

Card Apprentice Daily Log

Chapter 2401 Megapolis

Date: Unspecified Time: Unspecified Location: Myriad Realms, Lil. Red Storm realm

"Wyatt, the Freedom Fighters would rather die than surrender adding legitimacy to the crimes the central government has accused us of," Henricks said firmly, his tone resolute but tinged with quiet frustration. He wasn't outright rejecting Wyatt, but he made it clear they couldn't join his criminal reform and rehabilitation program. Doing so would dishonor the countless sacrifices their members had made for their cause. They'd rather take their chances with the Southern Princess or even the World Leaders than shame their fallen comrades.

Wyatt's expression didn't shift, but his eyes hardened slightly as he heard Henricks out. Then, with a calm yet commanding tone, he said, "Dalie, show him."

At his words, Dalie tilted her head, seemingly puzzled. Moments later, her eyes widened in astonishment as she mentally conversed with the Hive Spirit. It had shared with her the schematics of something Wyatt referred to as a "megapolis"—a massive and intricate city he wanted her to construct in her realm. Dalie didn't fully understand its purpose, but since her little brother wanted it, she didn't hesitate. Without a second thought, she resolved to build it for him.

Henricks, on the other hand, watched nervously. He knew how petty Wyatt could be; he'd seen it firsthand. But he also understood that the Freedom Fighters were an organization driven by principles and unwavering dedication to their cause, even if it meant risking Wyatt's wrath. Though his heart pounded in his chest, he held his ground, knowing he had to stand his ground here—even if it meant Wyatt might withdraw his offer entirely.

His eyes flicked toward Dalie. As a dimensional traveler, Henricks had encountered many terrifying beings and entities across realms, but the one Wyatt called Dalie was on a completely different level. Her mere presence radiated power beyond comprehension. How Wyatt had managed to tame her, he couldn't fathom. One thing was clear: with Dalie by his side, Wyatt was untouchable in the Myriad Realms would dare cross him.

Suddenly, Henricks noticed the space before them shift, the air growing dense and opaque. His eyes widened as an enormous array formation, spanning hundreds of miles in diameter, emerged from the ground beneath their feet. Henricks froze, utterly dumbfounded. How could an array of this magnitude appear out of nowhere? And what

stunned him even more was the realization—it wasn't artificial. It was a natural array formation.

Henricks turned toward Dalie, his face a mixture of confusion and awe. Could this massive array have always been here, hidden beneath the surface, and the latter was just revealing it? Given Wyatt's cryptic words and the fact that only the Realm's nature i.e.the Realm's Will could produce a natural array formation, it seemed like the only logical explanation. But as the scene unfolded further, Henricks realized how wrong he was.

The opaque space before him morphed, revealing a breathtaking cityscape. Towering buildings, each stretching thousands of feet into the sky, appeared as though conjured from thin air. Henricks's jaw dropped as he tried to comprehend the sheer scale of what he was seeing.

Wyatt's voice pulled him out of his shock. "That's the city I created just for my organization—the first citizens of the Lil. Red Strom realm," Wyatt said, his tone casual yet laced with pride. Gesturing toward the megapolis, he added, "Go ahead, explore it. It's designed to house millions of members and their families."

Still, in disbelief, Henricks shot into the air, ascending above the sprawling city. From his vantage point, he scrutinized every corner, every detail, using his intent sense to probe for answers. How could a natural array formation construct an entire megapolis spanning hundreds of miles in diameter? The deeper he searched, the more baffled he became. Nothing about it made sense.

The city below him was a masterpiece, yet its creation defied every natural law he knew. As confusion clouded his thoughts, one truth became clear—Dalie was not an ordinary being. "Henricks, what I'm offering is a new home," Wyatt said, his gaze steady and voice firm. "Here, your people won't have to worry about being invaded by their enemies. Here, they can live in peace—just like any regular family back in the five regions. They'll be provided with everything a company would give its employees: a decent salary, benefits like hospitals, schools, and infrastructure for daily needs and entertainment. This will be my organization's community, where they'll feel safe and see a hopeful future for their families and children."

Wyatt leaned slightly forward, his tone softening as he added, "I don't just want my people to survive, Henricks. I want them to live—to have something more than the cause you've been using to numb them to their circumstances. I want them to have something to look forward to at the end of a hard day."

Henricks blinked, taking a moment to process Wyatt's words. The conviction in Wyatt's voice was clear, but the implications of his offer were staggering. "Then... what about all that talk earlier about surrendering to you?" Henricks asked cautiously, narrowing his eyes. He needed to confirm that accepting this didn't mean his people would be branded as criminals. The benefits Wyatt was describing sounded too good to be true,

and he couldn't help but feel wary, especially after being burned by the Southern Princess. His skepticism was justified—trust wasn't something he could afford to give lightly anymore. Even Wyatt could respect that.

Wyatt straightened, his expression firm but honest. "The situation has changed. Back then, I didn't have a land that was truly mine. But now, I have an entire realm that's solely mine in every sense. That means I can offer better conditions to my people." He paused, his gaze sharpening. "But don't misunderstand me—this doesn't mean I'll be any less firm with my demands."

As Wyatt spoke, Dalie's eyes sparkled with delight. Hearing him claim her as his own sent a surge of pride through her. It was this possessive side of Wyatt that she loved the most—because it showed he had accepted their kinship wholeheartedly.

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Chapter 2402 Network Of Teleportation Station

[1,190 words]

Chapter 2402 Network Of Teleportation Station

Date: Unspecified Time: Unspecified Location: Myriad Realms, Lil. Red Storm realm

After taking in Wyatt's words, Henricks's haggard expression began to change. The exhaustion that had weighed down his features lifted, and for the first time in a long while, his face looked alive and determined, as if a heavy burden had finally been lifted off his chest. He exhaled deeply, his shoulders relaxing before he straightened up, his gaze now sharp and unwavering.

With firm resolve, Henricks replied, "Don't worry. If there's one thing my people aren't afraid of, it's hard work. What they are afraid of is living a meaningless life. And with what you're offering them—what you stand for—I doubt they'll be able to sleep soundly unless they're pulling their weight around here."

A faint smile tugged at the corners of his mouth, but it wasn't one of amusement—it was pride. He could vouch for the Freedom Fighters and their resolve. He had seen firsthand the lengths they were willing to go for something they truly believed in. If Wyatt could become that belief, he knew they wouldn't hesitate to give everything for him, even their lives, if it came to that.

But Henricks himself couldn't offer that blind devotion so easily. As the man responsible for millions of lives and their families, his trust had to be earned, and Wyatt knew that as well.

After a brief pause, Henricks's brow furrowed as a question surfaced in his mind. "Is this realm your fallback plan in case we lose to the second demon invasion?" he asked, studying Wyatt carefully.

The thought hadn't struck him until now. As natives of the Card World, the Freedom Fighters had always been acutely aware of the looming threat of a second demon invasion and what it could mean for their cause and their world. Yet, their dire circumstances left them little time or energy to focus on that distant catastrophe when their organization was teetering on the brink of collapse.

Now, with that immediate crisis seemingly resolved with Wyatt taking over, Henricks couldn't help but shift his thoughts to the future—and the grim possibilities it might hold. He crossed his arms, his gaze unwavering as he awaited Wyatt's answer. As a former Field Marshal for the central government, he understood better than most just how devastating internal strife could be during a foreign invasion. Not to mention, the enemies the Freedom Fighters were battling were the very pillars holding up the Card World. If those pillars fell, even though the Freedom Fighters might get closer to their cause but it would leave their realm vulnerable to a second demon invasion. Henricks couldn't ignore this. He wanted to gauge how far Wyatt had thought about the future of the Card World, especially since Wyatt was widely regarded as one of the most brilliant minds in it.

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"It could be," Wyatt began, his tone casual yet calculated. "But no. I've got different plans for the demon invasion—I plan to take the fight to the dark realm." He paused, watching Henricks's reaction closely. Wyatt wasn't the type to overshare, but now that Henricks had essentially joined his side, he figured it wouldn't hurt to give him a glimpse of his long-term plans.

Henricks's eyes widened in disbelief, his mouth slightly agape. "Take the fight to the dark realm?" he repeated, his voice tinged with both shock and skepticism. He straightened up instinctively, his posture tense.

Everyone in the Card World knew that the only reason their ancestors had managed to end the first demonic invasion was because of their home-field advantage—the realm's will suppressing foreign souls. Without that, the war would've been ten times harder, if

not outright impossible. The idea of marching into the dark realm, a place teeming with powerful beings and countless unknowns, felt reckless—if not outright suicidal.

"Are you serious?" Henricks asked, his tone incredulous. He leaned forward slightly, studying Wyatt's face for any sign that this was a joke.

"Nah," Wyatt replied with a faint smirk, shaking his head. "There's more to the dark realm than you know. Trust me on that. But don't worry about it for now. Just focus on carrying out my orders. When the time comes, and all the pieces fall into place, you'll see for yourself."

Wyatt's voice carried an air of calm authority, but there was an unmistakable edge to it—a subtle demand for trust. He wasn't asking Henricks to give him blind faith immediately, but the implication was clear: in the near future, as the Freedom Fighters integrated into his forces Henricks would need to rely on Wyatt's vision without question.

Henricks's brows knitted together in a mixture of frustration and unease. He wasn't used to being left in the dark, but he could sense that Wyatt wasn't going to elaborate further. For now, he would have to set aside his doubts and focus on the present.

"I understand," Henricks replied, his voice steady but tinged with a newfound sense of determination. Watching Wyatt stand shoulder to shoulder with a being as formidable as Dalie and give her commands without hesitation—then seeing them turn a barren, inhospitable realm into a thriving paradise for his people—convinced Henricks. It was time to start putting his faith in Wyatt.

"Wyatt," Dalie's melodic yet commanding voice broke the moment, drawing both their attention. "I've established multiple mass teleportation array formations in the metropolis at the teleportation stations you had me create. Now, all that's left is for you to set up the corresponding array formations in the Yellow Plains, and we can begin the mass migration."

Wyatt gave a small nod, a glimmer of satisfaction crossing his face. The metropolis, which the Hive Spirit had meticulously designed under Wyatt's direction, was nothing short of a marvel. It featured an intricate network of teleportation stations that functioned as a transportation system, allowing its citizens to move seamlessly within the city, to other parts of the Card Realm, or even to the Dark Realm. Its design was inspired by the ruler-class cities of the Dark Realm—urban behemoths protected by ruler-class beings.

"Perfect," Wyatt said with a confident smirk. Turning to Henricks, he added, "You guys wait here. We'll be back soon."

Henricks caught the subtle signal Wyatt gave him. Without hesitation, Henricks stepped forward, reaching out to grab Wyatt's wrist. His grip was firm but not forceful, his movements efficient, like someone who had done this countless times before.

In an instant, the two of them disappeared from Lil. Red Storm, heading straight for the Yellow Plains to set up the corresponding array formations and kick-start the migration plan without delay.

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[1,104 words]

Chapter 2403 Ambush

Date: Unspecified Time: Unspecified Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Way Beyond, Unknown

"Damn it, how long do we have to stay here?" a stout demigod grumbled, sprawled lazily on a cloud as if it were his personal mattress. He shifted restlessly, using the puff of vapor as a makeshift pillow. "Can't we just combine our powers and blast the seals on those reverse gate dungeons? Invade them directly?"

Rolling her eyes, an alluring demigod clad in revealing tights shot back, her voice dripping with sarcasm. "First, if we do that, we risk destroying the reverse gate dungeons entirely. Second, we already have enough people working on unsealing them—your birdbrain adding to the mix wouldn't change a damn thing. Third, we're Plan B. The sooner we catch Henricks, the sooner we can use him to invade the Yellow Plains."

The stout demigod huffed, clearly unimpressed, but stayed quiet.

"How sure are we he'll even pass through here?" an elderly demigod asked, his sharp, weathered eyes scanning their surroundings. His intent sense probed the area stealthily, covering every inch under their surveillance.

The alluring demigod crossed her arms, her lips curling into a smirk. "Can't say for sure. But he has to pass through one of these spots eventually. Based on his usual patterns, these are the places he uses as an intermediate step to travel between realms through the Card World. Let's just hope luck's on our side and he shows up here." Her eyes gleamed with greed as she added, "If he does, we'll be able to bargain for a bigger share of the loot."

The three weren't alone in their hidden watch. They were part of an intricate network of demigods stationed across key points, lying in wait for Henricks. The World Leaders had leveraged their influence with the central government to employ their diviners, who had pinpointed specific locations Henricks had been frequently using as intermediary

platforms in the Card world for his inter-realm travel. For now, all they could do was wait—and hope their prey would stumble right into their trap.

"Get the array formation ready—I sense a disturbance in the space," the elderly demigod barked, his tone sharp and urgent. His weathered eyes narrowed as he focused on the anomaly beneath them.

Hearing his warning, the other two demigods immediately snapped into action, positioning themselves to activate the space isolation array. They weren't taking any chances, ready to trap Henricks the moment he arrived, even if something seemed slightly off.

Just as the elderly demigod had predicted, the space a few meters below them rippled unnaturally before settling again, revealing two figures. Without pausing to identify who they were or questioning why there were two instead of one, the demigods triggered the array formation.

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"What the fuck?" Henricks swore, his eyes darting around as he realized the space had been isolated.

"Looks like you've walked into an ambush," Wyatt said, his tone calm yet sharp, as his primordial soul pupils flared. His eyes glinted with an otherworldly glow, quickly analyzing the space isolation array and locking onto the three demigods who had entered the trap with them.

"Holy shit! Is that Dalton Wyatt?" the stout demigod exclaimed, scrambling to his feet. The lazy posture he'd held moments ago was replaced with tense energy, his excitement of capturing Henricks just quadrupled.

"Yes, it's him. We've hit the jackpot!" the alluring demigod confirmed, her voice dripping with greed. Her eyes sparkled with avarice, and her grin stretched from ear to ear, unable to contain her delight at the unexpected windfall.

"What is he doing with a traitor?" the elderly demigod muttered, his voice heavy with disappointment as his frown deepened. While his teammates practically salivated over the thought of capturing Dalton Wyatt along with Henricks, his reaction was far more conflicted. He couldn't help but feel uneasy seeing the future of the Card World standing shoulder to shoulder with a criminal. This wasn't why he'd spent decades at the Way Beyond, guarding the Five Regions from threats. Seeing Wyatt standing alongside a known criminal, the elderly demigod felt a wave of betrayal crash over him. For centuries, he had devoted his life to protecting the Five Regions, and now the one they

called the future of the Card World was associating with someone like Henricks. Yet, a small part of him—a hopeful whisper—clung to the possibility that Wyatt was being held against his will. If that were the case, the elderly demigod would gladly go down in history as the hero who saved the future of the Card World, rather than someone who massacred millions of card apprentices to secure the only known source of Silver Milk.

'Let's keep them busy until reinforcements arrive,' the alluring demigod mentally communicated to her two partners, her tone sharp and commanding. The stout demigod nodded without hesitation, while the elderly demigod hesitated, his eyes narrowing as he focused on Wyatt.

"Are you being held against your will?" the elderly demigod asked Wyatt, his voice tinged with urgency. Deep down, he knew the chances of safely extracting Wyatt from this situation were slim—especially once the others arrived—but he had to try. He couldn't stomach the idea of Wyatt falling into the wrong hands. He believed the Southern Region was the only place that truly valued Wyatt's potential, while the other regions merely saw him as a golden goose they could butcher for their greed.

"Old man, what the hell are you doing?" the stout demigod snapped impatiently, his frustration boiling over. He knew the elderly demigod to be a stubborn ally, but this was crossing the line. It was clear from his demeanor that the old man didn't intend to capture Wyatt and might even help him escape.

Before the stout demigod could act, the alluring demigod moved with lightning speed. Her blade sliced through the air, mortally wounding the elderly demigod. Blood poured from his side as he stumbled back, his eyes wide with disbelief. Instinct alone had saved him from a fatal blow.

"Why?" he gasped, clutching his wound, his face etched with shock and betrayal.

"I'm not going to let anyone ruin my ascent—not even you," the alluring demigod replied coldly, her voice laced with venom. Her lips curled into a sneer as she turned to the stout demigod and barked, "Use your origin card! Now!"

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Chapter 2404 Just Doing Their Job

[1,128 words]

Chapter 2404 Just Doing Their Job

Date: Unspecified Time: Unspecified Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Way Beyond, Unspecified

"This is... interesting," Wyatt muttered, his tone laced with mild amusement as he watched the alluring demigod coldly and without hesitation mortally wound her own teammate, the Elderly demigod. While he wasn't naive about the shades of gray in the world, the elderly demigod's concern for him and the alluring female demigod's raw treachery unfold before him piqued his curiosity.

"Idiots," Henricks grumbled, shaking his head. He began preparing to teleport to the Yellow Plains with Wyatt, as a mere space isolation formation couldn't stop him. After all, it took a celestial space rule domain to truly capture him—something only the Field Marshal Lorn had managed to pull off. Until then he was under the impression that his origin card was invincible when it comes to escape. However, just as Henricks prepared to leave, Wyatt effortlessly slipped free and flew forward, muttering under his breath, "Celestial Blood Rule Domain."

Hovering at the same elevation as the three demigods, Wyatt glanced at the elderly demigod and asked in a calm yet almost playful tone, "Old man, do you need a hand?"

The elderly demigod, stabilizing his breathing despite the blood dripping from his wound, fixed his fierce gaze on Wyatt and demanded, "Young man, are you being held against your will?" His voice carried not just urgency but also a faint, desperate hope.

"What do you think?" Wyatt replied, spreading his arms wide, his form radiating crimson energy as the domain of Celestial Blood enveloped the area.

Meanwhile, panic flickered across the alluring demigod's face as she mentally snapped at the stout demigod, 'What's taking you so long?'

'I... I can't access my grimoire!' the stout demigod replied, his tone cracking under the weight of his distress.

The alluring demigod tried summoning her own grimoire, but her expression quickly turned to one of dread as she realized she couldn't access it either. The two demigods exchanged a look of alarm, their fear mounting as they understood the gravity of their predicament. They were cut off—not just from their grimoires, but from the rules and soul energy they relied on. All they had left was the dwindling reserve within their divinity.

"Why have you joined hands with a traitor?" the elderly demigod asked, his voice filled with both pain and accusation. But it wasn't just the physical wound that pained him—it was the thought of Wyatt, the hope of the Card World, allying himself with someone like Henricks.

"You've got it all wrong," Wyatt replied, a faint smirk tugging at his lips. "They didn't recruit me—I recruited them. They sold themselves to me for survival."

The elderly demigod's expression twisted with a mix of confusion and anguish. Wyatt, however, couldn't help but find the old man oddly amusing. Unlike his greedy and selfish teammates, this man's actions stemmed from an unshakable sense of duty to his homeland and community—a loyalty Wyatt could respect.

Listening to Wyatt's blunt words, Henricks' face twitched in irritation, but he couldn't argue with the truth of what was said. It was harsh, yes, but undeniably accurate.

"Do you plan to save them?" the elderly demigod asked, his voice betraying a hint of relief. For him, the only reason he had agreed to this cruel operation was to secure the Silver Beach Dungeon, the sole known source of Silver Milk, essential for creating Silver Milk Powder. That their society desperately needs. If not for that, he would never have participated in what amounted to genocide.

"Yes," Wyatt replied, a faint smile playing on his lips. "They work for me now. I kind of have to."

The elderly demigod's gaze softened as he nodded, appreciating Wyatt's choice. It wasn't about the the resource anymore—it was about saving millions of lives. Even if they were criminals, in the end, the old man had prioritized people over the Silver Milk.

"Good," the elderly demigod said, straightening his posture despite the blood oozing from his wounds. With quiet resolve, he added, "Well, what are you waiting for? Send me on my way." His voice was calm, even as he stood tall, ignoring the pain. Though he knew the central government had strayed far from its ideals, he still wanted to die as one of them, holding onto the faint dignity of his duty.

"No," Wyatt replied firmly, his crimson eyes locking onto the elderly demigod's. "Your duty in this world isn't finished yet, soldier."

The elderly demigod blinked in surprise but said nothing, his face a mix of confusion and quiet defiance.

Wyatt then turned to the other two demigods, a dangerous smirk tugging at his lips. Before they could react, their bodies exploded into blood mist, their grimoires and divinities dropping to the ground. In the next instant, the loot vanished, whisked away into Wyatt's storage card.

"Stay true to yourself," Wyatt said, his tone carrying an odd mix of authority and reassurance. As he spoke, his Celestial Blood Rule Domain began to heal the elderly demigod's wounds, stitching the man's battered body back together.

Henricks, catching Wyatt's signal, appeared next to him in a flicker of movement. With a brief glance at the elderly demigod, who stood silently watching, Wyatt and Henricks disappeared from the Card World, leaving behind a man whose duty and ideals had been given a new lease on life.

Just as Wyatt's Celestial Blood Rule Domain faded, several demigods finally materialized, their faces taut with urgency as they turned to the elderly demigod for answers. The old man, looking weary but resolute, shook his head slightly, signaling that he wasn't eager to explain. He adjusted his posture, preparing to return to his post at the Way Beyond.

But before he could leave, a commanding presence swept through the group. A majestic figure appeared among the demigods, exuding a suffocatingly oppressive aura that silenced the chatter. His piercing gaze swept over the scene before landing on the elderly demigod. With a voice that carried both authority and impatience, he demanded, "What happened here?"

The elderly demigod straightened his back, his expression a mixture of hesitation and duty. "Sir," he began, his tone steady despite the oppressive weight of the figure's aura, "the Freedom Fighters have sought asylum under Dalton Wyatt. He has declared his intention to save them."

"Dalton Wyatt?" The figure's brows furrowed, and a flicker of intrigue crossed his face. His lips curled into a faint smirk as he muttered under his breath, "What game is the Southern Princess playing now?"

Without waiting for further explanation, he raised his hand, summoning his grimoire. He wasted no time, contacting the other World Leaders, his aura intensifying as he prepared to share the unexpected turn of events.

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Chapter 2405 - 2405: Baylor's Betrayal

[1,139 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

"Baylor, how could you?" the demigod who dabbled in necromancy and chimera arts, stood frozen, his face a mix of shock and outrage. Finding Baylor not only bringing a stranger into their headquarters and inviting them to a private meeting of department heads he summoned on short notice in Henricks absence. This was just unthinkable. Especially now, when the Freedom Fighters were teetering on the brink of annihilation.

Baylor, unfazed by Jax's outburst, slammed his fist onto the round table, the sound reverberating through the room. "Sit down, Jax," he barked, his voice cutting through the tension. The department chiefs seated around the table exchanged uneasy glances, their frowns deepening at Baylor's brashness. Ignoring their displeasure, he continued, "In Henricks' absence, Ned was in charge. In light of his disappearance someone has to take the lead while Henricks is off somewhere—God knows where—"

"He didn't just go 'somewhere,' Baylor," the HR department chief, interrupted, her sharp tone underscoring her frustration. She leaned forward, her piercing gaze flickering to the robed stranger standing beside Baylor. "Henricks went to meet the Southern Princess to hold her to her end of the deal."

Baylor scoffed, his lips curling into a bitter smirk. "Oh, come on, Blair. Let's not kid ourselves. It was the Southern Princess who exposed our dealings to the World Leaders, prompting their strike against us. Even a child could see that trusting her now is a fool's errand," he retorted, his words laced with disdain.

Blair's eyes narrowed as she sat back in her chair, her fingers tapping against the table in a measured rhythm. Baylor seized the moment to press on, his voice rising. "Let's say—hypothetically—that Henricks somehow convinces the Southern Princess to uphold her end of the deal. After all, she's done to us, after everything that's happened, would you honestly trust her enough to restart the migration plan using the passage she provided? Do you still have faith in her, Blair?"

The room fell silent as Baylor's words hung heavy in the air. Blair's tapping stopped her gaze from hardening as she mulled over his pointed question. Around the table, the other chiefs shifted uneasily, the weight of their precarious situation sinking in.

"Oh? Then do you have any brilliant ideas, Baylor? I'm all ears," the R&D department head snapped, her voice dripping with sarcasm. She crossed her arms and leaned back in her chair, her sneer making it clear just how little faith she had in him. The tension in the room thickened as everyone silently watched Baylor, waiting for his response.

"Yes, I do," Baylor replied instantly, his tone smug, as though he'd been lying in wait for that very question. His lips curled into a satisfied smirk, and Luna, the R&D chief, frowned, realizing she'd walked right into his trap.

Her frustration was obvious as she looked away, biting the inside of her cheek. The room fell into an awkward silence, the other department heads refusing to engage. They all knew Baylor was baiting them, but no one dared speak up. Everyone understood what was happening—Baylor was staging a coup in Henricks' and Neb's absence.

Instead of confronting him, the department heads opted for neutrality, each wary of further destabilizing their already fragile situation. They weren't silent out of agreement but out of necessity. In a crisis like this, sticking together was paramount. Strife within their ranks would only hasten their downfall.

Still, it was heartbreaking to watch. Henricks's disciple, whom they all trusted, was now trying to undermine him.

Luna broke the silence, her voice laced with exasperation. "Enough of this. This is a waste of time. I'm heading back." She pushed her chair back with a screech and stood, brushing off her lab coat. Her narrowed eyes swept over the room, silently chastising the others for their inaction.

Luna turned to leave, her steps brisk and determined, her mind already racing with ideas for a new migration plan—just in case they needed one. She didn't wait for anyone's permission or acknowledgment. But just as she reached the door, it slammed shut with a heavy thud.

"Luna, take your seat while I'm still being polite," Baylor said, his voice cold and commanding, the tension in the room escalating instantly

Luna froze mid-step, her fingers curling into fists. Slowly, she turned back to face him, her expression dark and unyielding. "What the fuck did you just say to me?" she shot back, her voice sharp enough to cut through the air. Her eyes burned with defiance, and though she was only a Card Emperor, she made it clear she wasn't afraid of Baylor—or any of the demigods in the room, for that matter.

As her starry pupils began to shimmer with a dangerous glow, the room's atmosphere shifted. Baylor and every other demigod, including his mysterious guest, immediately shut their eyes and sharpened their other senses. Their intent senses flared to life, scanning for any movement or change. They knew better than to underestimate Luna's bloodline ability and its strong psychotic effects.

But for those caught in her line of sight, it was already too late. Her gaze had snared them. She was in their heads now, dulling their minds' sense of time with terrifying ease.

Luna slowly walked back toward the round table, her steps deliberate, her head slightly tilted as if in thought. She mumbled under her breath, her voice low but audible enough to echo faintly in the tense room, "Just because I lost Wyatt doesn't mean I'm weak. It just means he's strong."

Her eyes locked onto Baylor as she reached the table, her manic grin spreading wider with each step. "You," she said, her voice sharp and laced with mockery as she pointed a finger in his direction. She paused, letting the weight of her words hang in the air before continuing, "As someone who betrayed their family and homeland, I'm in no place to lecture about loyalty... but are you really sure you want to go through with this?"

Baylor didn't reply—not out of shame or guilt, but because his mind was processing everything excruciatingly slowly. Under Luna's bloodline ability, every second felt like five, leaving him stuck in a mental fog. The room felt heavy and oppressive, for those affected by her eyes it was as if time itself had been warped.

It wasn't until Luna stood directly in front of him, her piercing gaze boring into his, that Baylor's mind finally caught up to what she had said moments ago. But just as he scrambled to form a response, she tilted her head slightly, her grin fading into something far more sinister.

As Baylor's sluggish thoughts fought to take control, Luna's hand twitched at her side, her intent clear. She was ready to end him and send his soul to the River of Souls. Whatever Baylor was plotting, she knew it wasn't good for the organization—especially now.

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- Chapter 2406 - 2406: Imposter

Chapter 2406 - 2406: Imposter

[985 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

Just as Luna prepared to put an end to whatever Baylor was scheming, a low vibration rippled through the room, almost like a warning. The air seemed to hum, and in an instant, two humanoid figures materialized at the empty top end of the round table.

"What the heck is going on here?" Henricks barked, his voice laced with alarm. His wide-eyed gaze locked on Luna, who was seconds away from striking Baylor, while the rest sat frozen, silently watching the standoff.

The sound of his voice snapped Luna out of her of her rage. She jolted, blinking rapidly as her eyes returned to their normal hue. The strange, almost suffocating presence that had been clouding the demigods' minds dissipated like smoke, and their sense of time returned to normal.

The room was heavy with silence as everyone, including Luna, struggled to process what was happening. Baylor—his beloved disciple—had betrayed him. But as their eyes fell on Wyatt, standing casually beside Henricks, a flicker of realization rippled through the group. Maybe Henricks had achieved what he had set out to achieve.

Luna's gaze hardened as it flicked over Wyatt, cold and sharp. It wasn't surprising—she still held a grudge after their last encounter. Baylor, on the other hand, remained indifferently calm, even as his eyes landed on Ellen's son.

Henricks exhaled deeply, running a hand over his face before speaking. "Everyone, take your seats," he said, his tone more tired than commanding.

Luna hesitated for a split second, her jaw tight, but she eventually returned to her chair. Baylor followed though the cloaked figure he had brought with him stayed standing, looming behind him like a shadowy sentinel.

Henricks' frown deepened as he glanced at the stranger. Something about the figure felt... off. It was easy to assume they were the source of the tension between his captains, but Henricks pushed the thought aside. There were more pressing matters to handle. The teleportation array formation for the migration needed to be arranged first—then he could deal with the rest.

Straightening, Henricks stepped behind the head chair and cast one last glance at the room, making sure he had everyone's attention.

"Our deal with the Southern Princess is off," he announced, his voice steady and resolute. "Since she betrayed our trust, we'll be keeping the dungeon relocation apparatus as compensation."

There was a ripple of approval around the table as the others nodded in agreement. The betrayal of the Southern Princess deeply hurt, under normal circumstances, they would never have reached out to her in the first place but they had no other choice.

Baylor leaned back in his chair, seemingly pleased with the decision. Still, he couldn't stop himself from asking, "Then how are we going to migrate now? Or are we finally going to make a stand against them? Like we should've done from the start?"

His words hung in the air, charged and expectant. Everyone shifted uncomfortably, waiting to see how Henricks would respond. But his words surprised everyone, "Who the fuck are you and where is Baylor?"

Wyatt smirked, leaning back slightly as if enjoying a private joke. At least Henricks wasn't as clueless as the other demigods in the room. Wyatt couldn't fathom how they had all failed to realize that the Baylor sitting before them was an impostor.

From the moment Wyatt stepped into the room, he had instinctively activated his soul pupils, scanning the soul pathways of everyone present. It was a habit now—a necessary precaution, given how many of his enemies relied on sneaky abilities. The scan made it glaringly obvious: the Baylor in front of them was a fraud. And the cloaked figure beside him? Their body was only a few weeks old—with a demigod soul, yes, but barely formed.

"Henricks, what are you talking about? He's using Baylor's grimoire, so he has to be Baylor," Demigod Jax interjected, his tone dripping with disbelief. He shook his head, his brows furrowed. The very idea of Henricks suspecting Baylor was absurd to him. There are plenty of ways to impersonate someone, sure, but one can't fake their grimoire. Baylor called this meeting through his grimoires—no imposter could pull that off.

Wyatt raised an eyebrow, his grin widening just slightly as Jax spoke. The naivety was almost painful to watch.

Henricks, however, was undeterred. His jaw tightened as his sharp gaze lingered on the so-called Baylor. "That confirms it," he said, his voice low but firm. "You're behind Ned's disappearance. Baylor must've gotten too close during his investigation, didn't he?"

Henricks' accusation hung in the air, heavy with tension. A murmur rippled through the room, the other demigods exchanging uneasy glances.

Wyatt's smirk turned into a full grin, watching Henricks piece it together. The latter knew his disciple very well, real Baylor would never have advocated for the Freedom Fighters to go to war with the World Leaders unless it was an absolute last resort. That wasn't just out of character—it was a glaring red flag.

Henricks took a slow, measured breath and added, his tone as cold as steel, "I know my disciple too well to fall for this act. He wouldn't resort to force unless there was no other choice. Whoever you are, you're not Baylor."

The room grew deathly quiet as Henricks' words settled over them like a heavy fog. The revelation that Luna wasn't behind Ned's disappearance brought an undeniable wave of relief, evident in the way a few shoulders subtly relaxed. But that relief was fleeting, replaced just as quickly by a gnawing worry—for both Ned and the real Baylor.

Wyatt eyes were sharp as he observed the imposter and the robed figure behind him. His expression was unreadable, but his mind was working overtime, dissecting the situation. He'd hoped to see the imposter reveal their agenda, but Henricks had called them out too soon, throwing the conversation off track. The air in the room felt heavy, each person on edge, eyeing the imposter and his guest.

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

Chapter 2407 - 2407: The Empty Space Project

[1,079 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

"You two better start talking before I make you talk," Henricks warned, his sharp gaze locked onto the fake Baylor and his robed companion. He did not have the time for this. His patience was already running thin, and their lack of reaction—even after being exposed—only made him more angry.

The imposter Baylor turned to the robed figure beside him, silently seeking guidance. A small nod was all it took. With a resigned sigh, he finally spoke, "Well, I'll admit, it bruises my pride that I got caught the moment I opened my mouth in front of you. But I can live with it—knowing it wasn't a flaw in my ability, but rather that you just know your disciple too well—"

"Cut the crap." Henricks snapped, his tone curt and no-nonsense. "I don't have time for this. Start by telling me who you are."

The Freedom Fighters were already in dire straits, and every second wasted on theatrics was another second lost. He wasn't in the mood for games, especially from the trapped imposter.

The fake Baylor shook his head, seemingly unfazed by the interruption, before responding, "It doesn't matter who we are—what matters is what we can do for you."

Jax, who had been barely holding onto his patience, suddenly shot up from his seat. His voice thundered through the room, "Enough of this bullshit! Where the hell are Ned and the real Baylor?"

His fists clenched, his face flushed with anger and worry. He couldn't understand why Henricks was even entertaining this conversation instead of ordering them to be restrained and interrogated. Every second wasted was a second his friends could be suffering.

"Jax!" Henricks barked, rubbing his temples in frustration.

He didn't blame Jax for reacting this way, but he couldn't explain himself either. If Wyatt hadn't mentally contacted him, urging him to figure out the imposters' true intentions, he wouldn't have wasted even a second on this nonsense.

Jax exhaled sharply, visibly biting back the words he wanted to hurl. But he made his disappointment clear—slamming his boot against the stone table with a loud thud before dropping back into his seat, arms crossed, jaw clenched.

The tension in the room was suffocating. Now, all eyes were on the imposter and his companion. They felt there was a reason Henricks wanted them to start talking, like maybe he seeking other options to their problem than the Southern Princess but would they finally start talking and was Henricks willing to look past them imprisoning his best friend and disciple?

"The tensions are running high, so I'll skip the small talk and get straight to the point," the fake Baylor said, his tone calm yet deliberate. He paused, briefly glancing at Wyatt, displeased with how the young man was sizing him and his master up. Still, he let it slide—for now.

Then, turning back to the room, he revealed, "We can provide you with the missing piece to complete your Empty Space Project."

The moment those words left his lips, Luna and Henricks' eyes widened in shock. The Empty Space Project. Their secret contingency plan—the last resort in case the Southern Princess failed to uphold her end of the deal. Only a handful of people knew they were still working on it. The rest of the Freedom Fighters, including most of the department heads, had been led to believe the project had been shut down due to budgetary constraints.

Henricks frowned, folding his arms. "The Empty Space Project... What about it?" His tone was cautious, waiting for the fake Baylor to explain himself.

But instead of answering immediately, the imposter turned his gaze toward Luna, as if expecting her to speak up first.

That small action alone sent a wave of discomfort through the room. The Freedom Fighters exchanged uneasy glances, a silent frustration simmering beneath the surface. They were being undermined—right in their own headquarters. Yet, despite their irritation, they couldn't ignore the fact that this imposter had just mentioned something that piqued their interest.

'The Empty Space Project? The one Henricks and Luna were working on before shutting it down due to lack of funds?' She narrowed her eyes recalling the project. Unable to figure out how it mattered and relevant to their circumstance, now of all times, Blair finally spoke up, her voice laced with skepticism, "How exactly does it help us right now, when our enemies could break through that door any second?"

Her words carried the weight of impatience, mirroring the tension hanging thick in the air. Now, all eyes were back on the fake Baylor. Was this conversation even necessary right now? Was trying to trick them under the guise of offering a solution?

Seeing that both Henricks and Luna were playing dumb, the fake Baylor let out a weary sigh.

"We know everything there is to know about your Empty Space Project." His tone was calm, almost amused. "Honestly, we were both shocked and impressed by the progress you've made. You don't need me to tell you—you already know—your research into empty space is years ahead of the top ten universities and even the central government."

He leaned forward slightly, his voice lowering just a fraction. "You've hit a critical bottleneck. Given enough time, you'd overcome it—one way or another. And when you do, you'll be the first card apprentices to establish an artificial channel for inter-realm travel."

The weight of his words settled heavily over the room. But before anyone could react, he continued, his voice almost teasing.

"But here's the problem—you don't have time. And you don't have the resources." He let that sink in before adding, "We can give you both... and then some."

The room fell into an uneasy silence.

The other department heads exchanged confused glances. The Empty Space Project? What the hell was this guy talking about? As far as they knew, that project had been shut down ages ago due to budget cuts.

But Henricks and Luna?

They were sweating bullets.

Panic flickered in their eyes, their minds racing pondering the same, 'How the hell did he know this much? Was it Ned who revealed it to them to save his ass?'

What made it worse? The real culprit responsible for all this—Ned—was missing.

Meaning, all the blame for the ruthless and heartless choices they made behind everyone's backs? It was about to land squarely on their shoulders.

And even though the fake Baylor's words meant their research—the project they had poured blood, sweat, and sleepless nights into—now had a real chance of being completed...they did not like where this conversation was headed.

Not. One. Bit.

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

Chapter 2408 - 2408: Secrets

[990 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

Henricks and Luna were sweating bullets, and for good reason. They—along with Ned—had funneled a huge chunk of their organization's already limited funds into the Empty Space Project, tightening the belt on every other department, especially the health department run by Plague Doctor Joy who fortunately for them was too busy attending to the wounded at the plague palace to attend this meeting.

Because of that one decision, the health team had been forced to come up with a desperate solution to treat those who desperately needed medical attention—using a unique plague to siphon vitality from healthy members and transfer it to those on their deathbeds or mortally wounded, just enough to pull them back from the brink.

Yeah, the lack of funds had driven them to literal vampirism.

Thankfully, the Freedom Fighters were all fanatics. They would willingly lay down their lives for the cause they all believed in, so sharing their health with their fellow comrades? That was nothing. If not for that level of devotion, the organization would have crumbled long before the Southern Princess stabbed them in the back. Because of that, as the ones responsible for dragging their people to this despair-filled point, Ned, Luna, and Henricks couldn't shake their shame.

However, they did not do it out of greed. They knew the Empty Space Project wouldn't just be the answer to their current crisis—it would be their redemption, the key to making things right. After all, by stealing the only known source of Silver Milk overnight, they had turned every single ally of theirs in the Card World into an enemy. Their plans to hand the Silver Beach Dungeon over to the Southern Princess had only sealed their fate. The only way forward now was the Empty Space Project.

Their intentions were noble—they weren't just fighting to survive the present but to win tomorrow. But at what cost?

That was why Henricks and Luna were far from thrilled when the fake Baylor brought it up. Luna shot Henricks a sharp look, waiting for him to shut the fake Baylor up before anyone else pieced together what they had done. But he didn't. And that made her stomach drop as every second he kept talking, they were one step closer to being exposed.

"What the heck is he talking about?" the head of the operations department asked, deep frown etched on his face. Something wasn't adding up.

They knew exactly why they had shut down the Empty Space Project—because back then, Luna hadn't been able to show any promising results. If she had, they wouldn't have shut it down. Hell, they would've thrown every last dime they had at it. After all, being able to construct an artificial channel for inter-realm teleportation would have solved all their problems in one go.

Blair and Jax exchanged glances before turning to Luna, silently waiting for her to confirm or deny the fake Baylor's claims. But the moment they saw her shifting in her seat, eyes darting away to avoid their gaze, suspicion crept in.

Their stares grew sharper.

Finally, they turned to Henricks, who answered smoothly, as if fake Baylor's statement didn't shake him in the slightest. "Yes, you're right—we're way ahead of the top ten universities and the five regions in Empty Space research. But you're wrong about us lacking time and resources. We've already secured them all, so that's none of your concern." His tone was firm, dismissive. Then, without missing a beat, he threw the ball back in the imposter's court. "Now, answer me—who are you guys?"

Henricks had shifted the spotlight. A calculated move. He reminded his captains that their priority wasn't questioning him or Luna—it was dealing with the fake Baylor and his companion. They couldn't afford to let an outsider stir distrust among them.

Even so, the head of the operations department couldn't help but shoot another wary glance at Henricks and Luna before redirecting his focus to the imposter. Now wasn't the time for internal division—especially not in front of their enemies.

And yet, something still didn't sit right. Why was Henricks even entertaining this conversation? Why hadn't he shut the imposter down already? He wasn't alone in that thought. The other demigods were thinking the exact same thing.

What none of them realized, however, was that Henricks wasn't acting of his own accord. He was just a puppet—moving to Wyatt's strings. He was no longer the one in charge.

"Is it the Southern Princess? Did you reveal your progress on the Empty Space Project to her to regain her support?" the fake Baylor asked, his gaze sharp with suspicion.

He knew there was no way Henricks had secured the time and resources to continue the Empty Space Project unless he had found a sponsor. And considering that Henricks had left to find the Southern Princess and then returned with Wyatt, the answer seemed obvious—she had to be the one backing him.

Henricks' expression didn't change. "That doesn't concern you," he said coolly, dismissing the accusation with a wave of his hand. "I'll ask this one last time—who are you guys?"

But before he could steer the conversation away, Luna wasn't having it.

"Henricks, did you sell my research to that bitch?" she snapped, her voice rising with fury.

Henricks clenched his jaw. "Luna, now is not the ti—"

"Answer me!" she cut him off, shooting up from her seat, her hands slamming against the table.

Henricks exhaled sharply, his patience thinning. "No, I didn't. Now sit your ass down before I throw you into some unknown realm as punishment." His voice was low and edged with warning, his gaze locking onto hers.

The room fell into tense silence.

Luna stood frozen for a moment, fists clenched, nostrils flaring. Then, with a sharp exhale, she sank back into her seat, but her glare never wavered.

Henricks, for his part, didn't look at her again.

He didn't need to. His point had been made. However, fake Baylor's eyes sparkled, and he got the segway he needed from Luna's outburst.

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

Chapter 2409 - 2409: Meeting The Matron

[993 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

"Henricks, I thought you were smarter than to trust the Southern Princess again," the fake Baylor sighed, shaking his head as if Henricks had let him down. His tone was thick with disappointment, like a teacher chastising a student who should have known better.

Then, turning his attention to the other demigods at the table, he continued, his voice carrying a knowing edge.

"If there's one thing I know about women, it's that they hold grudges—deep ones. And that goes double for powerful ones like the Southern Princess. You all remember what she did to Gainover. The poor guy had no choice but to flee to the Northern Royal Family, while his second wife and her entire family were wiped out."

He let that sink in for a moment before leaning forward slightly, his voice dropping just enough to force them to listen closer.

"She will never forgive you for stealing from her. She made that clear when she was willing to throw away the Silver Beach Dungeon and the dungeon relocation apparatus—just to get back at you. Now, I don't know how you managed to weasel your way back into her good graces, but are you really sure you can trust her? She's proven time and again that common interests aren't enough to erase old grudges."

His gaze swept over the table, his sharp eyes locking onto each demigod in turn before finally settling on Luna. He lingered there, sensing the tension, the unresolved bitterness.

"How sure are you that the 'safe passage' she's offering isn't just another trap?" He shrugged, voice almost casual. "I'm not saying it is... but are you really willing to take that risk?"

The room grew heavy with silence.

The fake Baylor smirked inwardly. His job was simple: get the Freedom Fighters to abandon their desperate crawl back to the Southern Princess and instead, turn to his master. And judging by the looks on their faces, doubt was already starting to take root.

"Is that it?" Henricks asked the fake Baylor coldly. Glancing over all his captains, he pulled the head chair back and announced, "Since you guys are too shy and chicken to introduce yourself, let me introduce you to the new leader of the Freedom Fighters, Dalton Wyatt."

Wyatt slowly walked and took his seat on the head chair under the astonished gazes of everyone present while Henricks stood behind as if his butler. Looking at the dumbfounded fake Baylor, Wyatt smirked muttering, "Interesting," resting his hands on the round table, instantly drawing everyone's attention. His gaze locked onto the robed figure, his eyes narrowing with sharp intensity.

Then, without warning, he uttered, "Celestial Blood Rule Domain."

A deep crimson hue washed over the entire meeting hall, consuming everything within it. The air grew thick with an oppressive energy, pressing down on those present like an unseen weight.

"Henricks, what's the meaning of this?" Blair demanded, rising from her seat. Her glare burned into Wyatt, but she also flicked a glance at Henricks from the corner of her eye, waiting for him to answer her. To her shock, he didn't intervene with Wyatt's action. When he finally spoke, his voice was firm and unwavering, "Sit down, Blair. Let the leader finish."

Blair stiffened. For a moment, she held his gaze, frustration flashing in her eyes. But seeing no room for argument, she clenched her jaw and reluctantly lowered herself back into her seat, feeling wronged.

Wyatt, however, paid no mind to the tension of others on the round table. His focus never wavered from the robed figure as he spoke, his voice laced with something between curiosity and amusement, "What name do you go by now? Sansa Baylor? Or perhaps Professor Sansa Orian? Or would you prefer... the Matron?"

With the shocking revelation, a cold silence settled over the room. Eyes darted toward the robed figure in alarm, disbelief flashing across the gathered Freedom Fighters' faces. Wyatt's words had sent a ripple of unease through them, a tension that thickened the air. They were both mortified and relieved. Mortified that the infamous Matron was amidst them while relieved that Luna wasn't behind Ned's disappearance.

However, the robed figure stood motionless—unbothered, unaffected. Even the fake Baylor, seated before them, remained eerily calm, as if none of this concerned him in the slightest.

Henricks, despite all his years of experience, felt a chill creep down his spine. His brows furrowed as he glanced at Wyatt from behind and asked the only question that mattered at that moment, "Are you sure?"

"Hundred." Wyatt asserted without hesitation. His lips curled into a sneer as he turned to the robed figure and grudgingly asked, "How do you want to die?"

The fake Baylor rose from his seat without a word. His robed companion stepped forward, smoothly taking his place while he moved to stand behind them. Settling comfortably into the stone chair, the figure finally pulled back the hood and lowered lowered the face mask, revealing a cascade of wild golden hair framing a perfectly symmetrical face with unrealistically beautiful features, it seemed like an master piece.

Though she had a gentle and soft smile on her face the manic light in her eyes sent a shiver through the gathered demigods. None of them dared to underestimate her. Her gaze flicked toward Wyatt, studying him with an unsettling intensity before she finally spoke, "Your eyes... they look just like Ellen's—"

"Keep my mother's name out of your mouth." Wyatt's voice was cold, edged with steel. Without looking away, he gave a subtle signal to Henricks.

Henricks didn't hesitate and activated his origin card. A space gate flared open behind him, and with a smooth, practiced motion, he stepped back entering it. The space gate closed sending him from the Yellow Plains straight to Lil Red Storm.

As the gate sealed shut, Sansa—unfazed—let out a small, almost amused sigh.

"Don't worry," she said nonchalantly, "even I'm repulsed just thinking of her name. If it were up to me, I'd erase her from the entire Card World's memory."

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Chapter 2410 - 2410: Anti-Matron Card

[1,084 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

"Just like how you erased your friend and her husband from this world?" Wyatt quipped, a menacing sneer tugging at his lips.

Sansa's frown deepened. Something about the way he phrased it felt... off. The words gnawed at her, unsettling in a way she couldn't quite place. Yes, Ellen had been her friend first, but the way Wyatt said it—it was as if they were strangers to him.

That didn't make sense.

How could there be such distance between a child and his own parents?

Wyatt didn't give her time to dwell on it. His voice cut through the moment like a blade, "Where are Baylor and Ned?"

He already knew it was impossible for Sansa to add Baylor to her Paw Clan, her feeling for him would not allow her to do so but as for Ned... If she had successfully brainwashed him, she wouldn't have needed an imposter, nor would she have shown up personally in the Yellow Plains. That meant she had failed because of some reason. It appears Ned wasn't to be underestimated causing Wyatt to reevaluate the captains of the Freedom Fighters.

Sansa tilted her head slightly. "They're safe." Then, as if bored with the topic, she shifted her focus back to him, a sly smile curling on her lips. "It's astonishing, to see you, an orphan, manage to cut the strings of the Southern Princess and the royal family and rise to become one of the richest in the Card World—and steal everything from me."

Her voice darkened, a bitterness creeping in. "I should have killed you along with your parents. Huh, Ellen continues to get in my way even now."

Her fingers drummed obsessively against the arm of the stone chair, her manic energy making the room feel even heavier.

Wyatt scoffed, leaning in slightly. "Then you should've finished what you started yourself instead of hiding behind your puppets and allies like a coward."

He let that jab sink in before twisting the knife deeper, "You know everything I took from you was what my mother gave you out of pity."

Listening to Wyatt's words Sansa's entire demeanor snapped.

"She didn't give me anything," she snarled, her voice echoing through the domain. "I took everything I wanted!"

Her expression twisted into an unsightly grimace, raw and unfiltered. Wyatt smirked, his tone laced with mock sympathy. "Keep telling yourself that. It was Ellen who made Baylor promise to move on by marrying you."

Wyatt blatantly lied. He had no clue what had actually happened between Ellen and Baylor in the past as they part their ways. But that didn't matter. All that mattered was how easily he could use it to chip away at Sansa's mind, "Baylor only married you because he promised Ellen he would."

The moment the words left his lips, he could see it—the flicker of doubt, of rage, of something deeper festering beneath the surface. And that was exactly what he wanted. He did not want her to figure out what he was up to.

Baylor was her obvious weak point. Unlike the other two mischiefs that worked on erasing their weak points, she protected her weak point with her life making herself vulnerable and limiting her growth.

...

Arriving at Lil Red Storm, Henricks wasted no time. He immediately met with Dalie Wyatt, who handed him two E-rank Anti-Matron cards.

"Just equip one in your grimoire," Dalie explained, his tone crisp and businesslike. "You'll be able to see anyone influenced by the Matron's origin card. They'll appear with a red hue—pinpointing every single spy she's planted within the Freedom Fighters."

Henricks nodded, absorbing the weight of what these cards meant.

While he had been questioning the fake Baylor, Wyatt had already unraveled the true identity of the imposter's robed companion. Using his Primordial Pupils, he had recorded the unique soul pathway arrangements of the Matron. From there, he developed a card that could help identify any card apprentice whose memories had been altered by her.

Without wasting a second, he relayed the recipe through the Demon Codex to Dredre, who was beside Ceed and Dalie. He had instructed them to produce two of them. Dredre quickly procured the necessary ingredients from the Devil Merchant Code, while Dalie set up a large-scale array formation to manufacture two of Anti-Matron cards.

Back in the present, Henricks equipped on of the anti-matron cards in his grimoire. Almost instantly, a faint glow flickered in his vision—proof that the card was active.

"Appreciate it," he said, giving a curt nod before storing the other in his card holder. Without wasting another moment, he turned and left, bidding a quick farewell he headed to his next stop, the Plague Palace.

Henricks teleported away with purpose, arriving at the plague palace, ensuring that Plague Doctor Joy was free from the Matron's influence he handed over the last Anti-Matron cards and wasted no time filling her in.

He told her everything—the shift in power with Wyatt taking over the Freedom Fighters, the Matron's role in Ned's disappearance, and her attempt to seize control of the organization through a fake Baylor.

Joy listened intently, her expression darkening with each revelation. Without hesitation, she equipped the card and scanned the plague palace. Her eyes widened slightly as the truth settled in.

"If she was able to kidnap Ned right from headquarters without any of us noticing," she muttered, "then that means we have way more of her pawns hiding in our ranks than we thought."

Her gaze flickered across the wounded lying in recovery, a cold realization sinking in. That one in every twenty-five patients in the Plague Palace were glowing red. They weren't just wounded fighters but were Paw Clan spies.

"Yeah, they really are a menace," Henricks muttered, his jaw tightening as he met Joy's gaze. She folded her arms, her expression unreadable. "And what does Wyatt plan to do with them?"

Henricks exhaled, glancing out the window of the Plague Palace toward headquarters. "He says he can save them all," he said, turning back to her. "So he wants you to capture them alive using your plague."

Joy smirked, the corners of her lips curling upward in a mix of amusement and grim satisfaction. "Good thing I've been preparing a plague just for an occasion like this—ever since our last run-in with the Matron."

As soon as she finished speaking, a massive tide of plague erupted from the Plague Palace, spreading through out the headquarters like a tsunami, swallowing everything

and everyone in its path. The regular members of the Freedom Fighters were unaffected while Matron's spies were all forced into a deep sleep.

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Chapter 2411 - 2411: Twisted

[1,633 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

"Now that's the funniest thing I've heard all day," Sansa laughed, her voice sharp with amusement, though her eyes burned with barely contained rage. She stared at Wyatt as if she wanted to rip his mouth apart for daring to say that the life she built with Baylor was nothing more than Ellen's charity.

But as she tried to summon her power, a chilling realization struck her—within the Celestial Blood Rule Domain, her abilities were being severely restrained. If not for her divinity, she would've thought she had regressed to a mere mortal.

Then she saw it—that dismissive shake of Wyatt's head. It sent her fury spiraling out of control. Grinding her teeth, she spat, "I'm sure your parents told you how they met... but only I know the real story. Do you want to hear how your father, a penniless bum, managed to land your mother—the princess of the Duskborn family?"

Wyatt chuckled, his gaze mocking. "Oh, I don't doubt that you played your little games, pulling the strings behind the scenes." His smirk widened as he leaned forward. "But that doesn't change the fact that the love they shared—their marriage—was real. Unlike yours with Baylor. No wonder that, after all these years, you were never able to give birth to his child."

His words struck like a dagger, deliberate and cruel. He didn't just attack her marriage—he dragged her inability to conceive her love's child despite marrying him for more than a decade now into it, twisting the blade deeper.

Sansa's face darkened, her fingers twitching against the stone table. The moment he acknowledged that his parents' union wasn't fate but her own manipulation, she expected outrage, maybe even denial. But instead, he seemed... unbothered. No—worse. Thankful.

Her stomach twisted. From his perspective, it made sense—without her interference, he wouldn't even exist. But knowing that didn't make her anger any easier to swallow. She wanted to flip the table, shatter the smug look off his face, but she forced herself to stay composed, though the crack in her expression betrayed her simmering rage.

"You know," Wyatt mused, his tone almost casual, "I recently learned that Ellen wanted to make you her only child's godparent."

He let the words hang in the air, watching for a reaction. Then, after a deliberate pause, he added with a smirk, "You know what's funny? Until the day she died, Ellen truly believed you were her best friend. She was always grateful for how 'supportive' you were of her love."

Sansa scoffed, a cruel smile curling on her lips. "Sucker—" she sneered, mocking Ellen's ignorance and naivety.

"Don't do that," Wyatt cut in sharply, his voice low but firm. His piercing gaze locked onto hers as if daring her to deny what he was about to say. "I know the truth. Despite your envy, despite everything—you still considered her your best friend until the very end. That's why you never used your ability on her or the people close to her. That's why you had Karl do your dirty work—why you hired him to kill her and her family. Because deep down, you knew Baylor would never truly be yours as long as Ellen was alive."

The room felt colder. Sansa's expression faltered, just for a fraction of a second, before she masked it with indifference. But Wyatt saw it—saw the flicker of something behind her eyes.

She hated Ellen and envied her, but she loved her, too, as she was her one true friend. Everyone else around her treated her like a tragic kid or avoided her because she was a weird kid.

"What are you trying to get at, young man?" Sansa's voice was sharp, and her patience was wearing thin. She leaned forward, eyes narrowing dangerously. "Out of consideration for my friendship with your mother, you want me to spare you? Is that it?"

She was done with this back-and-forth. She didn't like how much Wyatt knew about her—how easily he was peeling back the layers she had long since buried.

Wyatt chuckled, shaking his head as if she had completely missed the point. "No," he said smoothly, "I just wanted you to know that Ellen considered you a true friend until

the very end. If you had asked for her help with Baylor, she would have happily helped you—without a second thought."

This chapter was made possible by the MV_LEMPYR community.

He let the words sink in before tilting his head slightly, his smirk deepening. "And you know that. But you just couldn't stomach it, could you? Knowing that as long as Ellen was around, you'd never be Baylor's priority."

He sighed dramatically, his expression almost mocking. "Well, I guess it is what it is, huh?"

The air between them grew heavy. Sansa's fingers twitched against the armrest of her chair, the slightest crack in her composure. Wyatt could see it—the way her jaw clenched, the way her eyes darkened with restrained fury.

And that was exactly what he wanted.

"Stop trying to paint your mother as some kind of saint who sacrificed her life for me!" Sansa screamed, slamming her fist against the table. The impact sent a sharp echo through the room, but it did little to ease her frustration. Her fingers curled into the stone as her chest heaved. She hated this—hated the Celestial Blood Rule Domain that restrained her, hated how she could do nothing but take this shit from the insolent brat in front of her.

Wyatt sneered, watching her unravel with detached amusement. "Is that what you tell yourself to sleep at night?" His tone was taunting, and his smirk made her blood boil even more.

"Shut up!" Sansa snapped, her voice laced with venom. "She knew how much Baylor meant to me! If she was truly my friend, she would have helped me without me having to ask!"

Wyatt leaned back, his gaze calculating. He could see it—the struggle flickering in her eyes. He was forcing her to relive memories she had long tried to bury, twisting the knife into wounds she thought had healed. And despite being someone who could manipulate minds, even Sansa found it impossible to erase Ellen from hers.

"Ellen wasn't just your friend. She was Baylor's friend too," Wyatt said, his voice slow and deliberate. "And that's what you really hate, isn't it? Because you wanted to be everything to him. You wanted Baylor all to yourself."

He tilted his head, studying her. "Honestly, I don't know how you managed to keep your true self hidden from him for so many years. Especially during your marriage. But I suppose fear worked in your favor. Fear of losing him. Fear of being hated by him. Fear

of him being indifferent to you. Fear is a powerful motivator when used correctly, isn't it?"

His words hung in the air, a twisted reminder to everyone at the table just how deep Sansa's obsession with Baylor had run. She had spent her life molding herself into what he needed, suppressing the real her—when in truth, she never had to. With her power, she could have demanded anything. Yet, she chose to shape her entire existence around him, as long as he was at the center of her world alone.

Wyatt's smirk deepened. "Let me guess... You thought Baylor would never be able to move on from Ellen as long as you were still around, right?" He let the words settle before delivering the final blow. "It must've killed you when he told you he wanted to adopt me."

The silence that followed was deafening.

Sansa's nails dug into the table, her expression twisting into something dark and unreadable. But Wyatt could see it—the slight tremble in her fingers, the way her breath hitched for just a second.

...

"Will this teleportation array formation actually work?" Joy asked, her gaze shifting between Henricks and the nearly hundred teleportation arrays being assembled. The regular members of the organization bustled around, carefully placing ingredients and aligning formations under the supervision of the array masters. Fortunately, they had just enough skilled individuals to pull it off. Plus, the teleportation arrays were detailed enough to allow the higher-ranked array masters to divide the work among lower-level array masters and volunteers, making the process smoother.

"Yeah, it will," Henricks confirmed, arms crossed as he watched the work in progress. "It was designed by a monster—you'd have to meet her to understand what I mean."

Joy arched a brow at his wording. "A monster?"

Henricks chuckled, shaking his head. "You'll see."

Joy hummed in thought before adding, "So, your decision to join Wyatt wasn't just a last-ditch effort?" She had suspected as much—Henricks wasn't the type to make desperate, reckless moves. If he had thrown his lot in with Wyatt, he had likely thought it through.

Henricks exhaled, his gaze steady. "You'll understand when we get there." There was no point in discussing it further—at this stage, they were already committed.

Joy crossed her arms, watching the formation process for a moment before turning back to Henricks. "What about Matron? Why doesn't he just kill her and let the others come help with the immigration plan?" It seemed like the obvious solution. With the other demigods available—especially Luna—they could speed things up considerably.

Henricks' expression darkened slightly. "He said Matron's Origin Card is tricky. Apparently, if she wanted to, she could kill all of us in an instant, and we wouldn't be able to do a damn thing to stop her."

Joy's breath hitched, her body going stiff as a chill ran down her spine. The casual hum of activity around them suddenly felt distant. "What...?" The weight of Henricks' words settled over her mind like a thick fog of dread.

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Chapter 2412 - 2412: Haunting Memories, Gideon Grim's New Plans

[1,526 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

"You've grown strong, I'll give you that," Sansa admitted, tilting her head slightly. "But don't mistake my patience for helplessness." Her lips curled into a smirk as her eyes darkened. "The only reason I didn't kill you the moment I became a demigod is because Baylor agreed to give our marriage another shot—on the condition that I leave you alone."

After ascending to the card demigod realm, the first thing Sansa did was check on her husband—silently, unseen—using the new abilities granted by her origin card, Haunting Memories. The card allowed the memory of her in a person's mind, to come to life as a phantom and haunt them, letting her spy without their knowledge. But that wasn't all. If she wanted, she could weaponize the memory itself, turning it into a deadly force as strong as the victim's perception of her. Allowing her memories to assassinate those who remember or even know her.

