

## Chaos' Heir 481

### Chapter 481 Bastard

Khan complied with the Headmistress' directives in the following days. He stayed put, even skipping lessons to let her handle the consequences of his fame.

That peaceful and relaxed period did wonders for Khan's injuries. His ribs healed completely, and the benefits of the rest didn't stop there. The additional free time allowed him to study more and even gave him a chance to consider his many opportunities.

Khan was overwhelmed with options. He could join any family he wanted or stick with the Global Army. He could also ignore all of that and focus on his studies. The entire political environment was within his reach. It was only waiting for his decision.

The break also helped Khan's mental state. He had gradually gotten more honest with his actions and words since his arrival in the Harbor, and that trend didn't stop. The outburst with Lucian only pushed him further in that direction. His fame was giving him a chance to be closer to himself, and he didn't refuse it.

Once the Headmistress gave the okay, Khan stuffed as many tasks as possible on the day before the weekend. He didn't want anything else to get in the way of his license, so he sacrificed an afternoon to deal with matters that had become mandatory.

The embassy opened upon Khan's arrival. Military salutes unfolded left and right as he followed a couple of soldiers through the structure's immense corridors, but he only nodded at them. The last lessons had ended quite late, so he wanted to save time to avoid finishing up way past dinnertime.

Luckily for Khan, the embassy was easy to cross due to its many specific elevators. He only had to climb two to reach the offices he sought, and the appointment set the previous day allowed him to enter them without waiting in line.

"Welcome to the Hyper-Privacy corporation," An attractive woman in her thirties donning elegant clothes welcomed Khan into her office before closing the metal door. The place was relatively small, featuring only an interactive desk and three chairs, but it didn't feel cramped.

"Captain Khan, make yourself comfortable," The woman said while pointing at one of the chairs. "I'll get to you in a moment."

Khan complied, taking his seat while the woman went to the other side of the table. The surface had multiple menus open, but she picked up a rectangular screen and a bottle before returning to Khan.

"Allow me to convey my gratitude for choosing us," The woman announced while pouring a drink and handing it to Khan. "Hyper-Privacy is glad to have such a high-profile figure as its client."

"I have yet to choose you," Khan laughed before bringing the drink to his mouth. Monica had vouched for that corporation but making it too easy for them might increase his expenses.

"Of course," The woman smiled while leaning on the desk. "Though, we are ready to satisfy your every request to get you to sign. You only have to ask."

The woman shot a charming glance at Khan while placing a hand on the surface behind her. Her stance highlighted her exquisite figure and tight short skirt, hinting that her duties could go beyond the menus.

"Ma'am," Khan called.

"Please, Captain, call me Jenny," The woman interrupted.

"Jenny," Khan corrected. "I'd like to know how this works and what advantages you can give me compared to a family."

"Families usually have private PR programs," Jenny explained. "They limit their services to their descendants. They can offer good deals to prominent outsiders, but their political neutrality is questionable."

"Isn't yours also questionable?" Khan wondered. "You are a corporation inside the Global Army in the end."

"Hyper-Privacy has multiple protocols in place," Jenny responded. "You'll receive a detailed list. Still, in short, we take the same political stances as our clients."

"What if your clients are criminals?" Khan questioned.

"Well," Jenny exclaimed, remaining strangely calm in front of that problematic question. "Hyper-Privacy can't refuse the Global Army's direct orders. If they want to learn about a client, they will. Yet, it might take them some time to gain access to everything."

Jenny's smiling expression didn't change, but Khan could read between the lines. Her mana also explained the entirety of the story, which partially reassured him.

"I find it hard to believe that you can stop the Global Army," Khan pointed out.

"We can't," Jenny stated. "We don't even try. There simply are automatic security protocols that even we can't breach."

'That sounds interesting,' Khan admitted in his mind.

"So, how does this work?" Khan repeated.

"Once you sign with us," Jenny announced, seizing the bottle on the table to refill Khan's glass, "You'll give us a list of the people allowed to contact you so we can filter out the others. We'll also sort through them and provide a weekly summary highlighting anything relevant."

"That's it?" Khan asked.

"Our summaries take the entire political environment into consideration," Jenny declared. "We give real-time stats of various families and markets while adding prospects. Captain, you wouldn't have to do personal research anymore."

"Does that include job offers?" Khan wondered.

"Job offers," Jenny confirmed, "Career advice, and even marriage proposals. If you wish, we can also tell you in which direction you should expand your profile to reach your goals more easily."

"I'm not planning on marrying for now," Khan laughed.

"If you were our client," Jenny replied, "We would agree with your decision. Your potential is too great to waste it on your current offers."

"Current offers?" Khan repeated.

"They aren't official," Jenny explained, reaching for a menu on the table to activate a few holograms. "However, we predict that twelve families will present them given the right opportunity. That number will increase in the next weeks, and you can even add to it by requesting similar offers."

Khan recognized the names on the holographic lists thanks to Monica's training. They belonged to middle-class families with little to no influence compared to Khan's classmates.

"Did you learn so much about me in a single day?" Khan questioned.

"We have kept track of your growth for years already," Jenny revealed. "Captain, you became relevant to our services since Istrone's rebellion."

'Makes sense,' Khan thought without letting any reaction reach his expression. He didn't have much influence back then, but his feats had already made him famous, which could affect part of the political environment.

"I believe the army's higher-ups won't need my authorization," Khan went back to the previous topic.

"They won't," Jenny confirmed, "But they'll still need to pass through us. You'd also receive a warning from our company in that case."

Khan had made his decision before attending that meeting, and Jenny's overall preparation confirmed it. Hyper-Privacy sounded as good as Monica had said. Khan only needed to see if he could get a discount.

"I'm interested," Khan openly admitted. "I wonder, how expensive are your services?"

"We have prepared tailor-made plans for you," Jenny's eyes lit up as she activated the rectangular device in her hand to show a series of offers. "This list already contains discounts for your rank, services, and potential. We also took the liberty to lower the price a bit more due to our desire to have you among our clients."

Khan had already looked for Hyper-Privacy's general prices, and the numbers on the list were far below them. Some plans could ask for up to five thousand Credits per month, but that was within Khan's range. After all, his finances had entered the millions.

"Our standard plan involves-," Jenny began to explain, but Khan interrupted her. "I'll take the deluxe plan."

Khan showed a shameless smile after the sudden statement, and Jenny could only feel surprised while retrieving the device. It was clear that Khan had also done his homework about Hyper-Privacy.

"Perfect!" Jenny exclaimed once she retrieved her cool. "I'll forward the application immediately. I only need your genetic signature."

Jenny hurried to the other side of the table and connected the device to show the intended forms. Khan skimmed through them before applying his thumb to the appointed spot. His signature went through in a matter of seconds, officially turning him into a client.

"Now, if I can have your attention," Jenny uttered while keeping her gaze on the desk.

"I'm sorry," Khan interrupted again while leaving his seat. "I'm actually in a hurry. Just send everything to my phone."

"But, Captain," Jenny gasped, "What about your contacts?"

"Don't you have a list of my friends already?" Khan asked.

"Yes," Jenny replied, "But you need to appoint a manager for your profile."

"Weren't you going to offer yourself for the position?" Khan laughed. "I'm fine with that."

"Oh," Jenny exclaimed as her political training kicked in and made her perform an elegant bow.

"Thank you, Captain. I won't disappoint you."

"I'll hear from you at the end of the week," Khan casually said and began to turn, but Jenny suddenly reached for his hand.

"Captain, it's customary in Hyper-Privacy to celebrate every new high-profile client," Jenny stated, wearing an expression that shouted her true intentions.

"I'll have to break the tradition," Khan politely refused. "I have two more appointments today, and I'm already late."

"I understand," Jenny nodded, letting go of Khan's hand and straightening her back. "However, if you ever need me, I'm available every hour of every day. You can call me or come directly to this office."

"I'm sure we'll see each other again," Khan promised. "It was a pleasure, Jenny."

"Anytime, Captain," Jenny voiced as some disappointment spread through her mana. She had hoped for the meeting to end differently, but Khan had never given her an opening.

Jenny's behavior set a pattern that followed Khan throughout the afternoon. His next appointment involved a haircut, which two women handled as slowly as possible to fit countless tempting jokes.

The situation didn't change even when Khan met two reporters in another part of the embassy. They were both women wearing elegant and slightly revealing clothes, and their mana told Khan things that would make Monica snap.

"Captain Khan!" The two reporters exclaimed when Khan entered the isolated office. They had left their couch and stood up as a form of respect, but that couldn't impress him.

"Hi," Khan casually said while reaching for the couch in front of the two reporters. "I hope you don't mind having this interview together. I don't have time for two different appointments."

"Captain, we have already settled this in your absence," The brown-haired woman stated. "We even agreed on several questions."

"Indeed," The blond-haired woman continued. "Also, allow me to apologize in my colleague's place. The Heavenly News had no intention to insult you."

"And here I thought you hated me," Khan joked.

"On the contrary," The blonde-haired woman replied. "Captain, you are the most talked about figure in the entire Global Army. We can only adore someone like you."

"Precisely," The brown-haired woman added, "And we from the Untold Tales have always supported your growing fame. We didn't write a single negative article about you."

"I beg you to understand, Captain," The blonde-haired woman pleaded. "The Heavenly News doesn't take stances. We like to report every possible truth and give our audience a chance to make up their own mind."

"Every possible truth," The brown-haired woman scoffed. "Most are simply rumors or blatant lies."

"When was the last time the Untold Tales matched our ratings?" The blonde-haired woman asked

"Okay, enough," Khan sighed. "Let's start the interview."

"Certainly," Both women said before the brown-haired one took the lead. "Why don't we start from the beginning? How was your life in the Slums?"

"There isn't much to say," Khan stated. "I worked for food until I was old enough to enlist."

"It must have been tough," The blonde-haired woman pointed out, adding a fake concerned tone to her voice.

"Enlisting didn't make my life any easier," Khan laughed. "My profile speaks for itself."

"But you showed impressive survival skills on Istrone already," The blonde-haired woman continued. "Did you develop them in the Slums?"

'It's the power of desperation,' Khan mocked himself while giving a completely different answer.

"The reports exaggerate my role during the rebellion. I had the help of many students with far better survival skills. I was only fast."

"Do you mean George Ildoo?" The brown-haired woman asked. "Madam Wildon praised him greatly in a past interview. Are her words accurate?"

"No," Khan corrected. "George is even better than what she described."

"Captain, you have such a good opinion about him," The blond-haired woman announced. "Do you plan on joining the Ildoo family in the future?"

"Let's leave my career out of this," Khan requested. "I'm not planning on joining any family for now. I'll perform a few jobs for the Harbor and review my situation once the semester ends."

"Though, you should have an idea, right?" The brown-haired woman questioned. "With your fame, even the noble families aren't too out of reach. Some say you have been invited to be their guard already."

"You should interview the nobles if you want to learn about that," Khan responded.

"Talking about rumors," The blond-haired woman exclaimed. "The entire network is flooded with clues about Miss Solodrey and you. Do you want to address them?"

"No," Khan firmly said.

"What do you mean?" The blond-haired woman gasped. "How should we interpret your refusal?"

"You shouldn't," Khan stated, "But you will anyway, so I'd rather not say anything at all."

The coldness in Khan's tone told the reporters that the time to change the topic had arrived. The two exchanged a glance, and the gesture made them opt for the main reason behind their visit.

"You must be aware of the video about your battle," The blond-haired woman uttered.

"It would be hard not to," Khan nodded.

"The Untold Tales hired experts to review it," The brown-haired woman continued, "And the results were incredible. They think you are the best third-level warrior in the history of the Global Army."

Some old teachings accumulated throughout the years popped into Khan's mind. Playing it humble could solve problems, but arrogance was necessary at times. Khan didn't like to pretend, but only truths left his mouth.

"I don't know about the best," Khan declared, "But I should be the strongest, excluding the nobles. I wouldn't be Nippe 2's monster otherwise."

The bold statement filled the two reporters with excitement, but Khan opted for a passive approach for the rest of the interview. He had only wanted to own his nickname to add some pride to his efforts. Everything else was pointless in his mind.

The reporters tried their best but eventually gave up on getting anything else out of Khan. That alone wouldn't make them interrupt the interview, but Khan had already made plans with the Headmistress, so a soldier eventually summoned him to grant an escape route.

Surprisingly enough, Khan managed to return to the second district by dinnertime, and his silent phone eased some of his mental exhaustion. If it were up to him, he would spend his entire time training and studying, but his fame came at a price, and the interviews were only part of it.

When Khan landed, he found a slightly overweight middle-aged man waiting in front of his building. In theory, the Headmistress was dealing with the issue, so his presence alerted Khan. Still, a name appeared in Khan's mind and told him that figure's identity.

"Mister Chares, I suppose," Khan called while approaching the man.

"I'm flattered," The man politely lowered his head. "I didn't expect Captain Khan to know me."

Khan showed no fear, but his senses worked at full power. Mister Chares was a blank spot in his sensitivity, but many emotions spread through the mana that touched him. Khan saw resolve, coldness, and anger.

"I can't attend any meeting right now," Khan announced while studying the man's long black hair.

"Yet, if you set something with the Headmistress, I'll make sure to come."

"I don't need anything so official, Captain," Mister Chares stated. "I'm only asking you to reconsider Tyler's evaluation. He is a good kid."

'Straight to the point,' Khan commented in his mind. "Sir, I avoided giving him a negative review. That's as far as I'm willing to go for him."

"But Captain," Mister Chares pressed on, "A positive evaluation from you would do wonders to his career."

"He might get someone killed if he keeps flying like that," Khan openly revealed. "I'm sorry. I don't want that weight on my shoulders."

Khan turned toward the building's entrance, but Mister Chares stepped in his way and forced him to stop.

"Captain, I'm sure we can reach an agreement," Mister Chares exclaimed. "My family isn't wealthy, but our reach might surprise you. Just name a price, and I will provide it."

"I'm not interested," Khan refused. "You should invest your resources in training Tyler. He might still become a decent pilot in a few years."

"I'm afraid I can't wait a few years," Mister Chares revealed. "Please, Captain, what do you desire?"

Mister Chares inspected his surroundings before covering part of his mouth and lowering his voice. "If alien women are your thing, I can-."

"Be very careful of your next words," Khan interrupted as pure killing intent left his figure and filled the symphony.

Mister Chares' pleading expression vanished, but no fear replaced it. He coldly accepted that his approach had failed and straightened his back to voice his goodbyes. "Have a good night, Captain."

Khan followed Mister Chares' departure with his eyes but eventually decided to enter the building. As for Mister Chares, he crossed a few blocks before picking up his phone and making a call.

"He was uncooperative," Mister Chares sighed while holding his phone to his ear. "Yes, the bastard noble is perfect for the job. He should enjoy ruining our upstanding Captain."

#### Chapter 482 Reaction

The unexpected meeting with Mister Chares upset Khan but also gave birth to worries that couldn't be ignored.

The Headmistress had great power inside the Harbor, but Mister Chares had still managed to enter it and meet Khan. That was no easy feat, especially for someone without a massive political influence. His apparent anonymity only worsened that problem, adding a layer of suspicion that forced Khan to consider him a real threat.

