

The Enigmatic Return (Neera and Jean)

Chapter 1151

Seeing his enthusiasm, Neera felt something was slightly off. After some consideration, she politely asked. "Mr. Medicina, if I may be so bold, do you know who I am?"

Caleb casually slipped his hands into the pockets of his trousers, exuding an air of elegance and nobility yet with a hint of nonchalance. "Ms. Garcia, you were at our auction house just last night, purchasing quite a few rare medicinal materials. Of course, I recognize you."

The reason was quite substantial, but for some reason, Neera always felt that there was more to it than that. This person is being so polite to me. There must be another reason. Could it be out of consideration for the Cox family?

Just as she was lost in uncertainty, the shop assistant had already returned, cradling an ice emerald box in her hands.

The carvings on that box were even more exquisite than the ones for sale.

The frost ganoderma stored inside was of even better quality and more complete than the one from before.

Neera was extremely delighted. Temporarily setting aside her doubts, she politely expressed her gratitude by saying, "Thank you, Mr. Medicina, for your generous offer. I won't stand on ceremony, then. May I ask how much for this plant?"

Caleb chuckled lightly. "You just said you wouldn't stand on ceremony, yet immediately you ask about the price. Isn't that being polite? As I said, pick whatever you want. Consider it a courtesy of our pharmacy. There's no need to pay."

"How could I possibly accept this? I'm already grateful that you're willing to sell me such a top-notch medicinal material. This is too precious for me to take for free. If you don't let me pay, then I'd rather leave it behind."

Seeing her persistence, Caleb felt helpless and turned to look at the shop assistant.

The latter was very astute, immediately discerning the expression on Caleb's face and promptly stating an amount.

In fact, that frost ganoderma was twice the price of the one from before. S~earch the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Since Caleb himself intended to give Neera a good deal, the shop assistant simply quoted half the price.

Without giving it much thought, Neera swiped her card. She then bid farewell to Caleb, ready to take her leave.

Caleb nodded, personally escorting her out of the pharmacy. "Ms. Garcia, if you ever need any medicinal material in the future, feel free to come by anytime. I'll let the staff know to give you a fifty percent discount."

Neera didn't like taking advantage of others without reason, but she also felt awkward to refuse their kindness. So, she could only express her gratitude and accept it.

Once she got in the car, she finally had time to check on Zephyr.

Seeing the shattered glass cut through his brow, blood trickling down his eye, leaving a trail on his face, she furrowed her brows.

"Clean it up first. I'll apply medicine for you when we get home."

Zephyr took the tissue, comforting her in return. "Don't worry, Ms. Garcia. This minor injury is nothing."

At that point, he narrowed his eyes slightly. "I underestimated the abilities of the people here and almost failed to protect you. From now on, I will be fully alert and will protect you at all costs, even if it means risking my life."

The agility of that person truly exceeded his expectations.

It seemed that he couldn't lower his guard.

Neera didn't blame him. "You don't need to blame yourself. You've done well today. The situation here is complex, and the waters are deep. It's best for us to be cautious in all matters."

Then, she recalled her earlier confusion and asked him, "By the way, what was that technique Caleb used earlier with the dry needle to subdue his opponent? The needles looked just like the ones used in acupuncture, which are rather soft. How did he manage to hit someone from such a distance, as if he was throwing a dart?"

Zephyr didn't quite understand either. He could only speculate. "Perhaps it's a technique for using stealth weapons, similar to throwing darts, but not quite the same. It requires long-term repetitive practice in terms of strength, and there must be some other tricks involved to achieve that effect. Ms. Garcia, are you very interested?"

Indeed, Neera's curiosity was piqued, and she wanted to investigate further. After arriving at this place, I increasingly realized the importance of my combat skills. This place is extremely ruthless. Without some skills to rely on, it's virtually impossible to make progress. I don't know anything and always rely on others for protection wherever I go. Having been here for just a few days, I had almost always been bullied. This is so frustrating. Perhaps I should consider making some changes.

Zephyr saw through her worries and comforted her, "These skills are honed over a long period of time. In a short time, I'm afraid you won't even learn the basics. Ms. Garcia, you've always been a saint, healing and saving people. It's only natural that you wouldn't know how to harm others."

A saint? Neera couldn't help but feel a bit amused, which somewhat dispelled her feelings of disappointment.

"Actually, I also thought about targeting that person's meridian points. However, with my skills, I would have to wait for that person to come closer, and only then could I accurately strike when the opportunity arises," she said after letting out a sigh. While it's possible to control the other party's actions this way, if they get the upper hand first, there's nothing I can do. So, it's essential to make the first move. Perhaps it could be combined with some kind of medicinal powder...

With that in mind, her eyes lit up, and she suddenly said, "Stop the car, turn around, and let's go back to the clinic."

Zephyr didn't quite understand why, but he followed through nonetheless.

When the two of them returned, Caleb was still there. Seeing her, he asked with a smile, "Ms. Garcia, did you miss out on some medicinal materials?"

Neera didn't stand on ceremony with him and listed a few types of medicine with a nod.

Upon hearing that, Caleb knew immediately that those were used to make anesthetics, to numb the nerves.

At that moment, his eyebrows lifted slightly, a hint of admiration flashing in his eyes. He took her along to make a selection.

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Chapter 1152

After selecting the medicinal materials she needed and paying for them, Neera expressed her gratitude once again.

"Mr. Medicina, I really appreciate your help today."

Caleb laughed nonchalantly. "I've heard of Ms. Garcia's exceptional medical skills. It's my honor to be able to assist you."

Half an hour later, Neera returned with a full load, unexpectedly finding that Avery was also there.

"How did you get here? Did something go wrong?" Neera asked.

Avery was casually chatting and drinking coffee with Shane, laughing as he said, "Can't I come if there's nothing wrong?"

Neera choked a little. "You can."

Avery looked at the large and small boxes in Zephyr's arms, curiously asking, "You've bought so much. What did you get?"

"I bought some medicine."

"You're not familiar with this place, let alone the situation is unclear. Why didn't you ask me to come with you?"

Neera smiled politely yet distantly. "It's all right. I don't want to trouble you too much. Besides, with Zephyr around, there won't be any problems."

She didn't mention the incident at the pharmacy, and she didn't want him to ask her too many questions. Instead, she started asking him, "By the way, Mr. Cox, I wanted to ask if you know Mr. Medicina. Are you two old acquaintances?" [Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

"Caleb?" Upon hearing this name from her lips, Avery was evidently taken aback. "Isn't that the heir of the Medicina family? I'm not very familiar with him. Why bring him up all of a sudden?"

He watched her keenly, not missing a single expression on her face. "Has something happened? Neera, tell me, has he made things difficult for you?"

Neera quickly shook her head in denial. "No. No. It's not that he's making things difficult for me. On the contrary, h-he's actually helped me. That's why I find it strange."

"Helped you? What happened?" Shane asked, his brows furrowing in concern.

Neera was momentarily at a loss for words, silently marveling in surprise. She hadn't expected that Caleb would have such an impressive background. No wonder, from our first meeting, I found him out of the ordinary. However, i he wasn't an old acquaintance of Avery, why would he go out of his way to help me so?

She was at a loss, unable to withstand their questioning. She succinctly explained Stella's domineering behavior and how Caleb had defended her.

As Avery continued to listen, his expression gradually turned displeased. "Neera, I know you have a strong personality, and you don't like to trouble others. However, the situation in Phison is much more complex than you imagine There are many people and many things that are not easy to deal with. In the future, when you go out, it's best to let me know. I will accompany you..."

Right then, he noticed Neera's discomfort. He pursed his thin lips and added, "If it's still not feasible, you can have Shane accompany you or bring more bodyguards just in case."

Neera understood his good intentions and nodded. "All right. Got it. I'm sorry for causing you all to worry."

Avery couldn't help but sigh, followed by a sense of confusion.

For a moment, he couldn't figure out why Caleb would do such a thing.

Shane, however, laughed, a glimmer of understanding in his eyes. "Stella? So it's her. What a coincidence. I didn't expect you two to meet there."

Neera was puzzled by his words and asked, "Do you know that woman?"

"Stella? She's the daughter of the Jennings family. She was raised in luxury since childhood and is quite arrogant. Because the Jennings family doesn't have many members, and there aren't many competitors in this generation, she has become the heiress. The Jennings family is one of the leading families in this competition for district president. She must have recognized you, which is why she behaved that way toward you."

Neera finally understood. It all made sense now why Stella was so arrogant. As it turns out, she's relying on the Jennings family to back her up. The criticism I faced today was probably intentional on her part, aimed solely at putting pressure on me.

At that thought, Neera was somewhat at a loss for words.

Even though she had no intention of running for office, others insisted on treating her as a hypothetical adversary, needlessly causing her trouble.

Shane glanced at Zephyr's injury and said, "The bodyguards around Stella are all top-notch Bartitsu experts. The fact that you were able to return unscathed is already quite an achievement."

Zephyr had always been proud, having great confidence in his own abilities. That day, he found himself at a disadvantage, a frustration simmering within him.

Those words, spoken to him repeatedly, did not serve to comfort him.

However, he still nodded politely, all the while secretly vowing that if given another chance, he would give that guy a good thrashing.

Avery was still worried. He urged again, "Neera, you must not go out alone again. In this place, a slight carelessness can easily put you at a disadvantage."

Neera hummed in agreement. "Don't worry. I won't be going out these next few days."

At that moment, she had an important matter to attend to. She turned her head to look at Shane.

"Shane, I need to ask a favor of you. Could you arrange a research room for me? It doesn't need to be large. I just need a space where I can conduct my research."

Shane laughed. "I was just thinking about telling you when you got back. Before we arrived, Uncle Chad had already arranged everything. Today, all the research equipment has been set up perfectly."

Upon hearing the news, Neera couldn't contain her excitement. "Really? I'll go check it out!"

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Chapter 1153

Shane immediately took her to visit the research room.

The research room was set up on the top floor of the mansion.

After going up, Neera discovered that all the partitions on that floor had been removed, creating a very spacious single room.

Inside, just as Shane said, all sorts of instruments needed for research had been arranged. They were all the latest and most cutting-edge in technology.

To the right, there was an entire wall of cabinets filled with all sorts of bottles and jars, housing both common and uncommon varieties of medicines.

"Wow! The environment here is really nice!" Neera looked around and checked out the things inside. Her eyes were filled with delight.

Shane smiled faintly. "As long as you like it, that's all that matters. Uncle Chad had already reminded me that you're a workaholic. No matter where you are, you always need a research room. I figured, this place will also be your home in the future, so if we're going to do it, we might as well do it the best we can. We can't let our dear Neera feel wronged."

Neera felt somewhat embarrassed by his words, yet also found them very comforting. "Shane, thank you. Both you and Uncle Chad have gone to great lengths for me."

Shane's arms were crossed in front of him, leaning casually against the door, a loose smile on his face. "We're all family here, so there's no need for such formality. It's my duty to look out for you. After all, my initial intention, along with Uncle Chad's, was to make things as comfortable and convenient for you as possible. I've consulted with Uncle Chad about these instruments. They're the same ones you used at your research institute in Essley. I've managed to gather them for you to use. If there's anything else you need, just let me know. I'll sort it out for you."

Neera curved her lips into a smile. "All right. Thank you, Shane!"

She had just bought some medicinal materials earlier. Without further ado, she immediately started to work on them with full concentration.

Avery had come all the way, seizing every opportunity to spend time with her, insisting on staying to lend her a hand.

However, Neera was not buying it and drove him out. "Mr. Cox, the research base is not a place for outsiders to disturb. I appreciate your kindness, but there's no need for you to assist. I can handle it on my own."

Seeing the situation, Avery could only helplessly retreat.

Seeing him fail miserably, Shane couldn't help but mock him, "Tsk! It seems like you have a lot to do to get the woman you like, Mr. Cox."

Avery initially didn't think much of it. However, after hearing his words, coupled with Neera's constant aloofness toward her, his mood instantly soured. "Shane, do you profit from watching me fail?"

Shane leisurely descended the stairs. "Not at all. I just rarely get to see you get the cold shoulder. I'm just here to enjoy the show."

Avery's face darkened. He scoffed, not wanting to engage with Shane.

Shane glanced at him, suddenly asking, "Did you intentionally let the media spread those rumors about Neera and you?"

Shane was well aware of Avery's temperament and abilities. If this guy doesn't want something to be spread, he would undoubtedly suppress all media companies at any cost. Even if people were to spread it privately, the media wouldn't reveal a single word. If he had done that, the matters concerning the two of them wouldn't have caused such a stir.

Avery didn't hide it, and with a stern face, he admitted, "Yes."

He had always been steadfast in what he wanted to do, unafraid of letting others know.

The two descended the stairs. Shane paused, his expression becoming more serious. "Aren't you afraid of Neera's retaliation? She doesn't want this marriage to happen, and the recent news has been troubling her a lot."

Avery's lips tightened into a line. After a few seconds, he finally said, "I don't care. Whether she opposes or frets, as long as I can achieve my ultimate goal, everything else will pass."

Avery actually did it for two reasons.

One was that Bartitsu Guild was still watching him like a tiger eyeing its prey. He had to perform for their sake. [SEARCH the FindNovel.net website](http://FindNovel.net) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Secondly, he was acting out of self-interest, wanting to blow things out of proportion as much as possible to make it a done deal, leaving Neera with no room to refuse.

Shane saw right through Avery, as if the latter's heart was a clear mirror.

"Avery, although the marriage alliance between the Cox and Gordon families is indeed a fact, and your actions are not without reason, don't forget your original intention. Winning Neera's heart is what you truly desire. If she finds out and distances herself from you or even despises you, then all your painstaking efforts will only be in vain," Shane advised.

Hearing that, Avery frowned and remained silent.

Shane had no intention of letting him speak, either. "I'll remind you of this," he said. "Neera may seem easygoing and agreeable, but she's extremely strong-willed. You should know where her heart lies. I don't want you to seize her by force. You're free to pursue her, but be gentle in your approach, and don't try to manipulate her. If you can't

win her over, don't push it. I don't want to see her unhappy. My uncle also asked me to tell you not to go too far. No matter what, you can't put Neera in a difficult position."

Shane spoke those words with utmost seriousness, not a hint of jest in his tone.

Avery knew that was a warning from Chad. His mood slightly sank, but he didn't say anything and just nodded in agreement.

Neera remained oblivious to the conversation between the two, staying in the research room and falling into her usual habit of being completely absorbed in doing research.

Fortunately, the drug being developed this time around was not very difficult.

On the third day, all the medicines were successfully produced.

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Read Chapter 1154

Chapter 1154

When she left the research room, she was on cloud nine. Her steps were light, and all her fatigue was swept away.

Avery had come again, and he was sipping coffee in the living room.

Seeing her coming down the stairs, he put down his coffee and teased, "You haven't come out for three days. I thought you were planning to live in there permanently."

Neera didn't expect to see him there. Her light footsteps paused for a moment, then became more steady.

"I've been working on quite a few medications, so I spent a bit more time inside. Mr. Cox, your timing is perfect. This is for you." She handed over a glass bottle filled to the brim with medicinal powder.

Avery took it. "What is this? Medicine?"

"Indeed," Neera nodded. "A couple of days ago, I visited the Medicina family's medical clinic and gathered some herbs. I've just finished preparing them. They can help you recuperate and speed up your recovery." Logically speaking, Avery was supposed to be happy knowing that she cared about him.

However, at that moment, he just couldn't bring himself to feel happy.

He could tell that Neera's actions while appearing to be out of concern on the surface, were actually a subtle way of repaying a favor. She's repaying me for the medicinal materials I gave her at the auction.

His heart sank slightly. His eyes lowered, his gaze darkened for a moment, then returned to normal.

He knew Neera was distancing herself from her. He didn't want her to do that, so he chose to play dumb, not exposing the truth.

Not only that, he deliberately said, "Thank you for caring so much about me. I'll remember it. I'll take the medicine on time."

Neera paused for a moment, a barely noticeable frown creasing her forehead. She didn't want things to be so vague and unclear, so she quickly explained, "No. Mr. Cox, you've misunderstood. I'm thanking you for all the help you've given me these past few days. The medicine is just a small token of my gratitude. As a doctor, I also hope for your speedy and complete recovery. Only then will my treatment be considered successful."

Every word she uttered carried a distinct sense of boundary.

Avery's mood became gloomy immediately, and it was for everyone to see.

Shane watched that scene unfold with one eyebrow arched in amusement. He was not surprised by that development at all.

Although he had some connection with Avery, and he didn't oppose the marriage alliance between the Cox and Gordon families, he respected Neera's wishes even more.

Hence, he had no intention of getting involved in their affairs, let alone offering any help.

Later on, out of courtesy, he invited Avery to stay for lunch.

But Avery declined by saying, "I have some matters to attend to. I'll be leaving first."

Shane's eyes flickered slightly. You've been drinking coffee here all morning without any apparent business, and now you're making excuses. Are you throwing a tantrum?

Despite having that thought, Shane just nodded. "All right. I'll have the butler see you off."

Neera wanted to avoid Avery as much as possible, and naturally, she wouldn't bother to keep him around. [Search the website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

So, after bidding farewell, Avery stepped out and got into the car, his face instantly darkening.

During lunch, Shane gave Neera a book.

"What is this?" Neera asked as she took it, examining it closely. She noticed that the book was wrapped in cowhide, without any writing on it. It was somewhat tattered and ancient-looking.

"A couple of days ago, I heard from Zephyr that you're interested in stealth weapons. So, I found this for you. This book contains many techniques on how to use them. If you find yourself with some spare time and nothing to do, you might want to give it a read. It could be a good way to kill time."

Neera's eyes brightened a bit as a myriad of wonderful images flashed through her mind. "Could this be one of those mysterious fighting arts manuals they show on TV?"

"Where did your mind wander off to?" Shane was amused to the point of laughter. "What you see on TV is all dramatized. It's so mystical. How could it possibly be real? Only a three-year-old would believe that."

"Right..." Neera rubbed her nose awkwardly.

She flipped through it and found that it was all about various techniques, how to exert force from different parts of the body, and so on.

Those details, all alike, required long-term practice and are not things that could be accomplished overnight.

Seeing her intense focus, Shane asked her, "I thought you were only interested in medical matters. Are you now considering fighting arts?"

"It's not exactly that," Neera said, closing her book. "I just want to learn a few tricks to have up my sleeve."

"That's easy. If you want to learn, I can find someone to teach you."

Neera was pleasantly surprised. "Really?"

Shane laughed and said, "Of course, fighting arts aren't something you can fully grasp by pondering on your own. Having a reliable mentor to guide you is crucial. Firstly, it can save you from taking many detours. Secondly, and most importantly, it prevents you from practicing incorrectly, which could lead to ruin."

Neera, overjoyed, immediately said with a smile, "Okay."

So, after lunch, Shane took her out.

Neera had assumed that he would take her to some sort of club or similar place.

Never in a million years did she expect that he would actually bring her to a fighting arts center.

Standing next to the car, she looked up at the dilapidated fighting arts center in front of her, her expression somewhat peculiar. This place seems out of sync with its surroundings, and it's far removed from the bustling District Fourteen. It doesn't look like a place where people would come. Is this fighting arts center about to close down? Why has Shane brought me here?

Shane noticed her confusion. Instead of explaining, he simply said, "Let's go. I'll bring you in."

"Oh. Okay." Neera nodded and followed him inside.

Inside the fighting arts center, a deep yellow wooden floor was laid out, which seemed to have quite a few years under its belt.

Not far to the left, a rocking chair was swaying. An old man lay within it, eyes closed, leisurely puffing on a cigarette.

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Chapter 1155

Shane walked over and called out softly, "Mr. Weaver."

The old man known as Finnley Weaver slightly opened his eyes and squinted. "Oh? It's you, Shane. What brings you here all of a sudden?"

His voice, raspy from age, was filled with the traces of time.

Beside the rocking chair, on the small side table, sat an empty coffee cup and a coffee pot.

With practiced ease, Shane brewed a pot of coffee and handed it to the old man with both hands. "Needless to say, I'm here to find you some work. Not to nag, but at your age, why are you still smoking so much? You never listen to my advice. Here, have some coffee to soothe your throat."

In the midst of their conversation, he swiftly took the cigarette from the old man's hand and extinguished it without a word.

Finnley pursed his lips, reluctantly sitting up with a great deal of distaste as he glanced at the bottom of his coffee cup. "What kind of coffee is this? It's so weak I can hardly see any coffee powder, and it has no flavor at all."

Shane smiled faintly. "With your current health, it would be better to drink less coffee."

The old man huffed defiantly. "What's wrong with my health? I'm in great health!"

As he spoke, he finally let his gaze fall on Neera, his eyes narrowing slightly. "Who is this little girl? Did you bring her?"

Shane introduced her to him by saying, "Yes. Her name is Neera. She's my cousin, my uncle's niece, and also the new head of the Gordon family."

Then, he turned to Neera and said, "This is the Gordon family's former butler, who watched over Uncle Chad since he was a child."

Neera saw Shane treating Finnley as family, so she stepped forward and introduced herself respectfully. "Mr. Weaver, nice to meet you for the first time. I am Neera."

Finnley had heard about the new head of the Gordon family. Therefore, seeing her for the first time, he couldn't help but take a few glances at her. "Mmm, not bad. The young girl is quite pretty and has a good temperament. She seems to be smart and sharp-"
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Shane interrupted him with a laugh. "Mr. Weaver, please, no more compliments. Just tell me, will you teach her or not?"

Finnley stroked his beard. "Are you saying that the job you have for me is to teach this young lady?"

Shane nodded.

With a meaningful hum, Finnley leaned back, completely at ease, and said, "I can teach you, but I want to ask you something. Why do you want to learn?"

Neera uttered honestly, "I'm too weak, incapable of defending myself. I can only rely on others. But this place, Phison, is unlike anywhere I've lived before. Here, danger lurks everywhere. Given my current status, I could easily become a thorn in someone's side, a target for their schemes. I want to learn some fighting arts for self-protection."

Finnley looked at her. "Even if you start learning now, you can't master anything overnight."

"I understand." Neera nodded with a bitter smile. "But I have to do something. If I don't try, if I don't put in the effort, I'll never succeed. Even if I can't master it, having some basic knowledge might come in handy at a critical moment. I don't aim to be incredibly powerful, but at least I don't want to be a burden to those around me."

She spoke her inner thoughts with great conviction.

Finnley revealed a satisfied smile. "As a person, what I detest the most is pretense. I appreciate it when you speak the truth. Such sincerity is wonderful."

He sat up again, slapped his thigh, and declared, "All right. I'll teach you!"

Neera's face lit up with joy, and a radiant smile spread across her face. "Thank you!"

Shane also laughed. "All right. In that case, you can stay with Mr. Weaver. I'll go back first and come to pick you up in the evening."

After he finished speaking, he left.

With a sense of urgency, Finnley decided to teach and immediately immersed himself in the instruction.

Neera didn't hesitate. She changed into her training attire and began to study earnestly with him.

As the afternoon wore on, if one were to ask about accomplishments, there were certainly none, just a body filled with exhaustion.

Neera felt as if her wrists were about to give out.

She spent the entire afternoon throwing darts, all aimed at a fixed spot.

During this time, Finnley would occasionally correct her movements, teaching her the technical essentials, the techniques of movement and exertion, as well as some minor details.

By the time it ended, her wrists were in unbearable pain, almost too heavy to lift.

That was far more serious than performing dozens of surgeries.

Finnley chuckled. "It's always like this when you start practicing. You'll get better in a few days. Soak in some hot water when you get home tonight. It'll help ease it."

Neera nodded. "Mr. Weaver, thank you for today. I'll need your help more in the future. Please don't find me bothersome."

Finnley laughed heartily. "No worries. After all, I don't have much else to do. If you're willing to learn, I'll teach you all the way."

After he finished speaking, he handed her two quaint little daggers. "It's unlikely to master the needle technique in a short time, but you can start with larger weapons. Here, take these daggers. They should be the most suitable for you."

Coincidentally, Shane arrived and saw the situation. He laughed and said, "It's quite rare for Mr. Weaver to give gifts. It seems he really likes you."

Neera tucked away the two daggers with a smile and cheerfully got into the car.

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Chapter 1156

That night, Jean called again.

Neera's eyes lit up when she saw his name. She held back for a few seconds, then picked up.

Although she was thrilled inside, she still spoke sparingly, restraining her sweet smile, and conversed with him in a casual, nonchalant manner.

Jean didn't mind at all. As long as he could hear her voice, he was content.

"What have you been busy with lately?" he asked.

Neera hummed in response and said, "I've recently bought many medicinal materials, so I've been busy concocting medicine these past few days."

She didn't mention anything about going to the fighting arts center to learn to fight. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Besides, when she thought about the uproar her marriage to Avery had caused back in the Phison, she suddenly felt a bit guilty.

Although she didn't want this news to reach her homeland, she knew the truth would eventually get exposed. Besides, with the internet being so advanced these days, the news was bound to reach every corner of the earth one day.

Hence, she thought it was best not to harbor any false hopes. In the end, it's better to confess this matter myself rather than him finding out from somewhere else. No matter what, he and I are the ones truly engaged.

With those thoughts in mind, she mustered up the courage and casually said to him, "By the way, I've recently been standing in for Uncle Chad, returning to the Gordon family to handle some family affairs."

Jean's eyebrows lifted slightly when he heard her mentioning the matter all of a sudden. He put down the pen in his hand and leaned into his chair, asking with interest, "Can you handle it, or is it too tricky?"

Neera then replied ambiguously, "It's okay. I-It's just that I've run into some trouble, w-which led to..."

The more she spoke, the more unsure she became. Her words started to stutter, and she unconsciously fiddled with the blanket.

"What did it lead to?" Jean asked in a leisurely manner.

The conversation had reached that point, and it wouldn't be right for Neera to back down then. She had no choice but to plow ahead.

"The Cox family and the Gordon family are close, aren't they? So, this time, Avery helped out a bit, and then... Umm..." No matter how much she tried to bolster her confidence, she felt incredibly insecure and hardly dared to speak what was on her mind.

Jean was absentmindedly tapping his fingers on the edge of the table, then suddenly took the initiative to ask, "So, did he announce the marriage publicly?"

Neera's heart raced when she heard those words. The overwhelming sound of her heartbeat filled her ears as if she had done something terribly wrong to him. How does this man guess so accurately?

For a moment, she didn't know what to say, yet she couldn't deny it. As the other person waited, she could only manage a soft, mosquito-like hum of agreement.

In response, Jean asked flatly, "What about you? What are you thinking? Have you admitted it?"

Neera didn't know what was on his mind. Feeling even more guilty, she quickly denied it by saying, "No. Absolutely not! The marriage alliance between the Cox and Gordon families was decided long ago. Avery said that to help me secure my position in the Gordon family. However, such an alliance must be agreed upon by the parties involved. I've made my stance very clear, and I've told Avery that I won't agree to this marriage. I just didn't expect that the matter would get so out of hand, becoming more and more absurd. I thought that if I could just temporarily stabilize the Gordon family members, everything would be fine. But the marriage issue has become even more complicated..."

Neera wanted to tell him not to believe those rumors, but she hesitated and didn't say it out loud. I've already been this honest with him. He should trust me, right?

After a few seconds of anxious waiting, Jean's calm voice came through. "Okay. Understood."

Understood? That's it? Neera, unable to discern his thoughts, braced herself to ask, "Are you angry?"

Jean lightly huffed. "Of course. Who wouldn't be angry if their own fiancée suddenly got engaged to someone else, causing such a commotion?"

Neera felt anxious and aggrieved. "I really didn't want this either. I've been so stressed out these past few days because of this issue. If you continue to be mad at me, I'll get angry too!"

She unconsciously started to act a bit petulant, and Jean simply couldn't handle it, heaving a helpless sigh.

