

Card Apprentice Daily Log

Chapter 1001 Sir Cloud Tail

[1,482 words]

Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 17:05

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Brown Stone castle

“Father, let’s return the pet monster,” little Sansa said dejectedly.

“Why? What happened? You don’t like your cub lion,” Sansa’s father asked. When the rest of the world was busy fighting monsters he had spent a fortune to get a high-breed well-trained pet monster for his lovely daughter and now she says she didn’t want it, he needed an explanation as to what changed her mind.

“He is not coming, he said he doesn’t like cats,” Little Sansa answered.

“That punk, how dare he,” Despite feeling happy that the boy rejected his daughter’s invitation Sansa’s father hid his true feelings and acted enraged to console his little angel.

Soon Sansa’s father’s mindset changed seeing that his little angel was heartbroken over this boy’s rejection. And could not help but ask, “What monster pet did Ellen’s parents buy her?”

“A wolf monster pup,” Little Sansa replied half-heartedly.

“Don’t tell me, after rejecting you that boy went to the Duskbrown family mansion to play with that girl’s monster pup,” Sansa’s father was enraged just at the thought of a snort nose boy rejecting his daughter for some other little doll.

Agreed that the little doll from the Duskbrown family was cute but his daughter was unrivaled in cuteness. Sansa’s father though knowing stuff like this was a common occurrence did not want this to loss his daughter’s self-confidence in herself. He did not want this boy’s rejection to define her entire life.

"Yes, he and the others all went to see Ellen's pet monster pup again," little Sansa answered emotionally.

"Were you not invited," Sansa's father couldn't help but ask this hearing his daughter say that all the other kids had gotten together in the Duskborn family girl's house after kindergarten. He could not help but worry that his daughter was having trouble making friends in school.

"No, Ellen did invite me but I rejected them because I promised Sir cloud tail to play with him after school and I did not want him to feel lonely," Little Sansa spoke looking at the lion monster cub that ran around the hall energetically.

"But don't you want to play with your friends?" Sansa's father sighed in relief hearing that his daughter had been invited by her friends but she rejected them to be with her monster pet. How responsible of her, Sansa's father could not help but feel proud of his little angel.

"I want to but I don't want Sir Cloud tail to feel lonely while I am out playing with my friends," little Sansa answered truthfully.

"Is that the reason you want to send him back so that he can play with his friends while you play with your friends?" Sansa's father finally guessed why his daughter wanted him to return the monster pet to the shop. Her reason made his heart warm. And he could not help but feel that her smile was the purest and incorruptible force in the world.

"Yes," little Sansa nodded.

"Well, honey, why don't you take sir cloud tail with you to play with your friends, this way you get to be with your friends and sir cloud tail will not be lonely. And maybe by getting to know Sir cloud tail, that boy may change his opinion and take a liking to sir cloud tail," Sansa's dad helped his little angel solve the little dilemma troubling her. More than feeling jealous of the Baylor boy, Sansa's father wanted his daughter have lots of friends and not to grow into a socially awkward person.

"Really? I can bring sir cloud tail out of the house," Little Sansa asked her father enthusiastically because if she can bring sir cloud tail out with her then she would no longer have to worry about him feeling lonely.

"Yes, but only if you promise me that you will keep an eye on sir cloud tail. He is very young, not so smart, and easily gets curious. You have to always keep an eye on him and make sure that he will not get lost," Sansa's dad said as he had to spend a little fortune to get this monster pet and he did not want it to be lost or stolen on its first outing. He knows that his daughter was more responsible than the kids of her age but she was still a kid. For kids when playing with other kids, it was even possible for them to forget their fathers let alone a pet monster.

"I promise, I will take good care of him and always keep an eye on him," little Sansa immediately promised.

"Good then, come I will take you to the Duskborn family mansion," Sansa's father decided to personally drop off his daughter at her friend's house and check in on the Baylor family kid who has been making his lovely angel sad lately.

"Okay, let me get changed," Little Sansa agreed immediately and headed to her wardrobe to change into something nice for her crush to take notice of her.

"Why? What you are wearing is already beautiful," Sansa's dad could not help but think if it was an inborn trait of every woman to dress up for every occasion.

"No, I wore the same thing to kindergarten, I need to change," Little Sansa answered as she went through her wardrobe and wore her favorite attire.

"Awe, my little angel you look so cute," Sansa's father could not help but be lost in his daughter's cuteness. According to him, her smile was more effective than an SSS-rank purifying skill when it came to washing away his fatigue.

"Stop it, daddy. We don't have time for this," little Sansa's cheek turned red hearing her father's praise and in embarrassment asked him to stop.

"Oh, my daughter looks so cute when shy," Sansa's father couldn't help but tease his little daughter, who would act more mature than her age. Which he found very cute. It also made him feel sad, if he had been around more may be his lovely daughter would not have needed to be more mature and could just be her age.

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Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 17:25

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn mansion.

"Kids, look who we have here. It's Sansa and her monster pet," Ellen's mother said trying to gather the attention of the bunch of kids that were playing with the young wolf monster pup.

"Sansa, you are here," Ellen immediately greeted Sansa and soon the other kids followed suit.

"I thought you did not want to come," One of the kids said not that the kid was deliberately making trouble for Sansa but that was what Sansa had said.

"Yes, but father said that I could bring sir cloud tail out with me, so I am here," little Sansa's explained.

"Is this your monster pet, it's so cool," As soon as the kids greeted Sansa their attention was immediately caught by the lion monster cub that walked beside Sansa, and feeling the stare of unknown kids it immediately hid behind her legs but curiously peeked at them.

"Yes, this is Sir cloud tail and he is a lion monster cub. Sir cloud tail, come, say hello to my friends," Sansa moved aside so that her friends can view sir cloud tail but it quickly hid behind her once again and this time it did not dare to peek fearing that its owner would once again reveal it to the stares of the unknown kids.

"Your pet is shy," Ellen said as she walked next to Sansa and bend down to pet sir cloud tail.

Seeing little Ellen reach out her little hand to pet it, Sir Cloud tail circled little Sansa's leg to escape Ellen's hand. As for Sansa, she looked at the boy at the other end of the hall who continued to play with the wolf pup and did not bother to greet her like the rest.

Ellen finally manage to catch hold of Sir Cloud tail, which kept circling Sansa's leg to escape her hand. The lion monster cub struggled but Ellen skillfully laid it on its back and began to rub its belly. Under the pleasure of its belly being scratched the lion monster cub could not help but purr and stopped struggling.

"Woah, Ellen you are so good at handling monster pets," One of the kids praised Ellen for skillfully subduing shy sir cloud tail.

Hearing the kid's praise Ellen could not help but lift her nose feeling proud and say, "I got a full score in the test that the store that sold me my wolf monster pup conducted before agreeing to sell me the wolf monster pup."

Woof!

The wolf pup who was being petted by the Baylor family boy barked in jealousy seeing its master rub the belly of some other monster and escaping from the boy's clutches it ran toward its master worrying that its master will replace it with that monster.

"Was there such a test? I did not have to give one when they sold me Sir Cloud tail."

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[1,025 words]

Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 17:34

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

“Was there such a test? I did not have to give one when they sold me Sir Cloud tail,” little Sansa said wondering why she was not asked to take a test while she adopted sir cloud tail.

Hearing Sansa the surrounding kids looked at Ellen for an answer. She looked troubled not knowing what to say, but she did give a test to adopt her monster pet and doesn’t know why Sansa was not asked before Sansa adopted her pet.

Meanwhile, the wolf monster pup rushed over and laid on its back next to the lion monster cub hoping to gain its master’s attention. Unfortunately, its master was troubled with other matters to spare any of her thoughts for it. As for the lion monster cub reluctantly looking back at the hands that almost made it forget its master it rushed back to its master’s side, not sparing a glance at the wolf monster pup. And began to rub its head against its master’s leg, trying to tell its master that it never forgot about her even for a second.

“Sansa, are you calling Ellen a liar?” the Baylor kid who followed the wolf monster pup, spoke up for Ellen, insinuating that Sansa was bullying Ellen.

“No, I am not. I was just asking since I did not have to take one,” little Sansa said defending herself.

“If you want to know why then I will tell you why,” the Baylor Kid paused to give little Sansa a stare and then continued to say, “Yesterday, after my butler picked me up, on my way home we visited the monster pet store to adopt a pet but was told that if I wanted to adopt a pet I need to undergo a test and only if I were able to get the minimum marks in the test will I be able to adopt a monster pet, but there is a way around it. That is if I am willing to pay extra for a trained monster pup, then I do not have to undergo the test.

Sansa, you must have paid extra seeing how your little cat is shy and tamed, it has lost all its wild instincts being trained by professionals. That is why you were not asked to take a test.”

“Woah,” the other kids looked at the Baylor kid in awe. They were really impressed by Baylor kids’ knowledge about adopting process involved in adopting a monster pet while those that had already adopted the monster pet didn’t seem to have any idea regarding it.

“Does that mean, I can adopt a monster pet without taking the test if I pay extra?” one of the kids asked enthusiastically.

“Yes,” the Baylor family’s kid nodded calmly. Gazes filled with admiration by his fellows did not seem to affect his mood.

“Great, then I am buying an eagle monster today and riding it to the kindergarten tomorrow,” the kid from earlier reported excitedly. It seems he wanted to adopt a monster pet just like Ellen but held back his urge knowing that he had to clear a test to adopt a monster pet. But now if what the Baylor family’s kid said was true then he will adopt a monster pet of his choice right away if he could.

Seeing the boy declare, the others followed suit. After seeing how cute Ellen’s wolf monster pup was they all wanted to buy one but lost interest when they heard that they would require to take a test to adopt a monster pet. But now learning that they could adopt a monster pet without taking tests by paying extra, the surrounding kid’s interest to adopt a monster pet rekindled.

“Ellen, why did you take a test to adopt your monster wolf pup, when you could get one by paying,” One of Ellen’s closest friends asked, she was not making use of this opportunity to target Ellen she asked so because she knows how hard Ellen worked to clear the test to adopt a pet. For a five-year-old to learn how to handle and take care of a few months-old monster pups was not an easy feat considering that most kids at this age did not know how to tie their shoelaces and need their parents to do it for them, in these group of kids it was their butler or maid that tied their shoelace.

Hearing the little girl, other kids too could not help but wonder why. Feeling their gazes Ellen once again went silent not knowing how to answer, but thankful a person came to her defense. Surprisingly it was none other than little Sansa, “She did so because she can.”

Hearing this the face of the surrounding kids turned awkward but they nodded in understanding thinking that they too would take the test rather than pay extra. And use the extra money they save to buy lots of candies and pastries.

Ellen looked at little Sansa with a grateful gaze. Ellen turned speechless the real reason why she had to take a test to adopt her monster pet was that her parents did not have the money to get a well-trained one. As a matter of fact, her parents cannot afford to buy a monster pet yet her mother insisted on buying her one to help her get close to the heirs of the other prominent families studying in her school.

Ellen’s parents belonged to the Duskbrown family but her father did not hold any power in the family as he was a mere captain at the way beyond. With the money he earns, they cannot afford to rent a home in the capital of the central region if not for them staying at the Duskbrown family mansion along with their big joint family they would have to move to a second-rate city.

Ellen's parents without the name of the Duskborn family were no different than poor card apprentices. But Ellen's mother had big ambitions, and she wanted to fulfill them by marrying into a big family but she lucked out marrying Ellen's father a simple and honest man with no ambition but loyalty to his family and country.

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[1,072 words]

Chapter 1003: Pact

Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 17:45

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

Since her husband was not fit to carry out her ambition, Ellen's mother burdened her only daughter with her dreams by forcing a four-year-old to train to pass the entrance test of a prestigious kindergarten with marks more than enough to be awarded a full scholarship.

Why do this? Because this particular kindergarten was where the big families of the capital of the central region would send their heirs to study and mostly make connections with the other family heirs. With her husband's salary, Ellen's mother couldn't afford admission fees to the prestigious kindergarten so she could only put her hopes on her daughter getting a full scholarship. Fortunately, her daughter unlike her husband did not let her down.

Since then Ellen's mother has tried various methods to get invited to the houses or parties of the other kindergarten moms but was not successful as the rich moms were snobbish, no surprise there, and saw Ellen's mother as the poor mother of only scholarship student in the whole kindergarten.

Finally, Ellen's mom could only choose to stop trying to get close to the rich moms from the prestigious kinder garden feeling that she would come off as desperate and trying too hard. But she did not give up thinking, 'so what if you guys don't invite me to your fancy parties, your children will.' And the only way that would happen was if they were best friends with her daughter.

Being the 'that Kid' that every kid's parent compares their kid with, Ellen had difficulty making friends at the kindergarten except for this creepy kid from the Baylor family that

kept following her around. But thanks to this creepy kid Ellen did not have to eat her lunch by herself.

Ellen's mother did not blame her daughter for her lack of friends because she knew how hard her daughter was trying to keep her full scholarship. So she took it upon herself to help her daughter make many friends who will invite her to their mother's fancy parties.

Soon she thought of various ideas that would help her daughter become popular among other kids in the kindergarten. Some worked some failed but none got her the invitation to one of those fancy parties held by the kindergarten's rich moms. Until she got the brilliant idea to get her daughter a cute monster pet, whose attraction the kids cannot escape. Though this idea put a big hole in their savings it worked, just yesterday, one of the kids invited her daughter to the pool party their parents were hosting this weekend. Since her daughter was invited she too was naturally invited.

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While the kids were playing, Sansa's father and Ellen's father were having a heated discussion in another hall.

"Are you sure about this?" Sansa's father asked as he gave Ellen's father a hard stare.

"I am, Commander," Ellen's father replied firmly.

"You know it doesn't have to be like this, I can lend you the money. And return it when possible," Sansa's father persuaded Ellen's father.

"Commander, I know you mean well but I already owe you a lot. So, I can only beg you to let me do this," Ellen's father didn't waiver from his decision and instead begged Sansa's father to stop persuading him.

"I told you that woman was trouble when we first saw her at the tavern," Sansa's father said in dissatisfaction, after letting out a sigh he added, "And couldn't you just learn to say no to her already? What were you thinking when you spent a such huge chunk of your savings on that monster pet?"

"She said that it would help Ellen make friends and form connections that would help her further in her life," Ellen's father answered without bothering to defend his wife.

"Connections? Are you hearing yourself? Ellen is just five-years-old, god dammit," Sansa's father said in frustration.

"Commander, please understand. I am not doing this for my wife, I am doing this for Ellen, this is the happiest I have seen her in a while. You should have seen her when

went to adopt the monster pet, she was so happy and excited. Buying that monster pet for her, I felt like a real father after quite some time. So please let me do this for her," Ellen's father said hoping that Sansa's father would support his idea after hearing his reason.

"No, I will not. That day beyond that land we made a pact. A pact that we will survive, be there for our families, and never return to that goddamned place. If I let you do this I will be letting down our brothers that gave their lives so that at least those of us that survived would uphold the pact. Don't bring this up ever again. Otherwise, I will not hesitate to turn you in to creep if that is what is required of me to stop you," Sansa's father said resolutely, his firm eyes yelled out his resolve. It seems he really would not hesitate to turn Ellen's father into a cripple if he continued to pester him to follow through with this decision resulting in breaking the pact with their martyred comrades. Sansa's father made it clear to Ellen's father that he planned to uphold his pact with their dead comrades and would not hesitate to use force to have Ellen's father do the same.

"..." Ellen's father shook his head dejectedly. It appeared he had already expected this outcome. So decided to use what he wished he wouldn't have to use but was interpreted by Sansa's father, "Though I can't give you my permission to go back to that hell, I will dig up some old favors and try to make other arrangements. So give me some time and meanwhile don't do anything to make things worse."

"Commander, please don't, you have already done a lot for us," Ellen's father said hurriedly.

"If you really believe and mean that then come work with me, I would be lucky to have a man with your skill set working with me. And this will also solve your money problems," This was the hundredth time Sansa's father had asked Ellen's father to come work with him, and each time Ellen's father rejected him saying, "Commander, you know Duskborn family rules don't tolerate it."

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Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 17:51

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

Having Ellen's father rejects his proposal a hundred and oneth time Sansa's father shook his head and sighs saying, "You are a good man you know that. The Duskborns and that woman don't deserve you. Your loyalty is what I like the most and hate the

most about you. This loyalty of yours is going to hurt you badly one day, I just hope Ellen doesn't become the collateral."

"Commander, it is not loyalty. This what I have to do as a son and a husband," Ellen's father replied.

"What about your part as a father? Can't you see because of your stubbornness that child... Sigh, For the child's sake I will ask you one last time to come work with me, as far as the Duskborns are concerned let me handle them," Sansa's father word's were genuine, for his men he was willing to shoulder the storm let alone the Duskborn family.

"..." This time Ellen's father did not immediately reject Sansa's father. As his commander's words stuck with him, he was a good son to the Duskborn family and a good husband to his wife, but was he a good father to his daughter?

Being bound by the Duskborn family, Ellen's father had to make a lot of compromises that indirectly made it difficult to be a good husband and a good father. But he owned his life, his parent's life to the Duskborn family, he could not bring himself to turn his back on them over a few disagreements. Remembering his dying father's words, Ellen's father chooses to suppress the side of him that screamed that he was not being a good father. Then blurted out, "I am sorry commander, I cannot."

While speaking these words Ellen's father kept his head down while speaking these words as he could not look into his commander's eyes and say that he chose his family over his daughter.

Sansa's father shook his head and walked away saying, "I will contact you with something soon, until then don't do anything stupid."

Before leaving Sansa's father decided to check on his little angel and following the laughter of the children he walked to the adjacent hall. As he was preparing to peek into the hall through the door, he saw Ellen's mother bring refreshments for the children and immediately moved to make way for her. While passing by him Ellen's mother halted and glimpsing at him she said, "I don't know why he needs your permission for him to get his old job back but what happened?"

"So, it was your idea. Woman, do you know you are sending him to his death," Learning that it was Ellen's mother who put the idea of going back to the hell hole in his comrade's mind Sansa's father snapped.

"Don't overreact. All jobs have their risks but none pay as well as this one. Besides he is doing the same work for the Duskborns for pennies," Ellen's mother, spoke realistically, but that was her husband's life she was speaking of, so Sansa's father could not help but wonder how can this woman be so heartless to the man she loved or used to love or the father of her only child.

"Wipe that disgust off your face or I will forget that there are children in the next room. Even though you don't agree with what I am doing. I am doing everything in my power to give my child a better future. Unlike your comrade who time and again chose the Duskbrown's over this actual family, us.

Do you know how frustrating it is to know that the man you trusted your entire being to doesn't consider you as his priority? Forget me, I am an outsider, what about his daughter? She is his flesh and blood, yet he would rather see her suffer than go against the Duskbrown family. You don't know half of what I have to deal with here. So, don't you dare judge me," Ellen's mother tried her best not to rise her voice fearing the children on the other side of the door.

Listening to Ellen's mother's side of the story Sansa's father could not help but hate the undying loyalty of his comrade and feel that as a weak woman facing a big family like the Duskbrown family all by herself, Ellen's mother did not have many options to choose from. It was either this or letting the Duskbrown family use her daughter as a tool in some potential or business arranged marriage.

"I am sorry that I looked down on your struggle. But this doesn't mean that I approve of your ways," Sansa's father apologized but stuck to his opinion.

"As long as it doesn't happen again," Ellen's mother forgave Sansa's father and continued to say, "You know, I too don't like using my daughter as a tool but if I don't make her strong now, like her father she will never be able to escape the clutches of the Duskbrown family."

"I understand. You are trying to help your daughter in the means available to you. I can respect that," Sansa's father said so seeing that even though this woman was rotten, she still showed a little love for her daughter. So he decided to recruit her help.

"Thank you," Ellen's mother knew the arrogant and prideful Sansa's father would never speak such words. He wanted something from so she added, "What is that you want?"

"I forgot who I was dealing with here," Sansa's father said trying to hide his embarrassment, and then confessed, "I want your help with your husband."

"I can't get my husband to choose me over the Duskbrown family, what makes you think that I can be of any help to you with regard to him?" Ellen's mother said recalling that she was not even in the top three of her priority list.

"You expect me to believe that? From the day you met him you have him wrapped around your fingers. Yes, he is stubborn when it comes to the Duskbrown family but if it is you, I think we can do something about it."

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Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 17:57

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

"I am sorry, no matter how you put it I don't think I can help you when it comes to him," Ellen's mother once again rejected Sansa's father.

Getting rejected by Ellen's mother, Sansa's father was not surprised as he had never known this woman to lift a figure unless she had something to gain from it. If not for her misfortune of marrying his comrade, this woman and her shrewd mind would not be stuck passive-aggressively fighting the Duskborn family. Till today Sansa's father never understood why she did not leave his comrade after learning about his circumstances. Sometimes he can't help but feel that she may really love her husband but he was far too wise to believe that.

"Your husband may have never told you this and neither did I want to involve you in this but circumstances have changed and I would be a fool not to make use of it. For a decade now I have been trying to get your husband to come work with me. But he always rejects my offer without hesitation," Sansa's father said, to which Ellen's mother commented, "I would expect nothing better from him. But you should know better, that man will die as Duskborn family ghost than go against them."

"That was what I thought too, but your husband and his skills are too valuable, so I cannot help it hoping that he will bite one of the hundred baits I throw at him," Sansa's father valued Ellen's dad as his comrade but he valued his specialist level skill set honed in the depths of the hell more.

"So did he," Ellen's mother asked even though she should have known better than to expect anything different from usual when it comes to her husband.

"No, he did not. But he did linger," Sansa's father said as if it was a huge development. Knowing Ellen's dad better than anyone on the planet Ellen's mother knew how big of a deal it was that her husband even considered the thought to go against the Duskborn family. So she asked, "Well, what is it?"

"I don't know what exactly it was but I think it has something to do with him not being a good father and Ellen suffering for his stubbornness. So what do you think? Can you work with it?" Sansa's father asked with expectations.

"I don't know, but when you say 'work with you,' do you mean like partners or just as a better way to put the 'work for you.'" Sansa's mother asked trying to figure out if Sansa's father really planned to have her husband work with him as an equal or if it was just another sugarcoated word to make it easy for others to hear.

"I knew I came to the right person," Sansa's father was not offended hearing Ellen's mother's question but rather excited because her husband was an asset.

"I can't make any promises, since I am not clear on certain key points," Ellen's mother knew better than to promise without being clear on what she stood to gain.

"When I said that your husband can come work with me, I meant it. But you have to understand. I have spent a decade and a fortune building the business. I can't just give half it to someone, even if that person is my comrade.

Here's the deal, he can use the company's assets and name to get clients for 30 percent of whatever he makes. And once he has gathered enough money he can buy his way in as a partner. What do you say?" Sansa's father offered the platinum contract for Ellen's dad as he valued Ellen's dad's skill set that much.

"That seems fair, but how much is the buy-in for my husband to become a partner?" Ellen's mother understood that the conditions proposed by Sansa's father were better than what her husband can get in the market considering that there was no free lunch in the world therefore she did not bother to negotiate with him and rather unveiled the crux of this contract.

Right now Sansa's father's firm was doing well in the market but it struggled to stand above its competitors, but that would change if her husband joined him. This meant that the value of Sansa's father's firm would skyrocket after her husband joins them. This also meant that the buy-in amount for her husband to become a partner would drastically increase from now. Therefore rather than negotiating the percentage by a small margin she directly went after the buy-in amount required to become a partner.

"About that, how about I decrease the firm's cut on every husband's earnings to 25% and shake on it," Sansa's father was willing to help his comrades out of goodwill but he was not a saint to take a loss for them.

"No, how about we agree on the buy-in amount to be the same as what it is now in the future too," Ellen's mother spoke her mind seeing that Sansa's father was trying to act dumb.

"Now you are asking too much," Sansa's father said directly. Yes, the addition of Ellen's father to his firm would increase their value, but the thought that he would give a part of it to Ellen's father for chump change did not sit right with him.

"I know, but you and your other partners also know that my husband is worth it," There was a reason why Ellen's family was allowed to live in the Duskborn manner despite their low status in the family and it was that they were hostages to keep Ellen's father in check in case he ever thought that he was better off on his own then laboring for the Duskborn family.

As for why Sansa's father and Ellen's mother vigorously negotiated when it came to the buy-in amount to become a partner rather than the firm's cut in Ellen's father's overall earnings was because as more time Ellen's father spent as part of the firm, the buy-in amount required to become a partner will keep growing exponentially. Meaning there were chances that despite the attractive terms offered in his contract, it was possible that Ellen's father may never be able to gather the buy-in amount

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AN: The easter egg about how Sansa's past and Mc's life are intermingled is taking more wc than I was hoping it would but I hope you guys are patient as it will be satisfying to watch when this knot is tied beautifully.

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Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 18:03

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

"How about this, the buy-in amount for your husband to become a partner will be the same as when he starts working with us but that will only be valid for the next two years. If he is not able to come up with the agreed-upon buy-in amount within the next two years then the buy-in amount he will have to pay be increased to the market value. This two years grace period is all I can give him, but this is the last time you can use this comrade card," Even though Sansa's father proposed this he did not know how he will explain this to the other partners and persuade them.

"Increase it to three years and we have a deal," Ellen's mother bargained to make the most of Sansa's father's comrade sentiment, she did not care about how he will get the others to agree with these terms as it was not her problem.

"Three years is too much, the other partners will never agree to it," Sansa's father spoke the truth, he and his partners built the firm with their blood and sweat, and they would not just hand a part of it to anybody no matter how much value their presence added to the firm. It was no longer about thinking realistically. Most of the current partners have

earned their way in, the seer envy that would surface because of such favorable terms offered to Ellen's father, alone was enough to engulf what they had built.

When it comes to money one has to be realistic but you would be making a big mistake if you were to take out human emotions entirely out of the equation. For good or worse, human emotion can create miracles and disasters alike, so a person needs to know which emotions are to be celebrated and which to be guarded against.

Sansa's father knows that Ellen's father's skill set and reputation in this field would work wonders for their market value but the firm no longer belonged just him alone, though he had the bigger voice, it was not the same as a decade ago when he had founded the firm.

"Fine, but you have to give me your word that you will keep fair so that my husband does stand a chance to gather such a huge amount of money in the limited time," Ellen's mother was not born yesterday, she knew money makes people do unthinkable things. Yes, her husband was skilled but if the people who were to stand behind him and support him were to work against him then no matter how skilled he was it would be impossible for him to gather the agreed buy-in amount in the given time limit despite the favorable contract offered to him.

"Isn't that given?" Sansa's father answered with great confidence. Even though he might have left the army but as a commander, he has and will continue to look out for and help his men with everything in his power.

"No, that is not enough you have to promise me with the world as a witness," Ellen's mother knew Sansa's father was a good man, but the same could not be said for other partners who would rather prefer her husband working for them than working with them.

"..." Sansa's father did not immediately answer because he knew the gravity of making a promise in presence of the world. Yes, he valued Ellen's father as a comrade and for his skill set but this was more than what he bargained for. Then framing his will, he looked into his comrade's wife's eyes and said, "I can't make that promise but you have my word that I will make sure that your husband has a fair chance at becoming a partner within the next two years and will not be targeted by other partners."

"..." Hearing Sansa's father not make the promise Ellen's mother was disappointed but she knew without the risk involved the offer made by Sansa's father would be too good to be true so after contemplating it for a while she nodded and confidently said, "we have a deal, give me a weak, he will contact you for the contract."

"Your daughter's sake, I hope you can pull this off," Sansa's father did not have total confidence in Ellen's mother that she would be able to convince her husband to go against the Duskbear family rules, after all, he knew his comrade's stubbornness better.

"Don't worry, leave it to me," Ellen's mother assured Sansa's gather and then handed the cart of refreshments to him she said, "Could you help me distribute the refreshments to the kids?"

"Huh? Sure," Sansa's father did not expect this but soon got on board as this way he could check on his little angel and the little demon bothering her without coming off as eavesdropping pedophilia.

"Thank you, I will leave it in your care," Ellen's mother said politely as she turned to leave.

"Wait, aren't you coming in? Who is going to look after the kids, if you leave? Wait, who is watching the kids right now?" Sansa's father asked feeling Ellen's mother was irresponsible.

"They are kids, the creativity takes shape in absence of adults," Ellen's mother replied as she turned down the lobby without a care for what Sansa's father thought of her and her parenting style.

"So nobody," Sansa's father mumbled before preparing to walk into a hall field with kids. To be frank, Sansa's father except for his little angel hated every other kid on the planet. He thought he would understand what appeal others find in kids to like them once he had one of his own but for some weird reason, his dislike for other's kids increased after the birth of his little angel.

Taking in a deep breath Sansa's father opened the door of the hall, and pushed in the refreshment cart yelling, "Who wants candies?"

Seeing an unknown man enter the hall, yelling, 'who wants candies?' the kids went silent recalling their parent's warning.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 18:11

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

"I was surprised to hear when my servant said that you were waiting to meet me," A wrinkly old man with a viking beard surrounded by a baleful aura said looking at the slender waist nymph with an annoyed expression and displaying not the least bit fear for an intimidating man such as himself.

"Fifth Elder, please, let us not bother with small talks. I am here with a proposal that will benefit you, if you are not interested I will not waste your precious time and leave right away," Ellen's mother did not like the gaze of the old man. She felt like the deer being eyed by a jackal. She thought being a part of the Duskborn family for a decade now she could hold a little standing in this old geezer's eyes but she was wrong, this purist motherfucker still saw her as a pest similar to the first day she stepped foot in this mansion.

"If it's a proposal that you have brought then it must be worth my time," knowing what Ellen's mother was capable of Fifth Elder did not make the mistake of underestimating her.

"Fifth elder, thank you for your trust in me," Ellen's mother sighed as the first obstacle of her plan had been completed.

"No, no, you are worth my trust. If not for you I would have killed that rascal nephew of mine when he dared to bring you home and missed out on such a great slave," Fifth Elder did not bother to filter his words because he knew there was nothing his nephew or his wife could do about it.

"And this junior thanks you for the grace you have shown us that day," Hearing the Fifth Elder call her husband a slave to her face Ellen's mother could only thank him for the mercy he had shown to their family.

"Enough with that, tell me what is that you have come to offer me this time," Fifth Elder liked a good bargain, especially one where he held an absolute advantage.

"Fifth Elder, I know even with my husband leading the operation, your firm is struggling in the market but I have a solution for it," Ellen's mother went to explain her proposal to the thee Fifth elder.

"So you think that is possible?" the Fifth elder's expression was grim, what his nephew's wife was offering him was too good to be true, that's how much it would benefit him if everything were to go in accordance with what his nephew's wife had planned.

"Yes, with your blessing, I can make it possible," Ellen's mother replied with great confidence.

"What about my nephew? Does he know what you are planning?" The fifth elder asked despite knowing that his nephew would never agree to something like this and his wife would not be here if she had informed him of her plans.

"No, he doesn't know a thing and doesn't need to know until the time is ripe to reap what we sow," Ellen's mother did not bother to hide the fact that she was doing this behind her husband's back. Because it would be unbelievable otherwise as her husband's stubborn loyalty was known to the entire capital.

"Now, that's a problem. What makes you think that he will be able to pull the trigger when the time is right, after all, in the end, everything we invested rests on his decision," Fifth Elder had to control his laughter as he spoke these words out loud.

"Fifth Elder, you and I both know, when the time comes, he will choose the family over anything. Aren't I and my daughter the living and walking example," Ellen's mother's expression did not fluctuate as she spoke these words. It was heartbreaking to know that the man she trusted her daughter and her life with would not hesitate to sacrifice them for his family's interest.

"I almost broke into laughter as I spoke those words," Fifth Elder said and then added, "Even though my brother was a waste, he did manage to do one thing right, and that is his son."

"..." Fifth Elder's unscrupulous words did not seem to daunt Ellen's mother's indifferent exterior. It was as if the fifth elder was not talking about her husband and father-in-law but strangers. One would wonder if Ellen's mother was that heartless or had her disappointment in her husband turned her so heartless.

"You know I pity that foolish commander of my nephew, but he should have stuck to his business and not tried to eye what belonged to me, now I have left no choice but to show him what happens if one were to eye the Duskborn's property. I bet his look would be priceless when he learns how you plan to repay his grace," Fifth elder could not help but grin thinking about the potential gains from Ellen's mother's proposal.

"Fifth Elder, about my condition-" Seeing the fifth elder who was having an orgasm just thinking about what he stood to gain from her plan, Ellen's mother could not help but remind him of the condition she put forward fearing that he had forgotten all about it but was interrupted by him.

"Yes-yes, I know, if you get me this, I will give you and your daughter the freedom you want," Fifth Elder grumbled when it came to paying a price.