However, the study that unfolded once Khan returned to his flat didn't lead anywhere. Even involving Monica and George didn't change that situation. According to the network, Mister Chares was no different from the average political figure. He wasn't even a Patriarch, which made everything more suspicious.

It didn't help that Mister Chares' motivations were relatively shallow. A recommendation for his nephew wasn't worth Khan's enmity, especially after the recent events. Eventual overprotectiveness could explain that behavior, but nothing in Mister Chares' history matched that pattern.

The lack of available information eventually forced Khan to give up on the matter. He simply couldn't do much about it, and there still was a chance that he was overthinking the issue. For all he knew, Mister Chares could be one of the inevitable crazy consequences of his fame.

Of course, the issue never left Khan's mind, but the peace that followed the meeting helped him ignore it. The video had made him more than a celebrity in the Harbor. Smiles broadened anywhere he looked, and every door opened for him. His status seemed impossible to affect, but trouble hit sooner than he expected.

A week after meeting Mister Chares, during lunchtime, Khan left his classroom with the rest of his peers. More lessons would follow in the afternoon, but everyone chose to use that break to rest or handle common political interactions.

"You must do my family next, Captain," Zoe whined. "My parents will disown me if I can't get you to come to dinner."

"I was already planning on doing that," Khan laughed. "Is next week fine with you?"

"Don't let Zoe trick you so easily," Anita sighed. "She will say anything to get you."

"Anita, don't take his side," Zoe complained. "You are already spending enough time with the Captain as it is. Leave something for us."

"Trust me," Anita exclaimed while eyeing Monica walking closely at Khan's side. "I have a hard time talking to him too."

Zoe turned to look at Monica, and the classmates around them imitated her. Those glances didn't carry anything serious. They were mostly playful gestures belonging to what had become a reoccurring joke, and Monica's stance only added fuel to them.

"I might have become possessive," Monica claimed while seizing Khan's elbow.

"Anita, it's fine," Khan reassured. "I planned to meet Zoe's family anyway."

"We'll finally get some privacy that night," Zoe giggled.

"I'll come too," Monica promptly stated.

"I'm sorry, Monica," Zoe responded. "My parents have family-related matters to discuss with him. I'll make it up to you another time."

Zoe's sly smile revealed a different truth that everyone noticed. She had probably used that lie to get Khan to come alone, and no one could call her out publicly. It would simply be disrespectful.

"I guess I'll go alone," Khan voiced.

"No, you aren't," Monica responded as a tinge of jealousy joined her tone. "Zoe, I'll contact your parents. I'm sure your mother can't wait to hear from me."

"I guess I won't go alone," Khan exclaimed, and a wave of laughs filled the group once Zoe's eyes widened, marking her defeat.

"The best third-level in history sure looks hopeless," George joked.

"Aren't you supposed to help me?" Khan played along.

"I'm not getting anywhere close to your women's problems," George shook his head. "It's way too much trouble."

"George, what women?" Monica asked. She had worn a smile the whole time, but a scary vibe had joined her expression now.

"It's unbelievable, really," George sighed. "Every time we are on the streets, he gets hordes of-."

"Anita, you should come over tonight," Monica interrupted. "I miss our girl talks."

"Of course, Khan never looks at them!" George coughed. "I actually think we should use the cabs more often. You know, privacy reasons."

"You must teach me that move," Anita uttered.

"What move?" Monica feigned innocence. "I only wanted to catch up with you."

"Way too much trouble," George whispered before turning to focus on the corridor to ignore Monica's glare.

Khan couldn't help but laugh at those cheerful interactions. He couldn't express the entirety of himself yet, but his social life had reached a good spot. He couldn't consider his classmates as true friends, but none of them had ill intentions toward him, and that was enough.

"Hello?" A loud voice eventually resounded in the corridor, forcing the big group to turn. Usually, no one approached the members of the advanced classes due to the many important figures among them, so discovering that a young man was behind the call added some confusion.

Nevertheless, the man's surprising good looks eased that reaction and put the group in a positive mood. He was tall, handsome, and with flowy black hair that reached his shoulders. His innocent face also added some charm to his figure.

"Are you from the advanced classes?" The man shouted again while approaching the group. Everyone became able to see the three pairs of stars on his military uniform at that point, which deepened their interest in that seemingly casual encounter.

"We are," Lucian stated, jumping on the group's lead. "And you are?"

"Wayne," The man stated, stopping when he reached Lucian, "Wayne Mauder. I should have joined your class but got lost along the way."

Wayne finished his line with a carefree laugh, but no one joined him. Everyone in the group had undergone thorough political training, which kicked in and led to more confusion. The Mauder family wasn't wealthy, so Wayne's presence in the Harbor was suspicious, and he looked too young to be a specialist of some kind.

"Mister Mauder," Lucian quickly decided to investigate further, "What do you mean by that? Are you a student?"

"Oh, yes!" Wayne exclaimed. "I just transferred here. You are Lucian Hencus, right? It's a pleasure to meet you."

Wayne stretched his hand, and Lucian hesitated for only a second before shaking it. That short explanation obviously didn't convince him, but he still behaved impeccably since he was in the open.

"And you must be George Ildoo!" Wayne voiced another excited line when he spotted George. "I heard your swordplay is incredible!"

George couldn't muster the same fake face as Lucian. His expression remained cold when he shook Wayne's hand, but the latter didn't seem to mind.

"And that's Captain Khan!" Wayne continued, almost jumping to approach Khan. "I'm your greatest fan, sir."

Khan had developed the habit of inspecting everyone's mana, and the events with Mister Chares had even intensified his social paranoia. However, he sensed nothing odd about Wayne. His energy was heavy but warm. The man seemed filled with nothing but happiness and excitement.

"Pleasure to meet you," Khan muttered, accepting Wayne's hand.

"Wow!" Wayne gasped when his eyes fell on Monica. "You are Monica Solodrey, right? I read you were beautiful, but those shallow praises don't do you justice."

"Thank you, Mister Mauder," Monica engaged in her elegant manners while shaking Wayne's hand. "I'm glad I can bring praises to the Solodrey name."

Wayne proceeded to salute every member of the advanced class, taking a minute to name all of them and add praises to those casual introductions. It was rare to see such straightforward manners in those circles, but that apparent honesty felt refreshing, and no one dared to refuse free compliments.

"I'm so glad I could find you," Wayne exploded into another laugh once his round of salutes ended. "I would have spent the entire day wandering through the embassy otherwise."

"Why didn't you ask the soldiers for directions?" Lucian questioned. "They would have been happy to help a member of the advanced classes."

"I'm shy," Wayne explained with a bright smile.

No one would ever describe Wayne as shy after seeing how quickly he had approached the group, but his expression was more than honest. He seemed to believe in his words.

"Well, we were heading for lunch," Lucian revealed. "Do you want to join us?"

"Certainly!" Wayne exclaimed, rushing through the group to reach its lead. He stopped when he reached Monica and put his arm around her shoulders before using his innocent voice again. "Let's go!"

Wayne's arm remained on Monica for less than a second. Khan's hand had instinctively snapped to grab Wayne's wrist and lift it, inevitably attracting the entire group's attention.

Of course, Khan's reaction wasn't the only reason behind that attention. Wayne's gesture had been improper and disrespectful. Even Monica's close friends didn't dare to act like that with her, especially in the open.

Khan's expression had grown cold, but he found himself unable to focus on Wayne since another event claimed his attention. The mana in Monica's hand shook a bit, and tiny red marks appeared on her dark skin. That reaction wasn't harmful, but Zoe gasped in shock when she followed Khan's eyes and noticed it.

"Monica, isn't that," Zoe voiced before recalling to lower her voice. "Are you on birth control?"

Zoe had tried to whisper, but the entire group heard her anyway. Monica's hand became popular, and more gasps resounded. Every female descendant and many men seemed able to recognize those red marks and connect them to birth control topics.

"That's my fault," Wayne laughed, uncaring that Khan was still holding his wrist. "Things tend to go bad when I'm around."

"Monica, why would you-?" Zoe began to ask, but looking at Khan was enough to clear her confusion. Everyone liked to joke about Khan and Monica, but that still sounded unrealistic. However, they had tangible proof now.

Khan's mana boiled, but a surprising realization dawned upon him while Wayne's wrist remained in his grasp. He could get a better idea of Wayne's presence while touching him, and his senses made him aware of the immense raw strength running through that arm.

"You said you were the strongest third-level warrior, right?" Wayne asked, almost as if he felt Khan's thoughts. "I always believed that to be me."

#### Chapter 483 Crazy

Everyone heard Wayne's statement and linked it to a potential enmity with Khan. However, Khan had a completely different impression of the matter. Wayne's mana had no bitterness, envy, or other negative emotions. He was simply saying what crossed his mind.

That wasn't enough to make Khan calm down. He didn't mind enemies, but Wayne had done something to Monica. Still, the raw strength running through that arm managed to delay his outburst.

Khan couldn't put what he felt into words. A deep realization unfolded in instinctive parts of his mind. Something told him that Wayne was strong and that his power didn't only come from a mere amount of mana and element. Wayne reeked of the same experience that Khan and George wielded.

The delay only lasted one second. Khan's thoughts screamed and remained calm at the same time as mana gathered into his grip. The suspicious situation granted him some special permissions due to his rank, but he couldn't actually kill, especially in the open. Still, even the Headmistress wouldn't say anything if he limited himself to capturing Wayne.

Nevertheless, Khan lost control of his mana before it could come out of his palm. He didn't sense any external influence, but his energy had gone rogue anyway.

"I told you," Wayne chuckled as if he could sense what had happened inside Khan's hand. "Things go bad around me."

A purple-red light shone in Wayne's vision as soon as he finished his line. Mana erupted out of Khan's hand, adding dangerous properties to his grip. He wasn't hurting Wayne yet, but prolonged exposure to his energy was bound to shatter his skin.

"I just have to use more mana then," Khan coldly declared during that stalemate. He wanted to fight and interrogate Wayne on the spot, but his surroundings prevented that.

Wayne showed some surprise at the sight of the purple-red mana, but a bright smile soon broadened. Genuine happiness and excitement replaced his shock and flowed into his following words.

"I knew you were as good as the rumors said," Wayne exclaimed. "I can't wait to get to know you better."

Khan couldn't help but feel confused, but another event attracted his attention. Monica wasn't the type of woman to freeze under unexpected situations. She even knew Khan's flaws, so she approached him before things degenerated.

"Mister Mauder, I don't enjoy being touched without permission," Monica warned, retaining her elegant vibe and taking Khan's free hand. "If something like this happens again, I will report it to the Headmistress."

Khan had been ready to fight, but Monica became his priority. He retracted his mana and let go of Wayne's wrist when Monica pulled him. She was using her unmarked hand, making the walk uncomfortable, but Khan quickly adjusted his position to remain at her side.

"Monica, are you and Khan-?" Zoe blurted when Monica and Khan were about to cross her.

"What I do with Captain Khan is none of your business," Monica firmly stated, "Nor how many times I do it."

Khan calmed down. He could feel Monica's mood swings trying to break through her elegant persona, and a laugh attempted to escape his throat. Still, the other conflicting emotions kept his face cold and his gaze straight.

Needless to say, Monica's statement triggered another series of gasps, but the couple didn't linger in the area to witness the consequences. Even George followed them after shooting a glare at Wayne, and Anita joined him before he could get too far.

No one spoke once the privacy of the elevator started. Anita checked Monica's marked hand and wrote something on her phone, but no words escaped her mouth. Monica sighed at some point as worry and sadness invaded her, but the reassuring kiss that Khan left on her hair improved her mood.

The group was in a hurry. They left the embassy only to find a cab already waiting for them. Anita had called it since she knew what the situation required, which wasn't a swift return to the flat.

Khan let Anita handle everything and focused on Monica. She remained silent while resting on his shoulder, but her eyes wandered to empty areas of the car. A lot was going on in her mind, and Khan did his best to show moral support.

The cab flew toward a medical bay in a nearby district and landed on its roof to gain access to its private areas. Those structures had exclusive rooms and doctors for people with wealthy backgrounds, and one look at Monica made her instantly gain access to them.

"You two wait outside," Anita ordered in a worried tone while Monica entered her private room.

Khan and George complied and headed for a waiting area nearby. The place was empty, with only a few nurses crossing it from time to time. The two were basically all alone, and words inevitably flew after they spent a few minutes on simple seats.

"Do you have any idea of what just happened?" George questioned while keeping his gaze straight.

"No," Khan admitted. "I couldn't sense anything odd. Honestly, I'm not sure that guy did anything."

"It might be his element," George guessed.

"That's what I concluded," Khan sighed, "But I don't know. He didn't even have a special aura."

"I see," George commented. "So, what do we do now?"

George's unyielding loyalty warmed Khan's heart, but he couldn't find the strength to relax right now. Too much had happened in mere minutes, and confusion still reigned in his mind.

"He looked strong," Khan revealed. "How can someone like him remain anonymous? I thought our classmates knew everyone."

"There are special cases," George explained. "Some families hide their talents to reveal them at the right time."

"Isn't every family looking for fame?" Khan asked.

"Again, it's rare," George continued, "And there can be multiple explanations. That guy might be part of a declining branch that isn't allowed to steal fame from the main family. He might very well be a loaned descendant."

"Loaned?" Khan repeated.

"Big families loaning talents to small families," George summarized. "It's more common than you think, especially when there are internal conflicts. He might be too talented for his own good or have a problematic bloodline."

"Do you think he is a bastard?" Khan questioned.

"I have no idea," George admitted. "I'm just listing options here."

Khan fell silent as George's explanation fused with his knowledge and granted him a new perspective on the event. The Mauder family was too small to disregard the opportunity to show a similar talent. Instead, the loaned option made sense and created more problems.

"Did you plan to kill him in the open?" George wondered.

"The idea did cross my mind," Khan uttered. "I probably wouldn't have hesitated to attack him for real if I sensed actual enmity. Still, I eventually opted to capture him."

"How mature of you," George teased.

"Hey, I'm stabler than I was at the start of the semester," Khan claimed. "Besides, if I throw everything away, I'll lose Monica. That thought is enough to keep my mana in check."

"That's not what the others have seen," George commented. "The next articles won't be kind."

"I'd be happy if they only talked about me," Khan responded. "By the way, how did everyone realize Monica was on birth control?"

"Those red marks are a possible side effect," George explained. "They might appear if the body rejects the treatment."

"Wait, rejects?" Khan gasped as his eyes widened in terror. One possible consequence of that explanation put true fear in his mind.

"Who knows?" George snickered. "It might be a good thing. Madam Solodrey will have to acknowledge you at that point."

"Don't even talk about it," Khan cursed. "It's way too early for that."

"And here I thought you two had already chosen the names," George joked.

"She knows I want to understand my mutations better first," Khan revealed.

"Wait," George gasped. "Did you actually talk about it?"

"It came out," Khan nodded.

"Man, you really go all out," George declared. "Can I help choose the names?"

"Shut up," Khan heaved a helpless sigh. "Why do you even know so much about birth control anyway?"

"My father forced me to learn everything about it for some reason," George feigned innocence. "It's quite complicated. Apparently, women need tailor-made treatments since their mana can get in the way."

"Is it dangerous?" Khan asked.

