

Chaos' Heir 511

Chapter 511 Extreme

George knew his place in the political environment. His family was good, but Francis, Monica, and many classmates were beyond his reach. Even Anita was an incredible step-up compared to his usual women.

However, the situation didn't involve politics, at least not strictly. Francis wasn't a student in the Harbor. Technically, he had no right to be in the second district, especially if he intended to harass the people living there. His family's influence could give him some leeway, and eventual secret pacts helped even further, but that deal didn't apply to his guards.

George didn't initially plan to intervene, and Monica didn't need help there. No matter what Francis said, he couldn't force her to leave. Monica had to accept on her own, which wasn't easy when she took pride in acts that would usually bring shame to her figure.

Still, the conversation had been too funny, and George couldn't hold back from joining it. Besides, he had been bored for quite a while already, and Francis had given him the perfect opportunity to blow off some steam.

Francis' guards encircled him to create a defensive line that could shield him from any threat. Only the man who had initially moved didn't join that arrangement and stood on the path between George and Francis.

George smirked at that scene before taking another sip from the bottle, but Monica interrupted his drink by approaching him.

"What are you doing?" Monica scolded. "I can't protect you if you act like this."

George wanted to voice a witty remark, but noticing Monica's genuine concern forced him to take her words seriously. She would hate involving George in her problems, and he could see that feeling on her face.

"No wonder he couldn't stay away from you," George commented. "Even I would falter in front of a face like this."

"What?" Monica gasped, taking a step back. For a second, she thought George was hitting on her, but he used that chance to cross her and voice a loud laugh.

"George!" Monica called, almost losing her cool in front of that childish action.

"You and Khan worry too much," George chuckled without bothering to turn. "Besides, I'm not doing this for you two."

Monica was conflicted. On one side, George's interference worked in her favor since it would keep Francis focused on him. Yet, George was a friend she had long since started to appreciate, and his close relationship with Khan made the event harder to ignore.

"Francis," Monica called after making up her mind. That was her problem, and she would handle it before anyone got hurt. However, an item flew toward her, and her arms instinctively shot forward when she realized what it was.

"Nice catch!" George laughed, peeking past his shoulder to confirm that the bottle was safe in Monica's hands. Her eyes carried pure irritation, but he felt satisfied for having stopped her advance.

"So," George announced once he got close to the guard outside the defensive encirclement. "Do you have something to say?"

The man frowned and remained silent. He didn't know what George had in mind, but his position wasn't ideal. The soldier didn't personally show any hostility, but Francis' stance wasn't friendly, so it would be easy to misunderstand his actions.

"Well?" George pressed on. "You entered the second district uninvited and started disrespecting its residents. The least you could do is apologize."

George used his arrogant voice on purpose but addressed only the guards. His earlier statement had already been too much against someone with Francis' status. Now, he could only respond to blatant provocations or focus on people with poor relevance.

"Mister Alstair and Miss Solodrey agreed to the meeting willingly," The guard responded.

"You forgot a sir," George chuckled before looking at the defensive encirclement. "What is happening there? I didn't know glasses could be so dangerous."

The guards didn't like that not-so-veiled insult, and Francis wasn't any better. George was mocking that extreme response, which was fitting, and Francis couldn't accept losing face in front of Monica.

"I will not accept this behavior any longer," Francis scoffed. "Seize him. We'll see how arrogant he is once I report this to Headmistress Holwen and his family."

The guard outside the defensive encirclement glanced at Francis and exchanged a nod with him before turning toward George. However, a dark-silver light suddenly flashed in his view, and pain followed.

George looked disappointed when the guard glanced at his chest and panicked at the long mark that crossed his entire torso. The man gasped and jumped back, but the action opened the injury, which spurting blood and made him lose his balance.

The guard fell and opened his suit to check his state. A long, oblique injury had appeared, and blood continued to flow from it. The wound wasn't too deep, but the scene remained scary.

"Just take a deep breath," George sighed. "You'll live."

"What is the meaning of this?!" Francis shouted as soon as he realized what had happened.

"I barely touched him," George said, spreading his arms to express innocence. "I only used one finger."

The situation immediately degenerated. The guards couldn't believe that George had actually used deadly force in the Harbor, so they tightened their defensive encirclement on Francis.

Francis was as stunned as his guards and felt unable to think straight. None of that was part of his plan. He only wanted to convince or coerce Monica into following him to let their families deal with the situation, but George had ruined everything.

As for Monica, she shared that surprise, but the sight of blood didn't stun her. She was worried about George but also accepted that the situation had escaped her control.

"What?" George asked. "There should be a few regulations in my favor. How can you look so surprised?"

Francis had to focus on George. Truth be told, George was technically correct, but that reaction remained extreme. Moreover, letting a descendant from a superior family do as he wished was the norm, but George completely ignored those customs.

"Sir, you should go back to the car," One of the guards said during that stalemate. "It isn't safe here."

Francis was about to nod, but a distant pair of eyes suddenly appeared in the corner of his vision. Someone from the next block had peeked past their building to inspect the scene, and that was only the initial example of that trend.

Heads and eyes began to pop from every distant corner, and a few people even came out in the open to approach the building. The second district had relatively important residents, and some didn't care about Francis' status enough to stay away.

That wasn't the end of it. Flying cabs also approached the area and stopped above the buildings around the block. They simply hovered there without ever descending, but that was enough to give Francis an idea of the attention he had attracted.

Moreover, the surrounding buildings had useful functions. Anyone could spy the scene from behind the large windows without getting spotted. The people in the open were probably the minority of the actual audience, and Francis understood that very well.

Francis was in a pickle. He had initially hoped to get the invitation done within a matter of minutes, but things had gone way past that. One of his guards was also injured, which made returning home empty-handed too troublesome. If he failed so badly, he would become a laughing stock inside his family.

"I'm a descendant of the Alstair family," Francis eventually cursed to the guard that had spoken. "I won't be sent away by such a despicable character!"

"But, sir-," One of the guards uttered.

"Francis, just leave," Monica stated, interrupting the guard. "Let's do this another time and through the proper channels. Also, don't forget to invite my fiancé."

The word "fiancé" made Francis' group open their mouths in shock. Even George turned to show his surprise, but Monica faked a panicked gasp and promptly corrected herself.

"I meant boyfriend," Monica voiced. "I apologize. I got carried away. Still, you will invite him if you think I deserve your respect."

"I don't think this one has the stones to show his face again," George commented, knowing what his words would trigger.

"I had enough of you!" Francis shouted at George.

"I was talking to that man," George feigned ignorance, pointing at a random man among the defensive encirclement. "I'm sorry for the misunderstanding."

No one believed George, but seeing a faint giggle from Monica made Francis lose his cool and shout again. "Seize this man! I want to bring him in front of the Headmistress now!"

The guards couldn't reject a direct order, but leaving Francis alone wasn't an option either. The five in the encirclement exchanged glances before two abandoned Francis and reached for their injured companion.

It turned out that George had spoken the truth. The guard's injury wasn't deep. A single night could be enough to close it completely. Yet, he was in no condition to fight, so the two soldiers left him be to turn toward George.

George didn't have Khan's inhumane senses, but his sensitivity was far from bad. He had long since surpassed what ordinary humans could see, so he had no problem evaluating his opponents.

The injured guard was a second-level warrior, and the same went for two inside the encirclement. Instead, Francis and the remaining soldiers were on the third level, just like him.

George couldn't help but smile at that development. He didn't lie to Khan. He didn't want to return to the battlefield. Yet, boredom had accumulated after spending years in safe environments, and his occasional sparring sessions couldn't appease his fighting drive.

"I thought you would never come," George snickered, placing his left palm on two stretched fingers before lifting it to create a dark-silver sword.

The two guards shot cold glances at the ethereal sword. Their orders were to restrain George, but he had put a deadly weapon against them. Moreover, the soldiers couldn't badly hurt George. Francis had given his directives, but George remained a famous descendant in the advanced classes.

"What?" George didn't waste the chance to insult his opponents some more. "Are the members of the Alstair family scared of a single man?"

"Get him already!" Francis shouted, and the two guards felt forced to shoot forward.

George waited calmly as the two middle-aged men ran toward him. His opponents split to approach him from opposite sides and wore offensive stances once they got close enough.

The man on the left opened his hands and leaped forward, bringing his right arm to his waist. Meanwhile, the other guard let his knees reach the floor to slide toward George before rotating on himself to launch a rising kick.

The kick was the fastest of the attacks, so George prepared himself to swing his blade at it. However, a dangerously high amount of mana gathered on his left, forcing him to jump backward.

The guard on the left stretched his right arm forward, and a wave of mana came out of his palm before he could land. The attack was dense enough to stop at George's previous position without stretching toward the other enemy, who could exploit that sudden retreat.

The sliding guard let his leg rise and lift his entire body. He performed a handstand before throwing two descending kicks at the retreating George.

George didn't let that sudden attack surprise him. He swung his sword at the incoming kicks, ready to endure both if necessary. His recklessness forced the guard to hesitate, but that worked against him.

The guard interrupted his descending kicks and folded his legs. Yet, his action had been too slow, so the dark-silver sword hit his left shinbone, almost cutting his limb in half.

George stomped his left foot behind him to interrupt his retreat and lunge forward, but the second guard landed in the meantime. The latter didn't hesitate to unleash his left palm, which engulfed George into a trembling wave of mana.

The tremors destabilized George's insides, and his control over his sword also wavered. However, his eyes remained open and fixed on the injured guard. The latter was still standing on his hands, so he couldn't retreat too quickly, and George wanted to exploit that.

George brute-forced his way through the shaking mana, uncaring that his sword shattered in the process. The injured guard was close, so George only needed to take a step forward to reach him, and his swordless fingers descended toward him.

The injured guard prioritized protecting his legs, so he bent backward. However, that gesture exposed his waist, and George didn't hesitate to slam his fingers at the most sensitive spot in his reach.

A painful cry resounded on the sidewalk when George's fingers stabbed the man's groin. His handstand immediately broke, and he crashed on the floor to hold his injured jewels.

The attack had left George exposed, and the second guard didn't hesitate to strike. Still, after seeing George's deadly attacks, the man put more mana than necessary into his blow, resulting in a low sound.

George tightened his left arm on his side, but his eyes widened in surprise when the guard's palm hit his elbow. The low sound and his senses warned him about the imminent danger, so he jumped to his right to avoid part of the attack.

Nevertheless, George lost his balance after landing. The guard's mana had crossed his elbow to enter his side, messing up with his insides. His left leg suddenly wasn't as responsive anymore, and blood started to accumulate in his mouth.

The guard chased after George and leaped again when he was about to reach him. Meanwhile, George recreated his sword and pointed it at his incoming assailant.

The man had to release his palm strike mid-air, sending dense mana forward to destabilize the ethereal blade. The sword shattered, but George closed his hand into a fist that welcomed the guard's landing.

The simple punch couldn't take the guard down, even when hitting him on the nose. The man retreated as blood flowed from his nostrils, but his offensive stance returned. He was still full of energy and at the peak of his game, and the same couldn't be said for George.

George struggled to get rid of the effects of the palm strike. He spat to empty his mouth of some blood, but more surged through his throat. He wasn't fine, and his left side didn't follow his instructions. He could only summon his sword and wait for his opponent's offensive.

The guard knew that the situation was in his favor and didn't bother to hide his intentions. He pointed his eyes at George's left side, almost telling him where he would attack.

George would understand the guard's plan even without that obvious hint. Only an idiot would attack the side with the sword, and the man had to know how much damage he had done. However, George ended up frowning and relaxing due to an unexpected development.

The guard was about to shoot forward when a tight grip closed itself around his right wrist. He turned, and his eyes widened in fear when he saw a smiling Monica keeping his arm still. She was wearing her usual elegant expression, but clear coldness reeked out of her.

"Miss Solodrey!" The guard muttered.

"What do you think you are doing?" Monica asked as her grip grew tighter.

"M-Mister Alstair-," The guard stammered.

"I heard what he said," Monica interrupted, "But you know who I am, and you still decided to attack my friend without asking my permission."

"Miss Solodrey, I didn't-," The guard tried to justify his actions, but fear filled his face when he saw grey smoke coming out of Monica's grip.

"If your next words have nothing to do with an apology," Monica interrupted again, "I will take your hand."

The guard froze in fear. He would typically ask for Francis' opinion before pursuing any action, but Monica seemed ready to cut off his hand as soon as he moved.

"I should warn you," Monica continued. "Silence will lead to the same outcome."

The guard opened his mouth to hurry with his apology, but a series of short noises suddenly echoed on the sidewalk. Monica, the guard, George, and Francis' group turned toward their source but only found a couple of crutches lying on the floor.

That confusion didn't last long. A suffocating coldness followed. The entire sidewalk seemed to have fallen underwater due to how hard breathing became, but nothing stood still. The very air shook under that tension as if everything was about to explode.

Chapter 512 Domineering

"I had to compromise," The Headmistress announced as soon as Khan brought his phone to his ear.

"What do you mean, ma'am?" Khan asked.

"I hope you understand," Headmistress Holwen continued. "The peace of the Harbor always comes first."

"Ma'am, what is happening?" Khan pressed on. He had understood that something was off as soon as he saw the Headmistress' call, and that vague explanation intensified his worries.

"I'm not sure either," Headmistress Holwen stated. "Forces that I can't hope to contain have stepped forward. I had to grant them some time."

"Time to do what?" Khan raised his voice. "And who are these forces?"

"A suitor's family," Headmistress Holwen revealed, "And your girlfriend's family. As for what they have in mind, I can only suggest you go look at it yourself."

Khan had countless questions, but the Headmistress cut the call short. "I have to prepare for the political implications. Good luck, Captain."

"Wait!" Khan shouted, but the Headmistress was gone. The call had ended, leaving Khan with the many messages that had reached him in the meantime.

Khan quickly skimmed through those texts without learning much. His classmates had sent prying and worried messages, with Lucian explaining the situation a bit more in detail. However, Khan could only understand that some political factions had chosen to act.