"You're here to thwart me, aren't you? Fine, we'll settle this score later," he said.

After that, he asserted dominantly, "You must always remember that you are mine. Even if we argue, even if we have a disagreement, any separation is only temporary. You can only ever be mine."

Upon hearing those words, Neera finally breathed a sigh of relief, feeling incredibly touched.

She was too shy to show it, merely responding with a nonchalant hum. Despite her cold demeanor, she couldn't help but let a smile creep up at the corners of her mouth.

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Chapter 1157

Deep into the night, Neera reluctantly hung up the phone. The man's earlier words, domineering yet filled with possessiveness, still echoing in her mind.

Hugging her blanket, she tossed and turned a few times before finally falling asleep with a joyful heart.

The next day, she went to see Finnley as usual.

That day's task remained the same, and that was throwing darts. The process was as challenging as ever.

However, she had always been one to endure hardship. For the sake of achieving her goals, no amount of toil or fatigue could deter her.

Seeing her determination, Finnley's fondness for her increased significantly. He even made a special lunch for her at noon.

Neera found out that his cooking skills were exceptionally good, which was a pleasant surprise. She couldn't stop praising him while eating.

Her words were as sweet as honey, charming Finnley into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. "Neera, you seem so composed. Never thought you'd be silver-tongued."

Neera blinked. "How could you say that? This is called being sweet, Mr. Weaver. I rarely behave like this."

Finnley laughed heartily, happily eating an extra half bowl of pasta.

In the afternoon, Neera chose to continue practicing. Finally, she hit the bullseye. At first, she circled the target in disbelief several times. Afterward, she was overcome with joy. "I've hit it! Mr. Weaver, I've hit the target! I finally hit it!"

Finnley sat in the rocking chair, sipping his coffee and praising her with a hearty laugh. "Oh, Neera! You seem to be quite a fast learner. Keep going."

Excited, Neera returned to her original position, dart in hand. After a few practice swings, she threw it out confidently.

She missed.

Neera stomped her foot, puffed up her cheeks, and instantly became unhappy again.

Finnley chuckled. "Don't rush. Nothing comes that easy. You need to practice more and make it muscle memory. The more you practice, the higher your chances of success. Practice makes perfect, after all."

Neera also understood that principle. She calmed her emotions, didn't get discouraged, and continued to practice.

In the evening, after finishing her training, her wrist and arm felt as if they were about to give out.

On the way back, she leaned back in her seat, utterly exhausted, sighing deeply. "Zephyr, I think I can finally understand the pain you fighting artists go through. When

you first started practicing, it must have been even more torturous than what I'm experiencing now. I really admire you all. It must take an incredible amount of determination to train as hard as you have."

Seeing her in that listless state, Zephyr felt a rare urge to laugh. Just as he was about to say something, a sharp glint suddenly caught the corner of his eye.

He keenly sensed something was amiss. His gaze fell on the rearview mirror, his cold eyes narrowing. It seems we've been tailed by some small fries.

Without hesitation, he suddenly accelerated, aiming to shake off the car trailing behind him. "Ms. Garcia, please hold on tight!"

Neera was momentarily stunned, immediately feeling her back pressed tightly against the seat. She quickly regained her senses and instinctively looked behind her.

Suddenly, two cars picked up speed, tailing closely behind.

"Are we being followed?" she asked, a knot forming in her chest.

"Yes." With a succinct and meaningful response, Zephyr focused intently on the road ahead, planning to sharply turn the steering wheel at the next intersection, throwing them off in the opposite direction.

Surprisingly, those small fries were not just tailing from behind but also prepared to block the way ahead.

The car hadn't reached the intersection yet when suddenly, a vehicle burst out from a side alley, blocking the road ahead.

Zephyr's pupils suddenly contracted. He slammed on the brakes fiercely, and the tires screeched loudly against the ground.

Neera's ears ached from what she heard. Her body jolted forward abruptly, her forehead crashing into the back of the passenger seat.

Before she could react, she heard Zephyr saying, "Ms. Garcia, please stay in the car. No matter what happens, do not get out."

With that, he promptly unbuckled his seatbelt, opened the car door, and stepped out with a long stride without any hesitation.

Neera raised her head, only to see his retreating figure. Her heart leaped into her throat, filled with worry and unbearable tension.

At that moment, the cars blocking them from the front and trailing from behind sandwiched their car in the middle, all coming to a halt.

A group of robust men stepped out of the vehicle, each one stretching their wrists and necks, their eyes fierce and intimidating.

Neera could feel the murderous intent even while sitting in the car. She quickly composed herself and dialed Shane's number, asking for help. Search the FindNøvel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Outside, Zephyr quickly engaged in a tussle with the other party.

The opponents were clearly experts, each one ruthless and fierce as if they intended to corner someone to their death.

If it were anyone else, dealing with countless opponents would not be an issue for Zephyr. However, when it came to those Bartitsu experts, he would find it much more challenging.

Moreover, the number of opponents was large, making it impossible for him to launch an attack at that moment. He could only defend and had no spare capacity to protect Neera.

Soon, he was entangled by several people, leaving him no time to attend to other matters.

The rest of them took the opportunity to approach the car.

Neera watched as those people got closer and closer, their hands about to touch the car door. She was so nervous that she was almost suffocating. What should I do now?

Just as her mind was racing, at the crucial moment, several figures emerged from the shadows, stepping out in front of the car and blocking the other party's path. "Who do you think you are? Daring to cause trouble for Ms. Garcia Are you tired of living?"

The other party sneered, "Enough talk! Bring it on!"

Before long, both sides were engaged in a fierce brawl, throwing punches and kicks at each other. The scene was utter chaos.

Neera's heart had nearly leaped out of her throat moments prior. She was then panting heavily, observing the people who had just appeared. Judging by their skills, they are on par with the opposition. They must have been sent by Uncle Chad to secretly protect me.

But even with the addition of Zephyr, they were still outnumbered by the opposition. After a period of stalemate, they gradually began to falter.

Soon, someone came to open Neera's car door.

But the car door had already been locked from the inside by Neera, preventing anyone outside from opening it. As a result, they began to smash the car window.

Neera's heart pounded nervously, her hands trembling slightly as she hurriedly moved inward.

Seeing the glass about to shatter, the car was no longer a safe place. She gritted her teeth and had no choice but to exit from the other side.

The other party was waiting for her to get out of the car. Seeing that, they immediately launched an attack on her.

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Chapter 1158

Deep down, Neera was actually in a state of panic.

But she knew, at that moment, she absolutely couldn't lose her composure. No matter how scared she was, she couldn't let it show.

She clenched her hand, her palm full of sweat, striving to keep herself calm and composed.

As she saw the other party getting closer and closer, a thought suddenly struck her. She reached into her pocket and found a dagger, the very one that Finnley had given her.

In her haste, she flexed her wrist and flung it toward the other party.

After a full day of training, her wrist ached terribly, making it even harder to aim.

The dagger flew out, veered off course, and fell to the ground not far away.

The other party scoffed, their tone dripping with sarcasm.

"With your pathetic little tricks, you think you can hurt others? Stop daydreaming!"

Neera gritted her teeth, her heart sinking heavily. She repeatedly told herself to stay calm.

She still remembered Shane had once said that the use of firearms was not allowed there.

It seemed that no matter how rampant the other party might be, they wouldn't dare to violate the law.

In that case, there was no need to worry about being hit by a bullet.

Right then, she surveyed her surroundings, doing her best to dodge and evade as much as she could.

While dodging, she was also trying to escape from the area.

However, more and more burly men began to gather, blocking her path from all directions.

"Thinking of running away? With your level of stamina, how far do you think you can get? You might as well surrender and save us both some energy," someone mocked.

Meanwhile, Zephyr noticed the situation Neera was in. With a stern expression, he yelled, "Ms. Garcia! Quickly hide!" He gritted his teeth and wanted to rush over to help her.

However, the person he was entangled with seized the opportunity and landed a heavy punch on him. "Why are you still trying to help others? Ha! You should take a good look at your own situation first. If you want to save her, you'll have to see if you have the ability to escape from us first!"

A sharp pain seared through the side of Zephyr's face, his cheek burning intensely. His mouth was also injured, the taste of blood filling his oral cavity.

His face was dark with anger. He wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth with the back of his hand, stood up again, and, without a word, charged back into the fray.

At the same time, the people surrounding Neera, upon seeing the situation on the other side, all let out laughs filled with contempt and mockery.

Subsequently, they shifted their focus, staring at Neera with half-smiles on their faces. "All right. Now, all we have to do is capture you, and our mission will be complete," one of them said.

Neera watched them get closer and closer, her face turning slightly pale.

However, the more she found herself in such situations, the more she felt calm and steady. Since I'm already pushed to this point, what else can I possibly fear? I'll just have to do whatever it takes to save myself!

It was as if time had come to a standstill there, and the movements of the people gathering around seemed to have slowed down.

Just as they were merely half a meter away from her, she seized the opportunity. With a sudden flick of her wrist, she swiftly spun around.

In the next moment, all the medicinal powder in her palm was scattered.

The others had prepared in advance, yet they were all covered in the powder from head to toe, choking and coughing uncontrollably.

"What the hell is this? I can't even open my eyes!" someone grumbled irritably.

However, in the next second, he fell silent.

Surrounding Neera were four or five burly men, all of whom had been affected. Their skin was covered in a dense rash, initially causing a sharp pain followed by an intense itch.

And then, they felt a numbness spreading throughout their bodies, leaving them utterly powerless. One by one, they collapsed to the ground, completely unable to move.

That unexpected turn of events unfolded in just a few seconds. No one saw it coming, and everyone was taken aback, too startled to recklessly approach her.

Neera was watching the medicinal powder take effect, and she was just about to breathe a sigh of relief.

However, right then, something from the darkness approached her.

Neera felt a chill down her spine, keenly aware of the danger looming. Instinctively, she dodged.

In the next moment, she felt a sharp, intense pain in her shoulder.

A dagger whizzed past her side, clattering to the ground with a metallic clanging sound. The blade shimmered with a bloody glow.

Neera's expression changed dramatically in an instant, unable to suppress a grunt of pain. She raised her hand to cover the wound, which wouldn't stop bleeding. Had I not noticed and dodged in time, the dagger would have likely slashed across the major artery in my neck! When the time comes, even if deities were to descend, they wouldn't be able to save me. The other party isn't trying to capture me. They're clearly out to take my life!

Seeing the situation, Zephyr's eyes were filled with a blood-red hue, as if he wished he could split himself in two, rushing over to save her.

Even those who stepped forward to help were in a state of urgency, but they were entangled and couldn't free themselves.

At that moment, that eerie feeling surfaced again.

A sudden chill of cold sweat crept up Neera's spine. She gathered all her focus, and as she turned her head, she saw another dagger flying straight toward her.

This time around, it was aiming straight for her heart.

In that moment, Neera's heart nearly sank to the depths.

She wanted to hide, but her body felt as if it was nailed to the spot, completely unable to move her feet. S~earch the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

That was a human's instinctual response. In the face of mortal danger, the body would almost always freeze.

It felt as though her heart was detached from her body. Even at that moment, she had the presence of mind to think she was probably going to meet her end there. What about Jean? What about my children and my family?

Just at that critical moment, out of nowhere, a stone flew in, striking the flying knife with pinpoint accuracy, knocking it straight to the ground.

Immediately after, a slender figure emerged from the darkness.

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Chapter 1159

Neera was taken aback. She turned her head and saw a very young woman.

At that moment, the woman was dressed in a black bodysuit, her beautiful face expressionless, coldly stunning, looking both cool and chic. SEARCH THE website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Despite having a slender figure, she carried a chilling, murderous aura.

Without uttering a word, she suddenly dashed into the bushes on the other side.

The bushes trembled, echoing with the intense sounds of a fierce battle, but it was short-lived.

In less than half a minute, the woman came out again, still holding someone's collar in her hand.

That was a short man, likely the one who had just hidden in the shadows, launching a sneak attack on Neera.

Thud!

The short man was ruthlessly thrown onto the open ground by the coldly beautiful woman, his back hitting the ground with a dull, heavy thud.

He was battered and bruised, his mouth filled with blood. Two of his teeth had been knocked out, leaving him to emit unconscious moans of pain.

That was also the last time he made a sound.

Before anyone present could react, the woman, paying no attention to the crowd, swiftly pulled out a fruit knife from her pocket and twirled it in her hand.

In the next instant, the sharp fruit knife was thrust toward the short man's throat.

Neera's pupils tightened, understanding her intentions. She wanted to stop the woman, but before she could, she saw her hand rise and fall with the knife, and the man was already dealt with.

Bright red blood spurted out like a fountain from the man's throat. His eyes bulged, and he quickly drew his last breath, dying with his eyes wide open.

Neera's eyes were wide open, staring at the scene before her, almost forgetting to breathe.

She had indeed witnessed the scene of death before.

As a doctor, she had stood by the operating table and by the bedside, witnessing patients who were beyond medical help. Her heart was filled with sorrow, helplessness, and a profound sense of the fragility of life.

However, she had never witnessed a scene where someone's life was being snatched away like that.

The mysterious woman clearly didn't care about what others thought or perceived.

Confirming that the man on the ground was indeed dead, she flicked the blood off her fruit knife without batting an eyelid, then turned and plunged back into the fray.

Her combat prowess was truly formidable. In an instant, it was as if a tiger had entered a flock of sheep, with the opponents losing their lives one after another.

In the end, the remaining three burly men were petrified by her madness, not daring to approach her anymore.

They held back the urge to wet their pants, trembling as they stepped back. Then, turning around, they took off, running faster than a cheetah.

A few minutes later, the chaotic scene was left with only Neera and a few others, surrounded by bodies strewn all over the ground.

Zephyr was also astonished by the mysterious woman's skills, wondering who on earth she was.

However, that was not the time to focus on those matters. He turned his head toward Neera and gave her a once-over before expressing his concern by asking, "Ms. Garcia, are you okay?"

"I-I'm okay." Neera, still in shock, stared intently at the woman.

"Who are you? Did my uncle send you to protect me?" Neera asked at that moment.

The woman also turned her gaze toward Neera. Initially, she had intended to approach and introduce herself.

As luck would have it, the distant roar of a car echoed through the air.

It was Shane and his men.

The woman, disturbed, frowned in displeasure. With a swift movement, she vanished behind the bushes, leaving no trace behind.

"Hey! You" Neera wanted to call out to her, but seeing the tranquility restored in the bushes, she had no choice but to give up.

The screech of brakes filled the air as several cars came to an abrupt halt.

Shane quickly got out of the car. His face was very serious, and there was a touch of anxiety.

He brought quite a few men with him, all of whom were somewhat surprised by the chaotic scene they encountered.

"What happened?" Shane asked, his brows furrowed in concern as he stepped forward.

No sooner had the words left his mouth than he noticed the wound in Neera's palm was bleeding profusely, and there was also a deep gash on her shoulder. He was so frightened that he almost lost his soul. "You're hurt! Is it serious?" he asked.

Neera covered her shoulder with one hand, her legs still a bit weak. But she didn't want him to worry, so she shook her head and said, "I'm fine. It just looks worse than it is. It's not a big deal."

After a careful examination, Shane's brows furrowed tighter. "With an injury like that, how can you say it's not a big deal?"

Afterward, he asked Zephyr, "Is everything taken care of?"

With a solemn expression, Zephyr replied, "No. A few of them were chased away."

"Chased away? Who chased them away? Also, did you fight off these people on the ground?" Shane asked.

There were quite a few people lying haphazardly on the ground, and a few more had run off. Given their numbers, logically, they would have been more than a match for Zephyr and his group. Zephyr's gaze darkened slightly. "A mysterious woman beat them. I don't know her."

Hearing that, Neera was somewhat surprised. "Isn't she one of us? It seemed like she wanted to talk to me just now."

Zephyr shook his head with certainty. "She's definitely not working for Mr. Gordon. I've never seen her before, and if Mr. Gordon had any arrangements, he would have informed me in advance."

As soon as these words were spoken, both Shane and Neera were completely baffled.

However, a moment later, Shane said, "Let's put this matter aside for now. We can't stay here for long. Let's go back first and deal with the wound. I'll leave the others here to handle things."

Neera had no objections and subsequently got in the car with him.

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Chapter 1160

Upon returning to the Gordon residence, the family doctor had already been summoned by Shane in advance.

Once Neera had cleaned the wounds, the doctor first applied medicine to her. After bandaging her up, he went on to treat a few others, including Zephyr.

Avery received the news late at night and immediately rushed over.

Upon seeing her and observing her somewhat disheveled appearance, Avery, for some unknown reason, suddenly felt a surge of anger. "Why didn't you call me when you were being tracked and cornered? It was such a dangerous situation. I could have rushed over to save you!"

That was the first time Neera had seen him lose his composure. After considering for a moment, she responded calmly and politely. "Mr. Cox, thank you for coming to see me so late. The incident happened so suddenly, and Shane was the only one I could rely on. I didn't think it was right to bother you in the middle of the night."

Is Shane the only one she can rely on? What about me? Who am I to her? Avery felt as if a large stone was lodged in his heart, causing unbearable discomfort.

Avery could tell, from Neera's words, that she was just short of saying he was an outsider. Why is she always like this? No matter when, she always has this cold and distant attitude, as if she's in a hurry to put a thousand miles between us!

Seeing that Avery's complexion was off, Shane cleared his throat to remind him, "All right. She's had a scare. Let's give her some time to recover."

Avery's cheek twitched slightly, but he didn't say anything more. Instead, he turned to Zephyr and asked, "What exactly happened tonight? What's going on?"

Zephyr moved his arm, the wound on his shoulder causing his entire body to ache.

He let out a soft hiss, then succinctly explained what had happened after they departed from the fighting arts center.

Listening to his report, Avery's face grew increasingly grim. "Who is that mysterious woman?"

Shane was puzzled. "Isn't she one of yours? I thought that woman was sent by you to secretly protect Neera, not by my uncle."

Avery shook his head. "I did send someone, but it wasn't a woman. It was a man. Moreover, he was occupied tonight."

"Occupied?" Shane narrowed his eyes. "If they knew this much and even deliberately lured your subordinate away, it seems they came prepared."

Zephyr's expression was dark, and his eyes chillingly cold. "They came with the intent of taking Ms. Garcia's life. Not only did they surround and intercept us, but there were also people lying in ambush. If they couldn't kill her openly, they planned to use stealth weapons to murder her! Argh! Such a ruthless scheme! As for that woman, she's an exceptional fighter. The people she killed were almost all done in with a single strike. Her opponents were all Bartitsu experts, yet that woman dealt with them without much effort. It's clear how terrifying her skills are. I have no idea where she came from..."

Avery paused for a moment, then said, "Regardless of her background, she did save Neera's life. It seems that she's not a threat to Neera. From what I understand, Neera intended to greet her, but she left because she saw someone coming. She probably didn't want to reveal her identity in front of others. Given this, there's no need to focus our attention on her."

"You're right. We need to focus on the group that ambushed us tonight. We must investigate thoroughly, or else we'll have endless troubles later." Shane nodded. The election convention hasn't even started, and such a big incident has already occurred. If Neera really wins the election, who knows what kind of danger she might encounter then?

"I've already sent someone to investigate thoroughly. As for the fact that Neera was harmed, it's been temporarily sealed off. Not a whisper of it will leak out," Shane said.

Upon hearing that, Avery nodded. "I will also have my people help with the investigation. We must catch the person behind the scenes as soon as possible."

After he finished speaking, he looked back at Neera, his gaze lingering on her wounds, his eyes filled with pain.

Neera had a less severe wound in the palm of her hand, but the one on her shoulder was severe, causing a lot of bleeding.

In the short span of the conversation, the bandage on the wound was already stained red with blood.

Due to excessive blood loss, Neera's face was frighteningly pale, with not a hint of color on her lips, making her look exceptionally weak.

Thinking back to how he had lost his temper with her as soon as he walked in the door, Avery felt somewhat remorseful. "I'm sorry. I let my emotions get the best of me earlier

and lost my composure. I shouldn't have lashed out at you. I hope you won't take it to heart."

Neera pursed her lips and shook her head. "It's okay. I know you mean well. Thank you."

Avery's gaze was complex, her voice suddenly tinged with a hint of bitterness.

"I failed to protect you. I'm sorry. If it wasn't for the woman who showed up tonight to help you, things could have been much worse. You might have lost your life..." Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Neera understood just how perilous an encounter she had experienced tonight. "Mr. Cox, you don't need to apologize or blame yourself. This matter has nothing to do with you. The other party was targeting me, fully prepared, intending to take my life when I was alone. Who could have predicted this? Fortunately, everyone is safe."

Shane then chimed in, "Yes. Thinking about it now still gives me a chill. I arrived too late..."

Later on, Neera, visibly weary and exhausted, decided to head upstairs to rest.

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Chapter 1161

Although it wasn't a life-threatening injury, she lost too much blood. Coupled with shock and exhaustion, she was incredibly weak.

In the middle of the night, she began to run a fever in her hazy slumber.

Luckily for her, Shane was worried about her, so he instructed the housekeeper to check on her every hour. That was how they found out Neera was running a fever.

Upon receiving the news, Shane got up and took the opportunity to wake the doctor, who was staying there overnight.

"Mr. Gordon, there's no need to worry. Ms. Garcia's fever is due to a slight inflammation from her wound. After taking some medicine and getting some rest, she should recover," the doctor said.

After the housekeeper had administered Neera medicine, Shane still felt uneasy. Instead of leaving, he sat on the couch to keep watch.

All the while, Neera didn't know what was going on.

She was deliriously feverish, completely out of her senses, and didn't wake up until noon the next day.

As soon as she regained consciousness, she felt a wave of dizziness. Struggling, she managed to lift her eyelids, paused for a couple of seconds, then tried to sit up.

As a result, she felt so weak and limp all over that she almost fell flat again.

Shane quickly stepped forward to support her, propping a pillow behind her. "You're finally awake."

Neera was a bit dazed. "W-What's happening to me?"

Shane sighed helplessly. "You scared me half to death with your high fever in the middle of the night. Thankfully, I didn't let the doctor leave and was able to give you medicine in time. Otherwise, things would've turned ugly."

Neera raised her hand and touched her forehead, belatedly realizing what had happened. She looked apologetic. "Sorry for the inconvenience, Shane. I've caused you some trouble."

Shane shook his head. "What's this about trouble? We're family. How are you feeling now?"

"Mmm... I'm drained, still feeling a bit weak."

"It's normal. Your fever hasn't completely subsided, and you're injured. It won't heal that quickly. Just wait a moment. I'll have someone bring up some food. Try to eat a bit, then you can take your medicine."

After a moment of thought, Neera said, "No need to go through all that trouble. I've been lying down for too long. It would be good to get out of bed and move around a bit."

Shane didn't insist otherwise. "All right. Let's go downstairs to eat, then."

After he finished speaking, he paused for a moment before reminding her, "Avery is downstairs. He heard that you had a high fever and came early in the morning. He's been waiting in the living room."

Neera got out of bed, showing no reaction to what was said.

"Great. That works. I'll go down and thank him," she said.

Seeing her cold demeanor, Shane didn't say anything, but he sighed inwardly. It seems that there's no hope for these two. The guy's heartfelt feelings are likely to be wasted.

As expected, Avery was in the living room.

Upon seeing Neera, he immediately stood up, his worry glaringly obvious and unhidden. "How are you? Are you feeling a bit better now?"

Neera simply responded with a nonchalant hum, subtly stepping back half a step, creating some distance between them. "After a good night's sleep, I'm feeling much better. Thank you for taking the trouble to come and see me. I appreciate it."

Avery's expression stiffened slightly. After a few seconds, he also responded with a nonchalant hum.

Neera didn't mind his reaction. "You guys continue chatting. I'm going to grab something to eat first."

Afterward, she didn't even glance at Avery. She simply turned around and headed straight to the dining room.

Avery watched her retreating figure, his gaze gradually deepening.

Shane showed a helpless expression, walked over, and patted Avery's shoulder. "If it's not working, maybe you should just let it go."

Avery's expression grew even darker, remaining silent. [SEARCH THE website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

Just when Shane thought Avery wouldn't respond, the latter suddenly said, "How can one give up so easily when it hasn't even started..."

After having a simple bowl of oatmeal to fill her stomach, Neera felt a slight return of strength to her body.

At that moment, Douglas, the butler of the Gordon family, came to report, "Mr. Gordon, Mr. Robin and Mr. Baxter have arrived. They say they've come to visit Ms. Garcia."

Only Shane and Neera were staying in the mansion.

As for Robin and Baxter, they had their own mansions.

Shane nodded, signaling for Douglas to invite the guests in.

Soon, Robin and Baxter, each with their own entourage, entered one after the other.

"I appreciate the trouble you two elders have taken to visit me. I'm sorry for the inconvenience," Neera courteously greeted them.

Robin chuckled. He looked kind when he said, "There's no need to worry. I heard you were attacked last night. Were you scared? It's your first time encountering such a thing, right?"

In his eyes, although Neera had taken over as the head of the family, she was still a young girl after all, and he couldn't help but worry.

Neera appreciated the kindness shown and responded with a smile, "I'm fine, actually. I've encountered similar situations, so it didn't scare me too much. However, the suddenness of it did startle me a bit. Thankfully, nothing serious happened."

"That's good." Robin noticed that although her complexion wasn't great, her spirits were still high, which put him at ease. "I heard you've been injured. I brought you some nourishing supplements. I'll have the housekeeper prepare them for you to help you regain your strength."

Neera nodded slightly. "Okay. Thank you, Granduncle Robin."

Although she wasn't very close to Robin, she recognized his kindness. Therefore, she changed the way she addressed him as a sign of trust and respect.

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Chapter 1162

At that moment, Baxter sneered sarcastically, "What's there to be scared of? As the head of the Gordon family, if you don't even have this much courage, make a fuss over every little thing, and lack the ability to solve problems, then you shouldn't be the head of the family! In my opinion, it's because someone is overestimating their abilities that we've ended up in this mess!"

He spoke with veiled threats, not explicitly pointing out, but it was clear as day who he was referring to.

Shane's and Avery's expressions turned sour, their eyes cold.

Just as Avery was about to chime in, Neera beat him to it with a retort.

"An attack is always sudden. Who could've predicted it? Moreover, this is a crime. Instead of blaming the ambushers, you're blaming the victims, Mr. Baxter. What kind of

logic is that? If someone wants to kill you, would you blame the perpetrator, or would you blame yourself for being incapable?"

"You—" Baxter didn't expect her to be so sharp-tongued, his anger causing his eyes to narrow. He then scolded her, "I am an elder, and you are being disrespectful to me. This is a great insolence!"

After hearing that, Neera scoffed even more mockingly than he did.

"Disrespectful? Insolent? Mr. Baxter, it seems age has clouded your judgment. In the Gordon family, who should be the one truly deserving of respect?" she asked.

Baxter choked up, his face stern, and stopped talking.

He remained silent while Neera casually lifted the corner of her mouth, calmly and composedly adding, "If I'm not mistaken, in the Gordon family, the head of the family holds the highest authority. Regardless of one's seniority or experience, no one is allowed to disrespect the head of the family. This is the rule. Mr. Baxter, I'm new here, and out of respect for your age, I addressed you politely. However, this doesn't mean you can boss me around. Having spent so many years in the Gordon family, as one of its elders, you should understand this principle. I shouldn't need to remind you, should I?"

In the end, she pressed her lips together. Despite being ill, she exuded an aura of dominance that demanded respect. "Mr. Baxter, you should know better at your age what should be said and shouldn't. Mind your own business and stop worrying about mine."

In all his years, Baxter had never been taught a lesson by anyone except Chad.

In an instant, he was consumed by anger, his face turning red and his neck swelling in rage.