"It can be," George replied. "That's why everyone was so surprised. I mean, I'm sure Monica had the best doctors, but people usually avoid those treatments, especially wealthy descendants who shouldn't be in any relationship."

Khan felt like an idiot. He didn't realize the topic was so complicated, and Madam Solodrey's initial refusal made sense now.

"She really loves me," Khan sighed, bumping the back of his head on the metal wall behind him a few times. He felt overwhelmed by love, which made him angrier about the recent events.

Khan's phone buzzed before he could remain stuck in those thoughts, and reading the name on the screen hinted at problems.

"What is it?" Khan asked after answering the call.

"Captain, you might want to make a public statement," Jenny stated. "The rumors about you have exploded in the last minutes. This might get bigger than your video."

Jenny didn't need to be explicit. Khan knew what she was talking about, but his priorities lay elsewhere. Monica was the one suffering, so he wanted to be there for her.

"Just keep blocking outside calls," Khan ordered. "I'll deal with the situation soon enough."

"As you wish, Captain," Jenny responded. "However, I advise you to hurry. It won't be long before the families get involved and turn this into a political incident."

'Political incident,' Khan repeated those words in his mind while closing the call. 'It's too sudden.'

Khan knew that the event was no small matter. The implications of Monica's treatment were bound to affect her political value in many ways. She had actively hurt her family, and Khan didn't wield enough influence to make that loss worth it.

'I just needed a few more years,' Khan thought, bumping his nape into the wall again. 'Maybe even one.'

A door opened, interrupting Khan's reasoning. He jumped on his feet and peeked into the branching corridor to spot Monica, Anita, and a female doctor. The three exchanged a few words before splitting and heading in different directions.

"Is everything okay?" Khan questioned as soon as he reached for Monica's cheek.

"It was just an outburst," Monica nodded while showing her right hand. The red marks had already disappeared.

"So, did the birth control work well?" Khan asked, doing his best not to be too explicit in Anita's presence.

"I'm not pregnant," Monica exploded into a laugh. "What? Disappointed?"

The tease tried to hide Monica's worried state, but Khan could see it. He didn't even reply. He just brought her closer to wrap her in a tight hug.

"It's going to be okay," Khan whispered as Monica rubbed her face on his chest. She finally showed some worry inside the hug, but her resolve also grew stronger in the meantime.

"I'm not worried about myself," Monica revealed.

"Hey, don't even say it," Khan scolded. "We are together in this."

Monica left Khan's chest to lift her face, and her lips instinctively strived for his mouth when she noticed his affection. The two kissed right in the middle of the waiting area but separated quickly.

"Let's go home," Monica voiced when she dived back into the hug.

Khan exchanged a glance with Anita, and she nodded before picking up her phone. Only a few seconds had to pass before the group returned to the roof to enter their cab and head toward the second district.

The second trip shared the same silence as the previous, but the general mood had changed. Monica became cuddlier, but her gaze remained lost as plans formed and shattered inside her mind. As for Khan, he ended up reviewing memories that felt painfully similar to his current situation.

Confirming that Monica was fine allowed Khan's mind to wander. Losing privileges or gaining new political enemies were troublesome developments, but he couldn't think about that when his relationship was at stake.

The Solodrey family could decide to recall Monica to contain eventual political problems. They might even force her to break up with Khan to save him from potential repercussions. He was a liability for her status, and she wouldn't hesitate to sacrifice herself to protect him.

That development would mark the second time external events had come in the way of Khan's meaningful relationships. He couldn't help but hear Yeza's words while he recalled how broken he had been after Nitis. He dreaded that possibility, not only for the pain it would cause.

Khan had been nothing more than a lost kid on Nitis. The alien planet, the interspecies politics, and his toxic love had been problems that even his greatest efforts couldn't overcome.

Yet, years had passed since those events. Khan had become a Captain and had established an enviable array of relationships. His strength had also increased greatly, making him completely different from the hopeless kid from back then.

If the worst possible outcome truly happened, Khan wouldn't just give up. It would be an insult to his efforts to let things unfold as they did on Nitis. He would fight, resorting to almost any method to retrieve and protect what he loved.

The silent trip eventually ended, bringing the group back to Khan's flat. George immediately headed to retrieve a bottle since he knew the situation needed it, while the two women settled on the same couch. Khan planned to sit at Monica's side to discuss the matter, but another call reached him.

"Headmistress, it's not a good time," Khan hastily said while closing his eyes to sound as polite as possible.

"You bet it isn't," Headmistress Holwen scoffed. "Come to see me. We need to talk."

"Can we postpone?" Khan almost begged. "I really need to be somewhere else."

"Captain, it's an order," Headmistress Holwen stated before closing the call.

Khan felt the urge to throw his phone away, but Monica left the couch and took his hand before he could snap. He found it hard to look her in the eyes with all the painful memories running through his vision, but she tilted his head and forced his gaze to focus.

"Go see the Headmistress," Monica whispered, pulling Khan from his neck to make their foreheads touch. "I'll be fine."

"Don't do anything crazy while I'm outside," Khan gave up.

"I'll be as crazy as I want to," Monica giggled. "I thought you learnt that by now."

George and Anita could hear those whispers, but the couple didn't care. Now that a real threat to their relationship had appeared, they spoke freely and honestly.

"I'm-," Khan said, hesitating for a second before admitting how he felt. "I'm scared."

"Me too," Monica replied, and her voice risked cracking. "I'll complain and cry a lot later, so make sure to come back and take responsibility."

"Don't you dare to start without me," Khan joked, forcing a giggle out of Monica that ended when their lips met.

Khan wanted to remain immersed in that affection forever, but even his mana agreed that other tasks required his attention. The unreasonable desire to fix everything took control of him and made him leave the flat in a hurry.

The Headmistress had already sent a flying car, so Khan hopped in and prepared for the incoming conversation. He didn't know what he would say, but resolve leaked out of him and filled the symphony. He was ready to cut any deal to preserve what he had.

The short trip led Khan to the embassy's roofs, where a soldier opened the path for the Headmistress' office. He found her behind her desk, staring at the countless notifications that popped among the menus, and recognizing some of the names warned Khan about the gravity of the situation.

"I received a basic briefing of today's events," Headmistress Holwen announced without moving her gaze from the desk. "I thought you couldn't miss anything."

"Wayne Mauder didn't do anything," Khan explained. "Nothing specific, at least."

"Damned families," Headmistress Holwen cursed. "First, Mister Chares slips past my additional securities. Now, a random student causes a political incident. This smells of nobles or worse."

Khan didn't need to ask for additional explanations. He had already considered similar options. The Hive or other secret organizations might be involved in the strange recent events, even if he couldn't understand why.

"Do you realize what you have done?" The Headmistress eventually exclaimed, lifting her gaze and unfolding her cold presence to fill the entire office.

"I held back, ma'am," Khan responded, uncaring of his partial lie. He had hesitated against Wayne only because Monica needed him more.

"I'm not talking about that!" Headmistress Holwen shouted. "What were you thinking? As if playing the married couple with Miss Solodrey wasn't enough. You also had to tell everyone that she wasn't a virgin anymore."

Headmistress Holwen was being unreasonable. Khan didn't do anything similar, but the recent events had led to those conclusions. His innocence wasn't important at that stage.

"Now I have dozens of families worried that you'll corrupt their descendants," Headmistress Holwen continued.

"I thought they couldn't wait for me to marry their descendants," Khan snorted.

"As if that's the same thing," Headmistress Holwen scolded. "Do you have any idea how many families have their eyes on Miss Solodrey? They'll do anything in their power to use the situation to their advantage."

Khan had learnt enough to imagine those consequences, so he limited his answer to a few cold words. "Let them come."

"Don't be stupid," Headmistress Holwen cursed. "Do you think the Solodrey family will have your back? They'll turn you into a scapegoat to regain some face in no time."

"You could always promote me to make me worthy of Miss Solodrey," Khan suggested.

"Enough with the games!" Headmistress Holwen shouted again. "Do you even realize the position you are in?"

"Yes," Khan nodded, "So tell me what to do. I'll take any mission and task. I'll join any battlefield you want. Just help me."

"You can't be serious," The Headmistress uttered, finally lowering her voice. Still, Khan's face cleared her doubts. That resolve wasn't something he could fake.

"Why would I help you?" Headmistress Holwen decided to ask. "The stability of the Harbor is my priority. If I have to throw you to the families to keep it, I will."

"Because I'm the best," Khan claimed without showing any shame. "You know it. I know it. Everyone knows it. I'm the best investment that has ever landed at your doorstep."

Headmistress Holwen fell silent. She was surprised at how Khan was speaking about himself. He wasn't trying to brag or improve his status. He was selling himself as if he were nothing more than a weapon.

"Besides," Khan continued. "It's safe to link the recent suspicious events to me. If you want to get to the bottom of the issue, you'll keep me around."

"Are you willing to play the bait?" Headmistress Holwen questioned.

"Oh, ma'am," Khan chuckled. "Words can't express what I'm willing to do."

Silence spread as Khan and the Headmistress fell prey to a contest of stares. They had reached a stalemate, but the buzzing of their phones broke it, bringing their attention to the new notification on the interactive desk.

It turned out that Khan wasn't the only one equipped with resolve. Actually, in terms of craziness, Monica surpassed him at that time.

'Monica Solodrey admits to secret relationship,' Khan read the headline on the interactive desk. 'In our article, we provide an exclusive and detailed interview about the hidden life of the Solodrey family's beautiful descendant and the famous Captain Khan!'

#### Chapter 484 Doubts

The Headmistress and Khan reached a silent understanding and interrupted their conversation to read the article. Khan headed for a seat while picking up his phone, and the words that appeared in his eyes after opening the network left him stunned.

Monica didn't limit herself to simple answers. She had performed a video call with a reporter to add value to her revelations, which were far from harmless.

In the interview, Monica placed the beginning of her relationship with Khan during the trip to the Harbor. She also claimed to have been the one to push for it, highlighting how Khan tried to refuse her multiple times before falling prey to her romantic advances.

Monica even added spicy details. She never openly admitted how far the two had gone, but it was easy to read between the lines. Somehow, she also managed to praise Khan's performance without being explicit.

Of course, Monica mixed lies to most of her revelations to keep Khan's private businesses outside the interview. She wanted the entire network to focus on her, and her finishing lines expressed part of her plan.

'I think I initially took it as a challenge,' Khan read on the video's subtitles, 'But the more I learnt about Captain Khan, the more my heart ached. He looked past my status and family, making me feel like my own woman. I couldn't help but fall for him, and now I only wish to protect him.'

Monica ended that statement with a sob and even hid her face to deepen the emotional impact that gesture would have. She was doing anything in her power to sell that performance, but Khan knew that her tears were genuine.

Khan understood Monica's approach. She wanted to play on the positive PR that her revelations would generate. Audiences loved gossip, and a relationship between a commoner and a wealthy descendant always put many people on the couple's side.

Monica and Khan were also famous figures with many fans, so it would make sense for them to gain the public's general approval. The birth control issue even played in their favor since it revealed how the Solodrey family was aware of their relationship. Going back on that decision wouldn't be the best political move.

That obviously was only one of the possible scenarios. The Solodrey family was powerful enough to disregard bad PR. They could go against the public's will and focus on their benefits. Even if other families banded together to support the couple, they had the wealth to silence them.

Khan kept staring at his phone long after the video ended. His thoughts were so messy that he didn't even bother to check the comments. Monica's move had left him speechless, and the love he felt for her couldn't cover his other negative emotions.

That negativity intensified when a familiar name appeared on the screen. Amber was calling, reminding Khan of other problems. He had been so focused on Monica that he didn't even consider how Cora would take that revelation.

"I need to take this," Khan whispered before bringing his phone to his ear. "Hey."

"Khan, is it true?" Amber directly asked.

"Yes," Khan didn't hide anything but still lowered his gaze before asking a specific question. "How did Cora take it?"

"She'll be fine," Amber promised.

"I'm glad she has you," Khan sighed.

"Don't sound so sad," Amber exclaimed. "Though you really stepped it up. I guess even Miss Solodrey couldn't survive your silver tongue."

"Amber, I'm sorry," Khan stated. "I never planned to move on so soon."

"Stop it," Amber ordered. "We only want you to be happy. Are you happy, Khan?"

"I'm working on it," Khan admitted.

"That's good," Amber replied. "Cora and I will cheer for you, but don't forget to call."

"I'll do my best," Khan uttered.

"I'll leave you to it now," Amber said. "Good luck."

"Thanks," Khan voiced, and the call ended.

"Just like Norrett," Headmistress Holwen scoffed when Khan lowered his phone. "Rascals and womanizers."

Headmistress Holwen didn't use her scolding tone. She was merely commenting on the situation while her mind did her best to process Monica's interview. However, Khan saw her words differently.

Amber had tried to reassure Khan, but he knew how Cora would react to the interview. He could almost hear her cries, which made him feel despicable. He had pushed people he cared about to tears on his path toward happiness.

It didn't help that the current issue was far from over. Khan's problems had just begun. He would have had an easier time accepting Cora's tears if things with Monica had ended well, but his relationship had gone back to the starting point with a single troublesome event.

A burst of anger made Khan throw his phone away. The device remained intact when it crashed on the wall and floor, and the gesture told the Headmistress that something was wrong. Seeing Khan taking his head into his hands even confirmed that belief.

"I wonder if I should just stop," Khan muttered while keeping his head lowered. "I should just give up and focus on fighting."

The Headmistress remained silent since she knew more words were about to reach her ears, and Khan didn't disappoint.

"The battlefield is simpler," Khan continued. "We hurt each other until someone wins, but people are different. No matter what I do, everybody loses."

Khan had already reached conclusions about those problems. He had come to terms with his desire to be happy and the difficulties of the social environment. His words were only complaints triggered by how powerless he felt.

A realization dawned upon Headmistress Holwen when she saw Khan in that state. His level, rank, feats, and general maturity always made him look older than he was. Yet, in a few ways, he was still a young man going through the same struggles as people of a similar age.

"Many lost their way in the dreadful wars that fill the universe," Headmistress Holwen exclaimed. "Still, seeing someone so young preferring bloodshed remains sad."

Headmistress Holwen couldn't put Khan above the Harbor, but his mindset affected her a bit. She was aware of his challenging life, but seeing how far it had pushed him made her waver. She couldn't believe someone would opt for the battlefield to avoid spreading suffering among his loved ones.

"So," Headmistress Holwen continued. "Will you give up?"

"Headmistress," Khan called, finally lifting his face to show a strange smile, "Giving up has never been among my options."

The statement sounded arrogant, but the Headmistress couldn't see any trace of that feeling in Khan's smile. The expression carried a sad and lonely vibe that she couldn't explain.

"What then?" Headmistress Holwen questioned.

"My girlfriend went through all this trouble to protect me," Khan exclaimed, standing up to retrieve his phone. "Being with her is the least I can do while I think about my next move."

Headmistress Holwen's eyes flickered. Khan had already adjusted his mindset to the recent interview, openly calling Monica his girlfriend. Even descendants as wealthy as Lucian would add more weight to the matter, so Khan's casual approach felt surprising.

"You won't get far on your own," Headmistress Holwen stated when Khan began to turn toward the exit. "They will eat you alive."

"Ma'am, just move to your offer," Khan chuckled, showing his knowing expression to the Headmistress. "You have an idea, so say it."