"Hey!" Khan promptly called, slamming his fist on the wall that separated him from the driver. "Hurry back to the second district."

"Sir," The driver spoke through the speaker, "We are already bordering the speed limit."

"This is a direct order from Captain Khan," Khan declared. "Article 61-14, section 3. During emergencies, drivers can ignore the speed limit and other regulations if a superior deems it necessary."

The driver had long since forgotten those regulations, but the second punch that landed on the wall forced him to agree. He also knew his passenger's identity, so he stepped on the accelerator and surpassed the speed limit.

The sudden acceleration barely affected Khan. He glanced past the window seat before looking at his phone again. He sent messages, but no one replied, and anxiety built up as bad thoughts accumulated in his mind. Having just received Raymond's unexpected call didn't help either, and the atmosphere around him grew heavy as he prepared for the worst.

Even with those vague clues, Khan could gain an idea of what was happening. Monica had educated him on the field, and they had both expected retaliations to happen sooner or later.

Monica's parents had publicly agreed to her relationship, but her family was immense. Many factions inhabited it, and it stood to reason that a few didn't like Khan since he brought them no benefits. Those forces might have heavily invested in Monica, only for Khan to ruin their hopes of getting their money back.

The same went for the suitors. Monica was beautiful, her manners were impeccable, and she wielded incredible influence. She was the closest thing to a noble, and many families wanted her. Some had already spent quite a bit getting their descendants close to her, and Khan had made that investment pointless.

Of course, Khan wasn't a fianc   or a husband. He wielded a temporary status that carried weight only if his opponents gave it value. There was still hope for those investments as long as he got out of the picture, which probably was what those factions aimed to accomplish.

Khan's mental state deteriorated during the wait. His grip on the phone tightened, threatening to break the screen, and his eyes often darted to the window seat. The cab was too slow for him, but flying wasn't an option. The situation had gotten political, so he had to avoid easy mistakes.

That apparent calm was only one side of Khan's thoughts. An opposite force existed and showed its presence as bad ideas popped into his mind. His unreasonable and wild desires began to growl, and the wait made them louder.

The trip felt endless, but reaching the second district gave Khan ideas about the state of the situation. He noticed cabs hovering in the distance and small groups of people carefully converging toward his building. It was clear that something big was happening, and his mana almost roared during the last minutes separating him from his destination.

Khan's mind tried to go blank when he became able to see his building from the window seat. His eyes couldn't do much at that distance, so he opened the door to get in contact with the symphony.

The many random influences vanished as Khan focused on known auras. He could sense George, Monica, and another familiar presence. He immediately recognized Francis, and clarity arrived as the cab grew closer.

When the cab stopped above the sidewalk, the unreasonable desires almost gained a proper voice. Khan saw the two injured guards, Francis, his defensive encirclement, George, and Monica, and the symphony handled the rest.

A battle had unfolded, and the general vibe was far from friendly, but Khan only focused on his friends. Monica was livid, and George's seemingly injured state made Khan's feelings flare.

The driver said something that Khan couldn't hear. His mind only had room for one voice that filled him with violent goals. Superior powers were playing with him once again, and he became ready to repeat what had happened on Induna.

'I'll kill them,' Khan instinctively thought. 'I'll kill them all.'

Those thoughts degenerated and began to target the entire block. Khan's actions on Induna had been a declaration that those enemies had ignored, but he would be happy to give them a reminder. Francis and his guards had tainted the sidewalk with their disrespect, and Khan couldn't let something like that exist in his world.

The crutches at Khan's side fell when he leaned further to get a better view of the scene. The sudden event made his aggression skyrocket, and his presence tainted the weak synthetic mana in the area, giving it his properties.

Khan had almost made up his mind. He would destroy everything. He would make the very floor pay for that insult. However, his reasonable side stepped forward at the last second and reminded him that his friends were still on the sidewalk.

'I want to lose control,' Khan thought as his internal conflict reached its peak, 'But that won't get me anywhere.'

The internal conflict suddenly ended, and the faint clicking growl in the background went silent. Khan had reached a conclusion, so he jumped forward and let the artificial gravity do its work.

A single and faint step in the air flung Khan toward George. He materialized at his side without making any sound. George actually had to rely on his senses to realize that Khan had arrived.

"You are early," George snickered, but Khan ignored those words to put a hand at the center of his chest.

George's state grew clear in Khan's mind. He couldn't sense the injuries, but the flow of mana created a troublesome picture. George had been hurt badly, and the wounds probably required professional help.

"You need to see a doctor," Khan stated before looking at one of the cabs hovering above the sidewalk. "You. Get down."

The order was slightly more than a whisper, but everyone could hear it. Even the driver inside the cab targeted by Khan understood its seriousness, so she didn't hesitate to bring the vehicle down.

"I can't be bothered with medical bays," George complained.

Khan didn't react but adjusted his request to suit George's wish. As soon as the cab reached the sidewalk, one of the windows went down to reveal a scared middle-aged woman who nodded at Khan's immediate order. "Get a doctor to my flat."

"Yes, sir!" The driver said before closing the window and setting off toward the nearest medical bay.

At that point, Khan turned toward the two injured guards. He ignored the man holding his groin to approach the soldier with the oblique cut on his chest. His walk was slow due to the braced foot, but the metal sounds that his uneven steps caused intensified the overall tension.

Khan reached the injured guard and inspected him from head to toe. The man had calmed down during George's battle, but Khan's arrival had rekindled his panic. Still, his long wound had already stopped bleeding.

"Sir, I-," The man stammered before looking at Francis. He couldn't hope to face Khan on his own, but Francis didn't lift his gaze. Khan's presence was too suffocating, so he left the guard alone.

"Do you know me?" Khan asked in an emotionless voice, making an invisible boulder fall on the guard's chest.

The guard wanted to search for Francis' gaze again, but the pressure radiated by Khan suddenly intensified. The man knew he had to keep his eyes on him to prevent something terrible from happening.

"Answer me," Khan pressed on.

"Y-yes!" The guard coughed. "You are Captain Khan."

"Good," Khan stated. "Where is my military salute?"

"W-what?" The guard gasped.

"A Captain is in your presence," Khan explained. "Stand up and salute him."

The guard wanted to refuse, but Khan's intense eyes never blinked. He appeared ready to inflict a deadly blow at the slightest misstep, so the soldier complied. He struggled on his feet, uncaring of the reopening of his injury, and wrapped his arms behind his back to perform a military salute.

"Now," Khan continued. "Did you hurt Mister Ildoo?"

"No, sir!" The guard promptly replied. "I swear, sir!"

Khan could spot lies, so he knew the guard was telling the truth. Besides, the man was a second-level warrior. He couldn't have possibly hurt George.

The tension remained as Khan turned. The guard began to relax, but Khan's gaze snapped back at him to interrupt the process. The second-level warrior didn't need words to know that his military salute had to stay.

Khan kept his eyes on the soldier for a few seconds before turning again and heading toward the guard with the injured groin. The latter was in pain but had witnessed the previous interaction, so he struggled on his feet even if more blood flowed over his legs.

"Captain Khan, sir!" The man shouted, performing a military salute to welcome Khan's arrival.

"Did you hurt Mister Ildoo?" Khan went straight to the point.

"No, sir," The guard stated. "I swear, sir!"

The guard was telling the truth, but his mana carried something odd that made Khan change his question. "Did you attack Mister Ildoo?"

"S-sir," The guard stammered. "Yes, sir, but Mister Ildoo skillfully dodged my-."

The guard couldn't finish his line since Khan delivered a powerful kick on his left knee. Khan had used the braced leg in the attack, and the impact between the metal protection and the joint generated cracking noises.

Pain tried to reach Khan's mind, but his feelings fended it off. His gaze remained steady while he watched the guard fall on the floor and turn into a mess. The man didn't know whether to hold his broken knee or bleeding groin.

"Where is your gratitude?" Khan asked, unfazed by the man's sorry state.

"W-what?" The guard managed to mutter through his pain.

"You attacked a descendant," Khan explained, "And a student of the advanced classes on top of that. You are guilty in front of the Harbor and the Ildoo family. I'd get a reward if I executed you right here."

The guard knew how bad the situation was and looked for Francis, but the latter kept his gaze lowered. Without Francis' help, the man was nothing more than a soldier who had committed a grave crime, and that realization quickly dawned upon him.

"Are you going to thank me or not?" Khan pressed on.

"Thank you, sir!" The guard mustered the entirety of his strength to shout.

"Thank you for what?" Khan questioned.

"T-thank you," The guard hesitated, "For showing mercy."

The look of defeat on the guard's face satisfied Khan. He didn't feel any better. He didn't like treating people like that. That behavior actually disgusted him. However, he needed everyone to understand that messing with him had consequences, heavy ones if his friends were involved.

Khan finally turned toward Monica and the other guard, and slow steps unfolded again. The metal braces were a hindrance, but that odd walk didn't interfere with his presence. Everyone remained too scared of Khan and the aura he radiated to even look at his intense eyes.

Monica was an exception. Francis' group felt pure terror, but she smiled as she let go of her prisoner. That domineering behavior perfectly suited Khan's new status. No other man could stand so proudly at her side, and knowing what had triggered that reaction made him incredibly attractive in her eyes.

'He is born for power,' Monica thought while her education kicked in. Her submissive side flared at that serious and intense gaze. She stepped back and performed a respectful nod to give Khan full control of the matter.

"Captain Khan, sir," The guard announced when Khan reached him and even performed a military salute to give an appropriate welcome.

"Did you hurt Mister Ildoo?" Khan questioned.

"Yes, sir," The guard stated, going to his knees while keeping his arms behind his back. "I'll accept any punishment you see fit, sir."

That straightforward approach slightly surprised Khan, but he didn't falter. Monica had seized the guard's hand before his arrival, so he could guess what he used to attack, and his following question matched that understanding.

"Which hand did you use to hurt him?" Khan asked, lifting his left arm to cover it with the purple-red sword.

The guard had lowered his head, but the arrival of the chaos element made him peek at Khan. That glowing sword could only mean one thing. He was about to lose a hand. Khan was simply giving him a chance to choose which.

"Both, sir," The guard revealed, breaking his military salute to show both arms to Khan.

Khan hid his surprise, but his senses confirmed the absence of ploys. The guard was simply being honest. He was performing his role dutifully and respectfully without showing any bias for Khan's status or background.

'Interesting,' Khan couldn't help but think before changing approach. "Stand up. You work for me now."

"Sir?" The guard gasped, lifting his gaze to check how serious Khan was.

"I gave you an order," Khan declared, lifting his glowing hand a bit higher. "Unless you prefer losing both hands."

"C-captain, it's not that," The guard stammered. "I'm under contract with the Alstair family."

"Rescind it," Khan ordered.

"Only a member of the Alstair family can rescind the contract, sir," The guard explained.

"That won't be a problem," Khan uttered, dispersing his mana to look at Francis.

From an outsider's perspective, the scene didn't make any sense. Khan was alone and without a leg, while Francis' group still had two active third-level warriors and Francis himself. They stood a good

chance to fight, but no one dared to move in Khan's presence. Everyone was too scared to even look at him.

Only the people on the sidewalk could understand what was happening. Their subservient behavior wasn't out of choice. They simply felt too scared for unknown reasons. The very air was telling them to respect the threat that Khan posed.

"Mister Alstair," Khan called while slowly walking toward the main group. "I've taken a liking to one of your guards. I hope you don't mind giving him to me."

Francis dared to lift his gaze but immediately lowered it at the sight of those cold eyes. Memories from Milia 222 resurfaced and reminded him about the difference between him and Khan. Francis was outclassed in every way. In that situation, he could only obey.

"I'll rescind his contract," Francis whispered.

"You heard him," Khan said, turning toward the guard. "Go assist George. Bring him into my flat."

"Y-yes, sir!" The guard initially hesitated, but one look at Francis made him shoot on his feet and approach George. The latter didn't want help, but he pointed at the bottle Monica had left on the floor while he walked toward the building's entrance.

"Mister Alstair," Khan continued, turning toward Francis again. "You are with me."

"What?" Francis gasped, finally looking Khan in the eyes.

"We have matters to discuss," Khan explained. "We'll do that in my flat."

The three guards around Francis would prefer not to help him after his treatment of their companions. However, they had duties that went beyond a simple descendant, so the third-level warrior among them decided to speak.

"Captain, sir," The guard announced, but a needle suddenly landed at his feet and turned into a small spherical version of the Wave spell.

The sudden attack made the guard retreat, and his gesture pushed his companions back, Francis included. The two second-level warriors lost their balance due to the abrupt movement and fear, and Francis fell with them.

"You will speak only when spoken to," Khan ordered.

The guard wanted to argue, but the fuming spot before him made him gulp in fear. Somehow, he knew Khan had missed on purpose. He would have taken both his feet otherwise.

"I have orders for you too," Khan continued. "Clean this mess and bring the injured to a medical bay. Also, remove these cars from my sidewalk."

"Sir, we must stay with Mister Alstair," The guard explained.

"No, Mister Alstair will follow me alone," Khan stated. "If you have something against that, I'll simply make you unable to be with him."

Chapter 513 Prisoner

The third-level warrior gulped. Khan's uncompromising behavior was impossible to deal with, and he had already shown where a refusal would lead. The guard could only accept that he had to decide between suffering a severe injury or betraying his duties.

"Mister Alstair, if you don't come by yourself," Khan pressed on, "I'll get you personally."

Khan's despotic behavior wasn't giving the guards a chance to think, and Francis was in a similar situation. The latter knew that following Khan was a bad idea. Still, Khan wasn't in the mood for compromises, and the sole thought of him approaching Francis was too scary to consider.

"I'll go," Francis agreed. "Do as he says and report back."

The three guards didn't even try to complain. They immediately abandoned Francis to assist their companions. Meanwhile, Francis stood up and kept his head lowered while slowly approaching Khan.