Watching Baylor work tirelessly, pushing himself past his limits to save the Freedom Fighters pained her, yes, but it also made her realize just how much the organization meant to him. That was when she decided—if the Freedom Fighters meant everything to Baylor, she would make them hers. And once they were under her control, he would have no choice but to return to her side.

But before she could fully execute her plan to make the freedom fighters hers, Baylor caught her in the act. She had no choice—she had his memories of her kidnap him.

Being taken captive without even a chance to resist sent a wave of panic through Baylor—not for himself, but for Wyatt. Thankfully, Wyatt was beyond the influence of the Card World's sphere, meaning Sansa couldn't reach him. Not yet. That gave Baylor just enough time to negotiate. He knew exactly what Sansa wanted most in the world, and this time, he made sure she wouldn't have the chance to pull strings behind his back—as she had with Ellen and her husband.

Though it infuriated Sansa that Baylor was only willing to give their marriage another shot for Ellen's orphan's sake, she wasn't about to waste this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Still, she wasn't going to let him half-ass it like last time. No, this time, he would truly commit—she had made sure of it. She had to be the center of his world, just as he was hers. That was why Baylor never reached out to the Freedom Fighters about his investigation—because he knew better.

Even with Baylor back by her side, Sansa continued taking over the Freedom Fighters. She wanted to gift the organization to him, a symbol of their fresh start. This time, she would support him with everything she had, ensuring he had no reason to leave. But that was only if he put her first—if she was his priority, the way he was hers.

Otherwise?

All hell would break loose. Just like the last time, she will hurt everyone that Baylor prioritized over her.

When Matron claimed that Baylor had already joined her side, the other departmental heads were stunned. They couldn't believe it—Baylor had dedicated his life to their cause. But then, remembering his love for Ellen, they realized Matron wasn't lying. A heavy silence settled over the room as they chose to remain mere spectators, watching the tense exchange between the new leader Henricks had forced upon them and Matron.

Wyatt was taken aback. So this was why Matron's memory never haunted him—why she hadn't tried to assassinate him in his sleep whenever he was in the Card World after she became a demigod. He had Baylor to thank for that. If not for Baylor's meddling he could have dealt with Matron sooner.

Shaking his head, Wyatt turned to Sansa. "How did you become a demigod? Last I checked, you were nowhere near condensing your divinity." His eyes narrowed as a thought struck him. "Was it Gideon Grim?"

He knew only Gideon had the knowledge and resources to reach out to the Three Mischiefs and help them break through to the demigod realm ahead of time.

At the mention of Gideon Grim, Sansa's expression finally darkened. But she quickly regained her composure, tilting her chin up slightly as she replied, "Looks like they weren't wrong to call you one of the most brilliant minds of this era." She let out a slow breath. "Yes, it was him. At first, he wanted me to kill you in exchange for his help, and since I wanted the same, I agreed." Her lips curled into a smirk. "Don't worry, though—I promised Baylor I wouldn't kill you or be the reason you died." She leaned in slightly. "As for Gideon... he never specified when I had to kill you. Could be now... could be a thousand years from now."

Wyatt exhaled sharply. So that's why Gideon Grim had stopped planting his seed in card apprentices across the five regions. Wyatt now realized that Gideon Grim had managed to plant his seed in one of the Southern Region's officials—someone who knew about Clown Mask and her visions of the future. That revelation forced him to reconsider his plans for helping the Seven Princes of Hell take over the Card World.

"Did he also help the Supreme Leader and the Emissary of Light?" Wyatt asked, though he already knew Gideon had reached out to the Supreme Leader—they were clearly working together. But the Emissary of Light? That was still a mystery.

Sansa smirked, crossing her arms as she leaned back slightly. "Hold on, buddy. I answered your question—now it's your turn to do me a solid."

Wyatt sighed, already having guessed the reason why she was suddenly being so cooperative. She wanted something from him. Narrowing his eyes, he leaned back, arms crossed. "What do you want?" His tone was prepared—he knew a negotiation when he saw one.

He did not want to entertain her but he had no choice. He needed information on the Emissary of Light. He needed to know if he also had become a demigod and joined hands with Gideon Grim. No news ever slipped out of the Empire about him. His followers considered it blasphemy to even discuss him, believing their duty was to obey without question or expectation.

Sansa's lips curled into a pleased smile. "The Freedom Fighters. I plan to gift it to Baylor during our honeymoon," she revealed, her voice practically dripping with delight. For some reason, talking about this with Ellen's orphan made her feel as if she were speaking to Ellen herself.

Wyatt scoffed, shaking his head before she'd even finished. "Not happening." His rejection was instant, absolute. She was asking too much for basically nothing. Wyatt was the one who took advantage in a negotiation—not the other way around.

"That's it. This is where I draw the line." Jax slammed his fist onto the stone table, his frustration boiling over. "I know we're in a tough spot, but you guys are basically kicking us while we're down. Wyatt, you're supposed to be our leader—I expected at least a little respect for our cause." He shot a glare at Wyatt and Sansa, disgusted by the way they so casually discussed the future of the Freedom Fighters right in front of them, as if their struggles meant nothing.

Wyatt barely spared him a glance. "Sit your ass down." His voice was sharp, laced with power.

Jax's body jerked against his will as the celestial blood rule domain took hold, forcing him back into his seat. His breath hitched. Panic flickered in his eyes as he struggled—but it was useless. His horror mirrored in the faces of the other demigods, who also found themselves frozen, staring at Wyatt in stunned silence.

Just then, Luna let out a dry laugh and leaned back. "See? Told you. I'm not weak—he's just too strong."

Ignoring Luna's interruption, Sansa began, "Don't be so quick to reject me. At least hear me out first, will you?"

Wyatt exhaled through his nose, already knowing this conversation would go nowhere. "Sure, go ahead," he said dismissively, leaning back in his chair. He wasn't going to give her what she wanted, which meant she wouldn't give him any useful information. Still, if he played along, he could at least stall for time—Henricks needed every second to get the Freedom Fighters safely to Lil Red Storm Realm.

Sansa studied him for a moment, then suddenly smiled. "You have no idea how much you resemble your mother." She tilted her head, amusement flickering in her eyes. "It's times like this I wish I'd just used my ability on her and kept her by my side instead of killing her. Don't get me wrong, I don't regret it—but I can't help feeling nostalgic."

Wyatt's jaw clenched. His expression remained cold, but there was a dangerous edge in his voice as he cut through her little game. "Sansa, nothing you say or do will make me hand over the Freedom Fighters. So let us just get this over with."

She was trying to get a rise out of him, but it wasn't going to work. Whatever she thought she saw in him, whatever connection she was trying to fabricate—it didn't exist. He wasn't Ellen's son. He was a stranger to her.

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Chapter 2413 - 2413: Sansa's Revelation

[1,495 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

"Wyatt, I didn't take you for someone so closed-minded—especially not as severe as these old-school folks," Sansa said suddenly, shaking her head in mock pity listening to him dismiss her outright even before she could put forward her proposal, making it clear that no matter what she proposed or offered, he wouldn't even consider it.

Wyatt turned to Luna, arching a brow. "She seems to be your kind. Any idea what she's getting at?" He paused briefly, then added, "No offense."

Hearing Wyatt lump her in with Sansa, Luna's expression twisted in irritation, but deep down, she was thrilled. He was finally acknowledging her. She was beginning to realize that indifference hurt far more than hatred. So she could not help but be overjoyed even though Wyatt was mocking her and seemed to hold a lot of grudge for her actions.

With a sigh, she crossed her arms and said, "Since she can't kill you, I'm guessing she wants you to join her. That way, you won't go after her for having a hand in your parents' deaths."

Her words made sense to every demigod in the room. They all understood one thing—Wyatt's potential was undeniable. If he survived long enough to reach his peak, the likes of Matron and the Founders would no longer sit at the top of the food chain. They would fall—and they knew it.

More than that, they recognized something else. With Wyatt on their side, the value of the Freedom Fighters had skyrocketed. Matron and the Southern Princess wanted them more than ever now. For a moment, they couldn't help but feel a sense of redemption—even if it wasn't truly because of them. Overnight, they had gone from a secret organization that kept the Central Government on its toes to the most hated group in the Card World and were forced into hiding. And now? Now, they were wanted again. It was almost... invigorating.

This time, though, people didn't see them as disposable pawns—they saw them as potential assets. Sure, it was degrading to have their worth reduced to mere numbers,

but after being overlooked for so long, even that felt like recognition. To think, one wrong decision had reduced them to this state. But at least now, under new leadership that was already delivering results, they had a shot at redemption.

Sansa smirked as she turned to Luna, catching the annoyance on her face after Wyatt lumped them together. "Southern Royal Family's pug, huh? You guys are real lucky he was born in your region instead of the Central Region," she mused, crossing her arms. "Otherwise, I had big plans for your territory once I became a demigod." Subtly implying that if not for her forcing Ellen and her husband to seek asylum in the Southern region, Wyatt would have been born in the central region and the Southern Region would not have been able to experience the sudden attention and growth it was experiencing right now.

Also, she wasn't bluffing about her nefarious plans to take over the Southern Region. As seen in Clown Mask's future vision, Sansa had been setting her sights on both the Northern and Southern Regions for a long while now. She had been preparing for it by planting sleeper spies in both the royal families to get them to fight each other leaving them vulnerable to her. But she and her paw clan came into light because of Baylor's hand in stealing the Silver milk powder.

But Luna wasn't wrong about her intentions, either. Sansa had never truly feared Wyatt—she knew the full extent of her Origin Card and had always felt confident she could handle anyone or at least manage to survive to get revenge another day. But after experiencing his Celestial Blood Rule Domain firsthand, she was beginning to reevaluate that belief. For the first time, she saw him as a genuine threat.

And the worst part?

She wasn't allowed to kill him or even be the reason for his death. It was like asking a lion to fight a tiger—without its claws and fangs.

"That's not going to happen." Wyatt shook his head, his expression unreadable, though inwardly, he sneered at Sansa's audacity—did she really think she could buy him?

His voice was cold as he continued, "There's nothing you can do or say that would make me even consider forgiving you—let alone joining you or working for you."

With Matron physically present in the Yellow Plains, Wyatt had no choice but to entertain her. Now that she was here, she could fully unleash her Origin Card's Haunting Memories effect, making it possible for her to assassinate anyone—everyone—within the realm.

That was why evacuating the Freedom Fighters had to happen fast and without her noticing. If she caught on, she could take them all hostage, using her ability to weaponize their memories of her against them.

The demigods might be able to survive, but the rest—especially the families and children—stood no chance. That left Wyatt with one option: tolerate Matron till Henricks was done evacuating all the members of the Freedom Fighters. The demigods had to be here to maintain appearance and give Matron a false sense of security that they weren't up anything behind her back.

Yes, he had Sansa trapped within his celestial blood rule domain, effectively rendering her powerless. But the real problem was Haunting Memories wasn't her Origin Card's only ability. During her Demigod Realm baptism, her origin card had also gained a terrifying effect, a form of immortality—Memory Womb.

Memory Womb allowed Sansa to revive herself using someone's memory of her as a womb to be reborn at her peak. As long as one person remembered her, she could live—but at the cost of that person's life. They would literally die while their memories of her give birth to her.

And yet, despite how broken her ability was, Clown Mask's future vision had revealed that Sansa wasn't even the trickiest of the three Mischiefs Aba Windsor had defeated. That title went to the Emissary of Light.

Now, he was practically omnipotent in the Card World. That was why Wyatt had gone so far as to negotiate with Sansa—to learn whether the Emissary of Light had become a demigod by joining forces with Gideon Grim.

Wyatt doubted it. If Gideon Grim was as intelligent as he gave him credit for, he wouldn't approach the Emissary of Light knowing he would be too hard to control with his abilities and army of fanatics. Then again, desperate times had a way of making even the smartest people do incredibly stupid things. And Wyatt couldn't afford to take chances.

"What if I were to say I'll join the Freedom Fighters?" Sansa said suddenly, her voice cutting through the tension in the room. "Not only will you gain me, but my Paw Clans as well."

Silence fell. Every person in the room stared at her, stunned.

Seeing that she had their attention, Sansa leaned in slightly, a knowing smile playing on her lips. "Of course, I have conditions. I expect to be given the rank of captain, and my Paw Clans will function as a separate department. Don't worry—I'm more than willing to share my forces and funds with the Freedom Fighters. After all, I know this will make Baylor happy."

Her tone was calm, but she made sure Wyatt and the other captains understood there was no trickery in her words. This wasn't a scheme—at least, not in the way they might assume.

With her grand ambitions of taking over the Southern Region, the Northern Region, and eventually the entire world shattered—thanks to her identity being exposed far too soon by her own husband—Sansa found herself aimless. And she had decided that wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

For now, she would focus on her marriage.

She believed that if she and Baylor were fighting for the same cause, it would be easier to mend the fractures between them. And since she knew Wyatt's presence made it impossible for her to take control of the Freedom Fighters, she chose the next best thing—joining them.

This way, she could keep her husband happy.

And more importantly, she could keep a very close eye on Wyatt—the only person who truly felt like a real threat.

Then there was Gideon Grim—a wild card with resources and means beyond her knowledge. But since the enemy of her enemy could be an ally, she could even see herself forming an uneasy truce with Wyatt... all because of him.

Luna let out a sharp laugh, arms crossed. "So let me get this straight—you expect us to believe that you've completely given up on world domination... because you suddenly want to work on your marriage with Baylor?" Her voice dripped with mockery. She knew exactly what Matron was capable of, and trusting her was out of the question.

"Hell no!" Blair snapped, her voice cutting through the room. She whirled on Wyatt, eyes blazing. "Leader, I'm sorry for speaking out of turn, but no matter what you decide—there is no way in hell I will ever consider her my comrade."

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Chapter 2414 - The Lunatic Bride

[1,000 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

When her blunt words were met with pin-drop silence, Blair glanced around the table, her brows furrowing as she sought support, "Come on, guys, back me up here. I know I'm not the only one feeling this way, right?"

The head of operations leaned back, arms crossed. "Beggars can't be choosers," he said with a shrug. "But that being said, it's up to the leader to decide—our job is to follow." His words made it clear that some of them were at least open to the idea of Matron joining their ranks, hoping Baylor could keep her in check by giving their marriage a real shot. Of course, whether he could ever truly erase Ellen from his heart—as Sansa wanted—was another matter entirely.

Luna, who had been listening quietly, suddenly spoke up, "I propose that if she really wants to join our cause, she has to make an oath—no using her freaky abilities on any Freedom Fighter members. If she agrees, I'm game."

She leaned forward, her gaze sharp predicting, "With Wyatt leading us and her assisting, we could bring our vision to fruition in a year, tops."

Her confidence wasn't unfounded. If Sansa was truly committed to their cause and willing to follow Wyatt's lead, nothing in the Card World could stop them. Not even the Emissary of Light—because Sansa was his natural enemy. That was precisely why he had allied himself with Matron and the Supreme Leader in the first place.

By the time the Three Michiefs were done with the Founders of the Central Government and rulers of the other four regions, their only real obstacle to world domination was themselves. And that, ironically, was why it had been so easy for Aba Windsor to pick them off one by one in Clown Mask's future vision.

"This is fucked up—you guys know that, right?" Blair shouted, slamming her fists on the table. She was livid. "She's partly the reason we're even in this mess! If she hadn't tried to take over our share of the black market—killing our people left and right—we would've had enough funds, from selling the silver, to go into hiding before the World Leaders joined forces against us!"

She looked around, her chest rising and falling with heavy breaths, only to realize the majority of the captains were actually for Sansa joining them. The rest stayed neutral. And she? She was completely alone in her stance.

Jax let out a weary sigh, rubbing the back of his neck. "Blair, I get it. Letting her in—it feels like we're spitting on the graves of our fallen comrades. But Luna's right." He met her glare head-on and proceeded to persuade her, "With Sansa on our side, we might actually end this a hell of a lot sooner. And who knows? We might even get to enjoy the paradise we've been fighting so damn hard to build for our future generations with them."

His voice softened, the exhaustion in his eyes evident. "Our people are dying, Blair. And yeah, Matron played a role in that... but if we keep carrying this fight on the backs of the good people of our organization, sooner or later, those backs are gonna break. Our current situation is an example of it."

Seeing that she already had the majority vote—even before Wyatt had spoken—Sansa felt a surge of pride and became overconfident thinking, 'It wouldn't be too difficult to take the Freedom Fighters right out from under Wyatt and Henricks' noses.'

Sure, there was the minor inconvenience of taking an oath not to use her abilities on any Freedom Fighter members, but she could easily find a way around that. All she had to do was be careful with her wording when making the oath. If she played this right, not only would she gain legitimacy within the organization, but she'd also have more influence over its direction once she was in.

Everything was falling into place.

Now, all she needed was Wyatt's approval. Once he gave the nod, she'd officially be part of the Freedom Fighters. And from there, she could truly claim the organization—for her beloved husband.

Her fingers subconsciously grazed her wrist as she thought of Baylor. 'I just need to wrap this up and get back home to him...' She missed his touch, his embrace. No matter how much she had of him, it never felt like enough. After all, she had been thirsty of his warm touch and embrace for decades now.

Lost in the memory of their intimate time together, Sansa almost drooled, completely forgetting her surroundings. A warm shiver ran down her spine as she thought about their long-overdue honeymoon. It was more than a decade and a half late, but she did not seem to care. As she still feels like she had just married him yesterday—a newly wedded bride.

The captains exchanged glances, their expressions shifting from wary to downright puzzled. Was this really Matron? The cold, calculating mastermind they knew? For the first time, they saw her completely off guard, lost in her own world. And that was... unsettling for reasons unknown to them.

The fake Baylor standing behind her noticed his master's embarrassing moment and let out a deliberate cough. Sansa blinked, snapping out of her thoughts, 'Shit.'

Feeling all eyes on her, she blushed—an unfamiliar heat creeping up her neck—before quickly composing herself. With forced nonchalance, she looked toward Wyatt and said, "Can we hurry this up? I have a honeymoon to plan with Baylor."

The room fell into stunned silence.

Blair's jaw practically hit the floor. 'This—one of the most feared Card Apprentices in existence—was acting like a lovestruck newlywed?' She couldn't wrap her head around it thinking that the woman before her played a major role in their downfall. It infuriated her.

Blair clenched her fists, biting back the urge to scream. She cursed Henricks in her mind thinking, 'This is your fault, you slippery old bastard.' If only he had finished her off when he had the chance instead of taunting this lunatic bride, they wouldn't be in half the mess they were currently in.

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Chapter 2415 - 2415: Killing Emissary Of Light

[1,011 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

Wyatt quietly studied Sansa, his gaze lingering on her after sweeping over the other captains. Except for Blair, they had all disappointed him. That said, he didn't hold it against them—except for Luna. They were exhausted, weighed down by the burden of failing those who trusted them. Luna, though? She lacked empathy, too caught up in cold logic. Otherwise, she would never have betrayed the Southern Royal family in the first place.

He had counted on them to argue, to stall for time, to drag this out. Instead, Sansa had readily accepted every condition thrown her way, shutting down the debate before it even started. That caught him off guard. There was no way she had given up on her world domination scheme.

Sansa was a predator. She wouldn't change—not for love, not for anything. A lion wouldn't turn into a herbivore just because it grew up alongside a gazelle. He knew she was up to something. But honestly? He didn't care. He would never agree to work with her. If not for his attempt to avoid unnecessary casualties, he would have struck her down already.

Exhaling slowly, Wyatt finally spoke. "If it were up to me, I'd never let you join the Freedom Fighters. But since the majority seems to think it's a good idea, I have no choice but to hear them out. That said, it's hard to trust that you won't turn on us later—"

Sansa's sharp eyes flickered, catching the shift in his tone. Before he could give his final verdict, she cut in, her voice urgent. "Tell me what I need to do to gain your trust."

Her decisiveness had an immediate effect. The neutral captains wavered, some leaning in her favor. She sounded sincere, and everyone knew she was reckless and crazy enough to do anything for Baylor.

Wyatt narrowed his eyes. "Return Ned unharmed—"

"Done!" Sansa interrupted before he could even finish.

"I wasn't done," Wyatt said with a frown, only for Sansa to cheerfully ask, "What else?"

He narrowed his eyes and put forward his final condition, "I want you to bring me the Emissary of Light's divinity and grimoire. Do that, and not only will I let you join the Freedom Fighters, but I'll also make you one of the captains and create a separate surveillance and spy department for you to lead using your Paw Clan just like you demanded."

The smirk on Sansa's face froze. Her amusement vanished, replaced by a deep frown.

Meanwhile, the captains exchanged puzzled glances. They had no personal vendetta against the Empire and certainly didn't want to provoke one at the moment. Sure, some fanatics from the Empire had allied with the World Leaders over the Silver Beach Dungeon, but that was a different matter entirely.

Still, they weren't blind. They knew that sooner or later, their cause would put them at odds with the Empire. If this was the price Wyatt demanded for letting Sansa join, they weren't about to challenge him on it. He had his reasons. Besides, he wasn't just demanding something from her—he was also offering a fair exchange, giving her an entire department under her control.

To them, it seemed like a straightforward deal.

Luna, however, saw exactly what Wyatt was doing. She knew the Emissary of Light would become the greatest obstacle to their cause if left unchecked. After hearing Wyatt question Sansa earlier, she had already started to suspect that the Emissary of Light had reached the demigod realm by allying with Gideon Grim. If that were true... She, too, was growing concerned. Then she could no help ponder, 'With Handsome Fox joining their ranks will they till be called three mischiefs? Four Fuckers would make a better title.' *This content is hosted at **

"This doesn't seem fair," Sansa suddenly said, her voice carrying a hint of irritation.

The captains frowned at her protest, but before they could question it, she quickly clarified, "I thought the deal was that I'd get a captain's seat and my own department in exchange for donating my entire fortune to the Freedom Fighters. Now you're asking me to take down the Emissary of Light on top of that?"

A murmur spread through the room as the captains exchanged glances. She has a point.

No one would willingly give up their entire fortune to a cause without having a say in it. And asking her to eliminate the Emissary of Light as well? That was pushing it.

Wyatt looked at Sansa for a brief moment, his gaze steady and unreadable. She shifted uncomfortably in her seat, unable to control the small twitch in her fingers. Then, with a smirk, he said, "We don't need your money. You know what? From now on, I'll be paying every member of the Freedom Fighters a monthly salary—based on their contribution, of course. Even the captains."

A heavy silence filled the room. The captains stared at Wyatt, stunned. The Freedom Fighters had millions of members. That meant he'd be spending hundreds of billions just to cover salaries for the low-level fighters alone.

Luna shook her head, exhaling through her nose as she watched Wyatt flex his wealth. She had dealt with him back when she was with the Southern Royal family—she knew exactly how secure his wallet was. There was no way he'd just hand out money. No, their members would have to work for it. Still, compared to their current situation—where they not only had to fight but also burn through their savings and sell off their assets just to keep the organization afloat—this was a massive upgrade.

Sansa frowned slightly, though she masked it well. She knew just how successful Wyatt's VR universe was, but seeing him invest this much in the Freedom Fighters unsettled her. If he took on the financial burden, what leverage would she have? How would she prove the Freedom Fighters needed her?

She didn't let her displeasure show. Instead, she quietly calculated, searching for a way around Wyatt's move. Then, her eyes lit up with realization. Her oath with other Mischiefs. A slow grin spread across her lips. The problem had just solved itself.

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

Chapter 2416 - 2416: Kidnapping Emissary Of Light

[1,009 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

"No. No matter what you offer, I can't kill the Emissary of Light," Sansa said firmly, shaking her head as she rejected Wyatt's offer. Before he could twist her words to turn the captains against her, she quickly added, "The Emissary of Light and I took an oath not to harm each other—several decades ago, back when we were still upstarts."

Wyatt's expression turned icy. "See? That's exactly why you shouldn't be part of our organization," he said coolly. Sensing some confusion among the others, he addressed them directly, "Think about it—what will she do when our cause inevitably puts us against the Emissary of Light?"

Sansa hesitated, waiting to carefully choose her words before responding. She knew Wyatt was setting her up, looking for any excuse to keep her out of the freedom fighters. As she expected it wasn't easy to cheat one of the sharpest minds in the Card World. If it were it wouldn't be fun. But she too wasn't just anyone—she was the Matron.

She opened her mouth to respond, but she was a second too late. Wyatt cut her off with a smirk.

"Nothing, that's what I expected from the likes of you," he answered for her. "You'll do nothing. You'll just sit that one out. This means, when we need you most, you'll abandon us. And so we have no place for someone like that among us."

"Wyatt, don't force your delusions onto me. I never said that," Sansa snapped, her eyes flashing. To add emphasis, she slammed her palm against the round table, the sharp sound cutting through the room. "Even if I can't harm him directly, there are always other ways I can help you deal with him." She leaned forward, locking eyes with Wyatt. "Just so we're clear—I truly want to be part of the Freedom Fighters. And I'm willing to go above and beyond for their cause—our cause—if you let me in."

Wyatt's lips curled into a subtle smile. She was sharp, he had to give her that. Without even breaking a sweat, she had clawed her way out of the pit he'd pushed her in. Fine. Let her think she had the upper hand—for now.

Shaking his head as if in disbelief, Wyatt suddenly spoke up, "Prove it."

Sansa narrowed her eyes, asking, "Prove what?" She wasn't about to make assumptions, not when dealing with Wyatt. She'd wait for him to spell it out—she wasn't about to trip over her own words.

"Prove that you'll stand with us when the time comes to face the Emissary of Light," Wyatt said, his face unreadable, as if he wasn't truly invested in any of this. His detached demeanor and his casual indifference were enough to make most people walk away, questioning why they even wanted to be part of such an organization in the first place.

But not Sansa.

She needed to be here. She needed to join the Freedom Fighters—not for their cause, but for her own. She had plans, and they all led to the same endgame: staging a coup and handing the entire organization over to her husband as a gift while she was controlling it from the shadows. Crazy but it was a lot better than world domination.

"How exactly am I supposed to do that?" she asked, arms crossed. She was running out of ways to maneuver around him, and he knew it. His refusal to give her an easy opening, his deliberate roadblocks—it couldn't be clearer. He didn't want her here. His grudge ran deep.

But she wasn't giving up that easily.

"You figure it out," Wyatt said coolly, leaning back as he studied her. "But know this—how you prove yourself will determine your role in the Freedom Fighters... and what it'll be limited to." He wondered just how far Sansa was willing to go to please Baylor in her own twisted way. Though, honestly, it was debatable whether Baylor would even appreciate her overhauling the Freedom Fighters just to gift their empty shell to him. It was like your girlfriend says she likes cats and you gift her an embalmed cat for her birthday.

"This is absurd," Sansa scoffed, throwing up her hands. She turned to the captains, searching for support, saying, "Don't tell me you're all just going to sit there and let him do whatever he pleases." [This is a sample from My Virtual Library Empire. Read the rest on*](#)

But the captains avoided her gaze. All except one—Blair.

Sansa met her eyes and smirked, daring her to speak up, to challenge her, to do anything that might force her to storm out in frustration. But if Blair thought a little provocation would make Sansa back down, she was sorely mistaken. It would take far more than that.

Realizing no one was going to stand up to Wyatt, Sansa swallowed her frustration and pressed on dancing to Wyatt's tune, "You need information on the Emissary of Light, right? I can provide it to you—"

"Not enough," Wyatt cut in before she could even finish.

Sansa clenched her jaw. He had already figured out her plan—she was aiming to start at the bottom, to push her pride aside just long enough to get her foot in the door. From there, she would work her way up, piece by piece, until she could set her real plan in motion.

Wyatt saw it. And he wasn't going to make it easy for her.

Realizing that nothing short of the Emissary of Light's divinity and grimoire would help her earn Wyatt's approval, Sansa decided to take a drastic step—something even he couldn't dismiss. She straightened, her voice unwavering as she said, "How about I bring you the Emissary of Light's head? I know he can regenerate it, but that should be enough to prove I mean what I say."

For a brief moment, she thought she had finally caught Wyatt off guard, and left him tongue-tied.

But before she could celebrate, Luna leaned forward, her eyes glinting with amusement. "If you're confident enough to cut off his head," she mused, tilting her head slightly, "why not just kidnap and bring him to us? That way, I can kill him in your place."

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

Chapter 2417 - 2417: Its Done

[1,015 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

As Luna spoke, the other captains exchanged uneasy glances, shaking their heads. Even Blair, who rarely hesitated to challenge Sansa, seemed to think the demand was a step too far.

The Emissary of Light wasn't just some powerful card apprentice—he was practically a god within the Empire. Millions of card apprentices revered him and would willingly lay

their lives for him. He was protected around the clock by thousands of semi-demigod and demigod guards. Forget kidnapping him—getting an audience with him without his permission was nearly impossible.

"So, it's decided then," Wyatt suddenly announced, his smug smile widening. "Sansa will kidnap the Emissary of Light and bring him to us so we can judge him for his crimes."

"Wait—what? When did I agree to that?!" Sansa protested, eyes widening in shock.

The only reason she had made the bold claim of bringing them the Emissary of Light's head was because she had a way to do it—without actually breaking her oath. At the right moment, she could activate a hidden pawn within the Emissary's ranks and have them chop off his head before sending it to her.

She knew the Emissary of Light loved to show off his supposed immortality to his followers. He'd likely allow the assassin to behead him just for the spectacle. He'd stay "dead" for a few seconds, letting the panic settle in, only to dramatically rise again, proving to his followers that he was unkillable—that he could not die until his mission in this world was over.

Sansa was betting everything on that habit. It was the perfect loophole. She wouldn't have to break her oath, and she'd still prove her worth to the Freedom Fighters. But Wyatt was pushing her into a far more dangerous game.

Kidnapping the Emissary of Light? That was a whole different story. There was no way her Paw Clan could pull that off. To make it happen, she'd have to be there in person, going head-to-head with him in an all-out war. Fighting the Emissary of Light in his own territory meant going up against the entire Empire, its entire population including the toddlers.

Her Paw Clan was formidable, but compared to the sheer population of the Empire, their numbers were insignificant. Fortunately, with the haunting memory ability of her origin card, an army—even an entire nation—meant little to her. But if she went through with this, she would have to massacre the entire Empire just to capture the Emissary of Light and escape.

The old her wouldn't even hesitate to head such a cruel, violent act. But now? Now she was restarting her life with Baylor. And the last thing she wanted was to do something that would make him look at her with disgust.

Wyatt watched, expecting Sansa to push back, to argue. Instead, he saw her expression shift, as if she were genuinely weighing the possibility. His smirk faded slightly before he shook his head, unimpressed. Her acting was good—too good.

But he knew the truth. She would never move against the Emissary of Light. Because if she did, she wouldn't just have to worry about him—she'd have to watch her back for the Supreme Leader. And possibly even Gideon Grim.

After all, there were too many intertwined interests in their alliance. Even though she had opted out of world domination, the other two mischiefs hadn't. They might be willing to let her live her own life, but if she ever tried to sabotage them, they wouldn't hesitate to eliminate her first—to cut off any future threats before they could take root.

The captains watched Sansa and Wyatt intently. None of them felt any sympathy for Sansa, considering her history with them they have been a very gracious host to her. Instead, they were more focused on figuring out their new leader's intent. What exactly was Wyatt trying to achieve here? Why was he dragging this out instead of just giving her a clear answer?

It wasn't Sansa that seemed odd to them—it was Wyatt.

They all knew it was impossible for Sansa to kidnap or kill the Emissary of Light. And more importantly—who were they to judge the Emissary of Light for his so-called crimes?

To them, the Emissary of Light was the most restrained of the three mischiefs. Unlike the others, he kept his operations contained within the Empire and took great care of his followers, forging their faith in him. Unlike Luna, they had no idea that his ambitions extended far beyond the Empire. So, it wasn't surprising they were confused as to why Wyatt was targeting him.

Just then, a space gate shimmered open behind Wyatt. Henricks stepped out, leaned in, and whispered in his ear, "It's done."

Wyatt gave a subtle nod, not letting the relief show on his face. Instead, he straightened and sternly announced, "That concludes our meeting for today. Everyone out."

Sansa blinked, caught off guard by the sudden shift. Seeing the others preparing to leave, she hurriedly protested, "Wait—I'm not done yet! I can't kidnap the Emissary of Light. That's beyond my ability. You might as well ask me to kill myself!"

"But we are done," Wyatt replied coldly, his tone leaving no room for argument. He signaled the captains to leave with Henricks, then leaned back in his chair, eyeing Sansa without the slightest hint of urgency.

"Without that amount of risk, how do you expect to prove that we can trust you?" he asked, his voice calm yet cutting. "Have you forgotten the bad blood between you and the Freedom Fighters? If we were to welcome you with open arms over something as trivial as gathering some worthless intel on the Emissary of Light, how would we justify that to our members? How are we supposed to show our faces after that?"

The captains dragged their feet, curious to see how this would play out, but Henricks shot them a sharp glare, silently urging them to move along. One by one, they stepped through the space gate, until only Wyatt, Sansa, and the fake Baylor—who now looked more like a worn-out, aged version of the real one—remained in the celestial blood rule domain.

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

Chapter 2418 - 2418: Worse Than Death

[1,069 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

"What's the meaning of this?" Sansa asked, her voice finally cutting through the tangle of thoughts that had consumed her—thoughts of how to convince Wyatt and the others to accept her as one of them. It was only now, as the realization settled, that she noticed she was alone with him. She had watched the others leave earlier, but the weight of that fact only just clicked.

She knew why Wyatt was so at ease. Having experienced his celestial blood rule domain firsthand, she understood his confidence. And, of course, she had told him about the promise she made to Baylor—not to harm him. But still... leaving their leader alone with her? That was a reckless move on the Freedom Fighter's part. He was the only one standing between her and what she wanted.

Sansa had promised not to kill him or be the reason for his death. But that didn't mean she couldn't do anything else to him. He should have known that. As sharp as he was, surely he realized that if given the chance, she would try to turn him into one of her pawns. Right?

Her lips curled into an unconscious grin.

"Could you be less obvious?" Wyatt drawled, his gaze steady on her. He had caught it—the subtle smirk, the flicker of intention in her eyes. Shifting in his chair, he spread

his legs slightly, settling in, making himself comfortable. The way he looked at her, it wasn't casual—it was calculated. Like a predator watching its prey.

Sansa's grin vanished in an instant, replaced by a dark, wrathful grimace. Enough of this. She had no intention of wasting her breath on him. She moved to summon her grimoire—only to realize she couldn't.

A chill crawled down her spine.

The true extent of Wyatt's celestial blood rule domain hit her like a crashing wave. Her breath caught as she stared at him, the full realization sinking in: She had lost.

Not now. Not at this moment.

She had lost the second Wyatt stepped into the room.

She had heard the myths about celestial rule domains before, but this was beyond the myths about them. It was terrifying.

"Any last words?" Wyatt asked, his patience wearing thin. He had no desire to drag this out any longer—he just wanted to get back to Delia and help her settle the Freedom Fighters into their new home.

"Wait! I still have Ned—we can talk this out," Sansa blurted, desperation creeping into her voice. She was planning to use Ned as leverage, but to her shock, Wyatt only grinned hearing her bring him up.

"Thank you for taking him out of the picture for me," he said smoothly. "Otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to take over the Freedom Fighters so easily—and for a bargain at that. If you were to release him now, I'd just kill him, claiming he was brainwashed by you. So, do me another favor, will you? Finish the job when you're reborn from your memory womb."

He wasn't bluffing.

The truth was, Ned had been the only real obstacle preventing Wyatt from getting Henricks to hand over the Freedom Fighters—even at their lowest point. Of course, Wyatt's offer to them wasn't tempting enough on its own, but that was beside the point.

Ned's disappearance at such a critical, do-or-die moment had been the final straw. If he had been there—even without a game-changing plan—the Freedom Fighters wouldn't have been this desperate. His presence alone would have kept them from making rash decisions.

Sansa had thought she was being clever when she had Ned kidnapped, but she had miscalculated. Badly. She hadn't accounted for just how many options the Freedom

Fighters really had. More importantly, she hadn't grasped the full extent of Wyatt's growth.

She had assumed he was just a genius kid with too much money—a cash cow for the Southern Royal Family. Had she known then what she knew now, maybe she would have moved faster. Maybe she would have played this differently.

"Wait, how do you know about that?" Sansa asked, her voice laced with shock.

She had never truly feared how her current situation shaped as she was no longer afraid of Death. After becoming a demigod thanks to her origin card, the concept of mortality had lost all weight. That was why she had dared to march into the Freedom Fighters' den in Yellow Plains so recklessly in the first place. But now, realizing that Wyatt not only knew she was unkillable but still intended to destroy this iteration of her—burning the branch she had extended to him out of love for Baylor—rattled her.

It didn't just shock her. It wounded her pride.

Wyatt's lips curled into a wide grin. "I knew it before you did," he said casually, then, almost as if he genuinely cared, he added, "Just go back to your burrow and live out your numbered days in that sham of a marriage. Consider that my compensation for helping me acquire the Freedom Fighters."

Sansa's brows furrowed. His words confused her—what was he getting at? But when she registered his insult toward her marriage, everything else faded. Her hands clenched into fists, and her eyes darkened with raw fury.

She wasn't going to let him have the satisfaction of killing her even if it's just one of her forms. If this memory of her was doomed anyway, she would at least be the one to end it.

But when she tried to excite her divinity into self-destruction, nothing happened.

A chill crawled up her spine.

She couldn't move. She couldn't even die on her own terms.

Wyatt let out a knowing chuckle, saying, "Oh no, you don't get to leave that easily." His voice was almost amused, but his eyes held something far colder.

With a flick of his wrist, the table between them crumbled into ash, erased by his celestial blood rule, as he ordered her, "Get up."

Sansa fought against it with everything she had, but her body betrayed her. Against her will, she rose from her seat. Terror began to spread in her mind as the realization that something worse than death was coming dawned on her.

Wyatt pointed at the ground before him, demanding with a unforgiving voice, "Kneel."

Sansa's breath hitched as her legs moved on their own, carrying her forward until she was on her knees before him, just inches from where he sat. Right by his spread legs.

Her heart pounded against her ribs.

She had underestimated him.

And now, she was utterly at his mercy.

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Chapter 2419 - 2419: Sansa's Horror

[1,116 words]

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters.

"What's the meaning of this?" Sansa gasped in horror as her gaze unwillingly locked with Wyatt's crotch.

Panic surged through her as she tried—willed—her body to move, to break free from whatever force held her captive. But it was useless. She was a prisoner in her own flesh, unable to so much as avert her eyes from Wyatt's groin. She couldn't even blink. Her body was no longer hers to command—except for her jaw and tongue. Everything else was frozen, locked in a nightmare where she had no control.

Yet, she could feel everything. Every strand of hair on her arms standing on end, every bead of sweat rolling down her skin, every erratic thump of her terrified heart. Her senses remained sharp, cruelly forcing her to endure whatever horror Wyatt had in store for her.

Her mind raced to the darkest corners of possibility. Was this what he wanted? To hear her groan and moan as he— No. No, she couldn't even finish the thought without the bile rising in her throat.

Baylor...

Her chest tightened as dread swallowed her whole. The chastity she had vowed to save for her one true love—her Baylor—was at risk of being stolen, and ruined before their long-awaited honeymoon. Worse of it all, Wyatt was forcing fake Baylor to watch. It was as if her worst fears began to materialise with the words 'There are things worse than death' echoing in her mind like a cruel prophecy.

Wyatt leaned forward from his chair, his movements slow and deliberate, like a predator savoring the moment before the kill. His fingers coiled into her hair, yanking her head up to meet his gaze.

Sansa's breath hitched as she stared into his eyes—cold, unreadable, merciless. Then he grinned. The sight of it sent a shiver so deep down her spine that she swore she felt it in her soul.

At that moment, she no longer cared that her scalp hurt or the way he was treating her. She no longer cared about anything else. She just wanted him to give her death without humiliating her, without stealing the most precious gift she was saving for her one true love.

This was the second time she had felt this weak and helpless. The first was when her father left her to fend for herself in this world. That day, she swore—never again. And yet, here she was. Again. At her lowest.

Her eyes welled up, turning red and glossy before tears spilled freely down her cheeks. She choked back a sob, her voice barely above a whisper as she pleaded, "Please... don't. Anything but this..."

She broke down, sobbing like a lost child, her desperation so raw and unguarded that it actually gave Wyatt pause.

He narrowed his eyes. Was this another one of her tricks? A ploy to win his sympathy? He doubted her sincerity, but the way her body trembled, the sheer terror in her gaze—it felt real. Not that it mattered. He had no intention of consoling her. No pity. No mercy. He was merely curious.

Then, slowly, his grin widened thinking, 'Damn, that worked even better than I thought.'

He had manipulated her posture—had her kneel before him, forced her eyes onto his spread legs, planted the idea in her mind. He hadn't said a word, yet she had jumped to the worst conclusion all on her own. Perfect.

Not dwelling on it, he leaned in slightly and asked, "Give me one good reason why I shouldn't?"

Sansa's sobs hitched. She froze, her teary gaze locking onto his. But before she could speak, his expression darkened.

"You have one chance," he warned. "So if I were you, I'd think real hard before answering."

Her mind raced. She wasn't foolish enough to think she could beg her way out of this. No, she had to give him something—leverage.

"I can provide you with all the information you need on the Emissary of Light," she blurted out. "And... I can help you kill him."

Earlier, when he had asked nicely, she had been so damn stubborn—negotiating, withholding, refusing to share what she knew. But now? Now she was ready to talk. Funny how quickly people changed when they thought they had no other choice.

"Good," Wyatt said, his gaze sharpening as he finally heard the words he'd been waiting for. A satisfied smirk tugged at his lips as he released her hair, granting her control over her upper body. Not that it mattered—she wouldn't dare attack him. In his Celestial Blood Fate Domain, anyone with blood flowing through their veins was at his mercy. Unless they had a stronger comprehension of the blood rule than him, they had no choice but to bend to his will.

"Great. Let's put it in writing," Without hesitation, Wyatt summoned his grimoire—his demon codex—and materialized a Demon Merchant Contract, passing it to her. If she was going to make a deal, she was going to be bound to it. No loopholes, no escape.

"A... demon contract?" Sansa's voice trembled as she took the grimoire, her eyes widening in disbelief. The eerie, familiar sigils on the page sent a chill down her spine, it was same contract as Gideon Grim had her sign.

She finally saw the missing piece. The connection between Wyatt's abnormal strength and the infamous Gideon Grim clicked into place. They shared a similar secret.

"Just sign it already," Wyatt said, his patience wearing thin as he watched her carefully scrutinize the document—for the fifth time. "If I wanted something more from you, I wouldn't need a contract to get it. It is just a formality for your peace of mind."

Still, Sansa wasn't about to be reckless. She had underestimated him before, and she wasn't about to make that mistake twice.

Her fingers tightened around the grimoire as she read every clause, every word, over and over. She knew men like Wyatt—tricksters, manipulators, deceivers. If there was even a hint of cleverly disguised wording, she'd catch it. Only when she was absolutely sure there was no hidden trap did she finally sign it.

She was willing to see through this because, in her mind, this contract ensured her safety—at least until the Emissary of Light was dead.

Seeing her sign Wyatt's smirk widened slightly as he recalled his grimoire and the Celestial Blood Fate Domain with a casual thought.

"You guys are free to go now," he said with a casual and indifferent tone. But the smirk on his lips remained as he wait to see her reaction after again her freedom. The fake Baylor reverted to his original form regaining his freedom. He waited for his liege's orders while Sansa spun around and used her haunting memory to behead him, latter's head rolled on floor with his eyes wide open in shock.

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

Chapter 2420 Her Beloved Be Damned

[1,112 words]

Chapter 2420 Her Beloved Be Damned

Date: Unspecified Time: Unspecified Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters. Ignoring the thud of her pawn's headless body hitting the ground, Sansa spun around the hall, her intent sense stretching outward—nothing. Not a single soul within a few hundred miles. Her stomach twisted as she turned back to Wyatt, locking eyes with him.

"Where is everybody?" she demanded, her voice sharp with suspicion and utter disbelief. She thought this was another one of Wyatt's tricks. Maybe he never let her out of his celestial blood rule domain. Wyatt rose from his throne, his movements unhurried, deliberate. "In their new home," he answered smoothly, stepping closer, his presence overwhelming. Before she could react, he was right next to her, his face mere inches from hers.

Sansa tensed as she felt his warm breath caress her skin. A shiver ran through her, but she clenched her jaw and stubbornly held her ground, refusing to step away.

Wyatt smirked. Leaning in even closer, he whispered into her ear, his voice dripping with amusement, "Now do you believe me? The contract was just a formality—for your peace of mind. So don't get any funny ideas, unless you want to experience firsthand... there are things far worse than death."

Sansa's breath hitched. His words sent an icy chill down her spine, but it was the sensation of his breath on her skin that truly unnerved her. Her mind betrayed her, dragging her back to that humiliating moment from earlier—on her knees before his crotch, powerless, trapped in her flesh.

For a fleeting second, she felt it all over again. The helplessness. The despair. Then something inside her snapped. Her trembling gaze hardened, her quivering lips curling into something sharp and fierce.

Without warning she used her haunting memory on Wyatt, another Sansa materialized behind him. No hesitation. No second-guessing. Her memory formed a claw with her hand and struck, driving it straight for his chest, intending to rip his heart out.

Her promise to her beloved be damned. As long as Wyatt was alive she would be the same little girl crying for her daddy at her father's funeral. The attack landed. Too easily. Her sharp fingers tore through Wyatt's back like paper, piercing through to his chest. A beat later, she yanked his heart free, still warm, still pulsing in her grasp.

It was too damn easy, easier than in her mind. Her breath caught. Something wasn't right. Both Sansas stared, their eyes widening in shock. Wyatt's memory of her should have begun to lose its prowess the moment his heart was torn from his body—but it didn't.

Realization hit them both at once. They had failed. Before they could react, the entire room was swallowed in red. Their bodies were locked up. Muscles rigid. Breath stolen. The fierce, murderous gleam in their eyes evaporated in an instant, replaced by something far more primal—Horror.

Wyatt's memory of Sansa shattered into nothing, dissolving into his domain like ash in the red wind. Meanwhile, he reached out and gently smoothed down a stray lock of her silky, long hair, his touch almost... affectionate.

As his heart effortlessly regenerated, the hole in his back sealing shut, he leaned in close—so close that she could feel the warmth of his breath against her ear.

"Do you want another try?" he murmured, his voice teasing, almost amused. "Maybe go for my head next?"

Sansa's stomach twisted into knots. Terror coiled around her like a vice, suffocating, paralyzing. She felt like a helpless fawn caught between the jaws of a tiger, utterly at its mercy. If she had control over her body right now, she knew she'd be trembling uncontrollably—or worse, she might have even soiled herself.

Then, a sliver of control returned—not over her body, but over her mouth. It wasn't much, but it was enough for her to speak. Swallowing down the raw panic clawing at her throat, she forced out the words, trying—and failing—to mask the quiver in her voice,

"I'm sorry... please, forgive me. This won't happen again. I promise you, I will do my best to help you kill the emissary of light."

"Sigh—" Wyatt exhaled, the disappointment in his tone unmistakable. But before he could say anything, Sansa hurriedly cut in, her words tumbling out in a rush, as if her life depended on it, "The Emissary of Light didn't accept Gideon Grim's offer. When Gideon put forward his proposal to help him become a demigod, the Emissary of Light broke through to the Card Demigod realm on the spot and immediately started hunting Gideon down across the empire—despite Gideon offering even more favorable terms to gain his alliance. Ultimately, he even stooped to buy his forgiveness with them. But the Emissary of Light was not moved by his terms & offers, and just when he was about to finish him off, Gideon magically vanished from the Card World."

Wyatt's eyes widened slightly. That changed things. Sansa's words confirmed what he had already suspected—he couldn't allow the Emissary of Light to leave the Card World. He had to end him before that ever became a possibility. Thankfully, the Emissary himself didn't seem to have any interest in leaving. Still, it was a dangerous variable.

"Details," Wyatt muttered, his voice low and demanding. Sansa swallowed hard. She had utterly lost to Wyatt. There was no point in putting up a feeble resistance only to irk him further.

"That's all I know," she said in distress, then quickly added, "but the Central Government and the Empire suspect that Gideon Grim might have a card capable of inter-realm travel—something similar to Henricks' or maybe even more effective."

She didn't hesitate to spill everything that came to mind. She thought it was better to submit right now than to suffer humiliation at Wyatt's hands. Because if she let this go any further, she wasn't sure she'd even be able to face her husband during their honeymoon. She was willing to do anything to save her purity for her beloved. "What reason did the Emissary of Light give for hunting down Gideon Grim?" Wyatt asked, his gaze sharp as he tried to piece it all together, 'Why had the Emissary of Light rejected Gideon's offer?'

As a Devil Merchant and a member of the 'Seven Princes of Hell' faction, Gideon Grim had the kind of leverage that was nearly impossible to turn down—especially for Emissary of Light who felt limited in the Card World. The terms Gideon must have offered should've been more than tempting. And yet, the Emissary of Light had chosen to chase him down instead. There had to be a reason.

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Chapter 2421 Religion & Rumors

[1,078 words]

Chapter 2421 Religion & Rumors

Date: Unspecified Time: Unspecified Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters. "The Emissary of Light didn't need a reason," Sansa scoffed, shaking her head to answer Wyatt, "Gideon Grim was an idiot to think he could walk out of the Empire alive—let alone convince the Emissary to ally with him. As a devil worshipper, he was already as good as dead the moment he set foot there."

Her lips curled into a smirk, her tone laced with amusement despite the deep shit she was in before continuing, "The only reason the Emissary didn't kill him on sight and actually let him spread his 'Devil's Temptation' was because of his love for theatrics. He used Gideon as a prop—a spectacle to entertain his fanatic masses and strengthen their faith in him. But I guarantee you, he must be pissed that he couldn't finish Gideon and he escaped from right under his nose. Knowing him, he's just waiting for Gideon to return to the Card World so he can finish what he started. That man knows how to hold a grudge."

Wyatt let out a low hum, nodding. "Ah, demons," he muttered, recalling the Empire's deep-seated hatred for anything sentient that wasn't human. And even among humans, they only truly got along with a select few—the ones who fully embraced their doctrine or were open to it.

Now, it all made sense.

The reason the three mischiefs never joined hands with the Dark Races in Clown Mask's future vision? Religion. Though it was mainly the Emissary of Light. The other two had to follow for the sake of their feeble alliance. But now that Gideon promised to give them what they sought from the alliance things changed. However, born, raised, and ultimately crowned as the ruler of the Empire, the Emissary Of Light wasn't just a product of their belief system—he was its embodiment, his origin card was the proof of it. He shared their values, their ideologies, and most importantly... their deep, unwavering hatred for the Dark Races. From the very depths of his soul, he despised them.

Religion had never crossed Wyatt's mind as the answer because in this world there were no gods—not even in the way Earth did. Sure, monsters, demons, and devils were rampant here but it never gave birth to religious superstition. As for other superstitions like coincidental ones for example wearing the same socks to work every day for luck, there were more than plenty of those. The closest thing the people of the Five Regions had to a god was the Card World's Will. It didn't judge them based on their morals,

beliefs, or deeds; it impartially rewarded their effort through baptism and provided realm suppression during demon invasions. Other than that, it stayed neutral—unless called on it to witness an oath.

Things here were straightforward. No divine intervention. No mystical prophecies. No room for superstitions. Unless, of course, you were from the Empire or worse... a demon worshipper.

As Sansa watched Wyatt nod in understanding, she felt her thoughts spiraling—bold, reckless thoughts. Maybe there was still hope for her and Wyatt, despite everything.

The Supreme Leader and the Emissary of Light scared her enough to force an alliance with them. But Wyatt? He terrified her enough to submit. She had never feared another being as much as she feared him. With her current strength, she could handle herself against the other two mischiefs, the top ten strongest, the Four Rulers, or even the Founders. If she couldn't defeat them, she could at least escape gracefully.

But facing Wyatt? She was only alive because he allowed it. And that was the terrifying part. It wasn't just his power that unnerved her—it was his methods, they were mysterious, unfathomable, and downright horrifying. She had no doubt in her mind that Wyatt could put her through a fate worse than death if he wished.

A chilling thought settled in her mind.

That, if she became useful to him... if she proved herself obedient... would he keep her around? Wyatt was an incredibly logical man. With his ambition, he was bound to make many powerful enemies. A tool like her could be useful. She could be valuable to him. And if she played her cards right... maybe she could survive and get to live her second start with her beloved. "There are a lot of rumors about the Emissary of Light," Sansa said, her voice taking on a conspiratorial edge hoping to establish herself in Wyatt's life using the small role he had given her to play, she continued, "For example—some say he can't die until his mission in this realm is complete. That he can't lose against evil-doers. That power will always be granted to him when he needs it. That he can cure any disease afflicted by a believer."

She scoffed adding, "And the crazy part? He's proven every single one of those rumors true on multiple occasions."

Sansa studied Wyatt's face for a reaction but found nothing. Still, she pressed on, hoping to hook his interest as her survival depended on it, "That's why you're seeing more and more people—powerful and influential people—defecting to the Empire. Betraying their families. Abandoning their regions. They believe in him. They believe he's divine, born to save humankind."

Sansa paused for a beat, gauging Wyatt's expression before continuing, her voice dropping slightly, "And now, after breaking through to the Card Demigod realm to defeat

Gideon Grim—despite failing to kill him—his believers are going crazy. Their faith in him has skyrocketed. There's a new rumor spreading now—"

She leaned in slightly, voice hushed but laced with intrigue, "People are saying no one in the Card World can defeat him. That he is the true son of the Card World."

Sansa pulled back, shrugging, though the weight of her words lingered as she expressed her disbelief, "And honestly? I don't know how he's supposed to pull that off. A human becoming a Celestial Being's son? It makes no damn sense."

She sighed, watching Wyatt intently, hoping something—anything— she said would catch his interest. And then she saw it.

Wyatt's expression shifted. The moment she uttered those last two sentences, his face darkened—his eyes sharpened, grim and calculating.

Sansa felt a shiver crawl up her spine. Did I just say something important? She wrecked her brain to figure out what she said caught Wyatt's interest but all she did was talk about some rumors.

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Chapter 2422 The True Son Of The Card World

[1,154 words]

Chapter 2422 The True Son Of The Card World

Date: Unspecified Time: Unspecified Location: Myriad Realms, Yellow Plains, Freedom Fighter's headquarters. Wyatt's silence stretched, his mind clearly working through the last few sentences she spoke. His eyes darkened as realization dawned on him. The Emissary of Light had bigger plans—much bigger. And the Second Demon Invasion happened to be the foundation for his big plans. This cleared his suspicion that Gideon Grim didn't escape. The Emissary of Light let him escape.

Wyatt knew this for a fact because, as a Demon Merchant, he had first-hand experience with the Devil Merchant Code—its rules, its loopholes, and its limits. And one thing he knew for sure?

No one could use the Devil Merchant Code's inter-realm transfer function while engaged in combat or when the surrounding space was being isolated or very turbulent. It was an ironclad restriction.

That was why, when the Devil Merchant Code granted him a privilege, he made damn sure to customize it to his advantage—he demanded that his soul be allowed to use inter-realm transfer when caught in such inconvenient situations. Luckily for him, the Devil Marchant Code was capable enough to grant that privilege to him. Allowing him to transfer his soul in his pseudo-primordial calamity gems across realms and dimensions.

But Gideon Grim who just became a Devil Merchant could not have such Privileges. Sure he helped the Belphegor's dark faction buy the rights to the Card World from the Devil Merchant Code but he himself did not buy it. So, he wasn't granted any privilege for such a huge transaction. Instead of killing him... the Emissary of Light let him live because he wanted him to return with the Second Demon Invasion. To kickstart his diabolical plan—he wasn't just aiming to take over five regions. No, he wanted to become the true son of the Card World i.e. become a fucking Celestial. Not just anyone could do that but with his origin card anything was possible. He didn't have any privilege. This meant there was no way in hell he escaped the Emissary of Light by using the Devil Merchant Code's inter-realm transfer function unless the Emissary of Light let him do so.

Wyatt's fists clenched at his sides having deduced that the Emissary of Light deliberately let Gideon Grim go. And why? Because thanks to the Southern Princess, everyone in the Card World knew Gideon Grim was the Harbinger of the Second Demon Invasion making the number one on the list of most wanted in the Card World.

Instead of killing him... the Emissary of Light let him live because he wanted him to return with the Second Demon Invasion. To kickstart his diabolical plan—he wasn't just aiming to take over five regions. No, he wanted to become the true son of the Card World i.e. become a fucking Celestial. Not just anyone could do that but with his origin card anything was possible. Wyatt let out a slow exhale, shaking his head. The Emissary of Light turned out to be far more ambitious than anyone had given him credit for—even Wyatt, who had witnessed his rise and fall in Clown Mask's future vision ended up underestimating his ambitions.

After a brief pause, Wyatt suddenly reached out and patted Sansa's head murmuring, "Good girl." Sansa stiffened. Her cheeks flushed crimson at the unexpected gesture. But more than that—she was confused. What the hell did she say to make him this satisfied with her? Still, she wasn't about to question it.

Instead, she made a mental note to have her Paw Clan investigate the rumors she had mentioned earlier. If Wyatt thought they were important enough to warrant his attention, she needed to understand why.

But she wouldn't ask him directly. A tool didn't pry into its master's business.

Wyatt suddenly smirked bringing up her honeymoon, "You know what? About your honeymoon—don't limit yourself to venues within the Card World. If there's a dungeon you like, I'll have Henricks chauffeur you guys to that realm."

Sansa's eyes widened in shock. "Really?" she asked, unable to believe her ears.

Wyatt nodded informing, "Yes. The information you just gave me was worth it. So when the time comes, don't hesitate to ask—I'll lend Henricks to you."

Sansa blinked, struggling to process his words with a mixture of shock, Joy, and Suspicion. She couldn't tell if this was genuine generosity or just another one of Wyatt's mind games. Still, she didn't reject the offer.

Instead, she tilted her head slightly and studied him before casually throwing out, "And what about Ned? Should I kill him for you?"

It was a test. Wyatt was full of surprises and too many things about him felt too good to be true. She wanted to see how he'd respond.

"No, don't get your hands dirty over something that'll just end up costing you your beloved's love," Wyatt waved off the idea like it was common sense. "Just drop him off in the busiest streets of any one of the region's capital cities. Let them handle the rest," He shook his head, exhaling in mock disappointment. "Honestly, I'm surprised I even have to teach you this stuff," He spoke so casually—like they were old colleagues like they weren't mortal enemies. For a second, even Sansa almost forgot that they were. She blinked, snapping out of it before the illusion sank in too deep.

"I'm sorry. I'll handle it properly," she said, giving a slight bow. Wyatt dismissed it with a flick of his fingers, already moving on, "Do you need a lift home or just to the Card World?"

"Huh?" Sansa's brows furrowed in confusion. She instinctively reached out with her intent sense—only to find that all the reverse gates were closed. She did not notice it before over the shock of Freedom Fighter's mass migration only now did she notice that she was cut off from the Card World and trapped here in the Yellow Plains.

With this realization, a chill ran down Sansa's spine. She had no idea what had happened outside while Wyatt had trapped her in his Celestial Rule Domain. The realization made her heart hammer violently against her ribs. Her fear of Wyatt grew another mile.

She hurriedly nodded, swallowing her pride as she desperately answered, "Yes. Please." Fearing if she answered even a second later he might change his mind. Wyatt smirked sensing her fear. "Don't be scared," he said, his voice smooth—too smooth. "As long as you stay useful to me, you'll live a full life." He blatantly lied. After all, a butcher

doesn't warn the pig about what's coming before slaughtering it. That would spoil the meat.

Wyatt didn't even blink as he said it. Because in his mind, Sansa was nothing more than a tool—one that would serve its purpose in helping him kill the Emissary of Light. And the moment she did? She was as good as dead.

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Chapter 2423 Freedom Megapolis

[1,022 words]

Chapter 2423 Freedom Megapolis

Date: Unspecified Time: Unspecified Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megapolis

"Did everyone settle into their new homes okay?" Wyatt asked Henricks as he overlooked the Megapolis from the penthouse of its tallest building. The city stretched beneath him, a glittering maze of new beginnings. It was like a concrete jungle with tall buildings. Because all the buildings were a minimum of a hundred floors, the entire city was divided into three layers each with three areas as follows, Top Layer- Core, inner wall, outer wall

Middle Layer- Core, Inner wall, outer wall

Bottom Layer- Core, inner wall, outer wall The houses in the core area offered beautiful views of the most sophisticated infrastructure and were close to many facilities. The outer wall area had beautiful views of the Lil Red Storm realms' vast red expanse, but as the city expanded, these would become part of the inner wall, while the inner wall area would slowly merge with the core area. All these factors counted into the pricing of the property. Thanks to the Hive Spirits' thoughtful and considerate city design, even the Bottom Layer would get sunlight in this realm where the sun doesn't set and the middle and top layers had access to parks and nature on their own layers and areas. Since the entire city had a public teleportation array network for transportation, the distance wasn't a problem. For now, it was free but once the city had its own economy that wouldn't be the case. Meanwhile, bored and lonely, Dalie was tinkering with the dungeon relocation apparatus, Hive Spirit assisting her as always. Her usual playmate, Ceed, wasn't

around—she had followed her mother, Dredre, to help heal the injured Freedom Fighters.

Fortunately, Wyatt had warned Dredre that not everyone was a Viltronian/World Calamity Tree hybrid like him. Regular card apprentices wouldn't be able to handle pixie dust—they'd explode and die. So, she knew better than to overdo it, no matter how much the injured flattered her. She'd use just enough to heal them and nothing more.

