

ONE LAST SYSTEM

Chapter 1 - Son Of Undesirable

"It's not there."

I stared at the several pieces of huge paper plastered all over the college's venue. Yet, no matter how hard I looked, my name was nowhere to be seen.

'This is surely a mistake,' I thought, refusing to acknowledge the reality.

I looked over the list again. Then once more. Then for the third time. But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't see something that simply wasn't there.

Standing in the middle of the crowd, I somehow felt like I was all alone. Neither the cheers of happiness nor the scowls of disappointment could reach my ears. Surrounded by the other candidates, I was confined to a small pocket of my personal devastation.

I took a step back. And then another one. And then, the big letters on top of the venue came to my view.

"Municipal College of Fine Arts and Creativity."

Seeing it, I felt as if someone grabbed my soul, wriggled all the juices out, and then cast it aside. Stunned by the merciless reality, I turned around and left. Left the crowd of candidates and the school of my dreams behind.

I had nowhere else to go but back home. With each step, my devastation grew larger. My walk of shame turned into a sprint as I lost myself in the sea of regret and worthlessness.

Before I could notice, I had already reached the main hallway of the condo I lived in. And there, as if to spit in my face, a simple note hung on the elevator's door.

"Elevator is broken. The management is sorry for the inconvenience."

"The world fucking hates me," I muttered, already tired from my desperation-driven dash.

It was strange to see such a basic malfunction in this building. It didn't fit the high-end image its owners hoped to create.

"Haah..." I released a deep sigh before heading for the stairs. There was no use cursing the reality. I wasn't some kind of mage or politician to change the world with my words alone.

I reached the seventh floor when my phone suddenly vibrated. I wiped down the fat drops of sweat from my forehead before pulling it out and checking the notifications.

'Sigma corporation?' I thought as my body froze. This wasn't an entity whose message I could ignore!

"We took notice of your great efforts and the results of your projects," I silently voiced the opening letters of the mail, only to skip the wall of text that followed. "We would like to invite you..." my reading speed slowed down as my eyes opened wide. My depression instantly turned into a thrill, one that only a kid opening a Christmas gift could experience.

I bumped into someone. My bad, I shouldn't climb the stairs with my head buried in my phone.

"Sorry," I muttered, raising my head as I moved to the side. The mail on my phone was too important to waste my time arguing over a small bump. It was easier to just give way.

And then I saw him. A man clad in a black suit with shades covering his eyes. 'What is he, some kind of undercover operative?' I thought, amused by his outdated look.

The weird stranger shifted in the same direction, blocking my path once again. His hand moved, as if in an attempt to smack my phone away.

'Seriously, what the hell?' I thought, moving my device out of harm's way. Was he trying to teach me a lesson by knocking the source of my distraction away? First the failed selection, then the elevator, and now that? Was this some sort of comedic skit, or was that man really set to confront me over a small bump?

The man's deadpan expression turned into a smirk as his entire body grew smaller. My vertigo screamed out in alarm. For a moment, the world turned into a whirlpool. My vision spun around.

Only then did I realize what actually happened. He didn't just shove me away. This fucker pushed me down the stairway!

Then, all the images slowed down. For a moment, I was certain it was the feeling of having one's life flash before their eyes. But as the flow of time came to a complete stop, I was forced to realize that it wasn't the case.

I was stuck at a weird angle, halfway down the staircase. Unable to move my eyes, I could only stare at the ceiling several floors above.

Then, as if someone had turned a galaxy-spanning vacuum-cleaner on, all the colors condensed to the central point of my vision only to vanish completely a second later.

"Those fuckers," a voice entered my ears. "I should've eradicated their entire race!"

I was too stunned to even analyze what it meant.

Was I dead? Was the overlord of life lamenting over my sudden demise?

"Damn it!" The voice sounded again before a sudden burst of light almost burned out my eyes. Yet, instead of turning flash-blind, I saw an orb of light descending upon me. "There goes all my plans." The orb of light flashed a bit brighter when it produced the voice.

Then, this ball of bright radiance turned into a human-shaped being. It was made up of light and light alone as if the orb from before simply changed shapes.

"Where am I? What happened?" I asked, somehow realizing that I actually could speak.

"You were about to die for real," the being announced, a smile made out of shadow appearing on where its face should be. "But fear not, I can offer you salvation."

"No, thanks," I replied without a second of hesitation. "I can't leave my little..."

"Your death will actually do well for her, as wrong as it might sound," the being replied before I could even finish my words. "You see, that email you received, that job offer from the Sigma company... It will suffice to say that they are not going to take your demise lightly."

For a moment, I was stuck in the limbo of shock, anxiety, and powerlessness. Stuck in the same position as before, I retained only singular freedom. The freedom of thought. And I intended to make full use of it.

"Listen, we don't have time for that. The Sigma company will take care of your sister once they investigate your death." The light of the being started to slowly fade away as if it was running out of energy.

It was only a guess of mine, but I felt like I didn't have that much time to make a choice. And between God and truth, I wasn't really sure if I could survive the fall if I rejected that being's offer!

"Fine. But only if you promise to take care of my sister," I said, unwilling to give up on this single term. Without me around, she would be powerless against this vile world. Protecting her was always the prime factor behind all my actions.

Especially given how apparently there was still some prejudice towards my people. Prejudice great enough to push some into the highest crime possible.

"Good choice. Sadly, I won't be able to personally see this promise through," the being said as it reverted back to the shape of a simple orb. "I need to use all my remaining power to help you out. But you need not to worry," somehow, I could feel that this strange being smiled. "Those who will come after me won't allow your sister any harm."

As those words reached my ears, I couldn't help but notice that their volume quickly started to decrease.

"I really wish I would have more time. Right now, I can't explain anything," the voice said, filled with grief.

The orb flashed weakly as if using up the last bits of its strength.

"I believe you will manage anyway. Good luck, and trust in the blood of God that flows in your veins. In your new world, it won't betray you."

The light disappeared, leaving me stranded in the complete darkness. For a long while, I could only wait for something to happen.

I couldn't tell how much time had passed when a single point of color appeared. It then started to quickly expand, as if someone reversed the vacuum of color, filling the world all around me with images.

When I came to be, I was floating high above the layer of clouds. With no body to speak of, I could only adore the pristine beauty that surrounded my consciousness.

Then I noticed something peculiar and worrying at the same time. Judging from how my point of view continued to change, I was actually falling... No, crashing towards the ground!

The pace of my descend continued to accelerate. As I cut through the layer of clouds, I noticed a vast, open area with a crowd of people filling it to the brim. They all stood in neat rows and columns, not daring to move an inch.

My descent took only a moment. And when my vision finally returned to a human-like perspective, I saw nothing but an angry face staring right down in my eyes!

"Don't you dare to move a muscle!" The man shouted, appearing as if his scream could tear the tendons of his face apart. "Trash!" he added, pulling back and spitting on the ground. He then stepped away and looked over the crowd that I was in the very first row of.

"Your test now begins!"