"Mister Alstair, get my crutches," Khan ordered before limping toward his building.

Monica hurried to Khan's side and matched his pace to walk with him. They didn't turn even once to check Francis' actions, but he had his fair share of onlookers. The audience and his guards noticed how he obediently retrieved the crutches and followed the couple without daring to reach them.

Entering the building brought some privacy but didn't disperse the tension. Khan and Monica continued to walk silently and entered the elevator, and Francis soon reached them. The couple still didn't speak, and the situation didn't change even after the lift began to move.

The flat unfolded in Khan's vision, and Monica waited for him to take the first step inside before going along. The two crossed the elevator room and reached the main hall, where George was waiting for them on a couch. The newly hired guard was also there, but he was on his feet, messing with some menus on the wall.

"Sir, I took the liberty of activating the cleaners," The guard stated, pointing at a rectangular robot sucking glass shards from the floor. "I hope that was the right decision."

"It was," Khan confirmed, ignoring the faint reaction in Monica's mana. He understood she had something to do with that broken glass, and seeing George's amused expression marked him as an accomplice.

"You can sit," Khan said to the guard.

"I prefer to stand, sir," The guard responded, performing a military salute and taking position behind the biggest couch.

Khan liked that behavior, but his face didn't show anything. He remained cold and emotionless while approaching the biggest couch and sitting at its center.

Monica hurried into another room while Francis entered the main hall. She returned with glasses and a bottle in a few seconds but only filled one of them to offer it to Khan.

"Sit, Mister Alstair," Khan ordered, taking the glass while keeping his gaze on the couch before him. His eyes didn't move even when Monica sat at his side and focused on matching his vibe with her posture.

Francis didn't need to ask where to sit. He entered the array of couches and leaned the crutches on the table before reaching the seat eyed by Khan. He occupied its center and placed his hands on his knees to wait for Khan to speak again.

"Tell me about your plan," Khan gave another order. "I want to know every detail."

Khan's heavy presence had never wavered, so Francis could only lift his gaze briefly before lowering it again and beginning his tale. "The plan was to force Monica out of the Harbor, applying pressure on her psychological and political state if necessary."

"Why?" Khan questioned.

"In a different environment," Francis explained, "We could have seized some leverage. With Monica in our possession, we could have kept you separated for years, if not indefinitely."

"Who is we?" Khan asked.

"My parents," Francis didn't hide anything, "Many factions inside my family, and a big part of Monica's family."

Khan already knew that the ploy involved many prominent figures, but that confirmation didn't sound any easier to accept. The Headmistress had warned him about those consequences, and they had finally arrived.

"Details," Khan reminded. "Describe the kind of pressure you wanted to apply."

Francis hesitated, but looking at Khan was scarier, so he eventually spoke. "We have many specialists on our side, and they are all willing to diagnose Monica with trauma-related illnesses. Some-."

Francis interrupted his line, but Khan wouldn't let him fall silent. "Continue."

"S-some," Francis stammered, "Some involve abuse and violence on your side."

Monica snorted angrily but didn't add anything. It made sense for the interested factions to target Khan, and his recent video could also help create the picture of a violent man.

"Your chances of forcing her hand were slim at best," Khan commented.

"We counted on an unbecoming reaction on her side too," Francis explained. "We only needed enough to involve higher-ups."

"Or my side, I suppose," Khan guessed.

"Kha-," Francis lifted his gaze and decided to correct his line. "Captain Khan, I swear, I never planned to involve you in this."

The statement surprised Khan, even if his face showed no trace of that feeling. Francis had spoken the truth, which didn't make much sense. In theory, Khan was the weakest link in that political situation, so the families shouldn't hesitate to target him.

"Tell me," Khan left that topic for later. "Did you obtain the unbecoming reaction you sought?"

Francis hesitated, but that reaction alone was enough for Khan. Francis timidly looked at Monica, but her cold stance made him focus on the table before uttering something bound to make the couple angry.

"Maybe," Francis responded. "It will depend on Monica's family."

Khan calmly drank from his glass and reviewed the new information. For once, it seemed people didn't want to mess with him, but he remained involved. Those factions were coming after his girlfriend now.

"I want to talk with these factions," Khan eventually announced. "Arrange something."

"What?" Francis gasped.

"Do your ears have issues?" Khan asked.

"N-no," Francis shook his head. "I'll reunite with them and convey your wish."

"No, you'll say here," Khan explained. "You are my prisoner now."

"C-captain, I-," Francis stammered.

"I want a meeting with the representatives of these factions," Khan interrupted. "Face to face. They can have you back once we have talked."

"But-!" Francis attempted to complain, but Khan had only threats for him.

"I can always send them your head in a box if you don't like these arrangements," Khan declared, and Francis lost any desire to speak.

"Leave now," Khan ordered, pointing at one of the corridors stretching from the hall. "Take the bedroom on the right. You aren't allowed outside unless I say so."

Francis could see that Khan was an unbreakable wall. Nothing would get past him now, and he was willing to use violence to fulfill his goals. Francis had to stand up and approach the corridor, but a tinge of resolve flared inside him and made him turn before he could leave the array of couches.

"Monica," Francis called as desperation and courage fused on his face, "Believe me when I say that I only want your well-being. I-, I love you. I always have."

The sudden declaration had no deeper meaning. The situation felt like a permanent goodbye, so Francis wanted to speak before it was too late. However, Monica wouldn't give him the answer he hoped to receive.

"Your feelings flatter me," Monica showed her impeccable, elegant manners while placing a hand on Khan's leg. "However, my body and heart belong to Khan. I hope we can remain friends."

Francis looked at Khan, but the latter had never moved his eyes from the couch before him. It almost seemed that the matter didn't concern Khan. He calmly drank as if he knew the outcome.

"I understand," Francis whispered before hurrying outside the hall and entering the appointed corridor. The sound of a metal door sliding close eventually resounded, marking the end of that strange night.

"Can you really imprison him?" George asked while drinking from the bottle that the guard had salvaged.

"I don't care about what I can do anymore," Khan stated, allowing himself to relax a bit and lying deeper on the couch. "If they want him back, they must show their faces."

"Sounds like a plan," George chuckled.

Khan couldn't help but glance at George. He was clearly not fine, but his mana was more lively than usual.

"Did you have fun?" Khan asked.

"A bit," George snickered, nodding toward the guard. "The guy here hit me good. I should carry my sword around more often."

"I apologize for attacking you, Mister Ildoo," The guard uttered. "Though, your swordsmanship deserves praise."

"I was just waving my hand randomly," George scoffed. "It's not real swordsmanship without a sword, but I guess I can say the same about your lack of spells."

"Mister Alstair had only ordered us to restrain you," The guard reminded.

"Pity," George sighed. "You do look decent."

"You," Khan recalled, lifting his head to look at the guard behind him. "What's your name?"

The guard entered the array of couches and crossed the table before Khan to give him a clearer view. The man had reached the middle-age, but his face carried no wrinkles. His brown eyes were firm and focused, and his short black hair had no grey strands. He was also quite burly, even if his suit tried to hide that.

"Andrew Durarel, sir," The guard stated, performing a military salute. "At your service, sir."

"Andrew, what's your story?" Khan questioned.

"I come from a small family, sir," Andrew explained. "I served in multiple places and some battlefields, Ecoruta included. The Alstair family eventually acknowledged my talent and hired me."

'Right,' Khan recalled. "How much did they pay you?"

"Twenty thousand Credits a month," Andrew revealed.

'The private sector sure pays well,' Khan thought. That sum was far higher than his Captain's allowance and matching it was the wise move. Loyalty issues could arise otherwise.

"I'll pay you twenty-five a month," Khan declared. "Is that acceptable?"

"I'm flattered, sir," Andrew voiced. "Thank you, sir."

"Don't mention it," Khan exclaimed. "Your first job is to take care of Mister Alstair. Make sure he stays in his room and gets enough food. I'll deal with the contract tomorrow."

"As you wish, sir," Andrew responded and turned to reach Francis' corridor. There was another bedroom there, so the guard wouldn't have problems finding a place to sleep.

"You have become rich," George teased.

"A family offers benefits I don't have," Khan explained. "Increasing his pay is necessary."

"Quite the politician," George smirked, but writings lit up on the wall and distracted him from that conversation.

'The doctor,' Khan thought and began to stand up, but Monica pressed on his leg to interrupt his action and take care of that guest.

Monica hurried toward the elevator room, granting Khan a clear line of sight with George. The latter showed a meaningful smile that carried lewd jokes Khan understood perfectly but chose to ignore.

George's smirk disappeared when Monica, a middle-aged woman, and Anita entered the main hall. George immediately stood up, but the abrupt gesture made him groan in pain and cough some blood on his hand.

"Are you okay?" Anita gasped, hurrying to George's side.

"It's only a scratch," George reassured, wiping the blood on his casual clothes. "I'll be fine after a good night of sleep."

"The doctor will decide that," Anita scolded, stealing the bottle from George's hand and leaving it on the table.

"I'm certain I can drink," George said.

"That's never a good option if medications are required," The doctor stated, adjusting her small glasses before browsing through her bag.

George wanted to complain, but Anita's puppy eyes carried genuine worry. She probably also wanted an explanation, which was bound to get in the way of a night spent drinking with friends.

"Let's do this in my flat," George sighed. "Khan, I'm leaving early."

"I'll see you tomorrow," Khan responded, fully understanding what was happening. He wanted to show a friendly smile too, but his domineering stance had yet to wear off.

George tried to take the bottle during his departure, but one glare from Anita made him put it back on the table. The couple and the doctor eventually left, and silence fell in the main hall.

Monica didn't immediately return to the couch. She played with the flat's menus to close Francis' corridor and isolate that side of the habitation. Privacy spread in the main hall, and Monica calmly reached Khan's side to regain her elegant posture.

Khan couldn't help but heave a tired sigh. That night had finally ended, but its consequences were bound to stretch through the entire week or more. He also had to think about Raymond's call and contents, which didn't hint at anything good.

'At least this statement should go a long way,' Khan thought.

Khan's domineering behavior had not been entirely natural. It aligned with his feelings, but he had exploited his lying skills and sensitivity to enhance it. That character was basically a persona that reflected an unreasonable side of Khan's personality. He didn't like it, but it was better than killing.

"What's up with you?" Khan asked, turning to look at Monica. "You are awfully quiet."

Monica had begun to show her true colors now that they were alone, but Khan had long since sensed the reactions of her mana. She was a mess of happiness and arousal. Still, she was holding back for fear of ending that incredible scene.

"I saw you ready to fight," Khan continued, reaching for Monica's cheek. "You know you shouldn't use your element here. It's too dangerous."

Monica remained silent and snuggled in Khan's palm until his thumb entered her range. She took it into her mouth, and her tempting eyes returned to Khan while wet sensations invaded him.

"Oh," Khan voiced, leaving his drink on the table before pulling Monica closer. Monica gasped at the sudden gesture, but no complaints resounded. Her eagerness intensified, and the thumb in her mouth experienced part of it.

"I wonder," Khan feigned ignorance. "What should I do with you?"

Monica let the thumb escape her mouth and kissed it before speaking tempting whispers. "My Captain can do anything he wants with me. I'm his to use as he wishes."

"Is that so?" Khan asked, bringing Monica onto his lap. She was ready to explode, but Khan was in control, so he let her boil and pant above him until he couldn't take it anymore.

Chapter 514 Hostage

Buzzing noises disturbed the nightmare and awakened Khan. He opened his eyes, but his vision was hazy. A cozy feeling also invaded his senses, tempting him to go back to sleep.

Still, the phone never stopped buzzing, and a cute groan joined that sound, bringing new energy to Khan's mind. He snapped up, sitting on the mattress while some mental exhaustion showed its presence. He felt drained, and an explanation arrived when the haziness dispersed.

Khan rubbed his eyes before the messiest bed he had ever seen unfolded in his vision. The blankets had disappeared, and a big part of the mattress was uncovered. He also spotted a pillow in the corner of the room while the heavy scent of sex invaded his nostrils.

The scene made Khan a bit proud and looking at the naked figure on his right intensified that feeling. Monica was sleeping belly down, without anything covering her beauty, and pieces of her beautiful face peeked past her curls.

The relentless buzzing forced Khan to lean past the mattress and grab his phone. Countless calls and messages had reached his device, with many coming from the Headmistress. That reaction wasn't surprising considering the previous night's events, but Khan had no intention of dealing with that just yet.

Khan silenced the phone and left it in the corner of the mattress before lying over Monica. He grabbed her waist to pull her closer while immersing his head in her curls. When Khan found her cheek, he kissed it and smiled at the loving moan it caused.

"I can't feel my legs," Monica whined.

"That's because you have been a good girl," Khan whispered to Monica's ear.

"Was I?" Monica innocently asked.

"Yes," Khan confirmed. "So, rest a little longer."

"I want to be with you," Monica complained, but a soft slap landed on her butt and made her gasp.

"Stay," Khan said in a firmer tone. "I have things to handle."

"Yes, Captain," Monica giggled and slightly lifted her head to let Khan kiss her. She returned to the mattress afterward, and Khan straightened his back while running a hand through her hair.

Khan couldn't hold back from prolonging that caress when he touched Monica's neck. He ran his fingers across her back, and another proud smile appeared when he noticed the faint bite mark on her butt.

'Maybe I exaggerated,' Khan wondered before dismissing that thought. The night had been too great to regret it. Besides, he had done worse with Liiza, and Monica had clearly been into it.

Khan shook his head and crawled out of bed to escape that tempting sight. He had silenced his phone, but those calls were still there, and he needed to address them before giving in to his desires again.

Finding underwear or pants in the messy room was impossible, so Khan retrieved his phone and went into another area to get a clean uniform. The main hall was his next destination, and entering it showed some missing clothes.

Khan rubbed his eyes again before limping toward the array of couches. He found Monica's underwear on the floor, and her socks were on the table. Monica's bra had ended under a seat, and her tracksuit had reached the other side of the room for some reason.