That didn't mean it was easy for her, though. Dredre was weak to genuine flattery and praise—a consequence of being abused by Dark Race customers in the Infinity Library for millennia. Thankfully, Ceed was there to keep her in check.

"Yes, Her Highness Dalie was very thorough in allotting housing to the members of the Freedom Fighters based on their merits and needs," Henricks answered gratefully. Meanwhile, watching as the departmental heads scrambled to set up their new offices and get the freedom fighters operational soon. There was no denying it—everyone was genuinely moved by what Wyatt had done for them.

Grateful didn't even begin to cover it. What impressed them most was the opportunity for growth—members with larger families or bigger ambitions were allowed to take out loans for bigger homes than their past merits could afford.

These loans would be slowly repaid with interest by working for Wyatt. It didn't feel like another temporary camp. It felt like an actual city—a place where they could dream of a better future.

"Good. Everyone—families and orphans alike—will get basic housing, food, healthcare, and schooling as a reward for their or their parents' past merits," Wyatt stated, his gaze still fixed on the Megapolis below. "But if they want more, they'll have to work for it. I'm not running a charity here."

Henricks, now serving as vice leader of the Freedom Fighters, nodded solemnly. Wyatt was a busy man, still unfamiliar with the Freedom Fighters' inner workings. He couldn't be there for every little thing, and it would take time for the members to warm up to him—to speak freely without hesitation. Using Henricks as a bridge was the logical choice. At least until he found a better alternative.

"Master Wyatt," Henricks said, bowing deeply, his voice filled with genuine gratitude, "thank you for rewarding our cause and overlooking past grudges. Each one of us in the Freedom Fighters will never forget your generosity. We are forever indebted to you."

Wyatt sighed, unimpressed.

"Flattery won't get you anywhere," he said, waving Henricks off. "If you guys want more, go earn it yourselves."

Henricks straightened, a little taken aback by Wyatt's remark. Then he realized their new leader did not like to be praised for his Work. He would rather they show their appreciation through their actions than just words. By ceasing the second chance he had given to them. "Take a few people and set up teleportation array points in Sky Blossom City. I've already informed Diana—she'll guide you to the locations," Wyatt ordered. There was no room for discussion in Wyatt's tone.

For now, the teleportation system would be limited to Sky Blossom City, but soon? He planned to expand it to the entire Southern Region.

Sure Dalie built a luxurious and beautiful megapolis but it did not have an economy it wasn't something one could build overnight. For now, the citizens of Freedom Megapolis would have to do with learning and earning from the VR universe and trading with the Sky Blossom City. "Master Wyatt, are you sure?" Henricks asked, his brow furrowing with concern. "With our differences with the Southern Princess—"

He hesitated. The Southern Region was her territory, and opening Freedom Megapolis's first trade route there felt like painting a target on their backs. If the Southern Princess wanted revenge, they'd be sitting ducks.

Wyatt, however, cut in before Henricks could finish, "Don't worry. I don't know about the Southern Region as a whole, but Sky Blossom City? That's mine. The Southern Royal Family has no authority there." His tone was calm but absolute, leaving no room for argument.

Henricks exhaled, nodding in agreement, "I understand, Master Wyatt. I'll get right on it."

Even though Sky Blossom City was just a third-rate city, beggars couldn't be choosers. Establishing a functional trade route was vital for their city's growth, and at least this location made sense—after all, it was their leader's hometown.

With that, he turned and left. The moment he was gone, Dalie rushed up to Wyatt, arms crossed, a pout on her face.

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Chapter 2424 Dungeon Relocation/Summoning Apparatus

[1,171 words]

Chapter 2424 Dungeon Relocation/Summoning Apparatus

Date: Unspecified Time: Unspecified Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megapolis

"Wyatt!" she huffed. "Why did you set such high housing prices? Even the Freedom Fighters' finest don't have enough merits accumulated to buy a house in the top layer of the city!"

She gestured wildly as she continued, her frustration evident in her golden eyes.

"Most of the houses in the city mid-layer core and outer wall areas are still empty! Even the mid-layer's inner wall area and the core area of the bottom layer have plenty of vacancies! Not to mention the shops and commercial buildings—they're all empty! It's such a waste of space and resources!"

Dalie wasn't just complaining for the sake of it. As things stood, the Megapolis was a massive financial loss—not just for Wyatt, but for her too.

Her celestial array formation had lost a small piece of land where it could have buried meteorites or asteroids it caught. Sure, compared to the surface array of the entire realm, the area taken by the city was insignificant—but a loss was a loss.

After all, in a clothing shop, even a tiny, insignificant hole in a shirt could make customers refuse to buy it—some would even call out the shop for trying to sell damaged goods.

Wyatt, however, remained unbothered.

"If everything goes according to my plan, give it a month or two—you'll be complaining that the city is too small and that we need to expand," he said, a knowing smirk playing on his lips.

He didn't bother explaining his grand vision for Freedom Megapolis a futuristic metropolis that would rival that fictional city on Mars everyone back on Earth dreamed of living in.

"Forget about the city for now," he continued. "How far along are you in your study of the Dungeon Relocation Apparatus?"

"I've familiarized myself with the concept and principles behind how it works," Dalie said confidently, her tone brimming with pride. "With my understanding of the space rule, relocating even an SSS-rank dungeon wouldn't be hard for me."

She wasn't boasting—it was just a fact. After all, she was a Celestial Being, an Array Spirit, and a Daughter Gem hybrid.

Wyatt nodded, impressed but not surprised. "What about the Dungeon Summoning Apparatus I created by modifying the Dungeon Relocation Apparatus?" he asked, his voice genuinely hoping for a positive answer. As this was the key to jumpstarting the economy of the Freedom Megapolis, and he needed to know if it was ready.

Dalie tilted her head, thinking for a moment before answering, "The concept and mechanics behind it make sense to me." Soon she dejectedly admitted, "But I'm still missing a few meanings of the space rule to pull it off completely. That said, no need to worry—I can compensate with my natural array formation to fill in the gaps." She straightened, confidence returning to her voice as she claimed, "So as long as you get me the coordinates, I'll be able to open a dungeon gate to connect the two realms. But the rank of the dungeon will still depend on the soul energy density of the other realm where the dungeon gate has connected my realm to—that part is beyond my control."

She wasn't making excuses—just being honest. Within a few months, she felt she could find and master space rule meanings she was missing to summon dungeons like the Card World but Wyatt didn't seem like the patient type, so she had to present him with the best possible alternative for now.

Wyatt's face lit up as he pulled her into a big bear hug.

"I knew you could do it! You're the best, Elder Sister," he praised her wholeheartedly. Meanwhile, his thoughts drifted—to Jill Norley. If he hadn't run into her, he wouldn't have figured out that the Dungeon Relocation Apparatus could be modified into a Dungeon Summoning Apparatus. He couldn't help but wonder what that curious but calculative woman was up to while father was busy building on the idea he stole from him. Dalie, clearly pleased with herself, pulled back slightly, her eyes twinkling with excitement.

"So?" she grinned. "Do you want to test it out?"

"How much resources do you need to set up the natural array formation to help you summon a dungeon?" Wyatt asked, his tone practical and measured.

He wasn't about to gamble away a fortune on something so unpredictable. The dungeon she summoned could be anywhere from E-rank to SSS-rank, and spending a ridiculous amount of resources just to end up with an E-rank dungeon would be a waste. He'd rather hold off until he found a way to tilt the odds in his favor.

Dalie's cheerful expression dimmed slightly. "A lot," she admitted, the smile fading from her face. For a Celestial to say "a lot", that alone painted a grim picture of how expensive this was going to be.

"Yeah... so let's not," Wyatt decided firmly. "I'll have Henricks scout the realms and find a location with SS or SSS-rank soul energy density. Once we have the right coordinates, you can use them to summon a high-level dungeon instead."

That was the best plan for now. But truth be told, he had no idea how much coordinates really mattered in dungeon summoning. They'd have to experiment a few times to find out, and he could already see his wealth dwindling in the near future.

Dalie nodded reluctantly, but Wyatt could tell she was blaming herself for not having a complete understanding of the space rule meanings yet. Just as he was about to reassure her, telling her it wasn't something she should worry about, a figure suddenly teleported into the room.

It was Luna.

She had been hounding Dredre and Ceed nonstop, insisting that she needed to meet with Wyatt regarding the Empty Space Project. Originally, she and Wyatt were supposed to work on it together, but after her sudden betrayal and Wyatt's escape from the Yellow Plains, they never got the chance.

Now that the project was in its final stages, she figured a fresh perspective—especially Wyatt's unique eyes—might help her spot whatever she was missing.

And if all else failed, she was sure Wyatt could get Sansa to reveal how she had planned to assist with the project when she had approached them to take over the Freedom Fighters—back when Henricks was away and the World Leaders were knocking at their door.

One way or another, Luna believed wholeheartedly that the Empty Space Project would play a huge role in building Freedom Megapolis's economy.

Wyatt had to admit, when she framed it like that, it was worth hearing her out—especially since his own Dungeon Summoning plans using Dalie's celestial prowess had hit a few roadblocks and funding issues.

Luna hurriedly bowed to Dalie with utmost respect, but just as she was about to turn to Wyatt, she froze mid-motion—her body going rigid. Dalie suddenly spoke to her with a calm but piercing voice, asking, "Why does my brother hate you?"

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megapolis

"Because I betrayed him... and everyone who cared for me," Luna admitted to Dalie without hesitation.

To mortals, Dalie's presence felt divine. In her presence, it was nearly impossible to lie—unless one was truly devoid of empathy like a sociopath or a psychopath. At the same time, her boundless enthusiasm had a way of energizing those around her and putting them at ease around her. Otherwise, it would have been difficult for anyone to enjoy Ceed's birthday party with a Divine entity among them.

Dalie studied Luna, sensing the storm of emotions raging inside her. Gently, she consoled, "Now that you're here, don't get lost again." As a Celestial, she could perceive far more than any mortal, though the way she interpreted emotions was entirely different.

Luna hesitated but finally gathered the courage to meet Dalie's eyes. "...Yes, Your Highness," she murmured.

She had never truly stopped to reflect on her betrayal—neither to the Southern Royal Family nor the Southern Region. To her, they had simply been the price she was willing to pay to further her research into the Empty Space through Henricks' Origin Card.

Because of this cost, she was always on her toes. Every moment she spent away from her research felt like a waste of the price paid to be here. That thought haunted her, driving her forward relentlessly. She never allowed herself to laze around or procrastinate because this opportunity had cost her everything. She couldn't let it all be for nothing.

Even when she learned that the Freedom Fighters were cutting her department's funding—planning to take back the funds they had already provided—she hadn't wasted time whining or blaming others. Instead, she found a way to secure the resources she needed. Unfortunately, the Freedom Fighters' finances were already in shambles. Not even her early investment in VR-Universe's currency could keep them afloat for long.

On top of everything, the Freedom Fighters had been forced to turn to the Southern Royal Family—and ultimately, to Wyatt—to survive. That, more than anything, made Luna confront her betrayal. It forced her to weigh her actions and ask herself: Was it worth it?

But in Luna's twisted logic, she comforted herself with the thought that betraying the Southern Region and its royal family had only been a stepping stone for her Empty Space research. She had to think that way. Otherwise, she'd be no different from a fool who had gambled away their entire fortune—and their family's along with it.

"You sure you should be running around instead of locking yourself up in your lab?" Wyatt asked, eyeing her skeptically. "You do know your grandma's here too, right?" He

wasn't looking for trouble—just hoping to avoid the inevitable family drama between Luna and the Field Marshal.

Luna scoffed, crossing her arms. "Why? What she and I did isn't all that different. We both followed what we thought was best for us. For me, it was ambition. For her, it was patriotism. That's what drove us to switch sides." Her voice was nonchalant, but she wasn't fooling anyone. Her eyes gave her away.

Dalie stepped forward, her presence warm yet commanding. "Little girl, you don't have to force yourself to be alone," she said gently. "Now that you're with us, learn to share—both your fears and your ambitions. It's not selfish to chase your dreams... as long as you're the only one paying the price. Not someone else."

Her words settled over Luna like a quiet storm. Mistakes had been made. That much was certain. But letting herself off easy wasn't the answer. If she truly wanted to move forward, she had to find a way to repay those who had borne the cost of her ambition.

"The Empty Project is going to be my way of repaying those I've hurt," Luna said, her voice steady. Then, after a brief pause, she added, "Before I ask for your help and funding, you should know—I had an agreement with Henricks. Once I complete the project, it's to be shared with the Southern Royal Family. I don't know if that arrangement still stands under your leadership. Does it?"

Wyatt leaned back, considering her words. "Yeah, it does. But... are you sure the Southern Royal Family will forgive you with this?" He understood why Luna had done what she did. Before he took over, the Southern Region had no real future—nothing that would allow it to keep up with the other regions. See betraying them was the only way for her to bring back their lost glory, Luna hadn't hesitated. She knew the risks. She knew her betrayal might amount to nothing. She knew she might go down in history as just another traitor. Yet, she did it anyway.

"I'm not doing this for their forgiveness," Luna shot back, crossing her arms. "I'm glad the Southern Region has you now, but that doesn't mean the rest of us get to sit around and do nothing." She fought to keep the irritation out of her voice. Explaining herself to Wyatt and his sister was grating, but she had no choice if she wanted to secure their help and funding. Otherwise, she was free to leave.

Wyatt let out a slow sigh. Same old Luna. He knew he couldn't ignore her betrayal, but he also knew he had a choice—he could either stay stuck in the past or build something new with her, accepting who she was now.

That said, he had no illusions about the future. People didn't really change. She'd probably make the same choices all over again.

"Fine. Send me all your progress and findings on the Empty Space so far. I'll go through them—"

"I just sent it to your grimoire," Luna cut in eagerly, her voice tinged with impatience. She knew this step was unavoidable—no one would blindly invest in research. "How long until I get your answer?"

Wyatt barely glanced at his grimoire before responding. "No need to wait. You can get started now, but Dalie will oversee the project. Use her abilities wisely." He had no doubt about Luna's intentions—she wasn't scheming or playing tricks. She just wanted to finish her research as quickly as possible and start applying it to everyday life.

Luna hesitated for a moment before asking, "What about you?" She knew that if Wyatt were involved, he'd come up with ingenious ways to apply her findings in the real world. That was the whole point of her work—to turn theory into something tangible.

Wyatt let out a small sigh. "I'd love to join you guys, but something urgent just came up. I have to handle it personally." He gave Dalie a quick nod, signaling her to transport him to his trophy section in the Seed World.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Seed World, Trophy section.

Arriving in the trophy section, Wyatt looked at Redfall, who was busy reviewing his rules and runes, and informed him, "Get ready, we will be leaving for the Card World soon."

"Yes, my liege," Redfall answered before returning to his practice.

Wyatt then checked on Lois, who was busy working on her divinity. She was his hidden ace against the masters of the central government. Once she reached at least the level of a Chief Knight in the chivalry class of the Card demigod realm without any aid from her primordial calamity daughter gem, he would green-light her mission to infiltrate the organization, pulling the strings of the puppet central government. This was necessary because otherwise, it would be like delivering a sheep to a den of wolves. Considering Agent Lois was one of a kind, he wasn't prepared to lose this sheep yet.

Making sure she was progressing smoothly, Wyatt then found an empty floating island and made himself comfortable to prepare for the urgent problem that had just come to his notice: his Police Chief aunt and daughter.

According to Aunt Denise, something about her last call with her daughter left her feeling odd and unsettling. As a cop, she had an intuitive gut, and it screamed that something was wrong. So, she tried reaching her daughter outside of the stipulated phone time by Morningstar University, under the guise of a family emergency. However, they said her daughter couldn't answer her call because she was busy with research and that she should leave a message if it was important.

This wasn't the first time Morningstar University had dismissed her calls to her daughter using this reason, but this time, her gut told her something was definitely wrong. So, she reached out to Susan to get a meeting with him, who then contacted her and updated her on what was going on.

Instead of agreeing to meet Denise, Wyatt asked Susan to tell her that her daughter would be home within the next 24 hours. Denise just wanted him to check on her daughter, but knowing the history of Denise, her daughter, and Morningstar University, Wyatt thought he might as well rescue the poor girl before other pressing issues pushed her to the back of his mind.

However, Wyatt didn't do anything without something in it for him. He wanted to use this opportunity to announce to the world that he would soon be taking over the Southern Academic City, hoping to increase student enrollment. Not that it wasn't already known to most; it was mostly limited to higher-ups in the five regions. He needed to spread awareness to the general public of the five regions.

Knowing this would get him enough attention, Wyatt posted the following update on the VR-Universe's main page of the Grimoire Network:

[The VR-Universe services within the area of Morningstar University in the Central Academic City of the Central Region are being permanently suspended unless Morningstar University facilitates the reunion of the Untaintable Princess with her mother, Chief Denise Johnson, in Sky Blossom City within the next six hours.

P.S. If anything were to happen to the Untaintable Princess, the Central Academic City would have one less top-ten university to boast about.]

Posting the update, Wyatt grinned, knowing that Morningstar University would likely not take his threat seriously and just ignore it. However, losing access to VR-Universe would make it hard for them to ignore. That inconvenience, along with the threat in the post, would generate enough buzz, setting the stage for him to announce to the world that he would be leading the Southern Academic Region from the next academic year.

Then, Wyatt turned his attention to creating a noble-class title demon core forging method for the Frosling race, as he had promised Moon Fright. It was much earlier than the promised time, but he planned to forge a few Frosling corpse puppets for his visit to the Central Region. While he was at it, he decided he would surprise Moon by sending her the noble-class title demon core forging method earlier than the specified time. To

show her that he was the peerless craftsman she believed him to be, he was capable of fulfilling his promise of building the Frozen Utopia for her race, as long as they were willing to show him absolute obedience.

With the help of the Hive Spirit, his design for Forsling corpse puppet, and using the Frosling's traditional title demon core forging method, Frosell, Wyatt was able to create both a noble-class title demon curse core forging art and upgrade his design to create curse puppets using Frosling corpses. The new design would incorporate his Primordial Calamity daughter gem and also his insights from Agony's title demon core. After revising the noble-class title demon curse core forging method one last time, he renamed it from Frosell to Frosilk before sharing it with Moon using the demon merchant codex.

Then, without wasting any time waiting for Moon's reply, he scoured the devil merchant's inter-realm network. Wyatt managed to get his hands on a dozen devil-rank, pseudo-noble class, Frosling female corpses that were in mint condition. Without any further delay, he and his primordial spirits began to refine all twelve Frosling corpses into Frosling corpse puppets following the upgraded blueprint with the help of the Hive Spirit.

This time, Wyatt went all out creating these corpse puppets, unlike back in the Duel World. Here, with no one watching him, he could make full use of all his cheats and means available to him, ensuring that these corpse puppets were going to be the best Froslings out there in the Myriad Realms. But despite his means and ingenuity, there was a limit to how much he could enhance the capabilities of these corpse puppets. After all, they were just pseudo-noble-class corpses.

However, if his insight from Agony's title demon core worked, he might be able to exceed even his own expectations.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Seed World, Trophy section.

Wyatt and his primordial spirits used the Breath of Erosion to refine a dozen semi-noble-class Forsling corpses, following the guidance of his primordial soul pupils, unlike during his duel against Bigold in the Duel World. Thanks to the unique properties of the Breath of Erosion, Wyatt found the refinement process far more profound, almost like witnessing the corpses being reborn in his vision.

Since acquiring the Breath of Erosion, Wyatt hadn't had many opportunities to incorporate it into card crafting. And when he did, the materials typically weren't up to standard. But this time was different. Though the corpses of semi-noble-class Forslings didn't fall under the unranked ingredient category, they were the highest quality ingredients in Mythical grade.

According to the realm limitations of the card world, only the devil realms of the upper noble-class realm and above were qualified as unranked-grade ingredients. As such, the semi-noble-class Forsling corpses were of the highest quality one could get in Mythical grade.

For a card crafter of Wyatt's calibre, crafting noble-class Forsling corpse puppets, or rather, unranked-grade corpse puppet cards using these semi-noble-class corpses, was a realistic challenge, especially since he intended to nourish the corpse puppets and their cores using primordial energy and pixie dust.

Seeing the impressive results of refining the Forsling corpses with the Breath of Erosion, Wyatt grew increasingly optimistic about the crafting process. He eagerly anticipated applying the vast knowledge he had gleaned from the undead devil Agony's title demon core. The anticipation of how many of the Forsling corpse puppets' cores would develop spirits made him restless. After all, considering the ingredients he used, a corpse puppet shy of a spirit, regardless of its grade, would be a failure and a huge disappointment.

With the Breath of Erosion, Primordial Energy, and Pixie Dust at his disposal, it would be shocking if these corpse puppets failed to develop spirits. If they didn't, it would call into question Wyatt's skills as a card crafter. These three forces were responsible for the very existence of life across the Myriad Realms at various stages—Breath of Erosion as rebirth, Pixie Dust as nourishment, and Primordial Energy as the origin. They were powers so immense and elusive that even ruler-class entities could only dream of wielding them. Yet here was Wyatt, a mortal card master, in command of them.

With such profound forces at his fingertips, if Wyatt failed to recreate the miracle of the Undead Devil Agony using these dozen Forsling corpses—especially with the guidance of his Primordial Soul Pupils and the vast knowledge from the Infinity Library—then he wasn't the genius card crafter he believed himself to be. He would be no better than a lucky hack in the vast and competitive field of Soul Crafting in the Myriad Realms.

Once the corpses were refined using the Breath of Erosion, Wyatt began the next phase: core creation. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of corpse puppet crafting, he worked following the guidance of his primordial soul pupils and Hive Spirit. He didn't hesitate to use Primordial Calamity Daughter Gems in their construction.

Additionally, he made sure to align the development of the cores with his newly devised Forsilk title demon core technique, the complete version of the Forsling Title Demon Core Technique he had designed for Moon Fright and her race.

This complete version would allow the spirits of the corpse puppets to cultivate all the way into the upper ruler-class realms, making up for the lack of ruler-class Forsling corpses to create ruler-class Forsling corpse puppets.

Now that Wyatt's grimoire had advanced to the unranked grade, it was no longer bound by rank or realm limitations of the Card World. Using the Breath of Erosion to upgrade, it had successfully broken free of the limitations of the Card World. In other words, he could now equip unranked cards crafted using the ruler-class ingredients.

One must understand that the Unranked Grade in the Card World was equivalent to the Noble and Ruler Classes of the Devil Realm. In other words, anything above the Semi Noble Class in the Devil Realm fell under the Unranked Grade in the Card World.

This distinction is important because if the Will of the Card World were to grow, the realm limit for living beings within it would rise from the Chivalry Class to the Noble Class, mirroring the structure of the Devil Realm. However, Wyatt had no idea how long it would take for the Card World's Will to achieve such growth, let alone reach the point where it could raise its limit to the Ruler Class.

He also didn't know how the Card World's Will would apply that growth to the living beings within it. Despite their similarities, the power systems of the Card World and the Devil Realm were fundamentally different.

That said, Wyatt—who had already surpassed the limitations of the Card World despite being mortal—had no choice but to look to the various power systems of the Myriad Realms for guidance. Given that the Devil Realm's power system, thanks to the Devil Merchant Code, was widely accepted throughout the Myriad Realms, he used it as a blueprint for his own progress.

It was no secret that corpse puppets with spirits, or any tool or relic with a spirit, could ascend in rank and grade just like demons and devils did in their realm. But when it came to cards, this wasn't usually the case. Aside from Origin Cards, which evolved alongside their card apprentices, most cards would not naturally ascend in rank or grade over time—unless they were deliberately upgraded or fused by their card apprentices.

Yes, there were exceptions—like rune cards. A rune card's rank and grade would increase along with the tier of its rune. It was important to note that only rune cards created using runes with a spirit and nourished within the ego gem of their original master were capable of evolving. However, the birth of a rune spirit was an extremely rare occurrence in the mortal realms, as mortal card apprentices were incapable of nourishing their runes with enough rule power to give rise to a spirit. If they planned to, they would have to pause their realm progress, wasting their golden years.

Only demigods were generally considered capable of achieving this. Having reached the realm limit of the Card World, they alone possessed both the time and the talent

required. At that stage, they had no choice but to turn to rules and runes to continue enhancing their strength, as they had already hit the ceiling of the Card World's power system.

This meant that the corpse puppet cards Wyatt aimed to craft were poised to become the first of their kind. To create a card capable of ascending to ruler-class over time, he would need to use a ruler-class core in its creation. Otherwise, despite having the potential to reach ruler-class within the Unranked Grade, the card would always be limited by the grade of the ingredients used in its crafting. Which would be a shame, considering the incredible prowess used in the crafting process of these dozen forsling corpse puppet cards.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Seed World, Trophy section.

Wyatt knew this even before he began the creation of a dozen Forsling corpse puppet cards. Yet, he did not make arrangements to acquire a dozen ruler-class cores to serve as the common core to house all the modified and edited soul pathways and arrangements that would later be morphed into a card because he couldn't afford even the lower ruler-class cores being sold or auctioned in the Devil Merchant Code.

The demand for ruler-class cores was very high, while the supply was very low. Therefore, even the lower ruler-class cores were priced or auctioned at an exorbitant rate that woke Wyatt, the richest card apprentice, up to the bitter reality that in the Myriad Realms, he was poor.

Wyatt had even planned to pool all his net worth together to buy at least one ruler-class core to use to create a single unranked card capable of summoning a dozen unranked Forsling corpse puppets. However, he learned that doing so would mean he would have to halt all his side ventures and return to being a poor card creationist offering his services to the highest bidder.

Wyatt felt a pang of nostalgia for those days, but not enough to relive them.

Despite not having a ruler-class core to perform the final card transformation in the card creation process, Wyatt decided to start the creation process anyway. He believed that with the help of his soul pupils and depending on the effect of pixie dust and primordial energy on the soul pathways of the Forsling corpse puppets, he could use semi-ruler

class cores to achieve a similar effect. If not, he could abandon card creation and switch to soul crafting to gain a dozen semi-noble class Forsling corpse puppets with awakened spirits instead of a dozen unranked Forsling corpse puppet cards.

However, now that he was almost at the climax of the card creation process, he knew that, forget semi-ruler class cores, even lower ruler-class cores wouldn't suffice. They would increase the star rating of the card significantly, potentially reaching three digits. He needed upper ruler-class cores to contain the entire potential of the dozen Forsling corpse puppets he was crafting and to create the unranked cards with the lowest star rating. Otherwise, his only option would be to switch to soul crafting to gain items with awakened spirits instead of unranked cards of these items.

Before starting the card creation process, Wyatt had thought he would decisively switch to soul crafting if card creation wasn't feasible. But now, seeing the potential of these dozen Forsling corpse puppets he was creating, Wyatt hesitated. He felt it would be a waste if he didn't turn them into unranked item cards and instead allowed them to be born as items with awakened spirits.

There were only six item card slots in a grimoire, regardless of its grade. The same was true for Wyatt's unranked grimoire. Yet, he was refining twelve unranked item cards. Why? Because he only planned to keep one for himself and give the rest to his friends and subordinates.

Yes, he was the only card apprentice alive with an unranked grimoire capable of equipping unranked cards, but he planned to address that during his next visit to the Card World.

One might ask why go through all that trouble. Couldn't he just hand them the item instead of the item card? Aren't the two one and the same? That would be a huge misunderstanding. In the hands of a card apprentice, an item card is far more efficient than the item itself. When a card apprentice equips an item card, they can not only summon the item in physical form but also gain a basic understanding of the item.

For example, what was the item? What was the purpose of the item? What was the item capable of? How to safely use the item? How to use the item so it would not lose its durability quickly with every use? This understanding came to the card apprentice along with the card creator's own knowledge, if any were added to the card, such as in the case of the Field Marshal's combat training card.

Because of this advantage of item cards, Wyatt believed his friends with lower realms would be able to use the Forsling corpse puppets much more efficiently. Especially considering that these Forsling corpse puppets were bound to have spirits. After all, items with spirits tend to be very picky about their masters, but not in this case, as they were made using primordial calamity daughter gems. But there were other problems the calamity gem could not solve. So, if he could, he would want to give his friends the

unranked item cards, which they could use instead of the items themselves, which might prove to be a burden due to their lacking realm.

All this aside, the real reason for Wyatt's hesitation was that he knew a place where he could acquire upper ruler-class cores as easily as picking up fallen apples during a leisurely walk in an apple orchard.

Wyatt, who had always strived to give the best to his customers, would not settle for subpar for himself and his friends when he knew he could obtain the best.

However, this time, giving his best might end up costing Wyatt his life because the location where he could get upper ruler-class cores was temporarily being used by the strongest being he had ever faced in the myriad realms, the Deviant Devil Prince Mamas Mulias. That was to say, the place he was thinking of was the origin of the blood rule in the entire myriad realms, the Blood Rule Source.

To be accurate, the battlefield in the Blood Rule Source was where Wyatt and Dream Assassin Raukaul Maar had escaped the blood regression meaning blood rule domain of Deviant Devil Mamas Mulias, while he prepared to fight the incoming Celestial Blood Rule Slave.

Now, that place was littered with the ruler-class cores of the Blood Rule Slaves that Mamas had killed in his attempt to capture Raukaul and fight the Celestial Blood Rule Slave.

Wyatt had always planned to return to that battlefield in the Blood Rule Source to collect the cores of the slain Blood Rule Slaves, but to his surprise, the last time he checked, Mamas was still fighting the Celestial Blood Rule Slave.

No, Wyatt did not return to the battlefield to witness it. He wouldn't dare, as the aftershock from the battle alone was enough to trigger his various super survival arrangements in case of instant death. Instead, it was feedback from the pseudo-calamity soul gems he had buried deep within the Blood Rule Source under the battlefield. The clones of Hive spirits within these gems were constantly monitoring their surroundings and reporting to Wyatt on the progress of the battle based on the tremors generated in that part of the Blood Rule Source by the aftershock of the exchange between Mamas and the Celestial Blood Rule Slave.

The Hive Spirit had deduced a lot from the tremors: that Mamas wasn't just fighting the Celestial Blood Rule Slave but was also constantly being besieged by other blood rule slaves.

The ruler-class cores on the battlefield were just piling up, some even being crushed to powder by the fight. The only problem was whether anyone dared to go and clean the battlefield of all that waste.

Previously, Wyatt had not given this much thought because he did not have any particular need for ruler-class cores significant enough to risk his life. But now that he did, he was pondering various unconventional ways he could fetch a dozen upper ruler-class cores from the battlefield in the Blood Rule Source without dying.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Seed World, Trophy section.

Wyatt pondered for a while, only to conclude that even at his strongest, he wouldn't be powerful enough to withstand the shockwaves from the Deviant Devil's battle within the Blood Rule Source. The difference in their power levels was simply too vast.

However, he thought of two individuals who might survive in that environment and fetch a dozen cores for him: one was his captive, the Elder Anesthesia Dragon, and the other was his elder sister, the newborn Celestial, Dalie. As for Ceed, she was simply too young and inexperienced.

The elder dragon would rather see its entire race exterminated than risk encountering the Deviant Devil. No offer from Wyatt—including its freedom—could convince it to help. It preferred the safety of Wyatt's prison over the possibility of being caught by Mamas.

That left Wyatt with Dalie. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he became that she was the best fit for the task. As a Celestial, she would not be targeted by the Blood Rule Source. The blood rule slaves focused on attacking Mamas wouldn't bother her while she harvested the cores of their fallen comrades, slaughtered by the Deviant Devil. In fact, if the situation allowed, they might be able to collect more than just a dozen cores.

With this in mind, Wyatt settled on Dalie. He even began to imagine future possibilities: venturing deeper into the Blood Rule Source, or perhaps locating other Rule Sources. If they could do so, they might be able to harvest the cores of rule slaves sent to eliminate him. It was an idea worth considering, though everything would depend on how events unfolded from here.

Having decided to take the risk of entering the Blood Rule Source, Wyatt instructed his clones to continue crafting cards while he and Dalie retrieved the final ingredient needed: a dozen ruler-class cores.

Leaving the trophy section with Ceed's assistance, Wyatt returned to his penthouse suite at the heart of the megalopolis, where Dalie was observing mortals and learning from them. Sensing a fluctuation in space, Dalie paused her lessons. Recognizing Wyatt's soul energy signature, she greeted him as he arrived, "Hello, little brother."

"Hi," Wyatt replied awkwardly. Apart from a few soap operas, he had never seen anyone greet their sibling so formally. It was uncomfortable and a little unsettling. Their bond sublimated that of ordinary siblings, thanks to his cursed bloodline. Things shouldn't have felt so stiff and awkward between them. But they did—because Dalie was trying too hard, while Wyatt, distracted by too many responsibilities, barely tried at all.

But now that he was aware of it, he decided not to rush into business. Instead, he asked, "Dalie, are you really okay with all the changes around here? If not, I can have them relocate."

Though he had confirmed several times with Dalie that she was fine with the Freedom Fighters moving in before they built the Megalopolis and immigrated millions of card apprentices. He now feared that while she may have liked the idea, she might not be enjoying the reality.

"No, I like it. I'm learning so many new things from them," Dalie answered quickly, worried that Wyatt might misunderstand her feelings and get the wrong impression.

Wyatt frowned, sensing that Dalie wasn't telling him everything. He pressed gently, "If something's bothering you, just say it. Maybe I can help."

"Well, since you asked... I want more siblings. No—actually, a bigger family. Like the ones mortals have," Dalie confessed.

"Dalie, you know better than anyone that I can't control my bloodline. I'm still figuring it out. Maybe someday, but for now, you have me and Ceed," Wyatt said, shaking his head helplessly. Of all the things she could have asked for, she chose the one thing completely out of his hands.

Wyatt didn't mention the Clown Mask or the others—they might share his bloodline, but they weren't Celestials like the three of them. And in Dalie's eyes, that meant they weren't truly 'family.'

"Well, Ceed and you aren't enough," Dalie said bluntly. She knew she was being unreasonable—maybe even greedy—but she couldn't help how she felt. The heart wants what it wants. Ever since the mortals moved in, her yearning for a larger family had only grown stronger, until Wyatt finally pulled it out of her.

"Then create your own race of mortal beings. It's about time, honestly. If you need inspiration, I can borrow books from the Infinity Library," Wyatt suggested, doing his

best to offer a solution. He figured that starting her own native civilization might keep her occupied—and perhaps fulfill her desire for a bigger family.

"No, that's not the same. They wouldn't be like you, Ceed, and me," Dalie rejected his suggestion without hesitation—clearly something she had already considered and dismissed long ago.

"Well, what about the Chaos Dwarfs? Weren't you planning on taking Dulas as your apprentice? How are they adjusting, by the way?" Wyatt asked, desperately trying to change the topic. He had a gut feeling Dalie had a specific way to expand their 'family,' and he was sure he wouldn't like it.

"They're settling in nicely," Dalie replied. Then, with a deep frown, she asked him, "Why did you even ask what's bothering me if you had no intention of helping me?"

"Dalie, I want to help you, but this... this isn't something I can control. I'm sorry, but I can't help you with this one," Wyatt said sincerely. He owed Dalie a lot and fully intended to repay her kindness somehow, but what she was asking was out of his hands.

"Yes, you can. All you have to do is find a suitable mate and give me dozens of nieces and nephews," Dalie explained eagerly, hoping her brother would agree.

Hearing Dalie's words, Dredre—nestled warmly within Wyatt's hair—couldn't help but poke her head out and glance at him, curious about his reaction. Knowing about Wyatt and Susan, the gossip bug inside her was already itching, she couldn't help but grow interested in where this conversation was headed.

"Hell no! There's no way I'm doing that!" Wyatt shouted at the top of his lungs, utterly stunned that Dalie wanted to reduce him to a breeder just to fulfill her own desires.

"Why not? You're the only one among the three of us who can reproduce. Trust me, if I could, I would've already given you tons of nieces and nephews," Dalie protested, trying to persuade her little brother to have children, for her sake. If she could, she would've done the same for him without hesitation.

"Yes, you can too. Just refine a human incarnation and have as many kids as you want. Leave me out of this," Wyatt countered, already regretting that he'd tried to be a considerate brother instead of just getting to business like usual.

"Again, that's not the same. The resulting children would be human, not Celestials. For that, I don't even need to create a human incarnation—I could make them now," Dalie said, making it clear that she wanted a Celestial family, not a mortal one who wouldn't live long enough for her to remember them in her long lifespan.

It wasn't that Dalie looked down on mortals. On the contrary, she respected them deeply, so much so that she had chosen to learn from them. What she admired most was their familial bonds. She longed for that herself.

As a Celestial, she was bound to live until the end of time—assuming nothing unexpected happened. Even the lifespans of the ruler-class beings paled in comparison. Hence, her understanding of time was fundamentally different. That's why longevity was one of the most important factors she considered before forming deep attachments. Based on her experience, she preferred companions who were Celestials like herself.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megalopolis.

"Dalie, nothing you say will change my mind. Let's just drop it," Wyatt said firmly. He had no intention of using his various bloodline authorities to force Dalie to let the matter go. If he started using his authority for every little disagreement, then what was the point of evolving the Calamity Daughters' gems into bloodkins in the first place? Besides, this was the first real disagreement between him and Dalie.

"You'd like that, wouldn't you? Since it's not you who wants a bigger family, but me," Dalie argued, showing no intention of backing down.

"..." Wyatt brooded, feeling like he had just dropped a hammer on his own foot. He truly regretted trying to be a considerate brother to Dalie instead of simply getting down to business as usual. He wanted to give her a good brother, but all she wanted were cute nieces and nephews.

"Tell me why you're against this idea. Maybe I can talk some sense into you," Dalie said, urging Wyatt to explain why he wouldn't sire dozens of quarter-celestial babies for her. After all, Wyatt himself wasn't a full celestial yet—though his World Calamity Tree lineage made up the difference.

"..." Wyatt stared blankly at Dalie. Seeing that she was serious, he didn't even feel like responding anymore.

Honestly, Wyatt had never thought about having children, not even in his past life. Considering the state Earth was in when he left it, he would have preferred to get a vasectomy rather than commit the sin of dragging an innocent soul into that purgatory.

Even in this world, Wyatt had never really given the idea any serious thought—except for that one time when Jill’s origin card schemed to steal his semen, and now, when Dalie brought it up. Otherwise, it wouldn’t have even crossed his mind until it stared him in the face on his wedding night—if he was lucky enough to have one.

So, why was he so against the idea when he hadn’t even truly considered it before? It was because of his cursed bloodline. He didn’t want to pass it on to his children. It would turn them into another one of his bloodkins, and he didn’t want that kind of fate for them. Unless he could figure out the intricacies of his bloodline and learn to control it, he wasn’t planning on having offspring—no matter how tempting the opportunity might be.

"Wyatt, answer me," Dalie pressed, not letting his silence slide.

"Sigh..." Wyatt let out a long breath and explained, pointing at the buildings below through the glass window. "Dalie, the families you admire down there all have one thing in common: love. Humans don’t need love to mate, but if they want to build a real family, they do. So, until I find someone I love, and who loves me back, there’s no point in trying to force me to breed dozens of nieces and nephews for you."

Listening to Wyatt’s words, Dalie’s eyes dimmed, but she nodded. Even though it had only been a short time since humans had moved here, she had seen love among them in various forms and had begun to understand that it was an integral part of their society. Demons, considered the most vicious race in the world, sought love and were capable of it. Even she, a celestial—supposedly one of the most detached beings—longed for it. So, she understood the message Wyatt was trying to convey, loud and clear.

With that understanding, Dalie decided to drop the matter. But before she could say anything, Wyatt continued, "Still, all hope is not lost. There’s another way we can expand our family—by finding unborn celestials across the Myriad Realms. That way, we can greet them when they’re born and invite them to join us, like we did with Ceed."

It was a great idea, but there was one tiny problem: finding an unborn celestial in the Myriad Realms was like finding a needle in a haystack.

"Wyatt, Ceed is a forest spirit, not a celestial," Dredre corrected, to which Wyatt rolled his eyes and subtly signaled Dalie not to correct Dredre. Then he replied, "What I meant was that we could throw a birthday party like we did for Ceed’s birth."

"Oh. Ceed's party was amazing," Dredre said, reminiscing fondly. Though her pixie friends had been absent, it was still a wonderful experience. After all, she had longed to see the world beyond her tribal forest and library—and this was it.

Meanwhile, Dalie stared intensely at Dredre, causing the latter to retreat into Wyatt's hair. Before Dalie could call out to her, Wyatt stopped her, saying, "Don't even think about it. Just stick to finding unborn celestials in the void, and I'll help you recruit them into our family."

"Why—" Dalie started to protest, but Wyatt cut her off.

"This isn't up for debate. Dredre is off-limits. Just focus on finding unborn celestials in the Myriad Realms. That's your best shot at expanding the family."

Wyatt knew exactly what Dalie wanted to say—she wanted Dredre to create more forest spirits so he could recruit them as bloodkin using his bloodline.

He also sent her a mental warning: Dredre belonged to the Librarian, one of the most powerful ruler-class beings in the Myriad Realm. If anything happened to Dredre, he and everyone he cared about would be as good as dead.

Wyatt prayed that this would be enough to scare Dalie from ever having designs on Dredre. But only time could tell.

He had no plans of using his bloodline authority here either. He trusted Dalie and truly meant it when he said he didn't want to use his bloodline authority on Dalie or any of his blood kin.

Besides, the reason he didn't want Dredre to create more so-called forest spirits was because he didn't think she would appreciate what he was doing to her "babies." But if he didn't, they would leech off her for eternity. Ceed's case was special—By the time Wyatt knew that the being Dredre referred to as a forest spirit turned out to be a celestial, it was too late. If he hadn't turned Ceed, she would have done everything in her power to make Dredre hers, regardless of Dredre's wishes. Since Dredre was too weak to resist Ceed, the choice was obvious.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megalopolis.

"Are you mad at me?" Dalie asked me while I was wondering if it was okay to bring a Pixie to the Blood Rule Source.

Yes, I will be asking for Dredre's opinion too, but I needed to make sure it was safe for her first. Since I was pretty sure that if asked, Dredre would want to go.

But, considering the circumstances of the location I planned to visit in Blood Rule Source. Let's pin it for next time.

"No, I am not," I lied. Thanks to the invasive connection between us bloodkins, Dalie knew it too. So, I added, "But if you want to make it up to me, I need your help opening a passage to the blood rule source and collecting some blood rule slave cores—"

"Say no more, do you have the coordinates of the location in the Blood Rule source? Or are we doing some good old exploring and gathering?" Dalie cut in, agreeing to my request without a second thought.

"Great, Hive spirit will guide you to the location in the blood rule source," I exclaimed to assure Dalie that I wasn't mad at her anymore through my fake excitement, and then informed Dredre, "My pixie guide, you are in charge while we two are gone. Can you handle it?"

"Yes, I can," Dredre said confidently, flying out of her cozy little nest in my hair.

I nodded with a gentle smile, instructing her, "Ceed is your number two. So, don't try to solve everything by yourself, got it. Goodbye."

Using the cursed bloodline and Hive spirit, it wasn't hard for Dalie to sense my pseudo-calamity soul gem in the Blood Rule source and open a passage a little further away from it to avoid the Deviant Devil's fight.

"All the best," Dredre wished Wyatt as he vanished with Dalie into the portal. Then she slowly turned to look at the skyline of the Freedom Megalopolis, a concrete and glass jungle, and her eyes twinkled. Nobody knew what was going on in the tiny little head of hers.

As soon as we stepped into the blood rule source, we did not have the time to explore its blood-themed habitat, as we felt the dying shockwaves from the Deviant Devil's battle blowing our hair.

"What is that entity? It's so powerful. It's able to resist the intent of the Blood rule source with just its bizarre thumping sound," Dalie asked in shock as it glanced at a silvermoon-like entity up ahead in this scarlet world. The entity was too big. She did not even have to make use of her celestial vision to notice it. It emitted a thumping sound like a bizarre but powerful heartbeat. Making her wonder if something was within the silver moon.

"Fuck!" I cursed, observing the truth using my primordial soul pupils. The Owlape prince had not only defeated the celestial blood rule slave but devoured it and was attempting to undergo an evolution of sorts. The silver moon was truly an Owlape egg containing a Ruler-class deviant prince. The Blood Rule source was doing its best to destroy the egg that did not belong here using its blood rule slaves, but they all were reduced to ash by the thumping sound produced by the egg, even before they could reach a couple of hundred yards of it. As the thumping sound was a mixture of various rules, a hybrid rune, a powerful one at that.

After losing the celestial blood rule slave to the deviant devil, the Blood Rule source should have up'd its response by sending out a more powerful blood rule slave to deal with the deviant devil. Instead, it was sending out these semi-ruler and low-level ruler class blood rule slaves. That was because it believed both its Celestial blood rule slave and the Deviant devil were dead, leaving behind this anomaly, a ruler-class egg. So, its response was within its own rules.

I speculated if the Deviant Devil recklessly attempted to undergo this unknown evolution and risked everything to trick the Blood Rule source. After all, it couldn't have come out unscathed from the fight. But the only hole in this speculation was what was keeping the Deviant Devil in here? Why did it not just escape licking its wounds but recklessly risk everything?

The first thing that came to my mind was that it wasn't capable of entering and leaving the Blood Rule source. It made use of a strange method to track and teleport to where the Elder Anaesthesia dragon was. Now that the Elder Anaesthesia dragon was locked away, it had no idea how to leave the Blood Rule source and was stuck in here.

After all, in here, even the entity which was believed to be closest to achieving transcendence in all of the Myriad Realms, the Devil Merchant Code could not enter or leave as it pleased. If not for my demon merchant privilege of soul transfer, the Devil Merchant Code would have abandoned me here regardless of how much I was willing to pay. Then, I, too, would be stuck here.

I believed my speculation and assumptions held merit, but I am sure the Deviant Devil would not have just rushed over to where Elder Anaesthesia Dragon was without any sort of preparation or plan. Well...the more I gave it a thought, the more I felt maybe my guess held more merit than I believed it to.

"Dalie, hurry, and collect as many blood rule cores as you can. We're not staying here a second more than we have to," I informed, not wanting to be targeted by the Blood Rule Source's intent. After all, I wasn't a true celestial like Dalie yet. I could be considered a Hybrid at best. If the history of hybrids of any race has taught me anything, it's that I should leave this place as quickly as possible once my job here gets done.

"Got it," Dalie agreed in a heartbeat and made use of her celestial array formation origin to gather all the blood rule slave cores within her range. There weren't many, as it

appeared that some of the cores had turned into dust with their users or were swallowed by the Blood Rule source to revive the blood rule slaves.

However, Dalie had collected enough cores for my use and some more. So, I signaled her to take us home, but just then we heard a desperate plea, "Young Celestial, please, take me with you."

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Source, Blood Rule Source

"Um, Wyatt, did the egg just talk to us?" Dalie asked in doubt, turning around to face the humongous silver egg.

"Dalie, get us out of here. Now!" I yelled in panic, having confirmed my speculation that the Davient Devil was stuck in the Blood Rule Source. Now, we were its only way out of here.

I had no problem with Dalie giving it a lift, but who was to say it wouldn't eat her to aid its recovery and evolution afterwards? My panic stemmed from the fact that none of the dark races could be trusted, especially those belonging to the ruler-class, and especially not when a celestial was involved.

Alerted by the urgency in her sibling's tone, Dalie wasted no time taking them home, but to her dismay, she found an oppressive force locked onto them, restraining their abilities as a blood rule domain locked them in it.

"Shit!" I exclaimed as the blood rule domain trapped us. It was no regular domain. It contained the blood regression meaning of the blood rule. Meaning, the longer we stayed in it, the weaker we would grow by slowly regressing to our younger selves, both physically and spiritually.

The Deviant Devil used it to defeat the Elder Anaesthesia Dragon, and now it was using it to trap Dalie, knowing she was surprisingly very young for a celestial. Considering that it did not take long for the Blood Regression domain to revert the Elder Anaesthesia Dragon to an Anaesthesia Dragon, Dalie was in deep trouble, considering she had only been a celestial for a few days.

I had no idea how the Deviant Devil was able to activate its blood rule domain in its current state, but one thing was for sure: it was now or never. We had to act now or be stuck with it in the blood rule source.

Knowing we had to act fast, I immediately ordered, "Dalie, use the skill, Suicide Over Death." Before having Devil Merchant Code transfer my soul to one of my pseudo calamity soul gems hidden in Ceed's world.

Suicide Over Death was the name I gave to the last resort skill, where the soul abandons the body and heads to a new one prearranged by the user, while I was teaching it to Dalie and Ceed, my Celestial bloodkins. However, I required the help of Devil Merchant Code to use this skill, as celestials Dalie and Ceed achieved a similar result when in their earthly incarnation and not in their celestial body. In their case, after abandoning their earthly incarnation, their 'Will' just returns to their original celestial body as if being pulled back into it.

[AN: Earthly incarnation?

Bloodette is the earthly incarnation of Card World's blood rule stream spirit. It took over Bloodette's body to help Wyatt enter the blood rule source and retrieve unconscious Cortney.

If Bloodette is an incarnation, how does she have a will of her own?

It's just that Bloodette got incredibly old and ultimately developed self-awareness and began getting into trouble along with other earthly incarnations, naming herself Bloodette and what not.

P.S. To be continued in 'Supreme Beings: Origins.' Stay tuned.]

Seeing Wyatt's body disintegrate without leaving his primordial calamity soul gem behind, Dalie suppressed all her doubts about whether the situation was grave enough to warrant such a response from them and executed the last resort skill her little brother taught her, Suicide Over Death, as he asked her to.

Dalie headed home, taking one last look at the ginormous silver egg, wondering why her little bro was so wary about the latter. It was strong, but her little brother wasn't the type to cower before the strong, especially with her right by his side.

...

Returning to her celestial body, Dalie immediately reconstructed a new Earthly incarnation using the ability of her primordial calamity daughter gem and headed into Ceed's world in search of her little brother to check on him and get a few answers.

As I got myself clothed in one of the empty islands of the Trophy section, Dalie arrived and asked, "Dalton, are you alright?" Even though her celestial vision told her little brother couldn't be healthier physically, mentally, and spiritually. Still, only after hearing her little brother say, "I am fine," did she calm down.

"What about you? This was your first time after all." I was genuinely concerned, having no idea about how a celestial's psyche would react to an experience quite similar to death. After all, they were the beings with the longest lifespan of all in the myriad realms.

"I am fine, too. But what was that, and why were you so scared of it?" Dalie immediately asked, as she did not like the fact that her little brother ran with his tail between his legs despite her being next to him. She wanted to fight, if it came to it.

"That's the infamous Deviant Devil Mamas Mulias. The Mulias family's owlape bloodline is known for its miraculous adaptability. Fighting them on their terms is nothing short of foolishness. Besides, you are nowhere strong enough to take on him on a regular basis, let alone after he activated his blood regression domain. You would have died if you had stayed in it any longer," I informed without holding back any details. Dalie became a celestial just recently, so she had very little worldly experience. Therefore, her actions to me appeared like a young calf challenging the tiger up the hill.

"Blood Regression meaning?" Dalie only understood this part of what her little bro just spoke, and the rest just went straight over her head. "What if I master Blood Regression meaning of the Blood rule to the ultimate tier, then will you believe that I can defeat him?"

"Did you not hear what I just said?" I asked my elder sister in disbelief. I didn't understand her weird fixation over this.

"I did, you think I'm weaker than that thing. Well, I will prove you wrong. We are heading back after I am done mastering blood rule's blood regression meaning," Dalie declared, preparing to connect to the blood rule source and comprehend the blood regression meaning. Being a true celestial, comprehending rules and their meanings wasn't a challenge for her, but natural, just like breathing was to humans and swimming was to a fish.

"No, are you not hearing me? Ruler-class are way stronger than a newborn celestial who still hasn't condensed more than a single rule stream. Even I can defeat you. Let us talk after you manage to form your first rule stream spirit."

I wasn't lying to Dalie, I could easily defeat any of my calamity daughter gems. Also, though comprehending rules was natural for celestials, comprehending a rule enough to condense a rule steam spirit would take her a lot of time. As a newborn celestial, except for the Space rule, Dalie wasn't very proficient in any of the other rules. If not for her

celestial array spirit background, she wouldn't have her current comprehension of the space rule.

Honestly, except for her celestial strength and abilities that she gained after becoming a true celestial and my calamity daughter gem abilities, she wasn't actually that strong. However, the strength and abilities she had now were enough to make her part of the top one percent in the Myriad realms.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Ceed World, Trophy Section

"I can defeat that thing!" Dalie exclaimed emotionally, catching me by surprise.

"Why does it matter? We're back home safe, aren't we? Just let it go," I said in response to Dalie's emotional outburst. My rational mind couldn't figure out why she was being so irrational about this and having such a hard time letting go of it.

"No, I can't let it go. I'm the eldest, I'm supposed to protect you, but you don't think I'm capable of protecting you," Dalie spoke what was on her mind, revealing the thing that made it difficult for her to let this matter rest for good, as I asked her to.

From her words, I gathered what bugged Dalie was not the fact that she was weaker than Davient Devil, but the fact that I thought she was weaker than Davient Devil. Realizing this, I let out a long sigh. For a second, I even considered whether the bloodkin calamity daughter gems were worth it.

It was just Dalie. Ceed and Clown Mask didn't bother him with their drama. In Dalie's defence, she chose to become my bloodkin calamity daughter gem seeking kinship. I guess this was one of the prices I paid to get myself a Celestial goon.

Many elder siblings enjoy having their younger siblings depend on them, and they will push themselves above and beyond to come through for their younger siblings even at the expense of themselves. Dalie was the same. She wasn't hurt by the fact that she was weak, but by the fact that she felt I thought I couldn't depend on her.

I guess for the price of a Celestial goon, I got a selfless Celestial elder sister. Some would consider it a bargain, but I felt... the same.

"Dalie, you are not omnipotent. You have your strengths and weaknesses. You have already helped me in so many ways. I know you would fight the Deviant Devil to death for me, but I couldn't bear to see my elder sister get hurt over something that could be solved so easily," I explained to Dalie that my actions in the blood rule source were in no reflection of her being an undependable elder sister, but just a tactical decision I made as her younger brother.

"Really?" Dalie asked skeptically, but soon eagerly added, "Because I would have really fought with it and also won."

"I know. Come on, you are a true celestial, a mere egg is no match for my elder sister," I said, eyeing Dalie's expressions, wondering if I was too obvious with my choice of words. So, I hurriedly continued, "Now help me with the card creation."

"Alright, what do I need to do?" Dalie enthusiastically asked, forgetting about the rest.

"Take out dozen Ruler-class Blood Slave cores and revert them to their soul pathways. Next, follow Hive Spirit's instructions to refine select parts of their soul pathways as per my needs for the card creation, and then add them respectively to dozen clusters of soul pathways following the card recipe. Then, leave the rest to me," I informed Dalie as we made to my clone that was holding down the fort in my absence. Taking over, I said, "If you have any doubts, don't hesitate to ask me or Hive spirit."

Breath of erosion was incredible when it came to refining soul pathways. But at my current rank, it was too taxing to use, especially if I planned to use it to refine the soul pathways of dozen ruler-class blood slave cores. Therefore, I had to recruit Dalie's help with the card creation process. Besides, this way I get to distract her from how we left the blood rule source.

"Whoa, you are fast," I exclaimed, expressing my fake surprise just to stabilize Dalie's emotions. She was a celestial; not to forget, her background as a celestial array spirit, this much was expected of her, especially with Hive Spirit guiding her.

With Dalie taking over refining of the ruler class soul pathways and my clones having already completed the rest of the creation process, I had nothing left to do but go through their work again and again. I wasn't trying to find faults, but trying to find if there was a way for me to further improve the card recipe I had decided on or any last-minute additions I would like to make.

I guess this was why other card creators referred to creating higher rank cards by forming a party with their trusted aids. Not only does it help me conserve my mental strength, but it also allows me to keep trying to improve the card being created until the very last second. Or at least this was true in my case.

This experience, involving Dalie, was different not the same as me using my clones and Hive spirit. It was the first time I had invited someone to help with my card creation.

Well, considering that Dalie was my bloodkin, I don't know if it counted as me trusting outside help with my card creation. It doesn't matter, as it was a pretty big deal for me. I said I was doing this to distract and stabilize Dalie's emotions, but turns out I was beginning to see Dalie as my trusted and dependable elder sister. What can I say? She fought for it. My only regret was that I had seen her earthly incarnation naked when she first formed it.

Just as my thoughts wandered, instead of doing what I said I planned to do, Ceed contacted me using Hive spirit, reporting that Corey was out and kicking up a fuzz, demanding that I meet her this instant. I frowned, wondering if Corey failed to defeat and subdue the darkness in her title demon core with the pills I prescribed to her. Because had she succeeded, the Corey I know and consider as a friend should be back, and she would never be this demanding or act unreasonably.

'Keep her busy, I will be out soon,' I replied and returned my focus to the card creation process. But I couldn't help but look at Dalie with stern eyes mid-process, realizing I almost lost my way. Never have I ever let my thoughts wander during a card creation process, but today, I did, and I believed Dalie and her selfless love were to be blamed for it.

"What? Did I make a mistake? I can fix it," Dalie said, feeling her little brother's gaze turn stern.

"No, you are doing better than me. It's just that I'm needed back in the city. So, let us finish this," I said, shaking my head, understanding that it wasn't Dalie but me. I can't let a moment of tender familial bond hold me back. Instead, I need to be a lot stricter with myself to protect what I have managed to gain in my second chance.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Ceed World, Trophy Section

"I am done," Dalie announced once she had finished adding the refined soul pathways of the dozen ruler-class blood slave cores to their respective frosling corpse puppet soul pathways.

Then I used the Breath of Erosion to exorcise all twelve clusters of soul pathway arrangement to ensure that the influence of the darkness in demonic cores and blood rule source in the blood slave cores used were thoroughly purged and erased for good.

I didn't want these remnant wills to downgrade the rank of the Forsling corpse puppet cards I was about to create or erase any chance of them becoming self-aware by giving birth to their spirits.

Simultaneously, together with my primordial spirits and Hive spirit, we added the artificial wills with complete mastery of the title Demon Core method: Frosilk, 3D printing AI software with a collection of 3D blueprints for various cold and magical weapons. All while we triple-checked the soul pathway arrangements, making sure none of the soul pathways were out of place and every soul pathway was where it should be.

There was a reason why I was being so meticulous about this card creation. It was because I wanted each of the frosling corpse puppets to give birth to their spirit when I finally crafted their cards into being. Considering all the profound, extensive knowledge I applied, not to mention the amount of time and expensive resources I have invested in them, these cards would only be worth it if they were to gain self-awareness. Ultimately, recreating the miracle of the Undead Devil Agony.

Now all that was left for me to do was to turn each soul pathway arrangement into cores, and then into cards. Suppressing the nervousness and my anticipation, I turned each cluster of soul pathway arrangement into a blood red core with an ice cold blue star at the center.

A typical Frosilk titled demon core would be pearl blue with a bright blue star at the center. This was especially true in the case of the Froslings that practiced the Frosilk titled demon core method.

Except for the ice cold blue star at their center these dozen cores I crafted did not look like typical Frosilk titled demon cores despite being designed using the Frosilk titled demon core method but appeared more like mutated blood slave cores, which wasn't surprising as the blood slave cores were the most dominant ingredients in the entire card crafting with ruler-class rank.

Before proceeding to the final step, I paused and turned to Dalie, asking, "Do you want to do the honors?"

Crafting cries during Soul Crafting and Card Crafting were different. During soul crafting, I had to time everything properly while animating the frosling corpse puppets to achieve the thunderous crafting cries. But in Card Crafting, I had more wiggle room, as the animation of the frosling corpse puppet was secondary as turning its core and soul pathways into a card was the most important defining moment. Because if it failed to turn into a card, all of this was a waste. Also, in card crafting, 'craft cry' wasn't actually the sound emitted by the successfully crafted item but the light emitted by the successfully crafted card.

What I meant to say was, the last step in card crafting, though very important wasn't actually that complex and pivotal. It was like turning in the answer sheet after taking a

test. It was a silly thing to forget and an important thing to do at the same time. Meaning, it didn't matter if Dalie or I completed the last step as long as we took it.

However, in terms of significance, I hoped this told Dalie that I had genuinely come to accept her as my elder sister. After all, there's a wise saying that if words weren't enough, use your actions to get the message across.

"No, how could I?" Dalie politely rejected me, but I insisted, "I want you to."

Dalie briefly looked at her younger brother with a warmth-filled gaze before she nodded in agreement. Then, following Hive spirit's guidance, Dalie mobilized her mental strength to simultaneously tug on the transformation soul pathway of all twelve cores, handing in our answer sheets. Meanwhile, I quickly sprinkled some pixie dust on all the cores. Increasing my odds of creating a miracle today.

Soon, the blue stars at the center of the twelve red cores flashed with brilliant, blinding blue light, filling the entire trophy section. Fortunately for me, I had celestial vision and primordial soul pupils. So, I witnessed the entire miracle without missing a single second of it.

I watched as the dozen blood-red cores turned into the dozen red diamond cards with their colourless diamond frames emitting a rainbow-colored hue. Soon the red diamond on the dozen cards revealed the portrait of a blue humanoid emitting a pale blue hue, they were female froslings, each posing differently donning different style of glacier armor for their portrait as if showing though they were the same cards, they were inherently different from each other.

As if feeling my gaze on them, the eyes of these portraits moved and met my curious gaze, almost frightening me. Then their radiance grew brighter before it reduced to form a silvery bubble with rainbow-coloured hues around them. Soon, these cards that were floating in the air began to move and circle around me like mischievous little butterflies instead of their usually falling into my palm or grimoire.