"Fifth Elder, be work harder to get what you desire if you were to say the same in the presence of the world's will," Ellen's mother knew better than to trust the word of a greedy pig such as the Fifth elder who did not have qualms about using his nephew as a slave and keeping his daughter-in-law and niece as assurance.

As Ellen's mother said that an intimidating pressure filled the hall, her weak body could not withstand the pressure and had no choice but to kneel helplessly. Then a loud voice reverted in the hall, "Are you doubting this Elder's word?"

"Yes"

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Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 18:23

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskbrown Mansion

"Fifth Elder, you called for me-" Ellen's father greeted the fifth elder entering the hall but paused seeing that the person sitting across him was his wife. After the incident years ago, his wife hardly approached Duskbrown's family members so Ellen's father was surprised to see his wife meeting the fifth elder.

"You seemed surprised, imagine my surprise when your wife approached me," Fifth Elder said with a polite smile. His actions were no longer unscrupulous in the presence of his nephew. He seemed to be putting up a gentle and approachable family elder front.

'Tsk' Seeing the sudden change in Fifth elder's demeanor Ellen's mother clicked her tongue in disapproval. Witnessing this her husband could not help but frown. Ellen's mother had long since given up on her husband so she did not even try to put up an act.

"Haha, Fifth Elder, please forgive my wife's offense," letting out a helpless laugh Ellen's father apologized to the fifth elder on behalf of his wife.

"..." Hearing her husband apologize to the fifth elder, Ellen's mother masked her annoyance with an indifferent expression, not letting her true thoughts appear on her face.

"Little Nephew, I don't blame her. After what happened that day, her little dissatisfaction towards this old man is justified. But now that we all are a single family, I hope we can keep our resentment aside and work together," Fifth Elder spoke taking all the blame a wise elder should.

"Fifth Elder, your words are wise as always. Please be rest assured, my family and I are willing to do everything in our power for the prosperity Duskbrown family," Ellen's father said with a firm resolve.

"Well said, my little nephew," Fifth Elder praised his nephew, and with a sigh, he added, "If only your cousins had half of your motivation and decisiveness, the days of prosperity for the Duskbrown family would not be far."

"Fifth Elder, you're being humble, my cousins and other family members are willing to sacrifice for the family. Rest assured the prosperity of the Duskbrown family is not far," Ellen's father believed what he said. And it was true as each family members were a

mere tool in the hands of the family's elders and leader to lead the Duskbrown family to prosperity.

"Haha, you are right little nephew. Now your cousins have grown and become responsible enough to shoulder the burden of the family. The prosperity of the family is not far, so you no longer need to suffer for the family," After feeding his Nephew's ego to the brim Fifth elder finally moved the conversation to his real motive.

"Fifth elder, what do you mean?" Hearing the Fifth elder, Ellen's father asked in confusion. The uncle who always preached about self-sacrifice for the family and the bigger picture suddenly asked him to take a break and be selfish, and Ellen's father's confusion was given.

"You heard me, little nephew. How long are you going to sacrifice for the family? You are married and have a daughter now. You need to start thinking for yourself. For quite a while now I have been thinking about this but I did not know how to bring this up until your wife came up with a perfect proposal," Fifth elder slowly built toward his objective such that his little nephew would drown in the gratitude toward him and the family. This way when he asks his nephew to betray his friend for his family's interest he would not hesitate.

Ellen's father threw a cold stare at his wife before explaining to the Fifth elder, "Fifth elder, I don't know what that woman said but the family's business still is at the infancy stage, it needs my presence more than ever. If I leave now, decades of work will be in vain."

"Nephew, are calling your cousins incapable?" The fifth elder's voice grew colder.

"No, Fifth Elder-

"But your choice of words enunciated that," The fifth elder spoke interpreting his nephew's explanation.

"I am sorry, Fifth Elder," Ellen's father apologized.

It was this idiotic loyalty of his nephew that was the reason why Fifth Elder agreed to Ellen's mother's plan without much caution. As she knew, no matter the circumstance, his nephew would always choose the family, a hundred out of a hundred times. Fifth Elder trusted his nephew more than his children, his flesh and blood.

With his nephew's apology, Fifth Elder's expression softened, and warmly said, "Nephew, you always have the best interest of the family in your mind so I will forgive your offense this once."

"Thank you, Fifth Elder-

" Little nephew, I am telling you this for your sake as your uncle. You have a child of your own. Now it's time for you to start thinking for yourself. Why don't start by hearing what your wife has to say," Fifth Elder took all the credit and still managed to keep the possibility of the blame on his nephew's wife. At the end of this job, his nephew will end up hating his wife, as all he did was give his nephew a wonderful opportunity to pursue the idea his nephew's wife came up with. When all this was over he was also a victim of his nephew's wife's nefarious scheme.

Seeing the old snake skillfully manipulate her husband's heart, Ellen's mother was impressed and cautioned herself to never let her guard down facing the fifth elder. Then under the cold stare of her husband she went on to explain what she and Sansa's dad had discussed.

After hearing his wife's explanation Ellen's father fell in contemplation but heard his uncle say, "Little nephew, you have a good wife, you lucked out with this own. She has a sharp head on her shoulder, I think you should consider what she has proposed."

"But-" Ellen's father still did not seem to be sold on the idea of working outside the family. Seeing his hesitation Fifth elder persuaded, "Don't worry about the family, your cousins, I, other elders and the family head can handle it. Don't let go of such a wonderful opportunity to make something of yourself outside of the family. If you are to make it out there you will be making our family proud."

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Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 18:29

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

"Did the commander really agree to these terms?" Ellen's father said hearing the terms of the contract discussed by his wife and commander, these terms were too good to be true. He had confidence in his skill set and felt they were worth the price but his commander didn't have to offer these terms as anybody else in the market wouldn't offer as much.

"Yes, if you have doubts you can call him," Ellen's mother said with very little interest as if his decision did not matter to her.

"No need, I trust you," Ellen's father said but seeing his wife continue to remain apathetic he added, "Since you have already discussed the terms, I guess you would not mind setting up a date for me to sign the contract."

"Sure," Ellen's mother agreed without displaying much emotion on her face or tone. It was unclear whether she was happy with her husband's decision.

"..." Seeing the emotional distance between his nephew and his wife, Fifth elder was more assured about the plan going through without a hitch. And then said, "Little Nephew, what have you planned about the buy-in money for to become a partner?"

"Fifth elder, two years is more than enough time for me to gather that amount," Ellen's father replied confidently. He was not being arrogant but he had that much faith in his skills. Back when he worked for the army, nobody would dare to claim first if he were to claim second. That's how good his skill mastery was, their prestige rounded through the military and beyond.

With his reply, hearing his passion for his work and skills, his wife's eyes sparkled but were soon swallowed by her indifferent gaze.

"Good. Still, the family would like to provide the buy-in money as an appreciation for your selfless duty towards the family," Fifth Elder said that the family was willing to pay the buy-in money to become a partner in Sansa's father's firm that his nephew required.

"Fifth Elder, I appreciate the family's gesture but there is no need for you to these lengths for me. The family's finances are stretched thin as they are now, I can gather the money in time, so please stop worrying," Ellen's father said rejecting the family's help not because he worried that they would interfere in his new life later. Instead, he was worried that the family could not afford it.

"The family money is stretched thin after all the fifth elder just brought his granddaughter an S-rank hovercar, it must have cost a lot," Ellen's mother scoffed hearing her husband's reason to reject the money he earned with his blood and sweat when offered to him.

"That's different, she needed it to commute to the college. This is safer and cheaper than having her live near the college," Ellen's father defended the fifth elder's unscrupulous spending of family money for his personal use.

"What about our daughter? With the inflation at its peak, I don't even dare to hail a cab and have to use public transportation to send her to kindergarten. Don't you think it would be safer for me and your daughter if we had our vehicle?" Ellen's mother did not want to dig this up and bicker with her husband but seeing her husband be so submissive to Fifth Elder and openly support his hypocritic behavior, all the resentment for this damned family she had buried under her indifference suddenly burst out like a volcano.

"You would not have to if you did not insist on enrolling Ellen in that kindergarten instead of a nearby one," Ellen's father argued.

"So, it is my fault that I want the best education for my daughter?" Ellen's mother could not believe the words that came from her man's mouth and wondered how she ever fell for this man. What did she see in him?

"Stop it, you are embarrassing me," yelling that Ellen's father turned to look at his uncle and apologetically said, "Sorry, Fifth elder, I let you see something unsightly."

"Forget it, which couple doesn't fight? Besides what your wife said is not wrong? You should have informed me about this. I would have thought of something to help her sooner," Fifth Elder spoke with a warm smile, and summoning his grimoire, he took out an AA-rank hovercar from the cardholder and passed it to his niece-in-law adding, "For now, this is the best I can do, I will get back to you when I can get my hands on something better."

"No, Fifth Elder, you don't have to," Ellen's father once again tried to reject the help offered by Fifth elder but the card had already exchanged hands and was now in his wife's possession. Who read the card name and added, "AA-rank AA-4 Stromwheel hovercar, this will do. I guess one has to be fortunate enough to own a brand new hovercar."

Ellen's mother said taking a dig at how Fifth Elder's granddaughter got a new hovercar and she got a used one. Ellen's mother would not have taken the card as it would undermine every little and big thing her resentment stood for but the thought of having the luxury of not having to wait for public transportation made her weak.

Seeing his wife not only take the card but also dare to complain about it Ellen's father threw a cold glare at her and thanked the fifth elder knowing that his wife would not, "Thank you, Elder."

"No need to thank me, as one of the family elders, that is what I should do. And little nephew I have transferred the buy-in money to your account and there is a little extra, buy something for my grandniece," Fifth Elder was so generous today because compared to what he stood to gain from the plan his niece-in-law proposed this amount he used to win his nephew's heart and quell a little bit of his niece-in-law's resentment was pennies.

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Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 18:36

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

"Fifth elder, you didn't have to. I can easily gather that money within the time limit," Getting the notification of the money being credited to his account Ellen's father hurriedly persuades Fifth Elder to take the money back.

"Little Nephew, I have no doubt that you can gather the buy-in money within the time limit but the human heart is fickle and prone to sin. Not to mention two years is a lot of time for a sudden change of heart. Nephew, you are too good for your own good, the outside world is not the same as your family, and they will not hesitate to take advantage of your trusting nature. So it is in your best interest to get ahead of this one," Fifth Elder did not give in to his nephew's persuasion.

After giving what Fifth Elder said a thought, Ellen's father finally decided to use the money given to him by the Fifth Elder to buy his way in as a partner in his commander's firm, "Fifth Elder, thank you and I will definitely pay the family back."

"..." Hearing her husband promise the fifth elder to pay the money back which was his, to begin with, could not help but let out a long sigh and wonder how blind was she to marry this man.

"Do as you see fit," Fifth elder was more than happy to hear his idiotic nephew promise to return the money to the family. At this point, the Fifth elder began to admire his brother for his teachings to his nephew as even he could not raise such a willing slave for the family.

"Thank you," Ellen's father thanked feeling grateful that his uncle gave him the chance to repay the family. As he was really touched by the family's gesture of lending him money to start a new career and a little extra to buy gifts for his daughter. His heart was filled with nothing but warmth for the family.

"Fifth Elder, it would be good if you could add a little extra for us to rent and move to a house closer to Ellen's kindergarten and his new workplace," Ellen's mother said seeing how the Fifth Elder for a change was in a giving mood.

"What are you saying woman? Are you out of your mind?" Hearing that his wife wanted to move out of the Duskborn family mansion Ellen's father immediately reprimanded her.

"What? Would it be more efficient for you and Ellen for use to move to a location that is close to her kindergarten and your new job? This way we save a lot of time wasted in commute," Ellen's mother justified her idea to her husband but seeing that he was still not convinced to move out of the Duskborn family mansion she added, "Fifth Elder, don't you think what I am saying is reasonable?"

Except for Ellen's father, everyone in the family knew the only reason, Ellen and her family were allowed to live in the Duskborn family mansion were because they were hostages in case Ellen's father suddenly had enough of the family and decides to rebel.

Now that Ellen's mother was trying to get out of the cage, how could Fifth elder agree to it? Just when he was about to come up with a reason to reject her idea to move out of the Duskbrown mansion he heard her continue to say, "Fifth Elder, don't you agree that it would be easier for him to achieve what you want if we were to live near to his new workplace?"

'Is she threatening me?' this thought came to Fifth Elder's mind after hearing his niece-in-law address him twice. Thinking of this Fifth Elder's mood suddenly pivoted for the worse. Nobody likes to be threatened, this was true for people like Fifth Elder. But he did not let his mad rage surface on his face because he need this one to go smoothly.

There was a reason why the Fifth Elder did not directly inform his nephew of what his niece-in-law and he had planned. If his nephew were to know that they planned to screw over his commander then no matter how loyal he was to the family he would never agree to it. Therefore he planned with his niece-in-law to lead his nephew to the endgame and then coerce him using the family sentiment into pulling the trigger. To get to the point he needed his niece-in-law's cooperation. Who seems to not mind using that to threaten him to get her way.

"What are you speaking woman?" Ellen's father did not understand what his wife was saying. What did the fifth elder want him to achieve? What was his wife babbling on about?

"Ahem, nephew, your wife is right. Instead of wasting most of your day commuting just to live in this old mansion alongside your family, you should move to a location near your new workplace. It will not only save some time by shortening the commute distance but also make it more efficient for you to tend to your clients," Fifth Elder chose to give in to his niece-in-law's demand for now as it did not matter where she lived. Once she had entered the Duskbrown family she can only die as the Duskbrown family ghost. If she thought that she had escaped the clutches of the Duskbrown family just by moving out of the family mansion, she would be proved dreadfully wrong when the time comes. As for her audacity to threaten him, once this project had reached its conclusion and he did not need her, it would not be too late for him to have his naive niece-in-law brush up on the Duskbrown family laws and regulations.

"Thank you, elder," Ellen's mother immediately thanked the Fifth Elder not waiting for her husband to open his stupid mouth, and added, "Fifth Elder, Ellen is a growing child and loves to play with her friends over. So, I was hoping that we could rent something that would not fill crowded when she invites her friend over."

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Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 18:36

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

"Kid, for the hundredth time it is not a cat monster but a cub of an AA-rank Cloud Mane lion monster," Sansa's father said hearing the Baylor family kid time and again call his daughter's cute lion monster cub a cat.

"..." The kid in question ignored Sansa's father and continued to pet the wolf pup adding, "Ellen's pet is stronger than your cat, Sansa."

Seeing the kid ignore him and continue to call his daughter's pet monster a cat, Sansa's father was irritated to the point where he was about to lose it, the only thing that helped him keep his calm was the fact he had a feeling that this kid was doing it purposefully and if he were to let irritation surface on his face then that would mean the kid had won.

"That's not true. As the uncle said, Sansa's pet cub is a descendant of the AA-rank monster, whereas my pet pup is a descendant of the B-rank monster. Even if my wolf pup is a month older than Sansa's lion cub, it is still not a match for Sir Cloud Tail," Ellen who had done her homework on monsters, did not hesitate to correct the Baylor kid. The surrounding kids nodded hearing Ellen preach.

'You tell him, girl,' Sansa's father cheered inside seeing Ellen come to the defense of his little angel's pet and correct the Baylor family kid who continued to give his daughter cold shoulder.

"Whatever, your wolf pup is still cuter than that cat," the Baylor kid continued to find ridiculous reasons to undermine Sansa's pet.

"I don't know, I myself prefer Sansa's sir cloud tail, if not for the pet store having a storage of feline monsters, I too would have chosen a feline pet monster," Saying that Ellen squatted next to Sir Cloud tail, who happened to be skittishly peeking at the group of children from behind Sansa's legs and began to pet it.

Seeing this the wolf pup who was enjoying the embrace of the Baylor kid immediately rushed to its master's side feeling jilted. Rushing to its master's side it obediently quatted next to the cat monster and started to make puppy eyes at its master. Getting no response from its master, it barked to get her attention. As a result, Ellen used her free hand to pet it on its head. Having successfully managed to get its master's attention, its cute little tail wagged uncontrollably.

Seeing the wolf return to its master, now the Baylor boy felt abandoned and looked in its direction with longing eyes. But it was not clear whether his eyes longed for the wolf pup or the owner of the hand petting it.

As the only adult in the room, it was clear to Sansa's dad what the boy really wanted. Which did him no favors. He was better off not knowing it. Learning the boy his daughter had a crush on had feelings for another girl, Sansa's father could only shake his head helplessly as there was nothing much he could do about this matter.

Fortunately the girl the boy his daughter had hots for did not have the same feelings for the boy. As she seemed to want to befriend his daughter. But all his daughter's thoughts were preoccupied with the thoughts of the boy she liked, so she was unable to take notice of what was happening around her. Seeing that his daughter was showing signs of wasting her life thinking about her feelings for a jerk who did not have the same feelings for her, Sansa's father decided to step in. His daughter was too young for heartbreaks and end up as a loner but not too young for a best friend, he had to do something before what he saw here becomes the norm of his little angel's life.

"Sansa, a word," Sansa's father called his daughter to the side.

"What is it dad?" little Sansa asked.

"Honey, who among them is your best friend?" Sansa's father asked his little angel looking at the group of kids.

"Um, all of them are my best friends," little Sansa replied innocently.

"No, honey, what I mean to say is, who among them do you like the most as your friend?" Seeing that his daughter did not understand his question Sansa's father decided to be more specific.

"Um, him," little Sansa said eyeing the Baylor family boy. Hearing her answer, her father's face almost became hideous out of envy. But he controlled his emotions and with a deadpan face he added, "Other than him."

Yes, the Baylor family kid had above-average cuteness and seemed trustworthy, but he saw no other merits about him for his daughter to be smitten to such an exaggerated level. If not for the age of the boy, he would have suspected that boy had used some kind of witchcraft to gain his daughter's undying favor.

"Other than him..." little Sansa suddenly found herself in a predicament. And wondered why was she friends with these kids to being with? And came to a sad realization that she was friends with this group of people because they were the close friends of the boy she had a crush on. Even though she did not like the answer she replied to her father truthfully, "None of them."

Having already prepared for her answer, Sansa's father was not surprised. He blamed himself for this, if had been more involved with his little angel's life, maybe he could have prevented his daughter from obsessing over the boy.

Since there was no point crying over broken eggs, Sansa's father asked, "Are there any other friends of yours outside of these kids?"

"No," Little Sansa replied and a hint of sadness could be heard in her voice as she just realized she had no friends, At least not the ones that she liked to invite back to her home.

Seeing his disappointed daughter who had come to a sad realization that she had no best friends, Sansa's father consoled her by saying, "How about you make some starting today?"

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Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 18:43

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

"Is that possible?" little Sansa asked as she was left with little confidence after getting a cold shoulder from the boy she pursued.

"Yes," though Sansa's dad replied with a warm smile he thought that he had failed as a father. The only thing that kept him going was the thought that it was not too late, there was still time for him to make up for his shortcomings.

"But will they want to be friends with me?" little Sansa asked in concern, getting the cold shoulder from the boy she liked each time she put herself out there, she was left with very fragile self-confidence. Therefore she could not help but wonder that other kids would not want to be friends with her.

"Why wouldn't they? Our Sansa is the cutest, bravest, and kindest kid I have ever known, as long as you are yourself and try these kids would love to be your friends," Sansa's dad has already noticed that among the group of friends my kids have tried to get close to little Sansa but she only had eyes for the Baylor boy and failed to notice when others approached her with the intent of friendship.

Sansa's father was worried about his daughter, as being love-sick was not one of the problems of a five-year-old. The fact that his daughter had developed something as

such at such a tender age only meant that somewhere down the line he had dropped the ball of fatherhood and messed up big time. All he could do right now was hope that there was still time left for him to pick up the ball without doing irreplaceable damage to it.

"Really?" little Sansa asked innocently. Having pointed out by her father little Sansa stopped obsessing over her puppy love and gave other aspects of life a shot.

"Yes, why don't you start with Ellen? She seems like a good friend," Sansa's father encourage little Sansa to put herself out there even though the last few times she did, did not work out in her favor.

Little Sansa contemplated what father said for a while and then nodding her cute face brimming with resolve she replied "Okay, but what do I say to her?"

"Um, how about you invite her to our house," Sansa's father said unable to think of any better reason on the spot.

"Okay," Little Sansa nodded and head towards Ellen who seemed to be immersed in petting the two cute pet monsters. Her technique seemed to be proficient as the pets seemed to be enjoying it. Meanwhile, the other kids were keeping themselves busy with building blocks or other toys. Because after a while the monster pets seemed to have lost their charm as these tend to not like being petted by some of them. The two monster pets were not to be blamed for this as they were not toys for kids to play with as they pleased.

Little Sansa heeding her father's advice, gather her courage and headed toward Ellen. This time the reason she approached little Ellen was different hence the need for courage. Suppressing the fear of being rejected little Sansa slowly made her way to Ellen.

Seeing her arrive, Ellen let out a smile displaying a row of pearly white teeth with a few of the teeth taking a leave of absence and said, "Sir Cloud tail, likes it when you rub its tummy."

"Meow" smelling its master nearby the little lion monster cub immediately awoke from its pleasure-filled state hurried toward her and rubbed its head against her legs displaying affection. Having grown up in a pet store and not a dungeon, Sir Cloud tail knew that if it did not want to sleep on a hungry stomach then it had to always remember to please its master.

"The pet store staff said the same thing but whenever I try to rub its tummy it does not seem as satisfied compared to when you do it," Little Sansa had already noticed that Sir Cloud tail seemed to prefer Ellen's tummy rub more than hers.

"I think I know why, there is a trick to this. The pet store grandma pointed it out to me. I can teach you if you want me to," Ellen said thinking of the reason why Sir Cloud tail would prefer her tummy rub over Sansa's.

"Really, that would be great," Little Sansa asked enthusiastically.

"Okay, watch me rub my wolf pup and you try the same on Sir Cloud tail," Ellen said as she laid the wolf monster pup on its back and began to comb the fur on its chest and stomach with her fingers repeatedly in a single direction.

"I see, what you are doing different," Little Sansa immediately noticed the difference and figured out what she was doing wrong. Ellen was combing the fur of her pet in a single direction unlike her where she combed back and forth in both directions, making it a little uncomfortable compared to the method that Ellen used.

Having figured out the trick that Ellen spoke of little Sansa tried it on Sir cloud tail and received better than intended results causing a beautiful smile to blossom on her face. Then she turned to Ellen and thanked her for the tip, "Thank you."

"Happy to help," Ellen replied humbly and continued to pet her wolf monster pup.

Speaking striking the iron while it was hot, little Sansa used the momentum built by the previous conversation to achieve her intended purpose to approach Ellen saying, "Ellen, my father has built a playroom for Sir cloud tail to play, you and your wolf monster pup should come by sometime. Sir cloud tail would love a friend to play with."

"A playroom for pets, like the one in the pet store?" Ellen asked with expectation.

"Yes," Sansa nodded.

"Cool, my pet and I would love to check it out. So when should I come by our house?" Ellen asked enthusiastically. Having not played enough in the playroom of the pet store she was looking forward to the one at Sansa's house.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 18:49

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

"How about tomorrow, after kindergarten?" little Sansa said but soon regretted it, worrying that Ellen would reject her as she may have had some prior arrangements.

"Great, I will ask my mom to bring my pet with her when she comes to pick me up at kindergarten so we can directly go to your house," Ellen readily agreed to little Sansa's invitation.

"Nice, your going to love the playroom," Sansa was excited hearing Ellen accept her invitation immediately.

From afar, seeing his daughter successful in her first quest to make a friend Sansa's father wanted to cheer but held himself back not wanting to embarrass his daughter, and felt that this was not enough to make up for the damage he had caused with his absence when she needed him.

"A playroom, is it like the one in the mall? Can I come too?" A little girl who happened to be playing nearby asked after hearing Ellen and Sansa make plans for tomorrow evening.

"..." Sansa who was delighted over making a friend had not thought this far ahead and could only turn to her father seeking an answer only to find him vigorously nodding his head. So she instinctively blurted, "Yes"

Hearing Sansa's awkward reply, Ellen immediately said, "Great, it is decided then tomorrow we all will meet at Sansa's house."

"Okay," the little girl nodded enthusiastically, attracting other kids who began to invite themselves to meet at Sansa's house tomorrow after kindergarten.

It did not take long for the Baylor family boy to learn of the playdate at Sansa's house, so he headed toward Ellen and gaining her attention, said, "Ellen, you agreed to come to my house tomorrow to meet the pet that I will be adopting tonight."

Hearing the boy, the group of kids who were babbling about meeting at Sansa's house went silent, as some remembered that they had agreed to meet at the boy's house tomorrow after kindergarten hours.

As for little Sansa, she held her breath forgetting to breathe. Feeling that this will inevitably end up badly for her.

"I am sorry, I forgot," Ellen said with an apologetic smile and then added, "But you can bring your pet to Sansa's house, you can introduce it to all of us there. I bet it will enjoy itself in Sansa's pet playroom."

"Yes, yes," the other kids nodded hearing Ellen's solution as they were more optimistic and curious about Sansa's pet playroom than another pet.

Feeling the peer pressure the Baylor family kid had no choice but to agree to their arrangements by coldly answering, "Fine," not bothering to hide his dissatisfaction with the arrangement and especially with Sansa, using a chilling stare aimed at her.

Before Sansa could feel happy about the fact that Ellen and the other kids choose to spend their evening at her house rather than at the house of the most popular kid in their kindergarten, her little crush's soul-chilling stare rendered her without any thoughts but one, 'He hates me.'

Seeing this Sansa's father wanted to rush and teach the Baylor family boy a lesson instead sighed and then decided to take his daughter home before she suffers any more damage. Right at that moment, as if she had timed it, the irresponsible mother of little Ellen entered the hall with her husband, and seeing Sansa's father still present, she said, "You are still here?"

Throwing a cold glare at her, Sansa's dad walked to his daughter, and picking her up in his arms he announced, "Kids, something urgent came up so I will be leaving with Sansa but I am looking forward to meeting you guys at our house tomorrow. Kids, bye."

"Bye, Sansa." "Sansa, bye" "See you in kindergarten."

"Since you have waited so long, why not wait a little longer to hear the good news?" Ellen's mother said as Sansa's father carried Sansa out of the hall.

"What good news? I think it can wait," Sansa's father said tightening his hug around his little angel, who stared into the air with blank eyes.

"Oh, I see. Was it the Baylor kid again?" Ellen's mother said seeing Sansa's blank eyes.

"I take it that it happened before and you did not bother to inform me about it?" Sansa's father's voice grew colder learning that this was not the first time his daughter went through a mental meltdown. What enraged him more was the fact that his daughter had to go through this all alone.

"I tried to cheer her but it had no effect and besides I did not think it was my place," Ellen's mother replied truthfully. Though she was not right, it was understandable because there was no easy way for a person to inform a father that his five-year-old was having boy troubles.

"..." Sansa's father stared at Ellen's mother before turning to leave while shaking his head in self blame. It was his fault for not showing more interest in his daughter's life, and that fact would not change by blaming it on others.

"My husband has agreed to work with you, so talk to other partners and prepare partnership agreement papers," Ellen's mother said from behind.

Hearing her talk about partnership Sansa's father stopped in his tracks and turning to look at his comrade, he asked, "What is she talking about?"

"I have decided to come work with you commander, I have the Duskbear family's blessing for this, they are the ones lending me the money to come up with the buy-in money to become a partner," Ellen's father explained enthusiastically.

"Nope, not happening," Saying that Sansa's father turned to leave which was completely out of Ellen's parent's expectations.

"What the?" Ellen's mother almost cussed but controlling herself she asked, "Why?"

Hearing Ellen's mother Sansa's father once again stops in his tracks to face Ellen's parents. Then he aggressively said, " I will tell you why, I invited your husband, not the Duskbears. I don't want those greedy bastards anywhere near me and the things I hold dear."

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 18:56

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskbear Mansion

The Duskbear family's reputation preceded them. Almost all of the families, organizations, and cults in the central region, especially its capital were aware of or had experienced the greed of the Duskbear family. Just like the snakes known for their poison, Duskbear were known for their greed. Despite their reputation, many fell prey to them, as like all predators they had a unique charm to them that would draw their prey toward them.

So it was not a surprise that Sansa's father refused to take money that had anything to do with the Duskbear family, even through indirect means. Sansa's father was not overreacting, he would be a fool if he were not this cautious towards the Duskbear family. Having seen the Duskbear family not hesitate to use their own flesh and blood as slaves and expendable for decades, he would be stupid to expect better treatment as an outsider with no blood ties to them. Knowing that Duskbear family was a greedy cackle of hyenas who would not even leave his bones behind after they were done with

him, Sansa's father was adamant that he would not let these desperadoes anywhere near things he holds dear.

"You are making no sense, how is the Duskborn family a problem here? They are not involved in this in any way possible," Ellen's mother said hearing Sansa's father say that he had called off the verbal agreement they had between them because he only wanted to do business with her husband not his family.

"Woman, you are smarter than that or do you think that I am not smart enough to recall one the most basic rule of doing business in the capital, don't take any investments from the Duskborn family," Sansa's father coldly glared at Ellen's parent. He understands that the buy-in money to become a partner in his firm was not small and was very hard for a person to gather within 2 years but he never expected Ellen's parents to make deal with their slave owners to get the money.

"Commander, it is not like what you think," Ellen's father came forward to explain to his commander that his family did not mean anything nor were they hatching a nefarious plan by lending him the buy-in money.

"It's not like what I think, then tell me what happens, in case you are unable to repay the money lent to you by your family. Will they ask for ownership of the partnership you bought using their money?" Sansa's father did not give Ellen's father a moment to explain for himself. As he did not want to be dragged into the quagmire named Duskborn family along with the comrade he was trying to save.

Sansa's father saw a way to make a profit while being a good commander, by having Ellen's father work with him not only was it good for his firm but also for Ellen's father being used by his family, which was enjoying the fruits of his hard work and getting rich from it while he, his wife and daughter did not see a dime of it. But Sansa's father never imagined that trying to help his friend, instead of dragging him out of the quagmire he may also be pulled in. Hence he was enraged at his friend.

"The Duskborn family did not lend that money to my husband, it is their compensation for my husband's years of selfless service to their family. So please be assured about the money, it will not come back to bite you," Ellen's mother suddenly spoke realizing that the origins of the money were the culprit of the current conflict.

"Yes, commander she is right but I did promise to return to them when I can," Ellen's father added to his wife's explanation as his pride did not allow him to take money from his family.

"..." Hearing her husband Ellen's mother frowned. Not because her husband continued to claim that he will pay back the Duskborn family the money they gave instead because she believe this was not what her husband's commander wanted to hear. And here thoughts were right.

"Well, which is it? Did the Duskborn family lend it to you or was it compensation for his service to their family?" Sansa's father asked even though he had an understanding of what was happening. He asked so because he wanted to establish a clear origin of the money such that later on, nobody, even the Duskborn family would not be able to dispute the origins of the money.

"Commander, they gave me the money as compensation but I have promised to return every penny I took from them with interest," Ellen's father once again replied, trying to assert that the money was the generosity of his family for his decades of selfless service to them but as the proud son of the Duskborn he would repay their generosity toward him with interest.

"For god sake, will you shut up for a second?" Ellen's mother yelled at her husband in a hushed voice and add, "Nobody cares about your promise, will you just shut up about it."

Hearing his wife's harsh words Ellen's father felt wronged, he wanted to complain but being in the presence of his commander he decided to stay quiet rather than show his commander the ugly side of his marriage.

Seeing that her husband choose to step down, with a warm smile Ellen's mother looked at Sansa's father and said, "The money is the Duskborn family's compensation for my husband's decades of selfless service to them, the Duskborn family has no claim over it. So please be rest assured when say that this money is clean."

Having lived in the capital for his whole life, Sansa's father grew up hearing the Duskborn family's atrocities. They had done a lot worse with much else to justify their actions so Sansa's dad was still skeptical that the origins of the money could not come back to bite him despite the explanation and assurance of Ellen's parents.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,003 words]

Chapter 1015: Declaration

Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 17:05

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Duskborn Mansion

"I am sorry but your words are not enough assurance when it comes to the Duskborn family, I would be a fool if I were not to cultivate this amount of cautiousness when it came to them. I look forward to working with you comrade but that is impossible if the Duskborn family were to be involved directly or indirectly," Sansa's father decisively made it clear to Ellen's parents that if their buy-in money were to come from the Duskborn family then they can forget about the verbal agreement they had between them.

Sansa's father has spent a decade building his firm into what it was now, he even had to sacrifice a part of his daughter's childhood for it. Therefore he was very cautious and decisive when it came to decisions regarding his firm and was not willing to compromise even if it was for his comrades.