The vague disrespect in Khan's attitude tried to affect Headmistress Holwen's patience, but another realization reached her. She was finally in front of the true Khan, the Khan who didn't care about politics, ranks, or families. All his cards were in the open, so he didn't bother to hide anything.

"You said you wanted to play the bait," Headmistress Holwen decided to go to the previous topic.

"That or any other plan you can think of," Khan responded, returning to his seat.

"During normal circumstances," Headmistress Holwen announced, "I'd never consider such ploys. You wouldn't even be my first choice since your interest in the matter has nothing to do with the Harbor."

Khan didn't even try to refute that claim. He knew the Headmistress was about to open a path for him, so he showed pure confidence while waiting for her following words.

"However," The Headmistress continued, and her tone grew colder due to Khan's stance, "Someone is making fun of my authority, and I can't allow it to continue. I want these people identified and punished."

"Anything you desire, ma'am," Khan voiced.

"Silence," Headmistress Holwen scoffed. "You talk big, but you'll only be able to attract small fish right now. I need a bait who can uncover the true culprits behind these events."

Khan wanted to challenge Headmistress Holwen's order but eventually decided to remain silent. That wasn't the time to test her patience.

"To do that," Headmistress Holwen continued, "You need to become larger than life. You must become so untouchable that any threat to you will cause tall waves."

"But, ma'am," Khan couldn't help but frown, "I'm already doing that. If there were a way to accelerate the process, I would have already pursued it."

"Will you take your pilot's test this week?" The Headmistress asked.

"If the Harbor allows it," Khan nodded. He only needed one last flight to meet the test's requirements. He could handle both on the weekend if Lieutenant Shurpard cleared him.

"So, you'll be able to attend to Professor Parver's tasks on your own starting next week," Headmistress Holwen commented. "According to my understanding, that was your original plan."

"I was still keeping other options open," Khan revealed, "But, yes. Working for the Global Army keeps me neutral among the families, so I was planning to accept the Professor's offer."

"Stick to that," Headmistress Holwen ordered. "I'll contact Professor Parver in the meantime. He initially wanted to give you easier tasks, but we don't have time for that."

"It sounds perfect, ma'am," Khan stated. "Thank you."

"Don't thank me," Headmistress Holwen snorted. "You won't feel any gratitude inside Honides' storms or Abora's poisonous swamps."

Those names belonged to planets inside the Harbor's system, which Khan had already studied. The Headmistress had mentioned dangerous environments, but Khan only felt curiosity toward them, and Monica's interview added resolve to all of that.

"Also, remember that I'm using you for the Harbor's sake," Headmistress Holwen added. "If you fail to meet my expectations, I'll throw you to the families."

"Did you grow emotional on me already?" Khan teased. The Headmistress didn't need to remind Khan about his position, but her gesture revealed some hope. Maybe, she wanted him to succeed and become a valuable figure in the Global Army.

"Get out of my office before I change my mind," Headmistress Holwen ordered.

"As you wish, ma'am," Khan held back a laugh while standing up and performing a military salute. "I won't disappoint you."

The Headmistress felt annoyed, but seeing Khan approaching the exit made her put away her rank and position for a bit. Truth be told, she didn't doubt Khan's value as a warrior. His mental and emotional state was her main worry.

"Captain," Headmistress Holwen called before Khan could reach the exit, "Getting away from everything might be an appealing solution, but you can't control people's feelings. You can't stop others from trying to save you."

"I'd be happy if I could save others from what I experienced," Khan admitted as his hand stopped right before the metal door.

"That's noble," Headmistress Holwen praised, "But others will be noble too at times. You have someone who brought the entirety of the network on herself to keep it away from you. I wouldn't waste time in doubts if I were you."

"I know," Khan couldn't help but smile. "With your permission, I'll go be a good boyfriend now."

"Permission granted, Captain," Headmistress Holwen stated.

"Also, can we talk about my promotion since we are being so honest?" Khan wondered. "I'd also accept a ship to celebrate our new bond."

"Get out of my office already!" Headmistress Holwen shouted, leaving her seat to slam her hands on the interactive desk.

Khan laughed and hurried out of the office, and the Headmistress heaved a tired sigh when the metal door closed. She felt the urge to curse when she returned to her seat, but her tone gained different properties when she glanced at the countless notifications on her desk.

"A ship might be doable," Headmistress Holwen muttered before disregarding the idea and focusing on her desk. That political crisis had just begun, and she needed to get on top of it.

## Chapter 485 Brother

The conversation with the Headmistress had left a few topics open. She didn't say much about Mister Chares and Wayne Mauder, and her plan to use Khan lacked many details. Still, he couldn't think about that right now. A very different job was calling for him.

A sigh of relief escaped Khan's mouth when he saw the empty sidewalk. Everyone was too busy absorbing the interview to give in to their excitement, which worked in Khan's favor, granting him an uneventful return to his flat.

The scene that welcomed Khan into the flat differed from the peaceful sidewalk. The symphony carried clear clues, and the loud voices that reached the elevator explained what was happening.

"Mom, I swear," Anita shouted. "I had no idea they were that close."

"Dad, can't we do this tomorrow?" George groaned. "It's not like we can do anything about it until the situation calms down."

Anita and George were so busy with the respective calls that they almost missed Khan's arrival in the flat's main hall. However, seeing him forced them to put down their phones.

"I'll get back to you in a minute," Anita stated, closing the call to face Khan. "I had no idea she would have gone on record. I would have stopped her otherwise."

"Dad, I'll shut down my phone until tomorrow," George said, also closing the call to address Khan. "Man, your woman made a mess. My father thinks the Solodrey family is sending a ship as we speak."

Khan raised his hand to stop following words before asking what truly mattered to him. "Where is she?"

"She's in the bedroom," Anita explained, nodding in the direction of one of the corridors, "But her mother called her a few minutes ago. I don't think they are done."

Khan barely let Anita finish speaking before heading toward the corridor. Monica had locked the bedroom, but Khan could override those directives, and an admonishing tone reached his ears as soon as he opened it.

"Do you have any idea of the shame you brought to our family?" Madam Solodrey's voice came out of a screen on the wall that featured her angry face. "We could have handled everything silently, but you had to go on record saying all kinds of lies."

"They weren't lies!" Monica cried from the bed's edge.

"I don't care what they were," Madam Solodrey uttered. "You are lucky that your father is busy with-."

"Good evening, Madam Solodrey," Khan interrupted, sitting at Monica's side to appear in the video call.

"There you are," Madam Solodrey exclaimed. "Once I'm done with my dear daughter, I'll turn you-."

"Goodbye, Madam Solodrey," Khan interrupted again, reaching for the phone in Monica's hands to close the call.

The screen disappeared, bringing some darkness into the room that didn't hide Monica's teary face. She glanced at Khan in shock before trying to restart the call, but he seized her phone to prevent that.

"Give me that," Monica gasped. "My mother-."

"Will still be angry at you tomorrow," Khan stated, hiding the phone behind his back and taking Monica's cheek into his hand as soon as she leaned toward him.

Monica felt able to forget about her mother in front of that loving face, but other problems appeared in her mind and forced her to speak. "Khan, I'm sorry. By the time Anita left the room, I was already contacting the reporters."

"It's fine," Khan reassured, using his thumb to wipe some of Monica's tears. "It's my fault for not expecting this. I knew you would have tried to protect me."

"But I did something-," Monica whined.

"Crazy," Khan laughed, interrupting Monica again. "That's just how you are. I wouldn't love you so much otherwise."

"Khan," Monica gave in, diving into Khan's chest to let some sobs come out. She had been so stressed that tears fell from her eyes as soon as she found some peace.

"There, there," Khan reassured, caressing Monica's hair while the desire to tease her overtook him. "I'm actually surprised you could keep a straight face during the interview. Some of the things you said were pretty embarrassing."

"Don't mention that now," Monica complained, lifting her face to show her shyness.

"What was it?" Khan pressed on while diverting his gaze. "It was hard to leave after the first night. Captain Khan has a way of making himself addictive."

"Stop it!" Monica shouted, pushing Khan down and climbing on him. "This isn't the time to joke about that."

"I know," Khan uttered as his expression grew serious. "They could take you away at any moment, so don't even think about sleeping tonight."

Just like Monica did in the past, Khan was giving her a chance to ignore all the outside world's problems and focus on what she liked. She also found it impossible to ignore Khan in her stressed state, so her head soon dived into his lips.

In the meantime, George and Anita had remained in the main hall, wondering what to do next. Khan's sudden entrance didn't help either since he disappeared without giving directives. Yet, the moan that eventually reached them brought an unsettling realization.

"What?" Anita gasped while turning in the direction of the corridor.

"They forgot to close the door," George explained, nodding in approval at that development. He shook his head and wore an admonishing expression as soon as Anita glared at him, but the arrival of a second moan forced the two to look for more private areas.

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The days that followed Monica's interview were as chaotic as everyone expected. The network never went silent, and countless articles appeared. Reporters interviewed all kinds of people connected to Khan or Monica, increasing the number of rumors about the topic and spotting the truth quite often.

Monica couldn't hide from her family, but waiting one night led to calmer tones in the calls that followed. The situation remained serious, but the overwhelming positive PR generated during her family's silence delayed possible harsh reactions. She still received orders to stay put, but her presence in the Harbor wasn't currently at risk.

Anita and George opted for a similar approach. They avoided showing their faces in the open while waiting for the situation to calm down. Luckily for them, it was the weekend, so no duty required their attention.

Things were quite different for Khan. He had businesses to attend to, so he couldn't wait for the storm to calm down in the safety of his flat. He had to show his face, which gave him a vague understanding of the consequences of the interview.

Fame obviously was the first and most glaring consequence. The Headmistress could keep crowds away from the second district, but the areas outside the hangars were a different issue. Those places were the homes of workers, simple soldiers, or poorer descendants, and the Harbor didn't have the manpower to stop them.

The second consequence carried some positive aspects. Monica's explicit involvement in the relationship forced Khan's boldest fans to stand down. It was one thing to risk enraging a relatively famous figure with no background, but Monica's presence added the weight of her family, scaring away the most aggressive supporters.

Monica's involvement also put an end to the flirtatious behavior that usually reached Khan. No woman wanted to get in her way. He became more than taken, according to public opinion.

The third consequence involved the families interested in the event. Jenny felt forced to send daily reports to keep Khan updated about the many offers that reached her office, but he avoided addressing them for the time being.

That chaos added five hours to Khan's last mandatory flight. The Harbor's soldiers spent half of that clearing a path for his cab and finding a hangar that could safely allow the unfolding of that procedure. Khan then needed the rest of that time to leave, turning a relatively short task into something that made him waste an entire day.

The experience helped the Headmistress create countermeasures. Her influence forced Lieutenant Shurpard to have all of Khan's tests on the last day of the week and even provided enough manpower to keep the involved areas clear.

First, Khan demonstrated mastery of the pilot's techniques in a null-gravity area. Scanners studied him the whole time to confirm the excellent execution of those skills, and his training during his solo flights made him pass with flying colors.

The practical flight followed, and Khan had no problems there either. He had long since memorized the test's route, allowing him to complete every task perfectly. The external inspector who joined Lieutenant Shurpard never found the chance to note down mistakes due to Khan's good performance.

Completing the theoretical test forced Khan to wait for the results in one of the offices among the hangars, with multiple soldiers acting as guards. Lieutenant Shurpard was the only familiar face in the area, but his presence didn't affect the tense silence.

"I passed," Khan eventually stated without breaking his military salute.

"Captain, I'm sure that your test went well," Lieutenant Shurpard laughed to hide his awkwardness, "But we must wait for the results before giving you the license."

"No," Khan corrected, nodding toward one of the empty corridors stretching from the office. "I passed."

Lieutenant Shurpard followed Khan's gaze and frowned seeing the empty corridor. However, a figure suddenly turned the corner to appear in his view, and his hurried pace hinted at the positive message he carried.

"Sir, sir!" The soldier called, rushing through the corridor to reach the office. "The results of Captain Khan's theoretical tests are out."

The soldier handed the screen in his hands to Lieutenant Shurpard, and the latter turned it on to check its contents. A list of all the correct answers and the overall score lit up, confirming that Khan had passed the test.

Lieutenant Shurpard couldn't help but glance at Khan in shock. He had read about his senses, but that felt inhuman. Ordinary soldiers would have required techniques to achieve similar results, but he had only needed a look to understand what was about to happen.

Nevertheless, the Headmistress had given specific directives. Everything had to unfold swiftly and quickly since she couldn't enforce peace for too long, so Lieutenant Shurpard cleared his throat and performed a military salute.

"Congratulations on passing the theoretical test, Captain," Lieutenant Shurpard announced. "Please, follow me inside to obtain your license."

Khan limited himself to a nod and entered the office to stand in front of the interactive desk. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Shurpard tinkered with the various menus and even connected the device to insert the last authorization that the process required.

A whooshing noise soon followed. A rectangular piece of the interactive desk caved in to allow the arrival of a metal card that carried Khan's name, picture, and other information. Lieutenant Shurpard picked it up, and an explanation followed when he handed it to Khan.

"This is your license, sir," Lieutenant Shurpard stated. "It will keep track of your infractions and feats, but you won't need it to prove your status. I've already sent an update to the network. To the Global Army, you are already a pilot."

"I'll try to remember to write praises about you," Khan promised, seizing the license to store it in his pocket. "You have been good to me, Lieutenant."

"I'm not worthy, Captain," Lieutenant Shurpard laughed. "If I may, my superiors have requested to meet you in the event of a positive outcome. What should I tell them?"

"Have them set an appointment through the Headmistress," Khan said while turning. "I'm sorry, but I don't have time today."

"Someone escort the Captain outside!" Lieutenant Shurpard ordered as soon as Khan began to leave. A few guards immediately followed him, but he barely looked at them while heading toward the closest hangar.

A cheering crowd welcomed Khan's arrival at the hangar. The soldiers there had created a metal barrier to keep those people away from the ship, but that didn't stop them from filling the area with shouts.

The shouts grew louder when Khan appeared, and many of the questions he had heard the previous day reached his ears. He usually ignored all that, but his fame had to increase, so he took out his license and waved it at the crowd.

The crowd's excitement skyrocketed, forcing more soldiers to approach the metal barrier to keep it steady. Some even drew tasers to stop people from attempting to jump toward Khan.

Khan disregarded the chaos to get on with his day, but the appearance of a familiar aura in the symphony forced him to approach the metal barrier. The rumors had spread so much that the crowd went silent when it understood what was happening. Everyone wanted to hear what Khan and Wayne would say to each other on their second encounter.

"Congratulations, Captain Khan!" Wayne exclaimed in his usual happy tone as soon as Khan reached the metal barrier. "I knew you would pass the tests."

"How did you know Monica was on birth control?" Khan went straight to the point, uncaring of the people around him.

"I didn't," Wayne revealed. "I was as surprised as the others."

Khan inspected Wayne from head to toe but found no trace of lies in his behavior or mana. That smiling man was the embodiment of honesty.

"So, are we going to fight now?" Wayne wondered. "We came pretty close to that last time."