Yet Neera was saying all the right words, leaving him no room to retort. He felt as if he was choking on his own frustration, unable to swallow it down or spit it out.

Ultimately, he gritted his teeth, let out a deep, cold huff, and turned to leave.

After Baxter left, Robin suddenly let out a soft laugh and said, "Chad indeed has a good eye for people. Neera, in just these few days you've been here, you've really started to show the makings of a family head."

Neera curled her lips. "He's always had a problem with me. I've already offended him, so why should I hold back? Otherwise, he might think I'm an easy target."

Robin nodded with a hearty laugh. "You have your own ideas, and that's great."

Afterward, he didn't stay long and also left.

Avery looked at her pale face and said gently, "After taking your medicine, go upstairs and rest. Your body is still weak and needs more care for your wounds to heal faster. As for those who hurt you, I will investigate as soon as possible. Don't worry."

"Okay." Neera did feel a bit tired. After expressing her thanks, she turned to head upstairs.

At that moment, something else came to her mind, and she turned to ask them a favor.

"Shane, Mr. Cox, about what happened yesterday, I beg you not to tell my aunt and uncle. I don't want them to worry," she said. If Aunt Adriana finds out about this, she will surely be so worried that she can't eat or sleep well. Also, the little ones might even end up crying.

News of Neera's injury reached not only the Gordon family but also Lordsworth Estate.

The night before, as Jean was about to rest, he saw Ian hurriedly enter.

"Mr. Beauvort, Luna has returned!" Ian reported.

Upon hearing that, Jean frowned immediately and wore a solemn expression. I specifically assigned Luna to secretly protect Neera. Without my orders, she cannot leave at will. Why did she rush back so late at night? Something must've happened.

"Have her wait for me in the study," Jean said to Ian.

"Understood."

In no time, he donned a coat and headed to the study. [Search the website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

As soon as he walked in, he saw the bloodstains on Luna, his pupils suddenly constricting.

Before Luna could speak, Jean was the first to ask, "What happened? Is she hurt?"

His voice was filled with unmistakable worry and anxiety.

Luna immediately reported in detail all the events that had occurred that night with the utmost respect. "Please forgive me, My Lord. I was delayed on my way here due to the enemy's interference, so I was a step late to rescue Mrs Beauvort."

Jean's face instantly turned icy cold when he heard that Neera had been injured. His aura suddenly became terrifyingly intimidating. "Who did it? Do you know?"

Luna shook her head. "It's still unclear at the moment. The Gordon residence's surroundings are heavily guarded now, so I only dared to come back and report to you in detail."

A dark cloud covered Jean's face, a fierce light flickering in his eyes. "Understood. Go back and continue to follow in secret. There must be no more mistakes. I will assign you more people to help find out who is responsible."

Afterward, he called for Ian and ordered, "Get things in order. We're heading to District Fourteen."

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Chapter 1163

Neera had barely rested for a couple of days when the election for the district president was about to commence.

These past few days, Avery did not show up again. It seemed he had been investigating the incident that occurred that night, as well as the identity of the person who saved Neera.

Shane was as busy as a beaver because of this.

"The other party was very covert in their actions, operating under a do-or-die order. They didn't expect their plan to be exposed. After those three people escaped, our team has been tracking them relentlessly. However, they were extremely cautious and did not immediately contact their superiors, which is why we couldn't identify the puppet master behind the scenes right away. But they're bound to slip up. We deliberately withdrew some of our search team to give the impression that we had given up the search. Coupled with the upcoming district president election conference, they finally let their guard down and exposed their weak spot."

That day, Shane and Avery returned together, their expressions solemn.

"Although we have some leads now, we haven't reached the mastermind yet. All we know at the moment is that the ones who acted are a group of paid assassins from District Twenty-Five. Clearly, someone hired them."

"District Twenty-Five?" Neera had only heard of this district but didn't know much about it. "Which family from that district holds a grudge against the Gordon family?"

Shane thought for a moment, then said, "It's hard to say. Right now, we're in the midst of electing the district president. The Gordon family is a popular choice. Anyone who wants to run is considered an adversary. It's not just District Twenty-Five, other districts might also make a move. Moreover, at the end of the day, all we know is that the assassins were hired from District Twenty-Five. But that doesn't necessarily mean the person who hired them is from there, too. It could be a deliberate attempt to mislead us and create confusion."

"Indeed, you have a point." Neera's brows furrowed further. Phison is truly unfathomable. No wonder Uncle Chad has been reluctant to involve the Gordon family in the affairs of Phison.

While one might evade for a moment, it was impossible to avoid for a lifetime. The roots of the Gordon family were in Phison, and they wouldn't be able to escape, no matter what.

Seeing her deep in thought, Avery didn't want her to worry, so he comforted her in a gentle voice.

"You don't need to worry about this matter. We're here for you. The election conference is set in District Twenty-One. When the time comes, we'll conduct a thorough investigation and seize the opportunity to settle the score."

Neera also knew that haste wouldn't help.

"Hmm, they didn't succeed this time, but they might still look for another opportunity to strike."

Shane nodded. "I've been thinking about it, and I wanted to discuss this with you. You've been injured this time, and your body hasn't fully recovered. It's not suitable for you to overwork. As for this election conference, perhaps you should not attend. Stay here and recuperate. I will assign more people to protect you. After all, you came from Phison this time just to show your face and secure your position as the family head. Whether you attend the election conference or not, it's not that important."

As a matter of fact, Neera could not care less about the election convention. If possible, he would prefer not to attend at all.

However, now...

She paused for a moment, then declined his proposal.

"I think I should go in person. Mr. Baxter places great importance on the position of the district president. If I don't go, he will definitely use this as an opportunity to make a fuss. I've just taken over as the head of the family, and my position is not yet stable. I

don't want to give people a chance to criticize me for no reason. I'll just go and make an appearance. If anything comes up, I'll deal with it as it happens."

Shane's brows furrowed slightly. "But can your body handle it?"

"Don't worry." Neera chuckled lightly. "I'm a doctor. No one knows my body better than I do. It's nothing serious. I just need to take some medicine, and I'll be fine."

At this point, she paused. The light in her eyes dimmed, and the conversation took a turn.

"Moreover," she said, "those who want to take my life will only reveal themselves when they see an opportunity to strike. Since I have people protecting me, I might as well play the role of a live target. Let's see if the puppet master behind the scenes will still make a move."

Seeing that she had already made up her mind, Shane didn't try to dissuade her any further.

"All right, then. Let's pack up. We'll set off first thing tomorrow morning."

That evening, after Neera had finished washing up, she instinctively picked up her phone to take a look.

There were no missed calls or any new messages.

She pouted. Her mood was foul as she slowly brushed her hair.

These past couple of days, it seemed as if Jean had evaporated from the face of the earth, losing all contact with her.

I wonder what he's up to...

Just as she was deep in thought, suddenly, her cell phone rang.

She picked it up, and her eyes lit up instantly.

It was a call from Jean.

She resisted the urge to answer immediately. She finally pressed the answer button after letting the phone ring for a while.

"Why are you calling at this late hour?" SEAR*ch the FindNovel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

The moment the words left her mouth, she felt a pang of regret.

Why does he sound so upset? Could he have detected my unhappiness?

Indeed, Jean heard it. He put down his signing pen, his eyes and eyebrows carrying a hint of a helpless yet indulgent smile.

"Why so glum? Who has upset you? Tell me about it."

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Chapter 1164

His voice was so gentle that it instantly soothed the little temper that had just flared up in Neera.

I'm so easy to please, huh?

She couldn't help but inwardly criticize herself. She pouted and denied with a tsundere attitude, "No one. Do you need something?"

Jean lightly chuckled, his lips curling into a smile. "Ah, you're being so cold toward me. It seems I'm the real culprit here."

When he pointed it out, Neera's cheeks flushed red instantly, feeling quite embarrassed.

"Hey, do you have something to ask of me? If not, I'm going to sleep now!"

After this little tiff, the girlish emotions Neera had been suppressing seemed to have ignited. She began to act more coy and capricious toward him, and it happened more and more frequently, becoming increasingly spontaneous.

Jean admired the woman she used to be gentle yet determined, generous and brave. But he found himself even more captivated by who she'd become, especially her newfound, tantalizing edge of temperamental flair.

He knew that only he could see this unique side of her.

With this in mind, the affection in his eyes deepened, and his voice became even more gentle.

"Don't sleep just yet. Keep me company and chat with me. I've been so busy these past few days, barely getting any sleep. I just want to hear your voice."

Upon hearing this, Neera was taken aback for a moment. Only then did she belatedly realize the fatigue in his voice, along with a slight hoarseness.

All her minor grievances vanished instantly, and she began to worry about him.

"Why are you so busy again? Didn't I tell you to rest properly? Given your current health condition, how can you withstand staying up late and working hard? Why are you like this? When I'm not by your side watching over you, you just don't take your health seriously, do you?"

Hearing her slight anger, Jean quickly tried to appease her.

"There's no need to worry. I've been taking the medicine you gave me on time, and I've been eating properly. I've only been working overtime because I've been really busy. But rest assured, it was just for these past few days, and I've just finished up."

So, his lack of contact these past few days was due to him being too busy.

As soon as he finished his work, he immediately called her just to hear the sound of her voice.

How could he be like this? It's so unfair. He's even making it impossible for me to get angry at him!

Neera bit her lip lightly, one hand clutching her phone, the other gripping the blanket. It took her a while before she finally spoke in a slow, deliberate manner.

"No matter how busy you are, you should always take good care of yourself. Have you forgotten how you used to watch over me, making sure I didn't stay up late? Don't let it happen again."

Upon hearing this, Jean knew she had forgiven him. The smile on his face broadened.

"Um, what about you? What have you been up to these past couple of days?"

Neera's inner gloom had dissipated, and her tone softened. She casually shared some interesting things she had come across on the internet in her spare time over the past couple of days.

However, she didn't utter a single word about her own attack and injury.

Jean listened quietly, his heart aching unbearably.

She always shares joy and never burdens others with her worries.

If he wasn't fully aware of the situation, he might have been deceived by her nonchalant words.

The two of them chatted for nearly an hour. Jean, mindful of her injury, reluctantly suggested that she should get some sleep.

Neera gave a hum of agreement. "All right, then. Good night."

"All right. Good night."

The call ended, and Jean stood by the window, his eyes darker than the night itself.

Upon learning of Neera's mishap, he was ready to set off for District Fourteen, wanting to fly to her side immediately.

However, with the district president's election approaching, there were many matters that he had to handle personally.

Moreover, if he were to appear by Neera's side at this moment, it might jeopardize her standing in the Gordon family.

Last time, just the appearance of Tiago alone was enough to give those old-timers from the Bartitsu family an opportunity to exaggerate matters. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

If Jean had gone instead, who knew what kind of suspicions that girl would have faced.

No matter how worried he was, he had to suppress it. All he could do now was wait for the convening of the district president's election.

As the night deepened, the man's eyes narrowed slightly as if he were contemplating something.

He called for Ian, his voice cold as he asked, "How is the situation over there?"

"Luna brought news saying that Mrs. Beauvort hasn't left the house for the past couple of days. She should be at the Gordon residence recuperating from her injuries. Besides Robin and Baxter, only Avery had visited. No other people had been seen around the Gordon residence."

At the mention of Avery, Jean's brows furrowed immediately, his displeasure evident on his face.

However, he knew that now was not the time to dwell on these matters, so he didn't say anything.

"Understood. Head to District Twenty-One tomorrow. Have Luna follow secretly as well. You must protect Neera at all costs. There must not be any mistakes!"

"Yes!"

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Chapter 1165

The next morning, Neera got up very early.

After changing her medication, she freshened up and tidied herself. Then she went downstairs.

As expected, she immediately spotted both Robin and Baxter.

"Good morning," she greeted, her tone unhurried and calm.

Robin smiled and nodded at her, asking with concern, "How have you been resting these past two days? Is your injury getting better?"

Neera smiled. "Thank you for your concern. I'm feeling much better now."

Beside him, Baxter began to speak in an ambiguous tone.

"If you're not feeling well, there's no need to push yourself to go in person. After all, your status as the head of the Gordon family doesn't carry much weight."

Upon seeing him start the conversation with a provocation, Shane's brows immediately furrowed.

"Granduncle Baxter, Neera's position as the heir is already well-established, beyond any doubt. There is no need to keep bringing it up, is there?"

Baxter grunted, about to say something, but was interrupted by Neera.

"Mr. Baxter, you really are fickle. When I previously mentioned that I had no interest in the district president's election and had no plans to participate, you seemed quite dissatisfied. So why are you saying this now? It seems like whether I go or not, it doesn't please you."

Her tone was even, laced with a hint of jest, yet she was subtly mocking him.

"However, there's no need for you to worry about what I should do, Mr. Baxter. As the heir of the Gordon family, it's not anyone else's place to interfere with my decisions. If you're dissatisfied, you're more than welcome to leave now. I can arrange for someone to escort you."

This single sentence left Baxter completely speechless, his face turning unsightly for a moment.

Robin watched from the side, a subtle curve forming at the corner of his mouth. He found himself quite fond of Neera's quick wit. [Search The website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Afterwards, the group embarked on their journey toward District Twenty-One.

After roughly four hours of flight, the plane touched down.

The district president election this time was quite grand. As the host, District Twenty-One had already arranged everything, down to every last detail, properly.

Someone was assigned to pick them up at the airport and take them to the hotel.

Shane had already booked a room in advance—a duplex presidential suite.

"Are we all going to live together?" Neera was a bit uncomfortable with the idea at first.

There would certainly be no problem to stay together with Shane.

However, Avery would also be there.

She had previously stayed temporarily at the Cox residence, causing a lot of trouble and misunderstandings, which became widely known to everyone.

If they were to stay together now, who knew what kind of scandalous rumors would be circulating this time?

Avery noticed her apprehension and a fleeting glint of understanding flashed across his eyes.

"The Gordon and Cox families have always been on good terms. Living in the same suite won't raise any eyebrows. Besides, we're on someone else's turf here. Staying close to each other has its advantages."

Shane also thought the same. "There might still be people watching you in secret, planning to do something harmful to you. We feel more at ease being by your side to protect you."

Hearing that, Neera would seem a bit pretentious if she said anything more.

In the end, all she could do was nod and walk in.

They had to admit that extravagance was truly displayed everywhere in Phison.

This hotel, from the outside, looked incredibly grand, and the interior decor was even more luxurious and splendid.

This presidential suite truly epitomized the height of opulence.

It was just a temporary stopover, yet everywhere you look. It was filled with top-notch furnishings and decorations.

Neera's gaze was instantly drawn to the porcelain vase on the display rack. She walked over, unable to resist touching it.

Shane saw and said, "Are you interested in porcelain? This is an antique left from six hundred years ago. If you like it, I can speak to the hotel and buy it directly for you." S-Six hundred years ago?

Neera was taken aback and quickly withdrew her hand.

It wasn't hard to imagine how this piece of artifact would cost.

She looked around and dared not touch anything around there anymore. Then, she turned to ask about her own room. "Which one is mine? Is it arranged?"

Shane lifted his chin slightly. "You can stay upstairs. Avery and I will be downstairs, and Zephyr and the others will be next door."

After assigning the rooms, Neera carried her luggage and went to her room first.

Everyone else also went back to their rooms to take a good rest.

That evening, during dinner, Irwin came over.

"Mr. Cox, we just received a notice from Bartitsu Guild. They are planning a meeting at Fighting Arts Guild tomorrow. Here is the invitation."

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Chapter 1166

A meeting at the Fighting Arts Guild base.

Avery and Shane exchanged glances with serious expressions on their faces.

They took over the invitation from Irwin, and their expressions grew even more solemn after seeing the signature at the bottom.

Neera noticed it and glanced at the signature as well. With a puzzled look on her face, she asked, "Who's Matthew?"

Shane explained calmly, "He is the vice president of the Bartitsu Guild and an important person among the ancient martial arts families."

"The fact that he had personally sent this invitation means no one is allowed to be absent," Avery added.

A wave of realization washed over Neera, who instantly felt as if a huge mountain was pressing down on her.

Things seem to be getting more and more complicated...

Just then, Irwin shared another piece of news.

"The family of the Fourth Elder has also arrived."

Upon hearing that, Avery's eyes darkened. "Is the Gardner family getting involved as well? Ha, they are indeed ambitious to dare to covet the position of the district president."

Neera could roughly guess what was going on from the sarcasm and disgust in the man's tone.

"Is the Gardner family at odds with the Gordon family?"

Shane nodded and replied, "To be precise, they're actually at odds with the Cox family, and because the Cox family is on good terms with the Gordon family, they've also come to view us as enemies. That's just how it is here in Phison. Once we choose to align with a certain family, we will automatically be considered as part of their faction."

Neera understood that principle well.

"Are the relations between the two families really that bad? Do they fight every time they meet? And they also play tricks behind each other's back?"

Shane understood what she meant and replied, "Are you suspecting that the Gardner family was the one who harmed you? It's hard to say. Even though the Cox family and

the Gordon family are on good terms, and the Gardner family also harbors hostility toward the Gordon family, so far, the Gardner family still sees the Cox family as their main enemy. After all, the Cox family's influence in Bartitsu Guild is stronger than the Gardner family's. Compared to the Gordon family, who has kept a low profile all these years, the Cox family poses a greater threat to the Gardner family. Therefore, the Gardner family has always considered the Cox family as their archenemy and has been trying to take over the Cox family's position in Bartitsu Guild."

Neera couldn't help but sigh as she figured out the intricacies of the relationship among the families.

"I didn't know that such competition exists among the elders in Bartitsu Guild. Being in the same guild, shouldn't they stay united? Why must they engage in internal strife..."

Avery put away the invitation and nodded.

"Actually, internal strife happens everywhere. Like power struggles within a company's management, Bartitsu Guild is no different. Families who haven't secured a seat among the eight elders would do anything in order to get a place. Those who are already among the eight elders would aspire to climb even higher, to become the leader of Bartitsu Guild. That's why there's endless internal strife. Besides, in Bartitsu Guild, power is respected above all else.

"That's right." Shane added, "You've only seen Bartitsu Guild so far, but the situation is the same in Lordsworth Estate. Jean is the leader of Lordsworth Estate, but there are many forces underneath him who want to hold high positions there. However, unlike Bartitsu Guild, the mysterious leader of Lordsworth Estate is so powerful that no one can match his capabilities. Under his iron-fisted rule, the forces underneath him dare not act too recklessly. Hence, and the competition among them is relatively mild."

Understanding the situation, Neera asked, "So, any degree of violence can be used in the competition within Bartitsu Guild? Even if it results in death?"

"Yes, just like the attack you experienced last time. Such incidents are actually very common in Bartitsu Guild. It happens all the time."

Neera pursed her lips, finding it hard to agree with the practices and governance of Bartitsu Guild, let alone have any fondness for them.

Worried that the woman might feel anxious over what she heard, Shane reassured, "Don't worry. They can fight among themselves for all they like, but we won't let them hurt you."

However, that was not what Neera was worried about. "I have a feeling that tomorrow's so-called meeting might not be anything good," she said. [Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

Sharing the same thoughts, Shane replied, "It's unlikely that it would be a peaceful event. After all, the election of the district president is a matter of great importance. There will inevitably be confrontations, both open and hidden.

Avery chimed in, "I'm afraid it's all about the election. The families on the invitation are all eligible candidates for the district president. Don't overthink it for now. Let's rest well tonight and be prepared to meet those wolves tomorrow."

Neera understood that overthinking wouldn't help. Hence, she calmed herself down and replied, "All right."

That night, before falling asleep, she found herself gazing at the ceiling, her thoughts drifting towards Jean.

She wondered how he would react if he knew about the recent events she had been through and the challenges she was about to face...

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Chapter 1167

The next day, the group packed up and headed toward the Fighting Arts Guild base.

On the way there, Shane asked with concern, "Are you nervous?"

Neera chuckled and replied, "I'd be lying if I said I wasn't nervous. It feels like we're heading toward a wolf's den. But it's fine. Since we're already on our way, we might as well be at peace with it. We'll just deal with whatever comes our way."

Seeing that she was able to remain optimistic, Shane chuckled and said, "You sure are carefree. It seems like I worried for nothing."

Neera let out a helpless sigh and replied, "There's no other way. Now that I'm the head of the family, I should be able to bear the responsibilities that come with it. If I can't even face such minor issues, how can I lead the family?"

Shane was relieved upon hearing that and said, "I'm glad that you think this way. Don't worry, with me around, no one would dare to harm you."

The man's words instantly filled Neera's heart with warmth, and her anxiety was significantly eased.

Half an hour later, the car arrived at the Fighting Arts Guild base.

Neera was astounded by the majestic building in front of her the moment she got out of the car.

The building was huge and ancient-looking, as if it had been around for a long time. One could feel a sense of solemnity and oppression just by looking at it.

Shane walked around the front of the car, making his way to Neera's side to give her a brief introduction of the place.

"This building is the guild's base. Usually, meetings will be held here when the guild has important matters to discuss. Come on, let's go in."

Neera nodded. Gazing at the majestic and spectacular ancient-looking building, she took a deep breath before stepping forward and striding steadily into the building.

Perhaps it was her mind playing tricks on her, but the moment she entered the hall, she could feel an invisible pressure enveloping her.

At that moment, the hall was already filled with quite a few people, each of them looking like they were not to be trifled with.

The arrival of Neera instantly quieted the previously bustling atmosphere.

All eyes were on her, with gazes scrutinizing her from every angle.

In comparison, those people showed much more respect toward Avery.

When they saw the man standing next to Neera, most of the people present stood up and took the initiative to greet him.

"Mr. Cox, long time no see." [Search The website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

Avery wore a calm expression as he nodded in acknowledgement and replied politely, "It's been a while since we last met."

Then, he began introducing Neera to everyone.

"I presume you all haven't met her yet. This is the new head of the Gordon family, who has been invited to participate in today's meeting."

With his words, naturally, those who behaved respectfully to him earlier could not continue to treat Neera coldly.

Immediately, those people started to greet Neera.

Neera was fully alert at that moment. Standing tall and with a calm expression on her face, she said, "Hello, it's nice meeting all of you. I look forward to your support."

Just then, an eerie laughter suddenly sounded as an old man began to speak.

"It's such a surprise that the head of the Cox family is also here. I heard that you've been away from Phison these days and thought you've lost interest in the district president's election, but here you are, back again."

Avery looked toward the direction of the sound, his expression indifferent.

The elder who was speaking was Solomon Gardner, the current head of the Gardner family.

The two families never saw eye to eye. Whenever they met, nothing good ever came out of their mouths. Avery had long grown accustomed to that and replied placidly, "The district president's election is a major event of Bartitsu Guild. As a member of the guild, how can the Cox family be absent? You're overthinking, Mr. Gardner."

Showing no signs of relenting, Solomon replied, "Really? I thought you came today because you had taken a fancy to the position of district president. But given how nonchalant you are, it doesn't seem like it."

Avery could tell that he was testing waters and tactfully replied using the elder's line of reasoning, "Everyone present today has been invited, including the Cox family. Naturally, I have to be present. If showing up implies ambition, then doesn't it mean that you have it too? Are you suggesting that the Gardner family is keen on competing and that you're reminding other families to clear the path for you?"

Solomon's brows instantly furrowed before he replied in an unpleasant tone, "It's been a while since we last met. I see that you have developed an increasingly sharp tongue, Mr. Gordon."

Avery smirked slightly and replied in an unconcerned manner, "When faced with someone who's deliberately looking for trouble, it's only natural to be sharp in response. I won't let anyone take advantage of me and tarnish my reputation for no reason. That's certainly not the style of our Cox family."

The two were at loggerheads, neither willing to back down.

Upon seeing the situation, the others around them tacitly kept their mouths shut, quietly watching the unfolding drama.

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Chapter 1168

But Solomon had always been unable to go head-to-head with Avery. After a few exchanges, he found himself on the losing end.

Reluctant to admit defeat, he shifted his focus toward Neera. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"So, this is the recently talked-about head of the Gordon family. I heard there's even a marriage alliance. Tsk tsk. I must say, Chad really is making a fuss. How did he manage to find such an outsider to become the head of the Gordon family? Are the people of the Gordon family okay with it? Chad seems to be disregarding both the Gordon family and the Cox family. Although you're the head of the Cox family, Chad has burdened you with such an unwelcome fiancée. You must be quite upset, right? Poor you..."

Not only did he involve himself, but he also besmirched Chad's name. Neera furrowed her brow, feeling annoyed.

Before she could respond, Shane intervened.

"Mr. Gardner, this is an internal matter for the Gordon family. As an outsider, you're not privy to the details. It's best not to make hasty speculations. Neera's position as the head of the Gordon family has been duly recognized, and no one has the authority to question it. Regarding the marriage with the Cox family, it's not within your purview to interfere," Avery said, his tone frigid. "Mr. Gardner, I am engaged to Avery, and our relationship is not open to others' commentary."

Despite the pushback, Solomon showed no signs of backing down.

"All right, that's enough. There's no need to silence me like this. I couldn't care less about the Gordon family's affairs, nor do I want to meddle. I just find it amusing that an outsider, and one who appears rather inexperienced, has been entrusted with the Gordon family. It's truly perplexing. Chad must either be out of his mind or had been put under a spell. He doesn't seem concerned if the Gordon family faces difficulties under this young lady's leadership. I heard she was even attacked a few days ago. Thankfully, it was not a serious incident. Otherwise, the newly appointed head of the Gordon family might have been in jeopardy. That would have provided ample material for Phison's jests!"

As his words left his lips, laughter erupted.

Neera's icy gaze scanned the crowd, and she spotted Stella among those who were mocking her, someone with whom she had previously clashed at the Medicina family's apothecary.

As an important member of the Bartitsu Guild from the Jennings family, Stella had naturally received an invitation.

When Neera glanced in her direction, Stella raised an arrogant eyebrow and taunted her.

"What's your problem? Displeased, Neera? You're overestimating your position. This gathering isn't meant for someone like you!"

Just as she finished her taunt, Charles, who stood behind Neera, sprang into action suddenly.

With a swift, deft movement, he positioned himself in front of Stella.

At some point, he had acquired a dagger, which was now pressed against her throat. The blade dangerously neared her skin, and with just a slight increase in pressure, it would draw blood.

"Say one more disparaging word about our family head, and I'll put an end to you right here!"

His swift reaction caught everyone off guard.

Stella, in particular, turned pale, the pitch of her voice heightened.

"You have quite the audacity! Daring to brandish a blade at me, who do you think you are?"

Her attendants behind her also voiced their outrage. "Unbelievable! Release our young lady immediately!"

Charles sneered. "It doesn't matter who I am. But if you maintain that attitude, you'll soon be no more than a wandering spirit beneath my blade."

The Bartitsu Guild had always held physical prowess in high regard, and genuine combat wasn't out of the ordinary for them.

Although the onlookers had been surprised initially, they now found nothing amiss. No one was inclined to intervene; they were all too eager to witness the unfolding drama.

Throughout the entire incident, Neera remained expressionless, her demeanor cool and collected.

Stella's sharp tongue needed a lesson.

Otherwise, she risked being seen as an easy target, someone to be stepped on.

Establishing authority had to be a priority.

Even if it didn't instill fear, it had to make them understand that she wasn't someone to be taken lightly.

On the Gordon family's side, individuals prepared for a possible confrontation, adopting combat stances.

The tension in the room grew palpable.

Solomon, observing the situation intensify, furrowed his brow and stepped forward to defend the Jennings family.

"What's happening here? Are the Gordon family members not allowed to tolerate differing opinions? Are you willing to take a life at the slightest provocation?"

At last, Neera spoke, her countenance radiant yet shrouded in icy composure.