Seeing this, I almost teared up with sheer joy as this was the sign that I had successfully managed to recreate the miracle of Undead devil Agony's birth, not once but twelve times simultaneously. I didn't think I would fail in my pursuit, but I didn't think I would succeed so excellently. To think all twelve Frosling corpse puppets succeeded in giving birth to spirits, I had no words to express the joy and sense of accomplishment I felt.

I let the cards continue hovering and dancing curiously around me in circles and do as they pleased, curbing my eagerness to check their card info. I finally understood Dredre's thought process when she was letting Ceed boss and push her around. It wasn't a matter of one's intelligence this willing compliance I showed towards these cards was just unexplainable.

Hopefully, I will get used to it. I thought so because the Celestials don't seem to care so much about the countless mortal lifeforms they create. I guess I owe Dredre an apology, but I don't regret what I did.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Ceed World, Trophy Section

"Settle down!" Dalie used her celestial voice to command the dozen card spirits that were circling her little brother unruly.

The cards paused for a second, but they reduced the radius of their activity before continuing to scrutinize me out of curiosity as they could feel a weird connection with me. I felt it too. It was my crafter's sense and primordial calamity daughter gems that I used in their creation.

However, their blatant disregard of Dalie caught us by surprise. Because even powerful demigods and devils wouldn't be able to resist her will carried by the celestial voice. So, I guess they were not only unranked cards but high-class in unranked without having to go through their card info.

"How are they able to do that? They were born just recently. How can they resist my will?" Dalie asked in disbelief. She recalled the time when she had just been born as a celestial array spirit.

At first, she just existed, trapping and extracting resources from passing meteorites. She knew nothing but her duty. She had no concept of freedom or loneliness until one day she suddenly began to hear the voices of nearby celestials communicating. She learned many things by listening in on them. It took a while, but she finally managed to join in, yet their 'Will' immediately pushed her out of the conversation without telling her why.

It took her millennia to grow her will to resist the celestials' will and ask why they wouldn't talk to her. That was when she learned what she was, not a celestial. Then what followed gave birth to her kinship complex. Because of which she went as far as to put her life in the hands of someone who not only trespassed on her property but stole from her.

Back to the matter at hand, as a celestial array spirit, it took Dalie millennia to grow her will to become capable enough to resist the will of the other celestials, but the spirits of

the frothing corpse puppet cards they created were able to resist her will, the will of a true celestial, right after their birth. This was just incomprehensible to her.

"Looks like they managed to retain most of the realm of the blood rule slave cores used to create them. Meaning, unlike other spirits that slowly grow stronger, they are strong from birth," I explained to my stupefied celestial elder sister.

I was proud to see that my trick to fuse the blood rule slave cores to the soul pathways of the corpse puppets then condensing them into cores and transforming into cards instead of just using them as common cores to move the soul pathways into before transforming them into cards worked out as I hoped it would.

But I know better than to use this trick in regular card crafting because the card wouldn't have chances of forming card spirits to retain and guide such energy, which will go rampant during the transformation step, causing the card crafting to fail.

That was to say that while crafting these dozen corpse puppet cards, I was prepared to see the crafting fail than successfully craft cards that failed to develop card spirits. I guess without such conviction I wouldn't have managed to craft a dozen miracles.

"I don't like them," Dalie said honestly, sternly glaring at the cards hovering around her little brother like birds hovering around a tree.

"Don't say that. They are my best creations till date. And you helped me make this happen. I think we should commemorate this," I said, feeling that the creation of these dozen card spirits was a big breakthrough in my card crafting career worthy of celebration. If Susan were here, she would have brought it up before me.

"Since you put it that way, they do seem pleasing to the eye," Dalie nodded, no longer seeing the card spirits as runts that defied her but as a symbol of her progressing bond with her little brother.

"And yes, you are right. We should commemorate this by throwing a huge banquet at Freedom Megalopolis. Everyone is invited. Don't worry about the details. I will handle everything. Just make sure you will attend it and not skip it for work," Dalie declared enthusiastically, leaving me no room to refuse her, not that I planned to. It was my idea after all.

"Sure, but don't be shy about assigning others tasks or seeking ideas. After all, everyone needs to enjoy themselves for it to be a banquet," I agreed to let Dalie be in charge of the banquet. Usually, I would turn to Susan for stuff like this, but now that I was giving Susan the space she asked for, I let Dalie do as she pleased. Hopefully, she wouldn't go overboard.

"Trust me, Dalton. I will contact you once I have decided on the time," Dalie assured before leaving the Ceed World and heading to her penthouse at the center of Freedom Megalopolis.

Shaking my head, I decided to trust Dalie on this one, recalling the wise words, 'One learns by making mistakes.' I had to let Dalie make her mistakes so that she would grow. My only concern was her bankrupting us by going overboard. Well, this wouldn't be the first case where someone went bankrupt by throwing a party beyond their means.

"Are you guys done?" I asked the restless card spirits applying my crafter's sense. They paused and finally lined up before me side by side. Showing their obedience towards me, their creator. They were the same cards, but they used everything at their disposal to highlight that they weren't. Like posing differently or wearing different types of glacier armor. It became apparent to me that these duodecaplet sisters were trying their best to stand apart from each other.

I let out an impressed chuckle at their attempt to highlight their individuality by showing me twelve different styles to use each one of them.

I strongly believed that a card was only as strong as how you use it. And these card spirits just showed me twelve different ways to use a frosling corpse puppet that were cut from the same cloth. Then I reached for one on the far left and began to go through its card info.

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Chapter 2436: Frosella

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Ceed World, Trophy Section

[Card Name: Frosella

Card Type: Spirit Item Card

Card Rank: Unranked, Semi-Nobel Class(upgradable)

Card Rate: 12-stars

Card Durability: 100/100(auto-repair)

Card Effects: A Frosling corpse that has successfully given birth to a spirit while being animated as corpse puppet, becoming self-aware and naming itself 'Frosella.'

Additional Effect:

i) Child of Frost: Blessing of the Frosling race's native world's will.

ii) Undead Spirit: A spirit born from the dead. It is not afraid of death but complete annihilation.

iii) Mutated Title Demon Core- Mutated Frosilk: Title Demon Core has absorbed all the skills of primordial calamity daughter gem, etc used in its creation and underwent a mutation.

Note:

i) Frosella adores her card creator for choosing her first, over her sister cards.]

"That was short?" I uttered, going through the card info.

Seeing how the card name did not read Frosling corpse puppet but read Frosella, I understood the card info had been altered. It only showed me what the card spirit, Frosella, wanted me to see. The card's note section was a dead giveaway that Frosella could alter the card info.

However, the altered card info did summarize everything I needed to know about the spirit item card. This was my first seeing an unranked card, and I believe Frosella did a pretty good job of highlighting her info and abilities. From it I understood that not only had she inherited all the skills I added to her soul pathway arrangements, but also managed to retain her native world's blessing and gained a new racial talent.

What impressed me most was how she highlighted the advantages of a card becoming self-aware using the remarks upgradable and auto-repair in the card rank and durability columns. But it was a little disappointing to learn that the card only retained the realm of the corpse it was born from and not the blood rule slave core used in its creation.

Honestly, I preferred this over cluttered card info with every damn little detail, but I needed to go through it all to ensure nothing was amiss. Not that I plan to do anything about it now, but as the card's creator, it was my job.

Using my primordial soul pupils, I observed the original card info and confirmed that Frosella had everything I added to her and more.

"Frosella, that's a nice name—" I tried using my curse sense to communicate and bond with the Card spirit but was interrupted by Ceed's urgent call for help. Apparently, Dalie has gone berserk and was out for Dredre's blood. She wouldn't listen to reason. So, Ceed had no choice but to call for my help.

"Girls, it appears we'll have to cut short our introductions. Duty calls," I informed the card spirits that were eagerly waiting their turn to get to know me and stored them in my Grimoire's card holder with a swift motion of my hand without leaving them room to refuse.

Collecting the card, I immediately appeared at Dalie's penthouse with Ceed's help only to find it a complete mess as Dalie tried to catch Dredre, who kept escaping her attacks by turning into pixie dust while giggling to taunt the latter. Thanks to her pixie dust escape skill, Dredre seemed to be capable of avoiding all kinds of attacks thrown her way, including celestial force attacks, space rule attacks, etc rendering all of Dalie's attempts to catch her useless.

I was astounded to see Dredre fighting back and not cowering in fear. Also, I was surprised to learn that pixies could use their golden dust this way to evade their attackers. In my shock, I ignored Corey, who was the only other person in the room to notice my arrival while being protected by Ceed.

Ignoring Corey's gaze, I used my primordial soul pupils to see what was going on, only to find that Dredre was not turning into pixie dust but using it as an entrance to travel between the physical plane and the river of reincarnation.

Honestly, even with all my means, I couldn't think of a way to catch Dredre. It was given, considering Dalie failed to do so in her home turf. However, though delayed, Dalie seemed to have also figured out the trick to Dredre evading all of her attacks was teleporting to another plane which she couldn't sense even with her mastery of space rule.

Still, she tried to use control attacks to stop Dredre from using her golden dust from traveling to another dimension to evade her attack, but all her means to stop Dredre failed as the pixie dust surrounding Dredre's wings teleported her to another dimension, regardless. As such, Dredre continued to evade Dalie's attack by traveling between the planes of the living and the dead.

I was both proud of Dredre and curious about her new ability. Dredre was enjoying herself so much that she did not notice my presence. It was rare for Dredre to have such fun ever since she left her tribe, so I let them be as long as they kept the ruckus within the penthouse. Also, I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Dredre misunderstood the situation as Dalie playing a game of tag with her.

Meanwhile, I wondered if the changes in Dredre were because of the visualization method I made to help her learn to control her newfound connection to the River of

Reincarnation. No, I wasn't trying to seek credit for Dredre's growth but just seeking an explanation.

Knowing speculating without getting my facts straight would get me nowhere near as asking Dredre herself, I reluctantly ordered aloud, "Okay, Dalie, stop it. Now!"

"Wyatt!"

"Dalton!"

Dredre and Dalie exclaimed together in surprise. They were so engrossed in their supposed game of tag that they forgot their surroundings.

Dredre immediately took her spot atop my head, snuggling in my hair while a fuming Dalie complained, pointing at the glass walls facing the city, "Dalton, look what she did to my beautiful city.

"Today, I am going to make her pay for what she did. I don't care if she is protected by the librarian or not. Enough is enough."

"It's not that bad. It looks more nature friendly," I defended, seeing that Dredre had grown trees and various plants atop the Dalie's buildings. The city now literally looked like a concrete jungle. I left Dredre in charge for a few hours, and she covered the entire Freedom Megalopolis with a freaking jungle. Can't blame her, I did say she could do as she pleased.

"Dalton, you always take her side!" Dalie complained that I was biased toward Dredre, but I beg to differ, "Do I though?"

Immediately I heard four resounding 'Yes' from Dalie, Corey, Ceed, and Dredre, the defendant herself.

'Dredre, honey, you are making it hard for me to defend you,' I mentally urged Dredre as I fake-coughed to hide my embarrassment and said, "It was a rhetorical question."

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megalopolis, Dalie's Penthouse.

"Dalton, since you can't be impartial about this, let me take over. I say we send this little menace packing, back to her little corner in the Infinity Library," Dalie proposed, taking my moment of embarrassment as an opportunity to speak her mind.

Come to think of it, Dalie and Dredre never seemed to have gotten along. It wasn't Dalie being petty but Dredre too. These two hated each other's guts. Dalie hated Dredre because she felt I was closer to the latter, while Dredre hated the former because she took Ceed without her permission.

I was certain Dredre didn't just thoughtlessly blurt out that I can't help but be biased when things related to her. She did it to rub it in Dalie's face, showing just how much I favored her compared to others, including his dearest elder sister. Also, Dredre growing an entire jungle on Dalie's Megalopolis was her passive aggressively asking the latter, *'How do you feel when someone takes something of yours without considering your feelings?'*

My eyes couldn't help but widen, realizing how scheming Dredre can be if she chooses to. In contrast, Dalie, a newborn celestial, had a lot to learn from her. It wasn't surprising considering Dredre had the knowledge she gathered over millennia as one of the Infinity Library's keepers. It was hard to tell who between Dredre and Dalie was older, but if I had to put my money, I would choose Dredre. Mostly because I believed the Pixies were the mythical Primordial Pixies.

I believed the changes in Dredre were most-likely related to her connection to the river of reincarnation and my visualisation method that she was practicing. She felt more and more like an elder pixie, but she showed no other signs of developing into one. Honestly, I can't wait to talk with Dredre about the changes in her and understand what was happening to her and if I should be prepared for her to evolve into an Elder Pixie.

Despite knowing what Dredre was doing, I chose to defend, "No, we can't do that, Dalie. She is family."

"How is she part of our family? She is just a help assigned to you. Just request a new one," Dalie said, after using her cursed bloodline to check if Dredre was their bloodkin, but she got nothing. Though she was happy, at the same time, she was a little confused knowing her little brother wouldn't lie to her.

"She is Ceed's creator. In my culture, she is basically Ceed's parent. So, she is part of our family. Have you two ever considered how your petty squabble will affect Ceed's young will?" I used the oldest trick in the book of parenting, guilt tripping and emotional blackmail. "I have no idea why you two are at each other's throats, but I want you guys to solve your differences amongst yourselves before this goes out of hand. Got it?"

"Yes," Dalie and Dredre agreed in unison.

"Good," I nodded, deciding not to interfere more than this because I wanted them to really connect and not connect through me. Because I wanted them to be together and looking out for each other even in my absence. And the best way to achieve it was to trust them and let nature take its course.

"Dalie, the damage to your city is not big considering your abilities. Just use the array formation I gave you to build the city, to clear the trees and plants, and repair the damaged buildings," I said, trying to ensure that Dalie did not feel dissatisfied with how I handled this.

Of all of us, Dalie was the one who valued the family the most. So, I was sure Dalie would put all her past dissatisfactions with Dredre aside and try to make up with her. After all, Dredre wasn't just Ceed's mother but an immortal too. Meeting Dalie's condition for one to be considered family. In this case extended family.

As far as Dredre goes, I was sure Dredre would do the same considering she was just returning Dalie's punches. However, keeping my faith in her, Dredre issued Dalie an apology, "I am sorry, Dalie. I shouldn't have changed the city design without your permission. I never meant to hurt you, I honestly believed the city would look better with more trees."

'Of course you would,' Dalie thought, but maintaining a calm expression and with a gentle smile she said, "No, there is no need for you to apologize. Regardless of your actions, I know your heart was in the right place. That's all that matters. Also, I don't plan to clear all the trees and plants. I will keep a few that I feel are doing justice to the city's aesthetic appeal."

"Great, I knew I could trust you guys on this one," I shamelessly said, ignoring the obvious signs indicating just how difficult it was for them to try to look from another's perspective or pretend to be getting along.

Dredre grew up among trees with her tribe while Dalie grew up on a mining planet alone and shunned by the celestials, these two had a totally different concept of home. It wasn't just their ideas that differed, even by nature they were different. Dredre, as a Wood Pixie, was the guardian of the woods, while Dalie, as a Celestial spirit of a celestial scale mining array, was the guardian of the mining planet.

These two were just too different. Asking them to get along was actually too much to ask for, but then they were also family, so it wasn't, really. They just needed time or just a foreign enemy to bring them closer despite their differences. I would take either as long as it wasn't me.

My entire enterprise was built with me at the center. I didn't want my family to also be centered around me. It was hypocritical of me considering the cursed bloodline most of my family members carried within them. Well, I was working on it. I did plan to solve the

mystery around my cursed bloodline. Even if it meant cutting a deal with Demigod Redfall.

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

Chapter 2437: DreDre VS Dalie

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megalopolis, Dalie's Penthouse.

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- Chapter 2438: Wise Corey

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megalopolis, Dalie's Penthouse.

Seeing Dalie get busy returning the Freedom Megalopolis back to its original state, and Dredre resting in my hair, I turned to Corey and eyed her, waiting for her to state what it was that couldn't wait and needed my attention urgently.

"Wyatt, I want you to help the Southern Royal family with their smuggling problem at the way beyond," Corey demanded, gathering her courage, the moment she felt my gaze on her.

"Took you so long. First, congratulations on becoming one with your darkness. Good to see that the medication I prescribed to you worked fabulously. And secondly, I think you should talk to the Southern Royal Family about this first. If they are willing to agree to my fee, I have no problem getting started today," I happily congratulated and answered Corey in relief.

I was relieved to see that she had successfully made her darkness a part of her. Turns out, the reason for her impatience was that she was done being on the fence about asking for my help with her parents' issue. Knowing enough about all four versions of her—Corey Bright, Earth Corey, Corey Park, and Agony, I knew that the topic of her parents was a very sensitive one for her.

No wonder she acted the way she did earlier. I bet she cannot wait to meet them but wouldn't, not wanting to waste the decades of time her parents poured into this single mission instead of being with their daughter. If she left things to take their natural course, Corey didn't know if she would ever get to meet her parents again, so she turned to her trusted boss, me, for help.

"Thank you. I can see and understand things a lot clearly now. Especially, its is a lot easier for me to let go of things now.

"Thank you for tolerating all my antics these past few months and not giving up on me despite me making it easier to do so.

"Wyatt, you have been a true friend to me even when I wasn't. I honestly have no idea how to repay you but if there is anything just say the word," Corey gratefully expressed the gratitude she felt towards me for being there for her at her lowest, especially considering there were too many reasons for me to dump her.

"Really?" I said as the gap between my brow grew narrow. "You honestly expect me to believe that you have no idea how to repay me?"

"What are you getting at?" Corey asked in confusion, though the glint in her eyes told a different story.

"You know what I am getting at," I remarked emotionally, causing my voice to raise.

"Oh, my God! I can't believe you are bringing this up now. You promised me, Wyatt. So, let's just drop it here," Corey exclaimed, no longer feigning ignorance about what I was talking about.

"I know what I promised. I only brought it up because you said you had no idea how you could ever repay me," I defended my non-existent honor by showing Corey what she actually was, a hypocrite. "You can keep your fake gratitude to yourself."

"Don't tell me you only tolerated me, stuck around, and helped me because you wanted this all along?" Corey uttered in shock, wondering if her friendship with Wyatt was ever true.

"You really think so little of me?" I asked, a little appalled, taking offense at Corey's accusation that I only became friends with her because I had a crush on her mom. "For your information, if I only befriended you for that, I would never have made such an asinine promise to you."

"Regardless of what you say, if your past is any indication, I wouldn't put it past you," Corey argued, knowing that her friend was way smarter than all versions of her put together.

"How dare you? I thought you were my friend and sacrificed my love for you," I yelled, stepping toward Corey threateningly, who didn't back down, instead smirked, "Stop calling your hormonal accumulation 'love.' That's downright disgusting, Wyatt. Also, you sacrificed nothing. My mother never loved you. She thought you would take the hint, but your creepy ass forced her to actually say she needs her space. Wasn't she obvious enough, Wyatt? Stop being a psycho. It's pathetic."

"I'm not the psycho, you are. You are the one calling someone a decade older than you your mom. I think the pills I prescribed you to become one with your darkness didn't work. Come here, I will fix you for good," I said, trying to grab Corey and give her a good whooping, but she yelled, "Wyatt, touch me and I will tell her that you tried to assault me."

"Like she will believe your ungrateful lying ass," I said, grabbing Corey's wrist only to hear her confidently say, "Maybe not the old me, but how sure are you that the current me can't convince her?"

"Screw you," I said, not wanting to take that risk, only for Corey to put her arm around my shoulder and try to persuade me, "Forget about her, I will introduce you to my godmother. She is a looker. I have a feeling you two will hit it off."

"You are crossing the line now," I warned, knowing she was actually using Anna, her godmother, to tell me that maybe what I felt toward Susan wasn't love if I felt the same way toward Anna.

"I'm crossing the line? No, you are! You are breaking the rules of monogamy. You can't catch two fish with one hook, Wyatt. You have to let one of them go. And as far as I know, my godmother is very stubborn and always gets what she wants. In the end, I am just looking out for my mom," Corey explained calmly, pointing out to me, I was playing a dangerous game, and she didn't want Susan to get hurt because of it.

"..." I found myself unable to argue against Corey's argument because I hadn't made up my mind and was just following what I wanted at that moment, putting off thinking about the future implications of my actions.

It dawned on me that, be it Susan or Anna, before I approached either of them, I had to make a decision. Otherwise, I would never be able to truly move forward with either of them.

I was astounded that it was Corey of all the people who made me realize this simple but tough truth. It seems the pills I prescribed to Corey not only helped her become one with her darkness but better use the memories she gained from her origin card. Because this Corey was a lot wiser than the one I befriended. Far better than the one who guilted me into promising that I wouldn't date her mother ever. I promised, thinking Susan wasn't actually Corey's mother, but now my non-existent honor was getting in the way.

Seeing me glance at her in astonishment along with a impressed look, Corey proudly rubbed her nose with her finger and mocked, "Don't tell me you fell in love with me too."

"In your dreams, psycho," I retorted, thinking now that Corey was cured, calling her psycho wouldn't be considered insensitive.

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megalopolis, Dalie's Penthouse.

"Speaking of psychos. How about I pay you for your services at the Way Beyond instead of the Southern Royal family? Money is money, regardless of who pays you for a job well done, right?" Corey took the opening to bring up the thing bothering her the most.

"You? With what money? I freaking own your ass for the next century. Don't even think about asking advance payment for the century after that," I said, trying my hardest not

to sound snobbish or appear as if I was belittling Corey. I ran enough start-ups to know where Corey was going.

Besides, me giving Corey advance on her salary so she can pay my service fee instead of the Southern Royal family wasn't the answer. Because the fee I wanted for solving the smuggling problem at Way Beyond was a share in the taxes they would impose and collect on the goods brought from the Way Beyond.

I couldn't compromise on this because I planned to offer similar services to the other regions too. I couldn't have my customers thinking that they were paying way too much for something that was basically free for others. Now that was bad for business, and next thing you know they will ask me to make the currency exchange in the VR-universe free for all. I knew this because history had proven that if you give them an inch, soon they will be asking for a foot.

"Don't get your panties in a bunch, Wyatt. I am not here to ask you for an advance on my salary. Besides, I have no interest in being your slave for another century. Park has a few treasures stashed away for emergencies in the Dark Realm. I think that should be enough to pay your fees for the Way Beyond job," Corey explained how she planned to pay me. Unfortunately, I knew that whatever she offered would fall short.

"Oh, honey. It's not a one-time payment job. I wouldn't care if it were just that. I donated more than you can imagine every day," I informed Corey to see her brimming smile collapse instantly. Shaking my head in dismay, I remarked, "You have no idea what the Way Beyond job is, do you? Didn't Park tell you anything?"

"She has no idea that I know about her hidden funds to help revive her old forces and my plans for them. I thought she would come around after meeting our parents," Corey came clean about her little devious plan. It appears after she became one with her darkness, her control over her title demon core and Park, her ego flame, has risen to new heights. I guess it sucks for Park.

Honestly, I don't blame Corey. She had a valid reason and was doing what she felt was right for both of them. This was nothing compared to Park conspiring against her with me. If Corey could forgive Park for that, then Park could forgive Corey for this. Besides, Corey still hasn't done any real damage yet, and Park doesn't get a say in this as Corey had inherited all her wealth. It was up to Corey what she wanted to do with it. My question was, how did Park hide this little fortune from Corey in the first place?

"Wyatt, say something. I feel lost. What do I do now?" Corey called out, seeing that I was lost in my thoughts and hadn't reacted to her shocking revelation filled with betrayal.

"First, take a deep breath and calm down. These things can't be rushed. They have a lot of bureaucratic hurdles. Honestly, with everything going on, the Way Beyond isn't on

anybody's priority list. Especially not the Southern Royal family, who are preparing to launch the Silver Milk Powder, that they don't have, in all five regions.

"But, don't worry. I will talk with Field Marshall, Lorenzo, Collen, and see how I can nudge the Southern royal family to make the Way Beyond a priority.

"As for you, if you feel like this is not enough, you can find Luna and discuss it with her. Yes, she is a psycho, but she has been groomed to be Anna's minister most of her life. Nobody knows the Southern Region's laws better than her. She might be able to help you dodge all the army procedures and meet your parents and persuade them to come home.

"And lastly, don't worry, I won't talk about this with Park," I assured Corey, showing her that she doesn't need to worry about me spilling what we talked about here. Besides, I didn't believe Corey could keep her thoughts from Park for long. The latter might have already noticed that Corey was up to something.

"Thank you, but no need. I will come clean about my plans to her and honestly ask for her help to save myself from making a fool of myself again," Corey replied, knowing that lying and hiding won't solve anything. But it's just that... it's her parents. After seeing what happened to her past selves, she was getting the feeling that the universe was against her having a regular family.

"Great, then I will see you later," I said, preparing to take my leave only to be stopped by Corey, who brought up my other promise to her, "What about the soul trait or physique you promised to help me acquire?"

"That will have to wait for later. Something urgent in the Card World needs my presence. I need to show a bunch of snobs their place. I am already late and still not completely prepared for my visit there," I informed Corey, without going into details about my appointment with Morningstar University.

"How about first thing after you return?" Corey nodded without doubting my words for a sloppy excuse. The old one wouldn't have believed me and pestered me to tag along just to confirm it.

"Sure thing," I said with a nod.

"Great. Hurry back. If you take too long, I will come find you."

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Ceed World, Trophy Section

Having dealt with Dalie and Corey, I returned to the Trophy Section to deal with Dredre's new abilities and the other eleven card spirits besides Frosette before heading to the Card World with Redfall and Agent Forger.

"Dredre, did you grow the jungle on the Freedom city on purpose, to get back at Dalie for taking Ceed as her sibling without your permission?" I asked, knowing full well she did exactly that. There was no need for resorting to the third degree; this was Dredre we were talking to. The kindest soul of us all until I tricked and forced her to resurrect someone who wasn't actually dead, almost killing her. Now she has an unexplainable connection with the 'river of reincarnation,' which was growing stronger by day, allowing her to actually resurrect the dead.

"I don't know. But I do think the city does look better with the green garden atop it," Dredre answered after thinking, and wondered if her beef with Dalie stemmed from Ceed or because the latter wanted to force her to produce more forest spirit to join her family. Actually, she was happy to see Ceed go independent and start her life, even if it was under Dalie and Wyatt. Also, she loves to produce forest spirits, the more, the merrier. Therefore, that wasn't it.

"Well, it is not up to us to decide that. It is Dalie's city. All we can do is suggest our ideas to her. Next time, just talk to her. Dalie is more open-minded for a celestial," I said, believing Dredre's every word.

When I say Dalie was open-minded for a celestial, I don't mean that celestials were a narrow-minded bunch, unwilling to consider new ideas or opinions. They were selective about where these new ideas or opinions come from. This could be seen when the Celestials excluded Dalie from their conversations because she was a celestial spirit and not a true celestial. This wasn't an issue with Dalie, she willingly offered her life to an unknown sentient organism with unclear intentions just to experience kinship when the opportunity presented itself. Though she was very selective of whom she considered as family.

Listening to Dredre, I had begun to think Dredre didn't really know the reason behind her actions. Also, it wasn't news that she preferred lush woods over the concrete jungle. My guess was that these changes in her were the effect of her connection to the river of reincarnation growing stronger.

There was also a little possibility that the visualization method I created for Dredre using my primordial soul pupils might be working beyond my estimation of it when I created it. However, I couldn't be sure until I had more test subjects, which was impossible.

I could reach out to MayMay, but the thought of meeting her after a long time scared me because of all that accumulated withdrawal. I wouldn't be surprised if she ate me the moment she laid her eyes on me. Just imagining the numerous possibilities of what meeting MayMay could lead to gave me shivers and, oddly, a little excited.

Either way, I had stumbled upon a way to help pixies gain new abilities. It could have been a potential goldmine if not for the entire pixies race being an enslaved race belonging solely to one powerful entity, the Librarian. Therefore, for now I had to be satisfied with seeing Dredre growing stronger using it without showing any concerning side effects. I couldn't wait to see what Dredre would develop it into.

"Dredre, since when were you able to move between the planes of the living and the dead?" I asked, as I knew how and why but not when her connection to the river of reincarnation grew strong enough for her to travel between two planes.

"Um, after I achieved grandmaster mastery of the visualization method. I have a feeling that I will soon be able to achieve sage mastery as long as I piece together the missing links. Do you think I will transition to an elder pixie then?" Dredre answered to the best of her knowledge and eagerly asked if her accession to elder pixie was just around the corner.

I wasn't surprised that Dredre mastered the visualization method to the grandmaster mastery and was even preparing to advance it to sage mastery. It was too fast by standards but not the pixie race's standards.

"I am sorry, Dredre. I no longer think that the changes in you, though similar to an elder pixie's traits, are signs of you developing into one. I will need to consult an expert on this, as I am beginning to think it is something entirely different," I apologized, recanting my previous speculation that changes in Dredre were signs of her developing into an elder pixie. I did so because these changes came with new abilities that weren't heard of in their race. As much as I was heartbroken about disappointing her, I couldn't lead her on as I had no idea what it took for a pixie to develop into an elder pixie. All I could do was make assumptions, and they weren't always correct. That was what happened here.

"I thought so. Becoming an elder pixie wouldn't be easy," Dredre sighed, a little disappointed but not enough to lose sleep over it.

"Easy? You do know that I almost lost you and had to resort to extreme methods to bring you back?" I said in disbelief, recalling how Dredre lost consciousness reviving Redfall.

Yes, Redfall had already made it to the living plane and found a suitable vessel, my calamity daughter gem, but he was still tainted by the breath of erosion, slowly eroding what was left of his soul. So, he wasn't truly alive until Dredre stripped his soul of the

breath of erosion eroding it. Giving Redfall a new lease on life. That was why it took so much toll on Dredre, threatening her existence.

"Well, I was unconscious throughout that ordeal. So I don't think it counts," Dredre remarked nonchalantly. I couldn't help but chuckle because that statement made Dredre a daredevil by the pixie race's standards, excluding the elder pixies, of course. From getting scared by a passing wind to casually brushing off a near-death experience, Dredre had grown a lot. That's my girl.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Ceed World, Trophy Section

Noticing the growth in Dredre, all my misgiving about bringing her with me on my next visit to the card world vanished. Shaking my head, I summoned my grimoire and released the dozen Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards.

I noticed that, unlike last time, Frosella was the only card that seemed happy to see me. So, I went through the card info for the other eleven Frosling corpse puppet cards one by one. There, in the notes section, I found that they all resented not being picked first instead of their sister.

'Resented' was putting it mildly; some of the spirits straight up stated they wouldn't want to be part of my deck if they had a choice. I observed that this 'resentment' increased with the order I picked them to go through their card info. I was wondering if calling them sister cards would be correct, seeing how much they competed with each other. However,

'Goddamn, they were fearless.'

Seeing how they put it, they clearly realize that they were not in charge. Yet they didn't hesitate to state their honest thoughts. I did read that the Snow Elves and Froslings had their pride in common along with their appearance. I didn't think the card spirits would pick up their nasty pride. I guess pride was indeed ingrained in bones.

The Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards' reaction was a little baffling because I had to start with someone. It was purely coincidentally that it was Frosella and not someone else from the twelve sister cards. I mean, what did they expect me to do? Summon twelve of

my primordial spirits to go through their card info simultaneously? Now that was just crazy.

"Heck with you ungrateful dozen. I just need two of you. The rest of you can eat dust in here until you fix your attitudes," I said, eyeing all twelve of the Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards. You want to be petty? I'll show you what being petty was truly like.

There were only six item card slots in my unranked grimoire. I never planned to fill all of them with the Frosling corpse puppet cards. Even if I did, there weren't enough item card slots to begin with. Then, why did I create twelve of these cards? To arm the demigods under me. With these cards, they could fearlessly continue to do my bidding in the card world. Seeing how these cards had serious attitude problems, I decided to postpone my plans for them until they fix their nasty personalities.

"Last chance, which two of you want to join my deck?" I asked the cards sternly. I never planned to coddle them. They were tools. Their sole purpose was to please me with their capabilities, not the other way around.

Listening to my offer, Frosella was the first to come forward while the other cards didn't even budge a little, as if telling me that they were prepared to eat dust in my trophy section rather than be a part of my deck.

'Is this the AI rebellion that the philosophers feared back on Earth?' I wondered, looking at the eleven Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards coming together to take a stand against me when given the choice.

I frowned glancing over the eleven Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards while equipping Frosella in one of my empty item card slots. I pondered what was going on here. I clearly used my primordial calamity daughter gems in the creation of each of these cards, having considered that if successful the resulting card spirit might rebel against me.

I could feel my control over them through the primordial calamity gem used in their creation. But the primordial calamity gem failed to influence their feelings. For some reason, they were putting themselves before me. Like my other primordial calamity daughter gems, shouldn't they be prioritizing me above all else? How are they able to prioritize their feelings over mine without the help of the cursed bloodline?

As I mulled over this dilemma for several minutes, I ultimately came to the conclusion that naturally born spirits were more complicated than I previously assumed. Yes, I created the Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards, but their spirits had formed naturally. I just facilitated all the right conditions for these cards to give birth to spirits. Ultimately, these cards giving birth to spirits was a natural process. Just like how parents with all the advancements could only choose the physical traits of the baby but not what kind of soul they will have. It formed naturally.

"Alright, suit yourselves," I said, taking one of the eleven cards against her wish and equipping it in one of my empty item card slots. This Frosling corpse puppet spirit card called herself Frosong. She was the second card whose card information I went through.

Before I burned the bridges with them, she just expressed dissatisfaction over not being chosen first and being chosen second. Now, after my threats, she seemed not to want to do anything with me if she could.

This was just crazy. If not for my appointment with Morningstar University, I would have left her with the rest to eat dust in the Trophy section until I explored each of their soul pathways and figured out the reason behind their nasty personalities.

I mean rebelling against your creator just because they didn't get to you first but your siblings. This was just crazy. The first time I saw them, I did notice that they wanted to be different from each other, but then I didn't know that these sisters' rivalry was so cutthroat.

Had I known, I wouldn't have done anything about it because this was the first time the parent-daughter gem ability had failed me. It's pretty difficult to prepare for something that you didn't know was a possibility. Until today I was under the impression that it was impossible for a calamity daughter gem to prioritize their feelings over mine without help from the cursed bloodline.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Ceed World, Trophy Section

"Continue to eat dust in here until you guys fix your nasty personalities," I barked at the ten Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards that hovered before me and turned to head toward Redfall and Agent Forger. But paused, seeing the cards following behind me. I couldn't help but sneer as I turned around to face them and hear them out, but to my dismay they flew past me and headed towards the floating island Redfall was practicing on.

I stood erect, frozen at the spot. If not for the resources and effort I poured into their creation, I would have destroyed all ten of that ungrateful bunch. Yes, I was that mad at them. Also, I was intrigued by their actions. Were they just curious about their surroundings? Or were they up to something?

Forgetting my embarrassment, I watched as the cards floated towards Redfall in unison. Alerted by their arrival, the latter coldly opened his eyes and glanced at them, causing the cards to pause and change their direction simultaneously. Then they continued towards Agent Forger, who was further away.

I wondered, 'What happened? Were they spooked by Redfall opening his eyes suddenly? These jerks stood up to me but were scared by Redfall? He was a mere calamity daughter gem whom I had given the highest degree of freedom under a bloodkin. This is insulting.'

As the cards reached Agent Forger, I watched earnestly trying to figure out what these jerks were up to. Feeling their presence, Agent Forger too opened her eyes and curiously glanced at the cards. This time, however, the cards didn't seem to be deterred by the latter. Instead, they continued to be near her. Then they began to circle her, similar to the time they circled me after I created them.

I felt a sense of betrayal. I thought that was something only I could enjoy, i.e. considering how they wouldn't even spare Dalie a second of their time even though the latter had helped in their creation, let alone listen to her. Come to think of it, these jerks have been rebellious since the beginning. I just failed to see it because I was blinded by the fact that I created them. It seems I was no less naive towards my creation than Dredre.

I didn't let my emotions get the best of me and patiently watched the cards in action. I wanted to figure out what they were doing and why they reacted differently toward Agent Forger and Redfall. Is it because they can tell Redfall was just a calamity daughter gem and Agent Forger was a bloodkin? Or was it because Redfall didn't have his grimoire, and Agent Forger not only had her grimoire but was of the Card Demigod rank now.

"Master, they want me to choose one of them. What do I do?" Agent Forger suddenly said, turning towards me.

This was when it hit me — they were choosing their card apprentice. But with whose permission? I, their freaking creator, never said they could go find their card apprentice. They were freaking supposed to honestly eat dust in the trophy section, reflecting on their nasty personalities, as I punished them to. Not go find a card apprentice of their choice. This was simply maddening.

However, I didn't stop the cards from selecting Agent Forger as their card apprentice because she was soon returning to the Card world with me to work as a double agent in the organization secretly controlling the central government. She would be serving as my eyes and ears around the masters. It was a dangerous job. Having an unranked card in her deck would surely help ensure her safety.

How does one equip an unranked card in a Diamond grade grimoire? They don't. It was impossible unless the said card had developed a spirit. The cards that awakened their spirit could place probations on themselves such that they could be equipped by a grimoire lower than their rank. Meaning these unranked Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards can be equipped in a bronze grimoire if they choose to. These cards were self aware and were constantly learning and developing, that was what made them great.

Back to the matter at hand, as soon as Agent Forger sought my input on this, four of the ten cards left the circle and moved away from Agent Forger. It didn't take a genius to guess what this meant. These guys freaking withdrew their offer to Agent Forger because they didn't like the fact that she sought my opinion.

"Just one of them? Why not two of them?" I asked, wondering if Louis could choose two cards. However, before she could even ask them, another three cards left the circle.

Fearing these jerks would collectively boycott Louis too, I hurriedly signalled her to choose one already. As she needed them to ensure her safety among the masters in case our plan for her to act double agent failed.

Getting my permission Louis immediately chose one of the three cards, Froseer, that still showed interest in her. Louis chose this card particularly because of its name Froseer. She liked how it was a clever word play on the words Frost and Seer, as in Frost Vision or something of sorts. It sounded much like her title, the right eye of the Card world's will. It felt like destiny.

After Louis was done choosing the other two cards joined the remaining seven and together they flew to my side and began to circle around me. I could feel these ungrateful jerks asking me to find more card apprentice candidates for them. It was as if they had forgotten about my punishment all together. Shaking my head, I pointed at Redfall and asked, "What's wrong with him? He is strong."

I meant it when I said Redfall was strong. Though he was still in chivalry-class, the runes that Redfall had reforged were just too powerful. Their rule meanings were not only sinister and shameful but very rare. I had come to understand why he was considered a menace in the five regions and conspired against.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Ceed World, Trophy Section

As I pointed at Redfall, the nine Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards wouldn't even bother to glance towards him. I could sense collective disdain and disgust from the cards when I mentioned Redfall. It surprised me as I thought they were spooked by his cold gaze, but no, they just didn't think he was worthy of being their card apprentice.

"Why? Is it because he is a primordial calamity daughter gem?" I asked, feeling their actions were like the pot discriminating against the kettle for being black. After all, these cards were also made using primordial calamity daughter gem, making them part primordial calamity daughter gem.

Thinking of this, it dawned on me that these card spirits were only part primordial calamity daughter gems. They weren't like my other primordial calamity daughter gems that were converted into a primordial calamity daughter gem. They were the spirit born from a part of primordial calamity daughter gem that the Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards retained after their creation.

No wonder these guys were able to put their feelings above mine. They were spirits of primordial calamity daughter gem but also, at the same time, they were also spirits of the cards I created.

How do I put it better?

Let's take the birth of a human baby as an example. They were basically their father's clones except for the part that they got from their mother. Ultimately, making the baby the best of the two of them together.

In the card spirits' case, my primordial calamity daughter gems were a part, and the other part was the natural card creation and spirit formation process.

I don't dare to claim my part was exactly half as in the case of a human baby. That was because the fact that the card spirits could rebel against me proved that the natural card creation and spirit formation process was more dominant than my primordial calamity daughter.

Thanks to my primordial soul pupils, I soon knew the natural creation process was dominant in the creation of the Frosling corpse puppet spirit cards over my primordial calamity daughter gems both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Hence, though the card spirits were not completely free of my control, the card spirits' will could not only choose to ignore my control but challenge it until I forced them to submit. Yes, they could strengthen their already powerful wills further to completely free themselves from my control. I believe that was why they were searching for a card apprentice that I didn't control.

Unfortunately for them, their card creationist wasn't just some card apprentice, but a hybrid between a Viltronian, a World Calamity Tree and a Celestial with access to the

primordial energy and pixie dust. Regardless of how strong their wills got, they could never get rid of me. Thinking of this, I found their combined rebellion against me funny and cute.

But this also surfaced a fear scenario in my mind: me losing to a being I created. It's not like it was the first time something I created came back to collect my head. The superhuman serum I discovered on Earth was a prime example of that. I discovered it to fight the fucking Viltronian bastard or at least buy me time until I found a permanent solution. But in return, it became the tool for him to take over Earth even faster.

Therefore, I couldn't help but take a second glance at the nine card spirits before me, wondering who among them would come for my head later. It was entirely possible as Card apprentices had many weird physiques, traits, and innate cards. Who knows, one of them could be a fated ingredient of some card apprentice and could completely erase my control over them with one baptism. The possibilities were endless, but the chances were near nil.

But hey, a miracle was also a possibility.

I couldn't help but shake my head in dismay thinking, *'One cannot underestimate anyone in the Myriad Realms, even the card spirits you created.'*

I awoke from my thoughts as the card spirit began to bug me about taking them to choose their card apprentice. Now that three of their sisters had chosen their card apprentice, they couldn't wait to find their own. Their extreme competitive relationship didn't allow them to be outdone, but at the same time they were relieved that their card apprentice wasn't their narcissistic creator or one of his bloodkins.

"Yes, wait here. When I return, I will bring a bunch of powerful card apprentices you can choose from," I assured, hoping they would stop spamming my mind, by sharing their feelings and thoughts about how they couldn't wait to choose their card apprentice with me.

Even though I couldn't tell them whom to choose as their card apprentice, I can make sure who they could choose from. I know the card spirits could be stubborn, but I'm stubborn too. Now it was the question of who could hold on longer. I was in no rush, but the card spirits were. Their competitive nature forced them to at least keep up with their sisters as soon as possible if they can't outdo them.

However, the card spirits protested my arrangements, saying they wanted to go out with me and choose their card apprentice based on kismet instead of arranged meetings.

"Are you kidding me? What do you take me for, your card pimp? I'm your Card Creator, damn it. Besides, what if you guys ended up choosing some stranger or my enemy? Do you take me for a fool or just ignorantly believe you are the smartest ones around here? Damn it, girls, I am too mad to even look at you. You better behave till I come back," I

lost it listening to card spirits demanding me to take them to find card apprentices worthy of them.

Actually, I wasn't even that mad. I expected such a reaction from them. I just wanted to see how these card spirits would react to my outburst. To get the maximum effect, I decided to storm off the trophy section with Louis and Redfall.

Arriving out of the trophy section, as I spied on them I found that the card spirits had long forgotten about my outburst and were wandering in it. Shaking my head in disappointment, I decided to head to the Card World without any more delay.

Just as their master stopped peeping and headed his way, one of the card spirits found the floating island covered in array formations sealing the storage card containing the Elder Anesthesia Dragon. It immediately called its sisters, and together they began to circle the island, and only they knew what was going on each of their minds.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megalopolis, Teleportation Hub

With Ceed's assistance, I brought Louis and Redfall to the Freedom Megalopolis's teleportation hub, planning to use the city's teleportation array system, still under construction, instead of spending a fortune on Devil Merchant Code to teleport the three of us to the card world.

The freedom fighters had already finished connecting the city to Sky Blossom City, the Southern Capital, and the Southern Academic City. Mostly because I had secure bases in these cities thanks to Southern family. The Freedom Fighters were working with the officials of the Southern region to extend the teleportation channels to all its cities and establish an efficient transportation and trading route throughout the south.

However, there was a delay. It was because the Southern Royal family was too cheap. They weren't willing to pay their share so I can help them establish a teleportation system connecting all their cities and Freedom City. Therefore, the captains of the freedom fighters were discussing an arrangement with the officials of the Southern region. Like allotting free land in all its cities and relaxing taxes on both the resources and labor used to build these teleportation hubs. Along with other incentives, of course.

Though I will own this teleportation array system, it wasn't like I alone would be using it. I planned to let people use it at a reasonable price, of course. After all, operating a teleportation array uses a lot of soul energy. Now imagine how much soul energy one would require to operate and maintain a teleportation array system connecting all the cities within the Southern Region. It wasn't going to be cheap.

Not to forget the economic boom the construction and operation of a teleportation array system connecting all of southern cities would bring to the Southern Region. The Southern Region and its Royal Family stood to gain a lot from my teleportation array system. So, if they were too cheap to pitch in their share of the capital, they could at least give us tax relaxations and attractive incentives. After all, the taxes they stood to gain from an operational teleportation array system were unimaginable.

Yes, the Southern Royal family did promise not to tax me as long as I don't leave the Southern region and don't take my business to another region. So what if they can't tax me? They could tax the citizens using the teleportation array system. Merchants, guilds, and other businesses across the region would be willing to pay a premium if it meant they could travel or just transport their goods safely between cities across the southern region without having to worry about running into a field dungeon or roaming monsters.

All I wanted to say was that the Southern Region and the Southern Royal Family stood to gain a lot from a teleportation array system connecting all their cities. So, they should be enthusiastic and willingly investing in it. Instead, I have to beg them. It was as if they were taking advantage of the fact that I would build the teleportation array system regardless of their investment. And once I was done and was earning enough, they would come to demand their share.

It's not just the Southern Royal Family; the other royal families were the same. Not just them, any governing body would do the same. When a bunch of people sit in a luxurious hall and discuss the matters concerning those they didn't even meet, the conversation always concludes with them seeking maximum profit with little investment and risk. Though the Royal Family had the final say, they couldn't just do as they pleased without giving a good reason or risking civil unrest.

This was how things worked. Each side is negotiating to get the most. Unless I planned to replace the other side with myself, I should just stick to trying to game their rigged system and accept my losses. Hoping to make up for it in the long run. Everything can't be perfect. You have to make them work, work for you.

Besides, the main reason I was building this teleportation array system was to help connect the Freedom Megalopolis to the card world. It wasn't just for tourism, trade, creating jobs for the Freedom fighters, but most importantly increasing the real estate value of the Freedom Megalopolis and attracting foreign investment. Only then would Freedom Megalopolis be considered a real city. As of now, it was just a big human settlement.

"Which one of these is operational and linked to the array in the Southern Capital?" I asked Henricks, who was on site overseeing the construction of the teleportation array system. With his origin card and mastery over the space rule, he was the perfect test subject for a newly established array or testing its connection to the other arrays through the network of teleportation arrays that can allow a single array to link to all the others, creating a multi-way teleportation channel rather than a simple two-way one.

"Huh! The one on the right platform, sir. Other arrays will be operational soon," Henricks answered after gathering his thoughts from the shock of seeing the notorious Redfall alive and stronger than before. Conjuring all his courage, he asked the redheaded handsome devil in human flesh, "Excuse me, are you by chance related to Demigod Redfall anyhow?"

"Henricks, it's me, old friend," Redfall corrected him with a gentle smile, reaching to pat the former on the shoulder.

"Who the fuck is your friend?" Henricks exclaimed, retreating a few steps in disgust, avoiding Redfall's touch. Then, with a gaze filled with disbelief, he asked, "How are you still alive? We killed you. I saw you draw your last breath as your soul left the physical plane with my own eyes."

Henricks regretted not looking into the recent rumors that Demigod Redfall was resurrected by his mother, Yin Widow. However, back then he didn't believe them, having learned Southern Emperor Anna Heatsend had killed her while she was attempting to resurrect her son.

Without waiting for Redfall to answer him, Henricks turned to their young leader and warned while pleading, "Wyatt, I don't know what lies this deviant has fed you, but you can't trust anything he says. Help me kill him."

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Lil Red Storm Realm, Freedom Megalopolis, Teleportation Hub

"Woah, that escalated quickly," Lois commented, appearing behind Henricks. Putting her arm around his neck, she uttered, "Calm down, old fart."

Henrick's eyes widened in shock because he hadn't sensed the female demigod approach him until she spoke or reacted as she put her hand around his neck. With his mastery of the space rule, it was basically impossible for someone weaker than him to sneak up on him, apart from Wyatt of course.

Clearly, it hasn't been long since this female demigod had built her divinity and had just taken a step into the demigod rank. Yet, somehow she made his instincts blare out of control. He could hear his heartbeat race as sweat trickled down his forehead.

"Now, that's like it," Lois said, as she left his side and then, turning to face him, she said, "We used to work together, I trusted my back to you. Not once did I stop to imagine that a day would come when you would backstab us and be a traitor along. That goes to say, things change, so do people. Just stop making a fuss and start the teleportation array before I change my mind and decide to kill you."

"Who the heck are you?" Henricks asked, feeling threatened, not just for his life but for his position in the new group the freedom fighters had just joined. He found it hard to believe that except for Field Marshal Lorn, there were other Demigod Card Apprentices working under their new leader. Not to mention, each one of them was a deadly force to reckon with.

"Me? I'm Calamity Eye. Master Wyatt's humble dragger. You can think of me as your death, because I will kill you if you dare to pull the kind of shit you did with me, here," Lois warned Henricks, claiming the moniker 'Calamity Eye' and making clear where her allegiance lay.

Bloodkin Lois's loyalty to me aside, it appeared she blamed Henricks for her being captured by me back at the Sky Blossom City. After all, Henricks was supposed to protect her and her team if things went south during their mission. Instead, he watched them get slaughtered one by one and then ran off with the dungeon relocation card they were after, leaving her to fend for herself.

"Calamity Eye?" Henricks uttered, confused, trying to remember if he had ever heard the name before. He had no recollection of that name. He had no recollection of the person before him claiming that they used to work together.

There was a reason Henricks failed to recognize Agent Lois Forger—the Right-Eye of the Card World—because she was in disguise and didn't have an empty right eye socket. Thanks to the reconstruction ability of her primordial calamity daughter gem, she was able to disguise herself and her right eye perfectly enough to fool Henricks, who once used to be her colleague. Not to mention, she was a demigod now.

Lois had a very important mission: infiltrating the organization controlling the central government and spying on the masters. As a precaution, she decided to hide her identity and her relation to their master even from their allies because she couldn't risk anything jeopardizing this mission. Being caught by the Masters and dying a worse

death possible was the least of her concerns. She just didn't want to fail the mission her master had assigned to her.

"Listen, little girl. I have no idea who you are or what you keep talking about. I think you mistook me for someone else," Henricks said, controlling his emotions, realizing that if the freedom fighters don't pull their weight around here, others will soon replace them.

"Yes, I did mistake you for someone you are not, but that was before. Now, I know exactly who I'm dealing with," Lois said. As she suddenly vanished from Henricks's field of vision, he immediately activated his space runes. But just as they screamed a warning, it was already too late. Lois grabbed his head from behind and slammed it hard on the floor. A spiderweb-shaped crack spread across the tiles, breaking them. Then, leaning her lips next to his ear, she whispered, "Old dog, remember to behave, or I will destroy you and everything even slightly related to you."

"Calamity Eye, stop playing around. I'm already late as is," I said sternly with a frown, ignoring her fight with Henricks. I didn't want the change of scenery to make the Freedom Fighters's demigods lazy, get comfortable where they were, and start playing politics. Besides, a little competition won't hurt. It would keep everyone on their toes, especially now that they had something to lose — the Freedom Megalopolis.

I wasn't surprised to see Lois wiping the floor with Henricks because with the Primordial Calamity Daughter Gem, Celestial Vision, and Right of the Card World aiding her, it would be a surprise if she failed to do so. With buffs from all these skills and physique, Lois could move between the physical and spiritual planes faster than Henrick's intent sense and runes could react.

"I'm sorry, Master Wyatt. I saw a rat and couldn't help wanting to stomp on it," Lois said, returning to my side as Henricks got back on his feet, not daring to start anything, but he glanced into Wyatt's eyes trying to figure out what brought this on.

"Start the array," I ordered, continuing to head toward the platform carved with the teleportation array linked to the array in the Southern Region.

Seeing I didn't plan to answer or comment, Henricks just nodded and personally started the array formation as the trio got on it while trying to figure out if he or the others from the Freedom Fighters do something wrong.

"Nice meeting you, old dog. Until next time," Lois waved at puzzled Henricks before they were teleported out of the Planet Lil' Red Storm.

As the three figures vanished, Henricks finally roared, "Who the fuck are you, bitch?"

Then, turning to the array masters working on the arrays still under construction, he gave an ultimatum: "I want all these teleportation array formations fully operational by evening. There are only a dozen of them at present, yet you are taking so long to set

them up. What will you do once the Southern Royal Family green lights the project? By then, we will have thousands of these arrays and be on a strict clock. Unless you guys want to lose your jobs to the array masters from the Southern Region, you better shape up fast. Do you hear me? Then stop dragging your feet and signing."

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Capital, Fine Gold Capital Branch Headquarters.

"I'm back," I said, breathing in a lungful of air, standing on the teleportation platform in the Card World.

Breathing the air out, I couldn't help but agree that our predecessors were right about one thing: *'There is no place like home.'*

"Welcome back, boss," Cindy greeted us on our arrival.

She was overseeing the development of the Fine Gold's branches both in the Southern Capital and Southern Academic City. Diana had her hands full back in the Sky Blossom City while others were busy or not skilled or didn't have enough experience to oversee any of these projects. The burden then fell on Cindy alone.

Not that she was complaining, she saw this as an opportunity to climb up the ladder. It wasn't news that their organization had now grown to the point of doing business with demigods and across the Myriad realms. Yet, still far from reaching its ceiling.

So, Cindy planned to make up for the lack in her realm with her skills and loyalty. Becoming the core of their organization, such that she can keep up with the organization's fast growth, if not just grow with it. As now, her single focus was to become a crucial part of its identity and future.

"How's work?" I asked with an amiable smile, pleased that I had successfully managed to poach Cindy from Diana. Though they both now worked for me, Cindy's loyalty belonged to me, not Diana.

"Can't complain, boss. But people are calling you names I'd rather not say as a lady in the Grimoire Network," Cindy said, reminding me of my ultimatum to Morningstar University.

"Hahaha, we both know you never were a lady," I teased Cindy, ignoring the noise in the Grimoire Network.

Somehow, I had gone from being praised as the Southern Hero and for my generosity to one of the most hated people in the Card World. My loyal Southern fans tried to defend me, but their posts were buried under a pile of insults: arrogant, cheat, fraud, coward, and more.

"You're one to talk, Boss. They're calling you the Southern Emperor's Pretty gigolo," Cindy snapped back playfully, noting that Dredre was sleeping, nuzzled in their Boss's hair.

"Ah, I wish I were the Southern Emperor's pretty gigolo," I joked. But before I could get back to business, I suddenly felt an unfathomable presence watching me. It wasn't just me; Lois felt it too. She rushed to my side, ready to use her body as a shield if it comes to it. When we searched our surroundings, we couldn't find the presence whose gaze we could still feel on us.

"What's wrong?" Cindy asked, seeing her boss and Lois literally go on guard.

Only then did I notice that it was just me and Lois who felt this overwhelmingly powerful gaze; everyone else, including Demigod Redfall, didn't seem to feel a thing. Before I could inquire about it, I felt a sudden tug on my soul, pulling it out of my Primordial Calamity Soul Gem, through the physical plane, and into the spiritual plane. I found myself in a place I was very familiar with: the womb of the Card World's will.

Helplessly floating before myriad colorful streams of rule power that flowed in the darkness, joining and interconnecting like a huge loom, I noticed I wasn't alone. Lois and Clown Mask's souls were on either side of me. Just as they noticed my presence, I had a dreadful realization: Lois and Clown Mask's souls were out of their primordial calamity daughter gems.

The calamity daughter gems were what made the souls imprisoned within them subservient to me. Now that Lois and Clown Mask's souls were free, I wondered if they were no longer under my influence. However, my racing heart settled as I felt my Cursed Bloodline connecting the three of us.

Only then did I begin to wonder what I was doing here in the womb of the World's will. Suddenly, three strings of rule power, thinner than a card apprentice's eye could see, split from their respective rule streams and headed our way at an incredible pace, like a snake striking at its prey. Before I could react, the strings of rule power had entered our souls. The next thing I knew, my soul was back in my primordial calamity soul gem, and I was in the teleportation hub of the Southern Capital.

"What the heck just happened?" I muttered, searching my soul for the foreign string of rule power that had entered it.

"It was the Card Celestial," Lois answered as I finally found the foreign string of rule power in my soul, but I was too late. It had already melted and mixed with my essence. I soon entered a state of trance, achieving enlightenment.

...

"Congratulations on your enlightenment, Boss." I woke to the sound of Cindy's voice.

"Thank you," I said, turning to look at Lois. She had also awakened. Feeling my gaze, she nodded in a reassuring manner. Then, I made up an excuse to leave. "Cindy, we'll have to catch up later. I need to digest this enlightenment asap."

"Oh, yes, boss. You do. I'll share the progress on both projects directly to your grimoire," Cindy nodded, making sure I knew the back-breaking work she was putting in to keep our organization operational.

Watching the three figures vanish, Cindy sighed, realizing the immense gap between her and these so called geniuses. She didn't dare to compare herself to her boss, but his female aid—she had also gained enlightenment, and simultaneously with him. What was that about? It was as if the world was reminding her not to slack off, or she would be left behind.

Honestly, she didn't mind being left behind, but she had already invested too much. The one thing she hated more than anything was taking a loss. She would rather die trying to get her share than just accept it. She hadn't clawed her way out of the slums of Sky Blossom City to the top of its underground to give up now.

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Capital, City Outskirts

"Wyatt, you don't plan to leave without saying hello, do you?" Colleen asked, lounging on a sofa-shaped cloud. The cloud twisted as she reclined on it with the grace of a queen on her throne as her gaze fixed on a familiar, repulsive figure beside her future grandson-in-law.

"Your Highness, it has been a while," I returned the greetings, coming to a halt, finding the Soldier Queen blocking our path. I only had the patience to entertain her because

the foreign string of rule power that mixed with my soul was a boon from the Card Celestial, actually a choice, to be exact.

"It has been a while. I see your present company has turned for the worse. It seems Ann's guess was right. You did provide sanctuary to this deviant," Colleen remarked, glancing over the three of us.

She eyed Demigod Redfall with a hatred befitting someone meeting the murderer who killed her entire family. A story was here. At his peak, Redfall ruined the lives of many card apprentices, regardless of their gender or alliance. Some of those unfortunate card apprentices were Colleen's own army comrades. To make it worse, he even targeted members of the Southern Royal Family and their vassal families.

Everyone knew one thing about the Soldier Queen for sure: she was fiercely loyal.

When her old regiment was trapped at the northern border by the Northern Army, Colleen learned of it and immediately headed north. Leveraging her position as the Queen of the Southern Region, she offered herself to the Northerners in exchange for her old regiment, ignoring all the warnings and threats of the Southern Royal family and court.

Unsurprisingly, the Northern Field Marshal Morrigan did not agree. Not wanting to offend the Southern Ruler, who went against his entire family to marry the Soldier Queen. Instead, he proposed a devious wager: For every card emperor she defeated from his army, he would let one of her comrades go.

Obviously, the Soldier Queen accepted the wager. However, her chilling reply still echoed in those mountains: "You don't have enough Card Emperors in your field army."

Provoked, the Northern Field Marshal, Morrigan, modified the wager. He claimed that if the Soldier Queen could defeat every Card Emperor in his Field Army, he would let her entire regiment go. He was certain she would die of exhaustion long before she could defeat all 1,435 of them.

However, Morrigan soon learned that he had seriously underestimated the Soldier Queen and would come to see what the Southern Ruler saw in her. The Soldier Queen defeated all her opponents efficiently and swiftly. Still, 1,435 was a huge number, but she proceeded with the wager anyway because she had a plan.

She took advantage of the fact that a Northerner would choose death over surrendering to a Southerner and vice versa. She would put them in a submission hold. While the stubborn northerner struggled between surrendering or helping the enemy, she got ample time to recover her strength.

It appeared that if things continued this way, she would win the wager and prove Morrigan wrong. However, to everyone's surprise, by the last week of the fourth month

of the wager, after the Soldier Queen defeated her thousandth opponent, the Northern Field Marshal, Morrigan, offered a compromise.

Impressed by her loyalty, commitment, and sheer will, he not only released her regiment with the utmost respect but also crowned her with the title: Unparalleled Soldier, commending her unparalleled loyalty to her old regiment and her unparalleled display of willpower by defeating a thousand card emperors in a row.

So, explaining why I sheltered Demigod Redfall, who ruined the lives of Colleen's comrades and relatives, to her wasn't going to be easy. I was fully prepared for this to get messy. Hopefully, the Southern Royal family wouldn't force me.

"I take it he's one of the first members of your criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program," Colleen remarked, jumping the gun and thinking of a reason why her brilliant grandson-in-law would bother with the likes of Redfall. However, her glare at Redfall intensified with every word, and her hands balled into fists. Only she knew how much control it took on her part not to attack him.

I nodded, but felt an urgent need to explain myself. Making a mental note to get to the source of these feelings later, I began, "I have plans for him. With the second demon invasion on the brink, I need all the talent I can get to stop it from happening. Also, by then, if he fails to prove himself with his actions, I will leave it to you to decide his fate."

As Colleen listened, a subtle smile appeared on her face along with a brief twinkle in her eyes, seeing I bothered to explain without her having to press me for it. Clearly, she saw this as a sign of progress in our relationship.