"Since, you find our word not enough as an assurance how about this," saying that Ellen's mother forwarded a document to Sansa's father.

The document that Ellen's mother forwarded to Sansa's father was a declaration with the world's will as witness written by the Fifth Elder of the Duskborn family, declaring that the money he gave to his nephew was compensation from the Duskborn family to his nephew for his decades of selfless service to the family and they did accept anything in return.

Going through the document, Sansa's father was finally assured that the Duskborn family will not use this money as a reason to stir up trouble for his firm or make a claim in the partnership. Bring in a new partner in any new business was a big deal, the only reason Sansa's father was willing to let Ellen's father become a partner was that with his presence and expertise the firm would grow to new heights and would set a precedent in the market for their competitors to overcome.

Sansa's father would never agree to anybody else becoming a partner or let them try to buy their way in as a partner, for example, the Duskborn family as they would not make any contribution to the firm or its development and would only add to its chaos such as internal strife. Whereas that was not the case for Ellen's father, whose skill set and reputation would soar the firm to new heights never before imagined.

"So, when should we be expecting to be hearing from you?" Ellen's mother asked as once again an indifference filled her expression. But under that indifference hid her turbulent heart and mind, the reason for this was the document of the declaration signed by the fifth elder which she forwarded to Sansa's father.

When Sansa's father decisively withdrew the verbal agreement between them, Ellen's mother suddenly received a message from the Fifth Elder reading, 'hope this speeds up the process.' with a file attached to it, the document of declaration signed by the fifth elder.

Receiving this message Ellen's mother felt a chill on her back realizing that this whole time the fifth Elder was listening in on their conversation. The unbelievable thing was that both her husband nor his commander discover the Fifth Elder eavesdropping on them. Ellen's mother did not show the scare given to her by the means of the Fifth Elder and calmly carried out the exchange.

Fifth Elder did not mind signing this declaration if it were to lessen Sansa's father's vigilance toward the motive of the Duskbrown family in helping his nephew become a partner in Sansa's father's firm. Fifth Elder was eyeing long-term gains so he did not hesitate to make some small losses for greater returns in the future. Ironically, losing money was the foundation of building wealth. This was the truth known to professional investors.

"Two days or a week, I can't make any promises," Sansa's father answered Ellen's mother.

"A week? Isn't that too long?" Ellen's mother blurted in surprise as she wanted to complete the first step of her plan as soon as possible.

"This a very short notice. It takes time to gather all the partners and explain to them how the presence of your husband as our partner will affect the future growth of the firm and persuade the majority of partners to vote in favor of the agenda, that is let your husband join us as a partner. Not to mention it will take me a while to draw up the required paperwork, so please try and understand if there is a delay," Sansa's father explained to the couple that though he was the founder of the firm, he did not hold the complete decision making power in the firm. So what they discussed here was still not set in stone. And considering the reputation of the Duskbrown family, most of the partners would not favor this decision. Persuading them otherwise would take a while but considering the prospects of Ellen's father joining them, Sansa's father was confident that he could get the majority of the partners to vote in their favor.

"We understand commander, this may not be the appropriate time but thank you for all that you are doing for our little family of three," Ellen's mother wholeheartedly thanked Sansa's father. Yes, she had ulterior motives for the man and his company, but that doesn't mean that she cannot take a time off from hatching her nefarious plans and genuinely thank the man for making it all possible.

"Don't mention it, I benefit from it too," Sansa's father said humbly.

"Commander, please don't be humble, if not for you talking me out of it I would have already applied to go back to that hell hole. Thank you, thank you for everything," Ellen's father thanked Sansa's father for persuading him otherwise when he asked permission to return to his old post in the army, right back to the hellhole they were lucky enough to escape.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 17:35

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Ice Cream parlor

"Sweetpea, which flavor would you like?" Sansa's Dad asked little Sansa who was still depressed about what transpired in the Duskbrown household even after her father repeatedly consoled her on the way here.

"It doesn't matter, he hates me," little Sansa said, hearing such dark words come from a little girl of Sansa's age was very concerning, especially if you were her father.

"How about the Rainbow mix? Different flavor with every lick," The attendant suggested doing his job.

"..." Hearing the attendant's suggestion little Sansa gave him a glare and then looked away thinking he was not worth it.

Looking into the little girl's eyes, despite being a mature adult, the attendant jolted in fright, as he felt an ominous stare staring at him from inside the little girl's eyes. Hence choosing to stay shut until asked to.

Seeing the darkness looming over his little angel, Sansa's dad knew he had a problem at his hands and could not help but regret thinking that things would not have spiraled to this if he was present to comfort Sansa when experienced she such a situation for the first time.

"I am sorry, I get back to you soon when I know what she wants," Sansa's dad apologized and then carried his little angel to an empty table.

"Sweat pea, I haven't told you this before but I think considering the situation it is about time," Sansa's dad paused seeing little Sansa show no interest in hearing what he has to say, still he chose to continue, "You know, your mother did not like me when we first met."

Sansa's dad was sure that now his daughter would be very interested to listen to what he was to say after hearing these words. And he was not wrong, the topic he was talking about was very close to what little Sansa was going through, so it immediately caught her interest. Therefore she could not help but perk her ears and ask, "Really?"

"Oh yes, she hated my guts and everything about me big time," Sansa's father said reminiscing about the day he met little Sansa's mother.

"You are lying, you told me that when two people are in love with each other, and if they choose to they can give birth to babies. If mother and you gave birth to me then you two must love each other very much," little Sansa though interested in listening to her dad's story was a little skeptical that her dad was making up stuff just to console her.

"Yeah, we do love each other now, you are the proof of that. But before that, your mother hated me," Sansa's father explained.

"What about you dad, did you hate mother too?" little Sansa asked choosing to believe her father.

"No, I fell in love with her the first time we met. I was so in love with her that, I announced my undying love for her right then," Sansa's dad was not exaggerating, he really did propose to Sansa's mother on their first meeting regardless of the countless eyes watching them.

"You did? And did mother accept your proposal?" little Sansa asked, just hearing her father say that he proposed to her mother on their first meeting in front of a lot of people no less, she felt embarrassed for him.

"Yes, I did, but because of that, your mother mistook my frankness for me being just another player and rejected me mercilessly," Thinking about it now Sansa's dad did not regret proposing to Sansa's mother on their first meeting despite the misunderstanding it bore between them. In fact, he was really grateful for that misunderstanding as because of that, someone as beautiful as Sansa's mother remembered him particularly out of her countless suitors. But he would not share that with his daughter, she was already progressive enough.

"What is a player, daddy?" Little Sansa asked curiously why her mother would consider her father a player and why would she hate her father for that.

"Ahem, let's just say that it did not make me popular with your mother. If I were to say, your mother hated because of that," Sansa's father cleared his throat reminding himself to keep his story kid friendly as much as possible.

"I am sorry daddy, you must have felt very bad because mother hated you and rejected you in front of so many people," Little Sansa said trying to console her father, as she knew how it hurt to know that the person you like did not like you back instead hated you.

"No, don't be. Because that was the best thing that could have happened to me and your mother," Sansa's father slowly curved the story into a teaching moment for his little angel.

"..." Sansa was confused hearing her father say that being rejected and hated by the woman he loved was the best thing that could happen to him in his life.

"Confused?" Sansa's father asked glancing at his daughter's cute face covered in a puzzled expression.

Little Sansa nodded.

"You know, it was embarrassing to get rejected in front of so many people, I wanted to crawl into hiding but something else bothered me more than that. It was the pain of knowing that the woman I loved not only rejected me but also hated me. It hurt a lot, but that made me realize how much your mother mattered to me which motivated me to struggle to gain her love," Sansa's father gave a dramatic pause for his daughter to soak up what he just said.

As her father intended, his words did make a huge impression on Sansa and she got to thinking.

"You see if your mother had agreed to my proposal back then, neither I nor your mother would know the value of what we had between each other.

Because things that are easy to obtain are taken for granted, that's human nature, there is no point denying it. But the only way around it was the struggle. Humans learn to value through struggle.

Your mother's rejection made me realize how much she mattered to me, and the struggle I went through to gain her love made me value it,"

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[1,045 words]

Chapter 1017: Life

Date- 12 Oct 22XX

Time- 17:42

Location- Central Region, Capital city, Ice Cream parlor

In the middle of his lesson, Sansa's dad noticed that half of what he was saying was going over his daughter's head, so he decided to keep it simple and end it before his daughter confused herself more or worse took the wrong lesson from it.

"What I am trying to say here is don't let a rejection stop you. If I had stopped trying to court your mother because she rejected me first and it was embarrassing, you would never have been born. If you were to stop every time you are rejected then you will never be able to get what you want in this life ever. So if you want something you will have to dedicate yourself to achieving it. Because without struggle there is nothing of value. This doesn't just apply to the Baylor kid but everything in your life no matter how little.

Remember my dear daughter, if you want something, dedicate yourself to getting it, no matter the obstacles in your way and what others say. Because only you know the value of what you want and the struggle you through is the best medium for you to realize how much you value something. As only struggle makes you ask the question, is it worth it?" Sansa's father's lesson was quite long, not everything was absorbed by Sansa but the key point that her father wanted to relay to her through his story was received by her and she was engrossed in her contemplation. It did not take for little Sansa's frowned brows to ease and her grim expression to be replaced by a pleasant one that oozed unknown confidence.

"Father, I will never give up," little Sansa said, hearing that her father was proud of the moment and forgot to go into details about what little Sansa meant when she said that she would never give up. If he had then he would not be feeling proud.

"That's like my girl, remember in our family dictionary there is no such word," Little Sansa's mood infected her father so he could not help but boast.

"Uhm," Sansa nodded to her father's words.

"Sir, please order something or empty the table for paying customers," The attendee from earlier said cautiously to the father-daughter pair.

Hearing the attendee little Sansa turned to look at him with the most beautiful smile and said, "Sir, I would like to try that Rainbow mix that you recommended."

Mesmerized by the little girl's angelic smile, the attendant almost forgot to take her order. When he came to the attendee hurriedly retracted his gaze because he did not want to sully something so pure with them and said, "Two rainbow mix, coming right away."

...

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 01:23

Location- Central region, Capital City, Baylor Manor

'Dad you were right but wrong at the same time,

Some have to struggle to get what they want and will never be appreciated for it even though they deserve it. And then some will get everything they want and be appreciated for it even though they don't deserve it. That is how life is.

Those whose dedication does not get appreciated will complain but never stop dedicating to their cause as they know the value of what they were struggling for.

Those who get undeserved appreciation will not complain or have the ambition to achieve more because they never knew the true value of what they were given.

This is how life continues to maintain balance.

Yes, sometimes there are oddballs in these two categories who rather than being a part of this game evolve to play the game, I am one of them.'

This Sadistic take of Sansa on life was the reason why she was handling the likes of the flower thief and others with handy origin cards with care when she did not have to. As for her blatant disregard for Gray fur and others like him, did not need any further explanation. What better way to run your organization than the way of the biggest organization to ever exist, life.

But what she forgot to account for was that in life all good things come to an end.

"Norman, state the purpose of your call."

"Matron, there is a slight hick-up in the plan. The Semi-demigods from the circle are not acting to attract the attention of the semi-demigods protecting the boy," the moon thief explained. As it is clear that without the semi-demigods from the circle distracting the semi-demigods protecting the boy it would be very hard for them to assassinate the boy even with his origin card considering the trick up the boy's sleeves that allowed him to fake his death after their last presumed successful assassination attempt on him.

"..." Sansa did not immediately respond to the flower thief's explanation because she wanted him to sweat a little and seriously contemplate whether this was reason enough for him to call her.

Yes, she tends to give card apprentices with special origins card preferential treatment but she would never let it affect her authority over them. Her origin card was a good way to remind them of that but when a simple silence can do the job making it pointless to go through the trouble of delivering corporal punishment and not mention it would serve contrary to her philosophy on the working of her organization.

As Sansa expected, hearing silence in response to his explanation flower thief was sweating bullets and thought maybe Gray fur was right. But what's done was done,

crying over it would only hasten his demise, so he decided to choose his next words carefully hopefully that would be enough to let him see the next sunrise and many more to come.

"Matron, I believe the people from the circle don't really plan to escalate this matter considering the importance the southern royal family has shown to the boy by sending three renowned semi-demigods to guard him."

"I am listening"

...

AN:- What did little Sansa learn from her father's lesson? Was that the origin of Sansa's sadistic nature?

What transpired between Ellen's mom, Sansa's father, and the Duskborns? Who won?

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 01:27

Location- Central region, Capital City, Baylor Manor

To save his skin, the flower thief started blabbing the first thing that came to his mind, and fortunately, the more he spoke, the more it made sense, so he stuck with it.

"I am listening," Sansa did not care what the flower thief had to say as long as he sweated enough and displayed submission in both body and mind. Forcing a person's body into submission was satisfying but forcing their mind into submission was simply pleasuring and had a sense of fulfillment.

Hearing the matron finally respond to him with three words more than before, the flower thief sighed in relief and then continued by building on his previous bullshit, "Matron, I believe the Circle plans to give up their sun blossom city's branch leader just make peace with the boy. They may even have come to a tactical understanding with the southern royal family."

" Flower thief, you do know that I can read your memories right?" Sansa said, fed up with the Flower thief's bullshit, she no longer planned to entertain him, and immediately shut him.

In this world apart from her nobody knew the real capability of the Supreme leader of the circle. She has tried numerous times to infiltrate the circle's core management using her ability but she was never successful in this endeavor. There were two reasons for this,

The first is that the regular members have no say in the management. Except for the branch leaders and a few elders in the main branch of the circle rest of them were mere expendables. No matter their contribution and merit to the cause of the circle they were nothing more than pawns in the Supreme leader's plans.

The second was that the true core management of the circle led by the branch leaders and a select group of elders in the main branch of the circle were somehow immune to her origin card. It would be more accurate to say that whenever she used her origin card on any one of them she would face a strong rejection.

Trying to find the reason or source behind the rejection, Sansa the self-proclaimed ruler of shadows in the central region was caught in the act for the first time in her entire career. Before that nobody had any idea that there existed an organization that served the purpose of one person and was the mysterious hand behind more than half of the accidents in the capital, and third in the entire central region.

At the cost of revealing her organization and her hidden identity, something good came out that fateful day, Sansa learned the best-kept secrets of one of many small organizations in the central region, the Circle, which slowly making a place for itself in the central region.

That day both Supreme Leader and Matron, met for the first time and learned each other secrets. As the oddballs in life, who decided not to be part of the game and instead play it, they came to respect each other and agreed to forge an alliance with their secrets as collateral. With this alliance, the Circle and the Paw clan's rise to power was shorter than it would have taken them individually. The alliance has served both the circle and the paw clan very well, until just recently.

The circle was not able to kill the boy before he rose to power as per their agreement with Matron.

In a fit of rage, she sent a bunch of Card emperors from paw clan to slaughter the Circle's Sky blossom city branch. Though the attack was a failure as the intended target managed to escape the casualty to the Circle's Sky blossom branch was not negligible.

As result in the present, they were having trouble communicating with each other, which is resulting in them being unable to trust each other, which was not a problem before.

Aside from all this, Sansa knew for sure that even if Circle were to compromise with the southern royal family they would never give up one of their branch leaders as they have spared no less effort in grooming them, and the fact that they played a very important role in the Supreme leader's grand scheme of plans. Therefore when the flower thief said that Circle may be planning to sacrifice the sun blossom city's branch leader to appease the boy and makeup with the southern royal family Sansa could no longer tolerate his bullshit.

"..." Hearing Matron's words, the flower thief's leg started to wobble, he opened his mouth but no words came out as his mind was scared blank, nothing but fear of Matron echoed in it.

"I will call them and get an update, no matter their response, the mission is a go. Tonight you have to kill the boy even if it cost you five your lives. So, for your sakes pray that Circle is as desperate as me to kill the boy," Leaving behind an ultimatum Sansa ended the call and she meant every word of what she said.

No matter what happened, Sansa wanted the boy dead tonight, even if it meant the death of the Flower thief. Because right now for her the boy's death was worth more than one hundred codename flower thief asher husband plans to adopt the boy before the next sunset. Which she could not tolerate, the mere thought of that woman's son becoming her husband's adoptive son caused Sansa's blood to boil in rage. She can't have it no matter what.

It's not like the thought of turning that woman's son into one of her slaves did not cross her mind but no matter how expendable the paw clan was to Sansa it held a little sentiment in her heart and she did not want it to be sullied by the presence of that woman's blood. Even if she were to look past that she could not look past the fact that a bunch of legal papers would associate her and her husband as the adoptive parents of that boy. So no matter the cost she wanted that boy dead tonight.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,017 words]

Chapter 1019: Karl

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 01:35

Location- Central region, Capital City, Baylor Manor

No matter how much Sansa tried to think of a mid-ground in case her minions failed to kill the boy for the second time she came up with nothing as for some reason just the thought of that boy being associated with her or her husband in any way repulsed her to her core. Sansa thrived on others' hatred toward her but never thought she, herself, would develop such hideous hatred for a person and the target of that hatred would be a mere boy no less. This ugly hatred of hers for the boy was why she did not hesitate when considering making use of desperate measures to kill the boy.

Having up on the flower thief, Sansa did not bother to continue and monitor the live memories of the flower thief and team. Instead, she immediately called the supreme leader to check if they were still on the same page.

[Calling SL Karl...]

Soon the call connected, and the other side did not immediately answer instead waited for the caller to lead the conversation with the reason for their call. Since they both knew who was at the other end of the call, they considered it to be pointless and a waste of their time to engage in small pleasantries such as exchanging greetings over a call.

"You never change," Sansa said, knowing the Supreme leader's habit.

"What is it Susan, how can I help you?" a deep voice answered from the other side of the call, he did not seem to bother to participate in small talk.

"Straight to the point, you know Karl your routine makes you very predictable," Sansa did not seem to care that the person on the other side of the call did not want to engage in small talk with her.

"Sansa, my routine saves me time, which in your case seems to only serve your sadistic side. Do you feel aroused knowing that it annoys me when you don't get to the point as my routines suggest you to?" Karl said, feeling irritated that despite his repeated warning Sansa would continue to try and engage him in senseless conversation just to satisfy her sadistic urges.

"I love it when you talk dirty to me, my sadist side, awe, you know me the best. If not for my husband, you would have been my next choice, you know that right," Sansa said with a sultry voice fully knowing that this would only add to Karl's annoyance.

"No, and I think it's for the best," Despite trying not to Karl had to participate in Sansa's conversation even if it was just to refute her.

"It breaks my heart when you say such things, Karl. Now tell me, why would you want to hurt me like that?" Sansa teased Karl.

"Enough, keep your small talks for your brainwashed buffoons. Now get to the point and don't force me to hang up on you," Karl had enough of Sansa and her pointless blabber,

considering the already existing tension between the two of them he was in no mood to entertain Sansa and her quirks.

"Oh my, that almost gave me an orgasm," Sansa responded to Karl's yell.

"..." Hearing Sansa's response Karl was speechless, though this was usual and expected of Sansa he wanted to hang up on her but he valued his alliance with her and did not want to worsen what little trust they had but if she forces him to, then he had no choice but to stand true to his words.

"That's it? Karl, honey, don't leave me hanging let me finish," hearing no reply from Karl Sansa spoke up.

"Matron, you seem to be busy, I will call you after you have finished," Saying that Karl prepared to hand up on Sansa but did not as hearing Sansa yell, "Karl don't you dare hang up on me."

"Sure, but if force I can't be held accountable," Karl stopped considering the long-term and rewarding alliance between the two of them.

"Fine, give me the update on the boy and your plans for him," Sansa stopped teasing Karl, knowing that he was not good at taking a joke.

"What boy?" Karl asked in confusion. As if it was the first time he had heard Sansa bring up the boy.

"Don't play dumb, you are fully aware of whom I speak off. After all, he is after the life of one of your chess pieces," Considering the importance of the Circle's branch leaders in the grand schemes of the Circle's Supreme leader's plan Sansa knew that the Supreme leader would definitely be informed if one of them were in harm's way.

"I get why the boy is after my chess pieces but I don't get why you are after the boy?" Karl's words seemed simple and straightforward enough but the tone he spoke in made it seem like he blamed Sansa for the bad blood between the boy and his organization.

After all, it was Sansa who introduced him to the boy's parents. If it were not for her his pawn would never have taken interest in the boy's parents 20 years ago when they moved to Sky blossom city.

It was Sansa who wanted her pawn to make life difficult for the boy's parents. It was Sansa who said that killing the couple right away would be troublesome. Because of her demands, they had to wait twenty years before they finally killed the couple.

Not to mention the only reason the boy was spared was that Sansa felt his death right after the death of his parents would stink of conspiracy and rather asked them to wait a few weeks before innovatively killing the boy.

Following her demand, his pawn did come up with an innovative way to kill the boy but it took a few weeks longer than she prescribed, and then for some unfortunate reason, things spiraled out of his pawn's hands with the unpredicted and sudden exponential rise of the boy.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

- Chapter 1020: Decades Long Alliance - Novel Fire

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 01:42

Location- Central region, Capital City

Everything was orchestrated according to Sansa's demand which led to the current results yet she had the gals sending a squad of card emperors to slaughter one of the Circle's branches and hunt its branch leader. Where does she come off pulling something like that? Fortunately, the branch leader had the foreknowledge of evacuating the branch headquarters before escaping to safety. Though the casualty was contained it did not mean he would overlook her offense or Did she think otherwise?

Sansa throwing a fit of rage when she doesn't get what she wanted was not new. In their decades of partnership, Karl had seen Sansa do a lot worse and get away with it due to the special trait of her organization. He did not care about it until now, as he was on the other side this time.

The loss of a third-rate city branch was not enough to make a dent in his plans or be worth ruining the decade-long alliance between the two organizations. That was why despite his dissatisfaction he tolerated Sansa's action in the Sky blossom city, looking past it, and acting as if nothing happened. Believing that Sansa would make up for her mistake in some other way.

He was not wrong, Sansa repaid what she owed him in just a week by giving him detailed information on a possible attack on the circle's new branch, the sun blossom city branch. Yes, Sansa was the indirect reason why the new branch of the circle was facing a threat with a possible semi-demigod realm involved, but that was the cost of doing business. After all, an enemy of a friend would end up as their enemy anyway.

Not to mention the information about the attack given by Sansa was too detailed, it contained every little detail from what, why, when, and how. If it was someone else giving him this information with this amount of details then he would think of the possibility of the source of the information being compromised but with Sansa, he did not think so, because he knew her ability was a lot more capable than that.

In the decades of alliance between them, Sansa had used her ability to eliminate numerous threats to the Circle, some of which even the Circle did not know of. If Sansa was able to get the information then she could also turn the source of her information into assassins to get rid of the aggregators without them knowing what hit them. This way Sansa was very efficient in getting rid of threats even before they became one. Such godly service could only be provided by Sansa's organization.

Therefore the alliance with her organization was paramount and it made sense to swallow small dissatisfaction for the bigger picture. If not for Sansa's help the circle would require another century, trillions of resources, and a lot more sacrifices to reach the heights it had reached today. His alliance with sansa was very rewarding so it only made sense to go along with some of her quirks.

That was what kept the alliance going until Mike, the branch leader of the Sun blossom city branch of the Circle reported the unusual betrayal of the In-house disciple of the Yin-yang harmony. Like Mike, Karl to though the possibility of Ji Feng going rogue or the involvement of the southern royal family or the Yin-yang harmony sect acting in its self-interest. But none of them made sense, Why would Ji Feng go rogue? How could the southern royal family influence Ji Feng, forgetting the bad blood between the yin-yang harmony sect? Why would the yin-yang harmony sect risk its highest revenue-generating business?

Out of all these, only the possibility of the southern royal family influencing Ji Feng into betrayal to discredit the Yin-yang harmony sect was most likely but there was a flaw in the details. How did Ji Feng counter Mike's origin card? Since Ji Feng was going to stay in the branch headquarters to maintain the Yin-yang harmony sect's desolate punisher array, he was put through a rigorous screening process. So for a fact they knew that Ji Feng did not have anything cards that would counter Mike's origin card yet, he was able to not only free himself from Mike's card but also look past its deception. This could only mean that Ji Feng was prepared in advance to face Mike's origin card.

Forgetting how Ji Feng got the information on Mike's origin card for a moment, As a mere disciple of the Yin-yang harmony sect how was Ji Feng able to come up with the cards that could counter the ability of Mike's origin card? These two questions were worth considering. Though they were not able to answer them, these questions greatly reduced the suspension pointing toward the Southern royal family influencing Ji Feng into betrayal to discredit the Yin-yang harmony sect. Though the Southern royal family was strong enough to stand as one of the top 5 powers of the world, it was only in the sense of raw power, but when it came to its information network, it was not that remarkable. The circle has been plundering the resources of the southern region right

under the noses of the southern royal family for decades and never once did they even bother to know what an organization that was established in the central region doing back in the third-rate city of the southern region. It ate up the reason they fed and yes the cross-check came as clean there was no doubt there but the southern royal family never bothered to dig around it.

So it was hard to believe that the Southern royal family that relied on brute strength had the brawns to pull off something like influencing Ji Feng into betrayal to discredit the Yin-yang harmony sect while destroying one of the circle's branches. This was unlike the unparalleled bloodline famous in the fables for their fists.

But this begged the question, who in the world was able to pull off something like this without gathering any suspicion and stood to gain the most...

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 01:42

Location- Central region, Capital City

Who in the world was able to pull off something like this without gathering any suspicion and stood to gain the most?

Matron and the Paw Clan.

This was what came to Mike and Karl's mind with what Mike had discovered on the battlefield.

The Yin-yang harmony sect had the capability but not enough motive to pull this off. Not to mention they stood to lose the most if word gets out about this incident.

The South Royal family had enough motive but its capability was very lacking and questionable to attempt something like this.

Ji Feng, by himself, neither had enough capability nor enough motive to betray not just the Circle but the Yin-Yang harmony sect.

As for the boy, without the southern royal family backing him he was nothing but an ant.

As for a third mysterious force acting from within the shadow, very likely, but how many unknown forces were out there that would be able to get such detailed information about something that was happening in a third-rate city like Sun Blossom city? Out of everything else they could be conspiring about why would they come to a third-rate city in a backwater region. Unless they were somehow personally related to this incident or they had a high-level prophet in their organization. Though the latter was debatable it was less possible than the former. Either way, these two possibilities left them with two organizations to be wary of,

Matron and the Paw clan

Or

Saint and the Holy Empire

Considering that the Saint and the Holy Empire had their hands full dealing with the so-called infidels, they would not have the time or reason to target the Circle.

As for Matron and the Paw clan,

They were very capable of pulling something like this, their unique type of information network was proficient in such dubious plans.

But the question remained, why? What was the motive for Matron to suddenly attack the alliance that has been rewarding for both of them? No matter how he racked his brain Karl could not come up with a reason, because though allied they had different motives, so there was no conflict of interest. With greed out of the picture, there was not much left that he would find justifying enough for Sansa to target them from the dark. This lack of motive on Sansa's part gave Karl the only reason Karl answered Sansa's call giving her the benefit of the doubt.

But things changed when Sansa replied that the reason behind her call was to get an update on his progress with the boy. Karl was not foolish enough to believe that Sansa did not have eyes in the sun blossom city right now, monitoring the fight between Mike and the boy and giving her a live update through their memories. Since she could give him such detailed information on the boy's attack on one of his branch headquarters then getting a live update on the progress of the battle would not be difficult with her capabilities.

Yet, she choose to call him to ask for the progress, this could only mean that she was not really interested in the progress of the battle but something else. Most like to figure out why where the semi-demigods of the circle not surfacing to engage the Semi-demigods protecting the boy for Mike to kill the boy.

If things were normal between them, Karl would not think too much about Sansa's actions but they weren't. Though he gave Sansa the benefit of the doubt because of the

lack of motive on her part, this did not mean that he had removed her from the suspect list, rather she was the number suspect currently.

Though he was not able to think of a motive for Sansa to make a move against him from the dark it did not mean she did not have one, so he was vigilant against her every action. Which was causing him to scrutinize every little action of Sansa which he would usually brush off as her quirky attitude out of suspicion that they meant or signaled something more.

With doubt in his mind, every action of Sansa started to appear suspicious despite them being harmless. The reason Karl was so cautious towards Sansa was that she was the worst enemy one could have. If you were on her naughty list then you would not even know what hit before you gasp your last breath on this world.

"Sure, what do you want to know?" Karl replied to Sansa after she stated her motive for calling him was to get an update on the progress. Though the replay of Karl seems to be compliant with Sansa's demand, it actually did not answer her, it raised another question enunciating that Sansa knew what was happening in the Sun blossom city.

If Sansa were to answer him she would be agreeing that she had her minions back monitoring the fight back in the Sun blossom city. Then the point of Sansa's call was no longer what she claimed it to be. Considering the decades of alliance between them why would Sansa lie to him?

"Fine, you caught me. Now answer me why aren't your semi-demigods drawing the attention of semi-demigods protecting the boy?" As long as the semi-demigods were protecting the boy Mike would never be able to land a killing blow on the boy despite his overwhelming advantage against the boy.

Though the semi-demigods protecting the boy would not interfere in the battle, they would indeed save him when needed and retreat. Which was not the result Sansa wanted to see. She wanted the boy dead no matter the cost.

"I plan to withdraw from the sun blossom city entirely. It would be childish on my part to make an enemy of the southern royal family over this," Karl replied even though he had yet to decide on what course of action Mike had to follow as this sentence was meant to test Sansa and her motive behind all this.

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Chapter 1022 Retreat, Are You Sure?

[990 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 01:44

Location- Central region, Capital City

..." Hearing Karl planned to yield and retreat, Sansa did not immediately respond. Her thoughts were chaotic right now as she need Karl to go after the boy.

Sansa had big plans she wanted to grow her secret organization into an unstoppable army before she became a demigod herself. Such that once she achieves the demigod realm she planned to surface her dark organization as a legitimate one by overthrowing world powers for example the Southern and Northern Royal families.

When that happens, it was inevitable that the past of her dark organization would be dug up. Sansa was not worried about becoming a public enemy because of her ability or her actions, but she was worried about her husband. As a Demigod, he was already detached from mortal perils except for one, his childhood love, the late Ellen Wyatt.

She was confident her husband would look past whatever she did to come to power and similarly she was also confident that he would not hesitate to kill her if he were to find out that,

She was the one who had influenced Ellen to fall for a mercenary. Sansa was proud of this one as she did not even have to use her ability to achieve this. All she had to do was fed Ellen romanticized crap about forbidden love such as the princess and the huntsman, the Lady and the stable boy, etc. Ellen's arranged marriage with Demigod Baylor was a big help too as it made Ellen's infatuation for the mercenary much dirtier and forbidden. Recall those memories, a satisfied grin formed on Sansa's lips.

She was the one who influenced Ellen to elope with her mercenary lover when Ellen had caved to the family pressure and decided to Marry demigod Baylor. Once again, Sansa did not need her origin card to influence Ellen. A little encouragement and a few glamorous words about undying love were enough for her to change Ellen's mind. This was only possible because Ellen naively believed and trusted Sansa as her best friend.

It was Sansa who leaked the information about Ellen and her mercenary partner's escape to the southern region to the Duskborn family. If not for the involvement of Demigod Baylor, the adulterous couple would be caught and hanged by the Duskborn family instead just having her name erased from the family ancestry records.

Sansa was the one behind Ellen and her new family's misfortune after Ellen settled in Sky Blossom City. Which ultimately led to the untimely death of the couple on Sansa's whim.

Anyone of these was reason enough for Demigod Baylor to kill Sansa, his only wife, without hesitation as that's how much he loves the late Ellen. Demigod Baylor was a man who was willing to see the love of his life in another man's arms as long as she was happy. Showing his selfless love for his childhood friend Ellen. Only someone with such altruistic love would be willing to adopt the son of the love of his life born to another man.

Knowing her husband's temperament Sansa had made sure to leave no evidence behind, except for the Circle. Considering the alliance between them she thought that won't be a problem and further planned to use them to get rid of the spawn of her late best friend to avoid the suspicion of her husband when he learns of the death of the boy within a day of him announcing that he wanted to adopt the boy.

But now the Circle plans no longer made it possible for her to achieve that. From the start, Sansa had her doubts that despite the hatred of the boy for their organization the Circle would hesitate to kill the boy considering their unfinished business in the southern region which required the consent of the Souther royal family. Therefore Susan deployed her best assassin to the battlefield to quietly do her bidding and let the Circle take all the blame for it. Only by Circle being labeled as the culprit for the death of the boy will she be able to escape the suspicion of the husband of her involvement in the successful assassination of the boy.