"The Gordon family, of course, allows freedom of speech, but that doesn't extend to slander. As the head of the Gordon family, I cannot simply stand by as such events unfold. Ms. Jennings displayed disrespect and required a lesson. However, my people merely issued a warning. She was not harmed in any way. Mr. Gardner has exaggerated the situation."

Clearly dissatisfied with her eloquent response, Solomon turned to Avery.

"Are you going to remain passive too? Have you no intention of intervening? Do you truly want to escalate this situation?"

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Chapter 1169

Avery maintained an air of indifference, his eyebrows barely flinching.

"Mr. Gardner, this is an issue between the Gordon family and the Jennings family. Let them resolve it on their own. It's advisable for outsiders not to meddle."

"You" Solomon, growing frustrated, countered, "This is enabling! Don't assume that just because the Cox family and the Gordon family are in alliance, you can dictate terms within the Bartitsu Guild. The Bartitsu Guild is not a place where you can always have your way!"

In contrast, Neera let out a soft chuckle, her striking eyes tinged with a hint of mockery.

"Mr. Gardner, why do you always twist the intentions of others? I never aspired to dominate within the Bartitsu Guild or assert undue authority. From the very start, it was the Jennings family causing the disruption. If you wish to mediate, why don't you counsel the Jennings family? You claim that Mr. Cox favors the Gordon family, but why don't you acknowledge your favoritism toward the Jennings family in their wrongful actions? What kind of logic is that?"

She possessed a gift for logical reasoning, and if the other party sought trouble, she had no qualms about teaching them a lesson.

"Moreover, Ms. Jennings insulted and slandered me and the Gordon family. She displayed no respect. If I had done nothing, wouldn't it have made the Gordon family a laughingstock? Mr. Gardner, suppose someone recklessly trampled on the dignity of your family. Would you still stand by with a smile and offer your hand for them to strike? If so, I must say, I would genuinely admire you..."

Solomon couldn't believe the audacity of this young lady.

Despite her youth and lack of a prominent background, on her very first appearance in such a setting, she showed no signs of intimidation.

Instead, she exuded confidence and the capacity to contend with others.

He had clearly underestimated her!

At that moment, he found himself struck dumb, his face flushing with frustration.

Yet, as the head of the Gardner family, revealing his emotions too openly, especially in front of an unfamiliar young lady, would be a source of embarrassment.

Consequently, he repressed his anger, attempting to salvage his composure.

"Young lady, where do your words lead us? We are all members of the Bartitsu Guild, comrades within the same faction. We should treat each other with respect and avoid unnecessary conflicts that tarnish everyone's reputation, don't you agree?"

Neera regarded him calmly, her inner amusement unmistakable.

Just moments ago, he had been overbearing, and now he was trying to play peacemaker.

It was too late for that.

If it hadn't already besmirched the Gordon family's reputation, she might have considered a different approach.

However, as the head of the Gordon family, to back down now after being verbally attacked right from the outset, and in front of so many witnesses, would truly disgrace the Gordon family!

"Mr. Gardner's words hold merit; mutual respect is essential," Neera stated after a brief pause, her tone measured and devoid of emotion. "I believe that, as leaders of our respective families, we should distinguish ourselves in both competence and character. Given our shared rationality, resolving this matter should be straightforward. Ms. Jennings may have acted hastily and shown disrespect to the Gordon family. I don't wish to escalate this any further. Why don't we all take a step back? If Ms. Jennings genuinely offers an apology, my people will step aside immediately, and we can consider this matter closed. What do you think?"

Once Neera was done with her statement, Stella erupted in anger.

"Who do you think you are? Why should I apologize to you? You, of all people....."

Her words were abruptly cut off as Charles' blade crept nearer, leaving a visible mark on her skin.

Stella, trembling with fear, let out a high-pitched cry. "You-You're serious? How dare you..." Search the FindNøvel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Neera's lips curved into a sly, half-smile. "Don't assume I'm bluffing. I can't afford to jest with you."

"Do you believe the Gordon family holds such sway that the Jennings family would cower in fear?" Stella challenged.

"Very well, let's go all out and find out," Neera responded, her tone growing more casual. In moments like these, she needed to stand her ground; no matter what, she couldn't afford to lose her momentum.

"But here's the unfortunate reality: to catch a thief, you must first catch their leader. Your life is at the mercy of my people right now. Even if your associates are skilled, they can't stop the blade at your throat. Do you think they dare to act now?"

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Chapter 1170

Stella's complexion shifted between pale and crimson. She stole a glance at her own attendants and discerned their hesitation; their frustration was palpable.

The room's tension became even more intense, filling the entire hall with an electrifying atmosphere.

Everyone eagerly observed, hoping the two families would engage in conflict.

Neera glanced at the time, displaying signs of impatience.

"It's quite straightforward, Ms. Jennings. Either offer an apology or take action. Let's not waste everyone's time with procrastination."

Stella realized that her side had lost the upper hand, and her frustration was overwhelming.

Finally, she gritted her teeth, quelling her anger, and mumbled an apology. "I'm... I'm sorry."

Neera cupped her ear mockingly. "Pardon? Ms. Jennings, your voice is rather soft. I can't quite hear you."

Stella's face flushed with humiliation, and she raised her voice, nearly shouting her apology. "I'm sorry, all right?"

This time, Neera appeared satisfied and smiled. "Charles, release her."

Without delay, Charles, wearing a stern expression, stepped back and returned to Neera's side.

Stella touched the faint blood streak on her neck, her anger reaching its boiling point.

"Neera, mark my words! One day, you'll realize just how formidable I am! When that day comes, the humiliation I endured today will return to you tenfold!"

Neera shrugged indifferently. "Sure, I'll be waiting."

Just then, a group of individuals entered the room, breaking the tense atmosphere.

"Is everyone present?" With the approaching footfalls, a voice as resonant as a tolling bell rang out.

Neera followed the sound to find the speaker at the head of the group.

He seemed to hold an exceptionally high status, exuding an aura of grandeur. He was accompanied by a retinue of black-clad bodyguards. [Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

His age appeared to be around sixty, with distinguished white hair at his temples. His slender figure carried a hint of sharpness, giving him an air of danger.

His eyes, in particular, resembled those of a venomous serpent, radiating a chilling presence that sent shivers down one's spine.

His very presence demanded respect and obedience from everyone in the room, who had all stood up for him.

As he took his seat at the head of the gathering, everyone greeted him respectfully, "Mr. Lozano!"

During this brief moment, Shane whispered to Neera, "This is Matthew Lozano, the vice president of the Bartitsu Guild."

Neera nodded in understanding and joined in with a courteous greeting.

Matthew turned his gaze toward her and began speaking in a composed manner. "The Bartitsu Guild hasn't welcomed new faces for quite some time. This young lady is the new head of the Gordon family, correct?"

Neera maintained her composure and replied with grace, "Yes, I'm Neera, the current head of the Gordon family. I am honored to have been invited to this meeting today."

Matthew nodded before speaking in a polite tone. "Ms. Garcia, you are being too modest. There's no need for such formality. The Bartitsu Guild is like a large family, and we all have our roles to play. As the head of the Gordon family, your presence here is only natural."

After some brief pleasantries, he transitioned to the main topic.

"I believe all the heads of the families have gathered. I apologize for the wait. The reason for our gathering is the impending district president election. We all understand the significance of the district president's role within the Bartitsu Guild. I trust that each head will put forth their utmost effort to secure this position, as it would greatly benefit the growth of our Bartitsu Guild."

Such diplomatic rhetoric did not go unnoticed, as each person present had their own agenda and calculations.

Matthew surveyed the room, seemingly attuned to their unspoken thoughts.

After a brief pause, he continued, "There is another significant announcement to make. The individual who secures the district president's position in this election will lead to the Bartitsu Guild establishing an additional elder seat, expanding our council to nine members."

With a deep understanding of the Bartitsu Guild and his high-ranking status, he had become quite the political strategist and sought to avoid creating adversaries among the present factions.

Upon hearing this news, excitement rippled through the room, with everyone eager to participate.

However, at that very moment, Stella rose from her seat.

First, she shot a hostile glance at Neera and then turned to Matthew, openly voicing her objection.

"Mr. Lozano, I believe the Gordon family is unqualified to compete!"

Matthew narrowed his eyes and inquired, "And why do you say that?"

Stella seemed prepared for his question and smiled, seemingly triumphant.

"I've heard that the new head of the Gordon family, Ms. Garcia, has connections with Lordsworth Estate. When she initially appeared at the Gordon family, asserting her position as the head, she faced resistance from the Gordons. Later, the deputy lord of Lordsworth Estate visited the Gordon family to support her, effectively securing her position as head. The current situation within the Gordon family is unclear, and we are uncertain about the extent of her ties to Lordsworth Estate. Such an influence could potentially betray the Bartitsu Guild in secret at any time. How can we allow her to participate in the election?"

As soon as she finished speaking, Solomon, unwilling to be outdone, chimed in.

"She's absolutely right! The Gordon family's present circumstances are uncertain, and it is not suitable for them to become involved!"

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Chapter 1171

Avery had foreseen that this matter might be brought up and promptly came to Neera's defense.

"We've already clarified this situation. Neera inadvertently saved the Lord of Phison, and in return, he aided her in securing her position as the Gordon family's head. However, regardless of the Lord's involvement, Neera's role as the family head remains unambiguous."

Solomon sneered. "The Coxes have a long-standing alliance with the Gordons, so naturally, you're siding with the Gordon family."

Avery's countenance darkened, and he inquired icily, "What are you insinuating? Are you suggesting that the Cox family is showing bias?"

"I didn't mean that. We trust the Cox family, but I think the Jennings family's young lady made a valid point. After all, the Cox family is the Cox family, and the Gordon family is the Gordon family. Even with a close relationship, you may not be privy to every detail," Solomon retorted.

Stella saw that she had garnered support from someone and immediately grew more self-assured. She glanced at the others, her tone carrying a significant implication as she asked, "And what do the rest of you think?"

The others exchanged looks and discerned the situation.

Even though they didn't fully comprehend the dynamics between the Gordon family and Lordsworth Estate, reducing the number of competitors at this juncture seemed advantageous.

Therefore, to eliminate one contender, these individuals began aligning with Stella, directing their criticisms toward the Gordon family.

"It's undeniable that this new Gordon family head has emerged out of nowhere. An outsider we've never encountered before, with a vague background, suddenly taking charge of the Gordon family. It does raise suspicions."

"I concur, the Gordon family should be excluded from the competition. The background of the Gordon family head and their ties to Lordsworth Estate need clarification."

"The Bartitsu Guild has never aligned itself with Lordsworth Estate. I've never witnessed any martial arts family connected to Lordsworth Estate. It contradicts the principles of our martial arts families!"

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All of a sudden, the Gordon family became the focal point of criticism.

Neera hadn't anticipated that Tiago's arrival would pose such a significant risk to the Gordon family, and her expression conveyed her concern.

Avery's sole recourse was to advocate for the Gordon family through the Cox family.

"Regardless of the circumstances, I'll reiterate it again: the Gordon family will remain steadfast, will not engage in any actions adverse to the Bartitsu Guild, and will certainly not betray the Bartitsu Guild!"

Matthew maintained an impassive expression as he listened to their arguments.

Hearing his silence, the room gradually fell quiet, the people attempted to gauge his thoughts.

Finally, Matthew spoke in a tone that neither held warmth nor coldness.

"I understand your concerns, but we should refrain from jumping to conclusions about the Gordon family's intentions to harm the Guild. Whether the Gordon family's presence will be detrimental to the guild is a matter for the guild to determine in the future. Today, let's focus on discussing the rules for tomorrow's district election."

His words implied that the Gordon family could still participate in tomorrow's election.

Those who had expressed dissent earlier were dissatisfied but refrained from speaking out further due to Matthew's statement.

Neera discreetly breathed a sigh of relief.

"The rules for tomorrow's election have been established by a neutral party. The participating family factions will enter Mount Cloud in Phison's dense forest. A white flag is already planted at the mountain's peak. The first to reach it will secure the district president's position. Each faction can bring ten individuals into the forest, whether they are family members or hired protectors. No specific requirements are set for this. Once you enter the forest, it's a matter of your own abilities as to whether you live or die. The guild won't concern itself with the process; we'll only evaluate the outcome."

This rule announcement stirred a reaction among everyone in the room.

Avery, just like everyone else, hadn't expected this method for the election.

He instinctively turned his gaze toward Neera, his brows furrowing deeply.

The dense forest posed numerous risks, from the natural environment to potential conflicts, and for Neera, these challenges could be life-threatening.

Neera had also not foreseen such a brutal election rule.

Though Matthew hadn't explicitly stated it, she could imagine the violent conflicts that might erupt in the Bartitsu Guild, which endorsed the use of force as a means to an end.

A matter of your own abilities as to whether you live or die?

This implied that even if someone lost their life in the forest, the guild would look the other way.

Neera, who had little interest in the district president election, was now resistant to the idea and even contemplating abstaining.

However, at that moment, Matthew directed his gaze toward her.

"This time, the third elder and the fourth elder have nominated the Jennings family and the Gordon family. The guild hopes you will achieve good results."

Nominated... the Gordon family?

The Guild's nomination of the Gordon family for the election took Neera by surprise. She had been pondering abstaining, but now it was clear that the Guild was insistent on their participation, and refusal was not an option.

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Chapter 1172

Stella had managed to overcome her earlier humiliation and was now brimming with a sense of pride.

She confidently reassured Matthew, "Mr. Lozano, you can trust that the Jennings family will excel!"

On Neera's side, the expressions grew increasingly somber.

Shane had clearly not anticipated the turn of events, and the situation was becoming more complex by the minute.

Both he and Avery understood that the Gordon family was now in a precarious situation, and there was no choice but to participate.

As various factions began to disperse after the meeting, Neera left the venue and was intercepted by Stella.

Charles, ever vigilant, quickly positioned himself in front of Neera and sternly questioned, "What do you want?"

Stella recalled the scratch on her neck from earlier, inflicted by this man, and it fueled her anger and unease.

She gave him an unfriendly look before shifting her gaze beyond him to Neera, her eyes filled with mockery.

"Neera, I'm looking forward to seeing how long someone can shield you. Let me tell you, the forest is no place for the faint-hearted. When you enter, make sure you stay alive. Be cautious, and don't meet your end in there."

She concluded with a malevolent smile.

Neera paid little attention to Stella's taunts and simply walked away.

When she returned home, Robin and Baxter were waiting in the living room.

Robin eagerly inquired, "How did it go? Did they finalize the rules for the district president's election?" [Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

Shane nodded and somberly explained the details.

Baxter, however, responded with mockery and sarcasm.

"Well, this is just perfect. Even if you didn't want to participate, now you have to. I've said it before, the Gordon family can't stay out of this as a member of Bartitsu Guild. Our new family head is being too naive. The forest is full of dangers. Staying alive with all your limbs intact is no easy feat. Plus, there will be other family factions fighting in there. The situation is incredibly complicated. If it were anyone else, they might stand a chance, but considering the Gordon family's circumstances, it's nearly impossible. We should bring Chad back to deal with the mess he created!"

Robin, growing impatient, snapped, "Enough! Do we need such sarcasm from you when things have reached this point?"

He was also frustrated and couldn't help but complain, "What's the deal with the neutral faction? Why did they suddenly establish these rules?"

Neera, eager to understand, asked, "What is the neutral faction?"

Avery explained, "The neutral faction is a very ancient family within Phison. Despite being a single entity, it holds a position on par with Bartitsu Guild and Lordsworth Estate. What sets them apart is their neutrality. They don't take sides in the conflicts between Bartitsu Guild and Lordsworth Estate, which grants them certain privileges, such as the authority to set rules."

Neera had no idea such a faction existed in Phison, as she hadn't paid much attention to it before.

Avery furrowed his brow and admitted, "I thought that binding you with the Cox family would make things smoother and help you avoid many troubles. Now it seems to have backfired, as we can't even abstain from the election. It's my oversight."

Neera didn't blame Avery for their predicament.

She responded, "Actually, it's not your fault. The Gordon family has drawn too much attention this time. If they wanted us to participate, they would have found a reason, regardless of our ties to the Cox family. The Gordon family has no choice but to take part now."

Avery nodded and said, "You're right. We have to select the right people, and your safety in the forest is the top priority. It's a perilous place, and once you're inside, everyone and everything becomes a potential adversary. We need to plan every move carefully and be extra cautious."

His tone softened as he continued, trying to reassure Neera, "However, you shouldn't be afraid. This time, I'll send the best experts from the Cox family to protect you. You can trust us to bring you back safely."

Shane added, "That's right. I'll make sure to assemble a strong team as well. No matter what challenges arise, we won't allow you to be in danger."

Neera reluctantly agreed.

At this point, she had no other option.

She hadn't been to the forest and didn't know much about it, but she could sense the danger.

She wasn't without fear, and the thought of her family and Jean weighed heavily on her mind.

If something were to happen to her, how would Aunt Adriana, Grandpa, Grandma, her children, and Jean cope? And...

And there was Jean.

What would he do if he found out about this?

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Chapter 1173

Throughout the remaining hours of that day, Neera felt entirely disoriented, unable to concentrate.

She recognized that she had no escape from the situation, and while she had no intention of retreating, she grappled with the question of how to inform the people she held dear.

She hoped for a successful outcome, but in the event that things took a turn for the worse, she grappled with the daunting prospect of what actions to take.

That evening, she barely ate a few bites of dinner and retreated to her room.

Avery, worried about her distant and preoccupied demeanor, mentioned, "I'll go upstairs and check on her."

Shane held him back, advising, "You better not."

Avery furrowed his brow, inquiring, "Why not? She appears so uneasy, hardly touching her dinner."

Shane sighed. "I know, and I understand she's under a lot of pressure. The world of Phison is so different from the outside world, and she's been confronting one challenge after another. It's normal to feel anxious. However, I believe... what's troubling her the most right now might not be the district president's election."

He paused, leaving his statement hanging.

In Avery's mind, it became clear. His pupils constricted, and he suppressed the emotions tugging at the corners of his mouth.

Upstairs, in her room, Neera sat on the bed, hugging her knees, holding her phone. She hesitated to make the call.

Perhaps it was best not to tell her family about this just yet.

Just as she was contemplating this, her phone rang.

It was a call from Chad.

She paused for a moment, recalling that Charles had probably already informed Chad about the situation.

After a brief hesitation, she answered, using the same cheerful tone as always to greet him.

"Uncle Chad, is there something you need? How are you and Aunt Adriana doing?"

"We're both fine," Chad replied with a sigh. "I've already heard about the Guild's selection location in the forest."

Neera wasn't surprised. She responded, "Yes, I've learned about this forest from Shane and Mr. Cox. It sounds pretty scary, but it's just a forest, not a den of monsters. It should be manageable."

Chad disagreed, "It's not as simple as you think. The forest is a place that can make even Phison residents shiver. You can imagine the dangers inside. The terrain is complex, and there are many traps set up in the past. People without enough experience who venture in could encounter unexpected problems. Neera, it's too dangerous. You should reconsider and not go."

Neera wryly chuckled. "Didn't Charles tell you what Mr. Lozano said? The guild clearly wants to involve the Gordon family. I have no choice. As the new family head, the Gordon family has already attracted too much attention within the guild due to the recent incident. If I refuse, it would be a public embarrassment for the family, and our position within the guild would plummet. The Gordon family's future would become extremely difficult. So, I can't be willful."

Chad didn't expect her to have thought this through so thoroughly, and he was at a loss for words.

After a pause, he spoke again in a somber tone.

"I'm sorry, Neera. I didn't expect things to get so complicated this time. Even the previous attack was my fault for involving you and subjecting you to these situations."

Not wanting him to feel guilty, Neera softly reassured him.

"Uncle Chad, don't say it like that. In fact, ever since I took on the role of family head, I've been prepared for anything. I can't back down, no matter what difficulties I face. This time is no different. I agreed to this because I hope you and Aunt Adriana can spend your remaining years in peace. You missed so many years, and now you finally have a chance to be together. I want you to cherish the time you have left with each other, so I don't want to involve you in these matters."

"You're such a sensible girl," Chad said, his heart aching.

Neera laughed lightly, trying to lighten the mood.

"Of course, I'm Aunt Adriana's beloved niece. Naturally, I have to worry about her happiness."

She then asked with concern, "Uncle Chad, you didn't tell Aunt Adriana about this, did you? And what about the attack on me..."

Chad shook his head. "No, if she knew, she would insist on going to find you right now."

"That's good," Neera sighed in relief. "We must keep it from Aunt Adriana; otherwise, she'll worry."

"Don't worry about things here. I'll be with her. But you need to be careful. By the way, have you... told Jean about this?"

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Chapter 1174

Neera hesitated for a moment and then, in a quiet voice, replied, "Not yet."

Chad offered his advice, saying, "Even though I'm not sure what's going on between you two right now, you're still engaged, and there are feelings between you. Something this significant should ideally be discussed with him. But if you're not ready to share, it's ultimately your decision. Just don't let yourself regret it."

"Okay."

After hanging up the phone, Neera found Jean's number and contemplated for a while.

Finally, she summoned the courage to dial his number, but the call couldn't get through.

At that very moment, Jean was on a plane.

After handling the affairs of Lordsworth Estate, he hurriedly made his way to District Twenty-One.

His thoughts were solely focused on reaching their destination as quickly as possible to reunite with the woman he longed to see.

As his phone was turned off during the flight, he remained unaware of Neera's attempt to reach out to him.

After landing, he got into a car and learned about the call from Ian.

"Mr. Beauvort," Ian began cautiously, "I just received a call from the subordinates. The neutral party has established the rules for the district president selection. They've

chosen Mount Cloud's forest as the location. The one who passes through the forest and reaches the white flag wins."

Upon hearing this, Mr. Beauvort's expression soured instantly, and his aura darkened.

"Mr. Beauvort, where shall we go now?" Ian inquired, taking care of his choice of words. "Should we return to the other mansion, or should we go see Mrs. Beauvort?"

He added, "I just inquired, and there are Bartitsu Guild personnel watching Mrs. Beauvort's hotel. If you were to show up abruptly, it might not bode well for you or Mrs. Beauvort, especially with the selection taking place tomorrow."

Jean's lips tightened into a straight line as his anticipation gradually gave way to disappointment.

Staring out the window, he replied coldly, "Let's go back to the mansion."

At this critical juncture, he couldn't act recklessly and put Neera in danger.

The mansion was a residence he had acquired in District Twenty-One under a false identity. No one knew who lived there.

When Jean returned to the mansion, he sat on the couch, pondering for a moment. Then, he decided to call Neera.

At this time, Neera was still awake, but it took her about half a minute to answer the call.

Soon, the deep voice of the man came through the phone. "It's quite late. Haven't gone to sleep yet?"

Neera replied with a soft "No, not yet. What's up?"

Jean hesitated for a moment, the words on the tip of his tongue swallowed back. He said, "Nothing. Just wanted to hear your voice."

Neera turned on her side, gazing at the moonlight seeping through the curtains. Her earlier courage to tell him had vanished.

He was so gentle, and if he knew about this, he would surely worry and rush over.

But she didn't want him to be involved in this dangerous situation.

If that was the case, maybe it was better not to tell him.

"Why so quiet? Is there nothing you want to say to me?" Jean suddenly inquired.

Neera hesitated for a moment, pulling herself out of her thoughts, and then responded without much consideration, "No, there's nothing."

On the other end, Jean's eyes were half-lowered, filled with a myriad of emotions, and he felt a deep sense of tenderness.

This woman, no matter what she faced, was accustomed to silently bearing it and moving forward on her own.

Her steadfastness and bravery always tugged at his heartstrings.

He was about to say something when Neera spoke again.

"Well, it's not that there's nothing..."

He was puzzled. "Hmm?"

There was a clear hesitation on the other end, and after a few seconds, a soft voice said, "Actually, there are some things I've been wanting to tell you for a long time, Jean. About what happened six years ago, I know you didn't mean to hurt me. I also understand your true feelings for me. I've never doubted this."

Jean didn't expect her to bring up this topic and his pupils constricted. "Neera..."

"Let me finish," Neera interrupted, her words measured and deliberate. "The reason I've been avoiding you is because I couldn't accept it at first. The impact of that night was huge, and you know it. I couldn't connect you, the man I love, with the man who hurt me. The thought of you being that man made me feel suffocated. However, during our time apart, I gradually calmed down, and I started missing you. I've also started to accept the truth. Jean, I forgive you. The past is in the past, and it was an accident. Luckily, we have three beautiful children together. Destiny brought us back together, and perhaps it was all meant to be. I've thought it through. When I return, let's make amends. What do you think?"

Under normal circumstances, Jean would have been overjoyed.

This was the moment he had been longing for.

However, at this moment, he couldn't find any happiness.

His heart ached to the point where he could barely breathe. He understood why she was saying these words now. Search the FindNovel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

At this moment, she must be feeling very anxious and scared of the unknown future. And yet, she was pretending that nothing was wrong and gently forgiving him...

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Chapter 1175

There were so many emotions swirling within, tugging at the man's heart.

Jean's throat tightened, his Adam's apple bobbing as he suppressed his emotions. He said with a strained voice, "All right, we'll make amends when you get back."

Then, he softly asked, "There must be something going on, right? Why did you suddenly bring this up? I thought I would have to convince you a bit more. What happened?"

On the other end, Neera's eyes became slightly moist, but a rare smile appeared on her face.

"Oh, you and your keen observation. I knew I couldn't hide anything from you. Well, yes, something a bit tricky has come up, but don't worry, I can handle it."

She still didn't reveal the details, and Jean respected her choice, going along with it and refraining from prying.

"That's good. Go ahead and do what you need to do. I'm sure everything will be fine."

The last sentence carried an unspoken promise and a sense of protection.

It was like a spell that gradually calmed Neera's heart. Suddenly, she felt that this trip to the dense forest might indeed turn out just fine.

With these reassuring thoughts, her anxiety dissipated, and she relaxed, chatting with Jean for a while before finally falling asleep.

The next day, the selection process officially began.

On Avery's side, he arranged for five individuals, all exceptional combat experts from the Cox family.

"They are quite familiar with the terrain of Mount Cloud, and they will be solely responsible for your protection. You can confidently follow their lead, and nothing will happen."

Neera nodded in acknowledgment to each of these five individuals and then expressed her gratitude to Avery.

"Mr. Cox, thank you so much for going to such lengths."

Avery sighed. "I've said it before, stop being so polite. You never listen. Besides, I share some responsibility for this matter, so I can't just stand by."

Neera maintained her somewhat distant demeanor. "In any case, thank you for your help."

At that moment, Shane finished his preparations and came downstairs.

"Well, here he is." He first greeted Avery, then turned to Charles. "Is everything ready?"

Charles nodded, "Everything is in order."

Neera was somewhat surprised. "Shane, are you going as well?"

Shane affectionately tousled her hair. "It's only natural. You're going to such a dangerous place. As your older brother figure, how could I sit idly outside? I have to accompany you."

Neera's lips twitched, about to say something, but he cut her off.

"Stop, stop, stop! We're family, don't thank me. Or I might get angry."

Neera could only smile wryly at that.

Shane seemed satisfied with her reaction and then looked toward the door. "Hmm, Mr. Weaver hasn't arrived yet."

Neera was puzzled. "Mr. Weaver? Is he coming? What's he doing?"

Shane playfully tapped her forehead. "Of course, he's coming with us to the forest."

This surprised Neera. "Mr. Weaver is coming too? Is that a good idea? He's quite old, and going into such a dangerous place..."

Before she could finish her sentence, Finnley entered, huffing with an air of annoyance.

"You, little miss, still making a fuss about my age! My skills are top-notch; even if I were ten years older, I could still handle it!"

Neera quickly turned around and, feeling a bit embarrassed, touched her nose.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make it sound like I was concerned about your age. I was worried about your health."