Instead of feeling cringe, a sudden sense of relief washed over me. I didn't understand why I felt this guilt or this need for her validation. If I had to guess, aside from Anna and Ann, she was the only person in the Royal Heatsend family who treated me genuinely. I found her presence was both warm and reassuring, similar to Field Marshal Lorn's. I guess it was the soldier in them that made me feel safe around them.

"Young man, you have big ambitions," Colleen encouraged, "I hope you succeed and prolong the peace our predecessors and friends had fought and sacrificed for." She didn't take her grandson-in-law's words lightly. She had seen him pull off enough miracles to truly believe in him. If anyone could think of a way to stop the impending demon invasion, it would be him.

As for Redfall, if Death had given him a second chance, she figured she could, too. But she would be watching him closely. One wrong move, and her generosity would end, even if it meant offending her grandson-in-law.

"Anyway, where's my sister-in-law? I haven't been able to reach her. You didn't get her killed, did you?" Colleen asked making it sound like a casual enquiry but she seemed genuinely concerned about the Field Marshal's whereabouts and wellbeing even though

the latter had indeed switched her allegiance from her daughter to her grandson-in-law, but Colleen didn't see the point in being hung up on details and dwelling on grudges. Circumstances change, and so do people. They'd all lived long enough to know that much. Not to mention, they were all one family.

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[1,012 words]

Chapter 2448: Boo!

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Capital, City Outskirts

"She is fine and busy polishing her skills in seclusion. I'm sure she will reach out when she's out," I assured Colleen calmly. Not surprised that she would try to contact Field Marshal using the grimoire network even though she knew the latter was in Lil Red Storm.

Now that I owned Lil Red Storm, and it had enough card apprentice population, I hosted the grimoire network and VR-universe in the demon merchant's personal realm network of Lil Red Storm. Meaning now one could use the grimoire network and VR-universe in the Lil Red Storm and Ceed World.

Otherwise, no matter how advanced and beautiful the Freedom Megalopolis was, the Freedom Fighters and their families would be bored out of their minds. Also, it would be impossible for the Freedom Megalopolis to become a trade and tourist hub if card apprentices couldn't use the grimoire network and VR-universe in Lil Red Storm.

This made the hefty fortune I spent to register Lil Red Storm as mine with the Devil Merchant Code worth it. These incredible perks of the Devil Merchant Code made its insane pricing reasonable. No wonder it has been dominating the entire Myriad Realms.

"I guess she finally got the vacation days she was applying for through you. Hopefully, she achieves the breakthrough she was seeking," Colleen prayed for her sister-in-law's breakthrough and then, got to the point, "Wyatt, you know that I can't allow you to go to the Central Academic City, right?"

Before I could reply, Lois appeared right behind the cloud Colleen was sitting on and warned, "Your Highness, it's not up to you."

The surrounding temperature dropped to dangerous levels, to the point where the time seemed to have slowed down — no, the vibration of the soul energy and pathways in the surrounding and our bodies seemed to have decreased drastically, causing us to perceive time slower than we usually would. Messing with our responses and reactions.

One had to know that the perception of time of a card demigod was different from that of a card emperor or a card student or a mortal. Our perception of time was one of the factors highly influencing our body's response and reactive time.

Compared to the time rule, this rule of Colleen's was more like a party trick. But Colleen's rule wasn't just about messing with enemies' perception of time. Its strength lay in slowing the soul energy and pathways in the surrounding. Effectively decreasing the attack speed of all soul energy and rule power based cards and abilities. In a card combat, every fraction of a second was important. A slight delay in casting their cards or abilities could cost them their lives.

Also, it was highly effective against array formations, rule domains, and other soul energy and rule power based defense abilities, especially like barriers. After all, when the soul energy and rule power were slowed, all these mentioned measures would collapse by themselves or be riddled with flaws. Honestly, for a party trick, this rule of Colleen's was deadly, especially in her hands, who happened to be a close combat expert. Not to mention, if Colleen were to use this rule meaning of hers to deploy a pseudo-celestial rule domain, I don't think their many demigods in the card world that could be her match.

There were too many similarities between Colleen and Anna's fighting styles. Considering that Colleen trained her as the next Southern Emperor, her influence on the latter's combat style wasn't surprising. Anna's numerous field cards made more sense now. The grandma and granddaughter duo weren't afraid of pain or dying, but afraid of their enemies escaping. They were like soldiers, prepared to kill for their nation at any cost.

Soon, the surrounding temperature had returned to normal, so did our perception of time. However, Colleen was no longer seated on her cloud but hovering in the sky, grasping Lois by her neck, while the latter's skin had turned pale blue in color under the effect of her ability.

Having caught Lois, Colleen concentrated her attack on the former, completely subduing the target by drastically slowing her perception of time. For example, a fraction of a second for us could be a second or a couple or even an entire minute. Only Lois and Colleen knew that, as I didn't plan to intrude because Colleen was testing my aides. If she were serious, based on her nature, she would have deployed her strongest attack, her pseudo-celestial rule domain, to destroy her enemy as quickly as possible.

To Colleen's bafflement, Lois's dangerously pale blue body disintegrated and vanished from the physical plane. Then, she heard a play voice from behind her, "Boo!"

Had it been old Lois, Colleen's attack would have indeed rendered her helpless, but she now had a Bloodkin-tier primordial calamity daughter gem. Not only was she incredibly strong, but versatile too. The moment Colleen caught and subdued her physical body on the physical plane, Lois immediately switched to her spiritual body on the spiritual plane.

Becoming a Bloodkin, Lois has not only gained celestial vision from the cursed bloodline but dual existence too. Like me, Lois can exist on both the physical and spiritual planes simultaneously. That was to say unless one didn't subdue both our bodies in both the planes simultaneously, they couldn't truly catch us especially due to the reconstruction ability of our primordial calamity gems.

Once on the spiritual plane, Lois was like a fish in the water. However, if she wanted to enter the physical plane, she had to create a new physical body because the old one was captured by Colleen. Therefore, abandoning the old physical body, she created a new one in her spiritual channel that connected/anchored the spiritual body to her physical body in the physical plane.

Once her new body was complete, Lois appeared on the physical plane behind Colleen, quietly watching the latter's astonishment as her old physical body disintegrated in the latter's hand.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Capital, City Outskirts

"I see why you dared to return without my sister-in-law by your side," Colleen said, slowly turning around to face us, then passing Lois, she neared me, saying, "She is good, but she is not enough. If you go to the Central Academic City, it will not be just Morningstar University you will be facing, but the entire academic city and maybe even the Central Government and the nobles from the Central Capital. Don't deny it. They orchestrated a demonic attack within the Southern Capital for you. There is no saying what they will do if you go to their home turf."

"I'm hoping they will," I replied with a confident smile. Locking my eyes with hers, I announced, "Celestial Blood Fate Domain."

Soon the whole world as far as we can see turned crimson as I robbed everything of its fate, and asked Colleen, "Home turf? Honey, what's that?"

"The real deal is way closer to the myths than the fake one. How are you doing this?" Colleen asked, ignoring the pressure her will was under. It got easier as she stopped resisting, realizing within the domain of her will was helpless against her grandson-in-law's will.

However, this destroyed all the confidence she had gained with her recent growth in her primary rules and mastery over the pseudo-celestial rule domain. She told herself not to compare herself with a monstrous genius like her grandson-in-law, but in front of him she could help but feel humbled.

"Honestly, it's instinctive. I just like to chant its name because I like to announce I am coming. Like Death. You know it's coming, and it's imminent. You just have to live knowing that.

So, don't waste your time using the pseudo-celestial rule domain to figure out the method to a real one because there isn't one. I wasn't completely honest when I shared the method of pseudo-celestial rule domain with the Royal Instructor. Not that I was trying to deceive him but just protecting him from the fact that the past few centuries of his life were a total waste of time.

A card apprentice, regardless of their realm, cannot deploy a celestial rule domain unless they meet a certain threshold. That's one of the reasons there aren't many records of the celestial rule domain. Just stick to increasing your mastery in the pseudo-celestial rule domain. When the time is right, I will share what I have with you all," I advised Colleen, not wanting her to waste her precious time on something impossible.

Listening to her grandson-in-law, Colleen's eyes widened in lament for his staggering narcissism. He had dared to fancy himself the same as Death, inevitable. However, thinking about the consequences of the information he revealed to her, she asked in curiosity, "Aren't you concerned that I will use this information to get the Royal instructor to our camp?"

"Hahaha, you are funny. The Royal instructor's loyalty was mine the moment I showed him the true celestial rule domain from the myths. It's just that he appeared too fascinated with the celestial rule domain to the point where I was worried if I told him the truth he would be of no use for either of us," I said without any exaggeration because in the Royal instructor's eyes I was akin to the chosen when I showed him I can use the celestial rule domain from the myths. However, that old fool was spellbound with his research into the celestial rule domain. Telling him the secret to it would be akin to feeding him poison.

I wouldn't bother with him, but he was one of the cornerstones of the Southern Region. With a war upon us, it wouldn't be wise to lose him now. So I decided to keep him busy with the pseudo-celestial rule domain.

Colleen's eyes widened learning grandson-in-law's measures towards the Royal Instructor and his reasons for them. What impressed her most was that the Royal Instructor had no idea. That old fool was going around bragging about how much the Southern Hero values him and chose to share the method to the pseudo-celestial domain, giving him the full right to teach it to others.

"My daughter is going to love you," Colleen said out of nowhere.

Listening to Colleen bring up her daughter, my expression turned indifferent as I asked, "Are you sure? I know her plans for Anna and me. I hate being used the most."

"Look at the time. The royal court is about to start. Good luck on your visit to the Central Academic City," Colleen excused herself, regretting bringing up her daughter. But what can she do? Every time she talks with him, she cannot help but feel like she was talking to her daughter. Also, there were more details to her daughter's plans, but she couldn't share them with her grandson-in-law.

Colleen nodded at Lois but fiercely eyed Demigod Redfall before heading to the Royal Court. I stared at her back, wondering whether, instead of heading to the central academic region, I should head to the Southern Royal Palace to confront Anna's mother and demand an explanation. She used me like a whetstone, sacrificing Anna's love for me to sharpen her daughter and help her forge an Extreme Divinity.

I should have known. How could a Royal Family be so enthusiastic about marrying the heir to the throne to an orphan from the slums of some third-rate city, no matter how miraculous his inventions and discoveries were? The Southern Princess knew her daughter the best, enough to use her rebellious nature to get the exact results she wanted.

I glared intensely at the Southern Royal Palace. However, I knew it wasn't the right time to meet the Southern Princess yet. She took Anna from me, so I took Field Marshal Lorn from her. As I waited for her retaliation, she gifted the Freedom Fighters to me. By the time I realized it was a gift, I had already accepted it. She was formidable. So, I planned to meet her bearing a gift, not just any gift.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"Go ahead, summon your grimoire," I ordered Redfall, hovering over the burning SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon near the Way Beyond at the Southern Border.

It took the three of less than five minutes to reduce this SSS-rank field dungeon bustling with gigantic trees and monsters into an enormous bonfire spreading across the entire field dungeon. Turning it into a perfect arena to meet the card apprentice holding Demigod Redfall's origin card.

"Yes, master," Redfall nodded, extending his hand out. Soon, a few seconds later, a diamond grimoire appeared above his palm. Redfall retrieved it within himself with the expression of twins meeting after decades of separation.

Suddenly, Redfall began to glow brilliantly. Soon, the brilliant light emerged out of his body. On second glance, it turned out to be his diamond grimoire.

"Did those assholes rig the grimoire?" Lois asked, enraged but also confused, wondering how Redfall didn't notice the trap. After all, it was his grimoire.

"No, it's upgrading," I uttered in shock as this wasn't the first time I was seeing this phenomenon. The other time was when my golden rank grimoire upgraded to an unranked grimoire.

"How is this even possible?" Redfall stole the words in my mind.

The only reason my grimoire upgraded to an unranked grimoire was because of the 'Breath of Erosion' tainting Redfall's soul separated by Dredre when I fooled her into trying to revive Redfall, who was pretending to be dead on my orders.

Most of the 'Breath of Erosion' was used up for my grimoire's upgrade while the rest returned to the river of reincarnation. That was to say there should be no more 'Breath of Erosion' left for Redfall's grimoire to upgrade. Yet, here I was watching Redfall's diamond rank grimoire upgraded into an unranked grimoire.

This didn't make sense unless there was more than one condition a card apprentice could choose from to satisfy to upgrade their ranked grimoire to unranked grimoire. Or maybe this had something to do with Redfall's soul having come into contact with the 'Breath of Erosion.'

I had too many questions yet no time to find answers for them, for now, as I sensed the fluctuation in the space. Getting my signal, Redfall retrieved the third unranked grimoire this world has seen and welcomed his murderers.

"Kiren, if he ran away. I'm sleeping at your place tonight," a sleazy old man joked with the female group mate next to him as soon as the group of six appeared in the field dungeon.

"Sure, Olli, as long as you root out your third leg. My social circle could use a eunuch demigod," Kiren, a cyan-haired demigod, shot back at the sleazy old man, who finally glanced at Redfall and cried, "Why are you still here?"

Feeling the creeped-out glances of his group mates on him, the sleazy old man explained, "I can always grow my third leg back, but never get such an offer from Kiren. Besides, I'm more of a tongue guy. I'm only satisfied when my partner is satisfied."

"Olli, stop. We all know you are still a virgin," the man standing at the center of the group and on the other side of Kiren said, unable to help but take a cheap shot at his sleazy friend.

"And now you guys know why," Ollie remarked, without denying that he was still a virgin. Then, leaning toward Kiren, standing next to him, he whispered, "I lied. Actually, I'm saving it for you."

"Motherfucker, step away from my wife," the man on the other side of Kiren screamed, having enough of sleazy Ollie hitting on his wife. He tried to let it slide out of consideration of their reunion and of course, Redfall. But the asshole didn't know to quit when he was ahead.

"Cam, calm down. We can deal with him after we complete our objective," Kiren reminded her husband of their priorities.

"Tsk," Ollie clicked his tongue in annoyance, uttering, "Just because you married her doesn't mean I lose my birthright to hit on her."

"Birthright?" Kiren asked in confusion.

"It's every man's birthright, nay, divine mission to hit on beautiful women," Ollie seriously explained with a holy undertone, and for a second it felt like he had achieved sainthood.

Cam wanted to punch Ollie in his self-righteous face, but Kiren signaled him not to. Suppressing his anger, he glanced at Redfall and grinned grimly, adding, "You are gonna wish you should have stayed dead."

"Finally! Cannibal Cam is the house people!" The only other female group mate besides Kiren announced aloud, then winking at Ollie she commended him, "Good job, Ollie."

"Happy to be of service, Your Highness Christina," Ollie thanked like a gentleman, completely opposite to his sleazy self. After all, he was in the presence of royalty. The Westerner Royalty, Princess Christina Chase, to be exact.

"..." Listening to the exchange between her friends, Kiren shook her head helplessly, fully aware of her anger issues. The more his rage builds up, the stronger he gets until it

hits the limit and one of his other personalities surfaces, Cannibal Cam. This personality of his was called Cannibal not because it fed on its own kind but because when it first surfaced it bit off the neck of the Card Apprentice, one entire realm above theirs, for trying to insult her before his eyes.

As Christina Chase was cheering for Cannibal Cam, one of her guards whispered in her ears recognizing one of Redfall's comrades.

"Who? Dalton Wyatt? Are you sure?" Christina asked, eyeing the young man with the card master soul energy signature.

"Master, I'm surprised there are still card apprentices out there who don't know about you. Was she living under a rock?" Lois commented, expressing her dissatisfaction that the group of card demigods before them didn't recognize her master immediately and a few of them genuinely appeared not to know of him.

Ignoring Lois, Christina gazed at the boy and asked, "They say you are Anna's fiancé. Well, are you?"

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"Master, you sure you don't want to just kill them and be done with it—" Lois asked in annoyance but stopped, catching her master's signal. She didn't like this group of demigods.

"No need to resort to the extreme," I answered because I didn't want to kill a bunch of Demigods who not only helped the world rid of a filth like Redfall but also made it their duty to ensure he didn't get a chance to make a comeback. They looked like reasonable people, there was no need to escalate things especially considering one of them was Western Royalty.

"Then, why do you have her family's heirloom?" Christina asked, eyeing the dummy ring on my finger.

"Fuck!" Recalling the ring and its name, I couldn't help but curse, realizing that the clues were all over the place. I was carrying one of them with me. Yet, I failed to see it.

"Excuse me?" Christina was a little taken aback listening to the boy curse out of nowhere.

"You are excused," Lois said sternly, prepared to attack if they showed any sign of hostility.

"Lois, stand down," I ordered before turning to Princess Christina and explaining, "The Southern Royal family loaned it to me for my safety."

Christina's eyes widened in shock knowing that the dummy ring represented the partner of the future Southern Ruler, who takes the throne in the ruler's absence, hence the name 'Dummy Ring.'

Just then, her two bodyguards mentally shared all the information they had on the Southern Hope as their princess had been exploring the Way Beyond for the past year and only returned recently after learning that Redfall might have been resurrected.

"What is someone like you doing with him?" Having digested all the information, Christina was surprised to learn the boy before her had achieved so much at such a young age. Now she felt that the Southern Royal family loaning him the Dummy Ring was a little believable.

"I believe in second chances," I said, prepared to hear them argue, calling me a fool. But to my astonishment, Ollie, Kiren, and Christina burst into laughter while Cannibal Cam returned to original Cam, who calmly said, "Young man, you are funny. That was the funniest joke heard in a while."

"Princess, he is being serious," Christina's guard informed, reporting about the criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program already implemented by the boy in the Sky Blossom City and the wonders it had done to the city.

"Guys, he is the real deal," Christina said in disbelief, unable to believe that an 18-year-old not only thought of something so selfless but also managed to successfully implement it. Princess Christina knew how hard it was to successfully integrate a program into the society. Granted, the boy only achieved it in his city, but considering the nature of this program, it was ten times harder than any other program she saw being implemented in the Western region.

Ollie, Kiren, and Cam stopped laughing and glanced at the card master. Finally, Ollie spoke out, "Young man, did he promise to help you get laid? Let me tell you, he promised me the same thing and then asked me to drop my pants as he dropped his and bent over. If you didn't catch my drift, he asked me to fuck him in the ass even though he knew I didn't swing that way. He almost gave me a lifetime worth of trauma, but I managed to get the hell out of there."

"Master, maybe we should let them kill him," Lois said, listening to Ollie, feeling that Redfall's past would stain her master's unblemished record.

I knew all of Redfall's past endeavors, including the one Ollie spoke of, having read his memories. But listening to someone else narrate it, just hit differently. I too couldn't help but look at Redfall, despite knowing that he only did it to capture Ollie's mind and make him a part of his cult. However, he had seriously underestimated Ollie.

"Old man, I am sure you too might have tried the same with a few lesbians. It doesn't mean you don't deserve a second chance," I controlled my expressions and defended my choice to give Redfall a second chance.

"You are right, but something about the way you say it is—" Ollie agreed, but felt something about the statement wasn't right until Cam cut in, exclaiming, "Ollie, you offered a lesbian to plow your ass?"

"Hell no! Cam, if you want to die, then just say so. Don't spread lies about me," Ollie almost pounced on Cam. But then realized he was mad at the wrong person, then he fiercely glanced at the boy and asked, "Young man, are you picking a fight with me?"

"It was a mistake, a mistake," I lied, not wanting to apologize to the sleazy old man, and then got to the point, "The way I see it, you guys have two choices. First is to trust me and leave Redfall in my custody. And the second is that you guys join my criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program. So, gentlemen and lovely ladies, what will you choose?"

"Reasonable," Ollie said, nodding his head as if had given my offer a serious consideration and then proposed a counter-offer, "Or we kill Redfall and then I will take you to the fanciest brothel in all of the five regions. You are paying."

The smile on my face receded as I eyed Princess Christina and announced, "Demigod Redfall is under my protection as long as he doesn't break any rules of my criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program. If you guys continue to pester him, I can only assume you guys also need my criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program."

"Young man, we don't mean to undermine your idea, but trust us, this one is beyond saving. Instead of wasting your strength and resources on this one, why not go help others who really need it?" Kiren stepped forward, attempting to persuade the young man.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"Kiren, is it? I don't think you don't understand what's happening here. We're not negotiating with you, we're ordering you to choose between the two choices. You better hurry and choose, or we will assume you have chosen the second choice," Lois aggressively clarified to Kiren and her group mates, seeing that they were underestimating her master because of his age and realm. Treating him like some second-generation rich, pampered card apprentice.

Listening to Lois's tone, Kiren wasn't offended. She was used to handling aggressive people, especially with her husband's special condition. Therefore, she remained patient and with a gentle smile she introduced herself, "Yes, I am Kiren John. And you are?"

"I am Calamity Eye, the dagger of Southern Hope," Lois proudly announced, causing Kiren and her group to look at her oddly. But they had met enough quirky and flamboyant demigods to ignore what they just heard.

"I am Ogrgy Ollie, the side piece of Kiren John," Ollie proudly announced, ignoring the disgusted look of everyone in his group but Cam eyed his wife's self-proclaimed side piece head to toe before nodding in agreement, "You know what? Now that you pointed it out, I get why you look like an elderly, malnourished, perverted loon with multiple STDs despite being a demigod. I have to say, orgy life-style hasn't been kind to you."

"Don't worry, I am clean now. If you have any doubts, I suggest you get yourself tested," Ollie didn't argue or deny, just built on what his friend said.

"Why should I get tested if you have — Motherfucker, I am going to kill you," Cam asked in confusion but midway through his sentence, having figured out what Ollie was implying, the Cannibal Cam surfaced.

"Cannibal Cam, in the dungeon, people!" Christina Chase called out aloud, as if she were a crazy fangirl of his. But to my surprise, I saw Cannibal Cam, who was about to attack Ollie, stop and begin to build his rage. I couldn't help but wonder if this was an ability of the Western princess, some kind of control-type skill card.

"Damn girl! That was loud," Kiren complained, and the princess apologized, "Sorry, I got excited."

"Enough of this, Celestial Blood—" Having had enough of the Western princess and her group of misfits, I prepared to recruit them into my criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program only to feel the overwhelming gaze I felt back in the Fine Gold's Southern Capital branch.

It was the Card World's Will, Card Celestial, reminding me of its boon: the string of rule power that melted into mine, Calamity Eyes, and Clown Mask's souls. I called it a boon, but it was more like a mandate. But I stuck with boon because it could have been a lot worse considering I was completely exposed and totally helpless against the Card Celestial's means.

I have seen the Deviant Devil Mamas fight a Blood Rule Slave Celestial and even defeat it, but having experienced the means of the Card Celestial firsthand, I felt like Devil Prince Mamas was a joke compared to the Card Celestial.

However, what shocked me the most was the means of the Librarian. DreDre was asleep in my hair, yet the Card Celestial who could strip my soul out of the calamity gem made from the world calamity seed, also known as nemesis of celestials, like it was nothing, didn't seem to notice the Pixie atop of my head.

I don't know what Librarian had done to the Pixies, but it appeared as if the Card Celestial was oblivious of DreDre's existence in its own Domain. DreDre was a Pixie, the sole obsession of the celestials, yet Card Celestial failed to notice one right in front of it. This was just crazy. I wasn't able to fathom the extent of Librarian's power.

Realizing this, I now knew why Librarian Jr confidently gave away DreDre to me as a personal guide. I got a headache thinking of the favor I owed him. Hopefully, he won't cash it anytime soon.

Back to the matter at hand, the Card Celestial's boon.

....

Card Celestial's boon to Clown Mask: She received an enlightenment on how to hide her 'Eye of Fortune' from the tracking & peeking of the 'Eye of Prosperity' and, if she ever managed to get it back, how to fuse 'Eye of Prosperity' and 'Eye of Fortune' to create flawless Tao Eyes.

Card Celestial's boon to Calamity Eyes: Her physique 'Right Eye of the Card World' was upgraded to Deliberation Eyes, enhancing its ability to communicate with the Card Celestial and help annual contracts made with Card World's Will as witness. Now she could judge all the contracts made with the Card World's Will as witness without involving the Card Celestial.

Lois could now actively force the parties involved to uphold their side of the contract or hold them in contempt for not upholding it, or even annul the contracts herself as long as the reason behind her verdict was justifiable. Basically, she was the judge, jury, and executioner on everything related to contracts made with the Card World's Will as witness.

Card Celestial's boon to me: It offered me two of its eyes, the Tao Eye and the Deliberation Eye, basically Clown Mask and Lois, with two options to help me go further in my celestial hood,

I could use the two eyes to step further in my celestial hood by becoming the 'True Son of the Card World,' a vassal celestial of the Card Celestial. Then, rule over the Card World as its representative.

or

I could borrow the two eyes for inspiration and create my own Tao Eyes and Deliberation Eyes to step further in my celestial hood on my own and return the two eyes when I no longer need them. But this came with conditions: I ally with the Card Celestial if I ever manage to become a true celestial. And I stop stealing its favored ones, like I did with Lois and Clown Mask. I could kill them but not take them.

....

It was because of such generosity and consideration shown by the Card Celestial I didn't call it the celestial mandate but the celestial boon. It also made one thing clear to me: the Card Celestial had no malice against me. It had chosen mutual growth over any of the stupid options out there.

The situation was a classic corporate dilemma. When a company's star employee outgrows his role, they don't resort to devious plots like in a TV show. Instead, they make a pragmatic choice: either offer him more shares and a higher salary to retain him, or invest with good faith in his next venture to profit from his success.

The Card Celestial was doing exactly the same thing, protecting its interest from all angles.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"Redfall, go beat them till they're a inch from death," I ordered, going back on plan to turn the Western Princess and her group into my calamity gems.

Apparently, one of them was a favored one, like Lois and Clown Mask. I went through Clown Mask's future vision again to check which one of them was the favored one? But these guys weren't even background characters in it. I wonder what the deal with these favored ones of the Card Celestial was.

Both Lois and Clown Mask had tragic fates in their own ways. Shouldn't the chosen ones live life on easy mode, like Aba Windsor? Speaking of Aba, she had her difficulties, but who didn't? Ultimately, she won and became the chosen one, the hero, while Lois and Clown Mask died tragic deaths. In their entire life only tragedy remained loyal to them.

Since I didn't plan to kill them over trying to do something they believed to be greater good. Also, these guys didn't totally disregard me and my criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program to do what they came here for. Instead, they tried to reason with me. I mean, if I was in their position and was confident about my strength, I wouldn't be as patient and tolerant as these guys were being with me.

So, instead of killing them, and helping the card celestial recycle one of its favored ones, I decided to force them to back off by showing Redfall was way stronger than the Redfall they knew. They weren't even in his league and should give up their stupid, meritless agenda. I mean, they weren't even being paid or praised for killing a scourge of the card world. I can never understand why people like them did what they did.

"Wait, what?" Kiren uttered in shock, wondering if the kid really did what he preached. Otherwise, why would he order a criminal he plans to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society to act as his thug? Was he fooling the five regions? Was he gathering the cruelest criminals the card world has to offer to secretly assemble the cruelest army the world has ever seen? Now, that would be diabolical.

"Here's the third option: you guys duke out your differences with Redfall. The winner gets their way. If you guys win, you get to kill Redfall for the second time. If Redfall wins, you guys will leave him alone to live his second shot at life honestly," I spoke, making an excuse on the spot.

"Sound's good," Ollie agreed, feeling that boy made things a lot easier. He wasn't a big fan of kids anyway. He has always only been good with — his fists and his digging bar. Otherwise, it would have been difficult to maintain his virginity at his age.

"I mean, isn't that why we are here?" Ollie defended, feeling his friends glaring at him with a look that said, 'Shut the heck up!' His brain automatically filtered the obscenity.

"Since when did we let others decide for us?" Princess Christina declared.

Kiren was quick to agree. "I say we get to the bottom of his criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program."

"You're thinking what I'm thinking?" Christina asked, her eyes locking with her girlfriend's. Kiren nodded excitedly. With a shared grin, they announced together, "We'll join your criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program. Where do we sign up?"

I and Lois looked at them as if they had a few screws loose in their minds. Then, turning to Redfall, who was awaiting my orders, I barked, "What the heck are you waiting for?"

Getting the green signal from his master, Redfall descended on the Western princess and her group of misfits like the red plague he was. However, Christina and others weren't pushovers; they held their ground until Redfall began to use his primordial calamity daughter gem. But Cannibal Cam proved a tough opponent, assisting others in the nick of time. Man, he could take a beating.

Letting the fight take its course, I wondered why the Card Celestial didn't call me out when I turned Clown Mask and Lois into my regular-tier calamity daughter gems, but it did when I turned them into my Bloodkin-tier calamity daughter gems.

I understood that an underdeveloped World Calamity Tree was of no threat to a Celestial. Therefore, it was able to separate our souls from my primordial calamity gems. However, I didn't understand why Card Celestial was so concerned about the Cursed Bloodline. Now, I was beginning to wonder if there wasn't any proper info on my Cursed Bloodline in the grimoire because the Card Celestial chose not to add it.

Also, I couldn't help but wonder if the Cursed Bloodline played a crucial role in Card Celestial's generosity toward me. I would have asked the Card Celestial if it bothered to show itself to me, but it just summoned us to its womb and handed us our boons and sent us packing without showing itself.

I even had Lois use her Deliberation eye to contact it, but it flat out refused to answer. Making me wonder if Lois's upgrade wasn't as good as I made it out to be in my head. Ultimately, the Card Celestial's actions only deepened my caution and curiosity towards the Cursed Bloodline. Only time would tell which among my caution and curiosity toward it would win.

As for the Card Celestial's offer to me, obviously I chose to go further in my Celestial hood on my own. As for allying with it, I have come to think of Card World as my home, so yeah, as long as it didn't restrict me, I didn't mind allying with it.

However, what concerned me was the first option of 'True Son of Card World.' That was the route the Emissary of Light seemed to have decided on to achieve Celestial hood. I wondered if he had the Card Celestial's blessing. Was he one of the favored ones? That shouldn't be possible based on Clown Mask's future vision.

Again, I would have directly asked the Card Celestial about it if I knew how I could communicate with it when it didn't bother to answer Lois's attempt to contact it.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"He's a lot stronger than we remember," Kiren said, retreating to tend to Ollie's deadly wounds. A large chunk of his torso's right side was missing, as if a wild beast had torn the flesh away.

"It has been a couple of decades since we killed him," Ollie replied, his voice strained. "We're a lot stronger than we were back then. But we weren't a match for him then, and we aren't a match for him now." He watched his dear friend Cam hold off Redfall's attacks, even as chunks of his flesh flew with every blow. Fortunately, Cannibal Cam grew sturdier and stronger the angrier he gets.

Kiren looked at her husband, his big back and wide shoulders drenched in blood but still straight. Knowing his limits, she turned to her bestie, who kept dealing ranged damage to Redfall, trying to hinder him, but it didn't appear that effective. So, Kiren instructed, "Christina, we can't continue like this. I'm sorry, but I don't think we can win like this. Let's notch it up to Super-time."

"Fine," Christina agreed, glaring at Redfall begrudgingly. Then, seeing Ollie nod in agreement, Kiren called her husband back, "Cannibal, retreat."

Christina's two royal bodyguards engaged Redfall, creating an opportunity for Ollie to retreat. As the four friends gathered, Kiren kissed Cannibal Cam, summoning the original Cam back. Just as Kiren was about to update her husband on the battle, Christina, knowing her bodyguards couldn't hold Redfall back for long, hurried them, "Hurry, activate super-time in 3.. 2.. 1!"

With that, the four friends activated their super-time cards simultaneously. Soon, the world around them came to a halt. Instead of checking their frozen surroundings the four friends checked each other. Seeing everyone was safe and at the same wavelength, Ollie sighed, "Phew! I was worried. After all, it has been a long time since we entered super time together."

"Let's hurry and finish him off fast. I don't want us to waste too much of our lifespan on killing this scum for the second time," Christina said, taking out a hand mirror to check her facial features.

"Do we destroy or seal his soul?" Cam asked the group. After all, if Redfall could crawl out of the afterlife once, then he can do it again. He didn't want to repeat this all over again.

"Destroy, obviously. Though we don't have the resolve to kill all his descendants, the least we can do is destroy his soul so that he can't kill another one of those descendants so he can revive again. I don't know about you guys, but I don't have enough lifespan left to keep repeating this," Ollie honestly answered, knowing that unlike his friends he didn't have the self-control not to use the Super-Time card. It was really the reason why his friends looked younger than him and he looked a lot older than his age.

Their former allies, who helped them bring down Redfall the first time, wanted to erase his 'evil bloodline' from the card world, but this group stopped them. The Misfits didn't agree to killing innocent toddlers and children just because they were afraid Redfall would revive again. These four intervened and saved the innocent descendants of Demigod Redfall.

If not for them, Sarah and the other leaders of the Tyrant Sun Raven Guild would have never made it to the Sky Blossom City and long been killed by Redfall's enemies. This was the main reason why only these four misfits from the party that brought down Redfall showed up to confront him now, after he had retrieved his grimoire.

There were some who would have chosen to help them despite their past differences fearing Redfall's revenge but these four came on their own without informing anyone, believing they could kill Redfall, who had just revived with their new prowess.

"Ollie, killing is one thing, but extinguishing his entire existence is different. We don't have the right to do that. Let's just seal his soul away." Kiren disagreed, preferring to seal Redfall's soul over destroying it. She believed that once the soul deteriorated in the seal with time and returned to the River of Reincarnation, it wouldn't have the strength to revive itself using the blood memory rune.

Also, once a soul was recycled by the river of reincarnation, there was no telling what it could achieve in its new life. So, why resort to the extreme when they had more humane methods to help the soul close the Chapter called Redfall and start a new one.

"Just decide already! If I get a single wrinkle, you guys will never hear the end of it," Princess Christina yelled, abstaining from voting, her eyes glued to the mirror as she meticulously checked her skin.

Cam glanced at his wife before casting the deciding vote. "I'm sorry, babe, but I'm with Ollie on this one. We shouldn't take any chances with this scum. Ollie's right—we might not be around next time to stop him, and then all the atrocities he commits will be on us. We have to take care of this here and now, for the future generations."

"You don't have to participate in this," Ollie said, and with that, he stepped forward, prepared to erase Redfall from existence.

As Ollie neared Redfall, he hit Redfall with his strongest blow, preparing to catch Redfall's soul before it was forced to leave the physical plane and destroy it for good. It took him a couple of punches to finally manage to destroy Redfall's physical body. However, in the pile of blood and gore paused in air, Redfall's divinity anchoring his soul in the physical plane didn't show even a single scratch. It also appeared to very slowly trying to regenerate Redfall's body in the Super-time, proving just how strong and fast Redfall's regenerative capabilities were.

"Hybrid Divinity?" Ollie muttered, looking at Redfall's divinity, finally knowing why the latter was stronger than four of them combined despite being dead for the last couple decades.

Just as Ollie reached out to dig out the divinity from a pile of mashed flesh and bones, he observed the world suddenly turn red as he heard a loud chant, "Celestial Blood Fate Domain!"

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

Ollie, Kiren, Cam, and Christina were terrified to see the world turn red and hear another voice within the super time. However, to their horror, they were all suddenly forced out of the super-time and into the regular time.

Ollie hurriedly retreated next to his friends with the two clueless Western royal guards. Feeling as if they appeared to have skipped ahead a second or two in time, one of the royal guards couldn't help but ask, "What's going on?"

"I have no idea, just regroup," Ollie replied, as they returned to the group's side.

"Everyone, conserve your soul energy and rule power. We are in a rule domain of sorts that appears to be capable of cutting us off from the external soul energy and rule power. I believe that is why our Super-time cards were forcefully deactivated," Princess Christina hurriedly shared with the group, having surveyed their surroundings already.

Christina having heard the loud chant, and the surveyed the rule domain had already guessed what kind of rule domain they were in, but she didn't think it was possible because the rule domain that came to her mind was only ever heard of in the legends and myths — the Celestial Rule Domain.

"I really underestimated you guys," I admitted, gathering the attention of the misfits on me, as Lois and the restructured Redfall stood behind me in obedience. I finally discovered that there wasn't one of them who was Card Celestial's favored one but that all four of them were.

"Nah, it seems we have underestimated you, little buddy." Ollie straight up asked, "Are you a Card Demigod or a Card Master?"

"Realms, Ranks, and Power Levels are just a concept," I began, posing a question. "Did you know that in the Dark Realm, some races have younglings that possess demigod-rank prowess from birth?"

Knowing the misfits were strong, and having decided to recruit them, I tried to gauge if they knew about the Dark Realm itself, or if they were only familiar with the common stories about Devils and Demons circulating in the five regions and the empire.

The Super-time skill card they used was a peculiar one. It wasn't a time-related skill but a speed-related one. It made the misfits so fast that they existed on an entirely different timeline, one way faster than the original one. It was like they were living at the speed of microseconds when we could only speed up to milliseconds at our best.

I didn't even realize what was happening when they first activated the card. It was the Hive Spirit that saved Redfall today; otherwise, I would have lost a demigod realm calamity daughter gem, and I wouldn't have even known what happened.

As soon as Ollie's attack connected with Redfall, he triggered the Hive Spirit's safety protocols. Still, even with its super-fast processing speed, it took a moment for Hive Spirit to warn us and help me deploy the Celestial Blood Fate Domain in time.

"Are you saying you're a demon?" Ollie asked, feigning ignorance. Kiren immediately stepped forward to say, "Don't listen to him. You know what, just ignore him. But I thought this fight was just between us and Redfall."

Kiren was not interested in small talk. She brought the conversation back to the matter at hand. As the more she saw this so-called Southern Hope in action, her doubt that there was more than what met the eye about him strengthened.

"Yes, it was, and I only took action because you won. I can hand him over to you right away," I replied and then threatened, "But if you plan to live to see another day, I suggest you exchange your lives for his."

"Is that a threat?" Princess Christina asked, standing beside her bestie.

"Hahaha!" I laughed, seeing the misfits hadn't understood their current circumstances. Then, breaking off my laughter abruptly, I menacingly ordered, "Kneel!"

"Huh?" Princess Christina uttered in confusion, a little stumped by the boy's arrogance. But soon she found her body was kneeling down without her commanding it to. She tried hard to stop but found that she couldn't just fight it. It was as if she was strapped in her car's driving seat and forced to watch as a mysterious force drove it into the ditch. She looked around to find that her friends were also kneeling down before the boy against their wills.

"What is happening?"

"I can't control my body."

"It is moving on its own as if it has a will of its own."

"How is this even possible?"

"It's because of the rule domain, I believe it's no ordinary rule domain but the celestial rule domain from the legends and the myths."

"Celestial Rule Domain?"

"I heard of it. Wasn't it supposed to be just a myth?"

"Yes, but everything points to it."

"Are you sure, Your Highness? You are not just making stuff, are you?"

"Ollie, shut up if you don't have anything helpful to add."

"Your wish is my command, my love."

"Ollie, know the right time and place to joke around."

"Right time and place? Buddy, there is no right time and place that isn't right to pick up a beautiful woman. I will flirt with Kiren even if it's the last thing I do. Though I prefer making love to her to be the last thing I do."

"Motherfucker, I will kill you even if it's the last thing I do."

"Cannibal Cam has entered the dungeon!"

"Princess, stop! I risked my life to rile him up. Let him go berserk. Maybe he can break free of whatever is restraining our wills."

"Oh, that's a smart idea. Sorry, Cam, this is going to hurt: Kiren has left the dungeon!"

"Aarrgh!"

"Come on, huddy, you can do it! You can do it!"

"Let me give you a hand, buddy. Just imagine you return home after a rough night shift to find me and Kiren rolling under the sheets in your marital bed, naked. Yes, Kiren was having an affair with me behind your back all along."

"Why? Why?"

"She said it was because your sword is smaller than mine."

"Sword?"

"You know the stick between your legs."

"Stick?"

"Penis, motherfucker. Penis!"

"She said your penis is small and couldn't satisfy her, so she came to me."

"So, bad friend helping Kiren?"

"No, motherfucker, bad friend fucking Kiren!"

"Roarrrr!"

"That's it bubby, imagine it, come kick my head off, I'm right here!"

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

Looking at the misfits scared out of their wits and doing everything in their power or just the first dumb thought that came to them to break the mysterious force controlling their bodies against their will, Lois lost her patience for these fools and prepared to shut them up but I signaled her not to, wanting to see if Cannibal Cam could actually overcome his fate with anger alone.

Could emotions ever be strong enough to help one overcome fate?

Within the Celestial Blood Fate domain, I was basically omnipotent. I could control the fate of everything, especially beings with blood coursing through their bodies. What I had in my hands was a rough experiment that could approximately answer the question if mortals can overcome their fate with powerful emotions alone.

I observed Cannibal Cam monitoring his soul energy and soul pathways. However, I didn't dare to use my Soul Pupils or Celestial Vision to monitor his runes and divinity. With my unparalleled affinity and comprehension of rules, I feared I would comprehend the rules and rule meaning he was using just by perceiving the rule power and runes. I couldn't risk rule contamination.

Some would think I am too overpowered when it comes to my hybrid ego gem's synchronization rate, but I would like to think I am not overpowered enough. If I were truly overpowered, I could comprehend rules from any source without having to worry about rule contamination.

With all these variables, I lost my interest in this experiment knowing that it was too restrictive and not adequate enough, especially when I noticed that all the Rage Cannibal Cam gathered was taking a mental toll on him. Without the proper external supply of soul energy and rule power to support his natural soul energy and rule power recovery, he would soon become mentally exhausted, going to sleep, handing the control back to the original Cam...

"I'm sorry, guys. There isn't enough soul energy and rule power to power the cards that offset the Cannibal Cam's side effects."

"It's okay, honey. You gav—"

"This proves it. I love Kiran more than you."

"What?"

"What?"

"Care to explain, buddy?"

"Buddy, clearly, you don't love Kiren enough. Otherwise, you would push through fueled by your love for her instead of complaining about not having enough soul energy and rule power."

"I agree. You have a point there. But how does that prove that your love for Kiren is greater than mine?"

"Damn it, you truly are out of juice, aren't you? Otherwise, you would be babbling and screaming like a neanderthal not making a reasonable argument."

"So, what do we do now?"

"We can try pooling our soul energy to help one of us activate Super-time and break this celestial rule domain."

"That could work."

"Your Highness, you proved you are smarter than all of us combined once again."

"Since I proposed this idea. I will let you guys handle the rest."

"No, the Celestial Rule Domain is too strong for one of us. What we need now is brains, not brawn. Clearly, you are the only one who has knowledge about it. So, it has to be you."

"No way. It takes more lifespan to enter super-time alone than all of us entering together. I can't risk my natural beauty and resort to using cosmetic cards like those old whores from the capital."

"Christina, we don't have enough soul energy to enter super-time together. Besides, if we die here, what's the use of beauty?"

"No, I'm not going. I would rather die beautifully than live hideously."

"Princess, your priorities seem a bit twisted."

"I'm different from you guys. My funeral will be streamed to all five regions. I don't want people to scream in terror seeing my open casket."

"Then just have a closed-casket funeral."

"Knowing my siblings, they would take any opportunity to humiliate me."

"Girl, you might be prepared to die, but I am not. I haven't even experienced motherhood yet. Cam, after this, you are putting a baby in my oven no matter how many times we have to do it."

...

"Master, they seem to have completely forgotten about us," Lois said, glancing over the misfits as they brainstormed and argued aloud. What pissed Lois the most was that these fools were telling their plans out loud. Were they mocking her master, or were they really that stupid? She didn't know what to make of it.

"No, they would rather embrace death than exchange their lives for Redfall's," I corrected, impressed by the resolve of the misfits. They talked so much nonsense, but none brought up begging or exchanging for their lives. Not to mention the Western Princess's guards, these guys didn't say one word and let the princess decide their fates. Such discipline and loyalty, I can only expect from Field Marshal Lorn.

"Damn, they really hate you, Red. What did you do to them?" Lois asked Redfall. She was aware of the infamous Demigod Redfall's deeds and past, but seeing the Misfits' determinations she wondered if they might have personal scores to settle with him.

Redfall shook his head, preparing to answer. "Nothing actually. It all started with one little boy from the slums of Western Capital. His tears somehow set my demise in motion. I have killed and ruined more lives than I can remember, but that little twerp's tears snowballed into my downfall. Within weeks, my cult was reduced to ash. Within months, they hunted me down."

"Before they killed me, they made sure I knew that boy was the domino that started my downfall," he continued, a grim look on his face. "But that single irrational act on their part also gave me a chance to find sanctuary in the River of Reincarnation."

"How?" Lois asked, eager to hear how a crying boy could have brought down one of the most notorious demigods.

"Apparently, the Western Princess was on one of her secret outings in the slums of the Western Capital," Redfall explained. "That single crying boy caught her eye. His father had abandoned their family to join my cult. For some reason, among all the other miseries plaguing that godforsaken place, that one detail resonated with her."

He shook his head in disgust. "I suppose you can guess the rest. Honestly, I still cringe just thinking about it. That's how I died."

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"Quite," I willed aloud, turning the misfits dumb.

Unable to speak, their eyes almost popped out of their sockets in horror. Finally, they stopped arguing among themselves and gave me their undivided attention. However, I couldn't help wondering if these fools forgot that they could communicate mentally or through soul whispers. Soul Whisper wasn't everyone's cup of tea, but as demigods, communicating mentally should come naturally to them.

'Young man, if you want to kill us, then get to it. Stop playing with us!' Kiren mentally complained to me.

'Ah, I almost began to think that you guys couldn't communicate mentally,'

I remarked, eyeing Kiren.

'No, stop. You will wake up others in Cam's mind. Just speak normally. Trust me, you don't want to wake them up. The last time they woke up, they started the Way Beyond Massacre,' Kiren hurriedly warned, helping me understand why they didn't dare to communicate mentally.

However, the fact that they weren't even willing to awaken the 'Others' in Cam's mind even when they thought they could die made me curious about the 'Others' Kiren spoke of.

About a few decades ago, at the Way Beyond, an unknown entity descended from the sky and began to kill Card Apprentices and Supreme Beings indiscriminately. Making the Way Beyond Massacre the only incident in history when the Card Apprentice and Supreme Beings worked together to fight a common enemy.

It was announced that the unlikely alliance managed to kill this entity into oblivion and might be the first step in Card Apprentice and Supreme Beings living in harmony. However, according to Kiren, the entity wasn't dead and was in Cam John's mind. I couldn't help but wonder if the 'Others' in Cam were similar to Adriene's Trait: Inner Goddess.

No, the fake Goddess was leeching off Adriene's incredible soul, hiding from the Card World and the Myriad Realms, but Cam was a favored one and surrounded by favored ones. It was impossible for a foreign entity to hide in his mind without the Card Celestial knowing. Either the entity originated in Card World or Card Celestial knew about the foreign entity and chose to do nothing about it, these two possibilities were more likely.

"Unmute," I willed, allowing the Misfits to speak in the Celestial Blood Fate Domain.

Kiren looked at me in astonishment, and couldn't help but ask, "You believe me?"

"Yes. You four are the most idiotically honest group of people I met in a while. That's why I have another proposal," I said, ready to get me four of the hardest working and honest mules for next to nothing.

"Wow. I don't know whether I should take offense or thank you. Anyway, we are out of ideas here, so let's hear it," Kiren said, glaring at her bestie grudgingly. However, the latter rolled her eyes at the former, summoning her hand mirror to fix her hair.

"But first," I said, retrieving my celestial blood rule domain as a show of my sincerity. Honest and hardworking people were suckers for sincerity and respect. They will help even if it hurts their interests.

"Ah, finally!" Ollie cried out, an exaggerated sigh of relief leaving his lips. The misfits rose to their feet, their bodies eagerly absorbing every last bit of soul energy and rule power they could. After just a few minutes of being cut off, they had felt suffocated, as if they were suffering from withdrawal. As Card Apprentices, soul energy and rule power were as essential to them as the very air they breathed.

Putting the mirror away, Princess Christina locked eyes with me and signaled, "You can begin."

"Bitch, this is not your royal palace. Pull that shit again, and honest to God, I will skin that face of yours and infect the flesh underneath with the most resilient parasites the world has to offer. Good luck, regrowing your face again," Lois threatened, appearing right before Christina in a blink of an eye, so close that they could feel each other's warm breath on their skin.

"I'm sorry, old habit," Princess Christina calmly apologized, her friends were impressed by her calmness until the horror in her eyes gave her away.

"That's more like it," Lois uttered, appearing behind me.

"You folks look like good people who believe in second chances—" I began only to be interrupted by Christina, who cut-in, declaring, "I would rather die than let him live another second..."

Christina wanted to add more, but feeling Lois's glare on her, she trailed off. Shaking my head, I asked, "Do you guys have to be that extreme?"

I glanced at the misfits, my gaze stopping on Christina, who appeared to have a lot to say. But under Lois's glare, she didn't dare to speak up. So, I continued, "I know Redfall is guilty of a lot; I'm not here to defend him. I'm here to ask you to give him a second chance, to allow him to spend the remainder of his life trying to make up for his crimes."

"All I'm trying to say is, don't be in a hurry to kill him. Give him—no, give me a chance to prove that despite his past, Redfall can still contribute to society," I pleaded. "You wanted to join the Criminal Rehabilitation and Reintegration program, right? Well, you're hired. You will be responsible for Redfall. Are you still interested?"

I knew Kiren and Christina were skeptical of the Criminal Rehabilitation and Reintegration program, so I handed them the perfect excuse they were looking for to investigate the program without stepping on any feathers.

After all, the Southern Royal Family had shown its support to program by sending prisoners from the capital to participate in it. If they were to blatantly throw accusations and investigate, they would upset the political relations between the Southern and Western regions because of Princess Christina's origin.

Now, with a legitimate way to monitor Redfall and the program's results, it would be much harder for them to refuse me. Not to mention, joining the program was their idea to begin with.

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: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"I think we can give it a try. It will be good for my PR," Princess Christina suddenly remarked, feigning disinterest and avoiding Lois's eyes. Forgetting that she said she would rather die than let Redfall live another second. Also, a few minutes ago, she and Kiren, in chorus, announced they wanted to join my criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program.

"Princess, make up your mind already!" Orgy Ollie cried in dissatisfaction. Because in his mind, if they could make it out of here alive, he planned to visit the most expensive and fanciest brothel in all the Southern Region to celebrate and forget that they got beat by a kid in Card Master realm. The world no longer made sense to him.

"Don't rush me—" Christina exclaimed only to be interrupted by an even louder voice, Kiren cut-in screaming, "Everyone shut up."

When all the other voices went silent, Kiren locked eyes with me and asked, "Why or how do we trust you? What's stopping Redfall from using this as an opportunity to escape?"

"I can't tell you guys why and how you should trust me, but I will tell you this: if I want to harm you, none of you can stop me. And as far as Redfall is concerned, the question you should be asking is why he isn't trying to escape and willingly serving as my dog?" I replied in a deep voice, as my gaze slowly glanced over all four of the misfits and rested on Kiren.

"Yes, why is he docile towards you?" Cam asked, as the Redfall he knew was daring enough to challenge the Royal families, the Noble clans, and the central government all together. He cheated death, for god's sake. Yet, here he was, taking orders from a Card Master.

"Cameron John, you have your secrets, and I have my secrets. I don't want to sound arrogant, but if I were present during the Way Beyond Massacre, it wouldn't be a massacre. Heck, it wouldn't even be mentioned in the pages of our history," I said, as my primordial Soul Pupil peeked into his mind to find the 'Others' slumbering in it.

Staring into Cam's mind, I felt like I was staring into a dark bottomless well until a pair of glowing eyes stared back. They felt familiar. They belonged to Cannibal Cam. Under the intimidating gaze of my primordial soul pupils, Cannibal Cam retreated into the darkness and went back to sleep.

Ignoring him, I went deeper into the seemingly bottomless well to find out what else was hiding in here—

"Stop!" Cam's scream interrupted me before he desperately began to plead with me to stop, "I beg you, please stop."

Seeing her husband's state, Kiren hurriedly exclaimed, "We accept. Stop, you don't have to prove anything to us. I said we agree, goddamn it."

"This isn't right. I feel like I coerced you guys," I teased, as Kiren tried to persuade me, "No, no, we already planned to join your program. Now we get to see how the program will fare at the highest difficulty as Redfall undergoes the program."

"That's great, because I don't want to force you guys to do anything you don't want," I said, feigning concern. Though I wondered how these guys managed to survive so long and even manage to become card demigods, these guys were too easy.

The Misfits' thoughts could be read on their faces and through their actions. Fortunately, these guys met me instead of some random-ass demon merchant. It wouldn't find their honesty cute like I did, but disgusting. Anyway, I will make good use of them. Ah — to think the Card Celestial wanted me to help it recycle these four.

"Yeah," Kiren agreed with a nervous laugh while Ollie bluntly asked, "So, what now?" He couldn't wait to find a whorehouse.

"Redfall will lead you to Southern Capital. From there you can teleport to Sky Blossom City. Where, Redfall will introduce you to my other staff, who will help you guys settle in. Any problem?" I asked, despite knowing that these guys would rather get lost than follow Redfall.

"What about you? You aren't coming with us?" Princess Christina asked in doubt. Before I could answer her, Lois warned, "You guys now work for Master. You will address him as Boss or Master Wyatt. Any disrespect to our Master will not be tolerated and will be swiftly dealt with."

"Did we just join a cult?" Ollie joked, only to feel coldness on his throat. He had no idea when Lois appeared behind him and placed an icicle dagger on his throat, whispering, "You're lucky, our master is a generous man. Make sure this doesn't repeat, or I will."

"One last question. Can I make a quick stop at Southern Capital's red little district? I'm turned on right now," Ollie said, unable to resist his urges. Lois's cold glare and voice with her warm breath on the back of his neck, he was genuinely turned on. If not for their policy not to masturbate in the open, he would have started already.

"Why waste money? You wouldn't do anything anyway," Cam remarked, knowing that Ollie, despite his vulgar template, was actually a genuine virgin. He has gotten a few blow jobs and eaten a few pussies/asses, but never gone all the way. Cam believed that this was the root of Ollie's frustration, which led to him venting it verbally, giving birth to his vulgar personality.

"No, it's not a waste of money. It will help me temper my will," Ollie refuted without any shame. "But if you want to help me save money, you can ask Kir—"

Punch

"Aw... ah, ah!" Ollie cried in pain as Cam punched him on his nose, interrupting him from shaming Kiren to tease him.

"Good shot, buddy. I totally deserved it." Instead of complaining, Ollie took it like a champ. Proving that he was not only good at dishing it out, but taking it too.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"I suggest you wait until you reach Sky Blossom City. Our Slime Fairy Card Project can use someone with your enthusiasm and expertise," I suggested to Ollie, wondering if sex with a Slime Fairy would count as sex or masturbation?

"Slime Fairy card? If it's anything like the Dream Nymph card being sold in the central capital, I will pass," Ollie replied, showing little interest in the Slime Fairy card due to his bad experience with the Dream Nymph card line produced by Demigod Norley and being sold by Jill Norley.

The father and daughter pair were fast. I thought it would at least take them like a month or so, but they proved me wrong. They not only designed the card recipe from scratch, but also started its mass production, and also put the product on the market. All in a matter of weeks. And there were talks of him working on the Dream Nymph 2.0 card, promising to sell it at a discounted price to all the Dream Nymph card users. I guess Demigod Norley wasn't respected by the masters for no reason.

I just hope the father and daughter pair can expand to other four regions just as fast. With them paving the way for me. I can begin the sale of my Slime Fairy cards without any hiccups.

Yes, by then the market will be dominated by Dream Nymph cards, but I believe with the quality of my Slime Fairy cards and a little help from competitive pricing, it wouldn't be long before my cards start to dominating the market in all five regions.

After all, when it comes to quality mass-produced cards, no one can outdo me. My success with the VR-Slime cards was the best example of this. With Dalie, the former Celestial array spirit and current array celestial, by my side, I can produce these cards at a lot cheaper cost. Devil Marchant Code's price to arrange a custom SSS-rank array was within reasonable rates, but free and quality labor will always beat cheap and quality labor.

"You have used the Dream Nymph card, that's better. This way you can try our product and give us an honest review and comparison. So, we can improve it. Unless you are not interested," I offered, after all, cultured card apprentices like Ollie were my target group.

"Of course I am interested. I will do my best to help you create the best mass-produced adult cards on the market for generations to come," Ollie agreed without hesitation, announcing his new goal. "You know, you are my kind of boss. Back when I was still young and hungry, I always imagined that if I ever got a chance to earn an honest living,

I should work under a cool boss like you. Boss Wyatt, thank you for this once in a lifetime opportunity. I'd rather die than let you down!"

"I have no idea why you guys are so eager to die, but that won't be necessary. Just give your best and trust the rest to me and the other staff," I informed awkwardly, because I didn't think Ollie would grow so sincere and emotional over something so simple.

I mean, it was just a bunch of humanoid slime cards that can take any female form their user imagines and simulate them to climax with ultimate pleasure, figuring out their most intimate preferences. He was acting like we were going to solve the world hunger or peace problem.

"Boss, I have a few unused Dream Nymph cards on me. Here, take them. It will help you figure out our competition," Ollie said, taking out four Dream Nymph cards. Seeing they were all the same Dream Nymph cards but with different aesthetics like shape, size, color, hair, dress, etc. I just took one and said, "Thanks, one is enough."

Under Ollie's eager eyes and the rest of the Misfits' disgusted gaze, I used my primordial soul pupils to uncover the secrets of the Dream Nymph. Going through it, I finally knew why Demigod Norley was able to create and release these cards on the market so quickly.

Turns out the so-called Dream Nymph adult cards were actually modified succubus summon cards. The succubus monster core was modified to summon a succubus monster in the form of a beautiful human female with the monster's seduction abilities fully intact. These weren't even the renowned Succubus demons from the Dark Realm but the common trash succubus monsters found in the dungeons.

If the card apprentices wanted to fuck monsters, they would go fuck one for free in the privacy of the dungeons. Not pay a hefty price to buy a separate card for it. Also, these so-called Dream nymphs were actually lifelike energy bodies. In a way similar to specters and wraiths.

At least these specters and wraiths were considered undead; these Dream Nymphs however were inanimate. Meaning, fucking them wouldn't be considered as sex but masturbation. This was nothing like what they advertised, making this a scam.

I was surprised that a great card crafter like Demigod Norley, who took pride in his work, would be involved in a card scam. The demigod Norley I met and knew wouldn't do something like this, but his greedy daughter would. This card had Jill Norley written all over it. That woman would buy panties in bulk and spray them with her piss to sell them online if it meant funding her research and projects. So, it wouldn't come as a surprise to me that Jill stole one of her father's rejected card recipes to make a shit ton of quick buck.

I should have known she was behind this the moment I saw that the Dream Nymph Cards didn't have a single extra feature. If you wanted a different hairstyle or color, you had to buy a new card entirely.

With no competition on the market whatsoever, this scheme worked brilliantly. Ollie alone had bought a dozen of these cards and already used eight of them. I couldn't imagine how much money that little money grubber had amassed by now. Also, as the daughter of one of the founding demigods of the current government, she didn't have to worry about the consequences for scamming the people of the central region. No wonder nepobabies attract so much hate from the public.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"Here," I returned Ollie's Yin Nymph card to him, adding, "Our Slime Fairy card is way, way better than this one. You are going to get addicted to it considering that you bought a dozen of these shitty cards."

It wasn't often I judged a card, out of respect for the card creator. But the Yin Nymph Card deserved all the hate. It was a trash card capitalizing on a hole in the market. I can't wait to see the outrage when people realize what they were actually buying.

"Boss, I only bought a dozen of these to support the hostess entertaining that night," Ollie hurriedly explained, a little embarrassed as the Yin Nymph card made it to the top five in the worst place he thrust his meat stick in.

"What do you mean?" I asked in confusion and also a little curious about how Jill was managing to sell these trash cards in dozens.

Yes, male card apprentices were hornier than the mortal male, but that didn't mean they would just mindlessly rub against anything with curves and a hole.

"You can't buy these cards in a regular card shop or malls. One could only get them in the red-light district. The courtesan there sold these cards, modeled after themselves, to their patrons. The dozen I brought were all sold to me by my favorite courtesan.

I only wanted to buy one, but I ended up with a dozen when I heard her brag that one of her guests bought half a dozen of her Yin Nymph cards and how much they liked to spoil her. As a cultured man, I couldn't just hear that and do nothing. I had to show her that I was her number one patron. So, I bought a dozen of her cards.

Besides, these twelve cards were worth it. Though they are of the same courtesan, each of these is an iteration of her as a soldier, teacher, maid, etc. Also, they plan to help the courtesan setup a dedicated shop on the grimoire network to sell their Yin Nymph cards across the five regions," Ollie explained how he didn't plan on buying these Yin Nymph cards, but ended up buying a dozen of them just to show his favorite courtesan that he spoiled her the most.

"Wait," Lois said, her confusion evident. "How does you buying those filthy cards help her? Won't the money just go to the card's creators?" After all, he reasoned, they were courtesans, not card crafters. At most, all they could get was a mere commission.

"Apparently, they get a 40 percent commission on the profits of each card they sell. Top sellers can also get up to 60 percent commissions of their total sales," Ollie enthusiastically answered, seeing his new colleague of all people show interest in one of his interests. Was she also a cultured card apprentice like him? That wouldn't be surprising considering their boss was planning to enter the adult card market.

