

Strongest Mage with the Lust system

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"Yes," Rima nodded but the turtle woman ignored her and looked at Kayla, "Miss Kayla, can you guarantee that she won't renege later?"

Kayla glanced at Rima and calmly nodded, "Yeah. I guarantee it."

Hearing this, the turtle woman smiled in satisfaction and shifted her gaze back to Rima, "Come, challenge me."

Rima looked at Kayla, who understood what she wanted to say and said, "Drop a drop of your blood on your badge and pay 100 Merit Points to cancel your scheduled challenge."

Rima nodded and was about to do it when Kayla stopped her and looked in the direction of the Silver Ranker's reserved spots, quickly spotting Midas Burrow, and said, "Sir Burrow, if you don't mind, can you please reject the challenge, or reschedule it to tomorrow so my friend here can challenge her?"

Midas' expression fell when he heard this, but knowing he couldn't afford to offend her, he gritted his teeth and took out his identity badge.

However, just as he was about to reschedule the challenge because rejecting it now would cost him 50 Merit Points... A mocking voice sounded from not too far away, stopping him in his tracks.

"Aren't you being a little too overbearing, Miss Kayla? You are asking him to reject the challenge without offering any compensation. Don't you think it's inappropriate for someone of your stature?"

Midas and others looked at the person who spoke just now—a yellow-haired young man—before shifting their gazes to Kayla, who was looking at him expressionlessly.

"What? Are you trying to scare me, Miss Kayla?" The young man's lips curled up, "Don't you think you are too weak to do that?"

Kayla stared at him for a few seconds more before she shifted her gaze to Midas and threw her identity badge over to him.

Swoosh!

"Take however many Merit Points you think would be enough for your compensation and *cancel* the challenge."

Midas caught the badge, but didn't immediately take the Merit Points—he could take them because Kayla had opened the restriction on the badge otherwise without her permission, no one could do it—and looked at the yellow-haired man.

"Sir Desmond, may I request your guidance on what I should do?"

Desmond, the yellow-haired man, stared at him for a moment before he sneered, "Want to take advantage of our conflict to make a profit, eh? You are really daring, you worthless trash!"

The people around him chuckled and shot Midas derisive looks.

Midas' expression darkened, but he didn't dare say anything because Desmond was even stronger than Kayla and his background was equally as formidable.

He then took a deep breath and threw Kayla's badge back toward her without taking any Merit Points and said, "There is no need for any compensation, Miss Kayla."

Saying this, he cancelled his appointment with Rima. Then he stood up and walked out of the arena under everyone's mocking gazes, his fists clenched tight.

Desmond watched him leave, a dark twinkle in his eyes.

...

"Go ahead. Issue her the challenge." Kayla said to Rima, who looked at her with her brows knitted together, [What about the bet?]

Kayla smiled and glanced at the entrance of the arena where a pot-bellied young man in golden robes could be seen walking in with a group of five, fierce looking men walking behind him.

[He will open the betting pool for this match. So, first go ahead and challenge her.] Kayla transmitted.

Rima glanced at him, nodded lightly at Kayla and then issued the challenge by dripping a drop of her blood, covered with her newly unlocked *Divine Sense*, onto her identity badge.

[You have issued a challenge to Aleena Turner. Please wait for half an hour for them to respond.]

Just a moment later, her badge vibrated.

[Aleena Turner has accepted your challenge.]

"Come." Aleena, turtle woman, called out to Rima while putting her badge away.

Rima didn't move and instead looked at Kayla, who looked at the golden robed man and said, "Can you hurry up a little? The participants are ready to begin their battle."

A few had already noticed him, but hearing Kayla's words, everyone else also looked over and immediately, surprise flashed in their eyes.

Desmond looked at the golden robed man before shifting his gaze to Rima and then to Kayla, his brows furrowing.

In the arena, Aleena Turner also frowned.