Tapping on the floor a few times activated the cleaning functions. Three rectangular drawers opened in different areas of the hall and released robots. Those machines dealt with the dirt, spots, and dust while Khan retrieved all the clothes he could find.

The process took a few minutes, and Khan merely threw the retrieved clothes into another bedroom before moving on with his next task. He unlocked Francis' corridor, and the metal wall slid open to reveal a familiar figure.

"I should have been more specific," Khan admitted seeing Andrew standing firmly before Francis' bedroom. It was clear that the guard didn't go to sleep at all, which was theoretically in line with Khan's orders.

"Mister Alstair didn't leave his room all night, sir," Andrew reported.

"Good job," Khan stated. "Follow me."

Khan led Andrew into the main hall and pointed at a couch before sitting down. Andrew decided to remain on his feet and perform a military salute, and Khan only nodded at him before making a call.

"Captain, you finally called!" Jenny's voice came out of the phone. "The situation needs your immediate-."

"Jenny, not now," Khan interrupted. "I have another pressing task."

"What is it, Captain?" Jenny asked, even if her tone carried the anxiety caused by the previous night's events.

"Can you handle contracts?" Khan questioned. "I need to hire someone."

"Is he by any chance Mister Alstair's guard?" Jenny questioned.

'Rumors spread fast,' Khan thought before speaking. "Indeed. His name is Andrew Durarel. I'd rather complete this now."

"I can send a universal form with your data," Jenny revealed, "But the Alstair's contracts require-."

"Mister Alstair will rescind his contract to his family," Khan interrupted again.

A few silent seconds had to pass before Jenny spoke again. "As you wish, Captain. I'll send the form to your phone."

The call ended, and a new message arrived right away. Khan sent its contents to the flat before summoning some holograms. A standard contract appeared between Khan and Andrew, and the two immediately began to fill it.

Khan didn't have much to write. He only had to insert the previously agreed remuneration. As for the contract's length, he set it to one year to be safe.

Once the two were done, Khan sent the contract to Francis' room and waited. He didn't know whether Francis was asleep or hesitant about the matter, but a signed version of the form returned in a mere minute. Everything was in order now, and Khan forwarded the document before checking his profile.

Those official procedures were public, and the network updated quickly, so Khan could immediately confirm Andrew's employment. He now had a guard who made his monthly expenses way heavier.

"You can rest now," Khan announced once the matter ended. "If you need food, just order it from the room. As for the drinks, almost any drawer in this flat has some."

"Sir, I can keep guarding Mister Alstair," Andrew stated.

"There is no need," Khan firmly reassured. "I'll be here anyway. Now, go."

Andrew didn't argue anymore. He relaxed and reperformed his military salute before entering Francis' corridor and picking a random bedroom. Khan isolated that area again afterward but didn't forget to give Andrew special authorizations inside the flat.

'Now,' Khan thought while skimming through the many messages to get an idea of the situation.

The streets had cameras, so Francis' arrival didn't go completely unnoticed. The Headmistress and families had prevented videos from reaching the network, but it was only a matter of time before the public learnt about those events.

Of course, Lucian and the other wealthy descendants had special channels, and their parents didn't like to remain in the dark. That political incident was relevant for many reasons, and the messages on Khan's phone conveyed that general interest.

'It's not completely out yet,' Khan thought. 'I can use that.'

It was still morning. The lessons had begun, but attending them wasn't an option during the current crisis. Still, Khan didn't know how long his leverage would last or if he even had any, so his next call began to address the issue.

"How dare you answer just now?!" Headmistress Holwen's loud voice came out of Khan's phone. "This is insubordination on multiple levels! Release Mister Alstair at once!"

"Mister Alstair stays here until I meet the interested parties," Khan responded.

"I'm not playing around, Captain," Headmistress Holwen exclaimed. "This is a direct order. Release him immediately!"

"Ma'am, I'm afraid he might fall from the stairs so early in the morning," Khan joked.

"It's midday," Headmistress Holwen stated, "And your building doesn't have stairs."

"Then," Khan said as his tone lost any trace of emotions, "I'm afraid he might fall headfirst on my knife."

Silence unfolded. The Headmistress had seen the footage but didn't expect Khan to answer like that. She was his superior inside the Harbor, but he was explicitly disobeying her orders.

"You are playing a dangerous game, Captain," The Headmistress eventually uttered.

"I'm not playing," Khan responded. "They came after my girlfriend while I wasn't there, and you gave them that window."

"I warned you," Headmistress Holwen reminded. "I told you many families have their eyes on Monica Solodrey. The Alstair family is only the first to make a move."

"And I will use it as a statement," Khan answered, "So that no one else gets any strange idea about my girlfriend or me."

"Your achievements must have made you delusional," Headmistress Holwen uttered. "The families have access to high-level warriors that I can't stop, let alone you."

"If they come," Khan announced, "I can still take the entire district with me."

"You are joking," Headmistress Holwen said, even if her voice lost part of its power.

"Am I?" Khan questioned. "Ma'am, take a good look at my profile. You know I can and will if cornered."

"This is terrorism," The Headmistress commented.

"I don't care what you call it," Khan declared. "I only care about protecting what I have."

Silence unfolded again. The statement sounded like a bluff, but the Headmistress wasn't ready to call it. Khan wasn't exactly predictable, and the recent events were bound to add fuel to the resolve she had seen in a past meeting.

"Ma'am, I know you can't take sides," Khan eventually continued, opting for a calmer tone. "I'm not asking you to. Still, I have Monica's parents on my side, at least publicly, and multiple descendants' support. You can stay out of this without labeling me as a traitor."

The Headmistress' obligations began and ended with the Harbor. She only had to maintain stability, and forcing Khan to free Francis was the simplest and most immediate solution.

However, that wasn't the Headmistress' only option. She could easily play both sides and let Khan do his game. That approach wouldn't make her look too good, but the alternative also had problems since the Alstair family could ask for reparations.

"A hostage and my silence can't buy you much time," Headmistress Holwen explained. "You need real pressure to make this go how you want to."

"I'll deal with that this very night," Khan promised. "I only need you to keep my profile clean."

Khan added a respectful "ma'am" after a few seconds. He was angry at the Headmistress but also understood her position. He was even asking another favor, and threatening to blow up the entire district wasn't the way to do it.

"You are a magnet for trouble, Captain," Headmistress Holwen declared. "I'm starting to wonder why I'm even helping you."

"I might have a lead on Mister Chares' organization," Khan decided to reveal.

"You do?" The Headmistress didn't hide her interest. "Tell me."

"I refuse," Khan replied. He wouldn't know how to explain Raymond's call, and that information was leverage. Luckily for Khan, the Headmistress was savvy enough to understand the second part.

"Very well," Headmistress Holwen exclaimed. "I'll stay out of this as long as possible, but you should hurry. I'll personally open your flat's doors if they corner me."

"Thank you, Headmistress," Khan uttered. "I'll repay this favor one day."

"You shouldn't worry about what you owe me," Headmistress Holwen warned. "You should mind what you are about to promise."

Khan nodded, even if the Headmistress couldn't see him. Still, that didn't matter since Headmistress Holwen closed the call, leaving Khan with his thoughts.

'An interview might buy me more time,' Khan considered revealing the previous night's events to the public, 'But it might also antagonize potential allies.'

Revealing private information about Francis and his plan would show that Khan wouldn't hesitate to ignore the families' privileges. Involving the public in the matter might improve his image but ruin potential relationships with the forces that could genuinely help him.

'It's not big enough anyway,' Khan sighed. 'I need the other descendants and that.'

Khan put his phone aside to play with the flat's menus. New holograms soon appeared before him to depict Honides. Raymond had basically told him to fly there, but the eleventh quadrant didn't feature anything special.

'Can I justify a trip there?' Khan wondered.

Khan stared at the holograms for a few minutes while various thoughts occupied his mind, and his eyes didn't move even when Monica entered the main hall. Still, a plaid pattern eventually appeared in the corner of his vision and distracted him from that topic.

"How do I look, dear?" Monica asked, slightly lifting the corners of her plaided red skirt to perform a bow. She had worn black tights and a jersey too, creating a simple but elegant look ruined only by her messy hair.

"Dear?" Khan couldn't help but repeat.

"I might have called you my fiancé yesterday," Monica revealed, brimming with excitement as she sat at Khan's side. "If I'm going to be your wife, I need practice."

Khan smiled, pulling Monica on his shoulder and placing a hand on her chin to tease her properly. "Are you letting your imagination run wild again?"

"Always," Monica whispered, "Until it's not my imagination anymore."

"What's next on your vision then?" Khan asked.

"Being a woman worthy of you," Monica responded. "Both in appearance and behavior."

The statement explained the elegant attire, but Monica wasn't done. "I still have to fix my hair, but I'm waiting for our bath. Did I make the right decision, Captain?"

"You did," Khan nodded. "I must watch you closely. Otherwise, I'd worry your legs would give up at the wrong time."

"You must hold me very tightly," Monica giggled, and the two fell into a long kiss.

The current crisis and the previous night's outburst allowed the couple to hold back their passion. When the kiss ended, the two focused on the holograms, but Monica spoke words that had nothing to do with them.

"I can't see my parents being in the dark about yesterday," Monica declared. "They didn't warn us on purpose."

"Did they hope Francis took you away?" Khan asked.

"I'm not sure," Monica admitted. "It might have been a test."

"The test isn't over," Khan reassured, kissing Monica's head before leaving the couch. "We can't stop them from coming at us, but I can give them a taste of the consequences."

Monica stood up and followed Khan as he limped around the table with the holograms. She recognized Honides but seeing Khan highlighting and zooming in on the eleventh quadrant confused her.

"Why Honides?" Monica eventually asked.

"Raymond called," Khan revealed. "He basically told me to go there."

"Raymond?!" Monica gasped. "What did he want?"

"I can't possibly imagine what he wants," Khan sighed. "That's what he said."

"Do you think it's Nak-related again?" Monica questioned.

"I would have sensed it," Khan guessed, "Probably. Still, I think it's related to Mister Chares. That's what Raymond tried to hint at."

Monica's confusion deepened, but only on specific topics. She didn't question how Raymond knew about Khan's missions or the criminal organization. The man had access to a Nak's hand. Illegal activities were nothing in comparison.

"Why is he trying to help you so badly?" Monica wondered. "There is only so much he can do before it becomes suspicious."

"I become suspicious," Khan corrected. According to the network, he was terrific, and the reality was really close to that evaluation. However, a major feat accomplished randomly would solidify the hypothesis that Khan had something to do with those criminals.

"You can't take this bait so openly," Monica warned, continuing to trail behind Khan.

"I can get a few additional tasks the next time they send me on Honides," Khan suggested, "With one casually close to the eleventh quadrant. At worst, I'll say I was using the storms to condition my skin."

"That," Monica exclaimed before hesitating a few seconds, "Can work, but take someone with you. Mister Durarel is perfect for the job."

"I'll consider that," Khan promised, even if Andrew had no place in those tasks. After all, they were classified missions set directly by the Harbor's specialists, and only Khan could fly relatively freely among Honides' storms.

"Do you want me to send invitations for tonight?" Monica changed the topic.

"I need you for Anita and Lucy," Khan nodded. "Maybe I should leave all the women to you."

"It's for the best," Monica agreed.

"Another study session where no one will study," Khan joked. "I also need to check on George."

"We need," Monica corrected. "He might have had his reasons, but his actions still helped me."

"The doctor probably told him to stop drinking until he healed," Khan chuckled. "He'll need us."

Monica laughed at that comment, and the two continued to walk around the table a bit longer. Yet, Khan eventually stopped in his tracks.

"Monica," Khan called while his eyes remained on the holograms.

"Yes?" Monica replied.

"Why are you following me?" Khan asked, peeking past his shoulder and noticing the intensity of the icy-blue eyes fixed on him.

"I can't stop if I see you," Monica responded, taking her cheeks in her hands. "I'm burning already."

Khan couldn't find the strength to scold Monica. She looked too excited and happy about her feelings to stop them. In a way, that extreme mood was the perfect match for Khan's love, and he wouldn't dare to suppress it.

Chapter 515 Friends

As much as Khan wanted to attend Professor Parver's private lesson that night, he had to prioritize the study session to reinforce his political stability. Moving with Francis inside his flat also wasn't ideal, so Monica helped him send invitations to his classmates for the meeting.

Everyone was eager to learn more about the matter. Khan's phone threatened to explode whenever he allowed it to ring, so he found no surprise seeing his classmates accepting the invitations. Even Lucy agreed to come, clearing the last variable about that night.

Monica put more effort than before into the preparations for the meeting. Khan was basically about to ask favors, and the Solodrey family had educated her for those occasions. She rearranged the

main hall, ordered food, and even forced the robotic cleaning services to work overtime to make everything perfect.

That additional effort risked giving away Khan's intentions before he had a chance to speak, but Monica knew how to balance things out. She kept the general setting casual and welcoming without going under the standards proper of wealthy descendants.

That process continued even after Khan and Monica had a long and lovely bath together. Monica personally handpicked Khan's clothes, which consisted of simple trousers and a casual turtleneck that gave him a dignified vibe. She also made sure to match his presence with her shirt dress and short heels before the inevitable wait began.

As dinnertime arrived, the flat warned the couple about the arrival of the first round of guests. Khan and Monica immediately headed for the elevator room, but reading their identity on the menus made her step back to stand on the backlines.

An athletic figure with short black curls and dark skin appeared once the elevator opened. Lucy stood tall inside the lift, but some hesitation arrived when she noticed Khan.

"Thank you for coming, Lucy," Khan announced, ignoring that faint awkwardness. "You are the first to arrive."

"I came early on purpose," Lucy revealed, stepping out of the elevator and joining her hands above her waist. "I stand by my past words, but I expressed myself poorly. I wanted to use this chance to apologize."

Khan honestly didn't care about the matter. He actually respected Lucy more because she had dared to accuse him. Yet, he needed people to acknowledge his status, so he couldn't dismiss the event completely.