"I can't waste time on you," Khan sighed. That was the truth. He had to prioritize the Headmistress' assignment to uncover the real culprits behind that ploy. Besides, he couldn't feel angry at someone with no bad intentions.

"Of course!" Wayne laughed. "I guess we'll get to know each other in class."

"Why are you interested in me?" Khan couldn't help but ask. "Who sent you?"

"I can't reveal that," Wayne openly stated. "They only told me to get close to you, which I would have done anyway."

"Why?" Khan questioned.

"Because we are like brothers from different families," Wayne laughed again. "However, you got to grow in the light while I was raised in darkness."

Khan instinctively fell silent as his eyes darted among the crowd. That statement didn't have any specific meaning, especially to random people, but Khan understood something that couldn't be discussed in the open.

'Fame first,' Khan cursed in his mind before resuming his walk outside the hangar. A car was already waiting for him, and his pensive state almost made him miss its set-off. His interest in Wayne had grown greatly during that interaction, but other priorities called for his attention.

The car didn't head for the second district. Getting the pilot license was a big deal that required celebrations and interviews, but Khan had to complete another task first, and the embassy was the only place with enough privacy.

The long ride toward the embassy allowed Khan to replace those messy thoughts with resolve. By the time he reached a private training hall inside the immense triangular structure, only one goal had survived in his mind.

'I can't postpone this any further,' Khan thought while sealing himself inside the training hall and approaching the huge cage at its center. 'I must be at my best before diving into Professor Parver's tasks.'

Tapping on the cage made one of its surfaces open. Freezing air blew on Khan's face while that metal layer rose, and an awful smell followed. Still, he wore a confident smile when he checked its insides. The powerful Radola was a gory mess, but the long wait in that container didn't worsen its state.

#### Chapter 486 Pride

Since Nitis, the [Blood Shield] had been Khan's most powerful defensive spell. It had saved his life many times, even when against opponents he wouldn't normally be able to face.

Still, the alien spell had harsh requirements and drawbacks. It was heavy on the body, especially as its power increased, and the materials necessary to improve it grew rarer at each new checkpoint.

For once, Khan felt able to ignore those issues. His fame and wealth would grant him the necessary materials even without the powerful Radola. Also, the transformation and his new level were bound to make him suitable for the [Blood Shield]'s next checkpoint, allowing him to put the problem aside.

However, a glaring issue remained, and the Radola's level was to blame for that. Khan's control had never stopped improving, but the Tainted animal remained a material in the realm of fourth-level warriors. He might need multiple attempts to create what he needed. He might even fail.

The cage had preserved the Radola's corpse by freezing it and creating an isolated environment, making it currently unsuitable as a material. Khan needed to wait for the ice to leave, and the machine could help him with that.

Khan tapped on the floor to open the training hall's menus. The structure was already connected to the cage, so he could tinker with the area's temperature to accelerate the defrosting process.

In the meantime, Khan started another procedure that made him approach a wall. The training hall requested his genetic signature and scanned his eyes and nape before generating a few results.

'Seventy-one percent,' Khan read on the wall. 'I knew it.'

Almost three months had passed since the promotion, but Khan's attunement with mana had barely moved. He had taken it slowly only in the first period before going all-out with his training again, but that didn't change the outcome.

Khan couldn't claim to be surprised. Increasing the attunement with mana became harder and slower at the higher levels, and he also was a special case.

Meditating could lead to good results, but even humans found it too slow. Khan was beyond them due to the transformation, so it made sense for his growth to fall behind his peers.

It didn't take a genius to reach similar conclusions. A superior machine required more fuel, and bodies were no different. Khan had also long since accepted that the human methods didn't work too well for him. He needed something stronger to compensate for his inability to use infusions, and a suitable technique already existed in his arsenal.

'I need the [Blood Vortex],' Khan concluded in his mind, and his thoughts immediately flowed toward possible solutions.

The pilot license gave Khan the opportunity to fly into environments with natural mana. Yet, reaching other planets in the Harbor's system took time, which he didn't have.

The moon would have been perfect for Khan's needs, but its poor atmosphere made it almost devoid of mana. He would have already considered using a respirator to fix the air issue otherwise.

The garden in the Harbor's hidden floor popped into Khan's mind, but that couldn't do either. Synthetic and natural mana lived together there, which would affect the [Blood Vortex]'s performance. Special areas there might be able to meet his needs, but only a deeper relationship with Professor Parver would reveal them.

'Maybe I can dedicate a few hours during the missions,' Khan guessed. 'It might be doable once I know what I'm dealing with.'

Khan let his mind wander a little longer before reapproaching the cage. A few touches confirmed that the defrosting process was over, so he used another menu to make the training hall provide multiple tools.

The Radola's body was relatively weak even if it belonged to the warriors' family, so Khan had no problem cutting it with the saws and knives provided by the hall. The issues started when he had to squeeze out the clotted blood from the previously-frozen flesh, but his mana and the other menus eventually solved that.

The procedure took time, and Khan's careful approach slowed it down even more. The Radola was big enough to grant multiple attempts, but he wanted to avoid mistakes anyway, which wasn't easy with that powerful flesh getting in the way of his control.

Nevertheless, Khan showed exceptional patience and slowly worked his way toward a decent product. Touching, smelling, and licking it told him that the procedure had failed, but getting so close on his first try gave him hope.

Khan put aside the failed product and prepared himself to restart the process, but a call reached his phone. Reading Jenny's name on the hall's menus hinted at something urgent, so he answered while most of his attention remained on the Radola.

"Captain, I'm afraid I can't delay this any further," Jenny went straight to the point while her voice resounded from the floor.

"What is it now?" Khan cursed.

"It's Mister Solodrey, sir," Jenny explained. "He has tried to contact you since you got your license."

"I understand," Khan sighed, massaging his temples to prepare his mind for the incoming conversation. "Send him through."

Jenny didn't add anything. She closed the call to deal with the matter, and Khan approached a wall in the meantime. He wanted to take a good look at Monica's father, so he prepared the hall for a video call.

It didn't take long before a new call arrived, and Khan immediately answered it. Still, his dirty hand appeared in his view at that point, and his messy appearance also became evident once the hall's cameras activated. The alien procedure had covered Khan in blood, even tainting his face, but it was too late to do anything about it.

A rectangular face soon appeared on the hall's wall. A stern expression featuring brown skin, dark, bottomless eyes, and short black hair filled the screen, releasing a pressure that Khan felt able to experience.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Mister Solodrey," Khan announced, disregarding the pressure to focus on being polite. After all, that was Monica's father. If possible, he wanted to get on his good side.

"I'm afraid I don't have time for pleasantries," Mister Solodrey stated in his deep voice. "You have already wasted my afternoon, Captain, so I'll keep this short."

"As you wish, sir," Khan nodded, partially glad that Mister Solodrey wasn't even looking at his appearance. His eyes wandered left and right without focusing on the call even once.

"Your relationship with my daughter lost me money," Mister Solodrey explained. "I've done the math, and the amount is in the billions of Credits."

Khan couldn't even imagine such large sums, but Mister Solodrey's detachment was impossible to miss. The desire to keep things polite vanished at that realization, and a scolding tone joined Khan's reply. "So, it's about money."

"I don't expect you to understand," Mister Solodrey casually responded, "But I will get that money back, one way or another."

"Sir, you could just give Monica to me," Khan suggested. "I'll take care of her and cut your losses until I'm able to pay you back."

"You misunderstand, Captain," Mister Solodrey exclaimed. "That's the value my daughter lost when you took her virginity. As a whole, she is still worth a lot more."

Anger surged inside Khan. Mister Solodrey was treating Monica as nothing more than a valuable item, but he didn't get a chance to vent since the call ended. Mister Solodrey had left right after saying his piece.

"Good talk," Khan commented before punching the wall. He didn't hold back, so the skin above his knuckles broke, leaving a red mark on the metal surface.

The pain caused by the injury brought some clarity. Sadly enough, Khan knew that Mister Solodrey's math was correct. He had learnt enough about the descendants to understand where that sum came from.

Mister Solodrey wasn't speaking about mere Credits. As a political currency, Monica could earn her family many assets and allies, ultimately bringing her value close to what Mister Solodrey had calculated.

Monica wasn't the only one in that situation. Everyone inside the Global Army had a value connected to their position and achievements. For example, Khan's financial network was worth far more than the actual Credits in his profile.

According to that reasoning, Monica forsook some opportunities when Khan took her first time. That quality wasn't too crucial with poorer families, but Mister Solodrey could have used it to increase her value, which explained the financial loss.

Khan hated himself for even understanding those topics, but that was the political game, and he had to play it. Still, knowledge alone wouldn't get him anywhere, and sheer strength also had its limits.

'I need all the help I can get,' Khan acknowledged. Merely thinking about that option made him angry, but he had far higher priorities. His pride couldn't exist when Monica was at stake.

Khan sent a simple message before returning to his main task. Failing to improve the [Blood Shield] wasn't an option anymore, so he completely immersed himself in the procedure. His mana seemed able to feel his mental state, and his control grew firmer as a consequence.

The second product failed to meet Khan's requirements, and the same went for the third. Yet, on the fourth, Khan obtained something that could work, and another successful round of tests made that gory item end up in his mouth.

Khan prepared himself for the usual harsh reaction that improving the [Blood Shield] caused, but something different happened at that time. His chest felt heavy and tried to make him unable to breathe, but that weight moved, splitting in multiple directions to reach every corner of his body.

A grunt escaped Khan's mouth when the blood vessels in his throat clotted and forced him to lift his head. The instinctive desire to puke eventually made him end on all four, but he closed his teary eyes to keep the contents of his stomach in check.

Clotted blood vessels appeared in Khan's view as soon as he reopened his eyes. The alien technique was moving through his hands, eventually reaching his fingertips before slowly dispersing its weight.

A similar process unfolded everywhere in Khan's body, leaving him gasping for air once the weight dispersed. Saliva fell from his open mouth while the soreness of his skin filled his mind. He felt as if a firm object had crawled through his flesh, but that uncomfortable sensation slowly waned.

Khan summoned the [Blood Shield] as soon as he managed to sit. The blood vessels in his right palm clotted as usual, creating the defensive ability he knew far too well. Everything was working as intended, which put the blame for the unexpected reaction on something else.

'Is it because of the transformation?' Khan wondered, unbuttoning his uniform to check his chest. Everything was fine there, and the same went for the rest of his body.

Khan performed a few more tests before disregarding the matter. It made sense for his body to react differently to the [Blood Shield]. It basically confirmed how much he had changed after absorbing the Nak's hand.

The old Khan would let those realizations afflict him a bit longer, but he immediately moved to other tasks now. Dinnertime had already passed, and he needed to regroup with his friends to establish a plan of action. The lessons would resume the next day, so they needed to be on the same page.

Khan left orders to store the remains of the Radola before departing from the embassy. His dirty appearance shocked a few soldiers along the way, but no one hindered his return inside the cab. A few mustered praises for his license, but that was it.

Under normal circumstances, Khan's flat would have the most cheerful symphony, but the consequences of Monica's interview were nowhere near waning. Even at that late hour, Khan found Monica, George, and Anita busy with three different calls that almost made them miss his return.

The event made the three interrupt the calls, but seeing Khan's appearance generated different reactions. George whistled and prepared another glass, Anita gasped, and Monica approached him without showing any hesitation.

"Congratulations," Monica whispered once the customary kiss ended. "I knew you would pass."

"That's not everything," Khan snickered once the two separated. "Your father called."

"What?!" Monica, Anita, and George exclaimed at the same time.

"I think it went well," Khan laughed. "I kind of proposed, but he refused."

"You did what?!" Monica shouted before shyness overtook her and made her lower her face. "We agreed to wait a few years for that."

Anita and George's mouths hung open. They didn't know what surprised them the most. The fact that the couple had already discussed that topic was shocking, but Monica's apparent compliance surpassed that.

"I just wanted to tease him," Khan reached for Monica's cheek but hesitated when he noticed all the blood on his fingers.

Monica understood what was happening and grabbed Khan's wrist to bring his dirty hand to her cheek. She even snuggled on his palm, uncaring of how dirty she got, and the gesture made them fall prey to their respective eyes.

The situation didn't allow the couple to do as they wished, and George's cough eventually forced them to separate. The notification that reached the flat's walls also changed the topic, pushing Khan to reassure his friends.

"It's fine," Khan stated. "I called him."

"Are you sure?" George questioned without adding anything specific.

"We need more brains," Khan sighed. "Also, I can't only rely on the Headmistress, can I?"

Anita and Monica wanted to ask more questions, but the opening of the elevator forced everyone to turn. Tension spread when Lucian stepped forward, and his smile carried confidence even in front of that evident distrust.

"I finally made it to the inner circle," Lucian announced while inspecting Khan's group. "I should probably bring a date next time."

#### Chapter 487 Errand Boy

"The Harbor is an extremely complex environment," Lucian announced, using the holograms coming out of his phone to make his explanation clearer. "Even the families don't know how many activities choose it as their home."

Lucian leaned forward, leaving his armchair to reach for the phone on the table among the group. His commands made tens of routes light up on the holographic representation of the Harbor's system, adding enough info to trigger the worst headaches.

"We can assume the issue involves anything requiring a pilot," Lucian continued. "Sadly, the Harbor's nature and position attract all sorts of similar activities, and these are only those I'm aware of. There is a good chance our friends' business doesn't appear here."

George, Anita, Khan, and Monica inspected the holograms with as much concentration as they could muster, but no revelation dawned upon them. Things were as Lucian had described them. They knew too little about Wayne or Mister Chares to spot a motive in that messy scene.

Khan was the first to divert his gaze from the holograms to inspect his companions. George and Anita were on the opposite couch and looked as lost as he was. The same went for Monica, who sat closely at his side, uncaring of his unbuttoned uniform.

Lucian looked like the only one happy to be in that situation, and Khan didn't miss that. The latter had partially updated him about the recent issues, obviously omitting the Hive and other private matters to keep his knowledge in check. Lucian suspected as much but didn't show any displeasure or hesitation.

"Of course," Lucian stated, "This business might be secret enough to be among these. There is nothing like hiding in plain sight to catch your opponents by surprise."

Monica let her eyes linger on the holograms for a few more seconds before looking at Khan. Her expression said everything he needed to know. She couldn't help him, and her face gained an apologetic vibe because of that.

Khan showed a reassuring smile, reaching for Monica's cheek to clean a faint trace of blood left during the previous interaction. He had already washed, which explained his open uniform, and Monica didn't hold back from holding the hand on her face.

The scene was nothing surprising for Khan's friends, but Lucian didn't hide his amazement. He had teased Khan about Monica often, but that was his first time seeing them dropping their façade, and the event shocked him a bit.

Lucian's reaction didn't go unnoticed, and George immediately voiced his suspicion. "Why do you know so much already?"

"I obviously did my research days before Captain Khan's message," Lucian declared. "I don't enjoy remaining in the dark during such exciting times."

George didn't like that answer, and Lucian even retained a challenging smile. It was evident that more was happening inside their minds, and Khan didn't even need to look at them to understand their reasons.

Lucian saw that invitation as an opportunity to exploit the unexpected situation. Being in the front rows after Monica's interview and a possible ploy that involved the entire Harbor was simply too appealing to him.