Now hearing the plan from Karl himself her doubts were confirmed but if the Circle retreated without putting up a fight as per their new plan then her contingency would never be able to be put into action. Therefore she had to think of a quick way to have the circle reconsider their plans or at least stand their ground against the boy long enough for her minions to get the job done.

"That's a surprise, I never thought that one day you would consider sacrificing one of your branch leaders," Sansa spoke provocatively hiding the chaos Karl's previous words have brewed in her mind.

"Who said anything about sacrificing my Mike? He will retreat with other surviving members, all we are doing is abandon the sun blossom city branch. We rebuild after the boy leaves for university," the plan to retreat that Karl came upon on a whim, became the only plan after he heard the provocation in Sansa's tone as she respond. Though he still did not conclude that Sansa was behind the series of unfortunate events that befell the Circle's Sun blossom city branch, he had a feeling that Sansa had other motives.

"And you think that is possible? According to my sources, the boy seemed to have vowed to kill your branch leader. I don't know if he is capable of that but I can guess that he would not let your people retreat," Sansa started to undermine Karl's plan to retreat using the hatred of the boy for the Circle as a reason.

"And whose to blame for the boy's hatred for my organization?" Karl answered blaming Sansa for the current mess one of his branches was going through.

“Hey, no need for pointing fingers, I am trying to help you aren’t I?”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 1023 Gray Fur's Enlightenment

[1,015 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 01:48

Location- Central region, Capital City

“Help, somehow I doubt that,” Karl replied no longer being polite with his words.

“What is that supposed to mean?” Sansa asked coyly.

“You know what I mean,” Karl said finally deciding to retreat from the Sun blossom city. As for their unfulfilled interest in the Blossom district, they could always regroup once the boy had left to pursue higher studies.

“You try to help somebody and get paid with suspicion instead of gratitude. Man, what has this world come to?” Sansa complained.

“I have decided to retreat. Now that you got your update If nothing else, I am hanging up,” Karl said impatiently thinking that Sansa was trying to buy time with her nonsense for something she was hatching.

“Fine,” Saying that Sansa hung up on Karl not wanting to give him the satisfaction of hanging up on her. Then she immediately contacted Gray Fur,

“Matron, what are your orders?” Gray Fur immediately picked up the call and answered even though he was devastated earlier after learning that the difference in treatment between a veteran and a talent of the organization. But his heart eased a little as he saw the flower thief sweat his clothes wet being warned by Matron, he realized despite the difference in the treatment, in the end, they all were nothing more than mere pawns to do Matron’s bidding.

“Tell me about your escape array is it one-way or two-way?” Sansa immediately asked to modify her contingency plan.

"It is one-way but if we require it, I can have it modified into two-way within a few minutes," Gray Fur answered feeling the gravity of the situation through Matron's tone.

"Good, do that and share the coordinates with the head office. I am sending in a dozen semi-demigods to help you with the objective. Remember to complete the mission even if it costs your life. Because if you come back alive after a failure, I will make sure you wish to have died in trying to complete the mission. Understood?" Sansa threatened Gray fur with the consequence of failure.

"Yes, ma'am. Matron what about the circle will they be making a move soon?" Gary fur could not help but ask as the mission was to kill the boy using the Circle as the scapegoat.

"The Circle has decided to retreat. Therefore I have decided to send the organization's semi-demigods," Sansa did not hide the reason for her suddenly deploying over a dozen semi-demigods to help with the mission.

Hearing Matron's words Gray fur felt a chill on his back as a dozen semi-demigods for the mission which involved shifting the blame onto other organizations it was too high profile. This increased the chances of successful completion of the first object of the mission by a good margin but the chances of completion of the second objective decreased. This could only mean Matron no longer cared about loss ends or she planned to deal with them next after the completion of the mission. Thinking of this Gray fur felt the coldness on his back spread to his entire body. And began to play numerous scenarios in his head based on the information he had so far. And all the roads end in his death, except for one where he follows and executes Matron's orders unconditionally. Soon Gray fur awakened from his contemplation knowing that the best course of action for his survival was to follow Matron's orders unconditionally. So deciding to show his loyalty he said, "Matron, what about array formation covering the southern region? The boy's ability is barely shielding the four of us, I don't think it can bare another dozen of Semi-demigods."

"Don't worry, I have other arrangements for that. Just make sure the two-way teleportation array is ready for their arrival," Sansa assured Gray fur that she had it all under control and hung up to arrange for a dozen semi-demigods to help with the mission.

Gray Fur chooses to believe her, considering the numerous talents in the organization there was bound to be someone with the capabilities to help cheat the array formation covering the southern region. Then turning to his team members Gray fur announced, "The Circle is planning to retreat. So the original plan is a no-go. But thankfully Matron is sending in a dozen semi-demigods to help us with our mission. So we have to turn the escape array's into two-way teleportation arrays."

"A dozen? Doesn't it sound a bit overkill," one of the card emperors could not help but say.

“Overkill, that is how I prefer it,” Sniper said enthusiastically. While the others nodded because even if it were overkill it lessens the risk in the mission guaranteeing their safety.

“It doesn’t matter, they are Matron’s orders we are following them to the dot, now you two get to modifying the teleportation array formation asap as if your lives depend on it. And then send the coordinates to the head office,” Gray Fur ordered the other two card emperors of the team who were mostly in charge of arranging the teleportation array for their escape. And then with a grim tone, he added, “I was not kidding when I said that your life depends on it.”

The card emperors heading to the one-way escape teleportation arrays they had arranged earlier could not help but pause in their tracks hearing Gray fur. They have been working with Gray fur for quite a while now and know he was not an alarmist. So, if the Gray fur said that their lives depended on this they believed him unconditionally and hurried in their tracks towards the teleportation arrays.

As the two card emperors began to modify the teleportation array into a two-way teleportation array, Gray fur returned to witness the battle between the Circle’s branch leader and the boy. He did not know why Matron gave so much importance to killing this boy, but he knew if they were not successful in killing him today, they might as well die trying. So that they can rest in peace in the afterlife otherwise, Matron will make sure that neither of them will find peace ever again.

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Chapter 1024 Fake Mike?

[991 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 01:48

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Circle’s Branch Headquarters

Slash *Splurt*

A deformed humanoid arm flew through the air as blood spurted into the surroundings. This was the result of my blood-rule-powered saber cutting one of Mike’s extra arms.

During the last half hour, this was not the first time I had managed to injure Mike but he would immediately heal himself by making use of some monster traits. I was frequently able to land blows on Mike not because I suddenly became an expert in the six-armed sword fighting style instead Mike had grown careless as a result he was prone to making a lot of mistakes that he didn't before.

I had this nagging feeling that Mike was not taking this fight seriously because the Mike I had fought at the start would not make such obvious mistakes. The more I fought with Mike the more I was convinced that either Mike did not consider me a threat or this was not Mike I was fighting with. Thinking of this possibility I scanned the Mike I was fighting using my soul pupils and everything came back normal. But considering my Soul pupil's history with Mike's myriad transformation body, I did not know if I could entirely trust the results given by them.

With my Soul pupils losing their credibility against Mike I had to go old school and rely on my instincts. And my instincts screamed that something was wrong with the Mike I was fighting. So I choose to go with my instincts and decided to stay alert as I continue to engage in a fight with Mike.

Was the Mike I was fighting with a fake one, a clone, or a duplicate maybe? Of course, if they were then they would have been modified by Mike's ability that allowed him to morph his victim to take any form he wants. With help of Mike's origin card, it would not be a surprise that his duplicates or clones were able to cheat the scrutiny of my soul pupils and pass as an original.

With the careless and reckless fighting style displayed by the Mike that I was fighting, I was pretty sure that this one was a fake, meant to keep me busy, while the original tried to ambush me. That sounded plausible, but why has he not tried to ambush me so far? Unless he had other plans, for example, he could be escaping.

Thinking of this I immediately had my two extra heads scan the surroundings for any object or beings with a variation in their soul pathway vibration. While they did that I fended off Mike's reckless attacks.

The thought that Mike could possibly be escaping ticked me off because I was dead set on using my blood fate plunder rune on him as I had taken interest in his origin card. But I had a feeling that Mike was not one of those that would run with his tail in face of adversity. So if he was not ambushing me or planning to escape what was he up to sending a fake to keep me engaged? Asking this question to self a person came to my mind, Ji Feng. Earlier Mike seemed to be more interested in capturing Ji Feng than hunting me.

While using the fake to keep me engaged Mike had three courses of action to choose from,

First was the obvious one, to ambush me when I am least expecting.

The second was to make a run for it.

The third was to capture Ji Feng who appeared to be the main culprit behind my successful attack on the Circle's sun blossom branch headquarters.

I could see why Mike would prioritize going after Ji Feng, he felt that if Ji Feng had not helped us with the desolate punisher array formation my army and I would never have been able to break into the circle's headquarter's defense system or slaughter all most all of its members. Not to mention Ji Feng was able to undo his origin card's ability. Most importantly, Mike seemed to believe that Ji Feng was just a puppet of another force that was targeting their circle, I gather this when he kept constantly asking Ji Feng whose orders he was following.

As continued to contemplate while defending against fake Mike's attack, Hive AI had completed scanning the surroundings as per my instruction and managed to find an object with a variation in its soul pathway vibration, a pebble, a rolling pebble to be exact.

Seeing the actions of the rolling pebble I sighed in relief as it was not trying to escape but tracing Ji Feng's tracks while maintaining a certain distance. The pebble seemed to be cautious in approaching Ji Feng. Seeing how Ji Feng was able to find his pebble body last time, it was not a surprise that Mike would be cautious while approaching him in that form once again.

This time I did not have my slave conscious controlling Ji Feng to try and grab the pebble-bodied Mike but asked it to continue to act as if we had not seen through his plan. This was why I did not take the numerous opportunity I got to kill the fake Mike and instead wounded it time and again.

Mike with his transformation ability was a slippery bastard, trying to capture him would had proved to be very difficult therefore I planned to wait for him to come to us. By that I mean to use Ji Feng as the bait and I would be the fisherman, waiting for Mike to take the bait. Considering how Mike was obsessed with capturing Ji Feng, I think Ji Feng made the perfect bait.

Now that the stage was set, all I had to do was wait patiently for Mike to make his move. This time no mistakes were allowed as I realized that if Mike wanted to escape thanks to his versatile ability I could not stop him.

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[994 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 01:56

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Circle's Branch Headquarters

In the silent auction, I came across many exciting cards, two of which were the Corpse wood stake and the Corpse wood coffin. I specifically bring these two up because I was going to use them to capture Mike. As much as I want to use my blood fate plunder rune on Mike immediately, I had to control myself. As there were too many eyes watching. So it would be in my best interest if I were to capture Mike for now and use him as a blood sacrifice in the blood fate plunder rune's blood ritual when I have my privacy.

I had to do this knowing that the Blood Fate plunder rule meanings would not be well received by the card apprentice community. They had no qualms about Blood Elixer or hematophagy meaning of the blood rule but Blood fate plunder, and Bloodline possession were frowned upon. As the former two even though could be used against other card apprentices had a limit to how much they can influence a card apprentice's strength but the latter two broke the norms, these meanings were so influential that they could turn a card apprentice crazy over unimaginable power and prolonged life. So it was not a surprise the card apprentice society could tolerate meanings such as Blood forge and Blood Elixer would frown at rule meanings such as Blood fate plunder.

As I was contemplating why it would be best for me to not use blood fate plunder on Mike Immediately, Mike had begun to make his move seeing that Ji Feng was completely open and defenselessly fighting the bone dragon clones.

...

After Mike reported his suspicions regarding Ji Feng's betrayal to the main headquarters. He and the three semi-demigods that had come to help him were ordered to stand down. And await further orders. Therefore despite an overwhelming advantage in the fight against the boy Mike chose to hold back for two reasons.

The first was the orders from the main branch. And second, was the fact that semi-demigods were watching their fight and had no qualms about stepping in to save the boy. So in this pointless battle, Mike did not bother to go all out and continued to entertain the boy but to his surprise, he proved to be more than what met the eye. To his astonishment, the boy's physique seemed to have broken the limits of his realm and reached the peak a gold grimoire holder could achieve. That was frightening as it meant that if not for the golden grimoire limiting the boy's physique then it would have been a lot stronger, maybe enough to overpower him without much effort.

Despite being limited by the bounds of his grimoire the boy had managed to stand on equal footing with him, therefore Mike could not help but applaud the boy

acknowledging his strength. As much as Mike would love to nip this future trouble in the bud. He was bound by the orders from the main branch not to take action as having him kill the boy could be a conspiracy plotted by a third unknown organization. Though most of the details were unknown Mike chose to play around with the boy keeping the bigger picture in mind.

Soon, new orders from the main branch came asking them to retreat and give up the sun blossom branch. Though Mike was not happy with the orders he understood why, as the possibility of the circle being conspired against by an unknown organization was very likely, and all the circumstantial evidence pointed towards Matron and the paw clan. The main branch did not want to jump to conclusions and give the paw clan benefit of the doubt considering their decades-long alliance.

Therefore, he was given one more important mission before retreating: to capture Ji Feng, who was in the middle of all of this and seemed to be the thread that, when pulled on, would unravel the entire web of mystery.

Having received his orders, Mike immediately made use of an explosion to switch places with a clone.

“Skill combo: S-Rank Demon Clone + Origin card Myriad devil’s hex, Absolute Replica”

“Myriad devil transformation, pebble body”

Mike’s skill combo Absolute Replica was one of the most advanced and proficient clone art. It not only allowed the clone to have the same soul pathways, arrangement and vibrations but it also allowed the clone to possess all his abilities and similar strength though the intelligence was questionable it was enough to pass as an original.

Having the Absolute replica take his place, Mike transformed into a pebble and once again neared Ji Feng but this time he did not dare to be unscrupulous as the last time. As he knew that Ji Feng seemed to see through his disguise. Therefore, keeping a distance from Ji Feng he monitored Ji Feng like a praying mantis waiting to strike when its prey was least expecting.

Soon Mike’s patience bore fruit, Ji Feng seemed to be completely occupied trying to fend off his skeleton dragon clone army, leaving his stance completely vulnerable to sneak attacks. The Skeleton Dragon clones were strong but they were still brainless undead, they had no concept of sneak attacks. So it was not surprising that when under a bind Ji Feng would focus on killing the skeleton dragon clones leaving himself completely open to sneak attacks.

This was a big mistake on Ji Feng’s part and Mike had no qualms about taking advantage of it to capture him and retreat following the orders from the main branch.

“Origin card, Myriad devil transformation – Colossal mouthed frog monster,”

With the chant, pebble-bodied Mike transformed into a foot-tall 4-pound frog. Based on its appearance, the frog monster appeared to be no different from a regular fat frog. But its mouth suddenly expanded about 30 meters wide and opened to engulf Ji Feng, the skeleton dragons surrounding him and the ground below them in one gulp.

Gulp

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Chapter 1026 Extreme Method

[1,012 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:06

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Circle's Branch Headquarters

Mike's card allowed him to access various skills, physiques, traits, and complete transformations to choose from. Which meant he had numerous ways to capture Ji Feng at his disposal. So as a fisherman waiting for the fish to catch the bait, I prepared myself some crazy stunt that Mike could pull to capture Ji Feng. But what I was I could never have imagined in my wildest dream.

The frog monster that Mike had transformed into was just a foot long at its mouth suddenly expanded to 30-something feet wide and engulfed everything in its path. And I couldn't help but think, 'Damn that frog must be really hungry. Even hungry hippos are put shame by it.'

The interesting thing was that even though the frog had swallowed enough to amount to a small mountain, it remained a foot tall and I bet if I were to weigh it, it would still be 4 pounds in weight. Everything about it had reverted to normal size except the small bulge in its throat.

When you think you have seen enough freaky stuff, the world has its way of reminding you that you haven't seen nearly enough. It did not take Hive AI long to provide me with relevant information about the frog monster Mike had transformed into. Interestingly enough the frog monster was named Colossal-mouthed frog monster, it seems they did not spend much thought on naming it.

Aside from its name the frog seemed to have other interesting aspects to it. Such as the stomach-like organ in its throat. Like how humans can chew food down to bits and lubricate it with saliva, the frog also seemed to do something similar using a stomach-like organ in its throat and much more, for example, it could store food in it to avoid starving in case it could not find prey's in time, considering the eco-system of the gate dungeon they were mostly found that was a possibility.

The stomach-like organ in the colossal frog's throat secreted saliva which was very thick like glue. This saliva not only helped the frog with digestion but also helped the frog to keep its prey from struggling and fresh.

When the prey was engulfed alive by the frog monster, it would be stored in the stomach-like organ in the frog monster's mouth, where the thick saliva would cover the prey. The thick saliva then would slowly condense like concrete encasing the prey in a cocoon of sorts, immobilizing and preserving the prey for the frog to consume the prey later when it desired.

Learning the abilities of the colossal-mouthed frogs I understood why Mike would choose to transform into this monster out of all the monsters in his arsenals. The frog monster's actions were so quick that everything had within a second. If I were not paying attention from the beginning, I would have missed this. The amazing hunting ability of the frog paired with the amazing function of the stomach-like organ in its mouth and the properties of the saliva it secreted, the monster made the perfect fit for Mike's mission to capture Ji Feng.

After engulfing Ji Feng, the frog monster burrowed into the ground like diving into a lake or a large water body. This caught me off guard as this was not the ability of a Colossal-mouthed frog monster.

The Colossal-mouthed frog monster was strictly a swamp monster that was known to prey on crocodile monsters, though it was a good swimmer, on land it was more of a jumper than a burrower. Its webbed feet were not meant to burrow into hard ground.

The only explanation for this could be that Mike's ability not only allowed him to use skills, physique, and traits in his demon form but also when he had transformed into a monster form. Learning of this, Mike's origin card became more appetizing to me. And I also realized that Mike did not go all out when fighting against me.

I don't know why Mike was holding back against me but this made me guess that he did not plan to fight me and was much more focused on escaping now that he had captured Ji Feng.

Feeling that Mike planned to escape, I no longer hesitated and executed my plan.

Boom

Hesitation? Yes, I hesitated before I activated the trap I laid for Mike because the trap that I had laid for Mike was Ji Feng himself. I had decided to have my slave consciousness controlling Ji Feng's body to detonate Ji Feng's physical body, ego gem, and runes.

The detonation of a single ego elemental made using a broken rune was already devastating. Now consider the damage a bunch of complete runes would cause when detonated. It was a lot, maybe enough to blow a card king to pieces, much less a card lord.

But Mike was no ordinary card lord, his origin card was proof of that. So I was expecting him to survive the explosion thanks to his demon physique but considering the proximity of the explosion, there was no way that he escaped unscathed.

Speaking of the proximity of the explosion, Ji Feng was in Mike's mouth when he exploded so I saw no way of Mike coming out of this without a scar. Considering Mike's strength and the resilience of the demon physique, Mike would not die from the explosion in his mouth but he would not be faring well either.

Since Mike had burrowed into the ground before the actual explosion occurred, mud flew everywhere and a cloud of dust covered the surroundings, making it impossible for the naked eye to find Mike in it, let alone check his status. So I turned on my soul pupils to locate Mike, only to find a fat frog with a busted mouth slowly morphing into a humanoid creature with two horns on its head, a pair of wings on the back, and a horned lizard tail extending out of its tail bone. Not surprising that its lower jaw was missing but it was regrowing at a remarkable speed.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,012 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:15

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Circle's Branch Headquarters

Ji Feng was the most capable of all my calamity daughter gems so it was sad that I had to part ways with him this early. But I could not think of any other effective method to catch Mike off guard. Mike was not only overpowered with his origin card and platinum grimoire but also very cautious by nature. If Ji Feng or I had even shown a hint of action worth his suspicion, he would not have gone through with his plan and would have

rather tried to think of a way less risky one. Therefore, despite Ji Feng's usefulness, I had to sacrifice him in exchange for capturing Mike.

Ji Feng was a reliable array master and a capable card creationist. Not to mention a Card lord on the verge of breaking through to the Card Overlord realm. With the help of my calamity gem, a platinum grimoire, and some concentrated sliver of milk powder he would have been able to break through to the card overlord realm. As much as I would have liked him to break through to the card overlord realm before the fight, it would have been against the rules of a third-rate city and enough reason for Circle to turn up a political shitstorm.

Besides his realm, his status as a disciple of the Yin-yang harmony sect alone made him special compared to other calamity gems of mine. But with his recent action against the Circle and the interest of the Yin-yang harmony sect, his identity as a disciple of the yin-yang harmony sect had become more of a liability than an asset. So when faced with the predicament of scarifying Ji Feng to capture Mike, I did hesitate but not a lot.

Boom

After the explosion, I located Mike in the cloud of dust using my soul pupils, not waiting for the dust to settle I immediately rushed toward Mike chanting, "A-rank Item card, Corpse Wood Stake"

Soon an ugly 30cm long wooden stake appeared in my hand and then nearing the immobile body of Mike, I plunged the wooden stake through his heart with all my might. The wooden stake passed through Mike's chest and came out his back sticking into the ground below him. The blood did not rush out of Mike's mortal wound instead it was absorbed by the corpse wood stake.

As the corpse wood stake passed through his heart Mike groaned in pain, his eyes opened wide, if not for him missing his tongue and lower jaw he would have let out more than a grunt as a wooden stake passed through his chest and then his heart.

Mike wanted to struggle but he felt he could not move his soul energy, so he immediately tried to deduce what was wrong with him and figured out that it was because of the obstruction by the wooden stake sticking through his heart. Knowing this he grew desperate. With no soul energy to struggle or a lower jaw and a tongue to scream, Mike felt like he was trapped in his own body.

With the circulation of the soul energy being interrupted in his body, Mike returned to his human form unable to muster even the minimum soul energy to maintain his demon form. With that, his lower jaw and tongue stopped regrowing. Then his army of bone dragon clones vanished and Diana who had turned into a cat monster by him also morphed back into her original form, as there was no supply of soul energy for the bone dragon clones and the curse on Diana to continue to exist. The battle had finally come to an end with the sacrifice of Ji Feng.

“A-rank item card, Corpse wood coffin,” Not caring for Mike’s desperation I summoned an ugly wooden coffin and moved immobilized Mike into it. Sealing the coffin shut with Mike in it I unsummoned the coffin, returning it to its card.

With this, my reason to visit Sun Blossom city had come to an end. So I immediately used my grimoire to order my calamity daughters gems, Diana, and Cindy to no longer waste time here and return to the sky blossom city.

Thanks to the scavenging team that I had assigned earlier we did not have to worry about leaving behind any loot because of our hurried retreat. As they not only collected the grimoires of the dead circle members but also successfully raided the treasure vault of the circle with few casualties. Considering the loot, the casualties were negligible. Following my orders, my forces began to return to the carrier floater vessels and began the retreat.

As for me, making use of the cloud of dust that was yet to settle, I chanted, “B-rank Skill card, 100 Clone escape.”

With my chant, a total of 103 clones of mine escaped in various directions. Out of 103 clones, 100 were the regular B-rank clones while the other three were the calamity daughter clones created using my three slave consciousnesses. And one of these calamity daughter clones was carrying my calamity soul gem. Was I being too cautious and going overboard? No, if anything my preparations to escape from here was not enough. what made me think I need to escape even though I won the battle?

There was a good reason behind why I was doing this and that was none other than the Supreme leader of the circle and his secret. Like me, the supreme leader also coveted Mike’s origin card. Now that I had stolen something he valued I could forget escaping from the sun blossom city with my life. And I was not wrong to think this,

“HOW DARE YOU!!!”

A dominating shout thundered throughout the sky of the sun blossom city, and then three figures suddenly appeared right where I captured Mike and began to capture my escaping clones. But before they could complete their action, three other figures suddenly appeared opposite to them and interrupted them. Coincidentally all six of them were in the semi-demigod realm.

“Circle’s balls seem to have grown larger...”

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Chapter 1028 Number Nine & Ten

[1,021 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:15

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Circle's Branch Headquarters

"Circle's goon balls seem to have grown larger," Agatha yelled as she spread her soul energy and incomplete divinity to negate the influence of the three semi-demigods from Circle. Thanks to her actions the 103 clones of the boy were able to escape without any hindrance.

"Now that's a weird line to say," Number Nine one of the Asong's bodyguards said referring to what Agatha just said.

"..." Agatha did not seem to react to the semi-demigod guard's remark instead she was frantically reaching out to the boy through her grimoire.

There was a good reason why Agatha would be so distracted in a confrontation, it was because she doubted that all three of the semi-demigods from the circle were Lich or at least one of them was. This was not her idea the boy had planted this doubt in her mind, and he also promised to help her deduce their identity with his unique Aura Sight. Now as the moment had arrived, the boy was not answering her calls or messages.

But soon considering the circumstance of the boy escaping she understood why the boy was not responding to her calls and texts. Right now the boy was escaping for his life under the cover of about 103 clones, if he were to suddenly summon his grimoire just to answer her then he would stand out from other clones making the cover of about 103 clones would be pointless.

Though Agatha understood the predicament of the boy, she wanted to avoid fighting a lich if possible. Agatha was pretty confident about her strength enough to challenge dragons and young supreme beings but a Lich was on a whole other level. Those undying monstrosities with near-infinite soul energy were like weeds, killing them was easier said than done. Knowing her capabilities Agatha would rather choose to retreat than fight a losing battle that could mark the end of her legend.

"Senior Sister Nine, I think she is ignoring you?" Number Ten tried sparking a flame between the two female semi-demigods of his and fan it at the same time.

“I think so too,” Number Nine agreed hearing her junior brother and adding, “Let us ignore her and complete our mission. You take one at the right corner, I will take the other two after we are done capturing all three of them we will return to report to Captain.”

“Yes, Senior Sister Nine,” Number Ten immediately agreed to his colleague’s arrangement. As much as he would love to watch a girl fight break out, the mission took priority.

“I would not do that if I were you,” Angtha said as she felt Asong’s guards activate their incomplete Divinity.

“Why not?” Number Ten immediately asked before his senior sister could take this chance to refute the allied semi-demigod because of the misunderstanding he had created.

“There is a possibility that either one or all three of them is a Lich,” Agatha did not try hiding her doubts even though she did not have any merits to prove her words.

“Lich!” Both Number Nine and Ten blurted in surprise. As part of an elite bodyguard force trained by the government, both of them were proud and confident about their capabilities. But to take on a single Lich made them doubtful let alone facing three Semi-demigod Lich.

“If so why did you rush over here? We could have just grabbed the boy and retreated by to Sky blossom city,” Number Nine could not help but wonder why Agatha rust to the front to confront the three semi-demigods from the circle if they were Lich.

“I don’t know, seeing the boy in danger I just reacted,” Agatha said, but the real reason she intervened, stopping three semi-demigods from capturing all 103 clones of the boy was that she, herself, did not know which one of the 103 clones was the real body of the boy. In such circumstances, she could only come forward before the enemy had captured the boy’s clones among which was his real body.

“Enough about that, how sure are you they or one of them is a Lich? We can ask for backup, considering the distance between the two cities rest of the team can be here in a few minutes,” Number Ten said, having decided to exterminate all three liches at any cost. As that was what he trained for, though it was a different story that the government had trained him to be a good bodyguard.

“About that, it is just my hunch,” Agatha replied shyly, hearing her Number Nine and Ten gave her a blank stare but Agatha soon added, “Don’t worry, if they are lich we have to force them to reveal they are true to form so that the southern emperor can make use of the protection array formation covering the southern region to capture them. If they are not liches, I don’t think either of you will have trouble capturing one of them.”

Hearing Agatha, Number Nine and Ten both nodded. As the same was true for their team. Their captain can't just waltz in and capture three Semi-demigods just based on their doubts that their opponents were Liches. They would need concrete evidence for them to mobilize full force against the suspects fearing the political repercussions that this one small incident can stir up.

"Fine," Number Nine and Ten agreed to Agatha's plan but before they could move the semi-demigods from the circle broke free from the confinement that Agatha made using her incomplete divinity. Breaking free, the three enemy semi-demigods fanned out in three different directions chasing the boy's clones.

While the allied semi-demigods were still planning their course of action, the enemy semi-demigods were clear about their motive. First, they made sure the number of enemy semi-demigods, calculated their battle prowess, and then moved their attention to the hoard of boy's clones fleeing in various directions. It did not take them long to see through the B-rank clones and find three clones that could be the originals. Then they fanned out, each aiming for one of the three most likely clones that could be the original.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,116 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:15

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Circle's Branch Headquarters

The enemy semi-demigods were more coordinated and clear about their priorities than the allied semi-demigods. Following the orders from the main branch, the circle's semi-demigod prioritized capturing the boy over participating in an all-out battle with the allied semi-demigods. So once they realized that their opponent's number was not greater than theirs they decided to fan out, capture the target, and retreat without leaving a trach behind. The circle's semi-demigods choose such a course of action because they were very confident about their capabilities and not because they underestimated their opponents.

"Fuck, they are targeting the three clones. Stop them immediately," Agatha who knew that the boy could create absolute clones that were as capable and similar as the original panicked seeing that the enemy semi-demigods immediately target the three absolute clones among the crowd of B-rank clones. Her fear stemmed from the worry that one of these three absolute clones was the original and she did not know which

one. So she could only rush after one of the clones while trusting the protection of the other two clones to Number Nine and Ten.

Agatha did not know Number Nine and Ten, therefore it was a big decision on Agatha's part to trust them at such a moment granted that she did not have much choice in this case. Agatha was so desperate not just because Aba's life was at stake but also because her future was at stake here. Because she believed the boy to be her golden ticket out of poverty. Who said there were no poor card apprentices among semi-demigods and demigods? It may appear like they have the power to get anything they desire but with an increase in the realm, the line of poverty for the card apprentices also increases. Most card apprentices could not meet this poverty line in their entire lives. Take the card lords of the Sky blossom city, in a third-rate city they make appear wealthy but their entire fortune was nothing in eyes of the card lords from second and first-rate cities.

Fortunately for Demigod Windsor, he has a were economical ability that allows him to amass more money as if he were printing the money. As his retainer, Agatha earned a decent paycheck but as a semi-demigod living paycheck to paycheck, Agatha couldn't be more ashamed of herself. Therefore, she needs to protect this golden ticket that the world has thrown her way.

Not to forget he can now be considered her friend. This was the main reason why she desperately wanted to protect the boy. Yes, this has to be it as it sounded better than the last one.

Without communicating, the three allied semi-demigods came to a tactical understanding and knew what they had to do. Not wasting much time they chased their respective opponents, but this one-second delay made a lot of difference in the battle of higher realms especially when it comes to the semi-demigod realm and above.

While the semi-demigods finally acted, as if the boy could sense the danger, all three clones of his that were being targeted immediately summoned a grimoire, and each of them used a different set of cards hoping to outrun the semi-demigod chasing them.

Sensing all three clones summon grimoire and use them, the Circle's semi-demigods were confused. As clones cannot contract grimoires but these three did. But soon attributing this anomaly to trickery the enemy semi-demigods ignore it and rushed to grab the respective clone they were chasing.

The three clones of the boy, showed a lot of intelligence, as they not only activated a set of cards to help them escape but they were able to skillfully use them. One of the three clones had used some kind of partial transformation card, growing beast ears, tail, and fur, he tried escaping to the city outskirts to hide in the wild. While the second one had a peculiar wing-type item, which seemed to allow the clone to flicker every second, this clone chose to run to a crowded place to blend among the people using a disguise. As

for the last one, after running for a while it immediately burrowed into the ground to hide in the city's drainage tunnels.

These detail did not escape the watchful eyes of the circle's Semi-demigods chasing the clones. The more they saw the respective clone they were chasing in action the more the circle's Semi-demigods became certain that the clone they were chasing was the original. So they could not help but show a confident smile as they captured the boy's clone they had chased.

Even though the allied semi-demigod gave their best they couldn't make up for the second of the head start they gave to their opponents due to their indecisiveness caused by a lack of coordination between them. As result, they were unable to catch up to the enemy demigod in time and could only watch as their opponents captured the target of their protection. The only thing card apprentices could not control in higher realms was time that was of course if they did not have the time rule mastery or time-related cards, so they had to be more decisive in their battles, but due to a lack of communication between them, the allied Semi-demigods had dropped the balls from the start.

Having captured their respective target the three enemy semi-demigods immediately chose to retreat feeling certain that the clone of the boy that they had captured was the original. So storing the boy they captured in their respective trap cards they rushed to the hidden teleportation array that Mike had built in the various hidden spots for their retreat.