"I understand my recent exploits have odd coincidences," Khan stated, "But that shouldn't undermine all my efforts for the Global Army."

"You are completely right," Lucy responded. "My tone was out of place."

"It's all good," Khan nodded before glancing at Monica behind him. "Well, almost."

"Monica," Lucy gasped, hurrying toward Monica. "Allow me to apologize to you too. I meant no disrespect to you, your family, or your partner. I'd like to blame the video, but my behavior remains unbecoming."

Monica was different from Khan. She didn't have to enforce her status on others because her family already claimed general respect, so her reply featured kinder tones.

"It's alright," Monica uttered. "I should also apologize for reacting so rudely. I can't think straight when Khan is involved."

"I guess we are both unbecoming of our status," Lucy giggled, taking Monica's hands. "Yet, your position is understandable. I can't imagine what you had to overcome to be with Khan publicly."

"You were only pointing out the obvious," Monica said. "Your concerns toward our safety shouldn't be a matter of pride and respect."

"Why don't we put this behind us?" Lucy wondered. "If it's not too much to ask."

"Gladly," Monica exclaimed, and her eyes lit up when she recalled something. "Khan actually suggested a group date. It might give us a chance to relax."

"Khan suggested a date?" Lucy teasingly asked, turning toward Khan. "That's a tempting offer. I'm not sure I'm allowed to refuse it."

"I don't want to impose," Khan chuckled, reaching Monica's side to caress her cheek. "I only thought it could be a good opportunity to make her happy and know you better."

"I won't hide it," Lucy stated, letting go of Monica's hands. "My family pressed me to establish a good relationship with you, especially after the many rumors. Still, I'd very much like to keep things friendly."

"That's ideal for me too," Khan agreed before addressing another topic. "When you say rumors, do you mean what I shared last time?"

"That," Lucy nodded, "And last night's events. All the big figures paid good money and called in favors to get their hands on this district's recordings. Mister Alstair sure is a bold one."

"It was a predictable reaction," Monica sighed. "I'm only sorry it had to involve Khan."

"I'm not," Lucy giggled, fixing her tempting black eyes on Khan. "You told me about his protective side, but I never expected it could take such shapes. It was quite the intriguing watch."

Khan could sense Monica tensing up from the fingers on her cheek, but only a smile broadened on his face. Truth be told, he didn't know how to deal with that obvious interest without being disrespectful, especially when Monica was at his side.

"Lucy, stop looking at my boyfriend like that," Monica warned.

"Oh, my," Lucy laughed. "You do lose your cool when Khan is involved. I can't help but look forward to our date now."

"I have to step in here," Khan wore a fake smile and moved his hand on Monica's opposite shoulder to pull her closer. "Only I get to tease her."

"The boyfriend is no different," Lucy joked. "You make a good pair."

"We should get to drinking already," Khan suggested.

"But Khan," Lucy pressed on. "I've known Monica for years. I'm sure you'd be interested in learning about her many suitors."

Khan was about to turn, but those words made him stop, squint his eyes, and speak. "Keep talking."

"I was thinking about inviting Mark to our group date," Monica intervened. "It should be nice with just the four of us."

Lucy had to abandon her teasing stance at that suggestion, and the three exchanged meaningful glances before exploding into a laugh.

"Let's find an agreement tonight," Monica happily declared.

"I'm counting on you for those names," Khan reminded.

"Khan, I was joking," Lucy revealed. "Every man from every family is Monica's suitor."

Khan groaned, and the gesture made the two women laugh. The three entered the main hall on that happy note, and drinks flowed as they waited for the other guests returned.

More rounds of arrivals eventually unfolded. Lucian, Mark, and John were next, followed closely by Zoe and Marcia. Khan and Monica exchanged casual conversations with them before heading for the main hall, and everyone avoided the pressing topics to wait for the remaining guests.

Khan and Monica had a different approach when George and Anita arrived. As usual, the couple met their friends in the elevator room, but friendlier and more honest words resounded during their interaction.

"Anita, I'm glad you could make it," Khan welcomed before looking at George. "Are you any better?"

"Same as always," George scoffed. "Might as well cuff me and throw me in a cage."

"Anita!" Monica exclaimed, falling into a hug with her friend. "How are you feeling?"

"Monica, you know my reaction wasn't about Khan or you," Anita stated. "I just wished someone else had to face those dangers, and I still do."

"I share the feeling," Monica admitted, "But we don't always have that choice."

"We do," Anita pointed out before fixing her warm eyes on George, "But I guess it wouldn't be the same. I'm glad George acted like George."

"She likes you more than me," George added.

"Only an internal injury could stop him from drinking," Anita sighed.

"Technically," George voiced, but Anita's eyes immediately gained a scolding vibe and forced him to interrupt his line.

"How are you anyway?" Anita asked. "It must have been shocking to see Mister Alstair summon you so suddenly."

"I'm fine," Monica shook her head, separating from Anita. "George is the one who deserves your attention."

"I admit I received a lot of that," George revealed, and Anita showed a rare embarrassed face while diverting her gaze.

Monica and Khan didn't need to ask to understand what had happened. They could read that on their friends' faces, and seeing that things were still working out for them brought some happiness.

"Why don't we go inside?" Anita muttered. "Before the lost cause gets any strange idea."

"I only have strange ideas," George proudly claimed and laughs accompanied their walk into the main hall. Cheers arrived once they reunited with the other descendants, and more polite exchanges unfolded.

"We were so worried about you," Marcia exclaimed. "I hope everything is okay."

"Anita isn't the kind of woman to get discouraged so easily," Lucy commented.

"Maybe George is her weak spot," Zoe giggled. "You guys should pressure him a bit."

"We only talk business when we are all guys," Mark joked.

"Anita is on our not-to-mess-with list," John announced, leaning sideways on his couch to put his legs on its arm.

"We are simply glad everything is well," Lucian added. "Though compliments are mandatory. George, you were quite heroic last night."

"I was only having fun," George disregarded the praise while occupying an empty couch with Anita. He instinctively reached for a bottle nearby, but Anita's promptly seized his wrist and showed a scolding expression that made him give up.

"Are you blushing, Anita?" Zoe inquired. "I hope it involves George's well-deserved reward."

"Zoe, you are so lewd!" Marcia gasped.

"You are the most curious about all of this," Zoe pouted.

"It's always the quiet ones," Khan sighed.

"Khan, not you too!" Marcia complained.

"The Captain is finally getting used to us," Mark laughed.

"I suppose his girlfriend had a hand in that," Lucy guessed.

"I can hardly stop his jokes," Monica revealed. "Bear them for me, so I'll get him all serious later."

"You know I never have enough of teasing you," Khan stated, seizing Monica's hand to lead her to the last empty couch.

Monica showed no annoyance. She was happy to see Khan make those public statements, and their fingers remained entangled even after they sat down.

"I'm guessing Khan also received his reward," Zoe giggled.

"They are always like that," George revealed. "Lucian can confirm that."

"I admit I've seen a few surprising scenes," Lucian laughed. "Still, their chemistry is so good I'm almost envious."

"I get what you mean," Marcia uttered. "They almost came out of fairy tales."

"If we don't count the political hurdles and other struggles," Lucy added.

"Which I wish they didn't face," Anita sighed. "However, things would have been impossible if Khan wasn't who he was."

Anita lightly bumped into George's shoulder after her comment, and he understood that subtle message. His arm went around her shoulders to wrap her into a hug that she timidly accepted.

"Speaking of which," John exclaimed, putting a cigarette into his mouth. "You two went crazy last night, especially you, Khan."

"Problems sure arrived at the worst possible time," Mark said, "But your response was commendable."

"It was quite despotic," Marcia admitted.

"And necessary," Lucian added. "Khan doesn't deserve such disrespect."

"I'm with Lucian here," Zoe stated. "You don't go after someone else's girlfriend."

"We all know there is more to that," Mark pointed out.

"Indeed," Lucy agreed. "We wouldn't be here craving information otherwise."

"Yeah, we want details," John announced, blowing up the cigarette's smoke above him. "Share the secrets of your coolness."

Anita remained outside those requests since George had already updated her a bit. Yet, she remained curious about other details, especially the sealed corridor in the hall's back.

"So," Khan spoke, bringing all the attention to him, "You have all seen the footage."

"Our families got to work as soon as the commotion spread," Mark explained.

"I'm sure you understand how big the event is," Lucian added.

"My parents called me in the middle of the night," Marcia revealed.

"Our entire class probably knows already," Zoe stated.

"Which is good," John declared. "Everyone knows not to mess with you now."

"Do they?" Khan asked. "I feel these attempts won't stop unless I do something radical."

"What do you have in mind?" Zoe asked. "You can't marry Monica yet, no matter how much she wants it."

"Zoe, don't expose me," Monica pretended to be embarrassed. "Khan and I plan to wait anyway."

"You could use Monica's birthday to announce your relationship properly," Lucy suggested. "It's soon, isn't it?"

"In three weeks," Khan confirmed. "Yet, I don't want to use the event to bolster my position. I'd rather make the day about her."

"So romantic," Marcia gasped.

"Don't fall for him," Monica warned before showing her needy face at Khan. "Don't stop either."

"I'm actually in trouble," Khan laughed. "I'm struggling to find an appropriate present. Can you girls help out?"

Anita, Zoe, Marcia, and Lucy instantly showed excitement, but Monica quickly poured cold water on it. "You are not going on a date with all of them, especially alone."

"What do you want then?" Khan asked.

"A mark of ownership," Monica's eyes lit up before quickly correcting her line. "I meant belonging. I want something that makes everyone know I'm yours."

"I don't know anything about jewels," Khan admitted, ignoring the gasps surrounding him, "And your mother will kill me if you get a tattoo."

"I was thinking about a ring," Monica revealed, showing her left hand and lifting her fourth finger. "Something to put here."

Everyone in the room knew what Monica meant, even Khan. He knew the problems that could arise, but Monica looked too excited to reject her.

"I hope you won't mind me dying the next day," Khan joked.

"It's just a ring," Monica feigned innocence but still took Khan's arm in her hug.

"I said they are a married couple," George commented.

"I gave up on them," Anita sighed.

"As happy as I am for you," Mark stated, "I think we have more pressing matters to discuss."

"Mark, don't interrupt them," John complained. "Every move he makes is a priceless lesson."

"The night is still young," Lucian said. "We can allow ourselves to take it easy."

"No, Mark is right," Khan responded. "I do have pressing matters to attend to and would really appreciate your suggestions."

"To do that," Lucy exclaimed, "We first need to know the whole situation."

"Especially regarding our common friend," Lucian added, looking past his couch to eye the sealed corridor. "Is Mister Alstair still here?"

"He is," Khan directly revealed. "I'll keep him here until I get a meeting with the factions involved with last night's crisis."

"Fuck around and find out," John snickered. "The guy deserves to be in that position."

"John, it's not so simple," Mark scolded. "Khan, with all due respect, I'm not sure a meeting is enough to discourage similar ploys."

"It might actually open the way for more of them," Lucy declared.

"It's so sad," Marcia sighed.

"It's the weight of the Solodrey name," Zoe commented. "I'm sure they both expected something like that to happen."

"Still, there are proper ways to do it," Anita responded, showing some anger. "Starting a fight in the Harbor is too much."

"Khan, what do you plan to do with him?" Lucian forced the conversation to stay on topic. "His actions have been out of line, but he remains an influential descendant."

"Honestly," Khan exclaimed, wearing a cold face when his gaze fell on the sealed corridor, "I'm pretty sure I'll have to kill him. The interested factions won't take me seriously otherwise."

A tense silence suddenly filled the hall. Happiness had reigned until now, but a single comment from Khan destroyed all of that. Besides, his face matched his words, and his history corroborated them too. Everyone instantly believed that he would stay true to his statement.

"Quite hardcore," John broke the tension. "I like it."

"John, don't joke about it," Mark scolded. "Mister Alstair is our friend, and a murder like this is bound to cause more problems. Khan, I know you must feel angry, but violence can't get you out of this."

"That's why I'm asking for your opinions," Khan explained. "Realistically, I only know how to kill compared to all of you. Might as well put that into use."

"Khan, problems wouldn't just disappear," Lucian warned. "Murdering Mister Alstair would label you as a criminal. You'd get apprehended in no time."

"So?" Khan questioned. "Should I just kill everyone involved in the ploy? I'm sure using Mister Alstair will eventually grant me a meeting with them."

The group didn't know how to take those statements. Khan was talking about killing as if it were no different than drinking. That terrifying mindset was his normality, and his classmates finally accepted it.

Eyes darted left and right. The descendants tried to look for George, but he shared Khan's cold stance. He had also prepared Anita accordingly, so she kept her head lowered to avoid those stares.

"Monica, can't you say something?" Marcia couldn't contain herself. "Killing is-."

"I know how bad it looks," Monica admitted. "However, we weren't the offenders. They came after me without minding my parents' announcement. I'd rather pursue less extreme paths, but I'm not sure we have many options."

"Would you condone Khan's actions?" Lucy questioned.

"He is a hero of multiple battlefields," Monica declared. "He learnt to kill because the Global Army asked him to, and now the families are playing with him. To speak the truth, I'm quite livid myself."

"But, Khan," Mark muttered, "You'll lose everything if you pursue this approach. The only way out is political."

"I considered that," Khan revealed, "But these factions are massive and powerful. I'm sure part of Monica's family is also involved. I'd need equally influential figures behind me to talk on an even ground."

Mark and the others saw the meaning behind those words. That was the very purpose of the meeting. Khan wasn't looking for opinions. He wanted those descendants to support him publicly to scare away the other factions.

"Let's be honest for a bit," Khan continued. "I know most of you aren't here because you like me. I don't care about that. I actually accept it."

Khan altered his presence to make the synthetic mana convey his seriousness. The air thickened as the tension intensified. Khan was speaking as calmly as possible, but his words still sounded like a threat.

"Yet, if you want me as a friend," Khan added. "You know what I need."

