

ONE LAST SYSTEM

Chapter 10 - Arthurs Decision

"Excuse me?"

My eyes turned wide when I realized what this question meant. For a short moment, I couldn't stop the lascivious thoughts from appearing in my head. Thankfully, those were just the urges of my body, not the wishes of my mind.

I closed my eyes and shook my head, about to reject the proposition.

"No!" Mia screamed out before I even had a chance to speak.

She plummeted down, hiding her face in her knees and locking her arms around her legs. A typical return to the embryonical position, one that humans assumed when in danger. An evolutionary instinct of making oneself smaller and thus a harder target to spot or attack.

Still, it hurt. Even if I had no wish of making use of this girl's situation and the weird laws of this world, seeing her reject me so willingly... I wouldn't be a man if that didn't hurt my feelings. Especially with how cute this girl was!

"Great, I will get all the... Wait, what?" the medic looked at me with a weird expression, as if she couldn't comprehend what just happened. "Did you just say no?" she asked, opening her eyes wide in shock. "Can't you see how cute she is?! Or are you perhaps..."

"No, I'm not," I denied even before the woman could utter her assumption.

I lowered my eyes and hid my face in my arms. Given the state of my hands, that was the only way for me to get some peace of mind to think.

The system status windows disappeared. I was in no mood to analyze it any further. It was something I could think about when alone when no one would disturb me. Not when I was about to reject a cute girl as my personal slave.

"Can you explain your decision?" Terio asked, equally as shocked as the woman beside him. Yet, it was clear that he attempted to get some sort of explanation.

Courtesy of the previous misunderstanding?

"Could it be, you don't know how slavery works in our sect either?" he asked after a second of thought.

'Good fucking job figuring that out,' I almost uttered those words out loud. Even if I acted as if I didn't pay attention during some sort of debriefing, there was a limit to how far I could push this excuse.

That's why, instead of answering, I had to change the topic.

Even if only by a tiny bit.

"I can see that there are some reasons behind your proposition," I said, turning my eyes towards the female medic. For as much as I could tell, I put a serious if not grim expression on my face. "Did you really expect me to take a deep dip in some kind of shit without knowing what I'm signing for?"

"I see. It seems you really are the best candidate for the job," the medic smiled, surprisingly satisfied with my answer. "The thing is, her circumstances... Are quite bad."

"That I could tell myself," I replied, not forcing myself to act respectfully towards the woman anymore. Right now, she was the one asking for a favor, putting me in the strong position of the talk.

"Her entire family was wiped out," Terio said before throwing me a peculiar look.

I could tell what he wanted to say next. 'Can't you sympathize with her now?'

No, I couldn't. What I said during the system override could be true to this world, but it wasn't true for me. I never experienced any of the things I mentioned back then, nor did I hold any grudge over it.

For me, it was nothing more but a fancy excuse to explain my lack of common sense.

But that didn't mean I couldn't pity her. Yet, just one look at her trembling body was enough to ascertain that even if I were to take her as my slave, that wouldn't necessarily do her any good.

"Mia failed her test because of what she went through before. In fact, the only reason why she's here is that our sect was the only place she could think off to escape to," the woman added, hanging her head low. "For the last period, I kept her as my temporary slave, but the law of the sect doesn't allow this situation to continue any longer.

"That's why I'm so eager to find someone strong enough to protect her. Someone with enough potential to stop... To hopefully let her become a sect disciple in the future."

For the most part, the woman's words made sense. While I didn't go through the disaster that my body did, I could still understand how insane effect would that have on one's willpower. And without the will to keep standing, passing yesterday's test was nigh impossible.

But that didn't mean the woman revealed the whole truth. I could tell that from how she stumbled, from what she said. So there was still something to the matter that she clearly wasn't willing to disclose.

As such, I decided to remain completely silent. My only response was a long and unrelenting stare directed right at the woman's face.

As seconds turned into minutes, the woman finally let out a deep sigh.

"I see. You are too smart for your own good," she said, biting on her lips only for a look of determination to appear on her face. People are aiming for her. In fact, the man who scored right below you already declared loud and wide that he would turn Mia into his whore. Nothing more but a fucktoy to sate his desires," the woman added, finally revealing the crux of the matter.

The situation was just as I expected. While there was a lot of stuff that gave it depth, for me, only one point held any weight.

By accepting Mia as my slave, I would effectively turn that guy into my enemy.

"And that guy that scored below me is someone of great influence, I assume," I said, even though this fact was pretty obvious. If he was someone insignificant, this woman would surely find some way to protect Mia from his clutches. It was clear from how desperate she was to dupe her on me.

"He is a son of one of the major clans supporting the Skyladder sect," she replied, confirming my guess.

I closed my eyes and hung my head to the back.

To be fair, despite how cute Mia was, I found it hard to put myself in such a deep shit just for her. So while scoring a favor with medic would surely be beneficial, it wasn't something that would pay back for turning a typical young master into my enemy.

But that was only a minor factor of my decision-making right now.

As I took a moment to think about everything that happened so far, several facts became obvious.

My growth rate was exceptional. It was something that both the medic's actions suggested and something she later confirmed with her words. But

while for her, it was a reason to use me as a shield for the girl, for me, it was a confirmation of something else.

It was proof that with this system of mine, it was only a matter of time before I would climb to the top of the world.

And that fact alone was enough for me to dismiss the conflict with a young local master as a major problem in the long run.

What was stopping me right now, were my repulsion towards the institution of slavery itself. But the more I thought about it, the lesser of an effect it had on the situation. Not because I allowed my morals to react.

It was because I decided not to use them as a convenient excuse to push the problems of others away.

I stood up from the bed only to approach the trembling girl and kneel before her.

"Mia, look at me," I ordered in a calm, composed tone.

The girl only shook her head in response.

"Look at me," I ordered again, keeping my voice just as calm as before.

Reluctantly, Mia raised her head. Seeing her teary eyes, I felt my heart jump only to tighten a moment later. Her wet face somehow awoken my internal drive of protection.

Was it because I was a man? Or maybe it was something that I grew used to by taking care of my sister?

"I'm not going to make you my slave. I abhor the very idea of keeping slaves," I said, making sure to keep my voice as calm as possible.

"So that's why..." the woman muttered, only to turn silent when I threw her an angry glance. I then took a deep breath to help me relax my expression before looking at Mia's adorable face again.

"But what would you say about becoming my partner?"