Seeing the enemy semi-demigods were not only able to capture the target of their protection and would be able to successfully retreat the three allied semi-demigods did not hesitate to launch attacks aimed at the enemy semi-demigods right within the city without care for the casualties that would follow their choices. Compared to the threat of the southern emperor, the allied semi-demigods felt that the mortal casualties were little price to pay.

The enemy semi-demigods knew that after they captured the target their opponents would resort to desperate actions, so they were already prepared and expecting the allied semi-demigods to attack. If possible they would try to evade their opponent's attack and if not possible they would strengthen their defenses, endure the attacks and keep rushing toward the hidden teleportation arrays like charging bulls without showing any notion of stopping. Because they knew if they stopped here to deal with the incoming attacks their opponent would entangle them with everything they got until more of them arrived blocking their retreat.

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[1,506 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:10

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Outskirts, Unknown

“Your majesty, welcome,” Grey wolf and the other team members greeted a dozen card semi-demigods as they walked out of their respective teleportation array formation.

“Don’t stand on ceremony, we can get to know each other once we complete the mission,” The semi-demigod in charge said with a warm amiable simple but hearing him, the expressions on the face of Gray wolf and his teammate could not help change. This slight change did not escape the watchful gaze of the lead semi-demigod. Understanding that his fellow juniors had misunderstood his words, he wanted to clear himself but a thundering shout originating from the city stopped him in his tracks,

“HOW DARE YOU!!!”

The dozens of semi-demigods, Gray Fur, and the team focused on the sun blossom city, specifically where the Circle’s branch headquarters was located as that was where the shout originated from. To their surprise, the three semi-demigods from the circle who did not plan to show themselves suddenly rushed to the frontlines aiming for the boy.

“What happened?” Gray fur asked his team members.

Codename sniper who had the best vision among the team and kept attention on the battlefield, immediately answered, “The boy has killed the Circle’s branch leader Mike, angering their semi-demigods into taking action.”

“So, what do we do now? Follow the previous plan or the new one?” Codename flower thief asked, even though the roles he and his team played in both the plans were pretty much the same: to assassinate the boy. Except in the first plan they need to time the assassination of the boy such that they could frame the circle for the boy’s death. So he needs to be clear on the part they need to play in the boy’s death.

“Let’s wait and watch,” the semi-demigod in charge said. As his gaze focused on the 103 clones of the boys that were escaping in various directions.

“No, the boy is very slippery. I think we should take this opportunity to assassinate the boy. Please don’t take offense but I speak from experience,” Only a flower thief who was pampered by the VIP privilege of the organization could say such a thing to the semi-demigod in charge. As for the rest of the team, they held their breath in, hoping that if they don’t breathe the semi-demigod would forget that they existed.

Hearing the flower thief's words opposing his direct orders the Semi-demigod in charge did not show dissatisfaction, maintaining his amiable smile the Semi-demigod in charge responded, "You must be codename flower thief, I know that you have the best interest in your mind but we can no longer implement first or the second plan because the circumstances at present are totally different. And don't you think you are underestimating the power of the semi-demigods?"

Hearing the Semi-demigod in charge's argument the flower thief could only reluctantly nod and take a step back. While the Semi-demigod in charge and the rest turned their attention back to the battlefield.

"The boy has thought of a good strategy to escape but he will have to do a lot better than B-rank clones if he plans to trick the eyes of the semi-demigods," one of the paw clan's semi-demigods commented looking at the 103 clones of the boy that scattered around to throw their pursuer off the original trail.

"I don't know, those three clones out of the crowd of boy's clones seem too livid for them to be clones of the boy. Even I am having a hard time differentiating between them and judging which one of them is the real deal. It would be best if the circle's three demigods hunt each of the three clones," said the other card semi-demigod.

"It seems the Circle's semi-demigods have the same idea," The Semi-demigod in charge replied seeing how the circle's demigods decisively went after the three clones instead of fighting their opponents.

"Great, it seems our work will be done without us getting involved," the semi-demigod cheered, seeing that the allied semi-demigods were unable to catch up to the circle's demigod before all three of the boy's clones were captured by them.

"Yes, but the tough part is yet to come, how do they plan to escape after capturing the boy still eludes me," the Semi demigod in charge thought ahead and saw that escaping the city would prove more difficult than capturing the boy.

As the Semi-demigod in charge expected the circle's semi-demigods faced a challenge while trying to escape as their opponents no longer held back and started to attack them unscrupulously.

"Something is fishy, shouldn't the southern emperor have made use of the array covering the southern region to deal with them?" The flower thief asked knowing that the southern royal family and southern emperor were very protective of the boy.

"You are right, but things would be different if they have these cards," the Semi-demigod in charge shared the information of the card he spoke of with gray fur and team.

“This, how can the southern royal family allow such cards to exist?” Gray Fur voiced his concern in disbelief after going through the card information shared by the Semi-demigod in charge.

“They had to, otherwise the government would never allow such an array formation to exist in the first place. Even though the ancestors of the unparalleled bloodline were among the founding members of the government, this was something all four of the royal families agreed on. This is just one of the few compromises the royal families made to assure the government that they will not declare their complete and independent sovereignty on their individual regions,” The Semi-demigod in charge explained that even though the royal families were rulers of their individual regions they were still a part of the government, hearing him Gary fur and the team finally knew how these semi-demigods were hiding their presence from the array formation covering the entire southern region.

“No wonder, even after so many centuries neither of the four royal families has ever tried to pull something funny like overthrowing the current government or invading each other,” The members of the paw clan continued to watch as the circle’s semi-demigods made use of agility and defense cards to escape the wild attack of the allied semi-demigods. Even though the circle’s semi-demigods only made evasion their main priority and tried their best not to engage their attackers, it was proving very difficult for them to throw their pursuers off their trail.

“I don’t think they can make a successful retreat if this continues,” the Semi-demigod in charge spoke seeing how the circle’s demigods and the allied semi-demigods ran in a process.

“Didn’t they prepare a hidden teleportation array or something beforehand?” Flower thief asked and added, “I bet the semi-demigods protecting kid will not dare to destroy the teleportation array in mid teleportation worrying about the safety of the boy captured by their opponents.”

“That is a possibility, but if the hidden teleportation array gets destroyed before they even make it to it, then they are stuck here forever,” answered another semi-demigod.

“Now this has pretty much become a cat-and-mouse chase, that is until the allied forces’ reinforcements arrived. Then it is game over for the Circle,” One of the semi-demigods commented.

The members of the paw clan forgot their mission and began to spectate from their hiding with no notion of helping the members of the circle with their retreat.

So Sansa who was watching their performance through the live feed of their memories called them with new instructions.” What heck are you people doing idle, go help the circle’s goons escape from here before the allied forces reinforcements arrive.”

It did not matter to Sansa if the boy was killed or taken hostage by the circle's supreme lord because, in the end, the boy's future was bleak.

"Yes, boss. But if we directly get involved in this then it may expose our involvement in this," The lead semi-demigod agreed to Sansa's demands but also pointed out that if they get helped the circle's members directly then their participation in the assassination of the boy would be apparent.

"Act as the reinforcement from the circle, the members of the circle will cooperate to keep your cover. Do I have to even teach such small things too?" Sansa snapped hearing the lead semi-demigod ask basic questions as if this was his first rodeo.

Hearing Sansa be so cold to the lead semi-demigod, Flower Thief relaxed about his last conversation with her. It was not just him, Sansa seemed to be the same to everyone, and maybe even a bit more tolerant toward him compared to others. So he enthusiastically asked, "Matron, what about us? How can we help?"

"You and your team use your origin card ability to scan the entire sun blossom city, its sewers, and its outskirts, just in case the three clones captured by the circle's semi-demigods were not the original one. I remind you, at no cost, you guys can allow the boy to walk out of this alive," Sansa warned being cautious having experienced failure once.

...

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[988 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:21

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

In the air of the sun blossom city, time and again people could hear sonic booms. When the curious public came to the streets to look at the sky they saw the sky brighten up with various colors and numerous cracks spread across it oozing deadly energy, feeling an imminent threat from the crack formation in the sky the general public was thrown into chaos. Fearing for their life, from mortals to card students to card lords, every single one rushed to the nearby shelter as per the disaster guidelines that were prominent during the monster war. It has been decades since the monster war but the dread of the

war was still fresh in the bones of the people, so it did not take them long to find shelter at the first sign of war.

At a time of urgency, the humanity that cannot be seen in the city during a regular day was seen in Sun blossom city, the veterans and survivors of the monster war from decades ago stepped up to help the young blood that had never experienced such disaster in their life. The general public, regardless of the realm hierarchy that had taken root in the bones of modern society, worked hand in hand to make sure that the casualty would be low and everyone in need of help gets tended to. Fortunately, though the cracks in the sky seemed deadly none of them miraculously ever reached the city thanks to the activation of the city array which isolated it from the outside space. Yet, the citizens of the sun blossom city did not let their guard down and hide in the shelter.

In a span of a few minutes, the entire sun blossom city was empty, the streets that used to be buzzing now had a graveyard silence. It was amazing how in face of common threats, mankind that was known for its greed can work together like a single entity to achieve what could have been deemed impossible on any given regular day. Thanks to the evacuation guidelines, a few minutes, that was all it took for the citizens of the sun blossom city to rush to safety.

Unlike card emperors semi-demigods were entities with divinity, no matter how little divinity they could use, it was the power that stood above the rules of the world, holding the equation to creation and destruction alike. So when it was released into the atmosphere the space around it collapsed exposing the world to the legendary void that was only accessible to the beings with divinity.

Under the constant barrage of attacks, the semi-demigods of the circle had to go around their escape route as they did not want a rogue attack destroying their teleportation array. But no matter how they tried to get rid of the allied semi-demigods off their backs, their opponents somehow continued to sniff their trail. Stressed on time the semi-demigods from the circle were getting impatient. And finally decided to sacrifice one of them so that the other could two could escape with the three clones of the boy captured by them. Though each of them was certain that the clone they captured was the original body of the boy, that was not the point right now, one of them, a semi-demigod had to stay behind so that they could retrieve the corpse of a mere card lord realm branch leader. That was how much the supreme leader valued Mike. He was willing to exchange a live and kicking semi-demigod just to get his hand on Mike's corpse.

"Agatha, I don't think either of them is a lich," Number Nine said as continued to tail her target.

"I think so too," Agatha agreed with Number nine because if a Lich wanted to escape neither was capable of stopping them. Seeing how their opponents were struggling to throw them off their trail she knew she may have overestimated her opponents.

“Then what are you waiting for, use the card the southern emperor gave you,” Number Ten suggested to Agatha.

“No, that is for desperate situations,” Agatha did not agree to Number Ten’s suggestion feeling that they could hold the enemy till the reinforcements arrived.

“They have all three clones of the boy, one of them got to be the original body, can the situation get any more desperate than this,” Number Ten believed that they should get the situation under control as soon as possible instead of waiting around for the reinforcement.

“No, we wait,” Agatha disagreed once again. Though the card lent to her by the southern emperor was strong and guaranteed success it came at a great cost if used by someone who did not possess the unparalleled bloodline.

Agatha had grown close to the boy and was willing to risk her life for him but the situation has not gotten to that point, therefore she held off from calling in the big guns.

“Watch out, enemy converging, they are up to something,” Number Ten reminded the other two as they argued about opinions.

“It seems two of them have decided to stall three of us while the remaining one escapes with all three clones of the boy,” Number Ten immediately deduced based on the enemies’ movements. But he would never have guessed that the enemy dare to underestimate them. So imagine his surprise when he saw only one of the enemy semi-demigods stay behind to stall all three of them while the other two escaped.

“I will take him on, you two follow the other two,” Number Nine made a decisive decision. She would rather hunt the strongest of the three but, unlike her Number Ten was wittier and Agatha held the trump card, so she felt that she was the one that should stay behind while the other two hunted the remaining enemies.

“Okay,” Number Ten and Agatha did not argue and nodded in response to Number Ten’s suggestion.

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Chapter 1032 Death To All

[1,017 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:26

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

Just as Number Ten and Agatha were about to get past the enemy as Number Nine engaged him, they heard the enemy chant, "SSS-rank, Curse Card, Death To All"

"Fuck, everybody, stay within a kilometer distance of him," Hearing the enemy, Number Ten cussed as a black halo appeared on each of their heads. Number Ten facial expression got uglier as he knew the exact ability of the opponent's card, so he instructed them to stay within 1km of the enemy. It seems their opponents were not underestimating them, they were more decisive than all three of them combined.

"Agatha immediately uses that card, the situation cannot get more desperate than this," Number Ten gave up on chasing the other two semi-demigods of the circle and yelled at Agatha to use the card.

"..." Agatha frowned as Number Ten's action was not what they had agreed upon. But seeing the black halo covering their heads and the desperate expression on Number Ten's face she chose to follow his instruction and use the card after giving it a thought.

"Quick, before they escape from the area of effect of the card," Number ten could not help but add seeing that Agatha was still considering his words.

Agatha, Number Nine and Number Ten were not weaker than the trio from the circle if anything they were stronger yet they fell short compared to the enemy trio because the level of coordination was unprecedented, they were in a state that can only be described as 'single mind three bodies'. Not to mention the decisiveness they showcased, they did not hesitate to sacrifice one of them for the other two to escape. In face of this, the advantage of strength that the allied trio held could not gain them the upper hand that they could have with a bit more coordination and decisiveness.

"SSS-rank Trap card, Heaven's Sanction," Agatha finally chose to heed Number Nine's words and activate the card given to her by the southern emperor. Fortunately, for Agatha, the other two enemies had circled back to the city to access the hidden teleportation array in the underground of the circle's destroyed branch headquarters. So they had not managed to escape the area of the effect of the trap card used by Agatha.

It can be said that Agatha was very lucky when it came to her timing of activating the trap card given to her by the southern emperor as the two semi-demigods of the circle who thought that they had gotten the allied semi-demigods off their backs headed straight to the hidden teleportation array and accessed them only to find that the isolation barrier protecting city suddenly was strengthened from A-rank to SSS-rank and they could not escape using the teleportation array as it was only of AA-rank.

"You better give me a worthy reason for this, or you got an enemy in me, mister," Agatha said to Number Ten with a grave expression as the bill of using the trap card came due. For now, she was fine but once she deactivates the trap card, she will have to recuperate for months to come as the price of accessing the strength of the array formation covering the southern region without the unparalleled bloodline following through her veins was not small.

The A-rank space isolation barrier array covering the city had its rank raised to SSS rank because it was being empowered by the array formation covering the southern region as the additional effect of the trap card, Heaven's sanction, used by Agatha.

Now that all three of the enemy card semi-demigods were trapped, Number Ten's expression finally eased and he explained, "Death To All is a newly created card that has quickly risen to popularity as the number one curse card. Western forces first used it to clear the SSS-rank gate dungeon in the shortest amount of recorded time. Thanks to this card, they could even clear an SSS-rank field dungeon in a record-breaking time.

The halo you see on your head is an effect of the curse called the blessing of death. It appears on the head of the user and all his enemies within the 1km range of him.

If you are out of the 1km range of the user, you die.

If you kill the user, you die.

The only way to end this curse is to wait."

"How long?" hearing Number Ten explain the curse card used by the enemy Agatha let him off the hook. fortunately, she was not too hot-headed earlier and choose to follow Number Ten's instruction otherwise she would be dead right now. This was one of the reasons why she hated curse masters. These fucking asshole force you to play a game of life and death and never tell you the rules of the game.

"Until the halo on our head disappears, which could be anywhere from an hour to a day to a month or even a year. It depends on the price the user has paid to activate the curse card," Number Ten said grimly. If not for the southern emperor's signature trap card tarping the enemy within the bounds of the city, Number Ten would not be as relaxed as he was now.

"..." Number Nine quietly nodded to Number Ten's explanation. Number Ten was what you call a textbook card nerd, thanks to that he was a walking encyclopedia of cards used across the five regions. This was the reason why she chose to let Number Ten follow the other enemies along with Agatha controlling her impulse to take on the strongest enemy on the battlefield.

"Wait, from what you are saying we cannot kill that bastard?" Agatha asked in annoyance.

“Killing them was never on the table. Even though I am not sure which one of the three clones is the Boy’s original body, since it is being held in their trap card, if we kill them the boy will forever be trapped in their grimoire,” Number Ten reminded Agatha. Though there were always to access a dead card apprentice’s grimoire, Number Ten would rather make a safe bet.

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Chapter 1033 Hermit's Retreat

[988 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:13

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewers

A figure burrowed down from the ceiling of the sun blossom city’s sewer system and began to rush towards the exit of the sewers which ended at a cleared lake field dungeon 100 miles away from the city. Ignoring the nauseating and repulsive smell of the sewers the figure ran at the highest speed it could muster as if its life was on the line. The sound of the rushed footsteps echoed in the tunnels as the figure kept running without looking back feeling that it could not afford to entertain any sort of distraction and it was right to think so but unfortunately for it whatever it was running from caught up to it and before a second could pass both the running figure and its pursuer had vanished from the tunnels of the sewer.

After the figure and its pursuer vanished the sewer tunnels once again regained their peace. Except for the hole in the ceiling of the tunnel of the sewers from where the figure had burrowed into the sewers, there was no trace left of the figure and its pursuer’s presence in the tunnel.

In the debris under the hole in the ceiling of the dark maintenance tunnel, there was a slight shimmer, if one looked closely it would appear to be a small gem of sorts. Five minutes in a small organic appendage began to grow from the gem and within no time it grew to cover the gem, then into a fully grown naked teenage boy.

Coming to his senses the boy did not waste any time investigating his surroundings instead he summoned his grimoire. Considering the chill weather and the fact that the boy was naked one would think the boy summon something to wear but he did not

rather he summoned a small hermit crab monster shell. The shell was worn out and very dirty, it looked no different hand a rock.

Holding the ugly hermit crab monster shell, the naked teenage boy suddenly vanished and the ugly shell he was holding fell to the ground and fell among the debris. Due to the appearance of the shell, it was very difficult for one to distinguish it from the debris surrounding it.

After vanishing from the dark sewer tunnels, the naked boy appeared 300 sq meters size room with no doors or windows. Yet the ventilation, thermostat, and lighting in the room were maintained to an optimum level thanks to the various array formations arranged in the room.

The boy soon assessed one of the arrays and pull up a translucent screen into the air which displayed the live video of the sewers, to be accurate the tunnel from very he had vanished. Turns out vanishing from the dark tunnels of the sewers the boy had entered the small ugly shell of the hermit card monster. The room he was currently present in was a sub-space within the hermit card monster's shell.

Using the translucent screen the boy monitored the entire 360 degrees surrounding the shell, feeling that his plan has worked he did not relax instead he summoned a rotting coffin and opened the lid to find a middle-aged man sleeping peacefully with a stake stuck in his heart.

[Card Name: Corpse Wood Stake

Card Type: Item Card

Card Rank: A-rank, Rare grade

Card Rate: 7 stars

Card Durability: [100/100]

Card Effect: Corpse wood is an A-rank card ingredient with an incredible property to deprive a being of soul energy just by being in contact, a similar effect is noted with regards to rules and runes but the corpse woods effects are more exaggerated with soul energy than rule power.

As a Stake made using corpse wood, the wounds made using corpse wood stake cannot be healed using soul energy or rule power, they can only be healed naturally.

Additional ability: Soul energy deprivation, Rule power Deprivation, Roots

Note: When used in combination with Corpse wood coffin the effect of the card and all its skills increases by 5 folds]

Soul Energy or Rule Power deprivation: These are skills created based using the natural trait of the corpse wood. When the corpse wood stake is in contact with the victim, they cannot access soul energy or rule power.

Roots: When impaled on the victim the corpse wood stake takes root within the body like a plant or tree taking root in the ground. These roots of the corpse wood stake will be constantly depriving the victim the access to internal and external soul energy or rule power.

[Card Name: Corpse Wood Coffin

Card Type: Item Card

Card Rank: A-rank, Rare grade

Card Rate: 8 stars

Card Durability: [100/100]

Card Effect: Corpse wood Coffin, as the name suggests is a coffin made using corpse wood. When the victim is laid in the coffin, they cannot access their soul energy or rule power.

Additional Effects: Eternal slumber

Note: When this card is used in combination with the corpse wood stake the effects of the card and its skill are increased by 5 folds]

Eternal Slumber: Losing access to soul energy and rule power the victim will go into a deep sleep.

[Card Name: Hermit's Retreat

Card Type: Item Card

Card Rank: A-rank, Rare grade

Card Rate: 7 stars

Card Durability: [100/100]

Card Effect: Hermit's Retreat is an item created using the shell of a mutated hermit crab monster which showed a trace of developing a subspace within it.

Hermit's Retreat allows the user to access a subspace of 300 sq meters in size.

Additional ability: Master Key, Space affinity]

Master Key: This skill gives the user full authority over the sub-space within the Hermit's Retreat. Without this key, no being can enter or leave the sub-space within the Hermit's retreat.

Note: The authority of the Master key can be challenged if the opponent has a strong mastery of the Space rule.

Space affinity: The hermit crab monster's shell used to create the Hermit's retreat card was mutated and had developed an affinity for space managing to show a trace of developing an independent space within it.

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Chapter 1034 Extracting The Real Loot

[1,009 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:21

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewers, Hermit's Retreat.

[Card Name: 100 Clone Escape

Card Type: Item Card

Card Rank: B-rank, Uncommon grade

Card Rate: 5 stars

Card Durability: [100/100]

Card Effect: As the name of the card suggest the user can summon 100 clones to escape amidst the confusion. The clones created by this card have very little strength but make up for it with their agility stats and high-level disguise skill.

Note: Due to the low strength of the clones the user is advised to use these clones' for escape or to confuse the enemy.]

After entering the hermit's retreat I did not dare to relax my vigilance even for a second. As I was dealing with semi-demigods here. These people were one step away from establishing their divinity, who knows what they were capable of? I could not take any chances here, my life was at stake here.

Even though I was not out of the fryer yet thanks to my shopping spree at the silent auction, I was able to fair better than I expected. I was not speaking about the B-rank 100 clones' escape card, the semi-demigods saw through that card in under a second and directly aimed for my three calamity daughter clones. But it was my fault for expecting a bunch of B-rank clones to fool semi-demigods. Fortunately, a few of the custom cards that I tweaked at the last second proved to be helpful, especially the Corpse wood coffin, Corpse wood stake, and the hermit's retreat.

The Corpse wood sold at the auction was nowhere near enough to create a stake and a coffin, so I had to use my insights to grow the 15 cm corpse wood more than enough to make a corpse wood stake, and coffin and save a little of it for future use.

As for the hermit crab monster's mutated shell, I bid for it after seeing an anomaly in its soul pathways but upon closer inspection, it turned out that the mutation in the hermit card monster's shell was related to space ability. Now that was a surprise, I was not expecting a random ingredient I bid for in the auction to have space ability, which happened to be one of the most coveted abilities of the Space system, Sub-space. Thanks to this I no longer had to bother with multiple storage cards. This Subspace was still under renovation so I had not emptied my storage cards in here yet but once the renovations were done this space would house the most precious of all rare ingredients I come across.

If the silent auction was not rigged by Cheng then I don't think I could have gotten my hands on these rare ingredients and cards. So it was a good decision to recruit him in my calamity daughter gem army. If not for the ingredients I procured in the silent auction, I wouldn't have been able to capture Mike alive for the Blood fate plunder ritual.

Yes, I would still be in possession of his corpse, but the greater the time passes between the sacrifice's death and the ritual's time, the gains will be significantly less compared to the gains of a fresh sacrifice for the ritual. This meant if I tried to extract the origin card from his corpse, I would have fewer chances of getting the complete original card as it was.

Thankfully now I did not have to worry about that as I had made use of the corpse wood stake and corpse wood coffin to capture Mike alive. This way my sacrifice was as fresh as it could get. Summoning the corpse wood coffin, I opened the lid to begin the ritual for the blood fate plunder.

Soon the blood fate plunder rune hovered out of my calamity soul gem and hovered above my sacrifice, Mike Brown. Then using my thought I commanded the corpse wood stake that had taken root in Mike's body to tear Mike's heart to shreds, killing him in the process.

Once Mike Brown was dead the blood fate plunder rune hovering above his body began to shine with a brilliant red light attracting the blood from Mike's body. Mike's blood began to be sucked in and devoured by the blood fate plunder rune. A few minutes in, Mike's body had dried up with no trace of blood in it and turned into ash leaving behind a platinum grimoire and a broken ego gem.

Once the blood fate plunder rune had devoured the blood Mike's body had to offer, the blood fate plunder rune began to shine brighter than before. Soon the entire subspace was filled with blinding red light. So, I had no choice but to look away, and the next second the blinding red light ceased to exist and a red card took the place of the blood fate plunder card. Then floating card hovered in front of me, taking it I read its card info with great nervousness as I learned that Mike had two origin cards as the blood fate plunder card was done processing Mike's blood. Other than his origin cards there was not much worth coveting. So having witnessed both of Mike's origin cards in action and having experienced them first hand I knew which one of the origin cards I wanted the most, apparently it was called the Myriad Devil body. The bone Dragon origin card of Mike was attractive but compared to the Myriad Devil body it fell short.

[Card Name: Myriad Devil Body

Card Type: Rune Card

Card Rank: Rare Grade, Upgradable

Card Rate: -/-

Card Durability: [100/100]

Card Effect: Myriad Devil Body rune card was created using the origin card the Myriad Devil body and the rune blood fate plunder. Due to the vast difference in the realm of the user and the victim, most of the abilities of the Myriad Devil body origin card are still underdeveloped or locked. Please upgrade the card to unlock its abilities completely.

Additional Effect: Myriad Devil Transformation, Myriad Devil's Hex, Myriad Devil Physique

Caution: The user can lose their true self to the Myriad Devil Transformation.]

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[1,494 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:24

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewers, Hermit's Retreat.

I held the blood red card and went through its card info ignoring the fact what I just did was nothing short of practices the demon worshippers were persecuted for, maybe even more deviant as during this whole ritual I was naked, due to the intelligent thermostat array of the Hermit's Retreat sub-space and my mind being preoccupied with vigilance for the enemy semi-demigods, I totally forgot the fact that I was naked.

Fascinated, I was lost in my thoughts as I went through the various abilities of the card I plundered by sacrificing Mike, as a result, I forgot to replace my birthday suit with something more civil and presentable. But it did not take long for my fascination to turn into fear and feel a chill run through my entire body despite the intelligent thermostat trying its best to make me comfortable. The reason behind my fear was the practical applications of the Myriad Devil Body card and its abilities. The card's effects were dreadful, especially the Myriad Devil's Hex, I broke into a sweat reading this skill info despite the intelligent thermostat giving its best.

Myriad Devil's Hex skill was so broken that the victim would not even understand what transpired when targeted by this skill. As the victim would not only lose their appearance but also their mind under the influence of this skill. The prime example of this was Ji Feng, under the influence of this skill his soul believed that it was a pebble. But there were some expectations such as Diana who was able to maintain her sanity thanks to her firm will.

After considering the various application of the Myriad Devil's Hex skill and its effects, I summoned a storage trunk and carefully took out a ring from within it. This ring was the reason why Mike's hex on Ji Feng did not spread to me and my other calamity daughter gems. Wearing the ring on my left pinky I felt very grateful toward Anna and could not help but miss her, if she were present I would not have to hide in the sewers of the sun blossom city. I shook my head stopping my mind from entertaining such thoughts. I did not mind hiding behind a woman but I did not want to make it a habit.

Speaking of the abilities of the cards most of them were currently unavailable to me, especially the Myriad Devil Physique. This physique allowed Mike to use the physique, skills, and traits of the different races while having transformed into a different race. But that was not a problem considering that I could gain access to these abilities of the card once I upgrade it. But this was where things got tricky, the condition for upgrading the

card was outrageous as It demanded the blood of the devil, not the blood of demons but devils who were considered to be the demigod equivalent of the Demon kin.

Asides from the Myriad Devil physique, the other abilities of the card were accessible but were more demanding when it came to soul energy and conditions required for activating them. Still, it was better than nothing.

After contemplating the card's abilities for a while, I decided to experience them firsthand. So I enthusiastically equipped the card but realized that I needed to provide the card with the necessary medium for me to activate either of the skills, Myriad Devil Body or Myriad Devil's Hex. At this point, I did not have blood or any DNA material of any monster or being on me so I could only think of turning into something inanimate, like a pebble for example. So summoning in a little of the debris surrounding the Hermit's Retreat shell, I used it as a medium to transform into a pebble from the debris remembering not to lose my sense of true self to Myriad Devil transformation skill like Ji Feng chanting, "Myriad Devil Transformation- Pebble"

Once again the calamity soul gem did not fail to surprise me. As I transformed into a pebble, the calamity soul gem too transformed into an ego gem equivalent of a pebble. This way I had completely transformed into a pebble without losing my true self to the skill.

This was a piece of great news because Mike's transformation skill was greatly limited by his fear of losing his true self to the Myriad Devil Transformation skill but I did not have to worry about this skill thanks to the calamity soul gem. Unlike Mike who could not stay transformed for a long time, I could maintain my transformation limitlessly, as I had no risk of falling prey to the side effect of the skill.

The most intriguing thing about my transforming into a pebble was that I was still wearing the dummy ring Anna gave me. Thanks to the transformation skill the ring apparently became a part of my pebble body, the same would have been true for my clothes if I had any on my body.

Transforming back to my original body, I threw on casual attire and then transformed into a pebble once again. Later I moved out of the Hermit's retreat sub-space and retrieved the Hermit's retreat back into its card.

Call me paranoid but under the scrutiny of the Semi-demigod Hermit's retreat would not stand a chance but the same was not true for the Myriad Devil transformation. There was a reason why the Myriad Devil transformation was described as a complete transformation, once a person's soul energy pathway, arrangement, vibrations, and signature were completely morphed to fit the transformation, even a demigod would have a hard time discerning the transformation from the original let alone a semi-demigod.

This specialty of his origin card made Mike a must-have commodity for the Supreme leader of the circle, therefore despite the risk involved he did not hesitate to deploy three semi-demigods to retrieve Mike's corpse that I had stored in my grimoire.

What could the Supreme leader possibly gain from Mike's origin card? The Myriad Devil Body card was the origin card and could not be traded, so how did the supreme leader plan to get his hands on Mike's origin card? The answer to this was related to the supreme leader's big secret, which he believed to be well kept, no other soul in the world except for him and Matron knew about it. Even if they did he made sure to help them keep their mouth shut by burning them seven feet under.

But unfortunately for him, decades ago he messed with the wrong girl, Codename Clown Mask. Who without him knowing had completely altered the course of his future not to mention my unexpected arrival in this world. I don't know what the supreme leader's reaction would be when he learns what Clown mask knew. I bet he would almost die from a stroke. Though significant news like this was not enough to bring down the Supreme leader.

Having retrieved the Hermit's Retreat to its card I lay in the sewer tunnel in my pebble body. Despite being a pebble I was able to use all of my soul energy-related abilities without any hindrance. As for the physical related abilities, with no hands, feet, or other appendages I was restricted to just rolling my pebble body. With proper exertion of force through my pebble body, I could roll around without using any spiritual energy but it was a lot more taxing than running, jogging, or walking. If it were just my human physique I could not have achieved this feat, my gigamite physique was at play here. Rolling around using my physical force was for the best, this way I could move around without causing even a minute disturbance in soul energy.

Right now my priority was to make it out of the sewers, then the sun blossom city, and later into the sky blossom city. After leaving the city sewers I can try and transform myself into one of my calamity daughter gems, mingle with the general populous, and stealthily get out of the sun blossom city and head to the sky blossom city. Only after reaching sky blossom city could I relax my vigilance before that I would use every ounce of mental energy I have to get to the sky blossom city.

As for the allied semi-demigods fighting the enemy semi-demigods, I did not have the luxury of informing them that I was safe and not trapped in the grimoire of the enemy semi-demigod because if I did that then I would not only be alerting the allied semi-demigods of my well being but also the enemy semi-demigods. Weighing the pros and cons I decided to let the allied semi-demigods keep the enemy semi-demigods busy as I made my way to the sky blossom city. Once I feel safe, I could worry about the rest and I believe the allied semi-demigods protecting me would agree with me.

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Chapter 1036 Soul Radar

[1,603 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:27

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewers

As I rolled my pebble body to find a way outside the sewers I suddenly felt the city go quiet. I was not talking about the city's regular hubbub, but the booming sound produced by the semi-demigods fighting in the city airspace. What happened? Why did they suddenly stop? Did they leave the city airspace and take their fight somewhere else? Or did the circle's demigod manage to escape? Now that would bring the fight to a halt. After all, with the enemy successfully retreating who were the allied semi-demigods supposed to fight? That was a possibility but if that were to happen then I would be very disappointed by the capabilities of the allied semi-demigods. Not only did they let the enemies capture my clones but also let them get away with it, which can only be explained as a huge letdown.