Chapter 516 Factions

The atmosphere changed, invaded by a suffocating tension. That wasn't a casual event driven by social rules anymore. With a few words, Khan had turned the entire situation political.

Lucian, Lucy, Mark, and the other guests stopped being casual acquaintances and became proper descendants capable of incredible influence. Khan had forced that transformation, and the changes didn't end there.

Murder was an unknown world to those descendants. They knew it existed, and their families had also prepared them for that eventuality. However, Khan had talked about killing someone who shared their status without showing any hesitation or regret.

Gulps resounded. Someone held their breath while others feigned calm. That wasn't the first time those descendants had to deal with political issues, but their meetings had always involved fellow young prominent figures or people interested in their families. Those interactions didn't allow much freedom, let alone consequences.

Instead, Khan was forcing the descendants to consider the issue on a personal level. They would have to take a stand against any family ready to get in the way of his relationship. Still, that decision could happen only if they accepted to deal with someone bordering psychopathy.

Cloaking techniques activated. Mark, Lucian, and Lucy tried to hide their mana and reactions, but nothing escaped Khan's senses. He saw everything and kept track of the slightest ripples in the symphony while his face remained stone-cold.

In the seconds that followed the announcement, Khan excluded a few descendants from his potential helpers. Marcia was too insecure about the matter, and something told Khan that she disagreed with his murderous stance.

The same went for Anita, even if her problems lay elsewhere. Her position was too unique due to her mother. Even if she tried to help, her family would get in the way.

Khan also excluded George from his list in advance. His father would probably help, but dumping such heavy problems on a smaller family would only sink it, and Khan didn't want that. He would refuse even if he could make things safer for them.

Only Zoe appeared ready to make a decision among the remaining candidates, and Khan understood why. She didn't like Khan's stance but still owed something to Monica due to her past flirting, so supporting their relationship felt mandatory and necessary.

Khan inspected the undecided descendants since everything else was quite clear. John had worn a surprisingly serious face, Mark was calculating something in his mind, Lucian appeared amused by the opportunity, and Lucy looked pensive.

"Khan," Lucian decided to break that silence, "Do you realize what you are asking us?"

"Partially," Khan admitted. "I can't tell you what to do because I don't know what's the best move."

Studying and knowing how to lie didn't make Khan a political powerhouse. He had grown way past his old self, but those descendants remained leagues above him. Only they could see the entire issue and learn how to handle it.

"Still," Lucian continued. "This is no mission or secret deal. Helping you would require us to involve our families or the influence we inherited from them."

"I thought you wanted valuable allies for your goals," Khan reminded. "Do you plan on getting them through simple missions financed by pocket money?"

Lucian's pocket money was an unthinkable number of Credits for Khan, but that wasn't the point. Lucian wanted allies able to push him to the upper echelon of his family, and Khan couldn't become one of them by completing his simple missions.

"Is that what you'll become if I help you?" Lucian wondered. "A valuable ally?"

Khan didn't answer. Those descendants wouldn't help him for free, and his silence could be useful as long as he received better offers.

"Realistically speaking," Mark joined the conversation with his flat tone. "Completely stopping suitors is impossible. Our interference might have produced good results with a different partner, but Monica is a unique case."

"Mark is right," Lucy added. "While few factions are willing to go against us, they still exist. Also, we don't have the power to speak for the entirety of our families. The next ploy might very well come from one of us."

"Precisely," Mark nodded. "The best and most immediate way to deter ploys is to gain the Solodrey family's approval, not only Monica's parents'. A proper engagement is also a good option."

"Mister Alstair wouldn't have approached me without my family's permission," Monica stated. "As for the engagement, it would make me happy, but-."

"It's a bit too early," Khan interrupted, breaking his cold stance to nod at Monica, "And I'd rather not use it as a political move."

"Of all the riches people would get marrying me," Monica sighed. "You are the only man who would do it out of love."

"It's the only reason I need," Khan whispered, "The only reason I want."

Happiness invaded Monica, but sadness also arrived. Those problems were her fault, and Khan was paying the price. Since part of her family was also to blame, she could only hug his arm tightly and wait.

"I'm not sure we can interfere with the Solodrey family's internal conflicts," Mark brought the conversation back on topic. "It might actually be disrespectful for us to speak on the matter."

"I figured as much," Khan revealed. "That's why I considered murder. A few corpses are bound to work as a deterrent."

"The families won't get threatened by a Captain," Lucian announced. "Maybe it's time you take things a step further."

"Are you planning on taking Khan into your family?" Lucy scoffed. "They'll make him break up with Monica in no time."

"Depends on which faction he joins," Lucian stated, showing a knowing smirk, "And his contract."

"Lucian, I wouldn't speak such words if I were you," Monica warned.

"I was only suggesting," Lucian feigned innocence. "After all, Khan has yet to decide what he is willing to sacrifice."

"If it's possible," Khan chose to take the bait, "You only need to name a price."

"It's sort of possible," Lucian declared. "Still, Mark is right. You'd need a noble to make the families behave, and I'm sure Princess Edna didn't give you her contact."

'A noble?' Khan thought. 'That might not be impossible.'

"Fine!" John finally spoke, slamming his head on the couch and lifting his arms at the ceiling. "I'll help you."

"What?" Mark exclaimed, and many echoed his question. Even Khan couldn't help but feel surprised at that sudden statement.

"Khan will be a Major in a few years," John explained, "Lieutenant Colonel in ten. It would be stupid not to do a single interview for a similar ally."

"Think about your family," Mark scolded.

"They complain about anything I do anyway," John groaned, curling on the couch. "Besides, the Global Army is the families' first shield, and Khan earned many merits already. I say he deserves some help."

Lucian, Mark, and Lucy were ready to interrupt John. Letting him speak would endanger their position in the deal, but Khan knew that and acted to stop them.

"What do you mean by a single interview?" Khan promptly asked. "How can that even stop ploys against Monica and me?"

"That's easy," John announced. "You just have to appeal to the factions against Monica. I can praise your relationship while reassuring them at the same time."

"Should I turn them into allies?" Khan didn't understand.

"No, no," John snorted. "You must tell them how poor and politically unreliable you are. Those factions don't want Monica to gain any power inside her family, so her union with someone like that will work in their favor."

'Is he a genius?' Khan wondered, almost overwhelmed by his own incredulity.

John had mentioned something precious. Like Lucian, Monica was only one of the Solodrey family's descendants. There had to be factions that didn't support her, so discrediting her value would turn those enemies into allies.

"I'd still need to play both sides," Khan exclaimed as understanding invaded every corner of his mind. "I can't just bring Monica down."

"Isn't that normal?" John questioned. "That's the foundation of politics."

Lucian feigned calm, but his mana didn't lie. Mark and Lucy's reactions also added value to those explanations. John had spoken the truth. His maneuver could work. Khan only had to think about ways to implement it.

"John, you shouldn't agree to these requests so soon," Mark scolded again.

"Why not?" John asked. "I made up my mind, so I spoke."

"But you have to mind your surroundings," Lucian added. "This should be a joint decision if we really hope to help Khan."

"We represent different families," John casually replied. "Belonging to the same generation doesn't make us a joint force. Also, I'm sure you all want different levels of exposure."

"How much are you willing to expose yourself for Khan?" Lucy asked.

"I can't involve my family," John admitted, straightening his back to sit. "Among us, only Lucian and Mark can do that, but with heavy limitations. So, I'll just tell the truth and use the right keywords."

"I don't know what to say," Khan gasped. "Will you do this without asking anything in return?"

"You asked for a friend, right?" John wondered. "Right now, you are politically useless, so requesting anything is pointless. However, once you get a high rank and marry Monica, you'll gain a lot of value."

John didn't say a single lie during his statements, and Khan also noticed the absence of ill intentions. John's speech had been purely practical. His investment would be only a fraction of what he could gain.

Khan wanted to add something, but his phone rang, and an interesting name appeared on the screen. The timing was also odd. It didn't make sense for Luke to call him now without sending a single warning message.

Chapter 517 Idea

Monica relaxed her grip on Khan's arm when she read the caller's name. Khan reacted accordingly, slipping out of her hug to hold the phone with both hands. They knew that timing wasn't a coincidence, and Luke could even help a lot in their situation.

"I need to take this," Khan announced. "Excuse me."

Monica performed a reassuring nod when Khan looked at her. She even moved to the center of the couch when he stood up. With her in charge, the meeting was in good hands, so Khan limped out of the hall to attend to the call.

"Luke!" Khan answered the call when he entered the privacy of a bedroom. "I don't know if this is good or bad timing."

"I hope perfect timing," Luke responded, conveying pure friendliness. "It's been a while."

"I do try to reply to every message," Khan stated. "Things have just been messy lately."

"I'm well aware," Luke exclaimed. "Not a week goes by without receiving news about you."

"That's why you wanted me on your payroll," Khan reminded. "I'm not that cheap anymore."

"I expected nothing less from you," Luke declared. "I wasn't shocked even when Anastasia gave her public approval about you and Monica."

"Straight to the main topic," Khan commented.

"Would you prefer to chit-chat first?" Luke chuckled.

"No, I'm actually busy," Khan sighed.

"I figured," Luke uttered. "I'll get straight to the point then. Francis visited Monica last night and is currently in your flat."

Barely a day had passed since Francis' ploy, but Luke already knew everything. It was almost incredible how quickly news could spread, especially in those wealthy circles, but Khan couldn't feel surprised anymore.

"He is my prisoner," Khan explained. "If necessary, I'll use him as a hostage."

"I understand," Luke sighed. "What's your goal?"

"Preventing future threats to my relationship," Khan replied. "Ideally, stopping people from trying to mess with me completely."

"I don't know about the latter," Luke voiced, "But I suspected you needed help with the former. It's the reason I called."

"How would you help?" Khan questioned. He had yet to make up his mind about his future approach, so he needed to be sure that Luke wouldn't go against any possible plan.

"I'll state my complicity," Luke explained. "I'll say that I facilitated your relationship and even covered for it. I've also talked with Bruce, and we are on the same page."

"Wait," Khan called, suppressing any trace of surprise or gratitude. "Won't this create problems for you? This kind of public support will get you many enemies."

Khan wasn't only referring to the factions interested in Monica. Luke risked endangering his position inside his family due to such an unwise political decision.

"Monica's parents acknowledged you," Luke declared. "Even if that were a lie, my statement would play into it in the public eye. Her parents themselves would have to praise my foresight."

Understanding washed over Khan. Luke could pretend to have done Monica's parents a favor while also showing his public support for the relationship. His family couldn't condemn such a move.

"That's," Khan hesitated. He still had reservations about Luke, but his help was necessary, so he swallowed his lingering anger and spoke again. "What do you want for this?"

"As far as I recall," Luke exclaimed, "I owe you one."

"I'm not trading Martha for Monica," Khan warned.

"That's not what I meant," Luke sighed. "I've been useless on Milia 222, but the political world is my playground. Let me do this. You can decide whether we are even or not afterward."

Khan fell silent. Truth be told, he didn't know if he could refuse the offer. He needed all the help he could get, and Luke could be more influential than the descendants in the flat. Adding Bruce to the equation might even force everyone's hand.

"How is Martha doing?" Khan asked.

"She is great," Luke revealed. "She became a second-level warrior before reaching this space station. She also said she'll beat you up if you don't accept my offer."

"Monica will be happy to hear that," Khan smirked. "Thank you, Luke."

"Don't mention it," Luke uttered. "Between Milia 222, Martha, and Istrone, I feel I have something to prove."

"Bring my thanks to Bruce too," Khan mentioned before deciding to reveal something. "Also, your uncle called."

"Problems?" Luke snapped as his tone grew firmer.

"I'll let you know," Khan promised. "I have other matters to handle now."

"Keep me updated," Luke responded. "As for the previous topic, I suggest you check the network in a few hours."

Luke ended the call without waiting for Khan's additional thanks, but a faint smile still bloomed on his face. The relationships built in the years enlisted in the Global Army were bearing fruit, and Khan still had another option left.

The conversations in the main hall had never moved past the previous issue during Khan's call. Lucian, Lucy, and Mark were still complaining about John's independent decision, and Zoe had made things worse.

"I'm just saying we should be on the same page here," Lucian explained. "It won't do Khan any good to show a divided front."

"I wouldn't want to take anything from Khan anyway," Zoe stated, knowing what Lucian was trying to achieve. "I can't be Monica's friend and exploit her boyfriend at the same time."

"Thank you, Zoe," Monica exclaimed, sliding to the couch's edge to reach for Zoe's hand.

"But you are a descendant of the Brolon family first," Lucy pointed out. "I'm not against helping them, but I'd like us to agree on a plan."

"Especially considering potential repercussions," Mark added. "Our generation doesn't hold much power yet, but this choice might follow us for years. It's simply unwise to make rash decisions."

"And I'm telling you I already made up my mind," John snorted. "It doesn't take a genius to understand the potential benefits at stake."

"Are you trying to earn or be Khan's friend?" Lucian questioned. "You didn't make that point clear."

"You are just buying yourself time," Zoe complained. "If you are so against this, just refuse."

"I'm sure no one is against this," Lucian declared. "Khan is one of us, which is why I'm insisting so much on this point. Doing him a random favor is no different from treating him as a simple soldier."

"Man, you are so good with words," John praised. "Just help him and think about spinning the story in your favor later."

"Sadly, we can't be so careless," Mark sighed. "It's very likely that factions inside our families had their eyes on Monica too. Taking her side might make us fall out of favor."

"Thank you!" Lucian declared. "I thought everyone understood that, but apparently, a reminder of who we are was in order."

"Maybe this meeting was too sudden," Khan announced, returning inside the hall. "For that, I apologize."

"Is everything okay?" Monica asked, peeking past her couch and following Khan's return with her eyes.

"More than okay," Khan revealed, slowly limping back toward his previous seat. "Luke and Bruce will reveal how much they helped us on Milia 222."

