan requested. "Possibly in the same building as George."

"George Ildoo?" Headmistress Holwen asked. "Done."

"My expenses in the Harbor must be taken care of," Khan continued. "I'm not talking about independent shops. I want free rides and unlimited access to the training halls."

"Try not to destroy them this time," Headmistress Holwen warned. "What else?"

"Get rid of the annoying crowd for me," Khan added. "With the Princess gone, I won't be able to move around without people following me."

"I'll set up a few teams," Headmistress Holwen promised. "Is this all?"

"One flight a week is too little," Khan didn't hold back. "I want two and refunds for when I start booking ships on my own."

"The hangars usually have a separate jurisdiction," Headmistress Holwen revealed, "But I'll deal with it. Anything else?"

Khan didn't know what to add. He felt that he had taken care of everything but still questioned the Headmistress to be sure. "What do you suggest?"

"Increased salary and better food," Headmistress Holwen declared. "That should cover everything."

"Thank you, ma'am," Khan said honestly.

"I should be the one to thank you," Headmistress Holwen sighed. "If you didn't retrieve the Princess, the entire Harbor risked closing down."