"40 to 60 percent commission per sale! That's crazy. Since when have the card creators gotten so generous toward their salespeople? This is just crazy. Back in my day, it was hard to get a 4 to 6 percent commission even on bulk sales. I can't believe I'm envious of courtesans now," Cam exclaimed, listening to the very generous revenue-sharing scheme of the Yin Nymph card. "Wait! Higher sales commissions also meant a higher price tag. How much did you spend on those cards, Ollie?"

"Money is not an object." Ollie tried to brush off Cam's question, only to hear Princess Christina demand, "Is it? Then, I would like all the money I lent to you over the years returned with a generous interest rate."

"Your Highness, I was just bragging. You know better than to take my words seriously," Ollie begged for mercy, knowing that he wouldn't be able to return the principal amount even if he sold himself, let alone giving her a generous interest.

Meanwhile, I could not help but nod my head, impressed by Jill's genius business model with a generous revenue sharing plan. It reminded me of the Only fans back on Earth. By getting the courtesans to sell her Yin Nymph cards, she not only managed to jump all the social hurdles that stopped me from introducing my Fairy cards into the market but also managed to get numerous proven beautiful models to design her Yin Nymph cards after, for no cost.

What impressed me the most was that her sales strategy allowed her to directly connect and sell to her target customer base. It was not like I hadn't thought about using the

courtesan's selling my fairy slime cards. I was already using them to help us create an artificial will with various personality types capable of learning its users' preferences and darkest fantasies to satisfy them, both physically and emotionally, with a collection of specialized techniques without any judgement. Ultimately, giving them the physical pleasure and emotional pleasure they sought in a partner.

It was just that courtesans were the royal families' and the central government's, quote unquote, information dealers. They were their eyes and ears in each of their cities' underworlds. If I wanted to use them, I would have to involve the royal families and the government in my venture.

Even if I were willing to give the royal families and the government a cut, it would make it difficult for me to offer a high revenue-share to the courtesans like Jill did. Because, unlike Jill's father, who was one of the founding demigods of the five regions, my father was an orphan card grandmaster. I couldn't just do as I pleased in the Southern region, like Jill did in the central region. Not to mention all five regions.

Now I was beginning to truly understand the hate the general public felt toward the nepobabies. This wouldn't bother me this much if Jill and her father hadn't stolen the idea of selling adult cards from me.

Shaking my head, I turned to Ollie and asked, "Ollie, can you get your courtesan friend to send over a copy of the contract she signed to sell her Yin Nymph Cards along with any other documents she was asked to sign?"

"Yes. If she resists, I will just buy another dozen of her Yin Cards," Ollie said as he began to contact his favorite courtesan in all of Central Capital. "Boss, our company will compensate me for this, right?"

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

Listening to Ollie, I couldn't help but raise my brows. This guy was suspiciously more enthusiastic about our arrangement than me. It seemed that one of the four honest mules I fooled into working for me wasn't as honest as I thought.

"Yes. Just share the bill and reason for expenditure with one of the staff in the accounts section, they will handle it," I agreed, willing to accommodate Ollie as long as his willfulness was limited to benefits a company should be providing to its employees. "Don't sweat the details. One of our staff will soon reach out to each of you, or if you don't mind, Redfall can help you guys."

"Wait, we are getting paid?" Cam asked in shock.

"Yes, plus benefits and incentives. I know better than not to pay a man for his job and occasionally spoil my star employees," I said with a gentle smile, as it finally dawned on the misfits what they had truly signed for.

"I only wanted to join your criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program. I never applied or agreed to a job," Princess Christina immediately protested. If her people learned that she was working under the Southern Hope, her life was over. She wouldn't be able to show her face in the Western Region. And her sinister siblings... Oh, fuck, her Royal Father — he might send assassins to assassinate her and wipe the stain on his royal lineage.

"There are only two ways for you to join the criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program: as a criminal or as a staff. Unless you are guilty of a serious crime and seeking a second chance, you can only join it as one of the staff," I said, shaking my head. Only to hear Kiren to her friend's rescue, asking, "What about volunteers?"

"Yes, I want to join as a volunteer," Christina cried even before I answered Kiren.

"No. I take my program too seriously to use volunteers. Besides, only scammers use volunteers. Mine is a genuine program dedicated to helping society be more empathetic and responsible for its ugly half, the criminal half. Yes, most of these criminals deserve their sentence but some of them were victims of our society themselves. Also, if I don't pay you enough, how can I expect you guys to give it your all? It's a no-brainer," I preached with a gentle demeanor, but in my mind I grinned widely, knowing I had sunk my claws so deep into them that no matter how hard they struggled they couldn't escape.

"Don't even think about backing out. We have a verbal agreement," Lois coldly said, eyeing fidgeting Princess Christina, who looked at bestie in distress seeking help.

Assuring her bestie that she got this with firm eyes, Kiren turned to me, demanding, "Fine, if we are getting paid, we need to be paid fairly, maybe a little extra." Soon, with a smirk she asked, "But are you sure your program's budget is big enough to hire four capable demigods?"

"Have you guys been living under a rock?" Lois asked the misfits, as these guys did not seem to understand who they were dealing with despite the reverence shown by the princess's bodyguards when they introduced her boss to them.

"Kind of. We were in seclusion until the Princess called, saying Redfall might have been resurrected. I wouldn't even have known that our five regions were now open-minded enough to sell adult cards if not for the courtesan trying to sell her cards to me," Ollie replied, while simultaneously texting with his favorite courtesan and mentally listening to Christina's bodyguards informed them except Cam, that, *'Dalton Wyatt is believed to be the unofficial richest card apprentice in the five regions.'*

Their eyes widened in shock. They couldn't fathom how a teenage card apprentice could be hailed as the richest card apprentice in the five regions. They couldn't help but wonder if the boy had a mysterious background.

For the first time, it occurred to the misfits that they should investigate the boy who was sheltering Redfall. Until now, they had been so focused on their target that they hadn't considered the person protecting him. It was as if they only used their brains for decoration, resorting to critical thinking only when they were absolutely forced to.

I was finally beginning to understand why there was hardly any mention of these four in Clown Mask's future vision. The Card Celestial, obviously, must have had someone else recycle their dumbasses outside of the canon. Otherwise, they should have made a splash in the future vision, especially with the entities hiding in Cameron John's mind.

"Again, one of our staff will contact you guys to negotiate your salary. I'm sure you guys will not spare any effort to help our organization prosper," I said with a subtle grin, not wanting to provoke the misfits. It was hard to tell how they would react if I began to celebrate conning them openly.

"Organization? We only signed for the criminal reintegration and rehabilitation program," Kiren suspiciously corrected me. While I feigned an embarrassed smile, and brushed it off saying, "Tomayto, tomahto. It's all the same"

Just as Kiren wanted to demand a clarification, Ollie beat her to it, reporting, "Boss, I have shared the contracts and documents the courtesan signed with the Yin Nymph card executives with your grimoire."

"Great," I beamed, summoning my grimoire to go through the documents.

However, as I read the contracts and documents the courtesans had signed, my smile vanished. I realized that Jill's true goal wasn't to make quick money but to acquire the courtesans' personality rights, which included their physical looks, features, voice, and speech. She was ensuring they could never work for her competitors, thereby guaranteeing that no competition to her business would ever appear for the foreseeable future. No wonder her revenue-sharing plan was so lucrative. I should have known this little money-grubber would never be so generous unless she was up to something devious. She was playing the long game.

"Fuck!" I roared, understanding that Jill had just declared war in the adult card market while no one even knew about it. Not many yet knew the adult card market was possible, let alone know how big the adult card market could grow. By the time they knew it, it would be too late as Jill Norley would have already conquered and monopolized the adult card market.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"Master, who do I kill?" Lois asked in concern, knowing that her master wouldn't easily lose his calm.

The misfits stared at Lois, bewildered and speechless at her reaction to their boss's outburst. Recovering from her shock, Kiren asked, "Boss, is she also in the criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program? If not, I suggest we add her."

"Nah, my schedule is full for the foreseeable future. Besides, my time is worth too much to waste it on helping dregs of the society get their lives together," Lois answered, misunderstanding that Kiren wanted her to join the program as a staff.

"..." the Misfits just nodded and smiled, not bothering to correct Lois's misunderstanding, knowing her bad temper.

Meanwhile, my mind was preoccupied with Jill and her Yin Nymph cards. Instead of helping remove the legal hurdles to selling adult cards in the five regions to sell her subpar cards like I had hoped for, it now appears that she was actually going to monopolize the entire adult card market using her advantage of being first in the adult card market.

For a moment, Jill's action had me consider whether I should release my Fairy Slime cards on the market way ahead of the time than I previously planned on. Especially with her buying the personality rights of every courtesan in the Central Region.

I'm sure Jill wasn't done here and planned to do the same in the other regions. However, they were not her home turf and should be facing similar challenges I was. However, if she promised to share enough profits with them, the four royal families will not only green-light her adult card sales but also actively help her.

Considering the steep price at which she was selling the Yin Nymph cards, she would have enough left to cover her investment and leave a good profit for herself after sharing most of the profits with the royal families and the courtesans.

If a money grubber like Jill had no problem sharing most of the profits with royal families and the courtesan to get the right to the courtesan's personality right, why could I not do the same? That was because Jill and I might be trying to monopolize the same market, but we were taking totally opposite routes.

I was trying to monopolize the adult card market by mass-producing quality adult cards and selling them at a reasonable price. However, Jill was trying to monopolize the adult card market by gaining sole control of one of the most important ingredients in creating quality adult cards, the personality rights of beautiful women and men who didn't mind giving up their intimate privacy for a lot of money.

Why were the personality rights of courtesans important?

It was because the human heart and mind were fickle. No matter how tasty a certain dish was, they couldn't eat it for every meal; they would grow bored with it in a few days, forget months or years.

Card apprentices were human, and similar to humans, they preferred having choices in the cards they equipped. For example, take the fireball skill card. It alone had about 709 iterations of it, and 57 of them were still actively being sold in the market.

The same was true for the adult cards. At first, people would be excited about it as it was the new thing on the market. But once their hype was over, they would see it for what it was, and return to their old routine.

Even the courtesan knew this. That was why they not only did not protest the adult cards, worrying it would affect their business. Instead, they were selling the adult cards to their loyal guests. Because they knew that a card could never be the same as the real deal, no matter how lifelike they got with time.

Their confidence didn't stem from ignorance but from millennia of history and experience. Many of the courtesans' guests were capable people who were surely aware that the city's brothels served as intelligence hubs for the royal families and the central government.

Yet, despite the risks, they continued to visit them. Whether out of confidence in their own abilities or a lack of self-control, they rolled the dice on their lives, ultimately influenced by the unforgettable skills of these courtesans. It played a detrimental role in swaying their will and decisions.

It was a common belief among the card apprentices that a skilled courtesan could awaken impure thoughts in a rock and force it to speak. It wasn't literally possible, but it

perfectly summed up just how proficient the courtesans were in the art of seduction and temptation.

To borrow the wise words of our predecessors, *'No matter how beautiful one is on the outside, if they're ugly on the inside, that inner ugliness will eventually corrupt their outward beauty.'*

This was true for the adult cards too. No matter how beautiful and lifelike a card creator made one, it would still be incomplete without a proper soul.

This was where the courtesans and their personality rights came in. Through their perfected skills—from their looks and voice to their shyness and teasing—they could create a beautiful soul for the adult card. These techniques had been passed down and refined among the courtesans for millennia.

Their skills were so good they could effortlessly get their on guard guests to spill their darkest secrets, like master lock pickers unlocking any vault. Jill's goal was to index and control these courtesans' identity and skills. In the future, she would be able to charge a hefty fee to any card apprentice who wanted to use them to create an adult card.

Her plan was a perfect example of what Microsoft, Android, and Apple had achieved back on Earth—a complete OS monopoly over pc and smartphone market.

How could Jill gain total control over the skills of the courtesans if they were passed down for millennia and practiced by millions of courtesans across the five regions? Even if she manages to get the personality rights from all courtesans in the world, with time won't new courtesans replace the old ones? Won't these new courtesans break Jill's monopoly?

Jill would buy or destroy anyone who threatens her monopoly using the money she amassed through her decades-long monopoly. Just like the trillion-dollar companies back on Earth. In the sort of market she had chosen, there wasn't actually much morality and ethics to speak of, so money would easily solve her problems and help maintain her monopoly for a long time. Unfortunately for her, her competition was me. If she wants a war, I will give her one.

Sorting out my thoughts, I ignored the arguing Misfits and uttered aloud, "Guys, prepare yourselves, we are going to war."

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

"War?" Kiren exclaimed, her shock evident. This was not the kind of thing someone sponsoring a criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program should be talking about. With every word from her young boss, Kiren's suspicions grew. She was no longer on the fence; she was committed to using this opportunity to work for him to investigate his organization thoroughly.

"Boss, did I hear you right? Are we truly going to war?" Ollie asked, trying hard to hide his disappointment, feeling his plans of visiting various brothels in the five regions under the guise of research using their organization's money were slowly fleeing away.

"I only signed up to work for you. Not go fight your war...B-boss," Princess Christina immediately protested but, feeling Lois's threatening glare on her, she toned down.

"By war I meant — a market share war. Adult card market share war between our yet to be launched Slime Fairy cards and the recently popular Yin Nymph cards. But it's good to know where your priorities lie. Just for that, you can forget about getting the hefty joining bonus I was planning to give you guys," I clarified after I slowly observed the reaction of each Misfit. None of their reactions came as a surprise to me. They responded just as I guessed, especially Cameron John. He was a total whipped husband. He would follow Kiren to his death without question.

"Joining bonus? What's that?" Kiren asked her young boss, even though the words were self-explanatory, as she found it hard to believe that someone would get paid a hefty bonus just for starting a job. Such generosity from a boss, and such entitlement from an employee, was simply unbelievable.

"Forget it," I remarked, knowing that they will realize what they missed out on when they interact with other staff in my organization. Even though delayed, the pain would definitely follow.

"How are we supposed to go about that? That too on such short notice?" Princess Christina asked, her tone showing just how unreasonable she found the request. Despite her disgust for the 'filthy adult cards,' she was determined to investigate the so-called Southern Hope. Considering the lengths he was going for Redfall, he was either a saint or a devil pretending to be one. She was determined to solve the mystery, and this was her chance. So, she played along.

"Finally, one of you is showing initiative," I commended Christina while glancing at the Misfits. Then, resting my gaze on the princess, I began, "I will tell you how after I return

from my little errand in the central academic city. Until then, you guys can guard our headquarters in Sky Blossom City parallelly participate in the criminal rehabilitation and reintegration program."

Honestly, there were lots of ways to disrupt Jill's plan. One of them, even a regular card apprentice could think of, was none other than an antitrust action. This was one of the crude ways. As it could take a long and tiresome legal battle, and had chances of Jill lobbying the judges, politicians, and other officials to get her way.

I was speaking from experience, because some politicians planned an antitrust action against my VR-slime card and VR-universe. To them, I bluntly replied that if they don't trust my stuff, they can stop using them instead of trying to make up reasons to steal them from me.

My response riled them, but they could do nothing about it unless they plan to tell the citizens of the five regions to stop equipping VR-slime cards. Actually, some of them did try that, yet my VR-universe only saw an increase in its users, both old and new.

But the same could not be applied to the Slime Fairy cards, as the ultimate authority over the adult card market would still lie in the hands of the central government and the four royal families, unless I planned to give them away for free like I did in the case of the VR-Slime cards. Otherwise, it would have be impossible for me to sell VR-Slime cards so quickly the traditional way and let the VR-universe get deeply ingrained in the current society.

I couldn't market the Slime fairy card the same as the VR-Slime cards. Though I lost money on VR-Slime cards, I made ten times that in VR-Universe. The same wouldn't be applicable to the Slime Fairy card.

Antitrust action was one of the reasons I didn't take the route Jill was taking to monopolize the adult card market. With the VR-universe at my disposal, I could easily achieve what she was trying to, but it was more trouble than it was worth. Besides, it undermined the spirit of card creation.

With strict card recipe copyright rules had already slowed innovation in card creation field. Many card creationists were aware of this, but they couldn't do anything about it as most of these card recipe copyrights were held by the top ten universities and the royal families. Everyone knew better than to harm the interests of the top ten universities and the royal families.

My Slime Fairy card was not only opening a new card market but also setting a bar for the adult cards. Such that someone like Jill cannot monopolize the market and bring innovation to a stunting halt. By the time the card creationists caught up to the level of my Slime Fairy Cards, I could afford to give up on the profits from the adult card market, making room for the new generation, which would be stronger and better than all the

previous generations. Unlike the current generation, which was still trying to get out of its predecessor's shadow.

When it comes to card creation, I thought one of the camping ground rules was very appropriate here, the one that asked the campers to leave the camping ground cleaner than when they arrived. Such that those after them could also enjoy it.

For someone who fancied himself as the greatest card creationist, I believed my cards shouldn't just change the present but pave the way for a better future. Of course, I want to be compensated appropriately for it too.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern Way Beyond, SSS-rank Titan Forest Field Dungeon.

Despite knowing various ways to put an end to Jill's adult card market monopoly dreams, I didn't decisively order the Misfits to take action against her despite them having the strength and status to get it done without dropping my name. Since they were new members, no one would connect them to me.

I held back because before going to war with Jill I wanted to give her a chance to back out. For old times' sake. She has been a good friend to me and also the first/only woman I bedded in this life. She has time and gain gone out of her way to help me on many occasions. Her informing me about Morningstar University and the central government conspiring to kidnap me during my college interview in the Southern Capital city was just one of them.

Jill Norley was greedy but also a very loyal friend. She had proven it time and time again. I didn't want to lose her friendship over this. That was why I didn't want to take any action against her until I talked to her. I know she likes to keep business and friendship apart, but I believed together we could find a common ground here.

Basically, I was going to strong-arm her into following my arrangements. If she doesn't appreciate it, then it's too bad for her. The world was not fair. Not everyone got what they wanted. Besides, she doesn't get to talk about what's fair considering she stole my idea and was using it without asking my opinion.

"Leave it to us, boss. We will protect the Sky Blossom city as if it were our native city," Kiren enthusiastically assured her young boss, seeing him give her the perfect reason to stick her nose in all of his business in the Sky Blossom City and investigate them. Under the guise of protecting the city, she planned to clarify her doubts and misgivings about her new boss.

"Love your enthusiasm. If guys do an exemplary job, maybe I might change my mind about your joining bonus," I said, as I never planned to take away their joining bonus, just ask the accounts department to delay it by a month or two.

Hey, I liked to take good care of my things, sue me.

Soon we parted ways. Redfall led the Misfits to the Southern Capital while I and Lois headed towards the Central Region. I could have used the Southern Royal Palace's teleportation array. It would have been faster, but I didn't want to be caught unprepared on the other side at Morningstar University. The palace not only shared its teleportation logs with the destination but sought permission from them for teleportation.

I didn't want my arrival to be a matter of record. After all, it would be like an assassin giving a heads up to the target of their assassination. Now that would simply be dumb on my part. I was confident about my strength, but I also didn't dare to underestimate Morningstar University. These people have a very long and rich heritage, especially their time-rule vestige.

I had a very strong resistance to the time-rule of the myriad realms because of my otherworldly soul, but I didn't want to test its limit, at least not yet. Especially after Redfall's defeat at the hands of the Misfits. There might be a meaning of a true rule that my otherworldly soul wasn't resistant to.

Or there could be other eye-opening rules and skill cards like the Super-time card used by the Misfits. Not to mention the collection of unique physiques, traits, and innate cards the university had gathered over the millennia. I couldn't stress enough how idiotic underestimating Morningstar University could be. That was why I completed my frosling corpse puppet spirit cards before heading over to Morningstar University.

I could have used the Devil Merchant Code or Henricks to take me to the Central Academic City. I planned to do exactly that once I helped Lois create and arrange evidence to back up her story about escaping the imprisonment of the Southern Royal family because her physique upgraded, helping her to break through to Card demigod realm, allowing her to escape the peculiar SSS-rank space isolation array that Southern Royal family used to imprison her.

It not only cut her off from the grimoire network but separated her from the original space by hundreds of thousands of miles, making it hard for her to navigate her way back to the original space even by entering the spiritual plane.

Afraid of getting lost in the spiritual plane, she could only give up. Until her physique 'right eye of the card world' upgraded to 'deliberation eye' helping her to break through to Card Demigod realm, giving her more confidence in navigating the spiritual plane to escape the array and appear outside of it in the physical plane.

"Are you ready?" I asked Lois as we arrived at the border of the central region. We specifically selected this particular border military base on the edge of the central region because it had a hideout frequently used by the Master's loyal minions.

If Lois were actually on the run from the Southern Royal Family, this hideout would be both the closest secret location to the southern region and the most optimal place for her to report to her masters and seek help.

Lois gaining back the Masters' trust was easier said than done. However, her chance had increased after her 'right eye of the card world' physique upgraded to 'deliberation eye.' It made her story a little believable. Still, the odds were against her.

Lois nodded resolutely, eyeing the military base and the secret hideout within it. Knowing the general in charge of this particular military base was most likely a lapdog of the Masters. If she managed to convince him that she was on the run from the Southern Royal family's forces, then her odds would drastically increase.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central-Southern Region Corridor, Central Region, Base Gecko

"General Maden, high-level soul energy and rule power disturbance has been recorded across the wire." In a hurry, the deputy general rushed into the base's general's cabin, skipping all formalities and protocols.

"What's the fuss? Those Southern hicks love to play in mud. It could be just that," the General nonchalantly said as he continued to practice his martial arts in the privacy of his cabin.

"I'm afraid this time that's not the case. Our scouts reported that one of our Demigod-realm spies is being chased by a Southern Demigod," the deputy general informed while sharing the reports he received from the scouts with the General's grimoire.

Maden stopped practicing martial arts and summoned his grimoire while asking, "Was their identity confirmed?"

"Yes. Though we cannot connect to the latter's grimoire as the pursuer from the south appears to be blocking all modes of communication around them, our scouts were able to get a read on the soul energy signature of the latter. I ran through the database and found a match, but my privilege level wasn't enough to open the dossier linked to it. So, I hurried over—" the deputy general explained as the general went through the report and cut-in, confirming, "She is one of us."

"It's special agent Lois Forger. She had gone M.I.A during a mission in the Southern Region and was believed to be captured by the Southerners. It seems she managed to escape," General Maden said as he got dressed in his uniform and headed out of his cabin while the deputy followed, waiting for his orders.

"Advise all units about the friendly asset returning to base and to take a position in the designated corridor [GRID] to [GRID]. Leave no position unmanned and don't engage until I say so," General Maden commanded his deputy as they flew to the sky to get a view of the asset from a vantage point.

"Yes, sir," the deputy general agreed, his voice clipped and precise. "Should I arrange a designated recovery team to intercept the hostile at the border and secure the target?"

"Not unless you want to send them to their deaths. Look closely. Don't you recognize who the hostile demigod pursuing our asset is?" General Maden said, pinching the middle of his brows as he summoned his grimoire, calling for backup.

"Is that — no way! She is doomed. I will put in a request to erase all her records in our database following the protocols," the deputy general was thunderstruck seeing the silhouette donning back from head to toe, pursuing their agent, who keeps vanishing and appearing out of thin air, as if using short distance teleportation to escape her pursuer's devastating attacks.

"No. Contact Base Ursus and inform them: the demigod being pursued is our agent. They are to provide immediate assistance. If they refuse, tell our soldiers to cross the border and apply pressure. Hurry, it doesn't appear she can hold on much longer," General Maden ordered his deputy general, ensuring adequate backup was en route and would reach them ASAP.

"Huh?" The deputy general was confused by the general's orders.

In a dire scenario like the current one, where there was no hope of recovering the asset, they would do everything to erase and deny any connection to the asset to avoid backlash, but here the general asked them to do the exact opposite of that.

"Right away, sir!" the deputy general agreed after a moment of confusion, noticing that agent Lois's pursuer was dressed in black from head to toe as if they were trying to hide their identity. He immediately understood that things were clearly more complicated than they appeared on the surface.

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Location: Southern-Central Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

"What the heck were our men doing? How could you meatheads let two rogue demigods get so close to my base? And how dare they stir up a ruckus? Do they take me for a joke?" General Welshman screamed at his deputies as he went through the report.

Usually, in an incident like this, demigod soldiers would immediately take action and detain the two unknown demigods. However, they all received a 'do not engage' command on their grimoires through the base's secure network.

Ultimately, the clueless deputies sought their general for clarification before taking action. The general too had no clue and was contemplating if he should contact the field marshal about this. However, he didn't dare to go through with it without having all the facts.

"Sir, do you think the snobs from the central region are up to their tricks again?" one of the deputy generals asked, causing Welshman to frown but then shaking his head he said, "If they could hack our secure network they wouldn't waste it here and now. It is not them."

General Welshman and the deputy general flew to the sky, and from a vantage point monitored the two rogue demigods. One appeared to be desperately trying to cross the border while the other seemed to be resolute in stopping the former even if it meant killing her.

"Sir, don't the martial arts of the silhouette in black seem familiar?" the deputy general pointed out, causing others to focus on the Martial arts of the demigod in black. Soon, General Welshman exclaimed, "That's Field Marshal Lorn."

"Why is she dressed in black from head to toe like an assassin—" one of the deputies blurted, but soon he closed his mouth, understanding something can only be thought but not said out loud. Clearly, something that would require the Field Marshal to hide her identity was above their pay grade.

"General, Base Gecko just contacted us claiming the card demigod who was trying to cross the border as their own and are requesting us to assist the card demigod. What do we do?" the deputy general reported as soon as he was updated about it by his men.

"Pretend the message was lost—that we never got it. Advise all units to take positions and run interference just in case their soldiers are stupid enough to cross the border."

The general issued the orders with perfect calm. His confidence stemmed from knowing his side had Field Marshal Lorn, one of the top ten strongest in the Card World. If things escalated, they would finally get the chance they had been looking for: a chance to give the snobs from central a bloody nose.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central-Southern Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

"Master, both the bases have mobilized their soldiers to their posts. It seems they bought it," Lois communicated with her master through the Hive Spirit. She desperately escaped the Field Marshal's attacks by jumping between planes, all while feigning mortal wounds and the exhaustion of a person at the end of her rope.

Thanks to the Hive Spirit's assistance, she was able to perform this act perfectly, paying attention to her escape and her performance simultaneously.

'Yes. Let us kick it up a notch, shall we? You ready, this is going to hurt,' I warned Lois as I decided to get serious. I wanted to make General Maden desperate enough to cross the border and come to rescue Lois himself instead of waiting for the reinforcement as I wanted to kill as many lapdogs of the Masters as possible using Lois as bait.

Why?

I was currently disguised as Field Marshal Lorn. It wouldn't befit her reputation as one of the top ten strongest if she not only failed to detain Agent Lois but also failed to stop those who came to her rescue. Such a failure would certainly look suspicious. After all, the Field Marshal was not only a Martial Sage but also an very skilled in spatial rules, not to mention her unparalleled Bloodline and Eyes.

Why disguise myself as Field Marshal Lorn? Believe me, I wouldn't have if there were any other choice. For Lois's story to be believable, her miraculous escape from the Southern Royal Family needed to be backed up by a tangible, high-profile pursuit.

The Masters would definitely investigate her story, no matter how convincing it seemed. After all, they'd stayed hidden in the central government's shadows for millennia because of such caution. Therefore, impersonating just anyone wouldn't be enough. It had to be Field Marshal Lorn, and disguising anyone else was out of the question as one person cannot be in two places at once.

My plan was clear: I would impersonate Field Marshal Lorn herself, as she was the only one in the Southern Royal family's tree whose whereabouts were currently unknown as her physical body was on the Lil Red Storm while her spiritual body was in the Devil Merchant Code's inter-realm city in the spiritual plane polishing her old martial arts and learning new martial arts.

So, when Masters try to divine about the original Field Marshal Lorn, they would be led to the next best, me disguised as Field Marshal Lorn. The means of the Masters were not to be underestimated, and the same went for my Myriad Devil Transformation skill.

Also, a public pursuit of Lois by a figure as prominent as Field Marshal Lorn would not only prove that Lois had truly been held captive by the Southern Royal family but give legitimacy to her story about escaping their grasp.

Not to mention Field Marshal Lorn's reputation among the Southern Army was crucial for this plan to work. If it were anyone else, things wouldn't have gone as smoothly with Base Ursus's General Welshman as they did.

That was because, within the present unparalleled bloodline, only Field Marshal Lorn held an actual high-level military rank. Others commanded their own personal armies that occasionally held posts at the Southern Borders and Way Beyond, but they were part of the monarchy, not the military.

Most importantly, Field Marshal Lorn was the only one who satisfied the condition of my Myriad Devil Transformation that would allow me to disguise as her perfectly. That was because during our mock battle on the planet Lil' Ride Storm, I had managed to get my hands on her DNA material and fed it to my Myriad Devil Transformation skill.

Also, just looking like Field Marshal Lorn and having a similar soul energy signature wasn't enough. I need to have similar strength, cards, rules, and skills or just enough to fake it till we make it. Thanks to my Curse Incarnation Form and Field Marshal Lorn adamantly teaching me her martial arts, I had more than enough to fake it.

Therefore, despite covering myself in black head to toe and suppressing my soul energy signature, I bluntly used the martial arts Field Marshal Lorn taught me. Though they were only basics, they were the Field Marshal Lorn's signature martial arts. As a result, without me having to tell them, the generals from both military bases immediately guessed my identity as the Field Marshal Lorn.

Can't blame them for falling for such a simple trick, as one of the top ten strongest for a couple centuries now, Field Marshal Lorn was insanely popular. Especially the martial arts she used. After all, she was the only Martial Sage in the top ten strongest. Everyone wants to learn the best and what was best then the martial arts used by the strongest Martial Sage known.

Though the basic martial arts used by Field Marshal Lorn were available in the market, they were no longer the same as the ones Field Marshal Lorn used. That was because she had improved them through enlightenment and augmented them to her preference through vigorous practice. She didn't share them with the rest of the world but shared them with her disciple.

Therefore, when I used her martial arts, looking exactly like her, it was no wonder that the generals from both military bases immediately jumped to the same conclusion. It would be surprising if they didn't.

'Master, don't worry. I can take it,' Lois just jumped out of the spiritual plane 100 yards from me.

Now that Lois could exist on the physical and spiritual planes simultaneously, she didn't need a card apprentice's spiritual channel to enter the spiritual plane or return to the physical plane at will. Only she wouldn't travel too far on the spiritual plane as she lacked the knowledge to navigate through the spiritual plane. Therefore, her traveling through planes appeared like short-distance instantaneous teleportation.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central-Southern Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

'Lois, go all out,' I ordered, as I concentrated my celestial force to pull her into my grasp. However, in the middle of being dragged towards me, Lois's body suddenly vanished into the spiritual plane, escaping the lock of my celestial force.

If I were fighting her as the original me, she would have been able to escape my hold just by escaping to the spiritual plane. After all, she got her dual-existence ability from me. I would have followed her into the spiritual plane and continued the fight there.

Not to mention, on the spiritual plane I could use my celestial force more freely and efficiently, ignoring the resistance from the Card Celestial's passive celestial force. So, Lois escaping to the spiritual plane in a fight against me would be a very bad idea. It could just cost her the fight.

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Location: Central-Southern Region Corridor, Central Region, Base Gecko

"General Maden, base Ursus is not responding to our request to assist agent Lois," the deputy general reported, waiting for the general's permission to advise the units to cross the border and run interference.

"As accepted." Maden wasn't surprised, now he had a legitimate reason to send his men across the borders. "Advise all units to cross the borders and spill enough enemy blood to create a lake of their blood."

Maden knew that if he personally went to assist Agent Lois, her chances of escaping would slightly increase, which might as well be negligible, but the odds of him dying were hundred percent. After all, unlike Agent Lois, he didn't have a godly physique that allowed him to enter the spiritual plane and escape the Field Marshal's attack in the nick of time.

Even if Maden took the risk and ran interference, he knew he would only buy Agent Lois a couple of seconds at best. Considering Agent Lois's physique, it might just be the miracle she needed, but he didn't want to die. He would rather send his men to their deaths and pray for a miracle.

Therefore, Maden planned to distract the Field Marshal by sending his men to fight to the death with their southern counterparts. The lore of Field Marshal Lorn's compassion was known to all across the five regions, especially among the soldiers. She cared for her fellow soldiers regardless of their alliances. It's not that she was the only one who felt compensation towards her subordinates, but others weren't strong enough to show it like she did.

Maden knew this wouldn't be enough to stop the Field Marshal Lorn and might even trigger her, but all he wanted was to buy Agent Lois a little room to breathe, just enough for her to avoid getting captured till the reinforcements from their organization arrived.

"Done," the deputy general reported emotionlessly despite being fully aware that he just sent his subordinates to their deaths.

Although their Southern counterparts weren't as civil and savvy as them, they were ferocious card apprentices who feared no pain when it came to fighting for their region. Not to mention the array formation covering the Southern Region. There wasn't going to be a winner here. Both sides were going to lose a lot of good men today.

"Um," General Maden nodded.

"Field Marshal Lorn's control over the celestial force seems to have reached another level. Though it's just basic martial arts, I haven't seen anyone else manage to integrate celestial force with martial arts so flawlessly. I wonder if the same is true for all her martial arts," General Maden praised the Field Marshal Lorn as he intently watched her try to capture the agent.

He knew that if the Field Marshal Lorn stopped holding back, no longer caring about keeping her identity hidden, it wouldn't take her a couple seconds to capture Agent Lois. Knowing that she wouldn't do that also gave him hope that his men's sacrifice would give Agent Lois a shiver of hope to make it back home.

"It's highly likely, sir. After all, she is a Martial Sage," the deputy general said as if it was given. It would be foolish to underestimate the unparalleled bloodline.

"On the other hand, this Agent Lois appears to be quite capable. Regardless of the Field Marshal holding back, her managing to make it till here proves she has some skills," General Maden said, impressed by the fact that Lois not only managed to escape her captivity but made it to the border. Yes, she had an overpowered physique, but she was also facing one of the strongest in the entire card world.

"Sir, according to our scouts, Agent Lois wasn't being pursued at first. But when she was a couple hundred miles from Base Ursus, Field Marshal Lorn appeared using long-distance teleportation. If I have to guess, it appears Agent Lois managed to escape her captivity and ditch her original pursuers. Unfortunately, they sent Field Marshal Lorn herself. That begs the question—"

Before the deputy could finish, Maden interrupted him, saying, "Don't ask questions above your pay grade."

"I'm sorry, sir."

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Location: Southern-Central Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

"It seems they are indeed foolish enough to cross the border. Advise the logistic units to control the array covering the region to set up a line of action. Ask them to make enough space for the kids to vent to their heart's content," General Welshmen ordered, observing the soldiers from the central region planning to run interference.

"Unfortunately for me, Maden is too much of a pussy to take action personally."

"Don't worry, Sir. You will get your wish. Our scouts across the border have reported that three teams of unknown demigods with soul energy signatures greater than that of elite-level has teleported at one of the Base Gecko's supply points: Four minutes till

they reach Base Gecko," the deputy general reported cracking his neck. He couldn't wait to join his soldiers on the frontline. Hopefully, the Field Marshal will notice him.

Just as the general, deputy general, and other chiefs were warming up to join the battle, they all received an urgent text through the Southern Watch's secured network to their grimoires simultaneously, reading,

[All units, be advised: do not engage. Fall back and establish a new line of defense past me. Let them attend their funerals.]

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Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central-Southern Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

'Master, how do I become one with you?' Lois asked as she was dragged by an invisible force toward her master, but she managed to enter the spiritual plane in the nick of time before he grasped her.

To the outside world, it appeared that the Field Marshal had cast a celestial force field across a vast area of the physical plane. Shocking everyone with the vast amount of celestial force she borrowed from the Card world and her command over it. Lois was trapped; no matter the direction or distance she traveled, she always found herself contained within the Field Marshal's field.

As soon as Lois appeared on the physical plane, she would find herself in the Field Marshal's celestial force field, and the latter would instantaneously sense her, instinctively attacking with a combo of martial arts and celestial force.

The assault would stun Lois, not only stop her from immediately entering the spiritual plane, but drag her closer and erase the lead she had worked so hard to gain. Knowing she didn't stand a chance, Lois had no choice but to rely on her outrageous physique's ability. With each passing moment, however, the Field Marshal seemed to be learning her patterns. If this continued, Lois would soon be captured.

Pretending to be trapped in her master's celestial force quagmire, Lois honestly thought of various ways to counter enemies with celestial force. The best one was to borrow celestial force from the Card world and counter her opponents' borrowed celestial force. Just as that thought crossed her mind, Lois couldn't help but wonder if she could borrow celestial force from her master? After all, her master was a celestial, and she literally belonged to him.

The more she thought about it, the more she felt it was doable. Then, entering the 'one with the world' state, she decided to borrow celestial force from her master just like she would from the Card world only to realize how could she borrow celestial force from her master if she became one with the Card world? Shouldn't she become one with her master to borrow his celestial force?

Then she wondered how she could become one with her master? Was it by having sex with him? She would love to engage intimately with her master, but that would be impractical when fighting an enemy. There had to be another way, right? Ultimately, she suppressed all the weird thoughts about her master in her mind and decided she should just ask him.

'What the fuck is going through that mind of yours?' I was taken aback by Lois's outrageous question. Honestly, I never thought my calamity daughter gems would sexually harass me before I did them. I guess that was what made the bloodkins special than the other tiers of the calamity daughter gems.

'Master, I was thinking about borrowing celestial force from you. It should be possible, right? After all, you are a celestial, and I belong to you. So, I was wondering, how do I become one with you? Is it only possible by having sex with you or are there other ways? Even though I prefer women, I would love it if it's you, but won't that be impractical on the battlefield?' Lois innocently asked her master all her doubts about borrowing his celestial force.

'What gave you the idea that you can become one with me by having sex?' I curiously asked, trying to figure out Lois's thought process that led to this outrageous theory.

'Master, how can you not know that? Are you by chance a virgin? Though I have only been with a couple of women, even I know that when a couple engage in sex, they become one with their partner,'

Lois answered, though a little surprised that her ingenious master didn't know something so basic.

'Ah, I see. The media has romanticized that vulgar act to you guys. You don't actually become one with your partner during sex you just forget yourself in that short moment of sheer pleasure and raw passion. When you have as much sex as I did, you will begin to see through all the lies in their narrative about sex. You do know that women like sex as

much as we do, right?' I explained, figuring out that though Lois was blunt about the deed, she was actually still a rookie when it comes to it.

'*They do?*' Lois asked in surprise as her entire world-view shattered.

'*Yeah, they are nastier and freakier than us. Especially those princess types,*' I replied, having noticed the heat between Christina and Lois earlier.

'*You noticed, huh?*' Lois said with a mix of shyness and a little worry. She didn't think her master would be okay with her having such thoughts about someone else other than him as she clearly wasn't.

'*Don't hold back on my account. I would have joined you guys in a threesome in case Christina was open to it, but at present my heart is stuck between two different women. You have no idea what I would be willing to pay to have a threesome with them,*' I sighed, knowing that Anna and Susan would never agree. Anna was open-minded, but she acts like a prude when it comes to Susan. As for Susan, she was born a prude. She wanted it badly, believe me she did, but there were some limits she would never cross.

'*Master, you are too generous. But no thanks, it was just a thought. My heart and body only belong to you. Enough about that, how do I become one with you?*' Lois asked, no longer wanting to continue this conversation as, for reasons unknown to her, she did not like the thought of her master with other women. Even the idea of him having a threesome with her and Christian irked her to the point where she caught herself hatching a plan to assassinate Christian.

'*Honestly, I haven't given this much thought. But I think you guys are already one with me through the Calamity Daughter Gem and the Cursed Bloodline. We can try it out later because I don't have enough celestial force for myself,*' I answered to the best of my knowledge while wondering if I could borrow celestial force from Dalie a.k.a Array Celestial and my elder sister.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern-Central Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

Celestial force, I still had a lot to explore. It's not that I didn't have time or someone to teach me, but it's just that I didn't have enough of it. Similar to how there wasn't enough water in the lake for surfers to ride tides, unlike in the sea or ocean.

As a young hybrid celestial, my celestial force was a lake, as new celestial Dalie's celestial force was a sea, and as for veteran celestials like the card celestial, its celestial force was an ocean. Actually, comparing my celestial force to a lake would be an overestimation as it was more of a puddle that was barely enough to meet my needs. Let alone share it with my calamity daughter gems.

Therefore, I was more curious if Dalie could share her celestial force with the rest of us. Now that would be something, or we could simply borrow from the card celestial as its natives.

The idea of borrowing from both celestials simultaneously did cross my mind, but one cannot be one with two celestials simultaneously unless the said celestials were one with another. Irrked by the idea of a celestial threesome, I turned attention back to the battlefield as the Hive Spirit updated me on the changes on the battlefield.

Learning that the soldiers of the central and southern regions were about to clash, I had two choices. I could sit back and let nature take its course and become responsible for the deaths of hundreds of soldiers from both the central and southern regions. Or I do something about it.

Of course, I had to do something about it. I didn't want these soldiers to become collateral damage in my schemes. I hate to be cringy here, but if I let nature take its course, I would be no different from the masters I am trying to overthrow.

Therefore, I had Hive Spirit send the following command to southern soldiers through the secured network: [All units, be advised: do not engage. Fall back and establish a new line of defense past me. Let them come to their funerals.]

Not that I didn't empathize with soldiers from the central region, I had to be dramatic and over the top with my command because to them it was from Field Marshal Lorn, the original Southern Hero, who saved the lives of countless southern soldiers in her centuries long service in the southern military and loved the Southern Region the most.

'Lois, let us put an end to this cat-and-mouse act,' I informed Lois, as the clueless soldiers from the central region surrounded us in a battle formation awaiting orders to engage and the reinforcements called by General Maden had arrived and were preparing to run interference to rescue Agent Lois.

'I'm all yours, master,' Lois said shyly as she faced the celestial punch fired by my fist head-on as soon as she entered the physical plane. Stunned, she felt an invisible force drag her body as I made use of the celestial force to drag her into my grasp at an incredible speed. Finally, ending the act one of our play.

...

Location: Central-Southern Region Corridor, Central Region, Base Gecko

"General, the southerners are retreating—" the deputy general reported in puzzlement, only to hear him snap back, "I can see that, damn it."

"The southerners have retreated behind the incident site and appear to be setting up a line of defense there. As if telling us to rescue our assets, our damn selves. The soldiers are clueless and are awaiting further orders. Should we follow the Southerners deeper into the Southern region?" The deputy general wasn't deterred by the general; he patiently continued with his report. He knew that he wouldn't lose his job for annoying the general by stating the obvious, but he sure as hell would lose it if he didn't do his job just because the general was in a mood.

"Advise the units to stop pursuing the Southerner and to surround the incident site in the Seven Sin Suppression battle array formation. Don't engage the hostile and wait for further orders," General Maden immediately modified his orders, sensing power soul energy signatures arriving at the base. The reinforcement he called for had arrived.

"Maden, you have outdone yourself."

"Yes, Maden, you had handled the situation better than we thought you would."

"I have to say, a Seven Sin Suppression battle array formation is more than any support we were expecting from the base Gecko."

Three voices sounded, attracting the attention of General Maden and his deputy general.

The deputy general almost jumped in a scare and looked at the three demigods and their team's shock. He was a demigod, yet he somehow didn't sense the rescue teams as they arrived behind him. Showing just how much of a difference there was between a veteran and elite card demigod.

With the three elite teams here, the deputy general's confidence grew. He couldn't help but think that their chances of rescuing Agent Lois had increased. Maybe, he wouldn't have to sacrifice any of the soldiers under him today. Just when he was planning to ask the general for permission to withdraw their soldiers from the battlefield, he heard the leader of the rescue squad one say, "Seven Sin Suppression Battle array formation, that should help us buy Agent Lois a few seconds to escape to our side."

Listening to the leader of the rescue team one, the deputy leader suddenly realized how foolish his thoughts were. After all, their opponent was one of the top ten strongest in the card world. Even if she was hiding her strength, it didn't change the fact that she

was among the top ten strongest in the card world. If things got desperate, who knows how she would react.

What if she comes to the conclusion that if there are no witnesses, she wouldn't have to worry about hiding her identity and could go all out? Now that would just mean that they were proving their fate by trying to challenge Field Marshal Lorn. If she comes at them with everything she got, is the Base Gecko equipped enough to survive her wrath?

Now the Base Gecko's deputy general finally knew what the Base Ursus was thinking by asking its soldiers to leave their posts unmanned and retreat.

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Chapter 2469: Seven Sin Suppression Battle Array Formation

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern-Central Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

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Location: Central-Southern Region Corridor, Central Region, Base Gecko

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- Chapter 2470: Agent Lois Is Not Worth The Gamble

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central-Southern Region Corridor, Central Region, Base Gecko

"Squads one and two will engage the hostile and buy time for the asset to escape. Meanwhile, Squad three will lay in wait at the edge of the corridor to secure assets and deliver her to the nearest supply depot. So, she can use the teleportation array there to escape to safety without any delay," the Squad one's leader instructed the three squads before turning to General Maden and instructing, "I want you to get all the supply depots to prepare their teleportation array to deliver the asset to safety. And get your soldiers to activate the battle array formation at my signal... Fuck, activate the battle array formation, now!"

"We have one shot, people. No mistakes will be tolerated. Move out now," the Squad one leader cut his instructions short and deployed the squads, seeing that the standstill between the Agent Lois and the Field Marshal had ended with the latter beating the former unconscious and capturing her.

...

Location: Southern-Central Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

'They can't wait any longer, can they?' I thought to myself smugly as I captured Lois by her neck and suddenly felt a thin veil of pressure descend on me. It was the seven sin suppression battle array formation set up by the soldiers of the central region that I let surround me.

I didn't immediately break the pressure and pretend to be affected by them, waiting for the whales that I waited for. I have to say I liked to take their time. If this wasn't a trap and a real scenario, I would feel bad for Lois seeing how unreliable these guys were being. Their soldier was fighting for her life at their doorstep, and these guys were still discussing their course of action instead of just diving in to rescue her.

I guess I can't blame them. After all, they thought they were facing the Field Marshal and were considering if they should be risking their lives over a doomed mission.

Especially now that the Field Marshal had already captured Lois. Now their mission had upgraded from buying Agent Lois sometime to escape using her godly physique to freeing her from the clutches of the Field Marshal and helping her escape her pursuit. It was akin to asking a bunch of crows to steal from a falcon. You know that would be like sending the crows to their death. But in their case, the crows knew they were being sent to their deaths, so the hesitation was understandable.

"Your Highness, please forgive our rudeness and our friend," a deep voice sounded as ten demigods entered my line of sight.

"Your Highness, please hand our friend over to us. I'm sure we can agree that she had suffered enough for her offence," the leader of squad one pleaded to me, referring to how *'I/Southern Royal family had imprisoned Lois till now.'*

He was careful with his words: he addressed the Southern Field Marshal Lorn politely, but without confirming her identity. Respect for the strong was common in this world, but more importantly, as long as he didn't state her name out loud, there would always be a hint of doubt. This ambiguity held true no matter how certain his subordinates were that the hostile was the renowned Field Marshal Lorn.

"It is not up to you or me to decide if she had suffered enough for her crimes. We each have our own duties. Unless you want to die on duty, I would advise you guys to leave now," I said, giving the rescue teams an opportunity to change their fate. Yes, I planned to kill them from the start, but I couldn't bring myself to be that cold-blooded. Besides, I knew these guys weren't smart enough to appreciate my offer.

"I agree with you, Your Highness," the squad leader said. "However, if you would generously let her leave with us, I assure you the central government will justly compensate for her mistakes."

The leader knew his words were futile; the Field Marshal would never compromise, especially after they had violated so many laws to trespass into the Southern Region. Yet, he had to try. He knew precisely how this would end if they were to fight her: most of them would die, and the few who survived would suffer from PTSD for decades. This wasn't a guess—it was a known fact. A couple dozen Elite demigods had faced her before, and those who survived did so only because the Field Marshal typically spared the defenseless, provided they weren't demon worshippers.

"Clearly, you lack the will to fight. Do yourselves a favor and clear the field by the time I return," I ordered, turning to leave in a swagger despite the pressure of the battle array formation. I carried the unconscious Lois, clutching her by the neck like a hunter carrying the duck he just hunted.

"I'm sorry, Your Highness. If you want to leave here, you will have to kill us all first," the leader of Squad One declared. At his command, members from Squads One and Two slowly surrounded me, taking up the arrangement of the Seven Sin Suppression battle array.

It was not that these guys didn't value their lives, it's just that if they left her empty-handed a fate worse than death awaited them at the hands of their masters even though the masters didn't really think they could actually stop the Field Marshal from capturing Lois. They were just distractions buying Lois time to escape using her godly ability. They were the price the masters were willing to pay to buy Lois a small window that could be her path to freedom.

Meaning, the masters weren't willing to send a pawn capable of standing toe to toe with Field Marshal Lorn to rescue Lois because then they would definitely manage to rescue Lois, but then, they might end up losing a pawn capable of standing toe to toe with Field Marshal Lorn. To them, underestimating Field Marshal Lorn was foolishness they couldn't afford, and Agent Lois wasn't worth gambling a pawn as strong as the Field Marshal Lorn.

Pawns with that kind of power were very hard to foster in submission and limited. To them, these pawns were worth more than Lois. After all, Lois's physique did make her an asset to them, but the physique's nature also made her a variable on their side — a variable that they cannot control.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern-Central Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

"I'm sorry, Your Highness. If you want to leave here, you will have to kill us all first."

Stating that Rescue Squads 1 and 2 began to surround the Field Marshal while securing strategic positions in the seven sin supersession battle array formation set up by the soldiers.

"What makes you guys think I won't?" I thundered with exaggerated bravado as if trying to scare the pests surrounding me away, playing the part of Field Marshal Lorn to the best of my knowledge.

The Field Marshal Lorn known to the world, though fierce, was actually very empathic and compassionate, especially towards her comrades, i.e. soldiers. Some even believed that these qualities of hers were what made her fierce on the battlefield, especially when against the monsters and demon worshippers.

Not to mention, Field Marshal Lorn was a symbol of honor and valor for many soldiers regardless of their alliance. She was not someone who would use her prowess to bully the weak and helpless. Therefore, I couldn't start a massacre unless, of course, I happened to have evidence that they were demon worshippers.

If I did slaughter the rescue squads and the soldiers, forget the Masters, the Southern Royal family would be alerted, learning that Field Marshal Lorn was engaged in such a gruesome act. Because that was not Field Marshal Lorn, the world knew.

She was one of the few field marshals out there known for showing mercy on the battlefield, even if it were against the Northerners. The long-standing difference between the northern and southern regions was known to everyone in the five regions, so Field Marshal Lorn's stance against them alone should speak volumes about her character.

Though it was worth noting that with her prowess she could afford to do so. However, that didn't apply to demon worshippers. She would kill them like the pests they were without hesitation, almost instinctively as if ingrained in her soul pathways.

The leader of the rescue squad was counting on this empathy and honor of Field Marshal Lorn to force her into a compromise. Similar to how Henricks made use of her honor to steal the D-rank Dungeon Relocation Card from right under her nose. Basically, the rescue squad from the central region wanted the Field Marshal to take pity on the enemy that not only dared to transgress in her territory but also tried to take advantage of her morals and principles.

Unfortunately for the rescue squad leader, unlike Henricks, he lacked the necessary leverage. The Field Marshal's patience and tolerance had a clear limit, a fact the Northerners were painfully aware of. To her, showing mercy to her enemies was not a weakness, but a undeniable symbol of her absolute strength and authority over the battlefield. It was like a multi-billionaire spending hundreds of millions on a whim—not because they needed to, but because it was nothing more than spare change to them.

"Your Highness, I mean no offence by this but we rather die at your hands than leave our hands empty," the rescue squad leader made it clear that this was not the case of 'damned if you do, damned if you don't,' it was a case of 'damned if you do, oblivion if you don't.'

If they were to fight the Field Marshal, at worst they will die and their soul will enter the river of reincarnation, but if they were to return empty handed to their Masters, they knew only oblivion awaited them. So, they would rather risk offending the Field Marshal over returning empty-handed. The thought of escaping to the Way Beyond never even crossed their minds, knowing that it would be a fool's errand.

"Fine, then. Allow me to put an end to your misery," I said as I suddenly unleashed the absolute pressure of my Thousand Blood Curse Incarnation Body through my celestial force.

The pressure of my physical strength alone was so intimidating and strong that everyone in the vicinity felt like the world had come to a sudden halt. Some weak-willed ones fainted on the spot. Without any suspense, the seven sin suppression battle array formation was undone while the Elite card demigods of the rescue squads one and two stared at me in horror. I was still in my mortal form, I couldn't imagine the look on their faces had they seen me in my hybrid form.

The strength of one thousand and twenty four SSS-rank curses carefully selected and integrated with my one thousand and twenty four primordial spirits to enhance my strength were no joke. These curses not only complemented and enhanced each other, but some of them also stacked up.

Unlike the time fought with the Field Marshal and the Celestial Array Spirit of the Lil' Red Storm, the list of thousand SSS-rank curses I'm using right now was more refined and calculated. They specifically chose to enhance my physical attributes to complement the rudimentary martial arts I learned from the Field Marshal's Martial Arts Intent Card.

This was to say my new playlist of SSS-rank curses made me stronger and had me better prepared than back when I fought with the Field Marshal and the spirit of the celestial array on Lil' Red Storm. The physical attributes of Thousand Blood Curse Incarnation Body back then were already overwhelming for the Field Marshal; she had to rely on her martial arts expertise to abuse my uncoordinated ass. But now with my new combination of SSS-rank curses and little knowledge in martial arts, I can give the Field Marshal a run for her money.

This was one of the determining factors why I chose to disguise as the Field Marshal. I had the strength and power to act as her. The thousands of soldiers lying unconscious around me would agree to that.

"I'm sure right about now you guys are feeling that suicide by my hands wasn't a..." I said, vanishing mid-sentence and eerily appeared behind the leader of the squad one dragging using my 'if you see me I see you ability,' before he could react I dug his divinity out of his body mercilessly uttering, "...wise choice."

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern-Central Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

"Let's go down with a bang!" The Rescue Squad 2's leader let out a wry cry, taking charge of the two squads with the leader of squad one dead. He dashed at the Field Marshal while activating his divinity beyond its maximum, reminding his squad members that they don't have a choice but to accept death, but they could choose how to accept it. Even though he was only the leader for a fraction of a second, he burned his brightest, inspiring his fellows.

Following their leader, squads one and two pounced on the Field Marshal with the highest speed they could fathom and ignited their divinity beyond its limit.

With that, the nine exploding divinities shone in the afternoon sky like stars before the brilliant light and violent energy from them combined, masking the rays of the sun as they engulfed the Field Marshal, and temporarily blinded anyone unfortunate enough to witness this.

However, before the energy from the nine exploding divinities could claim their first victim, the Field Marshal acted. She let go of the unconscious Agent Lois and used both her arms to compress the energy from the nine exploding divinity mobilizing the combination of her martial prowess and celestial force before they could wreak havoc, killing the unconscious soldiers right underneath them.

With the combination of her martial prowess and celestial force Field Marshal Lorn not only managed to contain the raw power of nine exploding divinity, but compressed it to the tip of her left index finger and pointed at the sky, shooting the raw power into sky like a one big bright and loud firework temporarily blinding and deafening everyone in a few thousand mile radius.

...

Location: Southern-Central Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

"In the end, Field Marshal Lorn is still too merciful. If it were the Soldier Queen or Southern Emperor, they would have slaughtered anyone who dared to trespass in our land without a second thought," one of the chiefs muttered, shaking his head in

disapproval seeing that the Field Marshal intentionally spared the lives of the soldiers from the central region by rendering them unconsciousness with her unparalleled will.

"What do you know? Only the strongest can afford mercy. Most can only hear it, consider yourselves lucky to witness it," another chief said, finding Field Marshal Lorn's action heroic. He was tired of killing, not that he hated it. It had become repetitive and was no longer exciting. However, the thought of showing his enemies mercy got his blood pumping. He could only imagine the confidence one needed to have to let their enemies live despite their differences.

"If it were the Southern Ruler or the Southern Prince, these fools wouldn't have dared to show their faces in front of them in the first place and chosen to hide in their base. What's your point?" the deputy general said, feeling that the definition of strongest was getting lost with the skewered world's strongest ranking. He thought the rule that monarchies cannot participate in the world ranking did not make sense.

"And if it were the Southern Princess, she would have sold them all back to the central region for a good profit," the general joked, trying to lighten the mood, seeing that small talk between his subordinates was headed toward a violent debate about who was the strongest in the Southern Region.

"Why can't we do that?" one of the chiefs suddenly proposed. "Maybe we should do that."

"We can... we should do that. After the Field Marshal is done, we are going to clear the battlefield clean. Make sure none escape if you all want a hefty bonus this year. And get the units to get started on setting up a SSS-rank soul energy and rule power isolation array as our prisons aren't big enough to hold them all," General Welshmen ordered his spectating deputies and chiefs.

Usually, many protocols were involved in processing the prisoners of war, but this time it was different. This altercation, considering its nature, would definitely not be recorded or reported higher up in the chain and disappear as if it never happened. Meaning unless the Field Marshal specifically advised them on how to arrange the prisoners of war, it would be up to General Welshman to stuff this mess under the rug.

Altercations like this weren't common, but also not the first. Welshmen had handled a few in his career. Usually, he would use the prisoners of war to exchange for his soldiers caught by the enemy regardless of which side had caught more soldiers, but this time their side suffered no casualties while the enemy side suffered a hundred percent casualty.

Thanks to the Field Marshal, General Welshmen found himself on the cusp of the moment where he would get the Southern soldiers to remember him for centuries to come. Instead of giving the snobs from the central region a bloody nose, he was going to empty their wallets.

"Finally, some blood!" the chiefs yelled, as they witnessed the Field Marshal kill an elite demigod deployed by the central region, having advised the array unit to begin setting up the SSS-rank array big enough to hold all the prisoners of war.

"Oh, no! The rest are planning to explode their divinity—"

"Retreat! Retreat!"

The entire regiment of the Base Ursus was in disarray knowing that they were within the range of the nine exploding divinity, even though they were just at the edge, the violent and raw power of the nine exploding divinity was not to underestimate, even a tiny hint of it would prove deadly for the lower realm soldiers.

Also they didn't appear to be worried about the Field Marshal Lorn in the slightest, knowing that with her prowess, escaping the range of the nine exploding divinity wouldn't be a challenge for her. If anything, they were worried she would risk her life to protect them. This wouldn't be the first time she did that.

"Holyshit!"

"Mother of everything awesome!"

"Did she just contain the power of nine exploding divinities and squeezed it onto her index finger?"

"Looks like there are going to be some serious changes to the top ten strongest rankings," General Welshmen uttered seeing unfathomable power and control displayed by Field Marshal Lorn as she shot the concentrated power of nine exploding divinity in to the afternoon sky, it was by far the most beautiful fireworks the base Ursus had seen.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central-Southern Region Corridor, Central Region, Base Gecko

"General Maden, what now?" the deputy general asked in concern, trying hard to mask his sheer dumbfounderment as they glanced down at the deserted base Gecko. Except for the logistic unit and a few high-ranking officials, all the other soldiers of base Gecko were captured, and their reinforcements were choosing suicide over facing Field

Marshal Lorn. There were no combatants left on their side. Unless Maden planned to lead a bunch of fat officials and the logistic unit to the front lines, they had no choice but to surrender.

"Don't forget rescue squad three is still on standby. As long as we have chips in our hands, we still have a chance to make a comeback," General Maden said, reminding his deputy not to give in until the very end.

However, to the deputy general's ears, Maden sounded like his drunk father, who would beat and snatch his mother's hard-earned daily wages only to lose it all at the neighborhood's illegal gambling den. Clearly, Maden didn't plan on making a decision until it was made for him by time.

"General, what is so special about Agent Lois that the rescue squads are willing to sacrifice themselves and our unconscious soldiers in hopes of creating a window of escape for her—" the deputy general asked, wondering what was so special about Agent Lois that the rescue squads were given so desperately. He couldn't even fathom a reason that would justify the sacrifice of an entire regiment and two rescue squads for one agent.

"Don't ask about things above your pay grade," Maden remained his deputy and couldn't help wondering if he should change him as this one had gotten too comfortable around him and asking questions someone of his position should know not to ask.

'Ah, just when he was getting used to having this one around.' General Maden subtly sighed .

The thought of going through heaps of personal files once again to find a new deputy for himself, General Maden couldn't help unconsciously wince. This was one of the things he hated the most about his job. He invested all that time and work in getting to know these people all for him to kill or ghost them. It was such a waste. Unfortunately, he was not in the business of my king friends.

"General. It's not that I am curious about things I shouldn't be. It's just that regardless of what happens here today, there is going to be a ton of mess that we will have to clear. I just want to know enough to avoid stepping on a landmine during the cleaning process," the deputy general answered.

Working under Maden, he had helped the former sweep enough unaccounted incidents under the rug. So, he could help but ponder why General Maden was being so secretive and cautious about this one.

What was so special about this one? Both the general and the rescue squad were acting oddly. All for what? One M.I.A asset that suddenly showed up at their doorsteps. The deputy general felt that there was more than what meets the eye here, but he knew better than to poke his nose where it did not belong.

"Don't worry about it. Someone from headquarters will come to take care of it. Just make sure you or any of our men don't get in his way," General Maden informed without thinking as the light from nine exploding divinities blinded him.

"Woah!" the deputy general exclaimed at the sight of Field Marshal Lorn confining and compressing the energy of nine exploding divinities at the tip of her index finger and shooting it in the sky like a firework. The sight was just too shocking.