Finnley waved his hand. "Don't underestimate me just because I'm an old man. I can still give you a big surprise."

Shane chuckled. "He's a true master, Neera. Mr. Weaver insisted on coming when he heard about this. Don't let his good intentions go to waste."

Neera was touched. "All right, Mr. Weaver, you're more than welcome to join us. After we're done, I'll prepare a lavish meal for you!"

Finnley, itching to try her cooking, rubbed his hands together. "You said it, no backing out now."

Neera grinned. "Absolutely not."

With Avery's team included, they now had a total of nine people.

Neera summoned Zephyr and said, "Let him come with me."

However, Shane hesitated and said, "I don't think he's very suitable..." [Search the website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Before he could finish his sentence, a voice came from the entrance, "I also think it's not appropriate."

Neera turned to see Robin and Baxter entering the room. Two other individuals followed behind Robin.

Robin had been the one to speak earlier.

Neera greeted them, but her focus was mainly on Robin, paying little attention to Baxter.

Robin nodded. "We've come to see you off. After all, it's such an important event."

Then, he added, "Zephyr going with you doesn't seem suitable. We should consider someone else."

Zephyr, feeling slighted, quickly responded, "Mr. Robin, are you doubting my abilities?"

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Chapter 1176

Robin shook his head. "I'm not questioning your abilities. Chad sent you to assist Ms. Garcia, so I'm sure you're qualified. However, you have never been to Phison, you are unfamiliar with the terrain of Mount Cloud, and you don't understand the conditions of the dense forest, so you are not suited to come with us."

Shane nodded in agreement. "I share the same sentiment. Given the current situation, the more experienced the people entering the dense forest, the better. It should be those who absolutely have to go, and ideally, they should be familiar with the place. This is the best way to minimize the risk."

Upon hearing this, Zephyr furrowed his brows but did not retort. Instead, he turned his gaze toward Neera.

After some consideration, the latter was also persuaded.

"We're about to leave. Is there time to find someone else?"

At once, Robin shot the person following him on the left a glance, signaling him to step forward.

"No need to find anyone. In consideration of your shortage of people, I've brought two men with me for this exact reason and hopefully, one of them can be of use. This lad's name is Wesley Gordon, a trusted aide of mine and a rare master of his caliber. Let him accompany you. Beyond this, I can't offer much help. Consider this as a token of my goodwill."

Neera felt a warmth in her heart at those words.

She knew Robin was using the opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty, affirming his stance of taking her side.

With his assistance and support, Neera felt much more at ease.

Thus, she did not turn him down. "Then I'll take you up on your offer and borrow your man for a bit. My sincerest apologies for any trouble I may have caused."

Robin waved an airy hand. "You are the heir apparent. Assisting you and lending a helping hand is my duty. There's no need for such formality. You must be extremely careful, Ms. Garcia, and return safely."

Neera nodded. "Rest assured, I will." Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

At that moment, a voice laced with sarcasm sounded.

"You sound so sure of yourself. It appears that you're unaware of the dangers here. You'd better hope for the best and try not to lose your life in this dense forest."

The sarcastic remark, at such a tense moment, was particularly grating.

Neera's eyes darkened. Shane and Avery's expressions also turned grim.

Robin, however, remained composed. His tone hardening, he retorted at once, "This matter concerns the future of our family, Baxter. How can you act as if it's none of your business, even being in the mood to make such sarcastic remarks? Have you forgotten who you are?"

Though Baxter threw his weight around as an elder and raised his voice against Neera, he felt somewhat apprehensive toward Robin.

Thus, he pursed his lips, electing not to confront his brother directly.

"I'm not being sarcastic. I'm just reminding her to return in one piece. I didn't say anything wrong, did I? There's no need to overreact, Robin."

"Overreact?" Robin shot him a sideways glance. "I see you're becoming more and more presumptuous. Ms. Garcia is participating in the selection for district presidency, yet you contribute neither manpower nor effort. Instead, you're here spouting nonsense. I have no idea what you're here for. If you have nothing else to do, go back and discipline your sons and men so as to cause less trouble for our family!"

Baxter's two sons, along with his subordinates, were arrogant and domineering, which had led to several instances of trouble; Neera heard about it when she arrived.

Unexpectedly, Robin's sharp reprimand caused Baxter's expression to sour. Not knowing where to look, all he could do was grit his teeth resentfully and turn to leave.

Robin ignored him. Instead, he turned to reassure Neera.

"Pay him no mind, Ms. Garcia. Go ahead without worry. With these people protecting you, nothing will go wrong."

Neera gave a little nod. The trifling incident did not bother her in the slightest.

Once everybody was ready, the group set off for Mount Cloud.

There was a massive circular plaza at the foot of the mountain.

When they arrived, there were already small clusters of people standing in almost every corner of the square.

After observing them for a while, Neera realized she had seen many of those present at the meeting.

On the other hand, the others were new faces; she did not remember them at all.

"Who are those people? Why haven't I seen them before? Are they also from Bartitsu Guild?" she asked Shane quietly, who was beside her.

"There are many I don't recognize either, but they are probably part of the forces dispatched by Lordsworth Estate," he answered. "The position of district president is not solely a contest within Bartitsu Guild, but a competition between Lordsworth Estate and Bartitsu Guild. Everybody wants control over these five regions. Whichever side manages to seize the position of district president will see a significant increase in power, breaking this delicate balance between the competing forces."

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Chapter 1177

Neera understood. Her expression turned grave, and she could not help feeling nervous.

Each one of these people appear to be somebody one does not simply provoke.

It became apparent to her that the competition for district presidency was even harsher and more brutal than she had imagined.

Dressed in traditional attire of dark red, Finnley stroked his beard while assessing the situation at hand.

"These are all tough fellows, with skills that are not to be underestimated. By comparison, it seems we're a bit at a disadvantage."

Listening to his ramblings, Neera became even more nervous.

She took a deep breath, telling herself that she could not display the slightest hint of fear.

The battle was about to begin, and she had to face it whether she liked it or not.

Chad shrugged. "There's nothing we can do about it. After all, the Gordon family has been passive for so long, and we're certainly not as powerful as the others. However, there's no need to be pessimistic. Our family isn't one that others can walk all over. We'll just have to trounce any opponent that we encounter," Avery told Neera, inclining his head.

"Given the resources of these families, it's likely they will not be fighting alone once inside the dense forest. There's also the possibility of them joining forces, so watch out for that. The Jennings family and the Logan family, especially, are close allies and the likelihood of them teaming up against the rest is very high. Remember to be cautious. Additionally, there are a few forces from Lordsworth Estate you need to pay special

attention to, one of which is the Osborn family." Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

As he spoke, he indicated toward the northwest direction with his chin.

Neera looked over and saw a sea of black bodysuits. Each man bore a badge on the left shoulder, marked with their engraving "Osborn"-likely a family crest.

The man standing at the forefront commanded particular attention. At first glance, he exuded the aura of one who had long held a position of power. His stony face, on which a smile rarely appeared, was intimidating.

The Osborn family came from a long, ancient line of fighting arts practitioners. However, over a hundred years ago, they pledged allegiance to the Lordsworth Estate, becoming a top-tier power under its rule. Its patriarch, Diego Osborn, was a rare fighting arts prodigy seen once in a century in his family. Due to his immense strength, he became the second-in-command in the Osborn family. His fierce and formidable reputation was common knowledge in the region governed by Lordsworth Estate.

"The family to the right of the Osborn family is the Fisher family, who is on good terms with the Osborn family..."

Neera took note of each one as she observed the forces when suddenly, she saw a familiar face.

It was Caleb.

"Isn't that the Medicina family? Aren't they doctors? Why are they participating in the contest for district presidency?"

Avery followed her gaze. "Though the Medicina family has been devoted to the healing arts for generations, they are just as strong in the fighting arts," she explained. "They are a formidable force indeed."

"I see..." Neera nodded.

Caleb caught sight of her. Despite the distance between them, he gave her a friendly smile.

Neera returned the smile, politely nodding in acknowledgment.

Unexpectedly, Stella, who was not far away, happened witness to this scene. Her expression darkened instantly.

She remembered the disadvantage twice in a row-that Neera had subjected her to.

She, a lowly outsider, dares to sit at the head of her family's table and even dares to compete with me. The nerve!

What infuriated her even more was how Caleb, who always acted so high and mighty around everybody else, chose to side with that despicable woman.

Accustomed to being the center of attention, pampered and adored by all, she could not tolerate such unequal treatment.

Thus, she turned to her left where the head of the Logan family, Howard, was standing.

"If you encounter anyone from the Gordon family after entering Mount Cloud, find a way to detain them, especially Neera. She must not escape!"

Howard craned his neck, squinting as he sized Neera up.

"That woman is the new head of the Gordon family. What a pity. I couldn't make it to the last meeting because something had come up at the last minute, or I could have seen her tactics. The fact that she could embarrass you is quite amusing, Ms. Jennings."

Stella scowled, clearly displeased. "What tactics could she possibly have? She's just good at talking with her backers around. Hey, whose side are you really on?"

Howard turned and smiled at her. His beady eyes especially captivating.

"I'm on your side, of course. I was just making a joke, why so serious? Don't worry, I'll help you. We'll split up once we're in the dense forest, and I'll find a way to make contact if there's any news, so you can decide what to do when the time comes.

Stella huffed, "That's more like it."

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Chapter 1178

Matthew finally appeared amidst the crowd's chatter.

His grandeur still undiminished, he came with a host of bodyguards in two rows on either side, paving the way for him.

His arrival quelled the bustling crowd instantly. Every eye was on him, watching as he steadily made his way to the center of the circular plaza, where three sets of very impressive-looking mahogany tables and chairs had been set up.

Matthew took a seat in one of the positions. Though aged, he looked stern and showed no signs of frailty. He exuded an aura of effortless imposition.

While the crowd was staring at him, two more figures arrived.

An elder, Miguel Carson, was the representative of the neutral family who established the selection criteria.

The other one was a young man, extraordinarily handsome, with a powerful yet gentle demeanor.

However, the way he was carrying himself caused a shift in the expressions of all those present.

Neera sensed quite clearly the building tension in the atmosphere around her, which left her feeling puzzled.

"Who is this? Why does he seem even more intimidating than Matthew and the old man who had just arrived?"

Shane first quietly introduced Miguel to her, then proceeded with his explanation.

"This young man, on the other hand, is a representative sent from Lordsworth Estate. His name is Colin Wiley, one of the seven branch leaders under Lordsworth Estate. Despite his young age, he holds great power, and his skills are remarkable, to say the least; he can hold his own against the vice president and the rest of them. Also, don't be fooled by his youth. He may not look it, but he is capable of drastic measures. Trust me when I tell you that his reputation alone is enough to strike fear into the hearts of men."

Neera was surprised by the introduction. She could not help murmuring to herself, "Do this Lordsworth Estate select people based on their looks? First, there was Tiago, and now Colin. Each one of them is so handsome that it's becoming outrageous..."

Shane was amused by her bewildered expression, but he held back his laughter.

"Judging by his appearance, he does look like a modest gentleman who would never resort to violence, but his exploits are the stuff of legend. This man single-handedly eliminated several powerful factions within half a month. Remember, none of the seven branch leaders under the jurisdiction of Lordsworth Estate are to be underestimated. All of them are masters in their own right."

Neera's astonishment grew.

Several powers wiped out in just half a month. How powerful would one be to achieve such a feat? It sounds like this person is even more ruthless than the deputy lord, Tiago,

by a factor of two. Sure enough, there's not a single decent person in all of Lordsworth Estate.

Matthew appeared polite as he exchanged pleasantries with Colin when the latter arrived. However, his words were laced with poorly-veiled hostility.

"What a surprise to see you at here today, Mr. Wiley."

With a faint smile, Colin replied evenly, "It's been a while, Mr. Lozano. I didn't expect to see you here either."

Narrowing his eyes, Matthew said in a nonchalant tone, "It's only natural that I preside over such an important occasion today. What surprises me is you and your party. Has Lordsworth Estate run out of people to allow a mere branch leader to attend?" Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Those words were filled with provocation, yet Colin seemed oblivious. With a hint of a smile still lingering on his lips, he effortlessly prevaricated the insult.

"Important occasion? Surely that's an overstatement, Mr. Lozano. This is a small event, which does not require the presence of any big shots. I can handle it just fine."

His words were as good as a slap to Matthew's face.

In an instant, the atmosphere became tense as if swords and bows were drawn.

Matthew found himself at a disadvantage, and his expression darkened slightly. He was about to retort in an attempt to regain his footing when Miguel of the neutral party interrupted the tense standoff between the two.

"Now that we are all present, it's time. Best not to keep everyone waiting too long."

Having said that, Matthew was forced to swallow his retort. The place finally fell silent.

Soon, the massive clock in the square began to chime. Deep and resonant, it inexplicably imbued a sense of solemnity and grandeur.

The tolling bell signified for all those participating in the selection to enter the misty forest to commence the battle.

Neera's heart clenched uncontrollably. She took a deep breath to pull herself together.

Noticing the situation, Avery wanted to ruffle her hair but, fearing her disapproval, ultimately rested his hand on her shoulder and gave it a light pat.

"Go on. Keep your eyes peeled. We'll be right here, waiting for your return."

Neera inclined her head, expressed her thanks, then set off with her entourage.

In the meantime, the other forces began marching into the mountain.

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Chapter 1179

Everyone carried weapons and medicines within permissible limits, and Neera was no exception to that.

As she walked in, she inexplicably felt as if she and the others were embarking on a jungle adventure.

However, she was well aware her mission was far more dangerous than any so-called jungle adventure.

Therefore, she was on high alert, being cautious at every turn and keeping her wits about her.

From the outset, she had her people slow down, deliberately entering Mount Cloud later than the other forces.

After all, no one wanted to encounter enemies and be eliminated after a conflict as soon as they stepped in. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

The terrain of Mount Cloud was complex and ever-changing, with a diverse range of ecosystems within.

As they moved forward, the gentle uphill path gradually narrowed, and the number of trees increased. They stood in all directions, forming a circle of enclosure, trapping anyone who entered.

That place seemed like a deserted area where trees grew wildly and luxuriantly without human interference. The dense foliage of the trees pressed down from above, blocking out a large swath of the sky. Sunlight could only filter through the gaps between the countless leaves.

Beyond that, a variety of flora and fauna had also found a great place to thrive there.

Birds chirp intermittently among the treetops, imbuing the silent forest with a touch of ethereal charm.

Neera was constantly on alert, an inexplicable sense of dread washing over her. Goosebumps rose and fell on her skin in waves.

"This place feels so eerie..." She couldn't help but mutter under her breath.

Shane was right beside her, appearing more relaxed than she was.

"While the people of Phison are more familiar with this place compared to outsiders, they don't actually know this place all that well."

Charles nodded in agreement, his foot stepping on a tree branch, creating a crisp snapping sound. "Indeed. In the past, similar elections in Phison had different rules each time, and the locations varied as well. The last time, it was set in a dense forest. That was already seven or eight years ago."

Neera sighed. "Does that mean you're also unclear about the situation here?"

"I know some important locations and routes, but beyond that, we'll have to explore on our own." At that moment, Finnley began to speak leisurely and unhurriedly. "I've been in here a couple of times before. There are quite a few natural traps that are hard to discern. Everyone needs to be careful."

At that point, he stroked his beard in reflection. "Speaking of which, there were instances where people trespassed here and never came out, disappearing without a trace. It seems like this has happened more than just a couple of times..."

Neera felt a chill run down her spine, gulping. "Mr. Weaver, please don't say such things at this time. It's quite frightening."

Finnley laughed heartily. "It's just a small matter. There's nothing to be scared of, especially when you have so many people around you."

He seemed at ease, showing no signs of fatigue despite the challenging mountain path.

He must have trained before. Even though he was aged, he was still energetic, and his body was still robust and strong.

The group of people chatted as they walked deeper into the area.

Before they knew it, a white mist began to envelop their surroundings. As they ventured deeper, the fog grew denser.

Neera's brows furrowed slightly, feeling that something was amiss. "Why is it so humid here? Is there a small river or a lake nearby?"

Shane looked around. "There shouldn't be anything nearby, but this fog is indeed a bit strange."

Neera couldn't quite pinpoint what felt odd at the moment, but hearing him say that, she decided not to dwell on it any further.

An hour later, the group sat down to rest. Shane spoke while sipping his water. "It seems we must be far behind. We haven't encountered any opposing forces along the way."

Wesley nodded. "It seems so. However, everyone has chosen different paths. It's likely that they are all wary of each other, so it's not certain. There may be other forces lurking on some other routes."

Neera was somewhat confused.

She was mindful of the Gordon family's influence and didn't want to clash head-on with other families. That was why she intentionally kept a low profile, avoiding drawing attention to herself.

However, what about the other families?

"Isn't it said that whoever gets the white flag is the winner? Then why would any family choose to lie low? Shouldn't they rush to the mountaintop?" asked Neera.

With a meaningful smile, Shane grinned, raising his hand to tap her forehead lightly. "Neera, it seems you don't fully understand the struggle within Phison."

Neera blinked. "What does that mean?"

Shane looked deeply into the distance. "Why do you think they say it's dangerous to enter the dense forest? Do you think it's just because of the harsh environment? Of course not. It is indeed dangerous here, but what's even more dangerous is people."

People are the most dangerous, huh? Neera was suddenly enlightened. "Are you suggesting that there may be violent incidents among the various families in the struggle for the white flag?"

Chad raised an eyebrow. "That's exactly what he meant."

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Chapter 1180

The anxiety in Neera's heart suddenly intensified.

She was aware that Phison's and Bartitsu Guild's rules were particularly indulgent toward the use of force.

She also knew that people there often resort to force to achieve their goals.

However, she still didn't associate those things with the struggle for the white flag.

She was still thinking too simply, assuming that those people were sent to ensure her safety in the dense forest.

In reality, they were not there to fend off the environment within the dense forest but to protect her from other families.

"Every election, the struggle for supremacy is a life-and-death battle among various factions. As long as no firearms are used, everything is permissible. The winner rules, while the loser is ruled. This is a battle of the strong. This time, the fight for district president is of utmost importance, with benefits far greater than ever before. Therefore, the competition will only be fiercer. In this dense forest, anything can happen, and no one can predict what will happen next. The only certainty is that all factions will scheme and strategize, even if it means stepping over the bones of others, just to get that white flag." After Shane finished speaking, he smiled slightly. "However, you don't need to be frightened. No matter what happens, we're here for you. Rest assured, we won't let anyone lay a finger on you."

"Mhm." Neera nodded, deep in thought.

At first, she was unaware of the responsibilities and mission that the head of the Gordon family had to bear. Her hasty agreement to become the head of the family was indeed too reckless.

Who would have thought she would find herself embroiled in such a dangerous dispute?

In fact, even at that point, she still felt somewhat like she was falling through fog and clouds. Everything seemed so surreal.

The slightly damp earth beneath her feet served as a reminder of where she was at that moment.

Once one entered that dense forest, there was no turning back.

No matter what, they had to take it one step at a time and face the challenge with a spirited attitude.

Cheering themselves on internally, everyone quickly resumed their journey.

After traveling for a while, Neera gradually felt drained.

At first, she didn't pay much attention to it, simply attributing it to the fatigue caused by climbing the mountain.

Yet after a while, that unsettling feeling returned, growing more and more pronounced.

No, this isn't right! This feeling of weakness is different from the fatigue brought on by exercise. Instead, it feels like it's due to something else... Just as she was furrowing her brows in deep thought, suddenly, Shane unexpectedly fell to the ground with a thud!

That sudden turn of events startled everyone present.

"Shane!" Neera anxiously and quickly squatted down. Because her movement was too abrupt, her vision suddenly went black.

"Mr. Gordon! Ms. Garcia!" Charles' pupils contracted, and he quickly stepped forward to check on them.

Seeing Neera with her eyes tightly shut as if she were in great pain, he panicked. He quickly called out to her, "Ms. Garcia! Ms. Garcia, are you all right?"

Neera slowed down, gradually recovering from the disorienting sensation.

Blinking, she gently shook her head. "I'm fine."

She immediately checked on Shane's condition. After confirming that he had merely fainted, she breathed a small sigh of relief but dared not let her guard down.

After taking the pulse, she immediately drew a conclusion. "His pulse is somewhat weak, his breathing shallow, showing signs of possible poisoning."

"Poisoned?" Finnley was shocked. "How could he be poisoned? He was perfectly fine before, and he's been with us all day today. How could he possibly be poisoned?" Search the FindNovel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Neera raised her head, about to say something, but noticed that both Finnley's and Charles' lips were turning somewhat purple, just like Shane.

The others were showing the same symptoms.

"What's going on with your mouths? Are you all feeling unwell, too?" Neera furrowed her brows, asking immediately.

Upon hearing that, everyone looked at each other, realizing that it was indeed the case.

Charles pursed his lips, speaking frankly. "I don't feel particularly unwell, but... I do feel very tired, and there's a heaviness in my chest. I thought it was due to climbing the mountain, just a result of excessive fatigue."

Neera became more convinced that something was up when Charles' description matched how she was feeling. "Mr. Weaver, what about you? Do you feel the same way?"

"A little..." Finnley stroked his beard, speaking ambiguously.

Clearly, he was holding back from speaking out, not wanting everyone to worry about his aging body.

As for the others, it was the same.

Neera's expression turned grim. "Just like you, I thought it was fatigue that made me weak. However, we've only been in the mountains for less than half a day. I can understand if I feel this way, but what about you guys? You all are skilled and have trained for years. Would you really feel this exhausted in such a short period of time?"

Charles realized something. "Ms. Garcia, do you mean... We're experiencing this because of some other factors?"

Neera had already formed a guess in her mind. She nodded, then reached out to take Charles' wrist, checking his pulse...

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Chapter 1181

As Neera had expected, Charles' pulse was indeed in a state of disorder.

Even Finnley and the others were no exception.

In fact, everyone shows signs of being poisoned!

Upon hearing that, Charles grimaced. "What's going on? We didn't touch anything, so how did we get poisoned?"

Neera shook her head. "It's not that we haven't come into contact with anything. There is something that has always been lingering around us, entering our bodies." Search The website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Upon hearing that, everyone was utterly perplexed.

Charles looked around, asking with confusion, "What is it?"

Neera's gaze was aimed ahead as if trying to pierce through something.

"It's the air that swirls around us, constantly being drawn into our lungs..." At that point, she paused, then corrected herself, "To be precise, it should be miasma."

"Miasma?" Finnley exclaimed in surprise. "Are you saying that this dense forest is filled with miasma now? We were poisoned because we inhaled it?"

Neera nodded. "Not long ago, I found it strange that the humidity in this dense forest was so high, and the fog was getting thicker. At first, I thought this fog was simply water vapor, but now it seems that it should be miasma. Have you noticed? Even though it's midsummer now, it's quite damp and cool here. Even though the temperature in the forest would be lower than the outside world, the altitude of Mount Cloud is not high, and it's daytime. Logically, it shouldn't be this cold. This must be the effect of the miasma."

Finnley rubbed his arm. "Now that you mention it, it's true. I was just thinking maybe I can't deny my old age anymore. After all, I've only been here a short while, yet I'm already feeling all sorts of discomfort."

Neera put down her backpack, talking as she rummaged through it. "It's not that your body is failing you. It's this miasma that is toxic. Shane fainted because he inhaled too much of it, and the toxicity is quite high. However, thankfully, his condition isn't too severe, and the poison hasn't affected him fundamentally. As for us, our situation is relatively mild. I have brought medicine with me, so we can use these."

Luckily, she had prepared in advance. She thought she might encounter some physical difficulties upon entering the dense forest, so she brought along useful items. She didn't expect to need them so soon, but they came in handy.

"Everyone take one. Let's eat and rest here for a while." She distributed medicine to everyone. Then, together with Charles, they helped Shane lean against a large rock.

Afterward, Neera took out the silver needle she carried with her and began to administer treatment to Shane.

Ten minutes later, Shane came to his senses.

"What... What happened to me?" His face was pale, his eyelids half-lifted. He was clearly still weak.

Neera quickly handed him water and medicine. "You've been poisoned by miasma and fainted for a while. Hurry up and take the medicine. I specially prepared this antidote. It works much faster than the usual ones."

Shane was still somewhat bewildered, not entirely clear about the situation. However, he had absolute faith in Neera, and without a second thought, he drank the medicine.

Half an hour later, everyone's complexion had finally improved, and their breathing had become much smoother.

Shane's spirit had noticeably lifted after that, and his complexion was no longer as terrible as before.

After hearing Neera explain the reasons, he finally understood. "So that's what happened. I was wondering why I felt unusually heavy. Before I could even mention it, I was hit with a severe headache, and then I lost consciousness."

Afterward, he gently smiled, raising his hand to ruffle Neera's hair, full of the affection of an elder brother. "You're amazing, Neera."

Neera felt a bit embarrassed at being suddenly praised by him. "I just happened to have the right thing on me..."

"You didn't do it by accident. It's your foresight and preparation that saved us from disaster. Otherwise, we may all be passed out here, perhaps even dying. We initially thought we were here to protect you, but as soon as we arrived, it turned out you were the one protecting us. You're really impressive, Neera. We're counting on you for what comes next."

Upon hearing those words, Neera was taken aback, followed by an inexplicable surge of excitement.

Actually, even before she arrived and after entering the dense forest, she always had that feeling that she was a burden.

Despite the importance of the event and the harshness of the selection process, the Gordon family had to rely on someone incompetent like her.

Throughout that journey, everyone must constantly protect her, serve her, and even risk getting hurt for her.

Yet, she could offer no help at all.

That was how she thought about herself in the past.

However, things were different.

She realized that she, too, was of great significance.

At the very least, she could also protect those who protect her with her skills.

She was fighting side by side with everyone.

As that thought surged in her heart, she suddenly gained confidence and was filled with enthusiasm. Suddenly, nothing seemed scary anymore.

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Chapter 1182

A quarter of an hour later, everyone had regained their strength and spirit, ready to set off again in high spirits.

Neera preferred to be more cautious this time, cutting out many strips from the gauze.

"Even though I've taken the antidote, it can only neutralize the poison inside me. I have no idea how much further I need to travel to escape this miasma. Therefore, it's best to keep my mouth and nose covered as much as possible to prevent any unforeseen incidents."

She folded the gauze into three layers and distributed it to each person.

Soon, everyone had a piece of gauze tied in front of their mouths and noses.

With this barrier in place, everyone breathed a bit more easily.

On their journey forward this time, they encountered a group of forces.

For safety reasons, the two factions kept a certain distance from each other. Neither made the first move to greet, nor did they approach each other.

However, Neera discovered that the other party seemed to be in some sort of trouble as everything was in a mess.

Shane also noticed and pointed across. "Look, it seems like two people have fainted over there."

Upon closer inspection, Neera realized that indeed, there were two people lying on the ground, surrounded by others.

"It seems they've also fallen victim to the miasma," Finnley murmured, squinting his eyes.

Neera's brow furrowed slightly, her instinct as a doctor kicked in. Subconsciously, she wanted to step forward and help.

However, she quickly dismissed the idea.

Right now, she was not a doctor, but the head of the Gordon family.

In this conflict, danger lurked at every turn. Apart from her own people, she could trust no one else. I can't afford to act recklessly. [search the Findnovel.net website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

As these thoughts were crossing her mind, a few people appeared suddenly. They were all uniformly dressed in bright vests, carrying two stretchers.

Shane also saw it and explained to her. "These are the rescue personnel from the neutral zone. If an accident occurs during the election, you can call them to take the person away. Of course, once you leave, you lose the qualification to return. If the last person of a family is taken away, then that family loses the right to compete."

"I see..." Neera nodded, watching as the two unconscious people were carried away. Without lingering any longer, he said, "Let's get going. We've wasted quite a bit of time already. We need to make up for it now."