As for George, he was being protective of Khan. He realized that compromises were necessary, but the invitation had been too sudden. Khan didn't even give him the time to prepare for Lucian's arrival.

"We still can't confirm a connection between Wayne and Mister Chares," Khan exclaimed to change the topic. "This might have nothing to do with Tyler and pilots in general."

Khan made himself comfortable on the couch, and Monica didn't miss the chance to claim a spot under his arm. Lucian inspected everything thoroughly, and his eyes grew wider at each explicit sign of affection.

"Stop staring," George warned. "It's not like you didn't know about them."

"You must forgive me," Lucian cleared his throat. "After knowing Miss Solodrey for so long, I find adjusting to her real character quite hard."

Monica glared at Lucian. She shared George's protective and untrustworthy stance, but Khan made her turn toward him by covering her eyes and leaving a kiss on the top of her head.

An annoyed groan left Monica's mouth, but Khan's following words covered it. "Lucian, I invited you because I need your brain, but we are playing by my rules. So, drop the Captain and Miss Solodrey's stuff."

"As you wish, Khan," Lucian responded while his amazement remained evident. "Still, I wasn't lying. This is truly shocking for me."

Khan let Monica's eyes go, and she immediately pointed them at Lucian. Yet, the evident shock on his face made her slightly shy. That was her first taste of how the outside world would react to her openly being Khan's girlfriend, and the faint happiness she felt generated a cuddly mood.

"Take your time," Khan whispered to Monica's ear when he realized what was happening. "It's better if you get used to it before facing Zoe again."

Monica's cheeks went on fire when she recalled her last words to Zoe, and Khan inevitably became the target of her complaints. "I said that because-! It's your fault!"

"I didn't expect you to lay everything out so openly," Khan laughed.

"Shut it, you scoundrel!" Monica shouted, almost climbing on Khan's lap to start a scuffle.

The bickering didn't stop there, and Lucian's mouth hung open as surprising words and scenes reached him. He had always suspected that Monica's elegance was a façade, but her current behavior was the exact opposite of that.

"Are they always like this?" Lucian couldn't help but ask while turning toward George and Anita.

"They'll calm down in a minute or two," Anita explained, trying her best to avoid taking sides.

"Unless they go on all night," George snickered and brought his drink to his mouth to hide from Anita's glare.

Khan and Monica held back due to the nature of the situation but still ended up in a relatively compromising position. Monica sat on Khan's lap with her arms crossed and his uniform's edges in her hands. She pretended to use his clothes as a blanket while Khan hugged her and kept his chin on her shoulder.

"Well," Lucian coughed, doing his best to bring back the topic to Khan's last statement. "It's hard to ignore a possible connection. Mister Chares proved himself able to slip past the Headmistress' control, showing us that he has the means to plant someone like Wayne."

"But that creates more problems," Khan pointed out. "Even if the birth control incident happened by mistake, sending someone after me would still be overkill. It can't be cheaper than finding a new pilot."

"That depends on the nature of the business," Lucian declared. "If, for example, Mister Chares had something to do with the kidnapping attempt, it would make sense for him to want trustworthy assets."

"Nippe 2's events happened weeks ago," Monica uttered, "And the Harbor already scoured the planet. I can understand the Headmistress' security having holes, but not when the nobles are involved."

"Though, it would make sense," Lucian pressed on. "An organization able to plan a kidnapping attempt on a noble would have the means to ignore the Harbor's security."

Khan kept his gaze on the holograms, but his thoughts ran wild. He didn't say anything about the Hive to Lucian, so that hypothesis could be his way of probing his secrets. Yet, Khan also had to admit that the connection would make sense.

"Let's say you are right," Khan announced. "What are they trying to achieve by targeting me? It can't be just out of spite."

"Realistically speaking," Lucian responded, "You still can't know what they are trying to achieve, especially if what happened with Wayne was an incident. The real offer might arrive only after their first clear move."

Khan fell silent. Lucian was right, but Khan had put Wayne's mana through his senses. The latter didn't seem to have any idea about his role in that ploy.

"Destabilizing Khan's fame might make his evaluations unreliable," Monica suggested. "With the right moves, they could turn Tyler into the hero who dared to call him out."

"I thought about that," Lucian voiced, "But that would take months to accomplish. Khan said that Mister Chares can't wait years, so a similar ploy might also be too much."

"I'd exclude it altogether," George stated. "That might have been their original plan, but Monica made it unfeasible with her interview."

The topic was still embarrassing for Monica, but she had to agree with George. Her romantic involvement with Khan made his fame airtight.

Silence fell into the flat, and Anita experienced some shame at her lack of opinions. She couldn't ignore her position like George, Monica, and Khan, and her intentions had no hidden purpose like

Lucian's. She wanted to help her friends, but that troublesome environment threatened to make her head explode.

"I might provide better support if I knew everything," Lucian eventually broke the silence.

"I'd tell you more if you were trustworthy," Khan responded without bothering to look at Lucian.

"We are on the same side here," Lucian chuckled.

"Your side?" Khan wondered.

"Our," Lucian corrected.

"You know," Khan sighed, looking past Monica's curls to eye Lucian, "It would be far easier to trust you if you didn't sound so manipulative."

"You want my brain," Lucian uttered, "You get my manipulative side."

"So," Khan didn't let that statement scare him, "What does your brain suggest?"

"Go off the grid," Lucian suggested. "Wayne can't do anything to you if you aren't there."

"I still have to attend classes," Khan pointed out. "Differently from you all, notes aren't enough for me, and her mother will never acknowledge me if I get bad grades."

"You need good grades to score a suitable job," Monica corrected, tilting her head to face Khan.

"You are better than any job," Khan teased.

"I'm already yours," Monica whispered before approaching Khan's ear, "And I have yet to give my favorite pilot his gift."

Lucian couldn't disperse his surprise in a single night but adapted quickly to that intimacy, so he spoke even if the couple wasn't looking at him. "In that case, become unapproachable. I can help during the classes, but the rest is up to you."

Khan didn't answer. He had similar plans, and hearing Lucian agree with them confirmed their alliance. Khan didn't know how long it would last, but keeping that path open sounded necessary in the current situation.

Monica agreed with Khan on that alliance. Yet, differently from him, she could use threats that went beyond simple violence.

"Lucian, I want us to understand each other," Monica called, leaving Khan's ear to show one of her fake elegant smiles to Lucian. "I appreciate your help, no matter how honest it is. However, if I ever sense ill intentions, I'll use the entirety of my influence to take you down."

Lucian remained calm, and his smile didn't flicker, but some fear appeared. He felt able to smell the crazy hidden behind Monica's elegant expression, and Khan didn't need introductions. The couple represented the best and worst of two worlds, and a single misstep could turn Lucian into their enemy.

Still, excitement soon arrived. Lucian knew that Khan and Monica were his tickets to greatness. Being their consultant was the role his family had trained him for.

"She really will," Khan added, "And her family already hates me as it is, so try to play nice. I'd like my crazy girlfriend to give interviews only about things I can tease her about."

A message reached Khan's phone while Monica turned to complain. She was ready to ignore the event but reading the Headmistress' name on the screen forced her to remain silent.

"Speaking about going off the grid," Khan announced once the message's contents became clear. "Do you know any available side business on Honides? I'm kind of in a hurry to make some money."

Monica began to play with her curls since she knew the purpose of Khan's last line, and George and Anita opened the network to study the topic. Only Lucian decided to question Khan. "Honides?"

"I'm flying there next weekend," Khan explained, showing his phone to let Lucian read the Headmistress' message. "I guess I've become the Harbor's official errand boy."

## Chapter 488 Storms

The brainstorming session ended without reaching any meaningful conclusion. The group only agreed on a joint approach and a few more details before splitting to face the tense night waiting for them.

Khan obviously had it worse than his friends. His companions were outsiders or trusted allies who could feign ignorance, and Monica had even received orders to lay low. She wouldn't attend classes, so Khan would have most eyes on himself.

It didn't help that Khan had plans of his own. Lucian had been right, but Khan couldn't ignore a chance to learn more about his family and secret organizations. Wayne probably knew something, so Khan couldn't avoid him altogether.

The morning arrived faster than Khan had hoped and leaving Monica's worried hug felt harder than ever. They had to spend a bit reassuring each other, but Khan eventually entered a cab heading for the embassy.

Due to the unique situation, Khan had received the Headmistress' authorization to reach the classrooms area through more remote paths. His presence would cause a scene that she couldn't fully control otherwise, but that didn't completely prevent the arrival of unwanted attention.

Khan entered the embassy through one of the ceilings and used private elevators to reach the classrooms area, but people still occupied those corridors. Besides, his azure hair was too eye-catching, so countless gazes fell on him as soon as he showed his face.

Luckily for Khan, most people in the corridors lacked the status to approach him. The embassy was also different from the Harbor's streets, so some decorum was mandatory. Yet, the situation changed once he arrived in front of his class.

The delay with Monica and the alternative path had made Khan slightly late, so Lucian, George, Anita, and everyone else had already gathered in front of the hall's entrance. No one had tried to take their seats either, and Khan didn't even need to look at the symphony to explain that behavior.

A series of "Captain" and "Captain Khan" resounded while Khan made his way toward the group. George, Anita, and Lucian approached him before their classmates, but that didn't stop the other students from gathering around him.

"Captain," Zoe managed to take the reins of that gathering, "Allow me to apologize for my past behavior. I've also been impolite last time. I let my surprise take the best of me."

Khan knew that those words weren't directed at him. His classmates had shown nothing but respect in the previous months, but Zoe's tone conveyed something different now. Khan could smell some fear, and Monica was to blame for that.

'As expected,' Khan sighed in his mind at that predictable outcome.

Zoe had always been quite explicit in her interest in Khan, and her comments from the previous week had made things hard for Monica. The possibility of ending on the Solodrey family's bad side scared her in more than one way, so she seized the initiative and apologized.

"It's not your fault," Khan reassured, wearing a genuine smile. "Actually, I almost want to thank you. My girlfriend can be too serious at times, and you gave me something to tease her about."

Khan was following a previously planned script, and his classmates' reactions matched his predictions. He had confirmed that Monica was his girlfriend while also showing vague insights into his relationship. The audience could only gasp at that gentle openness.

"Oh, is she now?" Zoe let her curiosity take over. "I can't imagine Monica Solodrey getting teased."

"You are missing out," Khan laughed, "But I'll keep that part of our life private."

The gossip-hungry crowd couldn't help but yearn for more, especially when it came to the women in the group. They wanted to learn everything about that seemingly forbidden romance, and the frail peace built by Zoe's initiative crumbled under the torrent of questions.

"Is everything she said in the interview true?" A woman asked.

"Did she really make romantic advances?" A second woman questioned.

"Did she coerce you into this relationship?" A third woman followed. "Captain, you can tell us."

"She couldn't have been the one to make the first move, could she?" A man wondered.

"Do you think the Captain would have had a chance otherwise?" The first woman scoffed.

"To put Miss Solodrey in a similar situation," A second man commented. "Captain Khan must have a special talent."

"I don't think the Captain had much choice," A fourth woman guessed. "Monica is beautiful, and her family must have educated her in that field."

"Don't be lewd," The second woman scolded.

"I wasn't!" The fourth woman stated.

Khan couldn't do much against that barrage. He retained his smile, waiting for the general enthusiasm to wane while doing his best to ignore the questions that made him angry. No one dared to insult Monica, but the implications that the relationship could have political motives remained annoying.

"Please, calm down," Khan laughed again once some peace tried to arrive. "I know you are curious, but I don't have the liberty to speak freely. I'm sure you understand."

Khan kept his words vague on purpose to use the Solodrey family's silence to his advantage. The descendants were no strangers to those politics, so they thought that Monica's parents wanted things to remain private until they were ready to make an official announcement.

A series of nods unfolded in Khan's view, but he made sure to speak again to add a personal touch. "Besides, I'm the jealous type. I want to be the only one to know Monica's cutest sides."

A wave of surprise swept the audience before a few laughs unfolded. Smiles also broadened, and more nods followed. Everyone seemed happy with those terms. Actually, many women in the group appeared quite charmed by Khan's upfront and slightly protective approach.

'Stop smiling at me like that,' Khan cursed in his mind. 'Monica will really kill you otherwise.'

Khan obviously kept those words to himself. Monica's interview had allowed him to be more open, but his classmates remained influential figures. He still had to show some politeness and suppress his rudest sides.

"Alright, let's not forget why we are here," Lucian announced to change the topic. "Captain, shall we?"

"When did Lucian make a move?" Zoe complained before eyeing George and Anita. "Why didn't you invite me?"

"Zoe, you are bad with secrets," Anita joked.

"And Miss Solodrey also is the jealous type," George muttered.

"George?" Zoe called, and her eyes lit up in front of that potential chance to learn more about Khan's relationship. "Why don't we spend more time together? Of course, only if Anita doesn't mind."

"He can spend time with whoever he wants," Anita stated in a plain tone, but everyone could see her true intentions.

"Hey, I didn't say anything," George complained, but Anita pretended not to hear him and hurried inside the hall.

The gesture generated more laughs and made the group head toward the hall. Khan was no exception, but one more matter required his attention before he could focus on the lessons.

"Sit with us," Khan exclaimed as soon as he reached Wayne. "It should give us a chance to get to know each other."

The interaction didn't go unnoticed, and Khan wasn't trying to hide it anyway. Many grew interested in Wayne's answer, while Lucian mostly showed surprise since Khan's offer wasn't part of the agreed plan.

"Of course!" Wayne promptly agreed. "I'm a bit behind, so I hope you'll show me around."

Khan didn't add anything, and everything followed the agreed plan afterward. Wayne's presence was the only exception, but he didn't create problems. Khan saw nothing more than an excited student after sitting next to him.

The lesson unfolded smoothly. Khan could sense some awkwardness in the Professor, but the latter didn't mention anything about his relationship. As for Wayne, he behaved like a perfect student,

paying utmost attention to the subject and even whispering questions to Khan when he didn't understand something.

A few strange but minor events happened. The screen under Wayne flickered twice for no apparent reason and resumed working properly almost immediately. That alone didn't mean much, but Khan made sure to add it to his mental map of clues.

Except for Wayne's invitation, Khan stuck to the agreed plan and spent as little as possible in the open. He even rode cabs in the breaks between lessons to avoid political interactions before ultimately returning to his flat.

That routine repeated itself for the entirety of the week. Khan focused on gathering information and studying while using the Solodrey family's silence as a shield for his privacy. Monica also never left his flat, so he completed all the lessons without facing problems.

Still, the time to attend to the Headmistress' task arrived at that point. Khan jumped into a cab as soon as his last weekly lesson ended, and a long trip brought him to a hangar. He handled a sweet call with Monica in the meantime, but his stance showed pure seriousness once he left the vehicle.

"Good evening, Captain Khan!" A series of soldiers performed military salutes as soon as Khan appeared in front of them, and he merely nodded to save time. The Headmistress had kept his new job a secret, so he could advance without dealing with the usual crowd.

"This way, sir," One of the soldiers called while leading Khan deeper into the hangar.

The man stopped after reaching a relatively small ship with a rectangular shape and two big engines. That was a fast vehicle meant for interplanetary travels, and its full tank created a bright spot in Khan's vision.

"It is my understanding that the Headmistress already briefed you about your ride," The soldier declared.