Monica only needed those vague words to understand that she had to play along. She promptly gasped, letting go of Zoe's hand to reach Khan and speak fitting lines. "Really? But I thought we agreed on keeping that a secret."

"Your dear mother gave them the opportunity to speak due to her public approval," Khan explained through words meant for the entire room. "Luke said your parents might actually have to thank them for facilitating our relationship."

"Luke is so sweet," Monica praised, placing both hands on Khan's leg to improve her façade. "Remind me to call him later."

"I will," Khan nodded. "We'll call Bruce too to thank him properly."

"I also wonder how Martha is doing," Monica said. "We haven't talked in a while."

"According to Luke," Khan chuckled, "She threatened to beat me up."

"If it's Martha," Monica muttered, "I can let it slide."

"On which side are you?" Khan complained.

"Martha is our dear friend," Monica exclaimed, "So we are on her side."

"We," George coughed.

"Khan, wait a moment," Lucian intervened. "Are Luke and Bruce-?"

"Luke Cobsend and Bruce Eerly," Khan interrupted, regaining his cold stance and showing his face to the guests. "They supported Monica and me since our first kiss."

"Such gentlemen," Marcia commented.

"They are good friends," Khan agreed. "Apparently, the rumors reached them too, and Luke decided to help."

Lucian, Lucy, and Mark couldn't help but put an end to their discussions. John and Zoe were isolated cases that could be controlled under certain circumstances. However, Luke and Bruce were different. They weren't only outside the Harbor's reach. Their influence was on par, if not above, Monica's.

"I thought about the issue while I was in the other room," Khan revealed. "John is right. I need to play both sides to succeed in politics, so I have a suggestion."

"We are all ears," Mark stated.

"If you want to gain something out of this situation," Khan continued, "You can say that your support is necessary to prevent a tragedy."

"I suppose by revealing what you were willing to do to Mister Alstair," Lucian guessed.

"It would be the truth," Khan said, "At least partially. You would appear as the wise descendants keeping me in check while spreading rumors about my character. I can't see many factions approving my behavior, which is exactly what John mentioned."

"That's smart!" John laughed. "Pretending to be a ticking bomb to garner support from multiple sides. It's great."

"John, I appreciate your enthusiasm," Khan exclaimed. "However, make no mistake. I am a ticking bomb."

The statement sounded like a threat, and Khan let it rest for a few seconds before continuing. "I'm sure this isn't an easy decision, so why don't we call it a day? I know you want to talk without me, so go ahead."

As much as the descendants wanted to object, they felt forced to accept Khan's escape route. Even John and Zoe couldn't disregard the opportunity to reorganize their thoughts and evaluate the best method to support Khan's relationship.

Soon, only Khan, Monica, Anita, and George remained inside the hall. That night seemed to have reached its end, and most of the group was ready to relax. However, Khan had one last idea in mind.

"Guys," Khan called when he was about to return to his couch. "Hypothetically, how would someone contact a noble?"

Chapter 518 Boss

"Khan, the Princess can't help us here," Monica announced. "The Virrai family would stop her from speaking, and my family would intercept any request."

"It's not for the Princess," Khan remained vague. "Just tell me how it should be done."

"What do you have in mind?" George questioned.

"Maybe all my fighting wasn't for naught," Khan sighed before waving his phone at his friends to remind them about his question.

"It's not something we can do," Anita explained. "We don't have the authority to reach the nobles."

"Even my family has a special figure appointed for the process," Monica continued. "I couldn't learn much, but I know my parents have to refer to this middle-man if they ever have a request that involves the nobles."

'So, nothing,' Khan thought before speaking again. "I'll be right back. I have something to check."

"Do you need help?" Monica asked.

"It's better if I'm alone," Khan revealed, and some understanding touched Monica. Khan had never hidden anything from her, and a past conversation popped into her mind after seeing those clues.

Khan limped into a bedroom before sealing himself inside. He didn't know if his idea would succeed, but it was safer to take precautions when the nobles were involved.

After sitting on the bed, Khan began scouring the network for information. In theory, he had established a meaningful relationship that the higher-ups wouldn't bother to regulate. That was the whole reason behind that opportunity.

'Rassec, Rassec,' Khan thought as his thumbs typed madly on the screen.

The network had a limited number of articles when it came to nobles, and the Rassec family was no exception. Learning anything valuable from that public channel was simply impossible. Khan couldn't find a single contact that could bring him closer to his past acquaintance.

'How do I call someone that can't be found?' Khan wondered.

Even the Solodrey family needed a middle-man, so Khan quickly gave up on contacting his target directly. He had to find a similar mediator, but the official channels were outside his reach.

'What was her name?' Khan cursed in his mind. 'Lu, Lu, Lucille!'

Typing the woman's name on the network didn't help much, but Khan slowly recalled a few details. Lucille said to have sisters and had served on Ecoruta around his time. Applying those filters gave far fewer results, and a picture featuring messy red hair eventually caught his attention.

'Lucille Edhold,' Khan read on the screen. 'It doesn't say much.'

Lucille's profile didn't have much after Ecoruta, which was suspicious enough to make Khan call her. It wasn't too late, so Khan hoped to receive an immediate answer, but his phone kept ringing even after minutes had passed.

'This must be a good sign, right?' Khan wondered, looking at the ringing phone on the mattress. 'If experts are checking my call, it means that she got high enough to afford them.'

Of course, Khan considered the possibility of Lucille being busy or not having anything to do with his target. Still, she was his only real option, so he waited for someone to pick up the call.

The wait stretched for more minutes, and Khan even lay down at some point. The meeting ran through his mind as he closed his eyes and let the mattress' comfort invade him. Having Luke, Bruce, John, and Zoe on his side was already a significant achievement, and he believed that his other classmates would soon budge. Yet, a price might still be necessary.

The ringing suddenly stopped and pulled Khan back to reality. A female voice came out of his phone, and he threw himself to his side to seize it.

"Hello?" Khan exclaimed. "It's Captain Khan here."

"I can read your name on my phone," The familiar female voice resounded. "You still can't keep it in your pants, Captain Khan."

"Lu!" Khan laughed. "Rumors sure run fast."

"Especially if they are about you," Lu stated. "Well, it's not like I had a choice."

Khan took that reply as a good sign and investigated the topic. "Listen, I didn't know who else to call. Do you happen to know how I can contact Rick?"

"Why do you think I should know?!" Lu shouted. "I'm not his girlfriend or anything!"

Khan didn't expect a similar reaction, but Lu's tone revealed clues he knew far too well. His very girlfriend had made him an expert in those types of women.

"Is he treating you properly?" Khan questioned.

"No!" Lu complained. "He is too dumb to know what that means. He only smiles like an idiot whenever I talk to him and runs away when we are alone."

"Why don't you just jump on him?" Khan suggested.

A few silent seconds had to pass before a shy voice came out of the phone. "A woman shouldn't make the first move. That's what my mother always says."

"Why don't you let me speak to him?" Khan asked. "Maybe I can still teach him a few things."

"No," Lu firmly refused. "You won't corrupt him."

'My reputation with women can't be so bad,' Khan thought before opting for a different approach.

"If you don't do anything now, Rick might get too far away. Even Princess Edna praised him when I met her."

Silence unfolded and lasted longer than before, but a positive statement eventually arrived. "I'll call him."

"Thank you, Lu," Khan declared before waiting for the speaker to change.

Clanging and whooshing noises reached Khan's ear. Lucille was clearly changing location, and the iconic sounds of engines eventually arrived. The woman was probably in a hangar or space station, but silence returned after a few minutes.

The call grew messy enough to force Khan to distance the phone from his ear, but everything eventually calmed down, and a new familiar voice arrived. "Boss! I missed you dearly!"

"You are still too loud, Rick," Khan chuckled. "You don't have to call me Boss either. Actually, I should be the one addressing you properly now."

"You'll always be my Boss!" Rick shouted before recalling Khan's admonishment and lowering his voice. "I've regained access to my family thanks to you. My gratitude will always come first."

"I'm glad things are working out for you," Khan uttered. He truly believed his words. Rick had a good heart, so he was happy for him.

"Things are going really well for you too, Boss," Rick exclaimed. "You are the youngest Captain in history! I'm sure you'll break even more records."

"Well, maybe," Khan admitted, "But things aren't as perfect as they look."

"I know everything about the recent crisis with Mister Alstair," Rick revealed. "I check the news every day for you. Those families have no respect for your efforts at all."

'That's what Lu meant,' Khan realized before clearing his throat. "Yes, Mister Alstair and the factions behind him put me in a tough position. That's why I called. I was wondering if you could help."

"I'll be happy to!" Rick announced. "What do you need me to do?"

"I don't know how much influence or power you have," Khan replied. "However, I'd be happy with anything capable of discouraging future threats to my relationship."

"I'll get to work on it immediately," Rick promised.

"Wait, Rick!" Khan called, worried that Rick might close his phone. "We didn't agree to any strategy. Maybe it's better if you told me what you plan to do."

"I have an expensive advisor now!" Rick revealed. "She will study the situation and tell me what to do. I'll update you as I learn more myself."

"Oh," Khan gasped. "That makes sense. Thank you, Rick."

"Don't mention it, Boss," Rick exclaimed. "I have been dying to find a way to repay my debt. I'm so glad you called."

"Speaking about debts," Khan said, forcing himself to remain on topic. "I noticed how Lucille is with you. Are you two still sparring?"

"We have to do it in secret now," Rick revealed, "And I must hide my injuries. My other Masters would kick her out otherwise."

"It seems you care about her," Khan investigated.

"She is my dearest friend!" Rick stated. "Only the Boss is above her."

"Rick, she likes you," Khan sighed, "And you like her. I know that you run away when you two are alone."

"B-Boss!" Rick stammered.

"Listen, I'm not a good teacher when it comes to this stuff," Khan announced. "The entire Global Army knows that my relationships are a mess and, at times, problematic. This call proves that."

"But the Boss-!" Rick tried to justify Khan, but he didn't let him.

"Don't interrupt me," Khan scolded.

"Yes, Boss," Rick gasped. "I'm sorry, Boss."

"I was about to say," Khan continued. "You learnt to face punches. Feelings can hit harder, but remaining hidden is against their nature."

"But, Boss," Rick muttered. "I'm a noble. It's better for her if I keep paying her. Nothing good will come if we, if I."

Rick went silent before completing his line. It seemed that part of his cowardly character was still there, and Khan couldn't feel surprised. Relationships and feelings were tougher than battles. He had long since learnt that.

"Are you making this decision for her?" Khan asked. "Besides, I thought I taught you how not to run away. Maybe I didn't do a good job."

"Your job was perfect, Boss!" Rick shouted. "Don't let my failures change your mind!"

"I'd rather be happy about your success," Khan pointed out. "So, don't run away."

"I won't!" Rick promised. "I won't run away anymore. Lucille!"

The last shout was louder than the previous, and a thudding noise followed. The call survived a few more seconds before shutting down completely, leaving Khan looking at his empty screen.

Chapter 519 Talk

Khan was almost sure that countless calls would follow, but his phone remained silent. He stared at the empty screen as if orders would arrive at any second, but no one contacted him.

'I did a good thing, right?' Khan wondered. 'Right?'

The call had been too short to learn about Rick's current status, but he remained a noble. Khan was experiencing first-hand the problems connected to relationships with someone at Monica's level. It stood to reason that Rick and Lucille would have it far worse.

'Maybe they'll let Rick do as he wishes to keep him out of the main family,' Khan considered. 'I couldn't help myself, could I?'

Khan sighed deeply, putting the matter in the back of his mind and storing his phone. The Niqols' ways had shaped his life, so he couldn't go against them. He could only hope that things would work out for Rick.

The return to the main hall showed a quiet environment. George was bored out of his mind without his drinks, and Anita couldn't face Monica due to her unclear position. As for Monica, she madly browsed her phone, looking for answers and news that the network couldn't provide.

"So?" George exclaimed as soon as Khan limped into the main hall.

"I might have caused a political incident," Khan revealed. "Love truly is my weakness."

"Problematic love is," George scoffed, and noticing Anita's glare made him spread his arms. "What? His record is my witness."

"Khan?" Monica voiced in a worried tone, peeking past the couch to follow Khan's return to her side.

"It should be fine," Khan summarized. "I don't know how much it will do, but I secured another ally."

Monica wanted to be happy, but her education made her aware of the issues connected to the topic. Khan was calling in favors that could have otherwise helped his career or other aspects of his life. Seeing him exhausting his resources for his relationship filled Monica with guilt.

"You are overthinking this again, aren't you?" Khan scolded, seizing Monica's nose to pull her closer. "You aren't only worth the trouble. This is something I need to do for myself."

Monica usually complained at that gesture, but her expression remained still. She limited herself to looking at Khan, holding the tears back to show nothing but love.

"I can't do much now," Monica muttered, her voice cracking a few times, "But, once we get past this, I'll involve my family and secure your status. I'll threaten to leave them if they ask anything in return."

Monica's statement took into consideration their situation. Her parents would get in the way if she tried to do anything now. However, if Khan could stand his ground against enemy factions, the couple could gain some leverage and value in the political world.

"But you would lose your status," Khan pointed out. "I don't know if I'll find you attractive without your money."

Monica didn't play along. She only showed a faint smile. She had long since learnt to love Khan's stupid jokes, and they had a reassuring effect now.

"Let's just go to bed," Monica suggested, seizing the hand on her nose to free herself. "My Captain must be tired after so much politics."

"On that," George announced, leaving his couch, "I agree. Resting is a vital part of our daily lives."

"How much do you even miss drinking?" Anita shook her head but also left the couch.

"That's code for sex," George explained. "It was an easy guess."

"You-!" Anita gasped. "Don't say that stuff in front of our friends!"

"Right," George snickered, looking at Khan and Monica. "We really have to mind our decorum with them."

"Get better soon, George," Monica saluted, "And thank you again for yesterday."

"Take care of him for us," Khan stated, eyeing Anita. "We'll talk more tomorrow."