Inside the sewer with my sense trapped in a tiny pebble body, the world had suddenly grown larger for me. Yes, my gigamite physique allowed my pebble body to do what no other pebble could, but it was still a great challenge to cover 100 meters with a body less than 1mm in size. Therefore, I felt being up to date on the semi-demigod activity took less priority, feeling that with my new rune card I had managed to overcome the huge disaster upon me.

But it did not take long for the world to remind me that I was wrong to think that. When I used the B-rank 100 clone escape card to summon 100 B-rank clones hoping that they could make a good cover for my calamity daughter clones as they escaped to the bounds of the city, but it was a waste of effort as the semi-demigods saw right through the B-rank clones and directly went after calamity daughter clone not even bothering to waste their energy to destroy the 100 B-rank clones.

Yes, even after my calamity daughter clones were captured my 100 B-rank clones were still free and trying to escape to every corner of the city. This made me regret the decision of having my calamity daughter clones carry my calamity soul gem. If not for my quick reaction and ditching the calamity soul gem along with the debris produced during the process of the calamity daughter clone burrowing into the sewer tunnel, my calamity soul gem would still be on the calamity daughter clone as it was captured by the circle's semi-demigod and trapped in their grimoire.

That was a matter of the past and not of concern now but the B-rank clones of mine were, as a minute ago something unknown had started to target and hunt them one by one. I do not know who was tracking my B-rank clones spread across every corner of the city and hunting them down methodically but it was clear that they must hold quite a grudge against me to do something so tedious and pointless. Hunting my B-rank clones would not harm me in any way unless they believed that it would.

The only reason for the enemy to do that would be if they think that my original body was hiding among the 100 B-rank clones and not the three prefect clones captured by the semi-demigods. Seeing how easily they were able to track my B-rank clones and methodically kill them, I bet whoever was behind this incident was no ordinary card apprentice.

Which meant they should know that my B-rank Clones were independent clones created using little soul energy with the sole purpose of misguiding my enemies, yet they resorted to something so tedious as hunting down my clones one by one could only show that they wanted to erase the slightest possibility of my original body hiding among the 100 B-rank clones and not the three prefect clones captured by the semi-demigods. This showed that whoever was behind this was very cautious and did not mind wasting extra time just to explore and erase even the tiniest possibility of my survival.

The only enemy of mine that I knew would be willing to go to such lengths was Matron and her Paw clan. Knowing that Cole was Matron's pawn, I was expecting to cross paths with them soon even though they already made arrangements to use the Circle to kill me. That was because Matron's hatred for the Wyatt family was at such a petty level that she would not believe I was laid to rest unless her pawns had confirmed that with their eyes.

Another reason why I believe it was Matron's goons who were hunting my B-rank clones was that Circle already believed that they had trapped my original body and were busy retreating, they did not have time or petty motives to pull something meaningless like this.

Now that the paw clan had shown itself and begun to scrutinize the entire sun blossom city just to erase any possibility of me surviving today I who had grown confident after plundering Mike's origin card could not help but become cautious, remembering the dread of five card emperors jumping out of the mouth of an empty beast just to kill a lowly card soldier like myself, right in presence of my card emperor security detail.

Right now the only thing that worried me was my location. I was at the spot where one of my calamity daughter clones was captured. Since the paw clan was doing everything in their power to not leave any stone unturned, they will definitely visit this place to check there was no malpractice involved when the circle's semi-demigod captured one of my calamity daughter clones here.

And when they do visit this place, they will definitely find a rolling pebble as an oddity even if no soul energy could be detected from it. Therefore I had to move out of the sewer as fast as possible but that was almost impossible with my current body unless I made use of a little soul energy. On the account that my pursuers were very sensitive to soul energy with them being card semi-demigods and all, I was keeping my soul energy usage to a minimum. Hoping that I would be able to come across a sewer rat or any other creature as soon as possible such that I can transform into them, which give me more freedom to use my physical advantages to escape from this city as soon as possible.

I was so keen on escaping to sky blossom city because only when either of the forces knew that I was under the protection of a demigod or someone with the capability of a demigod would they finally stop hunting me. As unless they want to start a war there was no way for them to send a demigod after me. And at this point in the growth of both the Circle and the Paw clan, it was not clear if they had Demigods amidst their ranks. But according to Clown Mask's alternate future vision, these two organizations did show numerous demigods in their ranks when one of them took down the government and the other took down two royal families.

As I continued to reach the exit rolling my pebble body suddenly came to a halt as my spirituality found a distortion in space not far from where I was situated. The origin of the disturbance was a weird-looking floating mask-type creature that I had the opportunity of seeing a while back in the Sky blossom city card stadium. Seeing this creature travel stealthily through the empty space while scrutinizing the sewer tunnels I couldn't be more proud of my decision to not make use of the soul energy unless it was necessary.

Soul pupils at its core were my eyes seeing the world through my soul. So though the pebble body I was currently transformed into did not have eyes, I could still use them thanks to my soul and its spirituality. Or rather I could use them more freely in this body than in my original body. Not just soul pupils but also the soul echo, this body was a lot more sensitive to vibration than the ears of my original body.

As I got used to my new body the soul pupils and soul echo that were part of my calamity soul gem effects seemed to form some kind of synergy and evolved into something more advanced and I called it Soul Radar as with the combination of soul pupils and soul echo I could not only hear the vibration of the surrounding soul pathways but also feel and see them, therefore, this effect mostly made use of the vibration of the soul pathways to map the soul pathways in my surrounding.

It was hard for me to believe that Soul pupil and Soul echo skills were more suitable for my pebble body than my original body, but considering that in my current state I would be more relatable with a stone elemental than a pebble it made sense. Because a pebble with spirituality was the rough definition of stone elemental.

Seeing the empty beast scrutinize the sewer tunnel, especially the hole through which my calamity clone burrowed into the sewer I stopped monitoring the empty beast with

my spirituality. Since the demigods know when a person calls their name, it only felt reasonable for me to assume that the card emperors and semi-demigods could find out if someone was peeking at them. Therefore shutting all my pebble body senses I played dead laying on the sewer floor motionlessly waiting for the empty beast to leave.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 1037 Death By Digestion

[1,032 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:29

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewers

After I shut down all my senses to pretend to be an ordinary pebble such that my curious sense would not attract the attention of the card apprentice hiding in the Empty beast as they explored the sewer tunnel, I realized that with all my senses gone I would have no idea of what was transpiring outside. Which meant I would not know if the empty beast left or not. I could continue to restrain from using my senses for a day or so but that would not be a productive use of my time. Considering that my life was at stake here I could compromise and pretend to be a pebble for a day, a week, or even a month but just playing dead would not guarantee my safety would it now?

Yes, it was true that as long as I do not show signs of spirituality nobody could see through my disguise as a pebble but what if something unexpected happens? For example, one of the famished sewer rats swallowing my pebble body finding it appetizing, or one of the enemy semi-demigods deciding to blow the entire sun blossom city sky high as a desperate resort.

In this world, sewer rats were a lot more tenacious than seen on earth, for survival, these rats' stomach acid had been enhanced to digest stones and other natural minerals. So if my pebble body were to come across a hungry sewer rat I would become rat food without me realizing it. As my soul would be asleep trying to disguise myself as a regular rock with no spirituality. If I were aware of my surroundings I would stop that from happening by scaring away the rat with a little show of might. Even though it would have the risk of exposing my whereabouts to those looking still it was better being digested by a sewer rat.

As for one of the enemy semi-demigod detonating the entire sun blossom city as a desperate measure was more likely than a sewer rat feeding on my pebble body, it only proved that I had to get out of the sun blossom city as soon as possible. I could not afford to waste time hiding in the sewers pretending to pebble.

Yes, I do feel sorry about the citizen of the sun blossom city being implicated in all this, with my strength I would be kidding myself if I thought I could help them or with the semi-demigod battle, the only way I could help was by making it to sky blossom city. Only that way I could put an end to this semi-demigod battle.

Considering the importance of Mike's origin card to the supreme leader, the circle's semi-demigod would stop at nothing to get his corpse back. Me telling them that I had already used Mike's corpse would not help, first, they would not believe me, second, even if they did believe me then I would only give them more reasons to come target me. Nothing I did would help here, the best solution was to return to Sky blossom city. This way Anna could officially come out and mediate between the circle's semi-demigods and my bodyguards into calling it quits or they would suffer her wrath. For that to happen I could not waste time pretending to be a pebble without spirituality.

Now that was a dilemma, so I decided to risk it by freeing one of my senses, the basic sense of the touch, which in the case of my pebble body would mean sensing the influence of the surrounding on it through the vibration. I was willing to do this because the soul energy utilized in this was no more than the existence of the pebble itself. So the soul energy activity here was negligible and not noticeable unless you were a very strong array master that is.

As a human, I had no experience in interpreting the vibration input I gained from my surrounding through my pebble body thankfully I had Hive AI which converted the analog data collected by the sense of touch of my pebble body into something that I could understand at negligible soul energy activity. Allowing me to actively monitor the changes in my surrounding. Though this did not allow me to directly see the empty beast like the soul pupils or the soul radar allowed me to it made me aware of the anomaly in the space from where the empty beast was peeking into the real space. The presence of this anomaly and its movement made me aware of the presence of the empty beast and its movements.

Thanks to this I was able to deduce that the empty beast had not left my vicinity yet and instead it seemed to have stopped at the hole through which my calamity daughter clone had burrowed into the sewer tunnels from the surface. This I found peculiar as the empty beast seemed to be very interested in that particular spot more than exploring the sewer tunnel. Seeing the empty beast's fixation in this place I could not help but find it odd and wonder.

Soon the anomaly in the space that made me aware of the presence of the empty beast in my vicinity was no more as the empty beast had entered the real world. It seems unable to find any clue about my whereabouts the empty beast seemed to have decided

to come out of the empty space into the real space to scrutinize that spot of the sewer tunnel more thoroughly.

But by doing this I could not only feel the vibration of the empty beast in the surroundings but also the minute vibrations of the sound it was producing. When I focused on these minute vibrations it turned out to be the conversation of the people hiding in the empty beast.

"Isn't this where one of the Clones of the boy got picked up by the circle's semi-demigods?" one of the card apprentices in the empty east spoke.

"Yes, it is. But this also happens to be the location where the B-rank clones of the boy transmitted the information of their death to."

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,081 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:32

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewers

Hearing the conversation of the card apprentice inside the empty beast I finally understood the reason why the paw clan's card apprentice seemed to be killing my B-rank Clones, they were using the death of these clones to triangulate my position by using the minute soul energy the B-rank clones realized upon their death to report their death to me. The soul energy used here was not a lot but not negligible either, still not enough to triangulate my position immediately, therefore they had to kill almost all of my B-rank clones before they could triangulate my location to the sewers.

Fortunately, I did not underestimate my enemies and made the mistake of resting in the Hermit's retreat until all this blew over. If I were still in the Hermit's Retreat, it would not have taken the Empty Beast any effort to spot it and take action. But I did not relax after fooling the circle's semi-demigod and instead remained vigilant and made use of the small opening to extract my new rune card and use it to escape out of the sun blossom city, out of the range of the supposed warzone.

Though I did not make it out of the sun blossom city, I still manage to increase my chance of survivability through my new rune card. Considering that the semi-demigods protecting me were occupied with the Circle's semi-demigods, once my whereabouts

were apparent to the members of the paw clan, I would be sitting ducks. So my current situation was better than it could have been.

Yes, I was patting myself on the back, I know was still not out of the frier and it was too early to celebrate but I felt it was necessary to recognize the small wins. After all, I too was human, my mind was not invincible. In this desperate situation, it was easy for even the mightiest of the general to lose sight of the victory, only by enjoying the small wins could hope to keep the victory in sight.

My current situation was very desperate than I would like to agree to. I had to sacrifice my three mutated soul consciousnesses to escape the pursuit of the Circle's three semi-demigod. Right now they were trapped in the Circle's semi-demigods grimoire. This was the main reason why the Circle's semi-demigod believed that the clone they captured was my true body. Fooling a semi-demigod was easier said than done. Without sacrificing my slave consciousnesses I would not have been able to get the Circle's semi-demigods off my back.

Though for now my slave consciousnesses were trapped in the grimoires of the semi-demigods, there were chances of me losing them permanently or even revealing the secret of my calamity daughter gems. Though all the calamity daughter gems had inherited the self-destruct sequence from their parent Dungeon calamity seed, considering the circumstance they were possibilities of them being rendered unable to make use of it. I said this because I have never seen calamity daughter gem in action semi-demigods. This was the first, hopefully, they don't let me down. Either way I knew escaping the pursuit of the semi-demigods was going to come with a price, I guess this was the price I have to pay.

Since my three salve consciousnesses were trapped in the grimoires of the semi-demigods, if I get caught by the empty beast, this time around I will not be able to fake my death that was not considering the fact whether the paw clan members would fall for the same trick for the second time.

Since I was all out of tricks, I could not afford to make any mistake, because that one mistake could be the death of me. So the stakes were a lot higher than ever before, even though I had Mike's broken card with me still it was nowhere near enough to even the odds.

"Since all the soul energy activity leads to this position means, it would safe to assume that the Circle's semi-demigods don't have the boy," another card apprentice from within the empty beast spoke.

Though I could not tell how many card apprentices were hiding in the empty beast, I am guessing five of them at least, they seemed to be a lot more formidable than I thought. They were not only able to make use of my B-rank clones to figure out that I was not among the three clones captured by the circle's semi-demigods but also precisely locate

my location. They would have already captured me if it had not been for Mike's overpowered origin card.

"That would appear to be the case," the Card apprentice who took credit for triangulating my location spoke agreeing with the card apprentice who deduced that I was not among the three clones captured by the circle's goons based on his findings.

"Fuck! Who is this kid? He has some interesting tricks up his sleeve. So what now, my familiar is unable to find any trace of the boy here. He must have known that we were tracing him and escaped deeper into the sewers," The Card apprentice spoke proclaiming himself as the master of the empty beast.

"Since he has managed to gather the attention of Matron, this much is expected of him but something is amiss here. Considering that the boy is just a card soldier, no matter how fast his means are, he should not have escaped far yet there is no trace of the boy here. It's as if he has vanished from the face of the world from this spot. For a fact we know that the boy did not use a teleportation card, so where did he go?" The paw clan's card apprentice who located me at this sewer seemed to be able to trace and read the soul energy. As he could accurately tell where my soul energy signature had vanished. He was able to rule out the possibility of teleportation since the SSS-rank space isolation barrier array was covering the city. So at present, the card apprentice was confused as to how I managed to suddenly vanish without even leaving behind any trace of the soul energy signature. Unfortunately for him, no matter how much he racked his brain he would never be able to guess that I had completely morphed into a pebble because a person would never be able to imagine such an ability existed unless they had personally witnessed it in action.

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Chapter 1039 Poison Gas

[999 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:36

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewers

"How sure are you about your findings?" Gray fur asked his team member who used this ability to trace the boy to the sewers—feeling that the teammate's findings may not

have been that accurate, because the result they got was not as he promised. Therefore Gray fur could not help but feel that they were being led on a wild goose chase.

"I am sure of it, the boy is within this sewer somewhere. He used some tricks to fool the Circle's semi-demigods and now, he is using the same trick to hide from us," Gray Fur's teammate was quite confident about his abilities when it came to soul energy signature tracing.

"Buddy, I hate to say this but there is nobody here. Maybe you made some mistake in the calculations while tracing the boy's soul energy signature," Sniper, as a marksman had a very keen perception of his surroundings, and his range was very wide. Yet, he was not able to feel the presence of any other living being within the city sewers, not even a sewer rat. That was given considering that a semi-demigod presence was felt here a few minutes ago. Any wild monster would be too scared to even consider roaming anywhere near this area.

"No, I did not make any mistake. That boy is here. There are two possibilities as to why we are not able to find the boy here.

First, he teleported knowing that somebody was tracing his whereabouts.

Second, he is using some cards to hide his presence. That he used it back in the VIP room of the card stadium to fake his death, and now he has used the same card to not only fool the Circle's semi-demigods but also hide from us.

The former is impossible considering that he was right here after the city's space isolation barrier array's rank was increased to SSS rank. Leaving us with the latter, the boy is hiding somewhere in these sewer tunnels.

Guys, trust me on this one. Have I ever let you guys down when it comes to soul energy tracing?" Gray Fur's teammate explained seeing his teammates start to doubt his findings.

"No, you have always been right about these kinds of stuff," Gray Fur said and others nodded in agreement as their teammate's records spoke for him. Giving them a strong reason to trust what he was saying. So codename Sniper added, "Since you believe the boy is hiding in these sewer tunnels, why don't we destroy them? This way either he will die with the destruction of the tunnels or will flush to the surface for safety."

"That's an idea but it has the risk of revealing our presence to the two other forces," Gray Fur immediately denied Sniper's idea and then said, "I will inform the semi-demigods not to act to help the Circle's semi-demigods to retreat. Since we will need them to distract the allied semi-demigods while we find the boy."

“While you are at it, why don’t you ask them to come to help us find the boy here,” The Flower Thief said feeling that another dozen pairs of eyes would get the job done a lot faster.

“That is not possible, because the closer they are to the other two factions of semi-demigods, the higher risk of them being discovered by them. But I will ask them to keep an in the outskirt of the city,” Gray Fur made the following arrangements feeling that if he were in the boy’s shoes he would do his best to get back to the sky blossom city. Therefore, he decided to have a dozen semi-demigods that Matron sent for their assistance monitor the city outskirts for the boy in case he manages to trick them and leave the city.

“That’s a good idea,” the other teammates nodded in appreciation of Gray Fur’s judgment.

“We know that the boy is within the walls of these tunnels. Now, how do we find him?” Flower thief asked trying to figure out their next course of action. With the Circle’s Semi-demigods keeping the allied semi-demigods protecting the boy busy they were free to hunt him down. They knew where to start and now they need to figure out how?

“If had a few more of those B-rank clones of the boy with me right now, I could kill them to locate him using the soul energy that transmits the news of the death of his clones to him. Too bad you guys killed them all,” Gray Fur’s teammate said remaining the rest of them that if they had not killed all the B-rank clones of the boy, they could have used the same method they used to trace the boy to these tunnels to pinpoint the exact location of the boy in here.

“There is no point in crying over the spilled milk, think of something else,” Gray Fur said trying to maintain the morale of the team but it was no help, so he added, “Come on people, our opponent is a card soldier for god sake, be it experience or strength we better than the boy. So let us not be outsmarted by the boy for the second time.”

Gray fur always felt that shaming people served as a better motivator than encouraging words. So he did not mind shaming himself and his team to help them keep their sight on the goal here.

Even Sniper who was not big on using his brain thought hard, as a card emperor he felt ashamed for being tricked by a card soldier. And he did not want that to repeat itself. So he could not help but give serious thought to how to get the boy out of his hiding without alerting the other two factions of their presence in the city.

“Though we cannot destroy the sewer tunnels, how about gassing the tunnels with some high-grade poison? Unless the boy wants to die of poisoning he will have no choice but to show himself.”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[986 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:41

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewers

“Interesting idea, I believe you would not suggest poisoning the entire sewer tunnel unless you have the high-grade poison you speak of,” Gray Fur said to Flower thief, hearing his crazy idea to poison the entire sewer system of the sun blossom city.

“I do,” Flower thief answered with a sinister smile then summoned a canister filled with neon green poison and introduced it to his teammates without waiting for them to ask, “This the poison extracted from the SS-rank Dragonviper. The best thing about this poison is that it has no presence. So even if flood the entire sewer system with it, the semi-demigods of the two factions will not even feel it until it was too late.”

“I have heard of the lethality of the Dragonviper’s poison, even though it is popular because of its traceless nature not many use it because it is highly corrosive and has the risk of corroding any material less than its grade which acts contrary to its traceless nature. I bet that the canister used to store the poison is an SS-rank ingredient by itself. If we were to release this poison within these tunnels, it will corrode the walls and foundation of the sewer tunnels, which has the risk of the enter sewer system collapsing on itself because of the corroded infrastructure. Which would easily gather the attention of the semi-demigods of the other two factions. So, I believe we should think something else,” Gray Fur’s teammate advised against flooding the sewer tunnels with poison.

“Come on, people don’t go soft on me now,” Gray fur said hearing his teammate advising the rest of them against the flower thief’s idea.

“Gray Fur, I am begging, please be smart about this. We don’t need to be this cruel. We can think of something else,” Gray fur’s teammate begged Gray Fur to reconsider.

“I am sorry, it is not like I have any choice in this matter,” Gray Fur rejected his teammate’s plea as he glared at the Flower Thief. Now that Flower thief had put this idea out in the open, it means this moment has already been witnessed by Matron, whom he believed to be monitoring their memories.

“Fine, help me contact Matron. I will change her mind,” Gray Fur’s teammate asked Gray Fur to help him get in contact with Matron so that he can change her mind about poisoning the entire sewer system of sun blossom city.

“Old friend, you and I both know, that is impossible. Please don’t make things hard for yourself,” having served Matron for decades Gary Fur knew that what his teammate was asking was impossible.

“That’s it, you are not even willing to give it a try. How can you be so heartless? We are speaking about millions of innocent lives here,” Gray Fur’s teammate did not seem to be willing to take a no regarding the matter.

“Stop, don’t say another word. Swallow whatever you are thinking, and bury it in a dark corner of your heart. Otherwise...” Gray Fur knew that what his teammate was thinking was bordering Matron’s bottom line so he advised him to stop but before he could finish he was interrupted by the light emitting from his body.

“I am sorry but this is where I draw the line,” Gray Fur’s teammate decided to detonate himself within the space of the Empty beast hoping that he would be able to stop them from going through with the plan of poisoning the entire sewer system by killing them all.

Even though Gray Fur’s teammate’s idea appeared flawless, he underestimated the capability of Matron, before he could go through self-detonation she had wiped his memory clean and sent him into a forced coma, something best explained with the words, factory reset.

Seeing one of their teammate about to self-detonate within the narrow space of the empty beast, all of them panicked. Especially Flower thief, who was stunned out of panic forgetting that he could just throw the rogue teammate out of the empty beast’s space. Fortunately, Matron had quickly reacted otherwise, all of them would have died here today.

Soon, Gray Fur’s grimoire rang, notifying him of an incoming call, it was the Matron. Despite still being in shock because of what just transpired, Gray Fur hurriedly answered the call not wanting to keep Matron waiting even for a second.

“Turn on the speaker,” Matron ordered. Following her order, Gray Fur immediately turned on the speaker option of the call.

“Flower Thief, good job on thinking of the solution for killing the pest.” the First thing Matron did was compliment Flower thief on his idea.

“... T-thank you, madam,” the Flower thief who just had faced a near-death experience was still out of it, but still managed to respond to Matron.

“As for the rest of you, let this be a moment of lesson for you. Gray Fur, don’t delay it any longer, put the plan into motion,” After warning the rest of the team members, Matron then ordered Gray Fur to go through the plan without delaying it any further and then hung up the call.

"Yes, your highness," Gray Fur responded respectfully even after Matron hung up the call not just because he was a huge kissass instead he knew that Matron was monitoring their actions in real-time through their memories.

Gray Fur wasn't the only one, the other two with the exception of the Flower thief also did the same. Even though unlike Gray Fur earlier they didn't suspect that Matron was monitoring their moments in real-time through their memories, after witnessing one of them being forced into a coma just at the right moment, they knew that their every action and thought was under the surveillance of Matron. So they became more cautious of how they acted and what they thought. As for the Flower thief, his ego was inflated being praised by Matron in front of everyone.

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[987 words]

1041 Negotiation

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:29

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

Trapped within the Heaven Sanction card used by Agatha the two enemy semi-demigods regrouped with their teammate unable to escape using the hidden escape teleportation prepared by Mike beforehand. And since the allied semi-demigods were cursed, they were not in a hurry to fight a death match with enemy semi-demigods. This bred an awkward atmosphere in Heaven's sanction.

A moment ago the enemy was ready to escape at the cost of abandoning one of their teammates and the allied force was bent on stopping them even at the expense of civilian casualties. But now allied semi-demigods did not bother to waste their breath at the enemy and patiently observed them as they had successfully managed to stop the enemy from escaping using heaven's sanction yet they were not in total control of the situation thanks to the enemy's curse haunting them.

"So how long do you guys plan to sit on your asses and glare at the enemy? Now they have regrouped. You guys do know that I can't summon heaven's sanction for long, right?" Heaven's sanction was the card Agatha received from Anna. It required an unparalleled bloodline to activate, but thanks to Anna removing the restriction, Agatha could use the card for a few moments in exchange for an appropriate sacrifice.

"Did you not hear him say due to the curse we are restricted to a 1km range of the enemy curse master?" Number Nine asked Agatha, wondering if Agatha had listened to what Number Ten had explained. A 1 km radius range was large but for semi-demigods, it wasn't much. That was not enough space for them to fight without worrying about friendly fire and because of the curse on them they could not kill the curse master. Therefore, they choose to sit by as the enemy regrouped.

"How long can you maintain Heaven's Sanction," Number Ten asked Agatha.

"Not for long but I guess can hold till your teammates as our reinforcement," Agatha replied with a frown, her complexion was turning pale, its Heaven's Scantion toll on her was becoming visible with passing seconds.

"Don't hold your breath on them, Our squad is Madam Asong's bodyguards, Rest of our teammates will never leave her side no matter the reason. The only reason they may arrive here would be if Madam Asong decides to visit Sun blossom city. Considering the political impact of this incident I don't believe Madam Asong would want to be part of any of this. If not for Southern Emperor threatening her niece, we wouldn't be here to help you," Number Ten explained to Agatha that there was no reinforcement coming, they were all on their own.

"So, what now?" Agatha asked learning that she could not count on Ason's bodyguard detail for reinforcement.

"We negotiate, that is the best option we have to get the boy back in one piece," Number Ten said surprising both Number Nine and Agatha.

"Number Ten, have you forgotten the rules? We don't negotiate," Number Nine reminded Number Ten. If they were to negotiate every time a political figure under their protection was taken hostage, then people would target the politicians to get their way, therefore the handbook which asked them to protect their clients with their life at stake also asked to never negotiate in case their client was taken as hostage.

"I know the rules, but this is not the same. We don't need to follow the same set of rules here. Just follow my lead," Number Ten said eyeing both Number Nine and Agatha. Then added let me make it clear, "Before we start let me make our priorities clear. Our task here is the protect the boy, not police what is happening in the southern region. So fighting the enemy is no longer an option unless the negotiation fails. Understood?"

"Yes," Number Nine and Agatha both nodded in agreement. Number Ten was correct, they did not care what the Circle and its goons were up to in the southern region. Their only responsibility was to protect the boy and that was all. Therefore Number Nine And Agatha agree to negotiate with the enemy.

"Here we go," Number Ten muttered as he decided to address the enemy semi-demigods, seeing hope for successful negotiation as the Enemies did not appear to want to fight them either and were passively observing their moments.

"Release the boy and we will let you go," Number Nine yelled glancing at the enemy semi-demigods.

"..." Number Nine's yell was responded to by a long silence and howling of passing wind. Since they could risk getting standard to capture the boy it was obvious they would not hand over the just for their freedom. Not knowing what the enemy wanted with the boy, Number Nine had to start somewhere.

"If you have any other demands just state them, as long as it doesn't involve harming the boy, I can promise it to you," Seeing that the enemy semi-demigods showed no interest in exchanging the boy for their freedom. He directly asked them to stay with their demands and as long it did not involve the boy he promised to help them with it.

This time Number Nine was not greeted by silence from the enemy semi-demigods but by an odd demand, "We want the boy to hand over the Circle's sun blossom city branch's leader's corpse."

Hearing the demand of the enemy semi-demigods Number Nine remembered the boy killing Mike and storing his corpse in a coffin-like item. Though Number Nine found it odd that the enemy semi-demigods would risk their freedom for the corpse of a mere branch leader, he did not give much thought to it. As his only priority was to protect the boy and return him unharmed to the Southern Emperor. As for the rest, he did not have the time for that.

"Fine, you can have your branch leader's corpse. Bring forth the boy, let me speak to him."

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Chapter 1042 Patriot Act

[993 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:29

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

[Card Name: Heaven's Sanction

Card Type: Trap Card (Bounded)

Card Rank: SSS-rank

Card Rate: 9 stars

Card Durability: [97/100]

Card Effect: This card can turn the array formation covering any city within the southern region into an SSS-rank trap with the help of the array formation covering the southern region.

Restriction: This card requires an unparalleled bloodline to activate.

Note: With the authority granted to Anna Heatsend by her Unparalleled bloodline, she removed the restriction on the card for the next 48 hours.]

[Card Name: Patriot Act

Card Type: Access Card

Card Rank: Rare Grade

Card Rate: 5 stars

Card Durability: [99/100]

Card Effect: This card was created with the agreement between the four royal families and the government. It gives the user VIP access to each of the Big Five array formations covering the Five regions.

Note: This card doesn't allow the user to use teleportation cards within the Big Five array formations covering the Five regions.]

VIP privileges:- The Patriot Act card user cannot be tracked using any of the big five array formations covering the five regions. And also their actions cannot be restricted by any one of the big five array formations covering the five regions with the exception of the teleportation cards.

...

The patriot act card was the reason why the semi-demigods from the Circle and the paw clan were able to hide their presence from the array formation covering the southern region and roam around freely in its cities. This card was a universal cheat code for the big five array formations. With it, they did not have to worry about their presence in the southern region and location being revealed to the southern royal family by the array formation. Not only that they were immune to many of the restrictions of the array formation. Meaning with this card the semi-demigods from the circle could easily bypass heaven's sanction card activated by Agatha as it was a part of the array formation covering the southern region.

Yet the enemy semi-demigods chose not to use this card to escape Heaven's sanction because they did not want to reveal any hint that they had equipped the patriot act card. As this card was only available to the Highly decorated officers of the government and the talented heirs of the royal families. So it would be alarming for both the government and the four royal families to learn that the semi-demigods from the Circle used a card with similar properties to the Patriot act card. Therefore, even if it was possible for them to escape the trap of heaven's sanction, they chose not to. This way they could throw any suspicion of the government and the four royal families them using the patriot act card.

The Patriot Act card was one of the pillars of trust between the four royal families and the government. Each one of them chose to sacrifice access to the first line of defense of their region array formation covering it to others to show that they were not going to rebel, separate themself from the current government and declare themselves as an independent monarchy. Or try to take over the other regions or the government itself. The existence of this card signified a sense of balance and trust between the five governing bodies.

Despite the card giving the user almost full immunity to the big five arrays, it restricted them from using teleportation cards in the foreign region because if powerful entities like semi-demigods and demigods could use teleportation within the big five array formation, then the point of the array formation would become totally moot as they could easily assassinate important figures and get away with it without anybody noticing them.

The users of this card were only restricted from using teleportation cards and not the pre-arranged teleportation arrays as the construction of an array took time and left behind too much evidence. Not to mention the natural limitation of the big five array formation the high-level card apprentice could teleport into the array but not out of the array but their teleportation would be tracked and the related authorities would be alerted to take immediate action.

The significance of the patriot act card was too high for the world to know that they were being used by the semi-demigods of the Circle who had nothing to do with their five governing bodies- the four royal families and the government. This would definitely put the Circle at top of the list of these five governing bodies. This was a lot of attention for an organization hatching plans to overthrow the government sometime in the future.

Therefore, the semi-demigods of the circle put up an act that they were trapped in heaven's sanction activated by Agatha.

The answer to the question of how the circle and the paw clan managed to get their hands on the patriot act cards was very obvious, both of the organizations had their inside men in the high-ranking members of the government or any one of the royal families. With the abilities of the Matron and the Supreme leader, something of this sort was not a big deal. They did not have a problem getting their hands on this card but hid the fact that they had it.

Because of their dilemma, the semi-demigods of the circle did not hesitate to negotiate when the semi-demigods that were supposed to protect the boy showed interest to negotiate with them.

"Release the boy and we will let you go."

"..."

"If you have any other demands just state them, as long as it doesn't involve harming the boy, I can promise it to you."

"We want the boy to hand over the Circle's sun blossom city branch's leader's corpse."

"Fine, you can have your branch leader's corpse. Bring forth the boy, let me speak to him."

Hearing the allied semi-demigods easily agree to their demands the Circle's demigods were not surprised. As they were pretty confident of their odds. And said, "How do we go about this?"