Just as Maden and his deputy were watching the fireworks in the sky, risking being temporarily blinded by them, Maden received a text from the leader of the rescue squad 3,

[General, we have secured the asset and are heading towards supply depot three. Please ensure the supply depot has made the necessary arrangements to send the asset to safety ASAP.]

"Yes," Maden cheered and immediately contacted the supply depot three without wasting any time celebrating the minor victory they secured at great loss. He ensured that the supply depot three had its teleportation array formation ready for Agent Lois's escape.

Meanwhile, listening to his general cheer, the deputy general mistook that the general was enjoying the fireworks more than he should, especially considering the dire situation they were in with most of their regiment being captured by the Southerners.

...

Location: Central-Southern Region Corridor, Central Region

"Fuck," the leader of the rescue squad three cursed, seeing that squads one and two chose to detonate their divinities and embrace death.

Not wasting any time mourning for his fallen comrades or enjoying the Field Marshal's show of strength, the leader of the rescue squad three struggled to decide if his squad should continue laying in wait for Lois to miraculously escape or go face the Field Marshal. Actually, after seeing how easily she dealt with the energy from the nine exploding divinities, they didn't have the will to go face her. However, knowing only oblivion awaited them back home if they returned empty-handed, they were helpless, not knowing what to do.

Just when the rescue squad were planning to resign to their fates, the sensory demigod on their team sensed a vague but fast soul energy signature crossing the Southern-Central Region Corridor and continued to head deeper into the central region. So, she exclaimed, "It's Agent Lois! She has escaped and crossed the border. Follow me!"

"Fuck, the luck is on our side today. Hurry!" The rescue squad chased their sensory card demigod to trace Agent Lois. Some even tried contacting her, but for some reason they couldn't do so. So they could only focus their attention on finding and reaching Agent Lois and getting her to one of the supply depots as soon as possible.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Southern-Central Region Corridor, Southern Region, Base Ursus

"..." I acted surprised noticing Lois had vanished from the battlefield, before dashing across the Southern-Central Region Corridor even though I felt drained from compressing the wild and violent energy from the nine exploding divinities onto the tip of my index finger before shooting it in the sky.

To an ill-informed eye, it might appear as I used the combination of my martial prowess and celestial force to achieve when actually all the credit went to the SSS-curses I had integrated with my primordial spirits to use my Thousand Curse Incarnation Body.

Most of the SSS-rank curses I was using could prohibit soul energy and rule power in various ways like compressing and confining them. I did so because I could force my opponents into close combat with me. After all, my strongest card was my World Calamity Tree, Celestial, and Viltronian hybrid body.

This was something I picked up from Anna and Colleen's combat style, how their cards and runes were centered around rendering their opponents' powerful cards and runes useless so they would be forced to engage them in a physical contest. I never thought one day I would live to see myself following their muscle-brain route. After all, I was always a brain over brawn kind of guy.

Anyway, thanks to that, I could perfectly act the part of Field Marshal Lorn. I thought I couldn't pull it off. After all, I didn't have a demigod's intent sense. However, thanks to my 'If you seem to me, I see you,' ability giving everyone watching me the sense I was watching them too, I managed to fake it till now.

Now the ball was in the Masters' minions' court, I just needed to act confused and lost until they scored. Then leave in a fit.

...

"Oh, shit. That bitch from the capital escaped while Field Marshal Lorn was distracted with saving our asses," General Welshmen exclaimed, noticing that unconscious Agent Lois had suddenly vanished from the battlefield.

"She must have crossed the corridor and headed deeper using her teleportation ability. Advising our scouts to find her whereabouts and immediately report," the deputy general simultaneously sought permission from the general as he ordered their scouts across the border without the general's permission.

General Welshmen nodded and ordered, "Ready all units. We are capturing Base Gecko today. Leave enough personnel here to construct the array and secure the prisoners of war."

He felt personally responsible for Field Marshal Lorn losing her target. Therefore, they would cross into enemy territory to help her recapture the asset. Even if it meant escalating the situation from their side and him getting his head chewed out at the royal court for not quitting when he was ahead.

Also, not to mention the reaction from the central government to losing a strategic military. It was going to be strong and swift. Therefore, Welshmen only planned to capture the Base Gecko for a while, but long enough to help the Field Marshal recapture her target. He was sure Field Marshal Lorn wouldn't mind if it also was enough time for him and his soldiers to loot the Base Gecko's supplies and free their captured comrades.

Unfortunately, learning from the past, the Base Gecko, like any other military base in the five regions, has set up various supply depots, far yet near enough to it. These supply depots were used in random rotation to ensure the safety of their supply line and supplies in case of a surprise war or dungeon outbreak. After all, if they were losing, they could retreat to fight another day, but if they lost their supplies, they would eventually lose. That was to say, there wasn't much in Base Gecko to loot.

...

Location: Central-Southern Region Corridor, Central Region, Base Gecko

[General, buy us little time. Stall Her Highness!]

Reading the text sent by the leader of the third rescue squad, General Maden wanted to find him and switch their roles with him. After all, trying to stall a pissed-off Field Marshal Lorn would be akin to donning all red in front of a raging bull.

"Fuck," General Maden cursed under his breath before rushing toward the Field Marshal Lorn, who charged into the central region like a raging bull showing no intent of stopping despite crossing the Southern-Central Region Corridor. She blatantly used her intent sense on everyone as she tried to find the missing Agent Lois.

"Your Highness, please stop!" General Maden yelled in desperation and helplessness, fearing by the time he caught up to the Field Marshal, she would have already located Agent Lois.

Seeing that Field Marshal Lorn ignored him, General Maden sternly said, "Your Highness, you lost. Please go back. This isn't befitting you."

As soon as those words left his mouth, Maden regretted it. But he had to say those harsh words to attract the Field Marshal's attention. He couldn't just let her continue searching the base Gecko's vicinity to locate Agent Lois.

"How can I lose when the hunt hasn't ended, and the trail is still hot?" Field Marshal retorted before returning to try to find the asset.

"Your Highness, this central region. Here you can't do as you please," General Maden said, trying his best to keep up with the Field Marshal. She was too fast for him. If not for her being distracted and occasionally stopping to search for Agent Lois, he wouldn't even be able to have this joke of a conversation with her.

"What are you trying to say, Maden?" The field marshal finally stopped and turned to stare at Maden, giving him a breath to explain himself.

"I meant to say the Central Region will not tolerate a terrorist on its soil," General Maden hurriedly clarified that he was addressing a terrorist and not the infamous Field Marshal Lorn of the Southern Region.

"Good for you guys, now—," the Field Marshal vanished from Maden's sight and reappeared right before him and ripped his divinity out of his chest uttering, "Repent in hell."

Maden stared at the Field Marshal ripping his divinity from his chest in shock and disbelief. He was a general, and killing him, unlike with the others, would not go without severe consequences. Unfortunately for him, Field Marshal Lorn appeared utterly indifferent.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central-Southern Region Corridor, Central Region, Base Gecko

In the uphill wilderness of the Central-Southern Region Corridor, I spotted two separate groups, each escorting a Agent Lois to safety. My deduction was immediate: the third rescue team had split to protect the asset. One group, composed of three squad members, served as the decoy. The other, containing two squad members and the actual Agent Lois, was the original extraction team.

I immediately identified the real Lois. After all, as my bloodkin calamity daughter gem, I could recognize Agent Lois faster than her own birth parents.

I could intentionally pursue the fake, but Field Marshal Lorn's unparalleled starry eyes wouldn't allow her to fall for such a lousy trick.

This was the worst part of disguising myself as Field Marshal Lorn for this mission. She was just too powerful, her losing wouldn't be convincing enough and might prompt one to give Agent Lois's escape story a second glance. As the Field Marshal, I couldn't just pretend to lose, I had to give it an actual try before failing. Otherwise, it would only garner scrutiny from the masters, making them suspicious about Agent Lois's escape from the Southern Royal family's captivity.

I noticed both groups had felt my gaze on them as they immediately began their evasion maneuvers, vanishing from my field of vision by going underground. I no longer hesitated and followed the original Agent Lois. Both my Soul Pupils and the Field Marshal's Starry Eyes could track the groups moving underground. Knowing the route they were taking, I rushed ahead of the original group and used my celestial force to lift the entire goddamned ground, instantly exposing them.

However, before I could proceed to kill the elite demigods while giving Agent Lois the window to escape using her ability, I noticed that the group of three was replaced by four paper figurines that soon burned into ash and dispersed with the wind, even before I could read their soul pathways and arrangements.

I soon learned from Lois that the Masters had sent over a powerful demigod proficient in assassination and espionage to assist those left of the three rescue teams they sent to help her escape the pursuit of Field Marshal Lorn.

Yeah, they sent a reinforcement for the reinforcements they sent to Base Gecko for rescuing Agent Lois.

This demigod not only found them in the nick of time but also teleported all of them to the supply depot 3 without me realizing, allowing Agent Lois to escape to the Masters' base in the central capital using its teleportation array. I don't dare to say I was the strongest in the card world, but I was confident enough to say that no card apprentice could pull one over me in the card world. But this assassin sent by the masters proved me wrong, reminding me not to be complacent. These guys had an arsenal of unique and capable physiques, traits, and innate cards I wasn't even aware of, let alone be prepared for them.

Also, I couldn't help but wonder if they had a problem with getting it right on the first try. If only they had sent this fucker sooner, I couldn't have had to go overboard crossing the border and killing a general on duty. I wasn't afraid of breaking the law or the consequences of doing so, but just that the consequences yet to come might spiral the situation into exposing my entire operation.

Hopefully, the Southern Princess still had a soft spot for her aunt and would let this matter rest without pulling on the one thread that was sticking out and undoing the entire crochet of my lies.

However, I could confirm one thing from this. The Masters had come to a conclusion that I was planning to lead them towards themselves without Lois having to tell her little story. The unknown assassin-type card demigod sent by the Masters to rescue her was evidence enough. They wouldn't have sent the assassin if they had a shred of doubt that Southern Royal Family got to Lois and this chase was a ruse.

That made things simpler on Lois's side. As such, it paved a path for Lois to get back into the masters' grace by revealing her upgraded physique. With that, I can be assured that Lois will not only be able to stay safe in the tiger's den, but also succeed in her mission. The operation couldn't have gone better.

Losing Agent Lois's trail, I a.k.a Field Marshal Lorn, dashed toward the decoy group. Unearthed them, killed the elite demigods, and left with the decoy. This way, the observers who didn't know the inside story will think Field Marshal Lorn successfully recaptured her target and left. Meanwhile, the Masters and their minions will think the Field Marshal Lorn used the decoy to save face. Making it a convincing enough response from the Field Marshal Lorn for losing her target.

Leaving the central-south region corridor, I headed in the direction of the Southern region after killing the decoy and making sure I had gotten rid of all the eyes following me. I reverted back to my original form and called Henricks to give me a lift to the central academic region.

...

"Boss, are you sure about this? I have no idea what you are capable of, but I know Morningstar University is one of the top three Organizations in the card world. They are ranked above all the royal families. I wouldn't be surprised if they had their own undisclosed contacts in the Myriad Realms like you and I do. Not to mention their generationally accumulated talents—" Henricks went on and on trying to persuade his young boss from taking on one of the top three organizations of the card world but was interrupted by his young boss.

Not that he didn't believe in his young boss's strength or was afraid of Morningstar University, it's just that he didn't dare to underestimate them. He was the guy who dared to rebel against the Masters, the hidden rulers of the five regions. If his boss wanted to,

he wouldn't hesitate to repeat the same with Morningstar University, only this time he would win because he had his young boss on his side.

"Enough, the time for talking has long passed," I said with grim eyes and then with a deep voice, I added, "It's time for action."

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus

"So, how do I go about this?" I asked Henricks as I glanced down at the Morningstar University campus hovering above it.

"What do you mean, boss?" Henricks replied in confusion, not knowing what exactly his young boss was asking about.

"You know — do I go find the dean or something?" I enquired again, not knowing how to go about the ultimatum I gave to Morningstar University. It's not that I didn't know what to do, it's just that I couldn't help feeling like the villain in the scenario.

No, I don't think I am in the wrong. It's just that the harmonious and tranquil atmosphere of the university campus was too infectious. It made me hesitant about rashly destroying the tranquility and peace.

It was like when you visit a place of worship and the atmosphere there just humbles you. Morningstar University gave me a similar feeling, a place where truth and knowledge were worshipped and pursued.

The longer I glanced at the university, the more I was mesmerized by its atmosphere. I couldn't help thinking, *'No wonder students from all five regions were willing to give an arm or leg to get admitted into his place.'*

Heck, I wished the universities I attended back on Earth were this serene and humbling. It's not the infrastructure or the facilities but the very atmosphere, the presence of the university gave birth to this sublime feeling within me. I just knew this was the place where truth and knowledge were respected above all else.

Point to be noted, I had yet to step into Morningstar University, and I was already a fan of it. That was huge considering my bias against Morningstar University. Therefore, there was also this fear in the back of mind, reminding me to be cautious and not to let my curiosity get the better of me. It was like when a child tries to reach for the rose, mesmerized by its beauty, and their parent warns them about the thorns.

Regardless, I hoped that the top universities in the Southern Academic City had at least a tenth of Morningstar University's humbling presence. Otherwise, it was going to be challenging for me to raise Southern Academic City up to the level of the Central Academic City in a short period let alone above it, even with me integrating the VR-universe into their new university syllabus.

"Boss, if you were here to get admitted into the university, meeting the dean would be an excellent way to go about it. But you are here to make good on your ultimatum, I say just let your majestic presence loose. Let everyone know who's here and they will come find us," Henricks answered, realizing that because he teleported them into the university's array formation, making it past all its security, no one had noticed them. But if they were to give it a minute or two, the campus security would find them as flying was banned on the campus grounds.

"That's one way to go about it. On another note, which university did you attend?" I asked, now that I had seen my competition with my own eyes. I had to agree they were intimidating.

"On paper, I attended Greyscroll University. I have heard that it has achieved significant breakthroughs in inter-stellar teleportation these days. But among all the top ten universities, it has a bad rep as there were some moral and ethical limits they were willing to and have crossed in the past in their pursuit of knowledge and truth—" Henricks answered, trying not to go into details about his time there by talking about Greyskull University only to be interrupt by his young boss, who surprisingly defend the Greyscroll University, "I don't think openly dealing with demons is crossing the moral and ethical limits as long as they don't participate in anything that could be interpreted as them betraying their race and world. Besides, it would be stupid not to learn inter-realm teleportation using the dark races' knowledge and expertise. After all, they are pioneers in it."

I wasn't just defending Greyscroll University but myself. If the Greyscroll University were wrong to study demonic knowledge and take part in a knowledge exchange with the demons, then as a Demon Merchant I should be considered a treacherous traitor among the Card Apprentices.

"That's exactly what they said, word for word," Henricks exaggerated to make his point, that his young boss's ideology aligned with Greyscroll University's.

He would have recommended his young boss to enroll at Greyscroll University if he hadn't known that with his young boss's genius he didn't need a university, even if the

said university were one of the top ten universities. Instead, the top ten universities needed him.

"Besides, are you trying to imply that, besides Greyhound University, none of the other top ten universities have done nothing that could be considered crossing the moral and ethical limits in their pursuit of knowledge and truth?" I say that because I was here at Morningstar University today because they broke numerous ethical and moral limits to study that taintless physique.

"No, I am not trying to say that. It's just that Greyscroll University is more open and forthcoming about their ways and actions, which sets them out among the other top universities and sometimes even at odds with them," Henricks hurriedly tried to explain only to see his young boss, shake his head and cut in, "There you go again. If I wanted a sycophant, I would have picked up a random Joe from the streets and not an ex-field marshal and the leader of a prominent rebel group. Stop agreeing with me and add something original and useful or recommend someone who can, except Luna."

"Boss, all ten of the top ten universities are greedy, capitalistic organizations operating under the disguise of being the most prestigious and prominent education hubs in the five regions making use of unreasonable copyright laws. Especially Greyscroll University, they have even stopped pretending and just do what they like in the name of seeking knowledge and truth," Henricks hurriedly corrected his words and answered without holding back, throwing away all caution, now that he knew what his young boss wanted from him.

He couldn't help but think about his old buddy Ned. If Ned were here, Henricks would have answered it correctly the first time. It was getting harder for him to talk to his young boss, just when he began to believe he had his boss figured out, the latter threw a curve ball and he was back to square one, clinging to his dear life. Henricks had been a boss for so long that this feeling felt new to him, but not strange or alien. Honestly, he didn't miss it.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus

"Boss, we finally have their attention," Henricks informed me, noticing two card emperor realm campus guards as they approached us.

"Sir, the university campus airspace is a no-fly zone. Please, follow us and pay the fine," one of the guards announced from afar without even taking a proper glance at us.

"Henricks, did they just call you a fly?" I said, feeling offended in his place.

"..." Henricks silently stared at his young boss. He didn't know how to respond to him, who took the words 'no-fly zone' literally. He was worried that if he agreed with him, his young boss would later blame him for calling him a fly. After all, he wasn't the only one flying in the no-fly zone.

Henricks figured until he figured out his young boss's personality he was going to struggle to get along with him. However, he didn't dare to give up for the sake of the Freedom Fighters and yelled at the campus guards, "How dare you call my boss a fly? You motherfuckers have done it now."

"Sir, calm down—" the card emperor realm campus guards stopped in their tracks and went silent in dread as Henricks' intent sense covered them.

"Boss, don't worry. I will teach these fools a lesson for calling you a fly," Henricks assured, facing his young boss with his most charming smile.

"Oldman Henricks, we both know if they called me a fly or not, but you sure implied that twice," I scowled at Henricks for ungratefully demanding a foot when I generously gave him an inch. I asked him to stop being unnecessarily cautious around me, and now he was acting way too comfortable around me, which made me regret asking to stop being cautious around me.

"Young boss, I called it as I heard it," Henricks stubbornly refused to give in, having decided to stop figuring out his young boss and show his young boss who he was. With the current circumstances, he didn't know what it was for sure, but he knew for sure that he wasn't an ass-kisser. He wanted to make it clear.

"Keep this up and you will be working as my driver for the rest of your deaf life," I warned Henricks. I didn't mind my employees challenging me once in a while, but they better not make a habit of it. Because, if I wanted people who would mindlessly please me and do what I say, I would have just got more calamity daughter gems and not adopt the entire freedom fighter group.

"It will be my pleasure," Henricks grinned, after all he had already dedicated his life to freedom fighters and their cause. Now, Dalton Wyatt was the Freedom Fighters and their cause. He didn't mind dying for him, let alone being his driver for the remainder of his life.

"We will see," I said in annoyance, and then turn to the campus guards, I scolded, "Don't you fuckers know who I am? Go call your Dean or shareholders. Tell them, Dalton Wyatt is here to make good on his promise."

The campus guards nodded vigorously before Henricks retrieved his intent sense on them. Watching the guards scurry away, I couldn't help but complain, "This is not at all the welcome I was expecting during my first visit to the central academic city."

"It's my fault, boss. Had I known you wanted to make a grand entrance in the central academic city, I would have teleported within the range of their security arrays and not inside it. Also, these guys have gotten complacent. We have been hovering on the campus grounds for several minutes now, and all they sent was two lousy campus guards. They weren't even a demigod realm. This is just maddening. Especially considering that you had warned them what would happen if your demands weren't met. Compared to these guys, the royal families have better security—" Henricks confessed, then complained about the university's lacking security response time, and then spiraled into an emotional outburst, but before he could finish he was interrupted by a familiar voice, "That's because they have to guard against assassins and what not, not to mention they were all soldiers at some point of their life. Here, we are not expecting assassins, at best a few spies trying to steal intellectual property. Also, we are all scholars here. We believe in brains over brawn."

But you are correct, we have become complacent with our array formations and other tricks. To think our University array formations had such a huge flaw. It is chilling. But then again, can it be considered a flaw? After all, your origin card is one of a kind, Field Marshal Henricks. It's just one of the many unlikely possibilities turning to a likely variable. Nothing a small patch cannot fix."

"You dumb fuck, you drove us right into the enemy's array formations. How the fuck did the Freedom fighters manage to survive so long under your leadership?" I blamed Henricks, unable to find the source of the voice as it spoke nonstop. Who the fuck teleports directly into the enemy array formations?

"Boss, it's just a trick. I will handle them. Trust me," Henricks assured, as he cluelessly spread his intent sense to find the source of the voice.

Seeing Henricks in action, I almost slapped my forehead in frustration, wondering if he really was this stupid? How could he have not figured out by now that the enemy was using the array formation covering the university campus to talk to us, making his voice omnipresent, making it harder for us to track its source. Unless he planned to scan the entire university campus with his intent sense, there was no guarantee he would find the culprit of voice with his intent sense. The same was true for my primordial soul pupils. Though I could do it faster by cracking the codes of the array formation and tracing the source of the voice.

"Unless you want me to break your ancient array formation, I advise you to show yourself and voluntarily face the consequences," I warned the unknown enemy, giving him one last chance to continue maintaining their university's beautiful and tranquil campus. After all, the array formations of this place was able to optimize the weather

and nature on the campus, playing a major part in the sublimity I felt from its presence, which made me reluctant about destroying it.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus

"Mr. Wyatt, I didn't mean to startle you guys. It's just that I didn't want to keep you waiting while I paused my ongoing experiment and rushed to greet you. If you are uncomfortable with me communicating through the array, feel free to explore our campus or wait at my office," the gentle and familiar voice explained in response to my warning.

"First of all, who are you? Why does your voice sound familiar and affectionate? Have we met somewhere or is it the array?" I asked in bafflement, wondering if the staff of Morningstar University had forgotten the basic manners of introducing oneself when they first meet.

"You said you wanted to meet the dean, right? Well, here I'm Dr. Samael Faust, the dean of Morningstar University. And no, we haven't met before. The array is interpreting my thoughts into the voice that you hear. To make it sound human-like, it has been optimized to sound familiar and affectionate to the listener. That is all there is to it," Dean Faust patiently answered his young and capable guest while simultaneously working on his experiment.

Dean Faust didn't bother with assigning other faculty or a student council member to entertain his young guest. He instead gave his guest a free pass to explore the entire Morningstar University campus, surprising his young guest.

"You should know why I'm here, right?" I asked Dean Faust, wondering if he hadn't heard about my ultimatum to Morningstar University because he was too busy with his experiment. No, if he were that busy, he wouldn't be talking to me right now.

"Yes, I am," Dean Faust acknowledged and went silent, without bothering to go into details or talk about his decision.

"You guys aren't going to repent unless I force you to, don't you?" I thundered as the combination of celestial force and the celestial force I borrowed from the card celestial

descended on the entire Morningstar Campus. Instantly making every soul on the campus aware of my arrival. I was patient and even forgiving, seeing the campus atmosphere they had managed to foster, but there was a limit to my generosity. "Bring me to Ahalya Johnson right away, or I will go find her?"

"Mr. Wyatt, let me make it clear to you. We are not holding Pristine Princess hostage or keeping her away from her mother on purpose. She entered our university's time vestige a week ago on her own violation, for the sake of her doctoral project based on time-rule. Please get your facts straight before you issue a public statement targeting someone, be it an individual or organization.

Because of your ill-informed decision to suspend the VR-universe services in Morningstar District. A lot of students and faculty members face serious inconvenience in their projects, research, and experiments. Most of them had to commute to other districts in the central academic region so as not to delay their work.

I hope you will be more careful and considerate before coming to such a drastic decision in the future. VR-universe is your creation, but now it is a crucial part of every card apprentice. I advise you to shape up or hire someone who will be a better fit for this responsibility," Dean Faust informed and then sternly lectured his young guest that the consequences of his actions and decision were no longer limited to him but the entire card apprentice community.

VR-universe was an uncharted new world with a treasure trove of unknown knowledge and mysteries just waiting there for card apprentices to explore and uncover. Most of the students and faculty who thought they were stuck or were at the end of their potential saw a new hope for their growth in the VR-universe.

VR-universe had already become a crucial part of Morningstar University and other top universities. The amount of capital and manpower they had invested in it in just a month was unprecedented in the history of the top ten universities. It was believed that this investment would only continue to grow at a rapid pace as the top ten universities had plans to integrate VR-universe into their syllabus by next academic year.

Actually, they would have already added it to the ongoing academic year on a trial basis if not for them being on the fence about the VR-Universe being a monopoly of a teenager. And with his sanction against the Morningstar University, the said teenager only proved to the top ten universities that their concerns weren't unfounded.

The top ten universities were now considering if they should slow down their investment into the VR-universe, as no one wanted their money and hard work to dangle on the whims of an arrogant and narcissistic teenager.

"Don't test me, Dean Faust. Believe it or not, I will extend the ban indefinitely," I warned Dean Faust from trying to play his tricks with me. He subtly hinted that I should give up my control over the VR-universe because I am incapable. These old foxes from the top

ten universities wanted to force me to share my control over VR-universe with them using the public opinion. Now that I have finally presented myself to them, Dean Faust couldn't help but take a shot.

I was aware of the attraction and importance of the VR-universe to the entire card apprentice community. That was why I dared to be so blunt when dealing with these foxes that wanted to steal from my plate.

The top ten universities' investments in the VR-universe and their plans about integrating it with their syllabi weren't news to me. Not only were their plans for the VR-universe a lot similar to mine, but they also implemented them faster than me while competing amongst themselves.

However, they couldn't openly and grandly go about it because the VR-universe was controlled by me and feared my retaliation for trying to mine knowledge and data from the VR-universe at such a large scale and fast pace. What they dreaded came true when I sanctioned a ban on Morningstar University.

This was one of the reasons why I chose the Pristine Princess incident to announce my becoming the city lord of the Southern Academic city and my future plans for the VR-universe.

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus

"I believe you," Dean Faust passive-aggressively agreed with his young guest, but the array's setting delivered it with a more neutral tone.

Based on the boy's actions so far, Dean Faust didn't doubt for a second that he wouldn't make good on what he claimed. However, that didn't mean that he would sit back and just give up. With such an attitude, there wouldn't be top ten universities but top nine universities.

"Then lead me to the time vestige. I will personally meet Ahalya and decide if my decision was ill-informed," I said shamelessly, even though I knew that there wasn't a possibility that Dean Faust would let me enter the time vestige for free. But I wouldn't know for sure until I tried.

"Are you truly that ignorant, or are you mocking me, young man?" Dean Faust asked, unable to decide if the creator of the VR-universe was that ignorant or just plain shameless.

"I just want to meet my aunt's daughter and decide if there should be a Morningstar University here to greet the next sunrise," I argued with a straight face.

"Unfortunately, that is not possible. Once a group has entered the time vestige, no one can enter it until the group returns or dies in it. You can only meet her when she returns. Until then, you are free to stay at our faculty dormitory," Dean Faust patiently explained, even though his young guest rudely and blatantly kept threatening to destroy Morningstar University on every turn, overestimating himself, but it was starting to get on his nerves.

The only reason he remained patient was that he realized his guest was purposefully provoking and baiting him. He had no idea what the latter stood to gain from doing so, but he had no plans to play along or continue this conversation as his experiment entered a critical phase in his attempts to pause it and go greet his young guest.

"I understand, but how can I be sure that you are not just saying that to buy time to silence the witness? Bring me my aunt's daughter now or I will come fetch her," I threatened even though I knew the Morningstar University meant no harm to Ahalya and was telling the truth about her doctoral project, but it was also true that her relationship with her mother was like a pebble stuck in their boots' sole. No matter how much they tried or wiggled their leg, they couldn't get it out without removing the shoe. I.e. they purposefully made it troublesome for Denis Johnson to ensure about her daughter's wellbeing and whereabouts, making her paranoid enough to reach out to me.

"Young man, quit it. Just tell us what it is that you are truly after. I am sure we can discuss something to accommodate the needs of the creator of the VR-universe," Dean Faust said, unable to spare more attention to the conversation. He was more concerned about his on-going experiment than arguing with the arrogant boy who was overestimating himself.

"How many times do I have to say I just want to confirm the wellbeing and freedom of my aunt's daughter?" I replied, pretending to be losing patience. After all, I couldn't come clean saying that I wanted to use this incident as a stage to announce my future plans for the VR-University and the Southern Academic city.

Honestly, I thought Morningstar University would be arrogant and domineering, but these guys surprisingly were welcoming except for the part where they lacked the basic sense of manners. I mean, who doesn't know to introduce themselves at the first meeting? And Dean Faust apparently lived for a couple centuries.

Anyways, these guys were making it difficult to kick up a fuss and use them as a stepping stone to grandly announce my plans to the entire card world.

I mean, where are the security guards and other faculty? I have been blatantly using my celestial force to oppress the entire university campus for a while now. I was beginning to fear if I continued any further, they might use this to turn the public opinion against me.

"Like I said before, you can wait in our faculty dormitory till Pristine Princess returns from the time vestige. Beyond that, I can't help you. Feel free to do as you please. I have an experiment that needs all the attention I can give to it," Dean Faust concluded the conversation without waiting for my response while I stood there like a fool forced to retrieve my celestial force.

Right now I felt like a bank robber who was handed the key to the bank vault by the bank itself. What do I make of it? If I go ballistic now, I will be the bad guy. Maybe even get my name added to the Card World's most wanted list. I knew the top ten universities would like that, proving to the citizens of the five regions that they shouldn't let the fate of the entire VR-universe be in the hands of a teenager drunk on power and money.

Not that public opinion would force me to share control over the VR-universe with others, but then what would be the point of all of this when the people I created it for didn't feel safe in it and had a bias against me. I didn't want to become benevolent and kind, but I also didn't want to be a tyrant.

"Boss, what now? They seem to have no intention of refuting your words, let alone fight you on it. Not surprising from a bunch of cowards," Henricks commented as I tried to figure out how to take control of the situation.

"They are not cowards. They are just being smart. Everything on the campus, even those trees and bushes, is insured. My rampaging here would only get them a free renovation and even save some money. Not to mention they get to prove to the five regions that I am not fit to control the VR-universe. Why stop the enemy when he is ignorantly helping you?" I explained to Henricks.

Being a soldier, economics was the last thing to cross Henrick's mind. It was no surprise that the Freedom Fighters always found themselves edging near bankruptcy under his leadership.

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus

"Do you know where the time vestige is?" I asked Henricks when my probing with celestial force failed to detect it.

Why the time vestige?

Morningstar University had everything on its campus insured. They didn't care what happened to the beautiful campus. They could just use the insurance payout to build a new and better campus. However, there were few things that the insurance can't just cover, like, for example, off the top of my head, Morningstar University's coveted time vestige. That thing was priceless. If destroyed, no amount of money could help Morningstar University get another time vestige.

Since Morningstar University was counting on me to rampage on their campus, I planned to do just that, but with one tiny adjustment, I changed the location of my rampage to where the time vestige was being hidden and protected. Let's see if Dean Faust and the other faculty can continue to ignore me then.

"I have been there once. But it is protected by an SSS-rank kaleidoscopic maze array formation, which is impossible to crack as the user can keep changing the maze pattern at will—" Henricks began to explain to the best of his knowledge only to be interrupted by his impatient young boss, "Just take me there and let me worry about the rest."

"Sure, right away," Henricks nodded in agreement, as he opened a portal next to him and signaled eloquently, "Right this way, boss."

Stepping into the portal, I found myself hovering above a gigantic garden. When I said gigantic, I couldn't have been more literal. Everything in here was magnified by 100x. Things in here were a hundred times of their original size. The grass here was 9-10 ft tall. Not just the grass, everything, the flowers, trees, bushes, etc. It was like I had stepped into a giant's garden. I couldn't help but feel like a tiny fly in here.

"Where is this?" I asked Henricks, because the last time I checked, I didn't find this gigantic garden on Morningstar Campus.

"The garden of the beginning, Morningstar University's heritage land and humankind's last haven in case we had lost to the demon invasion. While some were fighting the good fight, some were preparing for the worst. The founders of the Morningstar University were one of them.

Don't get them wrong, they fought the demon invasion alongside their comrades, but they didn't go all in. They used their spare strength and resources to build this place. Once the invasion was averted, they left it for the future generation to decide what to do with it. Morningstar University wasn't alone in this; many other forces did the same.

I used to think they were cowards for doing so, but now, after seeing the state Freedom Fighters were reduced to until you rescued us, I realize maybe not putting all your eggs in one basket isn't a bad strategy either," Henricks answered, but lost track realizing that he had no right to judge what their predecessors did to defeat the first demon invasion. They did what they thought was best at that moment, to the best of their abilities, just like he did with the Freedom Fighters.

"What does all this have to do with the time vestige?" I asked in annoyance. If it were some other time, I wouldn't have minded Henricks' history lesson that ended with his self-reflection, but now I was not in the mood. I was pissed off being ignored by Dean Faust.

How could I not be? I had imagined this grand scene of hero rescuing the damsel in distress before the hero announced his plan to make the world a better place, but Morningstar University threw that script into the bin and were forcing a new script, where I'm the stupid demon king with anger issues attempting to kidnap the damsel. I couldn't rest until I fixed the damn script.

"Ah, that... last I checked, the time vestige was hidden here. It has been decades since I have been to the Time Vestige. I wouldn't be surprised if they had moved it," Henricks replied in doubt.

"Shouldn't you have informed me that before you brought me here? Anyway, it's like the garden is a small world by itself. Let's fan out and search for it," I ordered after learning the garden was bigger than the university campus.

How could something inside a thing be bigger than the said thing? Unless they were in a different space or dimension, like for example a dungeon — artificial field dungeon, to be more accurate.

The card apprentices have long been able to make artificial field dungeons for millennia now, just like they could create pseudo-natural array formations. However, they were mostly used to build tombs and crypts by demigods at the end of their life span to avoid the theft of their card collection, remnants of their runes & divinity, and their diamond grimoire.

This practice was very common and long standing since the ancient period. After all, not all demigods were from the royal or noble families who had their own ancestral burial sites being guarded by and passed down to their descendants.

The methods of making manmade field dungeons were just as old as the practice of demigods creating big and hidden tombs and crypts for their final resting place.

It wasn't hard to believe that the card apprentice had figured out how to create a stable artificial field dungeon. After all, unlike the gate dungeon, field dungeons had lower

infrastructural requirements to be mimicked by the card apprentice especially with the core of the pseudo-natural array acting as the core of the manmade field dungeon.

However, the scale of manmade field dungeons usually wasn't this big. After all, these manmade field dungeons were built secretly by one demigod. Meanwhile, the garden of the beginning was grandly built using the resources pooled by Morningstar University. At the end of the day, the resources of an individual couldn't compare to that of an organization. The garden of the beginning could easily be considered one of the biggest artificial field dungeons in the Card World.

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"Boss, I don't think that's a good idea. Let us just stick together. This way I can take you to safety when needed," Henricks rejected his young boss's idea to search for the time vestige in the garden of beginning separately. It's not that he doubted his boss's prowess, but just that he didn't dare to underestimate the means of the Morningstar University.

Seeing his young boss hesitate, Henricks warned, "Boss, don't be fooled by their current easygoing demeanor. Remember who these people are: they orchestrated your kidnapping in the Southern Capital under the guise of a university admission interview, all in collusion with the central government. Their approach may have changed, but their ultimate goal remains the same. We can't afford to take any chances."

"Fine, lead the way," I had to agree with Henricks. I couldn't afford to underestimate the Morningstar university's accumulated wealth and means even though I could just escape any danger by getting the devil merchant code to transfer my soul to one of my pseudo primordial calamity soul gems that I had stashed across the Card World, Lil Red Storm, Ceed World, Dark Realm, and the Blood Rule Source.

The garden of beginning was Morningstar University's heritage land, there was no way that they didn't realize I had entered it. Maybe they were monitoring our every move right now. Though my skill 'If you see me, I see you' didn't ring any alarm bells, I wasn't naïve enough to believe that they didn't have unknown means to monitor intruders in their heritage land. After all, sight was just one of the senses. For demigods who had

intent sense, the need for sight only diminished, turning from one of the essential senses to a sense they were used to using.

"Boss, I think they moved the time vestige. It's not in here," Hendricks sighed after six taxing hours of searching across the 'garden of beginning' led to nothing. He came to realize why Morningstar University didn't bother to stop them as they scoured through the 'garden of beginning.' The time vestige wasn't here to begin with. Hendricks felt they should have guessed this when they saw Morningstar University made no effort to stop them as they searched the 'garden of beginning.' He couldn't help but feel like a fool. He prayed his young boss wouldn't blame him.

"No, they didn't move it. I know for a fact that it is here," I disagreed confidently. The reason I had Hendricks take the lead of the search was that I was busy using my primordial soul pupils to reverse engineer the biggest artificial field dungeon I had been to. I figured if Morningstar University was actually hiding the time vestige in its heritage land, what better way than for me to just piece it apart and put it back together, taking what I want.

For my primordial soul pupils, which could allow me to peek into the mysteries of the origin source, it shouldn't be hard for them to uncover the mysteries and core of an artificial field dungeon. However, I was stuck trying to uncover the core of the 'garden of beginning' for the past six hours now. I only knew why that was when I found out that the core of the artificial field dungeon 'garden of beginning,' at present, was in the past.

It was not that I didn't notice signs of time rule in the pseudo-natural array whose core was used as the core to create the 'garden of beginning' artificial field dungeon, but they weren't big enough for me to jump to any conclusion except for believing that the array before me was incomplete. Some of it was missing, yet somehow it was functioning optimally and efficiently as it was designed to.

Now that I figured out that it's core was in the past, I was beginning to think maybe it's not just core that was in the past but also other parts of the pseudo-natural array and the artificial field dungeon were in the past. Like, for example, the part of the array that allowed the array and dungeon to hide parts of it in the past and the part where the time vestige was hidden.

Reaching this conclusion, I finally knew why Morningstar University was not concerned with Hendricks and me searching the 'garden of beginning.' Neither of us had mastery over time rule enough to realize where the time vestige was hidden, let alone go into the past and drag the time vestige and the dungeon's core from the past. No wonder they didn't see us as a threat.

If not for my unexplainable immunity to the Myriad Realm's time rule, I would have never dared to face Morningstar University head on. Especially not arrogantly barging onto their campus. My immunity to the time rule did make me cocky enough to forget

that though I am not affected by it, my surroundings could be. And I didn't have the power to do anything about it.

Just like now. I was helpless. What could I do knowing that the time vestige and core of the artificial field dungeon were stashed away in the past? Try comprehending the time rule?

Even with my beyond perfect synchronization rate, it would take days, even weeks, for me to master time rule enough to do something about the time vestige and core hidden in the past. I couldn't help but lament that Morningstar University's 'garden of beginning' was truly the last resort of humankind in case of an impending demon invasion.

"Really? Did you find a clue?" Henricks asked in anticipation of finally finding the time vestige, but his young boss's reply only left him bewildered. "It is in the past. Either we wait for it to return to the present or figure out a way to force it to come to the present. I'm all ears to any creative ideas."

"Boss, please come again," Henricks asked in astonishment, wondering if he had heard his young boss right.

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"Boss, are you sure they are hiding the Time Vestige in the past? I'm not doubting you. It's just that for the past six hours, I haven't sensed an iota of time rule in the garden," Henricks indirectly bragged to his young boss about having started comprehension in time rule.

Back when Henricks was still serving the masters, as Field Marshal Henricks. He once earned a quota to enter the Time Vestige, an opportunity to comprehend the elusive Time Rule.

Despite spending what felt like an entire year within the Vestige, Henricks only managed to consolidate a basic mastery of the Time Rule. Once outside that highly focused temporal environment, he found he could no longer further his comprehension of the rule without the assistance of Time Vestige's concentrated temporal environment.

His understanding of Time Rule was both earned and inherently limited by the very shortcut he used as he had little to no talent in time rule. He was very gifted with space rules but when it came to time rules, he was just like the rest of the masses.

However, the basic mastery of the time rule was enough to help him become aware if someone used time rule in his immediate surroundings. Therefore, he was certain that there wasn't any time rule being used in the garden of beginning.

"That can only mean that your comprehension of time rules isn't enough," I said as I brainstormed ways to get my hands on the time vestige and make Morningstar University sweat. That should teach them not to ignore me again.

"..." Henricks couldn't argue because his boss was right. But he didn't doubt his young boss's mastery of time rule. After all, he had witnessed the latter's fight with devils back in the southern capital. In that fight, his young boss was totally unaffected by time rules and their meanings used the pig devil with a mohock.

Therefore, if his young boss told them that he sensed the time-rule in the artificial field dungeon and the time vestige was hidden in the past he believed him without any further questions. However, now the question was how were they going to get the time vestige that was hidden in the past? Clearly, his young boss's mastery of time rules wasn't enough to do that. Otherwise, he wouldn't have asked for his opinion.

Henricks glanced at his young boss, who appeared to be lost in thought. It couldn't have been more obvious. His young boss was stuck thinking about a solution to their current dilemma. Since he had nothing useful to add, Henricks decided not to disturb his young boss at work. Instead, chose to wait for his call at the sidelines.

"Ah!" I uttered in frustration, realizing that all the key components of the pseudo-natural array and the artificial field dungeon like the power supply, the core mechanism, etc, were all hidden away in the past. Making it impossible for me to hack into the array of the field dungeon and summon the time vestige from the past to the present.

From what I have uncovered so far, it would be more accurate to say that the pseudo-natural array and the artificial field dungeon were actually auxiliary, just extensions of an even bigger infrastructure that was securely hidden in the past.

Just as I was running out of ideas, a thought crossed my mind, a peculiar question about the nature of this entire arrangement itself: *'How do things hidden in the past find their way back to the present without becoming lost in the currents of time?'*

Yes, that is the crux of the complex arrangement Morningstar University had going on here. How exactly was Morningstar University able to ensure that the things they sent into the past didn't simply drift away with the currents of time, but instead remained there and even communicated and supply energy to present while waiting for them to summon them to the present?

This was a critical question, because whatever that mechanism was—be it a method or an item—I can mimic or forge the same to summon the Time Vestige to the present. Something like a temporal constant that would allow a time traveler to always find their way back to the present. I decided to call it the Time Anchor.

Now, all I needed to do was find the time anchor that made this complex but peculiar arrangement possible to finally get Morningstar University to give me the welcome I had been hoping for ever since I decided to use the incident with Chief Denise Johnson and Morningstar University faculty to convey the future I had planned for the Southern Academic City to the entire five regions. In hopes of attracting talent from all five regions to the Southern Academic City.

'Henricks, we are looking for an object, a being, or even a phenomenon with a profound temporal energy signature. It could be as minuscule as a pebble or as vast as the very ground we stand on. The crucial trait is that it must have withstood the test of time for an immense duration and be likely to continue doing so for the next few millennia.

That, Henricks, is what acts as the natural temporal anchor, tying the things hidden in the past to the present. As long as we find it, we will have Morningstar University—and its precious assets—by the throat,' I mentally informed Henricks of the strategy while also considering if the entire 'Garden of Beginning' was the actual temporal anchor.

After all, it's a place that has been around for an immense period and will continue to exist even longer with the aid of Morningstar University. It wouldn't be surprising if the University, leveraging its own heritage land, used it as a massive, stable time anchor to hide the Time Vestige and the rest of their secrets in the past. However, after probing around for a few minutes, I concluded the 'garden of beginning' was...

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

The Garden of the Beginning was not the temporal anchor. Though it had a long history, and could be here to witness millennia to come, it was just too obvious. If it were the temporal anchor, I could have sensed it the moment I laid my primordial soul pupils on it—that is, when I arrived here.

However, one thing was sure: whatever the temporal anchor was, it was within the confines of the Garden of the Beginning. The garden was vast, but we had already scoured it once searching for time vestige. We can do it again. Especially now that we know exactly what we're searching for. The temporal anchor will be in our grasp in time.

'Boss, even if we manage to find the temporal anchor, what next? I don't have enough mastery over the Time Rule to use it and summon Time Vestige back to the present,' Henricks mentally reported his doubts and concerns to me.

Clearly, he was trying to confirm if my own mastery of the Time Rule was sufficient to use the temporal anchor and take control of Time Vestige. I don't know why Henricks had to be so cautious about this when he could be direct about other silly things.

Also, his concerns weren't unfounded. Without enough mastery of the Time Rule and comprehension in required time rule meanings, it would be impossible to use the temporal anchor to summon things that have traveled to the past using it as an anchor. Even I couldn't manage that with the various means up my sleeve.

'I know, you don't have to remind me about your pitiful mastery of the Time Rule. Besides, who said that we have to use the time anchor to take control of the Time Vestige? And stop talking about taking control and whatnot—we are guests here, remember,' I replied mysteriously with a playful grin, without revealing my plans for after we find the temporal anchor.

'Yes, we are here for sightseeing,' Henricks played along with his young boss, knowing that the change in the boss's attitude meant he was confident about turning the situation in their favor. Then, Henricks went on to exclaim aloud, "What a beautiful garden."

With Henricks's exaggerated reaction, my grin grew wider. This comradeship was satisfying. I couldn't experience this with my calamity daughter gems excluding the blood kins who could be brutally honest on certain occasions.

After two freaking hours, Henricks and I stood before a gigantic lightning-struck stump. Looking at its half-burnt half-alive body, I declared, "This is it."

"Are you sure, Boss? I feel no temporal signatures from it," Henricks replied with doubt in his eyes. He repeatedly scrutinized the gigantic burned stump repeatedly, but couldn't sense an iota of temporal energy signature from it. The tree stump clearly was one of the oldest trees in the garden, even though half-burnt with proper care and nourishment, it will live long.

Still... It's just that Henricks felt it would be irresponsible on Morningstar University's part to use a half dead tree as a temporal anchor. So, he even tried to probe it with his basic mastery of time rule but he got no response—

"Huh? No, response," Henricks stared at the lightning-struck tree stump in astonishment. Even the SSS-rank seeds and plants have shown signs of augmentation under the probe of his time rule, let alone a half-dead giant garden tree. Unless it was really the temporal anchor as his boss claimed.

"Do you still have any concerns?" I asked, after Henricks was done with his tests.

"No—" Henricks shook his head sideways, but paused mid-sentence sensing a shift in the surrounding space.

"Stop, or I don't mind destroying it," I declared aloud, knowing that Morningstar University's faculty was trying to retrieve the lightning-struck stump after seeing our interest in it. Especially after Henricks probed it with his Time Rule power.

With my words, all the spatial disturbance in our surroundings came to an immediate halt. Meanwhile, Henricks broke into loud laughter as he made himself comfortable on a branch of the lightning-struck stump. "Boss, don't worry, with me here no one will teleport this temporal anchor away."

Henricks made sure that Morningstar University wasn't under the impression that we didn't actually know what the lightning-struck stump actually was. This way we can skip a lot of bullshit afterwards without making it awkward.

"Henricks, stop acting like a hooligan. We are guests here, remember," I said that, but I didn't mean it. I wanted to see how long it would take Morningstar University to ditch the saintly facade and show their true faces. Now, all I had to do was wait for them to come crawling to me.

"Boss, the garden is too big. Let me rest a little bit. This tree stump's fragrance is relaxing," Henricks replied as he made himself comfortable on the lightning-struck stump.

"Really? Let me see." Feigning exaggerated surprise and curiosity, I too found a branch on the lightning struck stump made myself comfortable. "It does smell good and relax."

"Wyatt, it smells like coal compared to you," a cute voice broke our shameless pretense. It was Dredre. After hearing me, she curiously sniffed the lightning struck stump and instantly came to regret it and immediately complained.

"..." Even Henricks couldn't salvage the situation after Dredre's blunt but honest remark.

"What do you know about trees and their fragrance, you are a dark pixie," I said, winking at Dredre, but later didn't get my signal. Instead, asked, "Wyatt, are you sick? Do you have a cold or something?"

"No, I'm not," I hurriedly replied and assured Dredre, fearing she would use her pixie dust on me in an attempt to cure me. If she were to openly use pixie dust in the card world, the card celestial would immediately become aware of her existence. I did warn her not to carelessly use her pixie dust when outside, but knowing her nature, her first instinct would be to cure her friend over recalling his warning.

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"Dredre, what do you think about the garden? Do you like it?" I asked to change the topic. Not wanting to drop an axe on my own foot while waiting for the Morningstar University's response.

"No, it's depressing here. Can we leave?" Dredre said, glancing over the gigantic flora and stopping at the lightning-struck tree. She felt as though she had entered the lab of a mad scientist, only they were experimenting with trees, not humans.

Most of the flora in the 'garden of beginning' weren't supposed to be of colossal size or possess such long lifespans. However, they weren't just colossal; they had been around for millennia now. Honestly, they were abominations, and she didn't know how to help them.

She could use her pixie dust on them, but that would only help them return to the embrace of the soil, much like how one can only give the sweet relief of death to those subjects experimented on by the mad scientist. Even though they were miserable, they were alive nonetheless. She couldn't bring herself to watch them suffer, nor could she bring herself to end their misery. Not to mention, Wyatt had warned her against using her pixie dust in the Card World or any realm for that matter.

Ultimately, Dredre chose to give up. Knowing that, if these floras wanted to die, no amount of external stimulation could keep them alive. That was to say if they chose to die, Morningstar University could only watch their heritage land be destroyed. But they were alive, which meant they wanted to live, despite it being a life filled with misery and pain.

"No, I can't. But you can leave with Henricks to meet up with Corey, Susan, and others," I proposed, seeing Dredre appeared to be really uncomfortable in here. Her presence and strength were slowly declining.

No wonder; it had been eight hours since we entered the Garden of the Beginning, but she never showed herself. Oddly, only showed herself when I said the lightning-struck stumps smelled nice. Knowing her, I should have guessed something was wrong. "Don't worry, I will join you guys soon."

"...okay," Dredre reluctantly agreed. Knowing that if she continued to stay here, she would die out of sadness for the flora in the 'garden of beginning.'

I signaled Henricks, who wanted to ask if he should return after dropping off Dredre, but I didn't give him the opportunity and ordered, "You don't have to return. Just go and make sure the teleportation hubs are functioning and running before the Southern Royal Family reaches a compromise and green lights the expansion to the entire Southern region. I don't want to, but if I have I will contract outside help to complete the project in time."

"I understand, boss. I know what's at stake here," Henricks assured before teleporting to Sky Blossom City with Dredre.

My teleportation network's five-region expansion plan was a huge project. The Freedom Fighters didn't have enough array masters to take this project on. I will have to contract the array association of the five regions for the project.

A lot of capital was going to be invested to make my teleportation network's five-region expansion possible. It will take a lot of array masters to complete. No single organization could swallow it as everyone has their limits. That included the array masters. There were only so many teleportation arrays one group could arrange within the specified project period. I.e. every array master will get to make money, some more than others based on their skill and sweat.

So, what was this stake Henricks spoke about? It involved what came after the teleportation network was expanded to all five regions. The five regions will have thousands of teleportation hubs, with tens to hundreds of teleportation arrays each. All these teleportation arrays would need periodic maintenance and repair, especially the ones used frequently. Creating hundreds of thousands of stable and high paying jobs.

However, not just anybody could maintain these teleportation arrays. Skilled array masters were required. Who better than the array masters that help expand the teleportation network to all five regions? These jobs will be eyed by all, especially the five array master associations of five regions.

That was a good thing because I planned to use that as leverage to maintain the upper hand in negotiations with the array master organizations across the five regions,

including the five array master associations. If I don't use these jobs to create a divide between these array master organizations and foster a competitive environment, these organizations will join hands to sit on my head and make unreasonable demands every turn, at that rate I might go bankrupt before the expansion was even halfway through.

However, I could just hand over such lucrative jobs to outsiders when I have array masters at home. Still, I couldn't hand over these jobs to incapable array masters. Doing so would be akin to setting my project on blaze with my own hands.

Therefore, I gave the Freedom Fighters' array masters a heads up, asking them not to waste this opportunity to increase their skills and secure their future. They got a head start, and if they still couldn't crack it, I didn't plan to give them another opportunity.

I favored the array masters from the Freedom Fighters over those from five regions because they were my people now and also because they were all honest and trustworthy people who were willing to do more than something to bring about the change they wanted to see in the world. I believed that if I uplifted them now, they would do everything in their power to uplift me for the rest of their lives.

I wasn't just looking for capable staff but capable and trustworthy staff, who would protect and continue my legacy even in my absence.

"Wyatt, my young friend. I see you like our garden?" A voice interrupted my train of thoughts, my eyes rested on a curtly dressed old gentleman who appeared to have rushed over in a hurry.

"Yes. I don't know why, but this particular stump is especially comfortable and relaxing. Is there something special about it, Dean Faust?"

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"Young friend, we have been nothing but welcoming and hospitable as hosts to you, do you agree?" Dean Faust said, skipping the small talk and formalities, hearing the sarcasm in my words. He was already pissed that he had to hurry over abandoning his experiment midway because of his young guests' antics.

"I don't know because I am not your guest. Haven't I made that clear when I first entered your campus? I am here to seek justice for my auntie Denise and her daughter. And your organization has been nothing but uncooperative. If you guys don't arrange a meeting between me and the pristine princess ASAP, I'm willing to go to any lengths to make you cooperate," I threatened as my fingers dug into the dead bark of the stump. The crisp crunch of it made Dean Faust's heart almost explode in shock and fear, prompting him to exclaim, "Wait, don't do anything rash."

"Rash? Dean, you haven't seen anything yet," I glared at Dean Faust as my eyes scanned our surroundings. I was surrounded. There were about seven dozen demigods surrounding me from every direction possible in a very complicated battle array formation which was again an extension of the pseudo-natural formation and the artificial field dungeon whose shared core and time rule power source was hidden in the past. Therefore, I couldn't help but add, "I'm warning you, my physical prowess is no weaker than that of the Heatsend royal family's unparalleled physique, before you even think of it, I will have destroyed this temporal anchor. Don't force me to do something you all will come to regret."

"Go ahead, break it..." a playful voice sounded, daring me to destroy the lightning-struck stump, "We have other temporal anchors made just for a situation like today."

"And who might you be?" I asked the woman who suddenly appeared besides Dean Faust, realizing it wasn't just the dean, but every faculty member didn't seem to understand the basic manners of introducing oneself. These so-called elite academicians were very socially awkward. No wonder Sansa chose to hide here among these as professors.

Also, I noticed that expressions of the Dean and the other demigods surrounding me turned dignified with the woman's arrival. It appears they were just as astonished by her sudden arrival and words as I was. Their faces appeared like children who got caught doing a mistake. To get such a reaction from the Dean and others, she must be a bigshot in Morningstar University, who apparently had not been informed about me taking the temporal anchor hostage.

"I am Lucine Morgenstern, Morningstar University's 3rd dean. Ahalya Johnson's mentor and guardian," Lucine introduced herself as the ex-dean and Ahalya's mentor. Also, her surname came as a huge shock to me. I couldn't help but wonder about relation to the founder of Morningstar University.

"Man, I sure thought that the 3rd Dean of Morningstar University would be smarter. You and I both know that Morningstar University doesn't have the capital to waste on maintaining two or more temporal anchors at one point in time. Don't get me wrong, you guys are rich, but you are not bottomless. Budget wise, it would make more sense for you guys to opt for linear time travel. I.e. one time tunnel connecting all three past, present, and future of this lightning struck stump. This is more economical and energy efficient for a long term usage. Not only can you not afford multiple temporal anchors,

they will further complicate this whole arrangement you guys have going on here," I mocked Lucine's intellect even though I knew she was just bluffing to call my bluff.

"Young man, if you are smart enough to catch my bluff, then you must be smart enough to know that if you destroy that temporal anchor, then you will never be able to meet Ahalya because she will be lost in time with the time vestige. They weren't lying when they said Ahalya had entered the time vestige for her time rule related doctoral project," Lucine replied with a hint of astonishment. She didn't expect a teenager to be so well versed in the functioning of time and University.

The teenager's deduction was spot on. The more temporal anchors they created, the more complex the arrangement would get, and it would propositionally consume an increased amount of Time Rule power to maintain multiple interconnected time tunnels across past, present, and future of all the time anchors.

All this for what? To hide the Time Vestige from an enemy that might or might not come. The Time Vestige was precious, but they couldn't spend so many resources just to safeguard it. It had become the prime example of the saying: the vault was more valuable than the treasure in it.

However, they also couldn't just leave Time Vestige without enough protection. So, they found a solution within the budget they found acceptable. Leaving them with a single temporal anchor guarded by a hidden kaleidoscope maze array formation, but before they could even get an opportunity to use this array the boy had already taken the time anchor hostage and then it was too late for them to do anything about it.

"Fine, then call her back. I am sure you guys have a way to contact the card apprentice that had entered the time vestige. I need to confirm that sending her to the time vestige was not your conspiracy to get rid of the victim, your crime, and evidence under the guise of an accident or something similar to that," I said, testing Ahalya's mentor/guardian. After all, Ahalya has been under Lucine's care and guidance for almost a couple of decades now. I had no plans about asking Ahalya to choose between her birth mother and the mother who raised her. So, if Lucine was a bad mentor/guardian then it will make my job easier. However, if her feelings for Ahalya were genuine then things would only get more complex.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"Young man, this is not melodrama. I have no idea why you have such a low impression of Morningstar University, but if we were as villainous and domineering as you make us out to be, do you think we need to resort to such tricks? Believe me, there are a lot simpler and direct ways we would resort to before even thinking of using the time vestige to hide our crimes," Lucine remarked with a smirk.

Something about the way she said what she said made me feel that she was speaking from experience. Considering that she was the 3rd dean of Morningstar University, she was the dean somewhere during the demon invasion and the monster mayhem, the times back then were chaotic and totally different from the peaceful times like now.

Lucine proved a tough opponent to read, I will just have to ask her directly, "Why are you keeping Auntie Denise from her daughter? Don't act like you don't know what I am talking about. With your power and influence, you could easily get Auntie Denise enough privilege to move to the central academic city and live with her daughter. Yet, you didn't. Why?"

"Isn't it obvious? I don't like to share. I want Ahalya all to myself. She is my dearest daughter and disciple. If it were up to me, I would have never allowed to contact her birth mother, let alone periodically," Lucine answered honestly, knowing that the young man before her had keen eyes and would not buy anything but the truth. If not for the sake of the temporal anchor, she wouldn't have bothered to bluff earlier either. She thought lying was beneath someone of her status and wisdom.

"Woah, you are surprisingly honest. That makes things easier for me but bad for you because I am here to help Ahalya reunite with her mother," I informed, having deduced Lucine had no idea who I am, let alone why I was here. I had no idea how someone in her field wouldn't know who I am. Was I overestimating myself or was Lucine living in a bubble?

I also kept an eye on Dean Faust's expression. He appeared indifferent, but his eyes gave him away. They seem to look at Lucine in reverence but occasionally in pity too, especially when she spoke.

"Reunite, Why? Ahalya is a grown woman. She can decide for herself. If she wants to meet her birth mother, she will. She doesn't need you to help her," Lucine refuted, looking at me as if looking at a fool.

'What's going on here?' I couldn't help but ask myself. Clearly, I was missing something here. Because, from Lucine's response and reaction, it seemed like Ahalya wasn't being kept in Morningstar University against her will. Talking to Lucine painted a totally different picture compared to when talking with Dean Faust or Chief Denise or what Hive Spirit found during its due diligence.

Seeing me glance at him suspiciously, Dean Faust came forward and finally spoke up, "Madam, don't waste your breath on that fool. Leave that troublemaker to us."

"Sam, I would love to do that, but we can't take any chances with the temporal anchor. Especially, when there are still our people in the past," Lucine rejected Dean Faust's suggestion as she was worried for her disciple/daughter's life.

As for the time vestige. Even if it was lost in time, it will eventually find its way back home, the garden of beginning. The artificial field dungeon was built on the site where the time vestige was first discovered. Its founders believed that the time vestige would help complete and support the 'garden of beginning' for ages to come.

"Fuck!" I exclaimed in shock after I used my primordial soul pupils to observe Lucine and, to my dismay, I found that most of her soul pathways and arrangement of her head were missing — no — in the past. Making it past that, I tried to understand how she was even alive. Only to learn that she was suffering from something similar to dementia. That explains it. Though it was surprising that Morningstar University had not only kept her around but still revered her, It could be seen in the way Dean Faust and the demigods surrounding me looked at her.

I mean, in times when one's own family can't be trusted, this woman, Lucine, had an entire organization caring for her. And from the looks of it, they seemed to be doing it out of genuine gratitude and reverence, and not out of any ulterior motives. This was what I wanted and had been seeking and building towards. Somehow, this female card apprentice before me had achieved it.

Yes, I envied her.

"Young man," Lucine uttered aloud with a stern stare in response to me cussing.

"Ma'am, don't get excited. Please head back to your work. Don't waste your precious time on these small squabbles. I promise you I will not do anything to the temporal anchor as long as they don't force me," I assured, seeing the more Lucine got excited, the more of her soul pathways moved to the past.

Listening to my words, Dean Faust and other demigod staff of Morningstar University were astonished. They looked at me in shock, realizing that I knew what was wrong with their ex-dean Lucine.

Now that I knew I was dealing with a patient, I couldn't help but take a step back. Regardless of Lucine's past, she was now a loon. I didn't bully loons. Ask Corey if you don't believe me.

I swear ever since I arrived here, nothing was going according to my plan. First Dean Faust with his laid back and easygoing welcome and now Lucine with her time rule

dementia. These guys were really making it hard for me to step on them and announce to the world my plans for the Southern Academic City starting next academic year.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

Lucine eyed the teenage card apprentice before her. She found that the way he looked at her had suddenly changed. His eyes had the same pity her staff had in their eyes when looking at her. Though the pity in his eyes for her was mixed with envy and longing.

She knew that she knew why they were looking at her like that, but she couldn't remember. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't remember. Just then the boy asked her not to push herself for him and return, trusting him, to her staff. What does he know that I don't seem to remember— wait — who's that kid? What's he doing standing on the temporal anchor? What am I doing here? Aaaahhhh!