"I will," Anita promised, taking George's elbow and wearing a helpless expression. "No."

"I didn't say anything," George complained.

"No," Anita repeated. "Let's go home now. I know you are hurting."

George could only give up before Anita's concerned face, and nods unfolded as the couple left the main hall. The elevator soon opened and closed, bringing privacy to the flat.

"I wonder," Khan voiced, staring longingly at the elevator room. "Did they grow closer because they found a solution or because they know it's ending?"

Monica didn't like that topic, but the two had already gone over it. They couldn't make decisions for George and Anita, and their problems were too big to think about others.

"You see so much," Monica whispered, letting go of Khan's hand to turn his face toward her. "Don't turn it into a curse."

"Is this the time when you tell me to look only at you?" Khan teased.

"I want my Captain all for myself," Monica revealed, "Every minute of every day. Even now that we are facing so many problems, I can't stop burning."

Monica's hands and her mana confirmed her words. The situation saddened her but seeing Khan claiming his rightful political position was too appealing.

"I had such a bad influence on you," Khan stated.

"Influence me more," Monica almost begged. "Mark me so deeply anyone would be able to tell I'm yours with a single glance."

The temptation reached its climax and attempted to break the little self-restraint Khan had managed to muster. Still, Monica stayed true to her word and interrupted the interaction before it could get in the way of Khan's goals.

"But do it later," Monica continued. "You have something else to do tonight, don't you?"

"I wonder if I should blow everything up to gain a few more seconds with you," Khan said. "I know I want to."

"Do what you must, my Captain," Monica nodded, retracting her arms and standing up to perform a bow. "I'll wait for you on our bed."

Monica began to leave the array of couches, but her self-restraint faltered for a second, making her lean toward Khan to whisper in his ear.

"I'll wear the thing you like," Monica's seductive tone invaded Khan's thoughts. "I hope you won't make your good girl wait too long, dear."

Monica had to hurry outside the main hall afterward since her arousal threatened to explode, and Khan had to thank her for that. He was in a similar state, and looking at the sealed corridor made those feelings add power to his firm stance.

Khan stood up and approached the sealed corridor to unlock it. Andrew was still awake, performing a military salute before Francis' room. His attention had never faltered, and even Khan's arrival didn't distract him.

"Mister Alstair never left his room, sir," Andrew stated.

"Good job," Khan praised. "Get some rest now."

"Sir, thank you, sir!" Andrew shouted, facing Khan to perform another military salute before heading toward an empty bedroom.

Khan waited for the door to close before limping toward Francis' bedroom. No hesitation showed its presence when his fingers reached the metal surface. The entrance opened, and a stern feeling blew on Khan's face as the place's synthetic mana mixed with the symphony.

Francis was still awake, and Khan's arrival didn't interrupt his meditative state. The man was sitting cross-legged at the bed's edge while wearing the elegant clothes from the previous night. Empty trays of food occupied the floor, but Khan noticed how the bottle of booze was still sealed.

"I need that meeting," Khan eventually stated, uncaring that he might disturb Francis' meditation.

"I contacted the factions I could reach," Francis replied without breaking his cross-legged stance. "They are still refusing."

"Maybe you should remind them about my threat," Khan said. "Your head is at stake here."

"I told them," Francis revealed. "They ignored it."

"Maybe sending a few fingers will make them take me seriously," Khan threatened.

Francis didn't react to the threat, and his mana remained calm. He showed no fear or resolve, but that wasn't a result of his guts. Khan saw nothing more than an empty shell when he looked at Francis.

"Pitiful," Khan scoffed. "They used you as a puppet for their schemes. Being angry is the least you could do."

"They turned me into a puppet because I'm useless," Francis said, finally opening his eyes to stare at the empty wall. "It's what I deserve."

"For your information," Khan uttered. "Monica didn't choose me over you. You were never on her list."

"I know," Francis weakly muttered. "I don't blame her. I wouldn't be with myself either after what I did to her."

"At least you realize this," Khan vaguely praised. "If you survive, you'll get away with an important lesson."

"I'm not as dumb as I look," Francis declared. "I knew what I was doing. I wish to blame my family's pressuring me to get Monica, but that would only add shame to my character."

Khan felt no pity for Francis. Part of his mind was already set on killing him. However, he had learnt the difficulties that wealthy descendants faced during the past months, so he could understand where Francis' toxic behavior came from.

"Self-pity won't get you anywhere," Khan mocked. "Everyone sucks in one way or another. You aren't special."

"I know," Francis sighed, "But you are. I think I have envied you for a while, but I understand now. You are more of a man than I'll ever be."

"What?" Khan snorted. "Because I wave my knife better than you? Pathetic."

"You can vent on me," Francis closed his eyes again. "I deserve it."

Disappointment invaded Khan. Francis was supposed to be a wealthy descendant, but he saw nothing more than a man ready to throw his life away. He obviously didn't care what Francis did. Yet, he needed someone with a bit more guts to get the meeting.

"There was a time when I also felt like this," Khan began to say. "Powerless, empty. I wanted to lose myself so badly that I jumped into a war..."

Chapter 520 Best Man

Francis was in no mood to speak, but Khan's story attracted his attention, diverting his empty gaze from the wall and adding surprise to it. Francis' mouth even hung open in shock at some point, and he never bothered to close it.

"This," Khan revealed, taking out his turtleneck and showing his right shoulder. "This isn't a normal tattoo. A Niqols made it through dangerous arts that risked taking off my shoulder."

"D-does," Francis finally spoke and cleared his throat to continue. "Does it have a meaning?"

"Eternal love," Khan explained, his gaze losing focus when he peeked at the tattoo. "At least in the human language."

Francis found it hard to hide his emotions. Everyone knew Khan's story, but few were aware of its many details. Khan had omitted a lot from his tale but had included the lake's events, which left Francis stunned and captivated.

"Mana itself had blessed our union," Khan said in a tone that reeked of sadness, "But I had to let her go anyway. Our love wasn't enough."

Francis was speechless. Khan had done all kinds of despicable deeds only to lose everything anyway. In comparison, his life had been a fairy tale stained by a couple of disappointments.

"You know the rest of the story," Khan stated, wearing his turtleneck and leaning on the open entrance. "I felt dirty whenever I touched Delia. I lied to myself when I was with Cora. I wanted nothing to do with Monica either, but the Niqols' ways are stronger than me."

Khan couldn't help but smile as his many memories with Monica resurfaced. Sometimes, he still struggled to believe how far he had come. He had been so lost after Nitis that his current happiness felt nothing short of a dream.

However, that unexpected development was the reason for Khan's firm stance. He would seal any deal and commit all kinds of crimes to protect what had taken him years to find.

"I lost everything once already," Khan continued, making the temperature in the room and corridor fall. "If I have to fill the Harbor with corpses to prevent that from happening again, I will."

Francis could only lower his head. He saw Khan in a new light, but his situation and mental state didn't change. He was a simple puppet with a broken heart caught in problems far bigger than him.

"You tried to take Monica away," Khan declared, stepping into the room to arrive before Francis. "Every fiber of my body is demanding your head."

Khan let his right leg slide backward and bent the other to crouch. He lowered himself enough to look into Francis' eyes, but the latter remained hidden behind his golden hair.

"But," Khan sighed, and the atmosphere relaxed enough to make Francis lift his gaze. "I need you for that meeting, and killing you probably isn't the best idea."

Khan hated to admit it, but Mark was right. Publicly killing a descendant would leave a permanent stain on his profile. Even if he could somehow avoid imprisonment and similar criminal charges, his career and overall future would be doomed.

The tale had turned part of Francis' feelings toward Khan into proper respect, and seeing him asking for his help so bluntly was a powerful scene. However, it wasn't enough to affect his mental state.

"I told you," Francis whispered, lowering his head again. "I'm just a puppet. I don't hold any power."

"I know," Khan nodded. "Because you are useless, just like I was on Nitis."

Francis didn't react to the insult, but the last part of Khan's line made him lift his head again. He seemed to understand something, but Khan stood up before they could have a friendly moment.

"If you really want something," Khan stated, limping toward the exit, "Do anything in your power to achieve it, be it planting flowers or creating bloody rivers."

Khan let those words linger in the room for a few seconds before continuing. "If you feel that your life is over, just die without causing problems for others. The choice is yours."

Francis watched Khan limping outside the room and disappearing past the entrance while motivation invaded his mind. Khan had experienced a terrible life but had still come out on top. Francis was nowhere near his level, but his problems were also shallower. If Khan had succeeded, maybe there was still hope for him.

Yet, before Francis could immerse himself in those new thoughts, a hand grabbed the entrance's edge and clawed deeper into the room. A purple-red halo also encircled it, eventually digging cracks in the metal wall.

Khan peeked past the entrance. The purple-red glow illuminated his dark face, and his eyes reflected it to create a chilling scene.

"Of course," Khan warned, "I was talking about being a man. If you as much as breathe Monica's air, there won't be families or politics capable of stopping me."

The cracks expanded, stretching deeper into the room, but Francis couldn't move his eyes from Khan. His whole being had frozen before that threat.

"Are we clear?" Khan asked.

"Y-yes!" Francis instinctively muttered.

"Say it," Khan ordered.

"I-," Francis gulped. "I won't create problems for Monica anymore."

Khan glared at Francis for a few more seconds before retracting his head and dispersing his mana. His hand also disappeared behind the entrance, and the door closed to seal the room.

A few metal shards fell from the wall and released clinging noises when they hit the floor. Meanwhile, Francis remained stunned. Even a man who had given up on life would experience fear in that situation.

Khan slowly limped outside the corridor and sealed it again. His mood didn't change even after crossing the main hall. The talk might lead nowhere, but he had to try. Yet, he had truly exhausted his sources now, and waiting was his only option.

Entering the appointed bedroom made Khan forget about his problems. A single glance at the tempting figure on the bed's corner was enough to remove all his exhaustion, worries, and thoughts.

Monica was sitting on the mattress with her legs folded to her side. Her short skirt barely covered her captivating thighs, enveloped in dark fishnet stockings. Her transparent bra carried the same pattern, and she showed it proudly by keeping her arms behind her back.

"This is the time when I tell you to look only at me," Monica used her sensual tone, stretching her legs to leave the bed, "Or do my best to earn that."

Monica approached Khan slowly, pulling her hair behind her shoulders to show her black choker. The necklace was nothing more than a strand of cloth, but Khan found it incredibly sexy on Monica's neck.

"Maybe I should give you a chance," Khan wondered, reaching for Monica's neck to slip a finger under her choker. "How would you earn that?"

"You just have to ask," Monica whispered, "And I'll comply."

Monica had a hard time controlling her breath. She was on the verge of panting, and Khan pushed her over the edge by pulling the choker. The gesture made her gasp and almost trip on him, but she steeled her balance to keep looking into his eyes.

"I wish I could wear this in the open," Monica revealed, reaching for the choker and sliding her fingers over it until she touched Khan's hand. "I love how you look at me when I do."

"I'm sure you'll love the ring even more," Khan stated, sliding his hand over Monica's neck to pull her from her nape and trap her in a kiss.

"Heal faster," Monica whined when their lips separated. "I miss jumping on you."

Khan promptly grabbed the sides of Monica's torso and lifted her. She let out a cry that transformed into a giggle when she crossed her legs around Khan's waist. The two kissed again, and Khan slowly limped toward the bed. The braced foot slightly hurt, but he couldn't feel that pain.

The worries, arousal, and other emotions accumulated during the day transformed into fuel for the couple's mad passion. Clothes flew left and right, and cries filled the flat. Khan and Monica had forgotten to lock the bedroom again, but the sealed corridor saved Andrew and Francis from their shouts.

The outside world stopped existing that night. Khan had eyes only for Monica, and the same went for her. Neither heard their ringing phones, and they disregarded them when they did. A lot could happen in the following days, so they didn't dare to waste any second together.

Nevertheless, when morning began approaching, Khan and Monica noticed that their phones had yet to go silent. The two initially tried to ignore them to delve into affectionate and soporific cuddles, but the incessant ringing eventually forced them to move.

"Who can it even be?" Monica complained, rubbing her face on the only surviving pillow. "Don't they know that the night is for sleep and sex?"

"It's your mother," Khan revealed when he found Monica's phone in the corner of the bedroom.

"Fuck her," Monica cursed. "She didn't bother to warn me about Francis, so I'll claim my cuddles first."

"I'm sorry, Madam Solodrey," Khan said, ignoring the call and leaving the phone on the floor. "Your daughter has priority when she is naked."

"I still have my tights," Monica giggled. "I don't know how you took out my underwear with these in the way."

"I ripped it off," Khan casually explained as his search resumed. "You were too busy clinging to my hair to notice."

"That explains the holes," Monica replied, peeking at her torn tights. "By the way, your hair got longer again. Should I accompany you to a saloon?"

"I'll call someone here," Khan reassured, "Or have the Headmistress put someone in my cab the next time I attend Professor Parver's lesson."

Khan's eyes lit up when he found his trousers and promptly went for their left pocket. His phone ended in his hands, but seeing the multitude of messages and missed calls made him frown.

'What happened?' Khan wondered, abandoning his relaxed mood to study the matter.

Khan only had to skim through a few messages to end on the network. A series of curious headlines had taken control of many articles, and a few mentioned his name in the titles.

"What is it?" Monica asked, understanding that something was off. She even left the pillow to crawl toward the edge closer to Khan, and he sat on it to show her the screen.

The phone was playing a video featuring two people that Monica didn't recognize, but labels hovered above them to state their identity. One of them was Rick Rassec, while the other was Lucille Edhold.

It was rare for nobles to hold such public interviews, but exceptions existed, so Monica didn't feel too surprised. However, the video's title talked about an official engagement, which was obviously a big deal at those levels.

Still, the most surprising detail had yet to arrive. Rick and Lucille were merely answering simple and scripted questions, but the former eventually took the initiative to declare something.

"The wedding will be next year," Rick declared, "And I wish Captain Khan to be my best man."