"That's right," Khan confirmed. "Is it ready to fly?"

"Yes, sir," The soldier stated. "We only failed to ask you whether you'd like a different paint. If this isn't to your liking, we can change it in under an hour."

The ship didn't match Khan's tastes. Its rectangular shape hinted at a spacious trunk, making it a small version of a cargo vehicle. He wanted something purely meant for speed, so he couldn't feel any ownership toward that booked ride.

However, the ship's dark-grey surfaces ended up putting Khan in a pensive state anyway. That wasn't his vehicle, but he had a preference when it came to colors. He couldn't imagine any different shade when it came to flying.

"Don't worry about today," Khan uttered. "Just make sure it's white for my next flight."

"White, sir?" The soldier questioned.

"Yes, white," Khan responded without moving his eyes from the ship. "As white as snow."

"It will be done, sir," The soldier uttered, performing another military salute.

Khan already had his directives, so he pressed his hand on the tall canopy and took out his license to gain access to the ship. A rectangular door opened, and a metal staircase stretched to the floor. Khan only had to jump on it to enter the vehicle.

The solitude of the ship felt almost reassuring, but Khan didn't let it delay his set-off. Tapping on the control desk and answering a few questions to the autopilot's robotic voice made the engines activate and start the automatic departure.

The flight inside the Harbor's channels was slow, and Khan had no power over it. Yet, his hands remained on the steering wheel, ready for the universe to unfold in his eyes.

"Set route for Honides," Khan ordered, and holograms appeared at his side to keep track of his flight.

The last of the Harbor's channels eventually reached its end, and Khan counted the seconds before the autopilot would finally take the backseat. His grip on the steering wheel tightened during that seemingly endless wait, but a beeping noise eventually arrived, putting a smile on his face.

'Finally!' Khan almost shouted in his mind before pushing the steering wheel forward. The ship immediately accelerated, and he made an upward turn to depart from the moon.

Nippe 2 soon appeared in the corner of the transparent canopy, but Khan ignored it to accelerate even more. He glanced at the holograms to confirm his route before the universe recaptured his attention. The blackness and the distant stars seemingly waiting for him captivated the entirety of his senses.

"I want to reach Honides before midday," Khan shouted as some pressure fell on his body due to the high speed.

"Calculating," The ship's robotic voice announced. "Captain Khan, your level is unsuitable for such speeds."

"Yeah, yeah," Khan scoffed. "Calculate it anyway."

"Sir, required speed and path calculated," The ship quickly exclaimed, adding a series of numbers to the holograms.

Khan glanced at the holograms before accelerating even more. The pressure became uncomfortable and was bound to increase, but that didn't make him slow down in the slightest.

"Sir, your heartbeat-," The ship didn't have the chance to finish its line since Khan deactivated those vocal inputs. He limited them to necessary information before pushing the vehicle a bit more.

The pressure began to affect Khan's ability to breathe. He felt heavy and struggled to move properly, but that was still bearable. He would be able to reach Honides the next morning if he kept that up, and saving time was one of his priorities.

Of course, that was no way to fly. The body had limits, even with mana. Khan was risking a series of internal injuries, especially in his brain. He was going past what average third-level warriors could endure, but those calculations only applied to humans. Since he couldn't escape his Nak's traits, he would use them to his advantage.

As the ship approached the intended speed, Khan let his gaze wander for a few seconds. The blackness of the universe made him feel incredibly small but not lost. Even his negative sides had to

acknowledge that the flight was a significant achievement. He only wished to have more time to appreciate the event.

"Open Monica's notes," Khan coughed to make his voice loud enough for the ship. He had already connected his phone to the control desk, so new holograms appeared after his directives.

A series of pages about that week's lessons opened before Khan. The weekends usually hosted his longest studying sessions, and he planned to stick to that. Monica had even prepared special notes for him to streamline the process.

Studying in those conditions was far from ideal, but Khan couldn't move anyway. He alternated reading and meditation while the holograms kept him updated on the ship's position and state.

Space had no friction force, so the speed remained stable even after Khan turned off the engines. The tank also showed enough fuel to perform multiple trips between the Harbor and Honides, especially in that period when the two were so close. Khan only had to worry about eventual asteroids, but the ship would warn him in that case.

The night went by faster than Khan had expected, and half of the morning suffered from a similar fate. He studied during most of the trip, but the appearance of a grey planet on the windows eventually distracted him, forcing him to begin landing procedures.

Honides was famous for its storms, and the initial landing attempt confirmed how violent they could be. Khan brought the ship inside the planet's atmosphere, and problems immediately arrived.

"Sir, the winds below are full of metal shards," The ship warned. "The engines might not survive them."

'Fuck,' Khan cursed, but a call reached the control desk and diverted his thoughts from the issue.

"Captain Khan, am I right?" A male voice came out of the speaker when Khan answered.

"In the flesh," Khan replied. "Who is this?"

"I'm Richard Murrow from the extraction plant right below you," Richard explained. "Headmistress Holwen warned us about your arrival, but Honides is acting out today. You might need to wait a few days to land."

"I don't have a few days," Khan stated.

"I can't control the weather, sir," Richard responded. "I'm sorry, but your ship can't land in these conditions."

Khan slammed his fist on the control desk to close the call but giving up never crossed his mind. He used the holograms to study Honides' weather a bit before shouting a few orders and isolating himself in the cargo area.

"Open the back doors," Khan ordered once everything was in place. The ship tried to give a warning, but he overruled it. The vehicle's back opened, and storms sucked him into Honides' atmosphere.

## Chapter 489 Drills

The ship's scanners had told Khan how violent Honides' weather was. The winds at that altitude could almost lift cars, and the metals they carried made them dangerous for the engines.

That quality only involved specific gales. Honides wasn't as plain as Nippe 2. It had many elements and features, especially in its atmosphere.

According to the scanners, the ship only had to descend a bit more to get past those metallic winds. A hundred meters would have been enough to bring it into areas it could cross. However, going against that initial layer would create a threat that Khan couldn't afford.

Ordinary soldiers would have to wait for the surface to send special ships or for the weather to calm down. Even Khan would have opted for those approaches under normal circumstances. Waiting wasn't a big issue, all things considered, but that would go against his main goal.

The entire Global Army knew that Khan was more than ordinary, but he had to step it up. To use the Headmistress' words, he had to become larger than life, which required inhumane feats.

Khan kept his eyes closed while the winds absorbed him in their violence. He could barely move, and the high speed threatened to turn his insides into a bloody pulp. Metal shards also surrounded him, but the symphony shone in his mind.

The winds were a mess that only advanced technology could predict, but Khan was an exception. The tremors, lights, and general atmosphere created a scene that Khan felt able to navigate. His mana even cheered at that chaos, but he spoke to himself before that energy could.

'Flow,' Khan thought, almost ordering his whole being to become one with the symphony and pursue his personal goals.

Khan's eardrums threatened to explode, and a couple of his uniform's buttons flew away, but he saw only the bigger picture. His mana made sure of that, and its intensity almost suppressed the chaos outside.

Survival instincts and resolve fused to give birth to a powerful reaction. Khan was trapped but felt stronger than ever. Everything grew clearer, and confidence flowed through his body. Somehow, he knew what to do and how to accomplish it.

Getting out of the rivers of metal shards was the priority, but harsh movements would turn that rubble into sharp knives. Khan had to go along with it until an opportunity showed itself.

Of course, that plan didn't stop Khan from affecting his trajectory. He had to reach cold, descending winds, which his senses had already highlighted. Moreover, there was more than one gale around him, so he used slow and faint ankle movements to dive into those that suited him.

Diving wasn't the exact word either. Khan wasn't pushing himself into specific gales. He was only tilting and slightly moving his figure so that those winds would absorb him.

The process was slow, and the storm never failed to mess up Khan's balance. He rolled wildly, lost his foothold multiple times, and even held his breath during the most violent phases, but his plan always moved forward.

After what felt like an eternity, Khan arrived at the bottom of the metallic layer. He was still one with it, flowing across Honides' atmosphere according to its momentum, but an escape route existed below him.

Khan didn't hesitate. He leaned backward and used the gale to apply a spinning motion to his body. The metal shards threatened to stab him at that point, but he kicked the air and unleashed his mana before any of them could cross his uniform.

A crackling growl resounded in Khan's closed mouth as his mana expanded in every direction, protecting him from the debris. Meanwhile, his body dived through a few gales, bringing him into equally violent winds that didn't carry any danger.

Khan fell prey to the storm again, but a chunk of his tension disappeared. He had crossed the main danger. The surface was quite distant, and a few threats still existed, but the hard part was over.

The wind's violence prevented Khan from diving straight toward the surface. He still had to alternate between flowing and altering his course, but the lack of metal shards allowed him to perform sharper movements.

The descent proceeded smoothly for a few minutes, but small yellow dots appeared in that otherwise brown symphony. A few flew in Khan's direction, threatening to converge on him, but he had expected a similar event.

Honides' storms never ceased. They only calmed down. A similarly chaotic environment would usually make the planet uninhabitable, but life had triumphed with the help of mana.

One yellow dot grew close enough to pass right next to Khan, but the winds protected him. He only heard a faint screech while a gale carried that threat away.

Instead, a second yellow dot managed to jump on the right gale and head directly toward Khan, but fingers closed around it before the impact. Khan trapped the threat in his firm grip, and clearer screeches reached his ears during the squirming on his palm.

'So, this is a Viliet,' Khan thought as his senses and studies about Honides gave him a complete picture of the Tainted animal in his grip.

Honides' harsh environment had pushed its fauna toward smaller shapes that could avoid fighting the storms, and the Viliet were a perfect example of that. They were small and almost flat fish-like animals with flexible insides that allowed them to survive the winds. Only their teeth were sharp and firm, and they used them to change their course.

That small shape obviously had weaknesses. The Viliet had evolved to survive and eat the winds, so nothing in their bodies made them capable of fighting off Khan. The captured specimen was as strong as a first-level warrior, but he only had to tighten his grasp to pop it like a balloon.

The blood that splashed on Khan's hand and face instantly dried up due to the storm, and he even let go of the corpse while continuing his descent. More yellow dots filled the symphony, and a few threatened to reach him, but he barely minded them. He had left his knife in the Harbor, but his bare hands were enough for those Tainted animals.

The relatively easy descent allowed Khan's thoughts to reappear. He didn't need to focus so heavily on the symphony or his mana anymore, so his mind wandered a bit.

Khan was no idiot. He knew that his gesture had been beyond reckless, but the strength that flowed through his body almost justified his actions. That unusual confidence made him feel whole as if he had unlocked something he didn't previously own.

It took some thinking and introspection to find answers. Khan had to acknowledge that the Harbor had never given him a chance to be completely unleashed. Even Nippe 2's events had gone against his priorities since he had to leave his friends to save the Princess.

Instead, the current mission allowed Khan's sides to gather under the same banner. He wasn't only traveling and facing dangers out of curiosity and desire to fight. He was also doing his best for his relationship, creating a powerful mixture between his innate inclinations and feelings.

Using all his abilities and power for the benefit of love was Khan's best expression of himself. His mana cheered, a sense of fulfillment invaded his feelings, and pure confidence filled him to bring his strengths to their peak.

Some minutes and a few Viliet later, Khan crashed on all fours on a firm surface. His eyes remained closed, but moving his hands on that layer and listening to the symphony revealed his position. The storm was still blowing, but he had reached the ground.

Khan forced himself to stand up but remained partially crouched to let his senses run freely. He had long since lost track of his position, but the symphony carried traces of his destination, and the many winds marked by it told him where to go.

The winds hindered Khan's advance, but he staggered forward, keeping an arm in front of his eyes to give his eyelids some rest. Dust blew on him, and faint tremors ran through the rocky ground, but his steps never halted. Nothing could stop him when his mind, feelings, and body were one.

The tremors grew stronger during the advance. They never turned into a proper earthquake, but Khan felt them anyway. Moreover, a loud siren eventually made its way through the deafening winds, helping Khan pinpoint his exact destination.

'They must have found me,' Khan realized, and confirmation arrived a few minutes later. The symphony brought him before an immense structure reeking of synthetic mana, and following the siren made him find an open gate.

Clanging and whooshing noises resounded while the gate closed and the siren stopped, eventually bringing some blissful silence. The tall door blocked the winds, isolating Khan inside a metal room. He could finally wipe his face and open his eyes, but the lack of illumination kept him in the dark.

The darkness and silence didn't last long since a second gate opened, showing the structure's insides. Khan had to clap his hands and rub his eyes some more to get rid of all the dirt, but the vast environment eventually fell into his view.

A spacious hall unfolded from the second gate. Khan saw multiple consoles, staircases, and intermediate floors around a tall transparent container full of white crystals. Shocked soldiers had also gathered before that entrance, and Khan's cough made them snap out of their amazement to perform military salutes.

"Welcome to Honides, Captain Khan!" The soldiers shouted simultaneously.

Truth be told, the soldiers didn't recognize Khan. They simply couldn't with all the dust that had accumulated on him. Even his skin had turned grey due to that amount of dirt. Still, there was only one person currently on Honides capable of performing that landing.

Khan ruffled his hair and scratched his ears to remove more dust, but one voice among the group attracted his attention. He quickly pointed his eyes at a middle-aged man with messy brown hair, and his question made the soldier pale. "Richard?"

The man froze. He had only exchanged a few lines with Khan, but they had not been too polite. They had not been rude either, but Khan's current state, incredible landing, and the rough voice caused by the storms terrified him.

"Y-yes, sir!" Richard eventually managed to muster out of his mouth, even if his voice grew loud only toward the end.

"Prepare a ship for my departure," Khan promptly ordered, patting his uniform to remove even more dirt. "You only need to bring me back to my ride."

"B-but, sir," Richard stuttered again, "With Honides' current weather, we might lose track of your ship."

"Right," Khan exclaimed, sending a hand inside his underwear to take out his phone. "I'm still connected to my ship. You can use this to track it down."

Khan expected some hesitation when he handed his phone to the closest soldier. After all, he didn't store it in the cleanest place in the world. Yet, the man immediately seized it before hurrying toward one of the consoles.

The event made Khan realize how impactful his landing had been. The soldiers weren't only in awe of his prowess. They also felt some disbelief, which brought proper fear. Somehow, the group failed to see Khan as a fellow human.

"Alright," Khan announced, avoiding wasting even more time. "Richard, show me this wall."

"Yes, sir!" Richard finally spoke in a firm tone. "This way, please."

The soldiers moved away and retained their military salutes while Khan walked past them. No one dared to speak or falter in his presence. Honides had people capable of matching Khan's rank, but the landing had turned him into the most important figure in their eyes.

Richard hurried toward a passage on the other side of the vast hall but slowed down when he realized that Khan was showing some curiosity toward the huge container. Those white crystals shone on their own, and Khan seemed able to look past their bright surfaces.

'They really contain natural mana,' Khan could barely hide his surprise. The entire hall reeked of synthetic mana, but he found the natural version of that energy inside those crystals.

"Beautiful, aren't they?" Richard asked after approaching Khan to join him in his inspection of the crystals.

"Achite," Khan commented. "Mana in the form of minerals."

"I didn't know you had an interest in minerals, sir," Richard exclaimed, trying to make his words sound like praises.