Even though she intentionally avoided contact with other families, it didn't mean she wasn't planning to make an effort.

Since she was already here and participating in this election process, she might as well give it her best shot.

This way, no one would ever question her again, nor would anyone question Chad's choices.

In the blink of an eye, it was noon.

Neera and her group stopped to look around.

"The visibility around us has improved. It seems we have walked out of the miasma," said Shane.

Neera nodded gently, "Indeed, finally I can breathe freely."

However, she still had some doubts in her heart.

Generally, miasma tends to appear in two places: one is the forest, and the other is the swamp.

But considering the conditions of Mount Cloud, will it really produce miasma on such a large scale?

She always felt that there was something more in this mountain. Something they hadn't discovered yet...

"Neera? Neera?" Shane opened his hand wide, waving it in front of her eyes. "What are you thinking about? You're so engrossed."

When Neera came back to her senses, she lifted her head, meeting Shane's puzzled expression.

She paused for a moment, but did not say much. "It's okay. I just had some thoughts, but it's not important."

Shane didn't press further. He pointed to an open space not far away and said, "It's noon now. I'm sure everyone is tired and hungry. Let's go over there to rest and have something to eat to fill our stomachs and regain some strength."

Naturally, no one had any objections. Thus, they all walked over together, set down their backpacks, and took a moment to relax.

The surroundings here were all natural, devoid of any pavilions or stone tables. There was only a robust tree toppled on the ground.

Neera looked at the moss on the trees, finding it quite fascinating.

"I've never ventured into a place like this before, and these sights are all new to me. If it weren't for the election, I would be in a better mood to truly appreciate it all."

As she spoke, she took a piece of paper, placed it on the tree trunk, and sat down.

Shane handed her a piece of bread and a box of milk.

"The surroundings are quite nice, though the conditions are a bit rough. Let's make do with what we have for now. Come evening, we'll find a place to start a fire and cook something warm to eat."

Neera chuckled. "It's okay, I find this experience quite amusing. I guess it's a once in a lifetime thing."

Finnley stretched a bit on the spot, and chuckled as he said, "I knew this girl wasn't the delicate and fragile type. I was right about her. It's rare to see someone who enjoys this kind of environment..."

Charles also let out a rare smile.

As everyone was talking, from not too far away, there was a rustling sound gradually getting closer.

At first, Neera didn't pay much attention, but as the sound got closer and closer, she had no choice but to be on guard...

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Chapter 1183

"Did you guys hear that? It sounded like a strange noise." She looked around but didn't find anything unusual.

Upon hearing this, everyone started looking around, but they found nothing too.

"There certainly is a sound, but it's not loud, and I have no idea where it's coming from. How strange."

For some reason, the more Neera listened to this voice, the more eerie it felt, causing goosebumps all over her body.

Just then, she caught sight of the fallen leaves behind the toppled tree trunk stirring out of the corner of her eye.

"Guys... just look!" Her heart was in her throat. She was so nervous she could hardly take it, and instinctively stepped back.

Upon hearing the sound, Shane turned around. His expression changed abruptly.

Beneath the tree leaves was clearly a huge python, slithering its way, swaying left and right!

"Ah!"

Neera was terrified of snakes and spiders. Upon seeing the cold eyes of the snake and its flickering tongue, she couldn't help but scream in fear. The bread and milk in her hands dropped to the ground.

She was completely taken aback as she hadn't expected the forest to be so pristine and was even home to such an enormous python!

However, although the others were also startled, they quickly regained their composure.

For these experts, dealing with a mere python was not a challenge at all.

In no time, the five individuals sent by Avery stepped forward. They drew their sharp blades and swiftly dealt with the large python.

Seeing her in a state of shock, Shane comforted her with a gentle voice. [search the website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"Don't be scared. Everything is fine now. This is a forest, so there are bound to be snakes. But rest assured, it is quite easy to deal with them."

While they were talking, he made her another sandwich.

"Take it easy. Have something to eat. We'll be setting off soon."

Neera reluctantly took it, her heart still pounding with fear. The image of her locking eyes with the python was still fresh in her mind. It had caused every pore on her body to stand on end in terror.

At this moment, she had completely lost her appetite. She had no desire to eat anything at all.

The thought of having to continue on her journey made her realize that it was impossible to move on without physical strength. Reluctantly, she forced herself to eat a little.

After resting for another half an hour, she finally calmed down. Everyone packed up their belongings, shouldered their backpacks, and resumed their journey up the mountain.

The light inside the forest in the afternoon was considerably stronger than in the morning, and the temperature had also risen a bit.

As they were moving forward, suddenly a group of riders emerged from the right side of the forest.

Neera and her group suddenly became tense, and stopped in their tracks.

Seeing them, the group of people were quite surprised, but they bore no hostility. Instead, they came over with smiles on their faces.

The one leading the way was Caleb.

"Ms. Garcia, I didn't expect us to meet so early," Caleb greeted warmly and politely as he approached.

The members of the Cox family, including Charles and Wesley, all assumed a defensive stance, watching him with exceptional vigilance.

Seeing it was him, Shane actually felt less nervous.

Neera felt the same way, and said politely, "It is quite a coincidence, Mr. Medicina. Has your journey been smooth so far?"

Caleb chuckled. "It's not too bad. I haven't encountered any danger yet."

As he spoke, he glanced at the person following her, his eyebrows slightly raised.

"It seems that your team is quite spirited. I knew you would definitely be able to dispel that miasma."

Neera modestly replied, "It's alright. I just happened to have some medicine with me, and it came in handy."

Caleb nodded. "Ms. Garcia's medical skills are extraordinary, so this little matter is certainly not a problem to you. However, there might be some trouble not far ahead."

Suddenly, he said something that made Neera's heart skip a beat. Puzzled, she asked, "What's ahead?"

Caleb told her honestly, "There's a swamp ahead, and in it, there are some poisonous snakes and some aquatic creatures, all of which are venomous. I see that you are choosing that route, so you must pass through that swamp. You'll have to figure out a way to get through safely. Be very careful."

Huh... Swamp!

Neera's eyes darkened. "As I thought, I found the miasma peculiar. Normally, the fog isn't that thick, but the one just now was different, the humidity was simply too high. So there really is a swamp here, and that explains it."

Hearing her say this, admiration grew in Caleb's eyes.

"It seems Ms. Garcia has already thought of it. I guess I've been talking too much."

Neera quickly waved her hand. "Not at all, Mr. Medicina. Thank you for your reminder. I will be careful. You should also take care in everything you do."

"Sure, I will." Caleb accepted her gratitude, smiled elegantly. Without saying anything more, he led his people and left in a different direction.

After watching him leave, Neera led the group to continue their journey forward.

The members of the Cox family hadn't let their guard down yet, occasionally casting wary glances in the direction where Caleb had left.

Some people were even surprised, and murmured, "Why would the Medicina family be so kind..."

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Chapter 1184

"Could they possibly have ill intentions? Could they have set up a trap ahead?"

"What was the point of reminding us just now?"

"Perhaps... it's a ploy to make us lower our guard, only to catch us off guard and stab us in the back when we least expect it?"

Err... Neera was listening ahead, inexplicably speechless, yet couldn't help but chuckle.

She turned around and looked at them. "I don't think so. The gentleman who just left, Mr. Medicina, has helped me before, more than once. I believe he must have reminded me out of good intentions."

Shane's impression of Caleb was neither good nor bad. After some thought, he also said, "I suppose so. From what I know, Caleb is a decent person. He probably wouldn't do something so double-dealing."

At that moment, Charles keenly noticed something.

"Ms. Garcia, Mr. Gordon, it seems that the Medicina family's route is quite similar to ours. Even though they're not traveling with us at the moment, there's really only one main road in this area. It is surrounded by dense forest, and it's isolated from any other routes."

Neera didn't think there was anything unusual about it. "After all, we are in a competition now. It's quite normal for each faction to go their own way. Since we didn't join forces with the Medicina family, we should each follow our own path. Choosing the same route doesn't matter, as there are only a few main routes after all. For now, let's not overthink it and focus on the road ahead."

Since she had said that, naturally, it wasn't appropriate for others to say anything more.

...

At three in the afternoon, they indeed came across a swamp.

Just as Caleb had warned them earlier, one could faintly see snakes slithering through this swamp.

Upon seeing a snake, Neera felt extremely uncomfortable, her goosebumps rising in waves.

"Although this swamp isn't large, it seems like there's no other way around it. What should we do?"

She suppressed the primal fear welling up within her, taking a moment to survey her surroundings, feeling somewhat headachy.

Shane and Charles were also looking around, racking their brains for a solution.

They had never anticipated that a swamp would exist within this dense forest, so they hadn't been able to prepare in advance.

But before they could come up with a good plan, the people from the Medicina family had already arrived.

"Hi, Ms. Garcia, we meet again." Caleb greeted Neera with a very relaxed demeanor.

Neera nodded in agreement, "Yes, indeed, as you said, there is a swamp here."

Caleb took a look and said, "Indeed, it's true. Actually, I heard about it from my family, but this is my first time seeing it."

After he finished speaking, he asked her, "Have you figured out a way to move past this?"

Neera felt somewhat awkward for no apparent reason. she rubbed her chin and gave a wry smile. "Not yet," she said. "This is the first time I've encountered such a situation, so I can't think of a solution to get through it safely for the moment."

Upon hearing those words, Caleb laughed. It wasn't a mocking laugh, but a very kind one.

"I see, no worries. It's quite normal. Actually, I do have a solution. It is something my family told me."

Neera's eyes lit up. "What's the plan? Can you share it with us?"

Caleb smiled slightly. "There's nothing that can't be shared. Look, these vines hanging in mid-air, they can all be put to good use."

Shane was the quickest to respond, his face lighting up with realization. "Are you suggesting," he asked, "that we use these vines to swing across?"

"That's right. The tree trunks wrapped in vines are the branches of centuries-old trees, thick and sturdy, capable of bearing the weight of several people without any problem. So, you don't need to worry about falling mid-air. As long as you hold on tight, you'll be able to get across smoothly."

Upon hearing this approach, Neera and the others here began to ponder. Subsequently, she found the method feasible.

They were all experts, so accomplishing such a small task would be a piece of cake for them. Therefore, there was absolutely nothing to fear.

However, it might not work for Neera.

As she watched each person in her gang pass by, her anxiety grew increasingly.

We have to fly over the swamp, what if... S~earch the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Hold on! I can't let my imagination run wild. There should be absolutely no overthinking! That's bad luck!

Thinking of that, Neera was somewhat tense.

Only Shane and Charles remained here. Seeing her expression, they became somewhat worried. "Can you make it? Do you dare to cross over?"

If she could, Neera would certainly prefer to say it outright, but she didn't dare.

But at this moment, she didn't want to be a burden to anyone, nor did she want to cause trouble for others. Therefore, she had no choice but to face it head-on.

Having mentally prepared herself, she kept repeating "it's okay" in her mind, and also voiced it out loud.

"No worries. I can give it a try. All I need to do is hold on tight to the vine and not let go. If it doesn't work out, I'll just try a few more times. There's bound to be a moment of success."

Even though she said so, Shane still felt uneasy.

"Don't worry. Neera you don't have to swing across by yourself. If you don't mind, I can carry you over. This vine can easily support both of us. It's no problem at all."

Before Neera had a chance to respond, a cold female voice rang out suddenly.

"No need, I'll carry her over. We're both girls. It'll be easier that way."

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Chapter 1185

Upon hearing this, everyone turned towards the source of the sound, only to find that it was a woman from the Medicina family.

This person appeared to be about the same age as Neera. They were both around twenty four or twenty five years old.

Neera and the others were somewhat surprised. They hadn't expected the Medicina family to send such a frail-looking girl to participate.

However, before they could even react, the woman had already wrapped her arms around Neera's waist with her other hand tightly coiled around the vine.

She glanced at Neera and whispered softly, "Ms. Garcia, hold on to me tightly and never let go."

After she finished speaking, she flexed her arm and held Neera tightly, swinging them both along the way!

Neera was stunned. Before she could even utter a word, she could feel her body being lifted into the air, and a breeze brushing past her face.

The sudden feeling of weightlessness scared her, causing her to tightly embrace the woman.

Throughout the process, her heart pounded nervously in her chest. Her eyes were tightly shut. She didn't dare to open them.

It felt as if a long time had passed, yet it seemed to be only a few seconds before her feet finally touched the ground again.

"Alright, Ms. Garcia. Everything is fine now." The woman's indifferent voice rang out again.

Neera was taken aback for a moment. Then, she opened her eyes, and quickly let go of the woman.

To her astonishment, she found herself landed on the other side of the swamp!

This is... simply incredible!

We swung across the swamp like we were in a movie!

And another thing, this girl is incredibly strong. She can actually swing her around with just one hand.

She is so strong...

Soon, Shane, Charles, and the people from the Medicina family, each crossed the swamp one by one.

Neera chose to suppress her shock. Then, she took a glance at her own people. She let out a sigh of relief after seeing that everyone was safe and sound.

Caleb maintained his usual gentle demeanor, smiling as he asked her, "How did you feel just now? Was it thrilling?"

Neera touched her chest, swallowed hard, and replied, "This is really thrilling. If I were to fall into the swamp, that would be the end of me!"

In all her years, she had never imagined that she would experience such incredible events.

At that moment, she realized that she had been too shocked to properly express her gratitude.

"Miss, thank you so much for your help just now. You're truly amazing, I really admire you." In that moment, she quickly looked at the woman, expressing her sincere gratitude.

The girl, as always, remained calm and composed. Her face was expressionless, as if she was incapable of even forcing out a smile. Yet, thankfully, she spoke with politeness.

"Ms. Garcia, you can simply call me Luna. There is no need for formalities. It's my honor to be able to help you."

"Luna?" Neera was somewhat surprised after hearing this. "Isn't your surname Medicina? Aren't you from the Medicina family?"

Luna was silent. She just looked down, not making a sound.

Today, she deliberately changed her appearance.

So, Neera didn't recognize her. In fact, she was the one who saved her during the last attack.

Beside them, Caleb, seeing the situation, quickly stepped in to explain, "Hmm, she's not from the Medicina family. She's here to assist me. She's very skilled and can be quite useful."

"So that's how it is..." Neera nodded in understanding, without giving it much thought.

On the other side, the Jennings family and the Logan family had agreed early on to join forces. After entering the dense forest, they had been traveling together.

Stella was completely indifferent to her surroundings. She held a vine in her hand, picked up from God knew where, and impatiently whipped the passing trees.

"It's almost been a day, and there's still no sign of Neera. I have no idea which route she took with her people."

Howard glanced at her, and smiled casually. "I told you from the start that there was no need to rush into the dense forest. But you wouldn't listen, and now, we can't find anyone at all, can we?"

Stella found his sarcastic remarks most annoying. She shot him a sidelong glance, her tone far from friendly.

"Can't you cut back on the nonsense? Will you die if you don't kick someone when they're down?"

However, Howard didn't mind at all. He chuckled lightly, and didn't take it to heart. [Search the website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"Alright, alright. There's no need to rush into the dense forest. I've noticed that Neera is taking her sweet time over there. She's probably trying to avoid us, or other family forces, by lagging behind. She's no fool, so she must have her own tactics to evade everyone else."

Stella sneered, "Does she really think she can avoid me forever? Sooner or later, we're bound to cross paths!"

Howard calmly added, "Hmm, if she got the white flag first, then any subsequent encounters would be meaningless, wouldn't they?"

Upon hearing these words, Stella's face took on a rather unpleasant expression.

"Who are you teaming up with, anyway? Why so much idle chatter! Hurry up and analyze where she might have gone, so we can get there as soon as possible. When the time comes..."

The sun had set and darkness had enveloped the surroundings.

Neera felt an inexplicable chill down her spine, and couldn't help but shiver.

Beside her, Shane noticed and asked with concern. "What's wrong? Are you cold?"

Neera shook her head. "No, I'm fine. It's getting dark. Let's find a place to rest."

Shane also said, "Hmm, I think so too. If we continue to travel rashly in this kind of weather, it could be dangerous."

Before long, they found a spacious spot, brought over some clean stones, set down their backpacks, and one by one, they sat down to rest.

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Read Chapter 1186

Chapter 1186

"I'm going to look around for some dry firewood. We need to start a fire; otherwise, the temperature in the dense forest will drop sharply when night falls. It's going to get very cold."

Wesley said so, then proceeded to unload the tent he had been carrying with him.

"I have four tents here. Let's set them up together." SEAR*ch the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Upon hearing this, the members of the Cox family immediately came over to help.

Neera was a bit worried. "Are you sure it's okay to go alone? Maybe we should get a couple more people to go with you."

Wesley declined, "It's okay. Everyone is getting ready to find a place to rest at this time, and I won't go far. There won't be any danger. Please rest assured, Miss."

Before long, he had left.

Shane helped set up the tents and asked, "Neera, are you okay with staying in a tent by yourself?"

Among those present, she was the only woman. Neera had no objections and asked naturally, "Alright, what about you guys?"

"We're all grown men here, so no worries. We'll split a tent among the three of us, and each of us will take turns standing guard, specifically at the entrance of your tent. You can rest easy at night and get a good night's sleep."

Neera felt somewhat embarrassed by their attentive care. "Perhaps, I should join you in guarding the place tonight."

Shane raised an eyebrow, "With so many grown men around, there's no need for a young lady like you to stand guard. Don't worry about it too much. Just get some rest is what's really important."

After a day of hustle and bustle, Neera was indeed exhausted and no longer insisted on staying up.

"Thank you for taking care of me. Once I've rested well, I'll get up early to cook for all of you."

Shane chuckled. "Well then, I wonder if you're up for it now, but could you help make some oatmeal? It would be nice for everyone to have something warm to drink, to heat up their bodies."

Neera smiled slightly. "That's easy enough. Leave it to me when Wesley returns."

In no time, the light in the dense forest dimmed even more, almost to the point where one could not see their hand in front of their face.

At that moment, Wesley returned carrying a bundle of dry branches.

Everyone gathered around to help light the fire.

Soon, a fire was kindled and a pot was set up.

Neera watched this scene, and the tension that had gripped her all day suddenly eased quite a bit.

"I really didn't expect you guys to bring so much stuff. Now we look like we're on a jungle expedition."

Finnley sat on a large rock, stroking his beard with a cheerful smile.

"Sounds about right. We must be fully prepared before we venture into this dense forest. Who knows how many days and nights we might end up trapped here. Naturally, we should make our stay as comfortable as possible."

Neera couldn't help but chuckle, thinking to herself. They really are accustomed to a life of privilege, always seeking enjoyment wherever they are.

At that moment, Wesley came over and shared with them what he had discovered when he was out collecting tree branches.

"The Medicina family has also set up camp nearby. It is just five hundred meters ahead."

Upon hearing this, everyone turned their gaze towards the distance, and sure enough, they saw sporadic flickers of light.

"Is it okay that they are so close to us?" one of the Cox family members asked with a hint of worry.

Neera gazed thoughtfully in that direction. "It should be fine. For now, I still have quite a bit of faith in Mr. Medicina."

Shane also said, "If the Medicina family really wanted to harm us, they wouldn't have helped us back in the swamp. They could have gotten rid of us then, so there was no need to wait until now."

That was easier said than done. The Cox family members were unfamiliar with the Medicina family, so they couldn't let their guard down naturally. Thus, they remained on high alert at all times.

After finishing her meal, Neera stood up to clean up, but was stopped by Finnley.

"Neera, let them handle those tasks. You take a break and get ready for training."

Neera let out a surprised "Eh", "Training? Do we need to train even here?"

Finnley's eyes widened in surprise. "Of course! Did you think you could do as you please while training under me? Once you've started, you can't just quit halfway!"

Neera swallowed hard, taking in the oppressive darkness that surrounded her.

"But... where should I start practicing? Everything around me is dark now..."

Finnley waved his hand. "Don't be so nervous. It is fine right here. It's not like I'm teaching you some extraordinary kung fu. Just keep practicing the darts. Look, I've brought all the stuff for you."

As he spoke, he rummaged through his bag, pulling out a bunch of darts.

Upon seeing this, Neera was completely dumbfounded.

"My dear elder, you truly are dedicated. You didn't forget to carry these darts with you even in this situation..."

Finnley hummed in agreement, "Of course, and these darts can not only help you train, but also serve as weapons. It's a win-win situation, so why not?"

After he finished speaking, he pointed to a nearby tree to explain the training requirements.

"Alright, that's enough chit-chat. You see that tree over there? Throw your dart at it. See that hole in the trunk? Only if you get your dart in there will it count as a success!"

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Chapter 1187

Neera took a look at the tree hole, which was about the same height as her, then glanced at the dart in front of her, and couldn't help but sigh.

Despite having been busy all day and utterly exhausted, how is it that this old man still seems so energetic, showing no signs of fatigue at all?

Compared to him, it was she the younger one, who seemed to be at a disadvantage.

Shane walked over, patted her shoulder, and smiled like a spring breeze.

"That's just how Mr. Weaver is. Don't regard him as an old man. He's always been in good health, and his energy surpasses that of the young lads. If you're training with him, you'll have to get used to this."

With a helpless shrug, Neera had no choice but to obediently go for training.

However, even though she was already very tired, she remained serious once she entered training mode.

Unfortunately, the darts were thrown again and again, but they never hit the mark.

Finnley, holding a big coffee mug, was giving directions on the side.

"Oh dear, this won't do. Lift your arm a bit higher on the same level with your shoulder."

"Right, just like that. Good, put some strength in your wrist... Ah, you almost got it. What a pity. Let's try again."

"No, no, this angle. It definitely won't hit..."

The more he looked, the more absurd things seemed. He simply put down the big coffee mug and walked over to pat her arm.

The moment he touched her, he heard her hiss in pain, her brows furrowing as if she was in great discomfort.

"What's the matter? Are you not feeling well?"

Neera shook her head, paused for a moment, then nodded, "There is a bit..."

Upon hearing this, Finnley immediately became worried. "What's wrong? You silly girl. Why didn't you say anything if you're feeling unwell?"

Shane had been keeping an eye on the situation. Seeing this, he quickly walked over with concern. "What's wrong? Neera, is it your wound that's hurting?"

Finnley furrowed his brows, "A wound?"

Shane explained, "It was during the last attack that Neera injured her shoulder."

Finnley was aware of the attack, but he didn't know that Neera had been injured.

Hearing this, he instantly felt a pang of regret. "Girl, you should speak up if you're not feeling well. How could you force yourself to endure it? If your wound were to split open and get infected, that would be really bad."

Neera chuckled, soothing him in return. "Don't worry. It's just a minor injury. I'm taking it easy. It's fine."

Even though she said that, the truth was her shoulder injury was causing her quite a bit of pain. That was why she couldn't lift her arm straight.

Not only that, but she had been walking all day. This was the first time she had experienced such a high level of physical activity. Her feet were burning with pain, probably from blisters that had formed. Therefore, even standing was a torment to her.

Yet, seeing that everyone else was still in high spirits, she didn't want to be the one to slow them down, nor did she want to cause them any worry. That was why she had been persisting without showing any signs of struggle.

After spending these days together, Shane had come to understand her way of thinking quite well.

At that moment, he let out a soft sigh, comforting her with his gentle voice.

"Neera, you don't have to constantly think about accommodating us, nor rush to make yourself stronger. We can protect you. Our mission is also to protect you, so don't feel like you're holding us back or anything. You really don't need to be like this. I am serious."

Upon hearing this, Neera pursed her lips, then let out a laugh and a sigh. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"Indeed, nothing escapes your keen eyes. Alright, I was hoping to learn it as quickly as possible, but it seems it's not something that can be achieved overnight. It looks like I'll have to put in more effort moving forward."

At this moment, Finnley also hurriedly urged, "Yes, whatever you do, you must proceed step by step. Being impatient trying to gain quick success and instant benefit won't work. Alright, you should hurry back to your tent to rest. You're still injured and can't continue training. Otherwise, if your wounds worsen, it will be terrible."

Neera chuckled. "Rest assured, I'm a doctor. I am in control of my own condition. I'll be fine."

Afterwards, she returned to the tent.

Sitting on the sleeping mat, she relaxed and let out a long sigh.

"Finally, I can rest..."

Murmuring softly, she removed half of her top, revealing the wound on her shoulder.

Sure enough, the area wrapped in gauze was faintly showing a hint of blood. It had cracked open slightly.

After reapplying medicine to the wound and bandaging it, she also applied medicine to the chafed area on her foot.

A while later, there was some noise from outside suddenly, followed by a familiar voice.

"So, you guys are indeed here. Have you had dinner already? It seems I'm a bit late."

It was Caleb's voice.

Neera was somewhat surprised as she did not expect him to come. Hence, she quickly put on her shoes and got up to leave the tent.

Outside, the members of the Cox family were already lined up at the entrance of her tent. Every one of them was on high alert, creating an inexplicably tense atmosphere.

Shane was quite composed, standing face to face with Caleb. Politely, he greeted, "Mr. Medicina, I wonder what brings you here so late?"

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Chapter 1188

Hearing him say this, Neera realized that Caleb did not come alone.

Behind him, there was another man, with most of his body concealed in the darkness, standing quietly, which was why she didn't notice him right away. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

At that moment, she bypassed the few people blocking her way and walked past them.

"Mr. Medicina, how come you're here? Is there something you need?" she greeted him politely, taking the initiative to ask.

Upon seeing her, Caleb curved his lips into a smile. Even in such an environment, he still maintained the demeanor of a refined and modest gentleman.

"Ms. Garcia, you must be tired after a whole day's journey, aren't you? Your complexion doesn't look too good. Are you feeling unwell?"

"Thank you

for your concern, but I'm fine. I just feel a bit tired."

Neera would rather respond politely. For some reason, she felt an inexplicably intense gaze on her as she spoke.

Without thinking, she followed the direction of her gaze, and landed on the man standing behind Caleb unexpectedly.

That face was largely concealed in the darkness of the night. There was only a small portion that was illuminated by the firelight, making it impossible to discern his features.

Is it this person who was just looking at me...

"Make sure to get a good rest tonight if you're tired."

After he finished speaking, he glanced at the man behind him, signaling him to step forward.

"Actually, the reason for my visit was to bring you some food. I specifically carried these into the dense forest to help you replenish your strength and nutrition. Even though you've already eaten, you can save these for tomorrow. I'll also leave this cooler box for you."

Neera glanced down and noticed that the man had laid out all sorts of things, from roast chicken and duck to even salmon and crabs.

Suddenly, the corner of her mouth twitched.

This person has ventured into the mountains, but brought along so much gourmet food. How can they not feel the slightest bit of tension? Could it be that they're here for a vacation?

Shane was much more straightforward than her, so he openly voiced his criticisms.

"You don't seem like you're here for the selection process. It is more like you're here for a leisure sightseeing trip."

Caleb didn't mind at all. With his hands in his pockets, he carried a touch of nonchalance in his elegance, yet without appearing frivolous. His demeanor was perfectly controlled.

"Well, you could say that. After all, the Medicina family has no intention of vying for the title of the district president. We're just here to make up the numbers, to show our faces, so to speak. As for that white flag, we have no plans to seize it."

As he was speaking, the man next to him suddenly handed Neera a drumstick.

Neera blinked, finding the situation somewhat amusing yet baffling. Although she wasn't hungry, she accepted it out of politeness. "Thank you."

At this moment, she finally saw the man's appearance clearly.

That was a very ordinary looking face, with average features that were quite symmetrical.

However, there was a scar on his right cheek, destroying his otherwise ordinary appearance. It added a touch of fierceness and ferocity, making him look somewhat intimidating.

Nevertheless, Neera always felt that there was something off about this man for some unknown reason.

But upon closer inspection, she couldn't quite pinpoint what was off.

As she was worried that her intense gaze might make the other person uncomfortable, she quickly averted her eyes, and turned her face away without showing any particular emotion.