"Madam Dean, are you alright!" Dean Faust asked in panic, seeing that Lucine appeared to be in discomfort and about to collapse.

I watched and recorded Lucine's soul pathways and arrangements as her time rule dementia flared up, causing her to collapse, losing consciousness. Nothing life threatening. It's just that most of her brain's soul pathways and arrangements had moved to the past, so it wasn't able to function normally, so it chose to shut down. She was just unconscious and not in a coma.

Yes, a coma and even death was possible if more of her brain's soul pathways and arrangements had moved to the past. But before that happened, her brain automatically shut down as a protection mechanism. I observed that the parts of soul pathways and arrangements that had moved to the past were slowly returning.

After checking her condition and making sure she was recovering, Dean Faust signaled one of the female demigod staff to take her to her chambers. Amidst all this, I didn't let my guard down. I didn't want some ambitious demigod staff of Morningstar University taking advantage of my distraction.

Sending unconscious Lucine away, Dean Faust finally paid his full attention to me and expressed appreciation for my understanding towards Lucine's disease even though it might only have made things worse, "Thank you, young friend."

Taking a deep breath, he continued, "Seeing you figured out our old dean is not doing well. I am guessing you know what Time Rule Dementia is."

"A little bit," I answered even though I had witnessed it for the time by observing Lucine's soul pathways.

"Ahalya's doctoral project is based on time rule dementia. She hopes to find a cure or at least a way to suppress it. Anything to help her mentor," Dean Faust informed, not getting the reaction he expected from me, he changed the topic, "I promise you, things are not as they seem. Ahalya is not here against her will. She was at first. I mean, what child isn't when they are enrolled in a boarding school. But that changed with time. Honestly, I don't know what happened for Denise Johnson to reach out to you about this, but we are conducting an internal review. I'm sure it's just a bit of miscommunication."

"..." My brows grew narrower the more I listened to Dean Faust. I was beginning to wonder what I had gotten myself into. I came here to reunite Denise and her daughter and while at it, use Morningstar University as a stepping stone to announce my big plans. However, nothing was going according to my plan and things were only getting complicated.

I thought now that Lucine had been carried away, Dean Faust would get down to business, but he did not. Instead, he began telling his sob story and I let him, hoping to learn more about Lucine and how she got time rule dementia.

The first time I read about time dementia was when I was reading about the various time zones of the various realms across the myriad realms. My curiosity stemmed from my need to understand the various sectors' time zone in the devil merchant code's inter-realm city to take advantage of their soul energy and rule power rich atmosphere.

Apparently, Time Rule Dementia has been a very rare disease that was only seen among celestial beings whose comprehension and understanding of the Time Rule was skewed. As a result, that particular celestial being gets stuck in a time loop where different parts of its celestial body are in different times—past, present, and future—similar to what Lucine's brain was suffering from.

Honestly, Lucine suffering from time rule dementia was like a virus that only affects bats but suddenly got mutated and was now infecting humans. Thankfully, unlike the viruses, time rule dementia wasn't contagious.

I would really like to know how a mortal not only managed to get a disease that only affects celestial beings but lives to tell about it. Hive Spirit has copied all of her soul

pathways we could get and concluded that there was nothing special about her; she was a regular card demigod.

Therefore, I didn't bother to interrupt Dean Faust as he told his sob story, but so far I have heard nothing of value. It didn't take me long to understand that he was just trying to invoke the understanding I showed with regards to Lucine's condition, to morally and emotionally manipulate me into taking a step back and reaching a compromise. That was a win for them because I had made it very obvious since beginning that I was here to pick a fight and Ahalya was just an excuse.

"All I am trying to say is wait till Ahalya returns from the time vestige. She will make everything clear to you," Dean Faust concluded, asking me not to resort to something rash and proposing the same thing he has been since the start, that I wait till Ahalya was back from the time vestige. If I didn't know better I would think the Dean was stalling for time or laying a trap.

It didn't matter because in Ahalya's absence, I wanted to use her unavailability to kick up a fuss and create a stage for my big announcement to the world.

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Chapter 2488: Checkmate?

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

I glanced over at the almost seven dozen demigods surrounding me, and rested my eyes on Dean Faust, realizing one component was missing for me to start stirring up trouble — an audience.

We were inside the 'garden of beginning,' even if I win here, I wouldn't have achieved my goal without an audience to watch me step on Morningstar University and hear me announce the new City Lord of the Southern Academic City.

'*Fuck!*' Although I managed to get Morningstar University's full attention by taking the temporal anchor hostage, it came at the cost of me losing my audience. This was why I

planned to make a grand entrance, gather as much attention as possible and conquer all the traffic in the grimoire network.

However, Dean Faust destroyed all my plans with his fucked up welcome and giving me full access to the University campus. Successfully using the little attention I managed to garner to his advantage, to show the world that Morningstar University was open to like-minded people.

It was a common assumption among the citizens of the five regions that the top ten universities were only open to the elite who passed their tests and agreed to their exorbitant tuition fees. All in all, they were the untouchable holy land of knowledge and development in the Card World.

Average card apprentices revered them, wanting to be them, but the smart ones, the truly smart ones, saw them as tyrants. As a result, most of them stayed away and joined other four academic cities based on their convenience and needs, despite the central academic city's tempting student loans and vault of knowledge. That was how the other four academic cities were still in the running and not out of the game.

I planned to use this perspective to my advantage. Be it Earth or Card World, these top universities were very exclusive and a group of tight-knit people. If you are not one of them, they do not have room for you. These guys only made a tiny percent of the field but were holding the largest percentage of the resources and funding.

Yes, they were the best and hard working, but sometimes the world changing inventions come from the least expected places by least expected people. For example, back on earth the telephone and the first electronic computer were invented by people who didn't even have any prior knowledge or education in that field.

The top ten universities had a monopoly over the elites in the five regions. No matter what promises and changes I bring to the Southern Academic City, these people will end up choosing the top ten universities. There was no denying it. I don't blame them. After all, they studied and practiced for them for most of their life. Nor was I interested in them. I was interested in the card apprentices who could be the next Alexander Graham Bell or John Vincent Atanasoff of the card world.

Actually, with the popularization of the VR-universe many capable people from the least expected places were popping up across the five regions even though most of them were just copying what they saw in the VR-universe, there were enough who learned for the VR-universe and were applying in the Card World to make it a better place. These were self-motivated people doing what they liked out of their own interests and reasons and not just because someone told them that was the only way to be successful in life.

They were the five regions' population's untapped potential. However, they were random and there was no systematic way to unearth them and polish them to their best shine. This was why the top ten universities had failed to capitalize on them.

Yes, I wasn't the only one who saw this untapped potential in the five regions card apprentice population; the top ten universities did too. They were trying their best to address that. However, their elite and exclusive reputation was making it hard for them to do so. Most importantly, they couldn't afford to touch this reputation of theirs because if they lose the elite and exclusive status, they would lose the charm to most of their potential students. If just anyone could enter them then why would anyone waste their teenage life preparing for them?

Back on Earth, the top universities, especially the Ivy League academics, addressed this by providing executive classes, workshops, and online classes with limited seats and above average tuition fee. However, the top ten universities of the card world couldn't do the same. After all, one couldn't teach card creation, array formation, etc online on the grimoire network. You need a practical class with a capable teacher monitoring and guiding you every step of the process. Nonetheless, it was now possible with the arrival of the VR-universe. Therefore, the top ten universities not only heavily invested in it but were making plans to add it to their syllabus until the Morningstar University ban.

Back to the matter at hand, Dean Faust used me to show the citizens of the five regions that even if they were not related to Morningstar University in any way, they were welcome to Morningstar University if they felt like they could make a contribution to the knowledge and development, no matter how small it was.

This worked because of two reasons: I was the guy who invented the VR-universe, one of the most brilliant minds of the current generation, and also I was the Southern Hope, possibly considered as a rival of Morningstar University. The elite were happy to work with someone considered as the smartest person of their generation. As for the citizens of five regions, they felt if Morningstar University can accommodate someone known as Southern Hope, it could accommodate them too. This way, both the elite and the regular population of the five regions were happy while Morningstar University got what it wanted.

I gave them an ultimatum through the grimoire network to gather a huge audience for my plans, but I also gave the Morningstar University a chance to prepare for what's to come. And they were prepared. If not for my taking the temporal anchor, they would have me in checkmate. From manipulating public opinion to using me to advertise their generosity and open-minded image, they were just brilliant.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"Fine. I will wait for Ahalya here," I compromised knowing there was nothing to gain by blowing up now. Since I could not make a grand entrance. I decided to pull off a grand exit. People knew that I had not only arrived at Morningstar University but also entered it, they wouldn't wait to see how things develop from there. And I will give them a exit worth their waiting for.

When I said I will wait, I only plan to leave behind a clone manned by a few of my primordial spirits. This way the clone will have the strength to resist until I arrive in case of something unexpected. After all, Morningstar University was not to be trusted. They definitely had a final play in place seeing how Dean Faust kept insisting on waiting for Ahalya to return from the Time Vestige. Whatever it was, I was ready to use it for my grand exit.

"Young friend, why not wait in our guesthouse? We will inform you when she is out of the time vestige," Dean Faust proposed, seeing that I compromised and stopped demanding to meet Ahalya or contact her right away. He reached for a foot now that I have given him an inch. I don't blame him, I would have done the same. But that didn't mean that I would just roll over to whatever he said.

I silently noted that at first he wanted me to wait at the student and staff dormitory, but now he was asking me to use the guesthouse. This old guy, I don't think he would have changed his attitude towards me if I hadn't found the temporal anchor and taken it hostage. I guess regardless of one's reputation, others don't truly begin to respect them unless they have personally witnessed them at work.

"How about I just see if the time vestige will return from the past to the present if I destroy the temporal anchor? You must have taken some safety precautions for such an event, right?" I threatened, not bothering to further negotiate with Dean Faust.

"Young friend, don't misunderstand me. It's just that Ahalya and team have entered the time vestige to test their hypothesis about the Time Rule Dementia, it would take them weeks or months to complete their research and return. Instead of wasting your time waiting for them. You could carry on with your work. Our guest houses are equipped with state-of-the-art card labs with all the latest machinery and array formations. If you need a bigger lab, our new research facilities happen to be only a few hundred yards from the guesthouse. It's just that we don't want you to delay your work over this," Dean Faust explained to me with a gentle smile and a twinkling glint in his eyes. I was creeped out by it, it was like he didn't view me as a human but an object — an opportunity, to be more accurate.

The longer I stayed here, the more credible their open-minded image they advertised to the world would appear. Not to mention, there was bound to be interactions between me

and their faculties and students, and if it were to lead to something like say collaboration or even an internship, then even better.

I see what was going on here. I wanted the world leaders and organizations to see me as their equals, and now that they saw me as their equal. They saw an opportunity to make a lot of money in me. However, our history, my difficult attitude, and my alliances were making it difficult for them to openly suggest a collaboration. They wanted me, especially the wealth I could generate. As for the VR-universe, it will always be there. They could slowly get to it once they had me.

As they say love and hatred might not be permanent, but interest was. Since the new wave of development and change in the card world would be led by the VR-universe and me, they had no choice but to put away their little thoughts and our little differences, so that they could make money with me instead of watching me and my allies make money.

"Dean Faust, I appreciate the offer but I am quite comfortable here on this branch," I said, as I chose the primordial clones to leave behind while I made use of my privilege with the devil merchant code to transfer rest of my soul into a pseudo-calamity core in the basement of the new Tyrant Sun Raven guild headquarters.

"Well, please do as you see fit. I will leave behind a few staff to attend to you. If you need anything at all just holler them," Dean Faust generously offered while signaling the demigod staff to leave but a half a dozen of them remained. I didn't expect Dean Faust to leave behind six demigods to attend to me, he really thought highly of me. Had I not known that the 'garden of beginning,' was always under surveillance, I would have misunderstood that they were here to monitor me.

However, just as Dean Faust was about to excuse himself, the time and space of the 'garden of beginning,' began to vibrate violently. Sensing this, Dean Faust immediately warned me, "Young friend, you have to get out of there now... hurry, the time vestige is returning from the past. That's the eye of the time tunnel, if you get caught in it, it will be too late."

Dean Faust hesitated but still chose to reveal the core secret about the time vestige just so that their young guest would not suffer the same tragedy their 3rd Dean Lucine had suffered. Though she managed to survive it, she was never the same since that day forth. He didn't want the leader of the new generation of the card apprentices to suffer such a tragic fate so young without fulfilling his duty of taking them all into the new era.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

I sensed the vibration even before Dean Faust warned me, as the source of the vibration turned out to be the temporal anchor. Standing on the temporal anchor, I was the first person to notice it. As the vibration in the temporal anchor intensified, the surrounding space and time began to vibrate and morph into a cyclone of sorts. Only when I listened to Dean Faust's warning did I realize that it wasn't a temporal cyclone but a time tunnel used by them to send the time vestige and the other parts of the array back in the past.

"Hurry, young friend, get out of there!" Dean Faust exclaimed again. However, it was too late; he was in the eye of the time tunnel. The temporal and spatial forces during the time tunnel's formation were too great even for their ex-Dean Lucine, a venerable Card Demigod. If she couldn't escape it, how could a teenage Card Master possibly escape? Not to mention, he was at the eye of the time tunnel, where the acting forces were the strongest.

Just when Dean Faust was thinking his young friend will be sucked into the temporal and spatial forces from the formation of the time tunnel and get lost in unknown time and space, he noticed something astonishing, his young friend unharmed by the combined forces of time and space with the time tunnel's formation.

"What are the odds of that," Dean Faust uttered in disbelief before he continued, "Young friend, the calm is fleeting, and you must be prepared to get out of there somehow. Let me think..."

The eye of the time tunnel was the dangerous place to be caught in. It was where the temporal and spatial forces converge and diverge with the formation and collapse of the time tunnel. But there was a small spot in the eye that expanded as the forces began to form the walls of the time tunnel. It was only calm until the time tunnel was formed. Then it becomes the bridge connecting past, present, and future. Anyone unfortunate enough to be inside it would be lost in time.

Dean Faust didn't know if his young friend was lucky or unlucky to have found that one safe zone in the eye of the circle. However, they didn't have much time as only seconds remained for the time tunnel to be formed. Before that happened, the young man had to get out of there or get lost in time for eternity. That was easier said than done, as the walls of the time tunnel that kept him safe for now in that one spot were also what kept him trapped in that spot until the inevitable.

In just a fraction of a second, Dean Faust processed his comprehension and understanding of space rule, time rule, and the time tunnel, but everything said that he

should say his goodbye to his young friend now because a couple seconds later it will be too late.

In the next fraction of a second, Dean Faust's mind and heart underwent a huge turmoil. Suppressing his internal turmoil, Dean Faust finally bid goodbye to his young friend, pleading, "Wyatt, I'm sorry, there is nothing I can do to help you. Also, I hate to have to ask you this, but this is important. It concerns the fate of every card apprentice alive and to be born. So, I will be shameless and ask,

What will happen to the VR-universe after your demise? Have you made any prior arrangements? If not, if you can find it in you to trust me, I promise you I will use the VR-universe to usher the card world into a new era.

Wyatt, I am begging you, please don't let our past differences rob the Card World of what could be the biggest leap for the entire card apprentice society since its foundation. I swear in the presence of the Card World, I will not only continue your legacy impartially but pass it on to a worthy heir when it is time."

"..." I, who was monitoring the formation of the time tunnel from within the safe spot in its eye, was left speechless listening to Dean Faust's pleas. I could be shameless when I needed to be, but Dean Faust, he took to another level. What he was doing was akin to begging your dying enemy to give their will to you.

Wasn't he supposed to be a brilliant mind of his time? I still didn't understand what made him think that this would work. I guess desperate times call for desperate measures. At least this way I got to understand his true thoughts. I guess he thought it wasn't necessary to hide his thoughts from a dying man.

Why was I not panicking when my enemies were panicking for me? That was because of the simple fact that the time rules of the myriad realms didn't affect me, and thanks to my celestial force, so did space rules. The only reason I didn't move or try to leave the eye of the time tunnel was that I was afraid my interruption might cause the time tunnel to backfire, putting the time vestige and the souls of those inside it in danger. Therefore, in order to ensure their safe arrival, I decided to do something I wouldn't recommend to anyone else: Using the forming time tunnel to travel to the past from where the time vestige was coming to the present.

Was I not afraid of getting lost in time for eternity? No, because I had saved the energy signature and the vibration frequency at which the temporal anchor vibrated before commencing the formation of the time tunnel.

I will use the temporal anchor's energy signature to navigate through time and resonate at the frequency it did to summon the time tunnel, to find my way back to the present.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

It was a rule of thumb that all soul pathways were always in motion, and this motion often takes the form of vibration. Even if the temporal anchor appears motionless and in a state of rest, its soul pathways were always in motion, that was the natural vibration of the temporal anchor. When it activates to summon the time tunnel, its vibration frequency increases.

I was planning on using the temporal anchor's energy signature and natural vibration frequency as a point in time to navigate through its temporal currents. This way I will always know where in time I was and not get lost in it. Then, resonating at the temporal anchor's active state's vibration frequency, I can summon the time tunnel and return to the present.

Both Hive Spirit and my calculations predicted that with the energy signature and vibrational frequencies of the temporal anchor, I have a good chance of going into the temporal currents of the card world and returning without getting lost. Especially with my immunity to the myriad realm's time rule.

Why go into the time and risk getting lost in it? Surely, there must be another solution that allowed me to move out of the time tunnel's way without affecting its formation.

There were many reasons, and to name a few,

The first reason was obvious. I didn't want to do anything that would harm Ahalya.

The second reason was my curiosity. I wanted to find out if the time vestige really traveled to the past. If it did, how come Morningstar University wasn't ruling the entire card world by now? Am I wrong to assume that if a greedy organization can go into the past, they would obviously do everything to be in power and maximize their profits, like rewriting the past in their favor?

The third reason was my thirst for power. I wanted to begin comprehending the time rule. With my mutated ego-gem's synchronous rate, I didn't need to put my life at risk to comprehend the time rule. I could do it normally by picking into the Card World's womb or into the time rule source. This was also the reason why I dared to go into the Card world's temporal currents. If all my preparations fail, I could just begin comprehending the time rule until it was strong enough to get out of the temporal currents and bring me back home.

The fourth reason was I am part celestial. Getting lost in the temporal current might be scary, even a mind breaking experience for the other card apprentices, but for me it was just a maze waiting to be solved.

I could go on about why I chose this solution over any other solution I could think of, but I had already made my decision and the time tunnel was here.

"Be right back, buddy," I mouthed to Dean Faust as the time tunnel formed, sucking anything and everything in its path into the realm's temporal currents.

Dean Faust stared blankly as his young friend was sucked into the temporal currents of the Card World as the time tunnel formed and spit out the time vestige above the lightning-struck tree before leaving.

"Damn you, you selfish bastard, Dalton Wyatt!" Dean Faust roared in agony, with bloodshot eyes, seeing the future of the Card World die without leaving them a ray of hope for the world to recover from losing him. He appeared to have lost his academicians' aura and looked more like a madman.

"Damn you, Wyatt!" haggard Dean Faust uttered in a daze, until the six demigods he arranged to tend to the selfish and arrogant bastard's needs rushed to his side and tried to console him, "Dean, control yourself."

"Dean, what's done is done. We can't waste time crying over spilled milk."

"Yes, Dean. We need to hurry and use the news of his death to our advantage."

"Sir, I suggest that we liquidate all our assets and investments in the VR-universe while VR-universe is still hot in the market."

"Also, we need to discuss how we are going to reveal this information to the world. After all, by now all the five regions know that Southern Hope is on our campus, and we invited him to stay as long as he pleased."

"The Southern Royal Family is going to be a problem. Let us not disclose anything until we have liquidated our assets and investments in the VR-universe and made the necessary preparations against the Southern Royal family."

"Yes, I agree and purpose that no eight soul knows about what happened here until we have cut our losses and are ready to face the consequences."

"That's a wise idea."

"Here, here."

"I agree."

"I agree."

"I agree, but can we spread the rumors about us collaborating with Wyatt on VR- Universe before we liquidate our investment in the VR-Universe?"

"That's a brilliant idea, but will we face backlash when we finally reveal his death?"

"There is bound to be a backlash regardless of what we do, but the question is, if we stand to make enough such that the backlash is worth it?"

"Considering the popularity of the VR-universe, a collaboration between us and Wyatt will definitely increase the public investment into the VR-universe. Based on the trend so far, I wouldn't be surprised if we make twice what we invested in the VR-universe."

"Fuck, that's a lot of money. Imagine how many researches and experiments we can fund with that kind of money."

"I hate to break it to you, but that's nothing compared to what we would stand to make more if we had actually managed to collaborate with Wyatt. Or if he bigheartedly trusted his legacy to our Dean."

"Keep dreaming. We saw first-hand how spiteful, arrogant, and narrow-minded he can be. He would never collaborate with us for orchestrating his kidnapping in cahoots with the central government."

"Yes, I wouldn't be surprised if he collaborated with the other top universities just to spite us. In a way, his death is good for us—"

"Shut up! All of you ungrateful, narrow minded bastards, shut up. We still have time to save Wyatt. Go get the 3rd Dean, we need her to go into past again," Dean Faust finally awakened from his daze, having figured out a way to save the future of the Card World.

"Dean, Madam Lucine is—"

"Just do as I say and don't question me. One more word from your mouths and I will strangle you guys," Deen Faust warned his staff and then reminded them who their 3rd Dean really was, "I know Madam Lucine, she would rather sacrifice her life for the future of the five regions than continue living as a loon. Just go get her before it's too late."

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"I'm sorry, Ma'am Dean!" Dean Faust apologized aloud on his knees before the 3rd Dean of Morningstar University, Lucine Morgenstern.

Then, he proceeded to kowtowed hiding streams of tears down his cheek, wetting his white beard. With a trembling but firm voice, he pleaded, "The university... the world needs you to go to the past again, Dean. I'm sorry, I failed you."

It was very difficult for Dean Faust to come to this decision. Watching their young guest sucked into the temporal current, he knew immediately that the only card apprentice at Morningstar University that can save their young guest was Madam Lucine, but he struggled internally to make a decision. It took a while, but he made the decision knowing Madam Lucine would blame him if he didn't do everything to save the future of the Card World.

Seeing Faust kowtow, the other six demigods were ashamed of themselves. Instead of seeing the bigger picture of what was at stake here and trying their best to protect it, they were focused on the small gains. After their initial hesitation, they didn't hesitate to join their Dean and kowtow to the 3rd. They were too disappointed in themselves to beg for forgiveness. They let their combined silence speak of their determination.

"Get up, we can discuss who did what later. Tell me exactly what I have to do before it's too late," Lucine asked without bothering to confirm the situation, such was her trust in her staff. She had no idea what these seven were going on about, but she knew that it must be big considering that their arrogant asses were kowtowing to her and crying a river.

Dean Faust didn't get up. He continued to kowtow, unable to face Lucine. The same was true for the other demigods. After all, what they were asking Lucine was akin to sending her to her death.

"Ma'am, I have shared the info with your grimoire. Please save it as a periodic five minutes reminder. This way, even if you begin to lose your memory, you will know why and what you're doing in the temporal currents," Dean Faust informed, getting on his feet, planning to witness Lucine's heroics, assuming full responsibility for his decision.

However, the other six demigods continued to kowtow, unable to forgive themselves. They couldn't understand when they got so consumed by the competition between the top ten universities that they failed to see the bigger picture. They failed to live up to the ceremonial oath they took when they accepted their tenure. They tainted the legacy of Morningstar University's founders.

Going through the file Dean Faust shared with her, Lucine set it as a recurring alert with a five-minute interval in her grimoire without a hint of hesitation. Nobody knew the horror of entering the temporal current better than her. Yet here she was, preparing to enter it again, even though she had no recollection of the boy she was supposed to be rescuing from the temporal currents. She didn't doubt Dean Faust or question his decision, just prepared to execute it with her all.

Lucine glanced over the time vestige above the lightning-stuck stump and rested her eyes on the six demigods kowtowing on her side. She willed her intent, forcing the six demigods to stand on their feet and then glancing into each of their eyes, she began, "I don't know what you guys did, but I forgive you. But only you can redeem yourself in your eyes. I can't help you guys with that. I leave the rest to you."

Listening to Lucine, the six demigods broke into tears like little children, vowing in their hearts to live a life they could be proud of, a life that would make their predecessors proud of them when they finally meet them in the womb of Card World.

Before Lucine, they truly were akin to children. She was still Morningstar University's Dean when a couple of them were admitted to the university as freshmen. Morningstar University was their identity, their life. They can't forgive themselves for forgetting the principles the university was built on.

Seeing them like this, Lucine shook her head with a gentle smile, knowing that there was no punishment that she could give them that would be more effective than the one they would give themselves for the rest of their lives. However, she hoped that they could forgive themselves by the end.

Lucine then stepped towards the lightning-struck stump unhurriedly, knowing that time was no longer an issue. No matter who goes first, they will be at the same point in time at the same time, unless the boy somehow manages to change his destination in time.

Hopefully, his mastery of time rule wasn't high enough. It would be hard for a layman to divert from the path of the university's time tunnel. Since he was sucked in from one end of the time tunnel, he would be thrown out of the other end. As long as he stayed put at that point in time, it would be easier for her to get him out, with a simple in and out. Otherwise, the odds of either of them surviving would be slim.

Yes, Lucine was heading into the time current only to return with the boy or search for him in time current for eternity. She was a card researcher. She didn't give into the situation. She would think of thousands of ways to tackle the situation and patiently try them all out until she succeeded. With every failure, her resolve would only grow stronger, and her means would get wiser. The notion of giving up was utterly alien to her.

Just then, several figures came out of the time vestige. Among them was a beautiful woman with an innocent vibe of a newborn baby. She appeared and felt so pure and

immaculate that all the filth in the world seemed to avoid her as if she were the bane of its existence. Looking at Lucine, she exclaimed, "Master, you didn't have to come personally to receive me."

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

Before Lucine could reply to her filial disciple, Ahalya noticed the oddness in the atmosphere as her eyes glanced over their Dean and six of the most reputed card demigod academicians of their university. They were quick to erase their tear stains, but the sadness and sorrow were obvious in their eyes.

How could they not be? They were sending their memory-challenged ex-dean back into the temporal currents of the Card World knowing what it did to her the first time. They knew the odds of the 3rd returning were very low. Still, they had to do this. If they don't manage to save the boy, they— Morningstar University, would go down pages of history as the sinner of the Card World.

"What's going on?" Ahalya skeptically asked, knowing that it had been long since her master had stopped waiting for her return in the 'garden of beginning' when she entered the time vestige. Clearly, something was off.

"Master, what's going on?" Ahalya repeated herself, feeling a sense of foreboding.

"Nothing. You head to your lab and record your findings in our university archives. I will join you soon," Lucine didn't answer Ahalya. Instead, ordered her to leave, signaling Ahalya's exploration team to take her away.

"Leader, let's go. The sooner we get our findings verified, the sooner we can publish them to attract generous fundings," a perky woman from Ahalya's team said, pulling her toward the exit of the 'garden of beginning,' knowing her assignment.

Ahalya shook her teammate's grasp off and grabbed her master's wrist. Taking her hand in hers, she glanced into her master's eyes as she enquired with a low, but clear voice, "Are you planning to enter the temporal currents again?"

Lucine's brows widened before she shook her head and replied, "You have always been very perceptive as a child. I could never hide anything from you."

Lucine spoke from experience. After accepting Ahalya as her disciple, she soon learned that her discipline could read her like an open book, she couldn't hide anything from her. For example, Ahalya stopped bringing up or speaking of any topic related to her birth mother, having sensed that Lucine didn't like it. She knew her master didn't just see her as a disciple, but as her child too.

"Yes, I am entering the temporal currents, and it is not up for debate. Just go and record your findings in the archive, I will be right back," Lucine sternly ordered Ahalya, but her eyes were pleading with the latter not to argue and just let her do this.

"Why?" Ahalya asked her master, unable to think of what could be possibly so important that their Dean would approve her master re-entering the temporal currents knowing the risk and odds.

"That's top secret. And I have declared the 'garden of beginning' under regulated zones. Only staff and students with my permission can be here. So, you lot, clear the 'garden of beginning' or face disciplinary actions," Dean Faust spoke up before Lucine could, knowing the 3rd couldn't lie to her disciple. She doted on her way too much unless it came to the latter's birth mother. He then signaled the other six demigods to take control of the situation.

"Fine. I'm going with my master then," Ahalya declared. Not bothered by Dean Faust's warning, meanwhile, her teammates were already leaving the garden. After all, their mentor wasn't the freaking direct descendant of the founder of Morningstar University. In a sense, Ahalya was the princess of Morningstar University. Hence, all her monikers had the word princess in them.

"No, you are not," Lucine exclaimed in panic, recalling the dread of being stuck in the tug of war between the spatial and temporal forces. If not for her adequate mastery of space and time rules, she would have been reduced to nothingness the first time she recklessly entered the temporal currents of the card world.

Seeing her like this, Dean Faust and the other six demigods knew instantly that Lucine wouldn't control her disciple. If things continued as they were they might not only risk losing the 3rd, but her disciple to the temporal currents of the Card World. They had to act now before Ahalya managed to convince Lucine to let her tag along.

"Why? Do you want to finish what you couldn't back then?" One of the six demigods maliciously blamed Ahalya for conspiring to kill Lucine using the temporal currents digging into the unfortunate past in the history of Morningstar University.

"No! I would never," Ahalya defended in horror. All the memories she had suppressed in the back of her mind suddenly flooded her mind. Still, she maintained a strong front and

argued, "My taintless trait makes me better suited for entering the temporal currents. If you are worried about my intentions, I will go in alone and complete whatever mission it is that you wanted my master to do."

Listening to Ahalya not only use his words against him but bend the situation to her desire, the demigod was left speechless. The other demigods blamed him for not thinking twice before acting. One of them hurriedly countered and rejected Ahalya's proposal, "No, that won't do. You don't have the required realm and enough mastery of space and time rules to undertake this mission. Don't argue and leave before we are forced to take disciplinary action against you."

The demigod spoke facts. Ahalya was a mere card king, and her mastery of space and time rule hadn't even reached the bifurcation point, her achievements so far in the space and time rules were only thanks to her taintless trait. Otherwise, it was very hard for lower-realm card apprentices to start the comprehension of space and time rules.

Still, Ahalya didn't accept defeat. Just as she was about to continue to argue, Lucine ordered aloud, "Stop it, Ahalya. I know you want to help, but all you are doing is making my condition worse as I take on a very difficult mission. Though I can't go into the details, the entire world's future hangs in the balance of this mission's success. Stop being a nuisance and just return to your dormitory right now."

Lucine was not only harsh with her words but also signaled one of the Demigod staff to drag Ahalya away and put her under house arrest until she returns, or until her soul candle in the University's altar dies. Lucine doted on her disciple and knew the latter meant well, but there was a time and place for that, and this wasn't it. So, she steeled her heart and did what needed to be done.

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"You have to let me go with her. I can help her," Ahalya begged. Despite her protests, she was dragged away by demigods while her master headed into the temporal river of the Card World connecting its past, present, and future. "I'm not conspiring about anything. I just want to help her."

Going into the past was like going against the temporal current, one of the easiest ways for one to die unless you have an adequate mastery of time rule and its relevant meanings. Like in the case of Lucine, and there were some special cases like Ahalya, whose powerful trait or physique allows them to achieve miracles.

Dean Faust wasn't worried that his young guest had perished under the force of the temporal currents, because they all had witnessed his fight against the Worldhog Devil rocking a mohawk and knew for a fact that his mastery over time rule was enough to put many veteran and elite card demigods to shame.

"Student Ahalya, don't take my words to your heart. I was just too desperate to stop you from following your master into the time river. I know what happened back then was not your fault. It was a one time freak accident, beyond your or anyone's control. I'm sorry you had to go through that and be burdened with the consequences that followed all alone," the demigod who blamed Ahalya of conspiring to kill Lucine in temporal river apologized, seeing that Lucine had entered the temporal river and the temporal crack by the time vestige was being guarded by the Dean Faust himself.

"Thank you, sir. But I was never alone, my master was always by my side. Not to mention, it was nothing compared to what Master lost that day," Ahalya said, recalling the price her master paid to save her from the temporal river.

The Demigod and his colleagues sighed, listening to Ahalya. They shared the immediate and deep-seated feeling that Ahalya was blaming herself for Lucine being afflicted with Time Rule Dementia. However, none attempted to console her, knowing a thing or two about self-blame and the subsequent drive for self-redemption. There was nothing they could say to her that would change the way she felt about herself.

Back when Ahalya was about to graduate and had slowly accustomed to her new life and identity, an accident happened as she visited the time vestige to take the readings of the temporal crack in space that made the formation of the time vestige in the physical plane possible.

A stray wave of temporal force dragged Ahalya into the temporal river. Her master, Lucine Morgenstren, jumped right behind to rescue her beloved disciple without any hesitation. Combined with Ahalya's taintless trait and Lucine's mastery of time and space rules, the rescue was successful. Ahalya, despite being thrown in the time river, was unharmed, while demigod Lucine was afflicted with a deadly disease that made even mortals pity her.

Things were never the same in Ahalya's new life since then. While Lucine brushed off her condition as a price to secure her beloved disciple's life, the rest of Morningstar University felt differently, they blamed Ahalya for the accident and Lucine's condition, which kept getting worse day by day, forcing her to cancel all her outside appearances and hide in the university campus.

That day, Ahalya felt like the world was playing a cosmic joke on her. Just when she had forgiven and accepted her master and Morningstar University for forcing her mother to sell her to them instead of lending her a helping hand to protect her from the Circle, life threw a curveball at her. Now, Morningstar University hated her, and she was in the stand defending herself to them, but at least her master was on her side unconditionally.

Because of such complications and Ahalya's personal choices, Chief Denise Johnson and the world perceived that she was leading a tough life at Morningstar University. The attitude of staff and students who believed Ahalya was to blame for the misfortune that befell Ma'am Lucine only made matters worse.

Despite being considered the princess of Morningstar University by many staff and students of Morningstar University, card apprentices across the five regions either had no idea who she was, and those who had heard of her used her as an example of the top ten universities' elitist practices.

The secrecy surrounding her origin and admission process didn't help, it only added fuel to the already blazing fire. There were nasty rumors like Morningstar University killing or holding Ahalya's entire family hostage to get her to admit into their university. Card apprentices believed Morningstar University fancied Ahalya's powerful trait but hated her tragic and humble origin, leading to her tough life in the Morningstar University.

The fact that neither Morningstar University or Ahalya came out to clear these rumors only added legitimacy to them. The culprits behind this mess were the factions within Morningstar University. They were willing to go to any lengths to consolidate their power in Morningstar University.

Ahalya, the disciple of the only remaining descendant of the founder of Morningstar University, was a huge variable in their struggle for power. Though they couldn't directly harm her, there were always other and more subtle ways to keep her in check and achieve what they wanted. For example, influencing public opinion has been a trend since the beginning of civilization. Not only was it versatile, but you could employ it from within the comfort of the shadows.

...

Entering the temporal river through the temporal crack, Lucine carefully and seamlessly controlled her time and space rule power to go against the time current, into the past that was connected with their present by the time tunnel. Unlike the boy she didn't have the aid of the temporal and spatial forces being released during the formation of the time tunnel, she had to navigate to that point in time herself. Traces of the time tunnel were still fresh, so she wasn't that worried about getting lost. It would be long before she joined the young man at that point in the time river. Hopefully, he was still there and didn't just wander around.

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

Standing in the eye of the time tunnel as it formed, I sensed the change in soul pathways in my surroundings, but interestingly I didn't feel the effects of the change while my surroundings clearly did. The surrounding air was being sucked into the temporal river through the recently formed temporal crack in the physical plane.

I stood right in front of it. Except for a little spatial distortion, I felt nothing. I don't know if the temporal forces were unaware of my presence or feigning ignorance, but I felt I was being discriminated against by time. I couldn't help but imagine the temporal river screaming at me, 'Go back to your damn world, you freaking transmigrator.'

Was it really the myriad realm's time rule discriminating against me or something else, I don't know. Regardless, I was grateful for it until I suddenly had a grim foreboding, *'What if this made it harder or even impossible for me to master time rule?'*

With that thought, I finally began to panic, and my worries were clear on my face. Fortunately, I knew the quickest way to clear this doubt, and that was to try comprehending the time rule. However, I noticed that the time tunnel was about to be formed and I would miss the window to use the temporal crack of Morningstar University without paying a single cent.

No sane person would enter the temporal crack unless they planned for their remains to be scattered across time. Well, that's highly unlikely and one of the best possible outcomes. However, usually the temporal currents will obliterate you into nothingness. The absolute worst case scenario would be being obliterated into nothingness across the time: past, present, and future. It was like you never existed. Therefore, Morningstar University only made use of the time vestige to explore the temporal river.

However, all these didn't apply to me, because the time rule of the myriad realms just refuses to affect me. I wonder if loves me too much or was just too disgusted to the point of not even acknowledging my presence. Hopefully, the former was true. Like every sentient creature out there, at a point in my life, I too have fantasized about controlling time. I would hate to learn that it wouldn't be possible for me even in this life.

"Be right back, buddy."

Bidding goodbye to Oldman Faust, I stopped resisting the spatial forces. I let them carry me through the temporal river to where the time tunnel's other end was.

In the blink of an eye, I found myself back in the 'garden of beginning' above the lightning-struck stump. The time vestige, Dean Faust, and other staff of Morningstar University were nowhere to be seen. Because they were in the present while I was in the past. Though I couldn't help but question myself: Was I really in the past?

Just then I sensed a gaze on me. I turned to look only to find a familiar face. It was Lucine Morgenstern. As our eyes met, she exclaimed, "Oh, good. You didn't divert from the trail. This makes things easy. I'm here to rescue you. Come, let us head back before our bodies and souls adapt to this timeline."

"I don't need rescuing, and I have no plans to leave just yet. Since I'm here, I might as well check out this so-called past. What time is it now? Exactly how far back in the past are we?" I asked Lucine, after all, the latter had been using the Time Vestige for centuries.

"Wyatt, things here are not as simple as you imagine. Despite our mastery of the Time Rule, the longer we remain, the quicker our bodies and minds start to succumb to the current timeline, slowly overwriting our memories until we believe this past is our present. Our Time Rule mastery only slows the time rule dementia compared to those who lack it. Ultimately, we all face the same fate: being trapped here for eternity. Therefore, let us exit now while the traces of the time tunnel are still fresh in the temporal river. Otherwise, we risk getting lost in the temporal river unable to find our way back to our present," Lucine patiently explained, because Dean Faust valued the boy before her enough to ask her to risk her life to save him. Otherwise, she would have immediately used force to take him back to the present.

"Doesn't that mean your being here will rapidly worsen your condition? Do you have a death wish? Please, leave. I don't want your death on my head," I politely rejected, gazing at Lucine as if looking at a damn fool. This was just insane. What kind of organization sends a person on their deathbed on a rescue-op? Was there no one sane left at Morningstar University?

"Huh?" Lucine stared at me dumbly in response.

"Fuck, did you already forget why you are here?" I remarked in shock.

"Young man, mind your language. Cussing might sound cool, but it's rude and bad manners," Lucine lectured, but was interrupted by her grimoire notification. As she went through it, her expression grew grim. It appeared like she was about to have a panic attack but then understanding the gravity of her mission, she managed to control her emotions and prevent herself from overloading her mind and going unconscious. Soon, she urgently said, "Wyatt, I am here to rescue you—"

"Ma'am, we already had that conversation. Read and add the file I shared with your grimoire to the reminder. Also, reduce the reminder's time interval to every thirty seconds," I interrupted Lucine midway and shared a file informing her about our conversation earlier. I planned to do so every time she forgets, this way she will quickly catch up and I can avoid having to have the same conversation over and over again.

Now my worry was how do I convince her to return to the present without me, before her time rule dementia grows serious, putting her in a coma or worse: death.

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

Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"Wyatt, don't be foolish. Without the Time Vestige, we're vulnerable. It is not just the 'time rule dementia,' there are other things about this place that I can't go into now. But trust me, we need to get out of here now," Lucine broke the silence after she had made adjustments to her periodic reminder. There was this sense of urgency in her tone that told that she wasn't lying just to persuade Wyatt to leave with her.

"That's not happening," I rejected, awakening from my thoughts. "Don't worry about me, worry about yourself. I can take care of myself and will return once I'm done. But you should hurry, from the looks of it, you don't have much time,"

"How high is your mastery of time rule? It has been a good while since we entered this past. Yet, I don't see this timeline affecting you in the slightest," Lucine exclaimed, scrubbing her plan to use force to drag the boy to their present.

Just like how one can make out the rotting wood or rusting iron, it wasn't hard for Lucine, with her mastery of time rule, to observe the influence of the past they were in. To her shock, the boy before was untouched. It was as if the past they were in didn't influence him in any way. What was even more incredible was that she didn't sense any time rule power on him. How was that even possible?

Surely, he had to be using his time rule power to fight the influence of the past they were in. Then, she should be able to sense his time rule power. Yet, she didn't sense an iota of time rule power on him. Not that it was just improbable. Unless his mastery of time rule was incomparable to hers. That was even more improbable.

He was just a teenager. Even if he had been comprehending the Time Rule since he was in his mother's womb, regardless of any physique or traits, it should be impossible for him to form a Time Rule Stream, as she was a step from forming a time rule stream. It took her centuries of hard work to achieve this, so she couldn't fathom how a teenager could. Lucine couldn't help but stare at the boy in skeptical awe. Though doubtful of his mastery of time rule, she could help but feel awe, as it was no small feat for a card master to make her question her world view.

"Told you I can handle myself," I just smirked in response to Lucine's shock and proceeded to check my surroundings, planning to experience the past they were in before finding a place to begin comprehension into time rule. As for Lucine, I let her be thinking now that she knows I can handle myself here, she will eventually leave when she can't suppress her ailment anymore.

"Have you already formed a time rule stream? How many time rule meanings have you added to your time rule stream so far?" Lucine asked the boy despite still being doubtful about whether his mastery of time rule had reached the formation of time rule stream in his ego gem.

"No, my condition is unique. Like how you can't talk about this past, I too can't talk about it," I answered Lucine, knowing that she wasn't going to stop pestering me until she got an answer.

Listening to me put it that way, Lucine was both relieved and curious. She was relieved that she was just over thinking and the boy before her hadn't formed his time rule stream and also curious about how he was able to resist the influence of the past they were in.

Was it a special physique or trait or innate card? No, if it was either of them she would have noticed it through changes in his energy signature. But there was none, he walked around with a slight influence from this timeline. It was as if he was native of this past they had entered. That was simply not possible since he was from the present she was from.

Was it a special time rule meaning? Something that can resist time rule dementia? Lucine couldn't help but let her mind wander trying to think out of the box. Since, nothing she knew could explain how the boy was uninfluenced by the timeline of the past they were in. Unable to hold back her curiosity, she asked the boy, "Did you comprehend a rare time rule meaning? Does it allow you to resist time rule dementia?"

I didn't answer Lucine and just let out a subtle smile. Neither confirming or denying if her guess was correct. I didn't want to lie to explain my time rule immunity as it would only limit the extent of what my time rule immunity was capable of in the eyes of those watching me. That was to say, I would have to lie in the future to explain why I was able to do what my time rule immunity helped me do. As the saying goes, one lie leads to a

thousand others. I didn't want to be caught in that cobweb. Besides, I couldn't bother to lie.

"Wyatt, what is going to take for you to tell me why you aren't being influenced by the timeline of this past?" Lucine asked, knowing better than to jump to conclusion. Guessing and assuming was how you write fantasy stories and not find out the truth.

"There is nothing you can offer me to persuade me to tell you my secrets," I uttered, shaking my head. "Besides, aren't you worried? Your condition is deteriorating fast."

"Don't worry, you have your secrets, I have my secrets," Lucine replied, trying to sound mysterious. Only then did I realize that, it has been a while but her memory didn't lapse. It seems she wasn't lying.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

Curious about Lucine's secret, I used my primordial soul pupils to check her soul pathways and arrangements, especially of her brain. What I observed shocked me. There were two ethereal spirits in her body. One was from our present and one was from this past. These two ethereal spirits were actively exchanging their soul pathways.

There were two Lucine. One from our present, who was suffering from time rule dementia, and timeline dementia. The other one was from this past, who was also suffering from time rule dementia.

Both Lucine were suffering from time rule dementia, one's soul pathway got transferred to this past while one's soul pathway got replaced by soul pathways from an unknown future, i.e. our present.

This was going to be confusing, bare with me.

To reiterate, where do the soul pathways of the Lucina from our present go under the influence of time rule dementia? They go to the past. Which past? This past. To be exact, to the Lucine of this past who too was also suffering from time rule dementia, which causes her to forget the present and recall a future, i.e. the present of the Lucina from our present.

Lucine from our present was losing her memories and soul pathways to this past.

Lucine from this past was getting her memories and soul pathways overwritten by her memories and soul pathways from our present, i.e, one of her possible futures.

Now that they both were in one timeline, Lucine of this past was giving the memory and soul pathways she gained due to time rule dementia back to Lucine of our present. Meanwhile, Lucine of our present, who was also suffering from timeline adaptation/dementia under the influence of this past, shared these memories back to the Lucine of this past.

This way, Lucine from our present got her memories and soul pathways back while avoiding timeline adaptation/dementia under the influence of this past, and the Lucine of this past got her memories and soul pathways back.

By exchanging the memories and soul pathways that got interchanged between present and past or overwritten due to time rule dementia or timeline dementia, the two Lucine were not only able to maintain their sanity and stop their health from deteriorating. That was to say Lucine of our present had not only found a way to avoid the influence of this past but also a temporary fix for her condition when in this past.

I wonder why she hadn't done the same in our past? Was she worried about the consequences of bringing Lucine from this past to our future?

"You are bold. You refined your other version in this timeline as your incarnation. I guess desperate times call for desperate measures," I couldn't help but exclaim, understanding what Lucine had done. But I was totally impressed by the fact that Lucine could think of this solution when battling with raging time rule dementia and timeline dementia. No wonder she was still alive when most of her generation were either dead or were serving under the masters controlling the central government from the shadows.

"You're mistaken. But I can see why you would think that. Still, color me impressed," Lucine complimented the boy in genuine awe for almost figuring out her secret.

I frowned and rechecked Lucine's soul pathways, this time more thoroughly. And what I found was bone chilling. I didn't think there was someone else out there in the Card World cruel enough to cut their soul like me, but Lucine proved me wrong.

Lucine had not refined her version in this time into her incarnation, instead she cut off the part of soul that had succumbed to the timeline dementia of this past and then refined that part of her soul into her incarnation and left it behind in this past. This way she not only managed to beat the timeline dementia, left a way to suppress her time rule dementia in this past, but also experimented with a method to create a perfect incarnation of herself.

Seeing how her incarnation had managed to develop an ethereal spirit, I think it's safe to assume her gamble was paying off. Her incarnation was so perfect that I mistook it for a version of her from this past.

"Do you have any more Soul Sour fruits?" I asked with a grin, having found tiny traces of soul sour fruits in Lucine's two ethereal spirits.

Soul sour fruits were miracle herds that can turn a half soul into a complete soul in a fraction of a second. Lucine had used two of these fruits, one to heal her soul after she had cut it in half and one to help the other half riddled with timeline dementia to turn into her incarnation.

"Holy crap, how are you doing that? Can you read minds? Get out of my head," Lucine screamed in panic, fearing the consequences if the boy could really read minds.

I had read about soul sour fruit when I was researching soul division and healing. However, I did pay attention to learning these miracle herds were basically extinct across the myriad realms like the primordial pixies, World calamity tree, etc. Soul sour fruits were simply priceless miracle herds across the myriad realms among the sentient creatures who knew what it was, let alone Card World.

It was believed that those who had eaten soul sour fruit would gain a soul regeneration soul treat. That was, their soul could regenerate slightly faster than a regular soul, enough to make a difference. Lucine did gain this soul trait, but her incarnation appears to have gained it.

I also read that one could use the soul that inherited this soul trait to create a soul healing potion that would function similar to a soul sour fruit, only it would take several minutes to a few weeks to completely heal the soul based on the quality of the potion made. It appears Lucine also knew about this, explaining why she was panicking so much.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"Don't worry, your secret's safe with me. However, I gotta hand it to you. You're every bit of what your reputation advertised. Congrats on finding a method to make a perfect

clone/incarnation. Though its prodigal method, still you did," I assured Lucine and congratulated her on her enormous achievement before repeating myself, "Do you have any more soul sour fruit left on you?"

Lucine didn't immediately answer the boy, feeling naked under his gaze. He didn't seem like a villain, and Faust seemed to trust him, so she trusted him with her secret for now. "No, but I have their seeds. I will give you one if you follow me back to our present right now."

"Nah," I rejected Lucine's offer without any hesitation. Yes, I know its Soul sour fruit's seed, and with Dredre by my side, I could grow any seed into a tree until fruition. Yet, I rejected her because I had a better deal for her. So, I proposed to her, "How about you give me all the soul sour fruit seeds on you in exchange I will help cure your time rule dementia? That way, you can freely use your perfect incarnation in our present instead of hiding it in your divinity as a buffer to control your time rule dementia when your condition worsens."

Lucine was taken aback by the boy's proposal. She felt he was capable after all he saw through her and her perfect incarnation, but she knew the time rule dementia was something that even plagued Celestials, it was incurable. So, she shook her head disappointedly and remarked, "Don't joke around, Wyatt. That's insensitive."

"Did I laugh or snicker? I'm being serious. I don't make promises that I can't keep. I might be late, but I will deliver," I said, not knowing how I would convince Lucine to give me a shot. She was not like my usual clients. So, I didn't treat her appropriately without going into detail and leaving much to her imagination, "Look, Lucine, you're a smart woman who managed to suppress time rule dementia, timeline dementia, and solve the perfect incarnation problem all with one move. So, I will not waste my saliva and get to the point. Agree with my proposal only if you trust me. Otherwise, don't bother."

"I trust you. Alright, we have a deal then. Let's head back to our present so we can get started," Lucine enthusiastically agreed, so much so she insisted we head back to our present and get started on it right away.

"Don't get smart with me," I said passive-aggressively, deciding to fork the Soul sour fruit's seeds from Lucine's hands another way, one that I would not only enjoy but feel vindicated about this conversation with Lucine.

Seeing the boy take offense at her little trick to get him to return to their past with her, Lucine suddenly felt that she had made the situation worse than it already was. She immediately apologized, saying, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you. It's just that this past is not what you think. We have to leave here before the time tunnel's traces disappear in the temporal river."

"Come on, Wyatt. I said I was sorry. The place is not what you think it is. Please, just listen to me. I will give you all the Soul sour fruit's seeds I have, let us just return to our

present," Lucine tried tempting the boy, seeing that ordering him or pleading to him didn't work. Also, he was too petty. A teenage girl being petty she understood that, but a teenage boy, what's up with that?

Listening to Lucine willingly giving me all the Soul sour fruit seeds she had. I decided to forgive her. How could I not? Not only did she risk her life to save mine, but also came bearing gifts. "We have a deal. You can't back out this latter."

"Alright. Take my hand. I will get us back to our present," Lucine gladly agreed, reaching for the boy's wrist but he pulled back, informing, "I agreed to cure your time rule dementia and not return to our present with you."

"What? You are still on that," Lucine asked bewilderedly, and she finally gave up, revealing, "Wyatt, listen to me. This isn't some Holyland to comprehend time rule. Unless you planned to become devil food, I advise you to stop with your antics and quietly follow me."

"I knew it. This is not our past but a variation of our past. Did we lose to the dark realm in the timeline of this past?" I exclaimed, hearing Lucine confirm my guess. She had already confirmed that this was a different past and not our past considering how she, like me, kept addressing it as 'this past' and not 'our past.' No wonder our present didn't change despite Morningstar University meddling with the past using its Time Vestige.

Before Lucine could speak, I overzealously continued, "Have all the card apprentices been killed by the devils of this past? Does that mean we are the only remaining card apprentices in this past? Does that mean the devils are coming for us? And you are worried that with the Time Vestige and other parts of the array covering the 'garden of beginning' having returned to our present, this array in this past is no-longer strong enough to hold the devils of this timeline back from breaking into the 'garden of beginning,' am I right?"

"What? No, I wish that were the case—" Lucine paused midway, hesitating if she should tell the boy Morningstar University's deep kept secret. However, he had already figured out most of it so she decided to reward him with the truth, no matter how dark it was and the bad light shone above Morningstar University's unblemished record. "This is not the holy land for time rule that the five regions were led to believe. This is a prison designed to hold powerful demigods of the dark faction 'Ten Commandments.'"

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"Ten Commandments?" I repeated, pretending to be clueless. Trying to figure out how much Morningstar University understands the Dark Realm.

Honestly, I was shocked to learn that Morningstar University was aware of the Ten Commandments. They seem to have better knowledge of the Dark Realm when the rest of the five regions seem to have no clue or forgot about it. Instead, they just think demons tried to invade them.

"Yes, 'Ten Commandments.' They are a small faction in the dark realm. These guys are responsible for the first demon invasion of our world. The big guy imprisoned here is one of the leaders of 'Ten Commandments.' We only managed to learn this from him much later, after we had won the war," Lucine revealed, going into details without holding back. She thought someone as capable as the boy before should know their true past so that they didn't repeat the same mistake.

"Really? What else did you guys find out?" I asked curiously, feigning ignorance. No, I was not taking advantage of Lucine's good nature and trust in me. I was trying to gauge how to engage in an honest and rewarding conversation with her without revealing any of my own secrets.

Also, didn't the devil merchant code declare everyone in the 'Ten Commandments' faction dead? It not only reclaimed the rights to the Card World it sold to the 'Ten Commandments' faction but also re-sold it to the 'Seven Prince of Hell' faction. What's up with that?

As this thought crossed my mind, I immediately summoned my grimoire and checked out the demon codex page. Only to find that I could connect to the devil merchant code, but when I tried to use its functions, nothing happened. That was the first I had seen it do that, which meant one can access devil merchant code here.

Is this way the devil merchant code declared their faction annihilated and reclaimed their assets?

On the Card World, it has been centuries since the first demon invasion, but in the Dark Realm it hasn't been that long. After all, ten days in the card world was equal to one day in the dark realm. Judging by the time zone difference of the two realms, it has only been several decades on the Dark Realm since the Card World's first demon invasion.

No matter how I look at it, the devil merchant code was too quick to declare the 'Ten Commandments' dead and reclaim their assets registered with it. I used to think that though the devil merchant code was ruthless capitalist, it played by the rules, but from what I was learning right now, it seemed that wasn't the case. I need to get to the bottom of this matter. After all, the fate of the Card World depended on it. If my

assumptions were true, then maybe I can do something to ensure that no dark race or faction can ever use the devil merchant code to invade the Card World.

I calmed down, realizing I was getting ahead of myself. Clearly, the Devil Merchant Code wouldn't break its own rules. There was a point I wasn't seeing.

Perhaps the 'Ten Commandments' owed too much debt to the Devil Merchant Code in preparation for invading the Card World. This debt kept growing with time as neither of the leaders of the 'Ten Commandments' were available to make the loan payments on time for several years and decades altogether until the Devil Merchant Code was forced to reclaim their assets registered with it.

But that didn't explain why it declared them dead when one of the 'Ten Commandments' was alive in this past. I could see someone else making this mistake, but the Devil Merchant Code? No way. It was above such silly mistakes. Otherwise, the inter-realm network, inter-realm city, and the whole thing would have fallen apart a long time ago. There had to be something I was missing here.

"Not much. It's just too strong for us to capture and interrogate. We can only spy on it through the Time Vestige. The Devil imprisoned here calls himself Slay. Every time we think he has succumbed to timeline dementia under the influence of this past, he somehow manages to recall everything and recover, summoning a grimoire of sorts and screaming the words 'Devil Merchant Code.'

We have yet to find out what this 'Devil Merchant Code' is, but many believe it might be some kind of holy scripture that this faction of the dark race followed or worshipped. Those words are the only thing that has kept him from fully succumbing to the timeline dementia for centuries. I can't imagine how strong the being is that this Devil follows or worships.

This is the reason our predecessors were so adamant about building a sanctuary to escape in case we lost the Demon Invasion. You don't understand the horror we felt every time we failed to kill this Devil using every means we could think of. Since we are unable to kill it, I don't see how we are even going to face the entity it follows or worships," Lucine, for the very first time, confided her fears in someone other than her mentor.

"Then how does the time vestige factor into all this, actually? Don't tell me the bullshit about the array of the 'garden of beginning' needing it or that it's just a glorified elevator allowing travel between past, present, and future. There should be more than that to it, right?" I asked, listening to Lucine bring it up again and again, claiming that without the Time Vestige we weren't safe here. So far, from what she said, I gathered that it was a safe zone for those who entered this past from our present. However, I felt there was more to it. I could get it out of Lucine, or will have to enter the time vestige to figure it out using my primordial soul pupils.

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Date: Unspecified

Time: Unspecified

Location: Myriad Realms, Card World, Central Region, Central Academic City, Morningstar University District, Morningstar University Campus, Garden of Beginning

"You are right on both counts. The Time Vestige is both a safe zone and one big elevator into the Card World's temporal river.

As a safe zone, the Time Vestige protects the users from all the side effects of entering the past while helping them learn to master time rule.

As an elevator, the Time Vestige helps us to travel to multiple time prisons Morningstar University's predecessors created in the Card World's temporal river—" Lucine explained, a little proud of her predecessor's achievement in terms of time rule. But was interrupted by the boy, asking, "Wait, I thought your university only had one time tunnel connecting this past with our present."

Listening to the boy's doubt, Lucine smiled and explained, "Unlike our Time Vestige, which is singular throughout the Card World's temporal river, our time tunnel is not singular, but various versions of it exist in various pasts. These time tunnels connect each of these various pasts in a sequence that only the core academicians of our university know, forming a network of time tunnels throughout the various pasts we have explored using the Time Vestige. Allowing us to access all the time prisons our predecessors created in various pasts with the cost of maintaining and operating only one time tunnel. Though it's tedious and complex, it's economical."

"Ah!" I sighed in realization. Because the Time Vestige was singular throughout the card world's time rule stream / temporal river, as in only one in all of the Card World's time, I assumed that the time tunnel was also singular, but it wasn't.

I had no idea how Morningstar University managed to ensure that the time tunnels of various versions of the past didn't connect with the same past, but rather with different pasts, forming a non-repeating, non-looping, and uninterrupted chain of network of time tunnels connecting all the time prisons Morningstar University had created to trap the devils and enemies they couldn't defeat.

Clearly, they put a lot of thought into creating their very own labyrinth of time. The work and resources that went into making this happen were no joke. I was impressed. This

was the moment I truly felt they were deserving of their reputation of being one of the top ten universities in the Card World. They had earned it.

However, knowing about Morningstar University's labyrinth of myriad past trapping various powerful devils, I felt that the information they gathered on the dark realm or Lucine was revealing to me was seriously lacking. I'm sure they knew more than the 'Ten Commandments' faction and mistaking the Devil Merchant Code's devil codex as the devil's holy scripture.

I don't believe that they didn't manage to interrogate the devils trapped in their Labyrinth of Myriad Pasts. Not even a single one of them? I don't believe it. I mean, they had several centuries, and you are telling me they didn't manage to crack a single devil trapped in their time prisons? That didn't sound like someone who had managed to make a labyrinth in time.

"What about the resources of the alternate pasts? Can you bring them into the Time Vestige?" I asked, knowing that resources from the past cannot be brought into the present or future; they will instantly rot into dust regardless of their grade and properties under the influence of the Card World's Time Rule Stream (or Temporal River). Similar to how anything from the future and present that enters the past will be inflicted by timeline dementia.

"Young man, you ask all the right questions. Yes, you can take the resources of the past into the Time Vestige and use them for research, studies, or experiments, but nothing permanent. If you use them on yourself or in card creation, then you or anything you created using resources from the past will turn into dust once you return to your present. However, as long as you don't break the time taboos, the Time Vestige is the best lab to conduct some of the most expensive research and experimentation without being conscious of funds or resources," Lucine answered giddily.

As a researcher, one of her greatest regrets was the rare resources lost in experimentation, but this way that regret was no more. They looted the precious resources and items from time prison and used them to conduct experiments in Time Vestige without wasting a single penny. Even I was a little envious of this hack of Morningstar university and grew even more motivated to master the Time Rule.

I am sure that since they were capable enough to create a freaking labyrinth in time, they knew to find alternate pasts that were very identical to ours in every way possible to loot resources from to conduct their little experiments. Otherwise, it would be hard to trust the results they get from their experiments. These results might not be right in our present.

"So, what about new knowledge and information? Do you guys steal it from a past identical to ours and test it out in our present?" I asked, thinking, why stop at resources and items? Why not loot their unique knowledge and information as well?

"Oh, yeah. We do it as well. Big time. Why do you think we have double the copyrights and patents compared to other top ten universities? However, so far, we haven't managed to find something of substance that could change how we live and see the world. Maybe one day we will," Lucine sighed, expressing her regret. To her and Morningstar University, this was not stealing but akin to archeology. Therefore, not only was she not ashamed to admit this but also a little proud.

I thought she was being greedy but also understood where she was coming from. Any other respectable and reputed university in Morningstar University's place would do and feel the same.

"How come with such a cheat you guys still haven't managed to become the number one university of the Card World?" I indirectly asked Lucine about other top-ten universities. Wondering if they too had their own secrets, like Morningstar University. Otherwise, it would have been hard for them to keep up with Morningstar University, which had its own Labyrinth of Myriad Past to mine data from.

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