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 1043 Waste Of Taxpayer's Money

[981 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:32

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

“What do you mean?” Number Ten asked the enemy semi-demigod in confusion.

“Which one of the three clones is the original one?” The semi-demigod in charge of the circle’s semi-demigods said.

“Wait...” saying that Number Ten turned to look at Agatha. In response, Agatha glanced back at him asking, “Why are you looking at me?”

“... Answer the gentleman, would you?” Agatha’s response caught Number Ten off guard but he still calmly replied to her.

“How would I know?” Agatha replied spreading her arms in innocence

“...” Agatha’s reply stumped not only Number Ten and Nine but the enemy semi-demigods too. This was not the reply they were looking for from a professional, high-profile bodyguard like Agatha herself.

“Had I known which one of the clones was original, why would I waste time trying to stop all three of them, instead of focusing all our power on stopping just the one with the boy,” Agatha replied

“I thought, you did that to not let the enemy know which one of the three clones of the boy was original,” Number Nine replied impressed with Agatha’s calmness.

“Hold on, you are telling me, your choice to chase that guy out of the three of them was just a random decision and not because you knew that the clone he was carrying was the original,” Number Ten could not get his head around Agatha’s actions so far and wondered how Demigod Windsor could trust her with his only daughter’s life.

“Yes and stop making a big deal out of it, don’t forget you two were also supposed to protect the boy, not just me,” Agatha said feeling a little embarrassed as this clearly showed incompetence in her duty as a professional high-profile bodyguard.

“Forget it,” Number Ten chose not to argue with Agatha, and then turning to the enemy semi-demigods he said, “Bring out all three of the boy’s clones, let them answer which one is the original.”

“How do we know that you will not attack once you know which one has the original?” One of the cautious Semi-demigods asked.

“Come on, if we had such thoughts we would not have tried to negotiate, and besides aren’t the three of you confident in your strength?” Since the start of the conversation Number Ten had noticed that the attitude of the three enemy semi-demigods was not that of trapped rats, but conniving foxes.

“Fine,” The enemy semi-demigods did not even bother to argue or deny Number Ten, and immediately the three clones were released from their respective trap. The three enemy semi-demigods each then held one clone.

Being released from their respective traps, each one of the clones gave a vivid expression, making it hard for the enemy and allied Semi-demigods to differentiate the original one from the clones just based on their expressions and actions.

Looking at the three clones Number Nine could not help but become impressed. He tried every arrow in his query and none of them seem to help him determine the original form of the clones. He really wanted to ask the boy whether he had mastered some kind of clone rule meaning. But holding back his curiosity, taking one last glance at the clones trying to figure out their trick, he signaled Agatha to address them.

“Wyatt, we have negotiated with your captors and if you are willing to hand over the corpse of their branch leader they are willing to let you go,” Agatha conveyed what was negotiated between the two forces to the boy.

“Agatha, I knew I couldn’t trust you with my protection,” all three clones respond simultaneously without any delay and with the exact same tone and notes, so their voice got amplified.

“Why did you try to run? We had it all in control until that moment,” Agatha replied being blamed by the boy for letting the enemies take him hostage.

“So, it was my fault then. Blame the victim,” The three clones complained and then said, “I should have hired these guys as my bodyguard instead of your incompetent ass.”

“Why did you try to run? We had it all in control until that moment,” Agatha replied being blamed by the boy for letting the enemies take him hostage.

“Are you sure about that? Their target of protection is dead,” Agatha jeered.

“Their comrade died bravely in a fight, not their fault. At least they are sensible enough to go this far to bring the corpse of their comrade home. Compared to them you are just incompetent,” The Three Clones defend the enemy semi-demigods and mocked Agatha in unison.

“Please stop speaking all the same time, it is creeping me out,” Agatha complained showing no notion of anger toward the boy for mocking her.

“...” Number Nine, Ten, and the enemy semi-demigods could not believe their ears hearing the argument between Agatha and the boy. They were surprised to see Agatha not get angry being mocked by the boy and treat him as an equal despite their strength and status gap. Number Ten looked pasted that and yelled, “Will you two stop arguing and save us all some time by doing as negotiated?”

“Who are these guys?” One of the boy’s clones asked Agatha. On account of her request, the clones had chosen not to speak simultaneously.

“Wyatt, meet Number Nine and Ten. They are the other two semi-demigods attached for your bodyguard detail,” Agatha introduced Number Nine and Ten to the boy, who looked at them and said, “I had heard government employees were lazy, incompetent, a waste of taxpayer’s money, and not to be trusted, but I did not know I would be unlucky enough to experience it first hand.”

“Boy, watch your mouth, we are not pushovers like Agatha. We won’t mind leaving you here with them just to teach you a lesson respecting your seniors,” Number Nine yelled hearing the boy call them lazy, incompetent, and a waste of taxpayer’s money.

“I dare you”

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[987 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:36

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

“What?” Number Nine asked in total disbelief. Never in her life did she imagine a day when a card soldier would dare to be so disrespectful toward her. She has been a bodyguard for centuries and has served many rich and pompous kids but no one dared to disrespect her, until today. The most appalling thing was this kid did not even have a status equal to those pompous brats yet he had the audacity to challenge her authority.

“You heard me, grandma, I dare you to do what you claimed,” all three of the clones looked at Number ten with scorn as one of them repeat themselves while at it they did not forget to mock Number Nine and address her as grandma.

“You-” Number Nine was about to threaten the boy but then stopped and glancing at the in charge of the enemy semi-demigods she said, “Torture him, kill him, do whatever it takes to get your comrade’s corpse we won’t stop you. Number Ten, We are leaving.”

“This...” Hearing Number Nine’s rash words Number Ten was embarrassed, especially for letting a junior lead her by her nose yet he chose to bear with her as she was his senior and because he knew exactly how to handle her when she gets like this as sadly

this was not the first time Number Nine had forgotten the mission priority and gone off-road by letting her sense of pride get in the way.

Number Nine could see that the clones of the boy were purposefully provoking his senior sister as if he was buying time, Number Nine did not know why the boy would do this so he decided to play along even though it meant him letting Number Nine continue to make a fool of herself.

“Semi-demigod Agatha, I will have to trouble you with the access to leave heaven’s sanction,” Number Nine asked Agatha, and then seeing her junior not move yet she yelled, “Number Ten, don’t make me repeat myself.”

“Sure, you two are free to leave heaven’s sanction,” Agatha answered to Number Nine showing no worries about facing three semi-demigods by herself, as long as they were not Lich, he had her ways to come out victorious in a group fight.

Hearing Agatha, Number Nine nodded politely and glared at her junior who did not seem to show any notion of following her words. She asked, “Number Ten, what are you waiting for?”

Number Ten showed no signs of listening to Number Nine’s arrangements so she lost her patience and spoke grudgingly, “I did not want to pull ranks but it seems I have to remind you that as the senior agent among the two of us, I am in charge here. So unless you plan to rebel, you do as I say. Clear?”

“Senior Nine, don’t take offense but considering the situation, I have to remind you of the Bandrock field dungeon incident,” Number Ten finally used the magic words that would pierce Number Nine’s armor of ego and pride, reminding her of the Mission and its priority.

“How dare you bring that up?” Hearing her junior bring up the only but most embarrassing black spot in her resume, Number Nine was enraged beyond words but then she calmed down, that was the effect of her memories of the Bandrock field dungeon job.

“Wait, hold up. So it was you who caused the Bandrock field dungeon incident?” As Agatha said this unconsciously a smile formed on her face remembering the conversation between Demigod Windsor and Asong concerning the Bandrock field dungeon incident. Though Madam Asong was kind enough to hide the identity of the fool responsible for that incident, today Agatha could finally put a face and name on that fool.

“Agatha, what is the Bandrock field dungeon incident?” One of the boy’s clones asked Agatha seeing how Agatha was trying hard to surprise her laughter as spoke of the name of the incident.

“It is a hilarious- long story, I will tell you later,” Agatha was about to call the incident a hilarious story but seeing the ugly complexion on Number Nine’s face she chose her wording in order not to hurt her feelings.

“No, you will not, nobody will speak of that unfortunate incident,” Number Nine said hearing Agatha.

“Enough!” the enemy semi-demigods in charge yelled, unable to take the pointless argument among the allied forces and wondering if they were stalling for reinforcement.

“...” Hearing the enemy semi-demigod’s sudden outburst the clones and the allied semi-demigods went quiet and focused on him.

Seeing that he had gained the attention of all, the enemy semi-demigod regained his calm and said, “Gentlemen and Ladies, why don’t you continue your argument after we are done with negotiations.”

“Fine by me,” Before the allied semi-demigods could speak up one of the boy’s clones replied. Hearing the boy’s clones enemy semi-demigods could not help but look at them strangely as they had never seen such a peculiar hostage. It would have been entertaining if not for the pressing time, now it was plain annoying.

“You shut up,” Number Nine yelled at the clone that just spoke and then turned to look at the enemy semi-demigod in charge and said, “How do we know that you will follow the agreement and not kill the after you got your comrade’s corpse?”

“We can always make an oral oath with the world’s will and its rules as a witness,” The enemy semi-demigod in charge suggested.

“Fine, why don’t you start,” Number Nine asked the enemy semi-demigod in charge to take the oath he just suggested.

“Not so fast, how do we know you or the forces will let us go after you get the boy?” The enemy semi-demigod in charge said asking the allied semi-demigods to also take an oath to assure them that the allied forces would stand by their world.

“Fine, both our teams will take oaths with the world’s will as witnesses.”

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Chapter 1045 Sticking To The Oath

[1,049 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:39

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

“With the world’s will as a witness, we promise that if you three hand over the boy unharmed with no tricks in store we will let you retreat,” the Allied force took the oath to assure the semi-demigods of the circle.

“With the world’s will as a witness, we promise to handover the boy and leave in peace if the boy hands over Mike’s corpse,” the enemy semi-demigods took an oath with very lose terms causing Number Ten to frown, but considering that their oath was airtight he chooses to overlook it.

“Now that we have established a sense of trust among us, let us get this over with,” Number Ten said signaling me to hand over the corpse of the circle’s sun blossom breach leader so that the enemy semi-demigods could hold up their end of the bargain.

“What’s the hold-up?” The enemy semi-demigod in charge complained seeing no signs of realizing the corpse of their dead comrade.

“Kid, what are you waiting for? Handover the corpse,” Number Ten said impatiently. He had played along when the boy tried to stall for time, but now that they were at the brink of burying all this he did not understand why the boy would delay things now of all times.

“Here’s the thing, the corpse is my loot. If I have to give it to them then, I need something of equal in exchange,” The boy said surprising the half a dozen semi-demigods surrounding him.

“We are letting you live, that’s already enough to compensate you for handing our comrade’s corpse,” The semi-demigod in charge replied.

“I can understand how you can misunderstand the situation here but let me put things in perspective for you, you are letting me go because of your deal with them. As for the corpse, it is my loot, so if you want it then I need to be compensated appropriately,” The spoke explained why he thought he deserved to be appropriately compensated for handing over Mike’s corpse to the Circle.

“I take it back, I am starting to like you,” Number Nine who has been dissatisfied with the boy for his audacity to challenge her authority had a new impression of the boy. It was not sudden, earlier she believed that the boy dare to be disrespectful to her

because of the southern emperor backing him but seeing him bargain with his captors her impression of him changed for the better.

"I know right, his attitude grows on you," Agatha commented hearing Number Nine change her opinion about the boy.

"What kind of bullshit is this?" the enemy semi-demigod in charge yelled hearing the boy make demands and the reaction of the allied forces to it. He was starting to feel like a joke because of the boy's laid-back attitude.

"What, you have a problem with it," The boy asked without care of enraging his captors.

"Kid, let me put things in perspective for you. We don't need you alive to get what we want, your grimoire and a sample of your blood will do the trick. We are willing to compromise to save an SS-rank 'The Dummy' card and a lot of trouble but that doesn't mean that we are willing to let you walk all over us," The enemy semi-demigod in charge reminded the boy that since the corpse of their comrade was stored in his grimoire, they don't really need him alive to get what they want.

"Now, that does make a lot of sense. One corpse coming right up," One of the boy's clones replied, and<anno data-annotation-id="26c8ee5a-79b5-f32a-57e2-716c20060260"> then summoning its grimoire it summoned the corpse wood coffin and opened the lead revealing Mike's corpse with the corpse wood stake stuck in his chest. </anno>

As for the six semi-demigods, they were wondering if this clone of the boy was his original body but considering that they have seen all three clones summon grimoire when they were escaping, they thought this was not enough to conclude.

"And his grimoire," Examining the broken ego gem in the corpse the enemy semi-demigod in charge confirmed that the corpse was indeed Mike and then remind the boy to hand over Mike's platinum grimoire too.

"I totally forgot, here you go," the clone then took out a platinum grimoire and hand it over to the semi-demigod holding him. Then it deactivated the corpse wood stake and coffin, before Mike's corpse could free fall under the influence of gravity it was retrieved by the enemy semi-demigod in charge, who placed both the corpse and platinum grimoire in his storage item.

"Now you got what you want realize the boy," Number Ten ordered the enemy semi-demigods.

"Kid, you are free to go but remember your debt to our organization will be collected soon," Having taken an oath to let the boy go if he handed the corpse of their comrade, the enemy semi-demigod had no choice but to let the three clones of the boy go. Being free, the boy's clones did not hurry to safety but instead they choose to taunt their ex-

captors, “woo, I am so scared,” then they calmly flew to the one person they trusted most among the three allied semi-demigods, Agatha.

“Now, that you have the boy remove the Heaven’s Sanction,” the enemy semi-demigod in charge said.

Before Agatha could answer, one of the boy’s clones interrupted her saying, “Agatha, don’t remove Heaven’s sanction we need it to catch rats, just give them access to use their hidden teleportation array formation.”

Hearing the boy all six semi-demigods frowned, especially the Circle’s semi-demigods. They could not help but wonder who the rats the boy spoke of were. But they did not waste their time, trying to understand what the boy meant, they decided to leave before it was too late. So they hurried to the hidden teleportation array arranged by Mike and fled the southern region.

“Kid, I think you had enough adventure for one night. Time for you to head home now,” Number Ten said sticking to the priority of the mission handed to him.

“We cannot leave now, at least not until we rid the city’s sewers of the poisonous rats infesting it.”

<annotations style="display: none;"><ol class="tinymce-annotation-container"><li data-annotation-id="26c8ee5a-79b5-f32a-57e2-716c20060260">AN: This is not a mistake. I did not forget that MC has already sacrificed Mike to his rune to plunder his origin card.</annotations>,

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 1046 Sewer Rats

[1,029 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:41

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

“What are these rats you keep talking about?” Agatha asked the clones.

“They are the people behind Cole,” one of the clones answered.

“People behind Cole? Isn’t that the circle?” Agatha asked in confusion.

“No... I will explain later. For now, know this: a bunch of card emperors in the city sewers are trying to poison the entire city drainage system using a potent SS-rank Dragonviper’s position,” one of the clones quickly brought Agatha up to speed not going into details.

“Where? I scanned the entire city drainage system, I could find any trace of card emperor in those tunnels,” Number Nine asked.

“They are in an empty beast to hide their presence you can’t find them with your mental strength alone,” the Clone explained.

“Then, how do you know that they are in the sewers and what they are planning?” Number Ten asked the boy’s clones.

“It is complicated. But answer me this, why would I make this stuff up? What do I get out of this? Do you think I am some kind of habitual liar who lies to gain attention? Come on man, use your brains for once,” the boy’s clone did not try to mask his disdain for Number Ten’s foolish questions.

“...” Number Ten did not explode hearing the boy’s clone be rude to him instead spared some thought to what that boy said but decided to prioritize the Mission and then said, “Not our problem, you got your revenge now lets head back,”

The boy’s clone ignore Number Ten and then asked Agatha, “Agatha destroy the hidden teleportation arrays used by the circle’s semi-demigods and any other you can find.”

“Sure,” Agatha did not question why and just did what the boy’s clone asked of her trusting that the boy will tell everything later.

“Wait, what did you do?” Number Ten immediately got suspicious hearing the boy’s clones asking Agatha to destroy the teleportation arrays used by the circle’s semi-demigods.

“Aren’t you quick to catch on these kinds of things-“

“Just tell me what you did,” Number Ten impatiently interrupted the boy’s clone and asked to get to the point.

“I was just getting to it,” the clone rolled its eyes at Number Ten and then revealed, ” The corpse that I gave to the Circle’s demigod is fake.”

"What, how is it possible? Wouldn't they have noticed if you did something like that?" Number Ten asked in disbelief, wondering how the three semi-demigods could not see through a card soldier's trick. Forgetting that he too did not suspect that Mike's corpse was fake until the boy brought it up.

"I am quite confident about my disguise skills and I used his original broken ego gem to make it more compelling," the clone explained as if it was just another party trick.

"Respect," the boy was starting to grow on Number Nine, hearing his deeds she grew more fond of him. But feeling her juniors stare she said, "What? I don't negotiate, be it with terrorists or kidnappers."

"I can't believe that worked but I don't understand why would you do that?" Number Ten found it surprising that the boy's trick of using the victim's broken gem was enough to fool the Circle's semi-demigods into thinking that they had the real corpse of their comrade. But he could not wrap his mind around why the boy would risk his life by presenting his captors with a fake corpse. Was he an adrenaline junkie? Who loved testing the boundaries with his life on the balance.

"Boy weren't you worried they would kill out of rage," Number Ten asked. To which the boy and his senior looked at him as if he was asking a stupid question. Yet the boy chooses to answer him, "I am confident about my disguise skills."

"Done, all the teleportation arrays I could find have been dealt with," Agatha soon reported after destroying the teleportation arrays used by the Circle's semi-demigods.

"Good, now we wait for the rats to come out of their hole," one of the boy's clones responded to Agatha.

"Nope, we leave now before the semi-demigods from the circle come back knowing they were tricked," Number Ten said, and his worries were indeed worth merit but the boy's clone was adamant, "You can leave if you wanted to I am not leaving until we have dealt with rats in the city's sewer."

"Ten, what are you afraid of? Those three were not that strong. If they return, I will take care of them since I longer have to hold back my punches since we have the boy in our custody," Number Nine asked Number Ten to stop worrying.

"Senior Nine, let's not underestimate the enemy if we don't want another Bandrock incident on our hands," Number Ten decided to use Number Nine's dark past to get his way. And it worked, hearing the word bandrock Number Ten went silent.

"You two do you, I am not leaving until I have taken care of the rats in the city's sewer," Agatha said supporting the boy's decision.

"Semi-demigod Agatha, that is not your mission. The boy's safety is your mission, it would be best if you did just that," Number Ten reminded Agatha that her mission took priority over the boy's baseless claim of five card emperors hiding in an empty beast, conspiring to poison the drainage system of a third-rate city down in the backwaters of the southern region.

"That's cold, millions of innocent lives are at stake here and all you care about is your mission?" the clone looked at Number Nine with disdain.

Following the cat-and-mouse chase between the allied and enemy semi-demigods, all the citizens and residents of the sun blossom city moved to the shelter, which happens to use the drainage system of the city as secondary ventilation and emergency exit. Meaning if the sewer tunnels of the city were gassed with poison then, the shelters housing the citizens and residents of the sun blossom city were not safe. Not to mention concentrated venom of the SS-rank Dragonviper was enough to turn this entire city into a dead zone. Meaning any and all creatures in the city or the vicinity of the city would be direct victims of the poison.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 1047 Volatile Circumstances

[1,029 words]

1047 Volatile Circumstances

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:41

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewers

"Are you done?" Sniper asked the flower thief, who was busy tweaking the Dragonviper poison canister so that its area of effect covered the entire drainage system of the city at the cost of decreasing the concentration of the poison in the gas. Considering that the poison was SS-rank, even a little concentration of it in the air was more than enough to deal with a low-level card apprentice like the boy.

"Five more minutes, when I am done with this, this entire city's drainage system will be filled with poison in seconds," Flower thief said as if the consequence of his action never crossed his mind.

"Noice," Sniper was happy that they could get off work soon. He too did not seem to care about the implication of flooding the city's entire drainage system with poisonous gases.

"That's good but how long before the poison's gases disperse," Gary Fur asked knowing no matter how smelly a fart was it would disperse with time.

Before the flower thief could answer him their fourth teammate the card emperor in charge of the array formations suddenly spoke up, "How do you guys live with yourself? You speak of killing an entire city like throwing another bbq party."

Hearing him the other three did not spare him a glance and continued with their conversation.

"Since there is barely any air movement in here, the poison is going to last for a while. Even months if the authorities don't interfere," Flower thief answered ignoring the fourth member of their team. Turns out Flower thief was fully aware of the consequences of his idea to poison the city's entire drainage system, it was just that pretending ignorance let him continue with his plan.

"..." Being ignored the fourth team member shook his head blaming himself and his greed, he was not afraid of death nor losing his memory but having his memory altered to do Matron's bidding. He could turn to suicide but he knew he would be forced into a coma even before he could go through it, just like the fifth member of their team.

Yet he chooses to commit suicide by self-detonation, considering his circumstance he felt being forced into a coma was better than being a spectator to the deaths of millions of innocent souls. But before he could go through that, he suddenly felt the mental strength of the semi-demigods scan through the drainage system of the city. It wasn't just him the other three to felt the semi-demigods inspecting the drainage system.

Gray fur's expression turned ugly and he said, "What's going on up there? We need eyes up there. Flower thief, order your familiar to take us out there."

"Can't those semi-demigods, do that?" the Flower thief said feeling that they should use semi-demigods sent by Matron to run such errands.

"No, seeing it will give us a clear picture of changes up there than the words," Gray fur was adamant about personally checking on what the semi-demigods were up to while they traced the boy to the city sewers.

"Fine," Flower Thief did not agree with Gray fur but he felt that it would best to know what the semi-demigods were up to, though the Dragonviper poison was deadly if it were to be contained by the semi-demigods before it could achieve its purpose then all this would be for nothing so he instructed his familiar to go above ground.

Reaching the surface, they were surprised unable to find the semi-demigods from the circle. Then seeing the three clones of the boy next to the allied semi-demigods, they realized that the Circle and the boy's bodyguards came to an understanding and reached a compromise. Which was bad news for them because without the semi-demigods from the circle distracting the allied semi-demigods they could never successfully poison the city's drainage system.

Seeing the circumstance has changed for the worst, Gray fur immediately reacted and summoning his grimoire he updated the semi-demigods sent by Matron about the situation and asked them to distract the allied semi-demigods so that they could poison the sewers to kill the boy, completing the mission before the situation gets anymore out of hand.

Gray Fur choose to double down on their previous plan despite the volatile circumstances because of the previous mental sweep of the allied semi-demigods. As he felt the only reason the semi-demigods would scan the city's drainage system was to search for the boy, Gray Fur was confident of this because the empty beast was untraceable so the allied force shouldn't even know of their presence. So the former made sense.

But suggest when Gray fur was feeling assured of his decision he saw one of the boy's clone look right at them as if he could see the empty beast and them within its subspace. Gray Fur wanted to ignore it thinking he was imagining it but then the boy's clone's mouth arched into a smirk as he nodded at them. Seeing this Gray felt a chill run through his body.

"Guys, is it just me, or did the boy just smirk at us? Tell me I am not seeing things," Sniper said, as the boy's clone's actions were too obvious to miss.

"No, you are not seeing things," the Flower thief spoke and then yelled, "This proves I was right, the boy can see us, that is how he was able to pull that trick on us at the stadium."

"Shit, we have more pressing things to worry about," Gray fur was not interested in the past but present. He started to doubt whether the clone smirking at them was the original body of the boy. That would explain why he was able to see them. But that put his theory of the allied semi-demigods sweeping the city's sewer with their mental strength.

If the clone was really the original body of the boy then things would be a lot easier, with 12 semi-demigods on their side they could complete the job with ease but this begged the question if this clone was the original body of the boy why risk it by signaling that to them unless there was something else afoot here.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,022 words]

1048 Mistake

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:44

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

"Motherfucker, he was right there," Gray fur yelled and ordered Flower thief, "Rookie, go back to the sewer immediately."

Hearing Gray Fur yell the Flower Thief did not need the context he immediately knew what Gray Fur meant, he rushed his familiar to the sewer where they previously stayed. Reaching the sewers he heard Gray fur add, "Immediately detonate the poison."

Flower thief was not done tweaking the poison canister to increase its range to cover the entire city but considering that the boy was within their close vicinity the current range would do the job.

Just as Flower thief was about to release the poison in the sewer, the team noticed that the entire sewer was filled with slime monsters. This was surprising considering that a minute ago that was not the case. This immediately made them more confident that they were right, the boy was hiding right under their nose all this time. So without any further delay Flower Thief released the Dragonviper poison in the sewer by detonating the canister which helped the poison spread and reach the deepest tunnels of the sewer. As the poison spread throughout the sewer tunnels the slimes in the surrounding started to pop one after another like popcorn.

...

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:41

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewer

Hearing the conversation among the card apprentice in the empty beast I had already learned that my guess about the empty beast containing a minimum of five card apprentices in it with the minimum realm of a card emperor was not that far off. But I never guessed that I would get to listen to Matron, herself, even though it was through a grimoire call. Despite the Hive AI trying its best to paint a picture of what these cold bastards were speaking by interpreting the soul pathway vibrations, in the end, it still

needed a lot of work but it was enough to get the gist of what these inhumane motherfuckers were planning. And they were up to no good.

They seemed to not mind stooping to a new low just to get what they wanted. Considering what they wanted was me dead. My dissatisfaction with these callous assholes had turned into hatred.

As for the idiots who got mixed with these monsters out of greed, I did not feel sorry for them. Though they tried to make things right when it mattered, in face of Matron's prowess it made no difference. Well, they dug their graves when they made the deal with Matron. If they were under the impression that Matron would not come for their soul, then they were wrong. Matron always collects her dues. Having seen the paw clan of the alternate future in Clown Mask's memories, I knew none of the members of the Paw clan or the circle deserved my sympathy, Clown Mask included.

But the fact that Matron just forced a being of card emperor or higher realm into a coma was what caught my attention the most. From Clone mask's memories, I knew she was capable of that but hearing her do it in real-time painted a more vivid and dreadful picture. This firmed my decision to stay away from Matron until I am at a realm higher than her but that seemed less likely as according to Clone Mask's vision within a decade or so Sansa would climb the ranks of demigods and come out as Matron to the world in preparation to wage war against the Southern and Northern royal families.

I was confident about my talent but becoming a demigod within a decade seemed a bit far-fetched even for me. That's beside the point, these fucker were planning to gas the entire sewer system with SS-rank Dragonviper poison. As a pebble should I be worried about poison? Yes, I should be, considering that Dragonviper's poison does prove deadly to an SS-rank stone elemental, a pebble with a gigamite physique such as myself was not an exception.

Therefore, I decided to intervene before these guys set their inhumane plan into motion. For that, I would need help. And fortunately, my supposed bodyguards were able to negotiate a deal to save all three of my clones. But the condition they agreed to was impossible since what the enemy semi-demigods demanded was no longer possible. So I decided to get creative with my new ability and find a way around it.

So I instructed one of the clones to stall for time and the other to use this time to stealthily use its copy grimoire to use a slime fairy card and morph it into Mike's corpse using Myriad devil's hex. Then place it in the corpse wood coffin equipped with Mike's broken ego gem and the corpse wood stake stuck in its chest.

I was confident that these would be enough to fool the circle's demigods because Mike's origin card was unmatched when it came to disguising and also because of his original broken ego gem added authenticity to the slime fairy morphed Mike's corpse.

As expected, the Circle's semi-demigod did not find anything wrong with Mike's corpse that I handed to them. With the circle's semi-demigods off my back for now, I could get to rats in the sewer.

As I expected the semi-demigod's mental sweep of the city's drainage system spooked the card apprentice in the empty beast forcing them to leave the sewer and update about the current circumstance on the surface. Giving me the opening I need to escape. But still, I chose to be conscious and summoned, "Transcendent Blood Slime Demon"

Soon a blood-red slime appeared, then split into numerous clones that spread throughout the sewer tunnels. As for the original, it swallowed my pebble body and rushed toward the exit of the sewer.

But shit hit the fan when I decided to orchestrate a situation where the paw clan's members would come to believe that one of my three clones was the original body. As this was a mistake, my web of deception began to unwind here as I ended up making a mistake underestimating the members of the paw clan.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 1049 Space Distortion Array

[999 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:45

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewer

Did I have to use the transcendent blood slime demon to escape? Would it not be safer to escape as a pebble?

My speed in pebble form could be compared to snail speed, which wasn't enough so I could either transform into my original form or use the transcendent blood slime demon as a shuttle to make a run for it hoping that the paw clan members wouldn't return to catch me in the act.

Heeding caution, I went with the transcendent blood slime demon shuttle. For an A-rank demon, it was strong and all but it was not fast enough to take me to the exit of the

sewers in seconds. Making the scenario of the paw clan members catching me in the act very likely.

To ensure that scenario would not happen, I decided to stall the paw clan members by having them believe one of my three clones was my original body. Hoping that this would keep the paw clan members busy for a while buying me the time I needed to escape.

Efficient plan, what could go wrong, right? But my web of deception unwinded here. I had underestimated the paw clan members, they were smarter than I gave them credit for. And even though the paw clan members did not show it, they trusted each other and their abilities very much.

The moment my clone tried to make contact with the paw clan members to confuse them into believing it was the original body, the paw clan members immediately saw through my clone's act and its intention to gain their attention.

This was where they showed how much they had faith in their teammate's soul energy signature tracing ability. Because of this, they believed that my original body was in the sewer, making it possible for them to see through my clone's act. Which raised the question, why would a clone try to fool them into believing it was the original? The answer couldn't be obvious. It was trying to stall for time by confusing them into believing that it was the original.

From there it did not take long for the paw clan members to figure out why their teammate kept saying that the soul energy signature of the boy vanished at that particular part of the sewer tunnel. It was because my original body was hiding right there under their noses. Knowing this they acted on it immediately leading to my current situation.

Under a second, two-thirds of the city's sewer network was filled with SS-rank Dragonviper Poison. Unfortunately for me, I was in that two-thirds portion of the sewer network. But having already expected something like this, I had prepared for this. Though it was not ideal it would buy me enough time until my other contingencies kicked in.

"Space distortion Array," as the poison was about to hit the transcendent blood slime demon I immediately deployed the space distortion Array formation, distorting the space surrounding the Slime demon, making it impossible for the poison to reach the slime demon.

Considering that the rate of spread of the poison was under a second how did I perfectly time the deployment of the space discretion array?

The timing in the deployment of the space distortion array was key because if I were to deploy it even a millisecond late, it would be too late as the poison would have already

claimed the slime demon and me as its victim and if I were to deploy it early it would reveal my location to the paw clan members. So I needed the timing to be perfect, this was where the clones of slime demon came into the picture.

Coming into contact with poison the slime demon clones died immediately. As the poison got close to the original slime demon the closest slime demon clone would die informing it of the arrival of the poison, this way I could keep track of the spread of the poison and perfectly time the deployment of the space distortion array.

But by propping up the space distortion array the risk of my location being revealed was always there. However, it still mattered that I did not deploy the space distortion array too soon. Because they had to use the poison to get my location. Allowing me to get rid of the poison in their possession once and for all. Even though I risked revealing my location for this, it was worth it at the cost of damage to the city.

"Agatha, now use heaven's sanction and enhanced space isolation barrier to gather the poison and contain it," My clone reminded Agatha as soon as the paw clan members detonated the poison canister.

"Got it," Agatha immediately acted and used Anna's trap card and the city's enhanced protection array to gather and contain the poison spreading in the city's sewer system. Within the next few seconds, the poison spreading in the drainage tunnels was cooled and isolated by Agatha. Yet, the damage the SS-rank Dragonviper poison had left in its few seconds of glory was beyond irreparable.

Even though Agatha had managed to isolate the poison as fast as she could, most of the city's land and water resources were contaminated and had lost their vitality. When I say the poison was isolated, I mean all the poison and materials affected by it were moved to an area that was isolated using a space barrier. What this did was stop the poison from spreading and doing more damage, but to get rid of the poison we would need an SS-rank purification skill or array.

Though the hazard looming over the city was taken care of, the disaster following me had just descended.

Since the empty beast can hide in the empty space it was unaffected by the poison and once the paw clan members in it noticed the space distortion array within their vicinity they immediately made their way to it to complete their mission before the target went into hiding once again.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 1050 Mission Complete

[987 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:46

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewer

The space discretion array I had set up was a temporary array using some of the hard-to-procure rare-grade ingredients that I won in the silent auction. It was a pity that such ingredients were wasted on a temporary array considering that this act saved my life, I couldn't complain.