Yet, she felt as though his gaze was still fixed on her and carried an ambiguous look.

Luckily, after exchanging pleasantries, Caleb was about to take their leave.

Before leaving, he smiled at Neera and said, "Rest well tonight. Rejuvenate for we have to continue our journey tomorrow."

Neera smiled and nodded, "Thank you. You too."

After he finished speaking, Caleb left with that man.

Once their figures disappeared into the dense forest, Finnley suddenly came over, his eyes filled with suspicion.

"That Medicina boy, why won't he leave you alone? First, he reminded you of possible danger, then helped you cross the swamp, and now he even made a special trip to bring you food. If someone is overly attentive for no reason, he is probably up to no good. What does he have in mind? Could it be... that he's interested in you?"

As soon as he spoke, Shane and the others turned to look, each with a peculiar look in their eyes.

Neera felt a bit embarrassed and touched her nose.

"No way. That's a bit far-fetched, isn't it..."

However, the members of the Cox family argued, "There must be an ulterior motive. Why else would he help us time and again? It just doesn't make sense."

Neera hummed in return, "I don't think so. I barely have any interaction with him and have only met him two or three times. How could he possibly be interested in me?"

She may say so, but she didn't understand why Caleb was taking such good care of her.

And then there was that scary looking man...

She was certain of her intuition. The man with the scar on his face had definitely been staring at her for quite some time.

Why though?

And what about that feeling of discordance? What is it exactly?

After a moment of thought, she turned to Shane and asked, "Shane, do you know the man who came with Caleb?"

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Chapter 1189

Shane shook his head. "I don't have much to do with the Medicina family, and my acquaintance with Caleb is nothing before exchanging formalities. Hence, I don't know anyone in the Medicina family at all."

"I see..." Neera murmured thoughtfully.

"What's wrong? Do you feel there's something off about that man?"

"It's not really that, and there's nothing wrong." Neera would rather tell herself not to overthink, if she couldn't figure it out, she just wouldn't dwell on it.

Shane didn't pay much attention on such a minor hiccup, he looked at the delicious food in front of Neera and the chicken leg in her hand, and smiled.

"You hardly ate anything just now, why not have a little more? Consider it a late-night snack. After eating, you can get a good night's sleep."

Neera was not hungry just now, but looking at these delicacies, she actually felt her appetite being whetted.

In no time at all, the night gradually deepened after they filled their bellies.

Neera tilted her head back to gaze at the night sky through the gaps in the tree canopy, listening to the intermittent chirping of insects. She began to feel a growing sense of tranquility in her heart.

The image of Jean's face gradually became clear in her mind.

She couldn't help but wonder, what was he doing at this moment?

Are you still busy with work? Or perhaps in a meeting?

Could it be possible that he is thinking of me right now?

When she thought carefully, they hadn't seen each other for almost two months. This was the first time they had been apart for such a long period.

In fact, we parted when we had disagreement...

I really can't wait to see him.

Once things here are settled, I will go see him after I've left the dense forest.

Reconcile with him, just like before, and then never argue with him again. We will never part ways again...

"Neera? Neera?" Shane's voice came from afar, gradually getting closer.

Neera came back to her senses and looked at him apologetically. "I'm sorry. Did you need something? I was lost in thought and didn't hear you."

Shane raised an eyebrow. "No worries. I'm just reminding you that it's getting late. You should head into the tent and rest soon."

After he finished speaking, he asked another question, "What were you just thinking about? You had such a gentle expression."

Neera pursed her lips and chuckled, feeling a bit embarrassed.

"I'm missing my family, my children, my aunt, and also missing Jean."

This was the first time she had so openly mentioned this man in front of him.

"You haven't met him yet, have you? My fiancé. It's been a long time since we last saw each other. I have no idea what he's up to these days. When I'm bored, I will just think about him."

Shane was somewhat surprised. His gaze carried a hint of profound meaning.

"I know who he is, but this is the first time I've heard you mention him. It seems your state of mind now is different from when I first met you."

Neera curved her lips into a faint smile. "I suppose so. Something happened before and that left me with some emotional baggage. But now, that has been solved. It was through this experience that I realized some things aren't as important as they seem. What's most important is to understand what you truly want. Once you see your own heart clearly, there's nothing left to worry about."

If it were in the past, she would not have spoken these words to anyone.

But now, the longing she had for Jean grew deeper and deeper.

Certain emotions overflowed as if it was urgently seeking a way to express them, which was why she was able to voice these words.

However, after she spoke, she became shy again as her fair cheeks flushed with a faint blush.

"Alright, I'm feeling a bit tired, so I'm going to head back and get some sleep. I appreciate your efforts tonight to watch over things. Please, be careful." Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Shane gave a hum of acknowledgement, watching her enter the tent, then let out a sigh.

It seems like Avery doesn't even have the chance to take advantage of the situation anymore.

...

Neera simply washed up a bit, then lay down.

It was her first time sleeping in a tent, and that too in the depths of the forest, so she couldn't help but feel a bit nervous.

However, when she saw the firelight outside and the silhouette of someone standing guard outside her tent, her heart settled down again.

She was drowned in exhaustion, and felt sleepy soon.

In her drowsy haze, just as she was about to fall asleep, the face of the man with the scar suddenly appeared in her mind.

In that instant, it seemed as if she suddenly understood where that sense of discord was coming from.

It was about the man's temperament!

The man's demeanor was completely at odds with his face.

Even though he was clearly just a follower by Caleb's side, his aura seemed to overshadow Caleb's for some reason.

That sense of nobility and the aura of one who had long held a high position, was revealed in his every move, down to the finest detail.

How could this be? He's clearly under Caleb's command, yet he possesses such an aura.

And why does this aura give me an inexplicable sense of familiarity...

It's as if...

These questions kept spinning in her mind, troubling her.

But she was just too tired that she drifted off to sleep. Soon, sleep swept over her, plunging her into dreamland...

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Chapter 1190

She didn't manage to sleep until dawn the next day before getting abruptly awakened.

Around the wee hours of the morning, Neera was in a deep sleep when a burst of clamor abruptly awakened her.

At first, she opened her eyes in a daze, not quite registering her surroundings.

But she was taken aback when she saw the intertwined shadows on the tent and immediately became nervous. It seems like a fight has broken out outside!

Realizing that, she quickly crawled out of her sleeping bag.

Since she had to stay alert while sleeping in the forest, she didn't undress. She put on her coat and shoes and unzipped her tent.

The sounds of the fierce battle outside were intense. She didn't dare to rush out recklessly, so she could only cautiously lift a small part of the tent flap to peek through.

Peering through the gap, she was shocked to discover that there were many people in black appearing in their camp!

Counting them up, there were probably around a dozen people. Each one was wearing a large black mask and a hat. Their disguises were incredibly thorough, making it impossible to see their faces.

At that very moment, her men were entangled in a fierce battle with the other party, fighting relentlessly!

Even Finnley was forced to take action.

Although Finnley appeared languid due to his old age and seemed the easiest to deal with, his skills were actually incredibly formidable.

Each move he made was ruthless, capable of inflicting lethal damage. Those who dared to confront him lost their ground steadily.

Even in the midst of a fight, he could still afford to glance over at Neera. "Hey, girl! Why did you sneak out? Hurry back to your tent and keep yourself safe!"

Shane took a punch to the mouth, blood trickling down the corner of his mouth. Hearing Finnley's remark, he turned his head and yelled at her, "Hurry inside and find a way to protect yourself first. I'll be right there!"

Since they were outnumbered, each of them had to face several opponents at once, leaving them no time to protect Neera for the time being.

Seeing the situation, Neera gritted her teeth and had no choice but to turn and run into the tent. [SEARCH THE website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

However, it was already too late.

It was clear that those people were coming for her. As soon as they saw her, someone immediately rushed toward her.

Neera could sense the imminent danger, her heart leaping into her throat. Instinctively, she reached into her pocket.

There, she had her medicine powder prepared in advance, along with the dagger given by Finnley.

In that instant, a multitude of thoughts raced through her mind. Rather than hiding in the tent waiting for protection, I'll be better off lending a hand in the fight! Even if I were to hide, if these people's target is me, I'd quickly be cornered. In that case, it's better to take the initiative. Any contribution, no matter how small, is still valuable.

With that in mind, she gritted her teeth, steeled herself, suddenly halted her steps, and swiftly turned around.

The people rushing toward her didn't expect her to stop suddenly. They were slightly taken aback but didn't stop moving and extended their hands toward her.

Neera stared at the gleaming knives in their hands, fear tightening her throat to the point where she could barely move.

But she still gave it her all, calming herself down, waiting for the perfect moment as they approached. Suddenly, she flung her hand out, scattering the medicinal powder!

Suddenly, someone was blinded, but because they covered their eyes tightly, some still managed to escape her sneak attack.

Seeing that, Neera tried to control her trembling hand and forcefully threw the dagger out.

Someone cried out in pain, cursing angrily, "D*mn woman! How dare you hurt me! What are you standing there for? Hurry up and help me!"

Neera turned toward the sound, and at first glance, he saw the man who spoke was clutching his right arm.

The dagger she had just thrown was still embedded in his arm, with a small amount of blood seeping from the wound. I hit someone with my dagger!

Confidence surged within her in an instant. She narrowed her eyes and quickly pulled out another dagger from her pocket.

However, it was unlikely that the other party would obediently wait for her in place. Soon, someone approached.

"Neera, be careful! Watch out!"

"Neera, run quickly!"

"Ms. Garcia!"

Several voices rang out at once. Everyone was frantic, wishing they could be in two places simultaneously, rushing immediately to her side.

But in the end, they were outnumbered. Their side had fewer people than the opposition, and to make matters worse, their opponents were not unskilled. They found themselves unable to break free from the entanglement at that instant.

The isolated Neera became the perfect target for capture!

Hearing the shouts of several people, Neera suddenly looked up, her pupils abruptly constricting at the sight of the men in black who were almost upon her.

The sharp blade of the knife was right before her eyes. At that moment, she felt as if she had been struck by a paralyzing spell, completely forgetting to run away!

Just as the situation reached a critical juncture, suddenly, a figure appeared out of nowhere, positioning itself in front of Neera.

At the same time, a cry of agony echoed throughout the dense forest!

Suddenly, this man, who appeared out of nowhere, firmly grabbed the arm of the man in black and, with a swift twist, effortlessly dislocated the latter's arm!

The knife held aloft fell to the ground. The man in black took a heavy blow to the abdomen and tumbled awkwardly to the ground!

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Chapter 1191

Neera was somewhat dazed by that sudden turn of events.

She looked at the towering figure before her, a strange sense of familiarity rising within her.

The man turned around to meet her eyes as if sensing her gaze.

He was the man with the scar on his face who was always by Caleb's side!

Neera was utterly astonished. "It's you... How come you're here?"

The man didn't respond immediately. Instead, he looked deeply into her eyes. His gaze seemed to be mixed with a myriad of complex emotions, making it hard to discern.

After a few seconds, he finally spoke in a low voice. "I'm here to protect you. Now, go back to the tent and wait. You can come out when it's time for you to come out."

After he finished speaking, he lifted the tent flap for her. Without another word, he gently placed his hand on her shoulder and guided her inside.

Then, he zipped up her tent for her, turned around swiftly, and quickly walked off into the distance, joining the fray outside.

Neera watched the figure illuminated by the firelight inside the tent, her gaze following its movements. She was still somewhat dazed. Did that man come here to protect me because of the Medicina family? If he's here, then Caleb should be here, too, right? They must have heard the commotion over here, so they came over to help on purpose.

At that thought, she gradually returned to her senses, her heart still pounding nervously. Who exactly are those people in black? Which faction sent them? Also, why do they have so many people? The rule clearly states that each family power is only allowed to send ten people into the secret forest, but this group has at least sixteen or seventeen people. Could it be that family forces have joined hands, or perhaps there's another reason...

As she hid in the tent, filled with fear yet unable to stop her thoughts from racing, the struggle outside grew increasingly intense.

The tables had entirely turned.

The group of men in black clearly didn't anticipate that the Medicina family's forces would come to the rescue. Their advantage was instantly lost, and they were quickly driven into a steady retreat.

In the end, they didn't linger for a fight. Realizing they were outmatched, they quickly fled.

Once those people had disappeared from sight, Shane wiped the corner of his mouth and immediately headed to Neera's tent.

To his surprise, the man with the scar had entered the tent before him. He found this act quite impolite and immediately furrowed his brows.

However, the other party had just saved Neera and even helped them. He couldn't say anything and could only follow behind with a slightly stern face. S~earch the FindNøvel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Neera stayed hidden in a corner of the tent the whole time.

When she saw someone unzip the tent, her heart nearly leaped out of her throat. Her hand tightly gripped the dagger, ready to face whatever was to come.

Luckily, the person who came in was not an enemy.

She inexplicably breathed a sigh of relief when she saw the man with the scar.

"Neera, how are you?" Shane quickly followed, striding over to check on her condition.

Neera suppressed her wildly beating heart, saying hoarsely, "I'm fine. I'm not hurt."

She glanced at the scar-faced man as she spoke and whispered, "Thanks to this gentleman, I was saved from a predicament..."

Once Shane was sure she was truly all right, he finally relaxed. Helping her to her feet, he said, "Come on. Let's go outside. Mr. Medicina has arrived."

Neera nodded slightly, propping herself to stand up.

The shock she had just experienced was so intense that her legs were still weak. As she tried to stand up, she stumbled, nearly falling over.

Shane quickly supported her. "Be careful!"

Neera felt a bit embarrassed. "I'm sorry. I was really scared just now..."

Shane pursed his lips. "That was indeed a close call. We were almost wiped out. There's no need for apologies."

As they conversed and walked away, the man with the scarred face stared at the slender figure, his hands at his sides clenched tightly into a fist. I almost lost control just now and nearly extended my hand...

Outside, it was a complete mess.

Sure enough, besides their own people, Neera also saw members of the Medicina family.

Shane first took a headcount. Seeing that no one was seriously injured, he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Mr. Medicina, thank you for your assistance." He turned his head toward Caleb, expressing his gratitude earnestly.

Neera also walked over at that moment, slightly bowing toward him, her attitude sincere and solemn. "If it weren't for you bringing help today, we might have faced disaster. I am truly grateful to you. Once we leave this dense forest, I will repay this kindness in full."

Caleb waved his hand, still maintaining that nonchalant demeanor, clearly not taking it to heart. "Ms. Garcia, there's no need to worry so much. I'm glad I could help. Didn't I tell you? I didn't come here to fight for the white flag. I'm just passing through. We happened to cross paths, so I lent a hand. It's no big deal."

Even though he said that, Neera still kept his favor in mind.

"That was a close call just now. If we were a moment later, who knows what could have happened? I saw that person in black almost hurt you. Are you okay?"

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Chapter 1192

Neera shook her head. "Thank you for your concern. I'm fine. Thanks to this gentleman who arrived in time, I was not hurt."

As she spoke, she remembered something important and turned to look at the man with the scar on his face.

"By the way, I haven't thanked you yet. May I be so bold as to ask your name, sir?"

A subtle change seemed to cross the man's stern expression after he heard that. His eyebrows seemed to have slightly lifted.

"My name is Darcel Belma," he murmured, his lips barely parting as he spoke softly.

Neera nodded, smiling as she expressed her gratitude, "Darcel, I can't thank you enough. If it weren't for you just now, I would have definitely been hurt."

At that moment, Shane also politely expressed his gratitude, "Mr. Darcel, I would like to express my sincere gratitude on behalf of the Gordon family for what just happened. If you require our assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to ask. The Gordon family will do everything in its power to repay this kindness."

Having said that, he added, "The same goes for the Medicina family." [Search The Findnovel.net website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

With a nonchalant expression, Darcel lightly tapped his chin. "It's not a big deal. There's no need for thanks." Then, he stopped talking.

Caleb maintained his usual cheerful and kind expression. "There's no need to keep thanking us."

Neera watched from the side. Inexplicably, her gaze always unconsciously drifted toward Darcel.

A peculiar feeling lingered in her heart, making her feel quite strange. Why does this man inexplicably remind me of Jean? This man is taciturn, always aloof and indifferent.

Also, she noticed Jean and Darcel's temperaments seemed quite similar...

At that moment, the words of Caleb pulled her drifting thoughts back to reality. "Even though nothing major has happened, you should still be more cautious. What happened tonight was extremely unusual. The number of people on the other side suggests that it's not just one group. It looks like there are at least two groups that have joined forces

to target you. From what I can see, they're out to take your lives. Their moves are ruthless, and they're certainly not good people."

Upon hearing that, Neera furrowed her brows. "Are they after our lives again? We were also ambushed previously. Are people in Phison so ruthless?"

Caleb raised an eyebrow. "Indeed. Phison is an extremely ruthless place. Here, it's not uncommon for people to kill without batting an eye to achieve their goals."

Shane sneered, "Joining forces to take our lives and even sending so many people. Well, they really do think highly of the Gordon family!"

Caleb asked him, "Do you have any leads? Has the Gordon family offended anyone before?"

At that point, he paused, then corrected himself. "Perhaps it's pointless to ask such a question. Once you enter this dense forest, all forces become hostile. Even if there were no previous grudges, it's not impossible for them to strike against you just to eliminate competition."

While he said so, Neera already had someone in mind. "Speaking of adversaries, it's probably the Jennings family. During the previous meeting, Stella gave me a hard time. It seems like I've become a thorn in her side."

At the mention of Stella, Caleb looked somewhat apologetic. "Last time at the pharmacy, it seems my actions caused you some trouble, leading Stella to hold a grudge against you. I'm truly sorry."

"Mr. Medicina, please don't say that," Neera quickly waved her hands. "If it wasn't for your help last time, Zephyr and I might have been at a disadvantage. You meant well. There's no need for you to feel sorry."

She recalled the way Stella had immediately opposed her at the pharmacy previously, and she narrowed her eyes slightly. "If you're suggesting that Stella holds a grudge against me because you defended me, I actually think that she deliberately picked a fight with me that day. How else could it be such a coincidence that she wanted to buy that frost ganoderma at the same time as me? I don't know if I'm being overly suspicious, but I feel like she did it on purpose, just looking for an opportunity to teach me a lesson."

Shane's expression was cold and stern. "Perhaps you're not being overly suspicious. The relationship between the Jennings and Gordon families has never been good. She probably got wind of it in advance of the importance the union is placing on the Gordon family in this district president election, so she deliberately targeted you. Perhaps she was trying to find an opportunity to cut off the possibility of the Gordon family being elected before the election even begins."

Charles' expression was equally grim. "So, does this mean that the Jennings family might have been behind the ambush on Ms. Garcia earlier? I had my suspicions before, but I never had any proof."

"There's a high probability, but we indeed have no evidence. However..." Shane reflected on the recent fight scene and shared his speculation. "The person I was just fighting with, their skills greatly resemble the unique martial arts of the Jennings family."

Listening to their fragmented conversations, Caleb wrapped his mind around the situation.

He didn't respond immediately. Instead, he glanced at Darcel out of the corner of his eye, his gaze drifting downward to land on the latter's tightly clenched fist...

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Chapter 1193

A moment later, he started, "Even though there's no evidence, we can at least keep our guard up against the suspect. In any case, you all should be more vigilant."

Shane nodded, "Right, we will be more careful. Thank you for your advice."

Caleb waved his hand, suddenly suggesting, "Our campsites are quite close. I can call my people over tonight if you have no qualms about it. We can set up camp next to yours. It's safer for us to stick together."

Neera met Shane's gaze and asked, "Is this okay? Would it be too much trouble for you? It's late, after all."

Caleb chuckled. "No trouble at all. My men have all perked up after the commotion earlier. Moving to a new campsite is just a small matter."

With his assurance, Shane dropped the issue and said, "Perfect, I can't thank you enough."

Soon, the members of the Medicina family swiftly moved their backpacks and tents over, setting them up next to the Gordon family's camp. Together, they kept vigil throughout the night.

Neera felt slightly relieved, seeing the number of people increase.

Shane suggested she return to the tent to sleep, but she shook her head. "No, I'll stay outside."

She found a large rock to lean against, hugging her knees as she gazed into the dense shadows of the forest ahead.

Shane sighed. "You had quite a scare just now, didn't you?"

Neera felt a bit embarrassed that he noticed it, but she didn't hide it from him. "Yes, a little. That's why I prefer to stay in crowded places. Seeing so many people around makes me feel more at ease." Hearing her answer, Shane didn't try to persuade her further. "All right, then. You should get some sleep since it's already past one. I won't disturb you anymore."

He took off his coat and draped it over her knees. "Use this to keep warm," he said.

Neera thanked him and leaned back against the rock, lost in thought.

The surroundings had fallen silent, giving a false sense of security as if no one would attack again.

Yet, no matter how she tried, sleep eluded her. Despite being utterly exhausted, her imagination would run wild the moment she closed her eyes, making it impossible for her to fall asleep.

At that moment, Darcel walked over.

He had a blanket draped over his arm. When his gaze fell on the coat over her knees, it darkened slightly.

Neera had been spacing out before a pair of shoes walked into her sight. Her gaze trailed up the trouser leg until it clashed with his dark eyes. [Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

For some reason, a strong sense of familiarity flooded her at that moment.

Those eyes... Why do they look so much like his? Is it because I miss him so much that whenever I see something similar, it reminds me of him...

Lost in her thoughts, she didn't realize she had been staring at the man in front of her.

Darcel didn't seem to care, though. His eyebrows moved slightly as he quietly gazed back at her.

Those eyes, darker than the night itself, were filled with a tumult of emotions others couldn't discern.

After some time, Neera finally snapped back to reality.

Her face instantly turned red upon realizing she had been locking eyes with Darcel all along. She hurriedly averted her gaze, looking around flusteredly, not knowing what to do.

What on earth was I doing earlier? How could I just stare at some random man for so long? It's all Jean's fault! He's the reason I can't stop thinking about him! Yeah, it's all because of him!

The man across from her was completely oblivious. He had no idea she was silently complaining about him. His eyelashes fluttered slightly, a hint of joy stirring within him.

It has been a while since I've really looked at her. Thankfully, I'm finally by her side. I can now protect, accompany, and watch over her just like this.

The agony he felt when separated from her made him cherish every single moment he spent with her.

Thus, even if he assumed a new identity, he didn't want to break any eye contact and conversation with her.

"D-Darcel, are you here for me? Is there something you need?"

Neera sensed the subtle tension in the atmosphere, feeling a bit awkward. She cleared her throat, breaking the silence.

Darcel muttered an acknowledgment in a low voice. It was unclear whether he intentionally suppressed it or if it was originally like that.

"It's best to use this blanket instead since it gets quite chilly in the mountains at night. That coat is useless against the chill."

"Ah... Oh, okay." Neera paused briefly from surprise before obediently accepting the blanket, removing the coat from her knees, and covering herself with the blanket he had given her.

Darcel watched her every move in silence. Finally, satisfaction filled him. He then handed her a mug of warm milk.

"You had quite a bit of scare earlier. Drinking some warm milk will help you sleep better."

Neera didn't expect him to be so warmhearted. It was a surprise.

She vaguely sensed that he seemed to be overly concerned about her.

However, on second thought, Caleb must have asked him to do so. Since it wouldn't be right to refuse his kindness, she accepted it.

The milk was warm. The temperature was just right as it entered her mouth, warming her stomach comfortingly.

She obediently finished her drink, handed the cup back to him, and thanked him gently, "Thank you for going through the trouble, Darcel. You should also get some sleep soon."

Darcel nodded slightly, advising her, "Make sure to cover up well. Be careful not to catch a cold."

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Chapter 1194

"Um, okay." Neera pursed her lips as she wrapped herself in the blanket under his gaze, then closed her eyes.

She didn't know why she did it.

She just felt embarrassed, even a bit awkward, unsure of how to respond to his attentiveness.

Another reason was she would be reminded of Jean whenever she saw the man.

The concern he showed her earlier would inexplicably remind her of Jean's tenderness.

What's wrong with me? Has my emotions intensified from missing Jean so much that it's causing me to think of him?

Amid such chaotic thoughts, she heard the sound of footsteps leaving.

Surprisingly, her anxiety gradually ebbed with his arrival and departure.

It was as if something had smoothed it over.

Before long, her mind and emotions calmed down, and she finally drifted off to sleep.

Not far away, Darcel continued to gaze at her, his pitch-black eyes unreadable, leaving one to wonder what he was thinking.

"Are you not going to keep her company?" Caleb asked unexpectedly as he suddenly appeared from nowhere and casually sat next to him.

Darcel glanced at him, answering airily, "Too conspicuous."

Caleb was drinking water when he heard the comment. He choked, spurring out the water in his mouth.

He was causing quite a stir as he laughed and coughed simultaneously, causing Darcel to frown and shoot him a sidelong glance.

"Keep it down, will you? You'll wake her up with all the noise you're making."

Caleb raised his hand in acknowledgment. His voice was much softer when he spoke again. "My apologies. I was caught by surprise."

Then, he started teasing him.

"So you do know what conspicuous is? Do you think everything you've done before isn't? You specifically went to rescue her and even brought her a cup of warm milk and a blanket. Could you be any more obvious?"

Darcel's eyes narrowed slightly, his tone still as icy as ever.

"She didn't notice it and just assumed I was one of your men."

Caleb shivered, goosebumps rising across his skin. "What do you mean by my men? Don't make it sound as if there's something more than meets the eye. We have nothing between us."

Darcel turned his head, his gaze carrying a hint of danger. "Keep talking nonsense, and I'll have someone carry you out of here."

Caleb whined, "Aw, come on! I'm not done having fun yet. You won't get to be by her side if you kick me out this soon."

Darcel remained silent.

Caleb sighed lazily. "How unexpected. Your girlfriend had been dragged into such a complicated situation. She looks like a simple girl who devotes herself to studying medicine. Hence, treating wounds and saving people are the only things she knows. How can she even withstand all the fighting and killing? It must be tough on her. I wonder what was on Chad's mind to pass his position to her. I can't believe you agreed to this."

"She's not my girlfriend. She's my fiancée," Darcel emphasized, reminding him at the first opportunity.

Next, his gaze fell back on her soundly asleep face, a trace of tenderness flashing in his eyes.

"She is innocent but not fragile. On the contrary, she's much tougher than others. Even though she hasn't experienced all these, she is still striving and finding ways to make herself stronger." Search The website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

It was Caleb's first time to hear him speak so gently, so he couldn't help but take a closer look at him.

"Tsk, tsk, I really wish I could see your face right now, but unfortunately, this d*mn thing is blocking my view. I can't see anything. Do you really like her that much? This is the first time I've seen you like this, hiding your real identity just to protect her. No offense, but considering your noble status, doing such a thing seems a bit inferior, don't you think?"

Darcel casually curved his lips into a smirk. "Inferior? I don't think so. I'm willing to do anything as long as I can stay by her side to protect and guard her."

Caleb waved his hand dismissively, having had enough of his cheesiness.

"Suit yourself. Do whatever you want. I still have to follow your lead anyway, but you better tone it down a bit. They might see through your disguise if you keep drawing attention to yourself like this."

Tone it down a bit? I finally get to be by her side. Moreover, I already did my best to restrain myself in everything related to her. How much more do I need to tone it down?

"By the way, what's your take on what happened tonight? Do you think the Jennings family is behind it?"

Caleb abruptly changed the subject and asked about his thoughts on the raid earlier.

The tenderness in Darcel's eyes vanished in an instant, replaced by a chilling coldness.

"Shane mentioned earlier that the person he fought with had a very similar style to the unique technique of the Jennings family. His speculation is likely accurate. The people who sparred with me before also used the Jennings family's martial arts techniques."

Caleb nodded. "However, it appears not entirely so. Speaking of which, the Jennings family and the Logan family are on good terms."