"I don't," Khan admitted, "But seeing them in person gives a different effect."

"Achite," Richard nodded, "Or white gold. It's probably the most valuable resource of this system."

"I heard extracting the mana inside is quite expensive," Khan voiced.

"These crystals look pure," Richard explained, "But they gather many toxic substances during their formation. Simply breaking them wouldn't do."

Khan didn't need that explanation. Even his studies for the mission felt superfluous since his eyes were enough to uncover those secrets. He could see that the mana inside the crystals had gained an opaque color due to the long tampering it underwent.

"Let's go," Khan eventually ordered, diverting his gaze to head toward Richard's previous destination. The latter wanted to add something but felt forced to follow.

A series of corridors and a few halls unfolded from the container area, and Richard led Khan across them until a muffled grinding noise filled the structure. The two walked for a few more minutes, and the source of the tremors felt before eventually became clear.

One of the corridors featured transparent windows pointed at an immense machine with four huge legs that kept it above a vast hole. A giant drill even stretched from it, diving deeper and deeper into the black ground while taking out dirt and other materials.

"Does it ever stop?" Khan asked when he was about to cross the last window.

"Rarely, sir," Richard revealed, "And that's not the only one on Honides. This plant alone has three main drills, which stop digging only when they find something."

Khan fell silent. He had already studied most of that, and his mission didn't require great knowledge anyway. Yet, Richard felt awkward while their steps resounded on the metal floor, and doubts soon left his mouth.

"Sir, if I may," Richard cleared his throat. "While I'm ecstatic about this chance to meet you, there was no need for such urgency. The new drill is set to arrive in two months."

"Mister Nore wants his alloys," Khan declared. "He isn't willing to wait two months plus delivery."

"But, sir," Richard continued. "This job is beneath you."

"And yet," Khan casually replied, "I'm the only one who can accomplish it in such a short time."

Richard was timidly looking for Khan's eyes, but the latter never paid him attention. Khan only wanted to get the job done and depart. Everything else was temporary curiosity.

The two walked until they reached a second colossal drill. Richard had to grab his phone to send a series of directives at that point, and the machine slowly stopped rotating, granting safe access to its area.

Khan jumped on the black ground and compared it to the metal ceiling. Tremors reached his feet due to the other drills across the structure, but everything remained bearable. That vast room had no floor but could keep things relatively stable.

Richard approached one of the machine's legs, which opened to release two soldiers. The three began to talk while Khan reached the hole's edge to look down. That cavity was as large as a building, but even his senses couldn't calculate its depths.

"Captain, this way," Richard called while Khan was still busy staring at the dark hole, but lamps suddenly lit up and kept his gaze into those depths.

The entirety of the drill became visible, and the same went for the hole's wall, but Khan still struggled to see the bottom. He couldn't, no matter how much he squinted his eyes. That machine simply went too deep.

Khan eventually diverted his gaze and found Richard and another male soldier on a circular platform floating above the hole. The machine had released it, and the azure light from its new cavity marked the connection with that elevator.

Khan didn't waste time and jumped on the platform. He ignored the military salute of the new soldier and remained calm while that hovering elevator descended into the hole.

The descent resembled a freefall, but that wasn't Khan's first time on similar machines, so he simply waited to reach his destination. That happened a whole minute and a few hundred meters later when the platform arrived in front of a hole stretching into the wall.

"Is it here?" Khan asked when the platform stopped.

"Yes, sir," Richard confirmed. "The old drill broke after digging this opening. We only needed it to go forward for a few more meters."

"It's okay," Khan commented while jumping into that opening, showing no fear for the deadly fall that would have waited for him if he failed that leap.

"I only need to take down this wall, right?" Khan questioned as soon as the passage's bottom appeared in his view. That hole was barely a few meters deep, so he didn't need to move to spot it.

"Y-yes!" Richard exclaimed, experiencing some fear when he reached the platform's edge and looked below. "Sir, I'll show you the exact-."

"No need," Khan interrupted, lifting his right hand and covering it with bright mana that gave birth to a sword. "It's better if you stay away."

## Chapter 490 Departure

Richard and the other soldier had to suppress a gasp in front of that bright purple-red light. They felt utmost respect for Khan, especially after his landing, but that color remained a synonym for danger. Even experienced warriors would hesitate before the chaos element.

Khan noticed that but didn't care. Generating those reactions was actually for the best. Acquiring a superhuman state was the first step toward the status he required. That would raise a wall between him and ordinary soldiers, but he was willing to pay that price.

The wall at the end of that short passage looked sturdier than the other surfaces. Khan couldn't exactly see through rocks. He only felt a vague vibe that gave him that impression. Also, he could see the mark left by the previous drill, so he knew where his spell had to go.

The cavity's size reassured Khan. It wasn't as big as the main hole, but four full-grown men could easily fit inside it. Something far bigger than Khan had drilled there, so he didn't worry about the passage potentially crumbling on him.

Khan stabbed his glowing sword on the mark left by the old drill without putting much strength in his gesture. The chaos claws spell was different from the Divine Reaper, and he knew exactly how to unleash its full potential.

The glowing tip met some resistance when it touched the conical cavity in the wall, but the chaos element promptly got to work. The rocks began to give in, shattering and manifesting fissures that expanded as Khan stabbed his arm deeper. A crackling spiderweb grew, and the entire surface fell prey to it.

Khan barely looked at the actual effects of his spell. He was more interested in the chaos element's behavior. The thorough, deep, and endless instability it caused expressed some of its most iconic traits. Its mindless violence was almost inspiring. Nothing seemed able to match it in terms of raw power.

In a way, the chaos element was the perfect weapon for Khan's goals. Only something that strong could keep up with his growth and achievements.

The wall tried to oppose Khan, but the energy invading its fabric was simply unstoppable. Some areas required slightly more time, but they eventually gave in, crumbling into a cloud of smoke and dust.

Khan dug until his hand found nothing else to destroy. There was an underground room behind that layer of tough rocks, so he kept his spell active until a narrow cavity formed.

Dust and smoke were still in the air when Khan retracted his mana. The drill's light pierced through that, but the area inevitably grew darker. Things were worse in the underground room he had just uncovered, but that didn't stop him from crossing the cavity.

Khan moved slowly, diving into the darkness of the new passage while retaining stable footholds. The rocks were uneven, both frail and firm, with some even having sharp surfaces, but Khan's light steps allowed him to avoid injuries or falls and safely enter the underground room.

The area expanded, allowing Khan to stretch his arms without meeting any rock. Mana also flowed into the underground room, giving him a better understanding of that new space. It was quite big, but the primarily rocky composition ended up requesting his eyes.

Khan lifted a finger and released a constant whisp of mana that dispersed after flying for a few seconds. He wasn't casting any attack, but his energy was bright enough to illuminate most of the room.

Various lights flashed in Khan's vision. The underground room was mostly made of dark rocks, but a few spots sent back the glow radiated by his mana. There seemed to be a few minerals in there, with the biggest one being a chest-sized triangular boulder stretching from the ceiling.

Khan didn't only read the Headmistress' briefing. He had also conversed with Lucian about Honides' opportunities. Those underground rooms were almost common knowledge for the soldiers on the planet, and Khan had learnt enough about them to identify the valuable resources.

'That should be what Mister Nore wants,' Khan thought, eyeing the boulder on the ceiling. 'As for the others.'

Khan followed the reflections, approaching the walls to check what kind of minerals caused those effects. He was by no means an expert in that field, but Lucian had given him a summary that was easy to remember.

'Green is for the Global Army,' Khan recalled while inspecting the various surfaces, 'Blue is risky, and red is good.'

The light radiated by the chaos element wasn't ideal for distinguishing between colors. The dark rocks further hindered Khan's search, but he eventually identified a few minerals he could take.

Steps resounded through the narrow passage while Khan was busy with his inspection. A white light even shone through it at some point, allowing him to retract his mana. Richard and the other soldier eventually stepped into the underground room, bringing electric torches and their amazed expressions.

"You'll take care of enlarging the passage, right?" Khan questioned without lifting his gaze from the walls. "I can do it for you if needed."

"Don't worry, sir!" Richard hurriedly exclaimed. "You have already done enough!"

"I'll need a big bag then," Khan continued, straightening his back to retreat a bit.

Khan delivered a powerful kick on the wall before Richard could speak. A chunk of rocks crumbled during the impact, releasing rubble that accumulated on the room's floor. Khan didn't hesitate to crouch toward it, and a tiny dark-red pebble occupied his palm when he stood up again.

"Do you mind if I take these?" Khan asked, showing the pebble while heading for another spot with faint red reflections.

"They have never been here, sir!" Richard declared, showing a knowing smile that Khan didn't bother to look at. Instead, the other soldier noticed it, and Richard exchanged a nod with him.

The soldier hurried outside the passage and used the platform to return to the surface. Meanwhile, Khan delivered a couple of kicks in another spot to break the rocks and seize a second dark-red pebble that had fallen to the ground.

"I believe your scanners didn't pick these up," Khan commented while moving toward another red shade.

"No, sir," Richard stated. "We only found this room and that boulder. By the way, do you need help digging it out?"

Khan finally turned and followed Richard's eyes toward the ceiling. The latter was looking at the triangular boulder, which was the main reason for Khan's presence. Its size and position made it annoying to retrieve, which explained the question.

"It's fine," Khan muttered, kicking the ground to launch himself toward the triangular boulder.

To Richard's amazement, Khan rolled on himself during the leap and turned the room's ceiling into his new floor. He was upside down but remained able to walk even if his movements defied gravity. Moreover, Khan didn't stop at mere steps.

Khan tapped the ceiling a few times before putting real strength into his moves. He delivered a kick at the boulder's base before hurrying to the other side and repeating the process.

The boulder's metallic properties made it endure the kicks, but that didn't apply to its base. After four kicks, a chunk of the ceiling broke, making that triangular shape fall to the ground.

Khan delivered a descending kick on the boulder when he headed for the floor. His attack shattered some of the rocks still clinging to its base, turning it into a smaller shape that would be easier to carry around.

"Get this out while I clean the rest of the room," Khan ordered, and Richard didn't hesitate to approach the boulder.

The boulder was still heavy, and the narrow passage didn't help, but Richard did his best while Khan found more spots to kick. The second soldier returned in the meantime, and the three eventually reunited back into the main hole.

Khan crouched on the cavity's entrance in front of a small pile of dark-red rocks. A yellow backpack stood next to him, and he filled it with those pebbles. He left only two outside to pick them up and throw them at the soldiers.

"That's for you," Khan exclaimed, closing the backpack and straightening his position. Richard and the soldier were too surprised by the sudden throw to show gratitude, and Khan had already returned to the platform when they realized their lack of manners.

"Thank you, Captain!" Richard and the soldier shouted anyway, and Khan waved his hand to dismiss their gratitude. Still, that didn't stop the two from hurrying onto the platform and making it climb back to the surface.

Richard took care of leading Khan to a different area of the structure and carrying the boulder. He even respected Khan's silence since receiving one of the minerals had put him in a good mood.

The two had to walk for a while since the plant's hangar stood at the center of the structure. They even had to ride a small automated car to shorten the journey, but a series of ships eventually unfolded in their vision.

The hangar was pretty empty. Only one area had a strangely large team of soldiers busy preparing a rectangular ship with metal covers around its four engines. The process seemed to have more manpower than it needed since almost half of the group was merely watching their companions working.

Khan's arrival turned those idle soldiers into a welcoming party. They arranged themselves into a straight line and performed military salutes before shouting his name, forcing their companions to ignore the ship and imitate them.

"At ease," Khan nodded as soon as he reached the group, and one of the soldiers left the line to hand him his phone. The device didn't have a single stain, showing how the team had taken care of cleaning it up.

"We have a clean uniform ready, sir," The soldier who handed the phone proceeded to reveal.

"There's no need for that," Khan shook his head. "I just want to return to my ship."

"Everything is ready for set-off," The soldier stated. "You can depart immediately, Captain."

"Let's do that," Khan laughed, and the soldiers created a path toward the ship's cargo area, which featured an oddly placed seat, probably moved specifically for Khan's uncommon situation.

That arrangement was obviously enough for Khan. He entered the trunk and bound his backpack to the wall before strapping himself on the seat. Richard also joined him to secure the boulder on another surface and voice polite goodbyes.

"I'll see you around," Khan uttered in front of Richard's military salute, and the latter smiled before leaving the trunk. The cargo area closed at that point, and the pilot's voice resounded through the speakers.

"Shall we depart, Captain?" The pilot asked.

"Positive," Khan casually said, clinging to the seatbelt while the set-off began.

Khan didn't experience much in his position. He couldn't even watch the departure due to the absence of screens in the trunk. He could only wait, and the arrival of turbulences marked the ship's encounter with the storms.

The shaking continued for a while, and even the arrival of a clanging noise didn't put an end to it. Yet, the statement that followed made Khan smile.

"Sir, I've connected the two ships," The pilot conveyed through the speakers. "When you are ready, I can open the doors."

Khan unfastened the belt and retrieved the backpack before grabbing the boulder. He voiced an order, and the backdoors slowly opened to reveal a familiar dark-grey color. Khan only had to approach it to make his ship's side doors open.

A short leap brought Khan back into his ship, and he immediately dropped the boulder to deal with a few mandatory tasks. He closed the doors and unlocked the cargo area to access the cabin. Some dust flowed into the room due to the remains of his reckless departure, but everything was working as intended.

"I'm good here," Khan eventually said through a channel that connected the two ships. "Thank you for the lift."

"Anytime, Captain," The pilot responded. "Have a good trip."

"You too," Khan replied and waited for the second ship to depart to attend to other tasks. He bound the backpack to a seat and secured the boulder before returning to the cabin to activate every necessary function.

"Calculating," The ship's robotic voice resounded as soon as Khan brought the vehicle out of Honides' atmosphere. Lunchtime had already passed, so he needed a new route to return to the Harbor.

When the holograms appeared, Khan accelerated, bringing an uncomfortable pressure on his body. That weight grew heavier and heavier, but he felt able to endure a bit more than before after what he had experienced among the storms.

Notes had already come out of the control desk, and Khan began to read them while the ship continued to accelerate. Khan felt able to move only once the speed became constant since the pressure disappeared, and he reached for the backpack at his side after turning off the engines.

'How can these rocks be so valuable?' Khan wondered while browsing through the backpack's contents, but the arrival of a call distracted him from the task.

"So," Lucian's voice came out of the control desk when Khan answered, "How was my intel?"

"Quite accurate," Khan responded. "You earned your fifteen percent."

"Did you weigh them already?" Lucian questioned. "Wait, which minerals did you find?"

"I'll show you once I return to the Harbor," Khan said as a beeping key attracted his attention. "I need to close this. The Headmistress is calling."

Khan didn't give Lucian the time to add anything else since he directly closed the call to answer the Headmistress.

"I believe everything went well," The Headmistress stated.

"Exactly as planned," Khan responded.

"And you didn't happen to steal anything, am I right?" Headmistress Holwen continued.

"I don't know anything about rocks, Headmistress," Khan laughed.

"Predictable," Headmistress scoffed as if she could smell the lie in Khan's tone. "Well, you can use the trip back to study your new mission. Do you remember when I mentioned Abora's swamps? You are going there next week."