As the empty best made its way to me, Agatha had already isolated the poison spreading throughout the sewer. Meaning I no longer needed the space distortion array. Soon running out of the array I ordered the slime demon to swallow numerous chunks of rock.

,m Meanwhile, above in the city sky, my clone yelled, "Agatha, quick use the city array to protect the slime demon in the sewer tunnels."

But before Agatha could react, the empty beast had arrived right above the slime demon and revealed itself. Seeing the hideous Mask-like creature the transcendent blood slime demon reacted according to my plan and shot the chunks of rock from within its body in every direction. As if it was attacking the Mask-like creature that just revealed itself.

Ignoring the shower of rocks, numerous attacks extended out of the Mask-like creature aiming at the slime demon and killing it without a trace but a golden grimoire.

Agatha who was not able to use the space isolation barrier to protect the slime used the array to trap the Mask-like creature but it suddenly vanished as if it never existed.

As soon as the slime was killed the three clones next to Agatha vanished without a trace, indicating that either they ran out of soul energy to maintain their existence or their original body had met a tragic end.

"No!" Agatha yelled putting two and two together that the slime demon was the boy's original body.

"..." Hearing Agatha's aggrieved scream Number nine and Ten were puzzled but the dispersion of the clone gave them a foreboding of what could have transpired; they did

not want to believe it as that would mean despite all the efforts they had failed in their mission.

...

Matron, who was watching the memories of her henchmen for the real-time update, seeing the golden grimoire drop after the death of the slime demon immediately reacted and called her semi-demigod team who were preparing to attack the city to provide a distraction for Gray Fur's team and ordered them not to attack the allied semi-demigods but lurk and check on their reaction. Agatha's scream with the dispersion of the body clone was enough insurance for Matron that the evil spawn of her best friend had been sent on his way to accompany his mother in the afterlife.

After confirming that mission was successful, Matron ordered both Gray fur's team and the semi-demigod team to retreat before the Southern Emperor learns of the boy's death.

"You seem in a good mood," a voice sounded from behind Sansa.

Hearing the voice, the happiness in Sansa's eyes intensified by two-folds, she would recognize this voice any time in any situation as this was the voice of her beloved person, her husband Demigod Baylor.

"You are home," Sansa replied gently.

"Yes, remind me again how many times I have asked you not to wait for me," Demigod Baylor asked his virtuous wife would always stay awake, waiting for him to return home from work.

"As a Card Emperor, I think I can handle going to bed a little late. And besides, I am too excited to get any sleep," Sansa replied

"What's gotten you excited?"

"Have you forgotten, we are going to adopt Ellen's son first thing in the morning? I can't wait to meet that little guy. I wonder if he takes after his father or Ellen," Sansa single-mindedly spoke about adopting her best friend's son. As if she could not wait to meet her nephew and soon-to-be son.

"No, I haven't. That is why I am late tonight. I had to make arrangements for my absence tomorrow," Even though he was a demigod, demigod Baylor was bound by his duty. Showing how down-to-earth he was.

"Really, who dares to give you permission for a leave of absence," Sansa asked as a joke. Finding it funny that even as a demigod her husband chose to be bound by made-up mortal rules.

"Anyway, I have freed up my calendar for the next two days, that should be enough to complete the adoption process," Baylor said, which prompted his virtuous wife to laugh. She found it cute how her husband chose to let the made-up laws of the man bind him. Shaking her head she chose to indulge her husband's naivety, "It should be more than enough."

"Good, will you be coming too?"

"I thought you would never ask."

...

Done with screaming, venting her anger, and mourning her friend's death, Agatha was now panicking knowing the consequence of the death of the boy. She wasn't alone, Number Nine and Ten were in the same predicament.

They have failed the mission assigned to them and now neither of them knows how to report their failure to their team leader. Their target of protection was dead, the assassins were still at large and the situation could not be grimmer for them. If they had apprehended the perps they would have had little chance of redeeming themselves but they had nothing, they did not even know how the boy died, or who the boy's killers were. Except for a golden grimoire that Agatha dug from the sewer tunnels they had nothing to show for it. Which was bad, very bad, considering that the employer of this mission was an entity their team could not take on.

"Senior Nine, We have to inform the team leader of the failure of the mission. So that he can make appropriate preparations to extract Madam Asong and Aba before the Southern emperor learns of the news," Number Ten advised Number Nine, still trying to understand how such an easy task of protecting a card soldier could go so horribly wrong.

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[984 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:43

Location- Central Region, unknown

Skipping the small talk Karl asked three semi-demigods who just returned from Sun blossom city, "Bring out Mike's Corpse."

"Yes, leader," the Semi-demigod in charge answered, and using his storage card he summoned Mike's Corpse out.

But as soon as Mike's corpse came out of the storage space, it turned into a translucent slime monster. And then it dispersed as any summoned monster would once they were out of soul energy leaving behind a broken ego gem.

"What the fuck? Where is Mike's corpse?" Karl furiously yelled at the semi-demigod in charge even though he knew that his men had been deceived by the boy.

"Leader- I am sorry, I got deceived by the boy," the semi-demigod in charge had no idea what was going on but knew he had messed up big time so he did not dare to explain his mistake to Karl, instead chose to ask for forgiveness. Seeing him apologize, the other two also mimicked him.

"If you were not needed, I would have your head for this," Karl said then gave the three semi-demigods a chance to redeem themselves, "Go gather a half dozen Liches from the cemetery, return to Sun blossom city, disguise yourself as demon worshippers if you have to, just get me the boy at any cost."

"Thank you, leader. We will not let you down," the three semi-demigods thanked Karl for his mercy and followed through with his command.

...

Date- 4 April 2321

p Time- 02:52

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewer

"Senior Nine, we have stalled enough. We need to inform the team so they can extract Madam Song and Aba Windsor out of the southern region before the southern emperor learns of the boy's death," This was the second time Number Ten had reminded Number Nine to report to the team leader at the last minute. But Number Nine showed no signs of reporting the failure of the mission to the team leader.

Time was of the essence here, Number Ten wanted to report to the team leader himself but the protocol dictated that in a situation like this member with seniority will be in charge and call the shots. So, without getting Number Nine's approval he could not report the failure of the mission to their team leader. He could try to go over Number Nine's head and report to the team leader anyway but having failed a mission he did not want to add insubordination to this rap sheet. Therefore he could only urge Number Nine to act fast.

"I heard you the first time, so shut up," Number Nine snapped at Number Ten. Having more experience than her junior she knew that time was of the essence here, she should report the new development back to their team leader at the latest but she did not know what to report. Except for Agatha claiming that the boy was dead, Number Nine did not know anything for sure.

From the start to the end of the mission, nothing made sense. When she, herself, was still in confusion about what transpired, how could she report anything back to her immediate superior? In the wake of the botched-up mission, Number Nine did not want to make any more mistakes. So Number Nine thought really hard before writing an official report to their team leader.

[Team Leader,

Package Destroyed. Mission failed.]

[Number Nine,

Initiating plan B. Will you be joining us?]

[Team leader,

Staying behind with Number 10 to address the mission aftermath.]

[Number Nine,

Okay. Keep me updated.]

"Senior Nine—" Number Ten was once again about to remind Number Nine to report the failure of the mission but was interrupted by her instead, "I sent the report to the team leader through a secure channel, so stop being on my case. And Find out who was the third party that assassinated the boy?"

"Yes, Ma'am," Number Ten agreed to Number Nine's arrangement but he did not know where to start. If not for the poison and weird mask creature killing the slime demon, they would never have known that there was an unknown third party lurking in the shadows during their confrontation with Circle's demigods.

While Number Ten was busy scouring for the clues left behind by an unknown third party, Number Nine reached out to Agatha to get her perspective on what happened, "Agatha, could you tell me what happened? And why do you think that slime demon was the original body of the boy?"

"I don't have time for this. I need to go save my princess," Agatha who had already gone over what transpired over and over again, was done mourning for the dead and decided to take action to save Aba from the Southern Emperor's clutches.

"About that, don't worry. Our team is already taking care of it as we speak. Going there right now will only complicate the situation. So why don't we stay here and help us uncover the unknown third party that killed the boy?" Number Nine advised Agatha against returning to sky blossom city to rescue Aba Windsor as her team was already on it.

"Yeah, right," Agatha scoffed at Number Nine and prepared to head to Sky blossom city to rescue her princess but her path was blocked by Number Nine who seemed to set on stopping Agatha from leaving.

"Agatha doesn't be silly, even though you are doing a good job of hiding the toll of activating Heaven's sanctions on your body, you are in no condition to move around let alone fight. How about you sit this one out? I know you don't trust us but I am asking you to trust Madam Asong. Do you really believe she will let anything happen to her niece?" Number Nine tried to reason with Agatha and everything she said was true. Especially the part about the cost of activating heaven's sanction card eating away at Agatha's body. Though Agatha tried to hide it, with time her condition was becoming more obvious.

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chapter 1051

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:43

Location- Central Region, unknown

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Date- 4 April 2321

p Time- 02:52

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city, Sewer

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[Number Nine,

Okay. Keep me updated.]

"Senior Nine—" Number Ten was once again about to remind Number Nine to report the failure of the mission but was interrupted by her instead, "I sent the report to the team leader through a secure channel, so stop being on my case. And Find out who was the third party that assassinated the boy?"

"Yes, Ma'am," Number Ten agreed to Number Nine's arrangement but he did not know where to start. If not for the poison and weird mask creature killing the slime demon, they would never have known that there was an unknown third party lurking in the shadows during their confrontation with Circle's demigods.

While Number Ten was busy scouring for the clues left behind by an unknown third party, Number Nine reached out to Agatha to get her perspective on what happened, "Agatha, could you tell me what happened? And why do you think that slime demon was the original body of the boy?"

"I don't have time for this. I need to go save my princess," Agatha who had already gone over what transpired over and over again, was done mourning for the dead and decided to take action to save Aba from the Southern Emperor's clutches.

"About that, don't worry. Our team is already taking care of it as we speak. Going there right now will only complicate the situation. So why don't we stay here and help us uncover the unknown third party that killed the boy?" Number Nine advised Agatha against returning to sky blossom city to rescue Aba Windsor as her team was already on it.

"Yeah, right," Agatha scoffed at Number Nine and prepared to head to Sky blossom city to rescue her princess but her path was blocked by Number Nine who seemed to set on stopping Agatha from leaving.

"Agatha doesn't be silly, even though you are doing a good job of hiding the toll of activating Heaven's sanctions on your body, you are in no condition to move around let alone fight. How about you sit this one out? I know you don't trust us but I am asking you to trust Madam Asong. Do you really believe she will let anything happen to her niece?" Number Nine tried to reason with Agatha and everything she said was true. Especially the part about the cost of activating heaven's sanction card eating away at Agatha's body. Though Agatha tried to hide it, with time her condition was becoming more obvious.

chapter 1052

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:54

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

As a warrior, the death of a teammate was not new for Agatha nor enough to slow her down yet she took her time to go for Aba's rescue. It was all because of the Heaven's Sanction card. As soon as she deactivated it a weakness took over her body as if something was stealing her vitality. With time the weakness she felt only grew. Because of this Agatha had to slow down and get herself together to go for Aba's rescue but as Number Nine suggested Agatha had grown so weak within minutes of deactivating the card that she was struggling to keep up the appearance that everything was normal with her.

"No, I have already lost a friend. I don't want to lose another, I have to go," Agatha argued. The boy's death had saddened Agatha; she did not want to go through the same with Aba. Therefore she could not leave Aba's safety to someone else.

"Agatha-" Number Nine wanted to reassure Agatha once again and change her mind about rushing to the sky blossom city but she was interrupted by the spatial disturbance in the surroundings.

"Senior Nine, someone is attempting a long-distance teleportation without array formation," feeling the disturbance in space Number Ten warned Number Nine about it.

"Yes, I can feel it too. It must be the semi-demigods from the Circle. I bet they saw through the boy's deception," Number Nine speculated based on the information she had. And she was right.

Soon a spatial tear appeared in the sky, and the Circle's three semi-demigods from earlier walked out of it while they were followed by half a dozen semi-demigods who were surrounded by a dreadful aura. Seeing them arrive Number Nine, Ten, and Agatha prepared for battle.

"..." Standing in city air space the circle's demigod in charge searched for the boy but could not find him or his clones. Puzzled, he glanced at the trio semi-demigods who were supposed to protect the boy and asked, "Where is the boy?"

"He was assassinated by an unknown group," Number Nine answered. Though she did not want to cooperate with the enemy, she did not have a choice as they were not a match for the enemy.

"What?" The circle's semi-demigod in charge asked in disbelief. The thought of the trio trying to trick him did cross his mind but seeing their reaction he leaned toward that they were not deceiving him. But still having faced deception earlier he chooses to leave no stone unturned and decides to enquire about it, "What happened?"

"A mask-like creature jumped out of the empty space, killed the boy, and escaped back into the empty space. We are still trying to figure out who this unknown attacker is," Number Ten cleverly answered the circle's semi-demigod in charge giving out very little detail about the incident but his words managed to sum it all up.

"A mask-shaped empty beast assassinated the boy?" The Circle's semi-demigod asked to confirm if he heard the Number Ten right.

"Yes," Number Ten nodded.

"What about the boy's grimoire?" Now that the boy was dead, Circle's Semi-demigod could only compromise for the next best thing even though it would cost them a lot.

"..." Number Ten and Nine went silent when asked this question because Agatha had the boy's grimoire; they felt it was not their place to answer this.

"I have his grimoire," Agatha suddenly spoke out.

"Good, hand it over to us and we will leave peacefully," the Circle's semi-demigod in charge said and did not hide his intention about what he could do if things didn't go his way.

Agatha was not threatened by the circle's semi-demigod in charge's intimidation, rather she glared back at him and said, "I don't mind giving you the grimoire as long as you tell me everything you know about the assassin who assassinated the boy."

"How would I know about the people that assassinated the boy when I don't even know who they were?" The circle's semi-demigod in charge feigned ignorance when it came to the people that assassinated the boy.

"You are good at acting but it is a waste to try it on me because for a fact I know that your organization and the people that assassinated the boy are on close terms. I dare you to tell me I am wrong," Agatha said confidently.

"I don't know what gave you this idea but you are in no position to ask questions. Do you need me to remind you what situation you are in?" The Circle's semi-demigod continued to feign ignorance and reminded Agatha that he was in charge here and not her.

"Oh really? I don't know why you guys care so much about a card lord's corpse but it is stored in the boy's grimoire. How would you like it if I were to destroy the boy's grimoire?" Agatha used the boy's grimoire to threaten the Circle's goons.

"You wouldn't dare to," The circle's semi-demigod did not believe Agatha was suicidal enough to destroy the grimoire but he decided not to take chances and gave in, "Fine, you win."

Saying this, Circle's semi-demigod in charge regretted not returning here as a demon worshipper. This way he would have a lot more freedom and options in

these kinds of situations. But the Circle's semi-demigod in charge had a strong reason behind not opting to disguise themselves as the demon worshippers. And it was none other than the fact that even though being disguised as demon worshippers gave them a lot of freedom it also came with a lot of dangers and risks too. That was, nobody would question a demigod realm card apprentice if they were to take action to kill a bunch of demon worshippers irrespective of their realm.

The Circle's semi-demigod in charge was confident to face an army of semi-demigods with half a dozen liches in his team but a demigod was an entirely different story.

- Chapter 1053 Intimidation - Novel Fire

[1,514 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 02:58

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Sun blossom city

The demon worshipers reached the point of extinction because of the demigods and other high-level card apprentices' excessively trophy-hunting Demon Worshipers for their Demonoid body parts. So any sensible person would know better than to impersonate Demon Worshipers, especially semi-demigod realm card apprentices as they were more likely to attract the attention of the bored Demigods. Therefore even though the Supreme leader had permitted them to disguise themselves as demon worshipers to complete the mission, the Circle's semi-demigod in charge who had just had his brush with life choose to play it safe. Thankfully he did that because of this he was able to gather information on the whereabouts of the boy faster than he could have disguised a demon worshipper.

"The Assassin whom you guys described sounds very much like a member of this new group that has been recently terrorizing the central region with a string of assassinations disguised as accidental deaths, this group is very mysterious and secretive, nobody knows who they are or where they are from or what they call themselves, so there isn't much I can tell you about them," the circle's semi-demigod in charge spewed the little myth about the paw clan being passed around in the central region which came into existence after people started to notice a pattern in the coincidental death of important figure of the central region.

Though currently the relationship between the Circle and the paw clan was strained, the circle's semi-demigod in charge chose to keep the identity of the paw clan hidden. As no matter how dissatisfied they both were with each other they could not go around

revealing each other's secrets fearing that the other would reveal their secrets. Therefore the circle's semi-demigod in charge decided to throw Agatha a bone by narrating the myth about the mysterious assassination group circulating in the central region.

"A mysterious assassination group, really? How dumb do you think I am to believe in something like that? Let us assume I believe you for a second, now tell me why would the mysterious assassination group mostly operating in the central region come to the backwaters of the southern region to kill a card soldier no less? Don't think that you can get the grimoire by spouting bullshit," Agatha snapped at the circle's semi-demigod in charge for trying to sell her a made-up story in exchange for the grimoire.

"How would I know why the mysterious assassination group mostly operating in the central region would choose to come to a third-rate city of the southern region to kill a card soldier? You tell me why, after all, what kind of kid requires three semi-demigods as his bodyguard? I bet only the royal progeny have such a bodyguard lineup. So why would an orphan from a third-rate city have such an expensive bodyguard detail?" the circle's semi-demigod in charge answered Agatha with a question putting her in a spot hoping that it would get her to shut up and just handover the boy's grimoire with no more further questions.

"I don't know, it's because the southern's are crazy I guess. And stop trying to lie your way out of this. As a matter of fact, I know the assassins were the ones who informed Mike of the boy ambushing the circle's sun blossom branch tonight, and about the three of us protecting him from the shadows. Now help me understand why would the mysterious assassination group mostly operating in the central region come to the backwaters of the southern region to inform one of your branch leaders that their branch is going to be ambushed by a card soldier," Agatha finally revealed what she had gathered from her conversation with the boy. From her conversation with the boy, she came to the conclusion that it was the organization behind Cole that informed the circle of the boy's plans to ambush and also assassinated him when they got the opportunity.

"..." hearing Agatha the circle's semi-demigod in charge's expression turned for the worse. He stealthy signaled the six liches to surround the trio. Following the circle's semi-demigod in charge's order, the liches disguised fanned out to surround the allied semi-demigods before they could even react to the situation. The agility displaced by the liches impressed and frightened Number Nine and Number Ten at the same time. As for Agatha, she was still glaring at the circle's semi-demigod in charge waiting for him to answer her.

Seeing the crazy stubborn glow in Agatha's eyes not wavier as the six liches disguised as regular card semi-demigods surround her and her teammates, the circle's semi-demigod in charge knew if he were to use force, Agatha would not hesitate to destroy the boy's grimoire so he decided to continue to intimidate her into giving him what he wanted rather than forcing her into doing something they both would regret.

"I don't know why the mysterious assassination group did what they did, but if you know what is better for you, your friends, and millions of innocent citizens of this city, you will handover the boy's grimoire to me," the circle's semi-demigod in charge threatened Agatha, this time not just with her life but the life of the millions of the residents of the sun blossom city.

"..." Agatha continued to glare at the circle's semi-demigod in charge as if his words did not faze her. So feeling he was not left with any choice her ordered his men, "For every minute we are in this dump, start killing 100,000 people starting now."

Hearing the circle's semi-demigod in charge's orders to his lackeys both Number Nine and Number Ten were intimidated, this situation was something where they could use their teams and the southern emperor's help but considering the death of the boy they could not call either of them. Therefore they could only hope that Agatha would make the right choice by giving the circle's semi-demigod in charge the boy's grimoire.

But all of them had underestimated Agatha as she looked right into the eyes of the circle's semi-demigod in charge, made sure he would know that she was not bluffing, and said, "Go right ahead, mortals die everyday big whoop a lot of them died at the same time and at the same place, see if I care. I will give you a minute to come clean about the organization behind the death of the boy or I will destroy his grimoire. How's that for an ultimatum?"

"Oh boy, Agatha, honey, calm down. Didn't you say you wanted to go to sky blossom city? Let us not waste time entangling these people. Give them what they want and we can go to the sky blossom city, remember Aba still needs you," Number Nine who earlier was opposed to the idea of Agatha rushing to the sky blossom city now advised Agatha to stop wasting time arguing with the circle's goon and rush to the sky blossom city to rescue Aba. As public servants, Number Nine or Ten could not be so indifferent about the lives of several hundred thousand mortals. So they could not sit by and watch the circle's semi-demigod in charge and Agatha make so light of so many innocent lives.

"..." Agatha did not respond to Number Nine but she was contemplating what she said. And then came to the conclusion that the alive Aba took priority over the dead boy. So diminishing the crazy glow in her eyes, she then said, "Take an oath that you will leave peacefully after I give you the grimoire, then we have a deal."

"Now that's something I can work with. But you too will have to take an oath stating that the grimoire you handover belongs to the boy," saying that the circle's semi-demigod in charge and his goons, card apprentice disguised liches included took an oath stating that they would leave peacefully after Agatha handed them the boy's grimoire.

"I too promise to give you the boy's grimoire to the best of my knowledge," after taking her oath Agatha handed the golden grimoire that she believed to belong to the boy to the circle's semi-demigod in charge, she did not fail to mention this particular detail in her oath. Clearly, she was still not sold on the boy's death.

After getting the grimoire that Agatha believed to be the Boy's grimoire the circle's semi-demigod in charge did not waste a second and used the temporary teleportation array formation set up by his goons to teleport out of the southern region.

"Agatha, I am sorry. This is to stop you from harming your and our interest," As soon as the semi-demigods from the Circle left, Number Nine signaled Number Ten, who moved in to knock Agatha unconscious as Number Nine engaged Agatha in a conversation to distract her. Considering that it was a sneak attack and Agatha was weakened in the aftermath of activating Heaven's sanction trap card, she could not put up any struggle as Number Ten knocked her out.

"She is going to be pissed when she wakes up."

"Not our problem."

...

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[1,484 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 05:08

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Unknown Location

"Fuck this, I should have just taken the Fine Gold floater vessels," I muttered to myself looking at my surroundings through my slit-shaped pupils. Right now I was in the middle of nowhere disguised as Gale Cougar monster.

How was I alive? Obviously, because of a small misdirection. When the Mask-shaped creature revealed itself, the Transcendent blood slime demon shot the chunks of rock it had swallowed in every direction, among those chunks of rock was my pebble body which the slime demon was transporting.

As expected the paw clan members ignored the shower of rocks shot by the transcendent blood slime demon as they were too focused on killing it as they were led to believe it to be the target of their assassination. The transcendent blood slime demon dropping a golden grimoire upon its death was just the final touch needed for me to make the morons from the paw clan believe that they had killed their target and successfully completed their mission.

This was the second time I had successfully faked my death and both times the paw clan members were very helpful. This was not something to brag about but I did manage to fool a bunch of semi-demigods and card emperors.

When Agatha and the other two semi-demigods appeared in the sewers to pick up the golden grimoire, I was shocked to see Agatha's reaction to my death. I know during this mission we have surprisingly gotten close enough to calling ourselves friends but I did not think she would grieve and weep for me. It seems our friendship meant more to Agatha than to me.

This realization made me think twice about my friendship with Agatha, upgrading it from just friends to good friends. Maybe things would have been different if I had trusted Agatha a little more. Anyway, things worked out in the end, I got a part of the revenge I promised to young Wyatt, made a good friend, got an awesome rune card, and finally the loot from the Circle's sun blossom branch's treasury. This trip to the sun blossom city could not have been more rewarding.

The reasons why I chose to continue to fake my death after the paw clan left were obvious. So despite the grief displayed by Agatha, I had to steel my heart and take the sewer tunnels to get out of the city and then travel to the sky blossom city on foot following the directions of the grimoire map.

I thought it was going to be a cool road trip, covering the distance by switching between my hoverbike and my other flight-related cards, but I had underestimated how much the dungeons had messed up the topography of this world. Even with the help of the directions on the grimoire map I somehow keep ending up in field dungeons. Gate dungeons I can avoid because they were obvious with their dungeon gates but the field dungeons were like a free for all trap, it was hard to avoid them.

Apparently, in this world, tens of new dungeons get created every minute replacing tens of old dungeons that collapse. Therefore it was really hard to have definite maps from one place to another. Making it hard to trust the grimoire maps. Now I finally understood why Diana's Fine Gold Merchants were able to attract so many clients despite their shady history of conducting business. They were valued for the routes between the cities owned by them. No wonder despite the magical advancements such as the storage cards, merchants were still pretty much a big deal in this world.

All things aside, I have to confess, though it hurts my ego to admit this I was lost and had stumbled into yet another field dungeon. I have finally lost my patients and decided to give up on this road trip. But the only problem was since I was in a dungeon I cannot use my grimoire to call for help and the same went for my hive AI. Looking at my surroundings I could not help but squint my slit-shaped pupils wondering if I have been going around in a circle.

Slit-shaped pupils? I had transformed in to gale cougar because I was in a field dungeon with the gale cougars were the dominant monsters. The first time I accidentally

walked into the field dungeon I enthusiastically used my summon monsters to clear it, but my enthusiasm only lasted till the third time. Now, on my fourth time, I decided to use the easy way out, disguise myself as a monster and find a route out of this field dungeon.

The fact that these field dungeons were all E-rank or below did not help my enthusiasm, because the monsters in these dungeons were so weak that I could not even bother to use this opportunity to use these monster to sacrifice my blood rue rune to stock up rune cards. Tens of dungeons were created every minute but the chance of most of them being high-level ones was very less, making high-level dungeons a high commodity among various organizations and guilds.

,m Just when I was about to scream in frustration, I finally understood why I felt like I was traveling in circles. It was because I was indeed going around in circles. Not that I had a bad sense of direction but someone had made use of the field dungeon's unique topography to set up a clever array formation that would mess with the sense of direction of anyone entering this dungeon, especially the monsters in this dungeon.

Upon this discovery, I was both pissed and happy at the same time. Pissed because I went around in circles like an idiot because of whoever used the array formation to make use of the unique topography of the dungeon to create a pseudo-natural array formation and happy because I was I could finally get out of this dungeon and call for help.

Normally, I would find the person responsible for the pseudo-natural array formation and give him a piece of my mind but today I was not. As for some to be well versed in array mastery to set up a pseudo-natural array formation they had to be of a pretty high realm, making them not someone I would want to mess with. My fight with Mike had shown me my limits, with my current realm I cannot go up against an elite card overlord.

With Mike, I had gotten lucky, as he was not interested in fighting me but in capturing Ji Feng, so during our fight, he kept getting distracted and pulling his punches. if lady luck wasn't on my side and I had made use of the opportunity that presented itself to detonate Ji Feng in Mike's mouth, I would never have been able to defeat Mike with my current prowess.

Despite my cautiousness, I had really overestimated my strength. Weighing Rami Kage and his bodyguards, I underestimated the strength of the Card Overlords. Compared to Rami and his bodyguards, Mike was on a whole other different level in terms of strength even though they all were of the same realm.

Since the card apprentice I came across was a capable array master with the ability to use the dungeon's topography to set up a pseudo-natural array formation, I believe along with his high realm he must have elite-level combat prowess. When I was busy thinking of reasons why I should not be messing with someone of this caliber, I suddenly thought, what was someone this capable of doing down here? The closest

second-rate city has four third-rate cities in between, so no matter how much I think it was hard to explain what this high-level card apprentice doing in this E-rank field dungeon in this backwater part of the blossom district.

I tried hard to stop my mind from getting curious about this and thinking of something else, but many questions kept popping into my mind as to why and what this powerful array master was doing in an E-rank dungeon. Whether he was alone? To get all these answers I would have to go to the core of this Puesod-natural array formation.

Condensing the function of the pseudo-natural array formation was to stop monsters or adventures from wandering into the core region of the formation, I believed heading towards the core of the array even disguised as a gale cougar monster was not the best of ideas. Remembering the phrase curiosity killed the cat, I did not let my mind wander around and focused on leaving the dungeon.

Since the purpose of this Pseudo-natural array of formations was to confuse my sense of direction, stopping me from entering the core of the dungeon or leaving the dungeon and nothing more. I easily cracked it and found a route out of the dungeon. Coming out of the dungeon, I figure slowly descended in front of me.

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Chapter 1055 Female Card King

[999 words]

Date- 4 April 2321

Time- 05:13

Location- Southern Region, Blossom District, Unknown Location

Seeing the humanoid figure descend in front of me, my body froze up, fortunately for me, the humanoid figure was a card apprentice who did not seem to be hostile toward me for now. I am not to be blamed for being caught off guard, having found the escape route, I was giddy and rushed out head first wondering whom to call for help, Anna? Or Diana? I was not expecting a stranger ambushing.

What was there to be giddy about finding an escape route? The escape route that I am talking about allowed me to pass through the field dungeon and exit through the other side of the dungeon. If I just wanted to get out of the dungeon I could have just exited it

as soon as I entered it. But that would mean I would be stuck on the path to the sky blossom city or could choose to return to the sun blossom city or go around the field dungeon to stay en route. Therefore I was a little taken aback to find the correct route through the dungeon despite the pseudo-natural array formation.

Pseudo-natural array formations were very covert and hard to crack, I cannot stress this point enough. Even for me, with my soul pupils, echo hearing, and Hive AI it took quite a while to figure out that I was going around in a circle. If pseudo-natural array formation were this powerful, just imagining a natural array formation made me excited. As they say, practice makes a man perfect, the more I come in contact with various array formations the better for me. Especially unconventional array formations like this pseudo-natural array formation.

Cracking the pseudo-natural array formation was an achievement worth being proud of but the pride did not last long having been caught in an ambush. Looking past my mistake I was stuck considering how to react to the ambush of the card apprentice. I guess leaning into being startled would do it considering the realm difference between me and the card apprentice. After all, an E-rank Gale Cougar monster would indeed be startled or even scared enough to wet itself as a result of its wild instinct going haywire being ambushed by a Card king.

"Incredible, I didn't expect to meet a card soldier capable of escaping a pseudo-natural array formation down here. Even veteran array masters have a hard time cracking it, I should know since I set it up," the card apprentice addressed the gale cougar monster which had a human-like expression on its face.

"..." Hearing the female card apprentice address me as if she was talking to an actual person I was flustered.

The female card apprentice was in the Card King realm, so it should be impossible for her to see through my transformation when even my soul pupils and semi-demigods failed to see through it. Yet this female card apprentice addressed me as if she knew that I was a card soldier morphed gale cougar monster, this could only mean one of two things,

First, she has an incredible card or rune that allowed her to see through Myriad Devil's transformation. This meant that the card or the rune in possession of this woman was more powerful than my soul pupils, now that was just great, another person with a hack card or rune.

Second, she has been monitoring me since the moment I entered the field dungeon, captured a wild gale cougar monster to extract a medium to help transform into a gale cougar monster so that it would allow me to pass through the field dungeon without attracting the monsters inhabiting the dungeon.

I am much inclined towards the second reason but the first reason was also likely. Well, I am about to find out.

"Let me cut it short, I have been watching you since you entered the first field dungeon. From the direction you are taking I am guessing you are on your way to Sky blossom city, am I right?" The female card king speculated but seeing me continue to act startled and scared monster, she added, "For your information, you have been transpassing on my property. If I wanted to kill you, I already had enough reason to do so. So, please don't add another reason to it."

Understanding her words loud and clear, I nodded my monster cat head hurriedly. Right now most of my brain was occupied trying to figure out how did I miss the surveillance of the female card apprentice? Was it the pseudo-natural array? No, the pseudo-natural array formation did not have any other function to it than misdirection. Then how was this female card king monitoring me?

"How would like to work for me as my assistant?" the female card king found the reaction of the card apprentice morphed cat monster adorable but that was not the reason why she wanted to hire him as her assistant. It was his array mastery, cracking a pseudo-natural array formation in under half an hour that made the boy qualified enough to be her assistant.

I was surprised to hear the female card king offer me a job, it was contrary to the reaction I was expecting from. But considering that the pseudo-natural array formation she set was non-lethal I guess it is not surprising that she did not try to kill for transpassing her property. As flattered as I was for being offered a job by her, I shook my cat monster head refusing her offer. Yes, a part of me was worried about what to do if she were to react violently to my rejection.

"Buddy, no matter how adorable I find a cat monster with human-like reactions. Heads will start rolling if you don't get an answer in yes or no," The female card king snapped. Heads will start rolling? What was her attempt to intimidate me into agreeing to her job offer? Well, well done, now I was really considering becoming her assistant.

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