At that moment, Darcel suddenly shot to his feet, his face cold and grave. "I don't care who they work for, but anyone who attacked tonight will not get away unscathed."

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Chapter 1195

"Not getting away unscathed..." Caleb's demeanor shifted. His previous nonchalance was gone, his upturned eyes narrowing slightly, comprehending the implications of Darcel's threat.

He didn't try to stop him either. He stood up and glanced at Luna not far away, his eyebrow slightly raised.

"Do whatever you want since you already have it all figured out. I'm done arguing with you and hitting the sack. I'm wiped. Good night."

He covered his mouth to yawn, waved his hand dismissively, and returned to his tent.

Darcel stood rooted to the ground, gazing at Neera for a while longer, then summoned two men.

"Watch her. No more mistakes are allowed."

The two men nodded respectfully. "Yes, sir!"

After giving his orders, Darcel took a final glimpse at the soundly asleep young woman before turning around and leaving.

At three in the morning, Darcel and Luna stood in the deep forest not far from the camp, enveloped by darkness.

"Deal with the group who attack tonight as you see fit. I don't want to see any of them again."

The man's tone was icy, like a sharp blade slicing through the pitch-black darkness.

Luna kept her gaze trained on the ground. Her eyebrows didn't even twitch at the order, and she merely nodded in acceptance. "Yes, I understand!"

She moved with agility and quickly disappeared into the night.

That night, at a campsite somewhere in the forest, about a dozen people dressed in black were resting, all with rather grim expressions on their faces.

"Who would have thought the Medicina family would actually step in to help the Gordon family? I've never heard of any communication being exchanged between the two before!"

"D*mn it, everything happened so quickly! If the Medicina family hadn't meddled, we would have succeeded by now!" [search the website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"Hasn't the Medicina family always prioritized medicine and considered martial arts insignificant? How come their men are so skilled? They're definitely not inferior to any of the ancient martial arts families!"

"Do any of you notice something feels off? It seems like some of the people from the Medicina family aren't using the traditional martial arts techniques from their family?"

"Exactly! I was just about to say the same thing! That man with a scar on his face, his skills are extraordinary! I've never encountered anyone like him before!"

"I also find him quite peculiar. Despite his average punches, every move he makes is incredibly sharp. I almost ended up losing to him."

They were all talking at once, tending to their wounds while engaging in a heated discussion filled with grumbles and complaints.

Someone couldn't take it anymore and irritably shouted, "What's the point of saying all this now? We've failed the mission tonight and should be thinking about how we're going to explain our failure when we get back!"

As soon as the words were spoken, everyone fell silent.

The mission had failed. They had no idea what kind of reprimand and punishment they were about to face.

Just then, suddenly, a slender figure appeared like a ghostly shadow behind the crowd in the profound silence.

Her arrival was as quiet as the church mouse. Not a single leaf was stirred.

"You don't have to worry about explaining when you get back," she said indifferently, startling the men.

Instantly, a dozen burly men shot to their feet, all looking at her simultaneously, immediately becoming alert.

"You! You're from the Medicina family!" Someone immediately recognized her as the very person they had fought earlier.

"What do you want with us? What do you mean?"

Luna rolled her shoulders slightly. Her face was cold as steel, devoid of any expression.

"I mean it literally. You don't have to think about explaining when you return, because..."

She slowly lifted her icy gaze.

"You can't go back anymore."

The men's faces darkened, and the atmosphere instantly became tense.

"What do you mean? Do you think you can defeat us all by yourself? Stop blowing hot air!"

A hint of expression finally appeared on Luna's face as she sneered.

"It seems you are quite full of yourselves. I alone would be enough to handle each and every one of you. However, my master's ordered me to deal with you quickly, so I had to bring some people along for the sake of efficiency, just in case of any unexpected occurrences."

On the heel of her words, a dozen figures emerged from the deep forest, encircling the group.

The men in black were greatly shocked and terrified, seeing they were hemmed in.

Each one of them was highly skilled. Thus, they were always keenly aware of any possible danger.

Yet, they hadn't even noticed until that very moment that so many had hidden so close to them.

"W-When did you all arrive?"

Luna answered coldly, "Does it matter when we arrived? You don't have much time left anyway, so why obsess over such trivial matters? It would be better to pray earnestly for you to have a better life in hell."

"You!" They were stunned and angered by Luna's arrogant tone, "Don't get cocky! Do you think you can take our lives with just you lot? In your dreams!"

Luna furrowed her brows with impatience. "We'll know soon enough whether it's a dream. I advise you to save your energy. Regardless of whether you die sooner or later, your death is inevitable, after all."

The next moment, she raised her voice to command, "Let's finish this quickly! Leave none standing!"

After she gave her command, her subordinates scattered and charged toward the enemy, wielding their swords, their blades gleaming fiercely.

Several minutes later, the sounds of fighting ceased. An overwhelming, pungent smell of blood permeated the entire camp, and bodies were strewn everywhere.

"Let's head back." Luna put out the blazing fire, glanced at the final plume of smoke, whirled around, and left. Her figure quickly vanished into the darkness.

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Chapter 1196

Early the next morning, Stella, who had a restless night, pulled Howard aside and asked, "What's going on? Why haven't the men who went out last night returned yet?"

Last night, after their men left, she had been eagerly awaiting them to bring her good news.

However, as she waited and waited, no one returned. Gradually, she became restless, barely getting any sleep.

Clearly unbothered by the matter, Howard yawned and responded in a nonchalant tone.

"I'm not sure, but with so many people, taking down the Gordon family would definitely be more than enough. They might still be dealing with the corpses right now. They'll probably be back soon."

Stella, however, was still worried. "How can they be more than enough? Although Neera is a burden, the people around her are not to be underestimated. Shane is difficult to deal with, and the Cox family has provided five people. Could something unexpected have happened?" [search the FindNøvel.NET website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

She was worried that the men she sent out had gotten caught and would give her away. That would put her in a difficult situation.

Howard scoffed, dismissing the idea. "How could that be possible? Even with the Cox family's help, the Gordon family can't perform miracles. You should just wait and see."

Seeing his nonchalant demeanor, Stella's brows furrowed slightly as she decided not to discuss it with him any further.

Nonetheless, she still couldn't rest easy, so she simply sent out a scout to probe the situation.

Two hours later, after her anxious wait, the scout finally returned.

"How's it going? What's the situation with the Gordon family now? And our people, where are they now?"

The scout's face was ashen, his expression grave. "The Gordon family... The Gordon family is unharmed, but all of our men... they're all dead!"

Upon hearing those words, Stella was first taken aback before being consumed by intense anger.

"What? The Gordon family is unscathed? What about Neera? Is she unharmed? How is that possible?"

Upon hearing the commotion, Howard came over and began taking the matter seriously. "You're saying they're all dead? How did they die?"

With a blank expression, the scout reported in detail the information he had gathered.

"Some among the Gordon family got hurt, but it's nothing serious. I don't know what's going on with the Medicina family, but they're working closely with the Gordon family. I didn't dare to get too close for fear of being discovered, so I just observed from a distance. There are indeed signs of a fight around their camp, but both the Gordon and Medicina families are fine. The head of the Gordon family is also well. As for our men, they..."

Stella's face turned grim, urging him, "What are you dawdling for? Hurry up and tell me!"

"Our men must have found a clearing to rest on their way back, and right there... they were killed. Not a single survivor was left!"

Upon learning the whole story, Stella's eyes widened in surprise, while Howard's previously relaxed demeanor changed instantly.

"How could this be..." Stella muttered through gritted teeth, "How could the Medicina family be aiding the Gordon family?"

Howard seemed calmer than her. "It appears that last night's surprise attack failed. The Medicina family joined forces with the Gordon family, and our men were no match for them. They were only killed on their way back. Who do you think did this? The Gordon family, or the Medicina family? Or could it be... another faction?"

Right then, Stella's mind was in a complete mess. She couldn't make heads or tails of anything.

She was solely focused on taking Neera's life, but she never expected her own men to be annihilated. This was the complete opposite of her expectations.

The mere thought of Neera remaining unscathed, and even protected by the Medicina family, made her so furious that she clenched her teeth.

Seeing her like this, Howard was somewhat speechless. "Aren't you being too impatient?"

Stella gritted her teeth. "How can I not be anxious? Our men have been killed, and we still don't know who did it! The current situation is unfavorable to us!"

Naturally, Howard's expression turned grim as the fact wasn't lost upon him.

When Neera woke up, she found an extra blanket on herself.

"You're awake. Come and have something to eat. Once we've packed up, we'll be on our way again."

Upon regaining her senses, Neera nodded. "Alright, I'll go freshen up first."

After getting up, she neatly folded the two blankets, her gaze drifting toward the Medicina family as she searched for Darcel.

His towering figure allowed him to be easily spotted in a crowd.

She glanced at the blanket in her hands and walked over.

"Darcel, here's your blanket. Thank you."

Darcel lowered his gaze to look at her, softly saying, "You're welcome." Then, he pointed to the other one in her hand.

"That's mine too. Please give it to me as well."

"Ah..." Neera paused for a moment before quickly handing it back to him. "I'm really sorry. Thank

you for

your care."

"It's no big deal. Just that the temperature here drops more later at night. I was afraid you might get cold, so I added an extra blanket for you."

In the later part of the night... So, did he come over to cover me with a blanket on purpose in the later part of the night?

Neera grunted in cursory acknowledgment before thanking him again.

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Chapter 1197

At that moment, Caleb approached with a smile. "Ms. Garcia, you're awake. Your timing is perfect. Let's all have breakfast together."

After he finished speaking, he didn't wait for her reaction. He immediately waved at Shane and the others, beckoning them to come over.

And so, the two families sat together.

On Neera's left was Shane, while Darcel was on her right.

For some reason, she felt somewhat awkward.

However, Darcel seemed unbothered. He even served her a bowl of soup.

Neera took it with a word of thanks, sipping slowly, but she didn't have much of an appetite.

Looking at the variety of food in front of her, she couldn't help but tease, "Mr. Medicina, you've prepared quite a lot. It seems like you're here for a vacation."

Caleb smiled faintly. "Indeed, no matter where we are, we should never shortchange ourselves."

Neera found it somewhat amusing. After spending the past two days together, she realized that Caleb was quite different from the impression she had of him at their first meeting.

When they first met at the pharmacy, he gave off an impression of dominance, nobility, and gentle sophistication.

In contrast to then, no matter how she looked at him now, she couldn't help but see him as a goofball.

Hmm, he quite an interesting guy.

After breakfast, the group took a short break before continuing on their journey.

After Neera had walked a distance, she didn't look well. [Search The website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Shane was worried about her, "What's wrong? Are you feeling unwell? Your complexion is a little pale."

Wiping the cold sweat from her forehead, Neera said, "It's nothing serious. It's just the wound I suffered from the recent attack. It split open a little last night, causing some pain."

Shane furrowed his brows. "Why don't we take a break so that you catch your breath?"

Neera declined, "No need. It's okay. Let's not hold everyone back. I'll just bear with it for a while, and it will pass."

Moreover, the Medicina family was also traveling with them. If she were to stop, Caleb would surely take care of her and stop as well. She didn't want to cause trouble for others.

Shane sighed. "You've had it tough too. You should have been resting at home, but instead, you were dragged into this struggle. Running around all day yesterday might have worsened your wound. Since you don't want to stop, why don't we slow down a little? It won't make much of a difference."

Neera chuckled lightly, insisting, "It's okay, let's keep up this pace. I can handle it. Don't worry."

With that, Shane didn't say anything more.

Rather than focusing on the pain in his shoulder, Neera chose to distract herself by shifting her gaze elsewhere. She looked around, taking in the scenery.

At that moment, she realized that someone was missing from the Medicina family's group.

Luna, who had carried her through the marsh before, was nowhere to be found.

After a moment of hesitation, she walked over and asked with concern, "Where is Luna? Why is she not here? Did something happen?"

Caleb pointed ahead. "She's fine. I sent her ahead to scout the path in front."

Upon hearing this, Neera felt reassured and put her worries aside.

Shane also believed it to be true, and even took the initiative to suggest, "Next time, if there's a need for scouting, you can call on us to join. It's better than acting alone."

Caleb smiled faintly, politely saying, "Of course, of course."

After a while, the dull pain in Neera's shoulder became unbearable. She simply couldn't go on any longer, so he finally stopped to rest.

Seeing her discomfort, the Medicina family indeed stopped and stayed with her.

Neera felt a little embarrassed. "Mr. Medicina, don't worry about me. You guys should go ahead. I don't want to hold

you back."

Caleb casually plucked a leaf from a tree, held it to his lips, and blew gently. With a relaxed air, he said, "No worries. We're tired from walking anyway. Let's take a break together."

Given what he said, Neera naturally insisted.

Thereafter, her wounds began to act up more frequently, forcing her to stop and rest two more times.

Caleb's men stayed together with her throughout, moving and resting as one group.

In fact, their demeanor was so relaxed that Neera even wondered if they were there on vacation.

At that moment, Caleb said, "Actually, there's no need to rush up the mountain. Hurrying might not necessarily be a good thing."

Neera understood his point. "Did something happen up there?"

"Mm-hmm." Caleb nodded. "It's quite lively up there right now."

Lively? Could it be that a fight has broken out?

Before long, they continued on their journey, confirming her speculation.

Sure enough, two groups of people were engaged in an intense battle.

Every attack unleashed would cause blood to splatter all around. Clean blades would be drenched in blood every time they were thrust forward.

Neera was visibly in discomfort. The stench of blood was so strong that it made her feel slightly nauseous.

At that moment, Darcel suddenly appeared, blocking her path.

"If it's making you uncomfortable, you should stop watching."

While speaking, he handed her a bottle of water and gave her two pills.

"I heard your wound is hurting. Eating this can help soothe it. We'll find a place at noon to set up a tent, so you can clean the wound."

Neera, whose attention was inadvertently diverted, thanked him softly.

After Darcel left, Finnley came over with a suspicious look, muttering under his breath, "Why does everyone in this group treat you so well?"

Shane seemed to appear out of nowhere, responding, "It's probably because Neera is quite attractive, which naturally inspires others to be protective of her."

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Chapter 1198

Neera was visibly exasperated. "How could it be? That's just ridiculous."

Shane said earnestly, "How could it not? Could it be that you're unaware of how charming your beauty is?"

He even made a point to stop Charles. "Don't you think I'm right?"

Charles played along, nodding solemnly. "I do."

Neera was rendered speechless.

Finnley shook his head repeatedly, stroking his beard with a deep sigh. "Ah, when only appearances matter, it means that we're experiencing a moral decline."

Neera didn't know how to react again.

What's going on here? Aren't they here to participate in a dangerous election in the jungle election, one that involves a violent struggle? Why are they indulging in idle gossip? "Could you all please stop making things up? That's not their intention at all. You'll just end up making things feel awkward."

The corner of her mouth twitched as she quickly stopped them.

Shane smiled and chose not to say anything more.

As they spoke, they had already bypassed the two clashing forces and arrived at a relatively secluded clearing.

Soon, a tent was set up. Shane urged, "Go in quickly, change the dressing on your wound, and rest. You don't look well."

Neera felt somewhat apologetic. "Shane, I'm sorry for the trouble and for taking up so much of your time today."

Shane tousled her hair. "Don't mention it. I'll be upset if you keep harping on it."

Just then, he sensed a scorching and threatening gaze fall upon him.

Glancing back, he saw his resting companions, Caleb and Darcel, standing nearby, engrossed in some discussion.

Caleb was as gentle and refined as ever, wearing a smile and exuding a relaxed aura.

As for Darcel, it seemed as if he had noticed Shane and was looking straight at the latter. His gaze fell almost imperceptibly on the hand Shane had placed on Neera's head.

The gaze, deep and inscrutable, was utterly piercing.

Oh, So that's how it is? Could it be that I have hit the nail on the head...

He arched an eyebrow, flashing an enigmatic smile at Darcel. Then, he turned around and paid Darcel no further heed.

He naturally lowered his hand, urging once again, "Stop blaming yourself all the time. If you really feel embarrassed, just focus on recuperating as quickly as possible."

Neera responded with a hum before entering the tent.

She was completely oblivious to the minor incident that just occurred.

Caleb, who was close by, saw everything clearly.

"Hey, if you keep this up, you'll give yourself away. They're siblings, and you're still jealous? Are you sure you haven't let jealousy consume you?"

Darcel withdrew his gaze and gave Caleb the side-eye. "It's none of your business."

Caleb laughed. "Hey, looks like you're really jealous. This is the first time I've seen it. It's quite interesting. It seems Ms. Garcia's charm is truly irresistible."

Darcel couldn't be bothered with Caleb, so he turned around and left.

He knew better than anyone just how charming Neera was.

Even though Shane was her sibling, he didn't want any other man to be as intimate to her as he was.

Even though he knew it wasn't right and tried to restrain himself, his intense possessiveness still upset him.

Neera had just changed the dressing on her wound when suddenly, a figure approached from outside the tent.

"Is it all right for me to come in?" Darcel's voice rang out.

For some reason, Neera suddenly recalled what Shane and the others had just said, causing her cheeks to flush unexpectedly.

"It's not convenient at the moment. May I ask what's the matter?" Her response was slightly soft, and she felt an inexplicable feeling in her heart.

Outside, Darcel's eyes lowered as he spoke softly, "I've brought you some ointment. It will help your wounds heal."

"Ah... Thank you, could you please wait a moment?"

Neera put on her clothes, tidied up her hair, and lifted the tent flap. When she looked up, her gaze met those deep, profound eyes.

"Thank you." Neera took the medicine, feeling somewhat awkward for no apparent reason.

Darcel, however, didn't seem uncomfortable at all as he handed her another thermos.

"This is a medicinal soup. Have it and take a nap. You'll feel much better when you wake up."

Neera was surprised as she looked at the thermos in her arms, then at him.

When did he manage to make this? It's in a thermos. Did he prepare it in advance during the morning just in case I feel unwell?

At that moment, all sorts of questions sprang up, swirling around in her mind. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Suddenly, she felt at a loss, as if the thermos in her arms had become scorchingly hot, leaving her unsure whether to keep it or not.

Isn't this gesture... a little too much?

If I were to accept it, could it possibly lead to any unnecessary misunderstandings?

Seemingly seeing through her worries, Darcel calmly said, "Caleb wanted to take extra care of you. After all, our families are joining forces, and it's only right that we help each other."

With his explanation, Neera felt a burning sensation in her cheeks as a sense of embarrassment swelled within her.

So, I have been overthinking it after all! This is all Shane and the others' fault. Their words have caused my imagination to run wild.

At that moment, she quickly expressed her gratitude while averting his gaze in embarrassment. After that, she dove back into the tent.

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Chapter 1199

Seeing this, a hint of amusement flickered in Darcel's eyes, while a subtle smile emerged across his face.

It's so fun to always tease this little goofball.

Without lingering any longer, he turned around to leave.

However, before he took a step, his fading smile failed to hide the delight glistening in his eyes.

Before he knew it, Shane had appeared two steps behind him. The latter was looking at him with an enigmatic smile and a probing gaze.

"Mr. Belma, you really do go out of your way to take care of my sister. Did Mr. Caleb instruct you to do so?"

Shane's tone was casual as if he was making small talk, yet there was a subtle interrogative tone in it.

Darcel concealed the emotions in his eyes, reverting to his usual stern expression. He then responded with a nonchalant hum.

"So that's how it is, Mr. Belma. You're really thoughtful."

Shane seemed to believe it, nodding thoughtfully.

After that, he suddenly changed his tune.

"It seems I've misunderstood. I was under the impression that you have taken a special interest in my younger sister, which explains why you're so attentive and caring toward her. Even I, her brother, pale in comparison to you."

As if he were oblivious to Shane's attempt at probing, Darcel calmly replied, "Mr. Medicina has a good heart, Mr. Gordon. There's no need to worry."

After speaking, he nodded in acknowledgment, then walked away.

Shane watched his retreating figure with his eyes narrowing.

Just now, this man did not deny what I said. Could it be that he's taken a liking to Neera? If that's the case, it could be troublesome.

Setting aside the legal case Jean and Avery were still embroiled in, Shane was intrigued by the mystery Darcel exuded.

On top of that, he could also sense an inexplicably dangerous aura from Darcel.

His intuition told him that there was far more to Darcel than was shown on the surface.

Moreover, ever since his first appearance, Darcel had been constantly staying close to Neera.

Given how clear Darcel's goal was, it was hard for Shane not to wonder if there was an ulterior motive.

After drinking the medicinal soup, Neera slept comfortably for two hours and even broke out in a sweat.

Upon getting up, she felt a little more refreshed.

It seems that the medicinal soup sent by Darcel is quite effective.

As she pondered, she wiped her body clean, changed into fresh clothes, and organized her backpack. Then, she stepped out of the tent.

Outside, everyone was sitting together idly, clearly waiting for her.

Neera apologized, "I'm sorry for keeping you waiting again."

Shane walked over and casually took her bag.

"It's okay. We've also managed to get a good rest. How are you feeling now? Does the wound still hurt?"

"It doesn't hurt anymore. I feel much more refreshed."

With that, she smiled at Darcel.

"Thanks to Darcel's medicine and soup, it feels as if I've received divine assistance."

Then, she turned around and thanked Caleb.

"Mr. Medicina, thank you for your care. We are very grateful to have your company on this journey."

Unexpectedly, Caleb found himself the topic of conversation. His eyebrows twitched slightly, and he shot a meaningful glance at Darcel from the corner of his eye.

At this moment, Finnley stood up with full vigor.

"Alright, now that we've had a good rest, let's continue on our journey. Oh, Neera, since your wounds are almost healed, we need to resume your training. If you have time on the road, you need to improve your accuracy."

Neera was speechless.

What the hell? I just started feeling a little better!

Shane immediately chimed in, "Finnley, you're being too hasty. Neera should be allowed to take things slowly."

Finnley snorted. "What do you know? Strict teachers produce outstanding students. You all saw what happened this morning. If this girl doesn't acquire some self-defense skills, who knows what might happen "

Before he could finish his sentence, a deep voice abruptly interrupted him.

"I will protect her."

As soon as the words were spoken, everyone fell silent.

Finnley wore a look of suspicion; Shane's eyes glistened thoughtfully; Charles seemed somewhat bewildered; Caleb just wanted to facepalm.

Can't this guy just hold it in a little?

After scanning the faces of the onlookers and the parties involved, he cleared his throat and quickly stepped in to rescue the situation.

"Rest assured that I will ensure that Ms. Garcia is protected. Since we have chosen to walk this path together, we are fully prepared to lend a hand."

Even if the Cox family were fools, they would realize that something was amiss by then.

Well, well, well, a dark horse has appeared out of nowhere, trying to steal our family head's fiancée. This won't do!

Someone immediately spoke up. "Mr. Cox sent us here specifically to protect Ms. Garcia. With us around, you can rest assured that Ms. Garcia will be safe."

Upon hearing members of the Cox family speak, Darcel turned grim with an icy look in his eyes.

"Are you sure you can protect her? Ha, when the camp was attacked before, it's clear to me that you have failed to keep her safe."

The scornful words instantly upset members of the Cox family. [Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

"What do you mean by that?"

Darcel's tone became even colder. "It's exactly as it sounds. What's wrong? Does the Cox family have problems comprehending words now?"

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Chapter 1200

Wait... Wait a minute! What's going on here? Why has a quarrel suddenly started?

Neera was still reeling from the impact of Darcel's words. Her heart was inexplicably racing. Before she could even react, the situation had escalated into an absurdly tense one.

"C-Calm down."

Although she was unsure why things had turned out that way, she realized she couldn't just stand by and do nothing. She quickly stepped in to mediate.

"Darcel, thank you for your kindness. However, the gentlemen sent by Mr. Cox have already done a great job. I'm truly grateful to all of you."

Upon hearing that, Darcel's lips pursed into a straight line, and he didn't say anything more.

Upon seeing him close his mouth, members of the Cox family didn't express their dissatisfaction any further.

Just like that, the confrontation was smoldered as quickly as it began.

Only Caleb and Shane saw through what was really going on.

Caleb couldn't help but feel frustrated. Can't he tone down his hostility toward the Cox family? Search the FindNovel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Just as he was just about to say something to lighten the mood, Neera beat him to it.

"My health has improved significantly, and it's high time I learned something new. Finnley is right. I can't always rely on you all to rescue me in critical moments. Besides, I want to make myself useful to the team."

Her resolute expression caused Darcel's eyes to darken a little as he sighed to himself.

No matter what she is faced with, she's always so determined...

After being interrupted by the others, Finnley completely forgot what he wanted to say.

He stroked his beard, nonchalantly grunting. Then, he said, "Alright, you should stay by my side during the journey. I'll teach you whenever I have the time."

After said that, he turned around and leisurely walked away.

Tsk ts, these young folks are such a mess!

In the afternoon, the group continued on their journey.

Neera stayed by Finnley's side, occasionally stopping to throw darts at the trees, practicing her aim.

Now that her shoulder injury had healed somewhat, her accuracy was much better than before.

Finnley seemed quite satisfied. "It seems you're gradually mastering the skills. With more practice, hitting the mark every time won't be a problem."

Neera's heart leaped with joy. "Really? When can I start practicing the flying needle?"

Finley feigned a glare at her. It wasn't a fierce one. Instead, it was a little adorable.

"I only gave you a couple of compliments, and you start getting carried away. You can't even throw a dart properly, let alone a needle! You need to learn this step by step, do you understand? Do you think you can succeed in something at the first attempt?"

The cheeky Neera playfully stuck out her tongue.

"I was just a little impatient. It was just a casual question, I didn't expect to start practicing right now..."

In the midst of the conversation, she spotted a shallow tree hollow. Raising her arm, she prepared to throw another dart.

However, Finnley stopped her.

"Enough, enough. Let's call it a day. Haste makes waste, especially considering your shoulder injury has just started to heal. It won't be able to withstand rigorous training. If you overdo it and end up hurting yourself again, it will be a real hassle."

Neera responded with a hum, obediently putting away the darts.

Seeing that, Shane walked over and handed her a bottle of water.

"Have a drink of water. You must be exhausted, right?"

Neera took it with a smile. "I'm not tired. I actually find it quite fun. I never even dreamed that I would learn this kind of skill..."

While the two were casually chatting. Darcel and Caleb were following at a comfortable distance.

"Not to criticize you, but you really gave me a scare. I thought you were about to start a fight with the Cox family."

Whenever Caleb found an opportunity, he makes sarcastic remarks to Darcel.

Darcel replied coldly, "What makes you think they're even worthy of me hitting them?"

Caleb was filled with frustration. "Please, don't forget your current status. You are a subordinate of the Medicina family, not the high and mighty..."

At that point, he paused to glance around, skipping the mention of Darcel's title.

"You understand, right? Tone it down a little. Don't always have your eyes glued to Ms. Garcia. Otherwise, people might think you have ulterior motives."

Darcel didn't care at all. "Why should what others think matter?"

Caleb was stunned.

Fine. Communicating with him is completely impossible.

Caleb sighed in resignation. Just as he was about to say something else, a commotion was suddenly heard from ahead.

It sounded as if a fight was going on, and it was pretty close to them.

"Everyone, halt!" Darcel, the first to react, ordered loudly.

Everyone was taken aback, then they halted in their tracks.

Neera was somewhat surprised, instinctively turning to look back with a peculiar expression.

That voice just now... why does it sound so much like Jean? Did I hear wrongly?

Sensing her gaze, Darcel lowered his eyes, subtly clearing his throat without a change in expression. When he spoke again, he resumed with a deep voice from suppressing his original one.

Shane didn't notice anything, as his attention was all focused ahead.

"Did something happen up ahead?"

Caleb nodded. "There must be another clash between two forces. We should try to avoid it and be careful not to get involved."

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