'Does she think the newbie can beat me?' She thought, looking at Rima. No matter how she tried to sense her mana fluctuations, she always found that Rima had just broken through to the Five Star realm.

'How is she supposed to defeat me, someone comparable to a peak Five Star mage with Turnip?' She wondered.

She, of course, didn't think it was impossible because it really was not. She knew a few people, who at the early-stage of the Five Star realm could defeat her, but they came from very formidable backgrounds.

But Rima... she didn't look the part.

However, Kayla and Rima's confidence didn't seem fake.

'I'll play it safe for a while.' She decided, but then her eyes glinted with a fierce light, and while looking at Rima, she thought, 'But, girl, if you aren't strong enough... I'll make you regret playing with me.'

...

"Haha, Miss Kayla. Let's not be so impatient." The golden robed man laughed out loud before sweeping his gaze across everyone. When he saw Desmond, his eyes lit up which made both Kayla and Desmond's eyelids twitch.

"My humble greetings to everyone!" He smilingly bowed lightly, "As you should have already guessed, I'm going to open a betting pool for the Match between Miss Kayla's friend, and our dear friend, Miss Turner."

Saying this, he walked over to an empty corner of the arena, and waved his hand, causing a table and chair to appear.

As he sat down in the chair behind the table, three of the five men stood behind him and the other two stood on his either side.

With a sunny smile on his chubby face, he said, "Now, according to the information I have about the participants, the odds of bets will be these."

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Two wooden boards appeared on the table with Rima and Aleena's names written on them.

The one with Rima's name had {1 : 4} written on it, while Aleena's had {1 : 1.3}.

"My friends, Willy's Betting House is open for business! Anyone who wants to, can place their bets. And though there is no need for me to say this given my stellar reputation, I won't cheat you out of your money. So, rest assured and place as big a bet as you want to."

Chapter 872: Tricking Everyone?

After Willy's—Wilson—announcement, the arena fell silent and everyone turned their gaze towards Desmond and Kayla, making him look at them and say with a smile, "Brother Desmond, Miss Kayla, why don't you guys place your bets first?"

Desmond didn't move but glanced at Kayla, who, with a placid look on her beautiful face, nodded and threw her badge toward Willy.

Swoosh!

One of Willy's bodyguards caught the badge and gave it to Willy who asked, "So, how much are you betting and on whom?"

"It's on my friend here, Rima, of course. As for the amount, let it be 5000." Kayla casually said.

For a moment, everyone froze before surprise colored their faces and their gazes shifted to Rima, evaluating her once more.

Since Kayla was betting so much on her, there had to be something special about her. But once again, no matter how hard they tried, they couldn't discern much. The same was true for Desmond and a few other high rankers present in the coliseum.

Rima looked at Kayla, surprised that she was willing to risk so much on her, but also confused because this action of hers seemed a bit contrary to what they wanted to achieve—earn.

[Miss Kayla, won't they now not bet on me?] She asked,

[Just watch.] Kayla simply transmitted two words before shifting her gaze to Desmond. Her lips curling up into a faint smile, she said,

"There is no need to think too much. I'm not betting so much on her because I'm confident of her winning because I'm not. She has clearly broken through recently to the Five Star and hadn't had the time to stabilize her foundation, let alone gain control of her increased strength."

Desmond's brows furrowed hearing this and seeing she was addressing him, he was surprised because despite the dispute between their families, she never took initiative to make things difficult for him.

Of course, it could be said that she wasn't confident in doing so because she was weaker than him and didn't have as significant a backing in the Beast Emperor Hall as him.

Still, it didn't change the fact that she didn't ever provoke him. It was always him who targeted her.

But now she was clearly trying to...

Suddenly, his eyes flickered, and he had a realization. 'She wants everyone to bet against that girl so when she wins, they win big.'

However, this realization only deepened his frown because...

Why was she confident that Rima was going to win?

Her next words only served to increase his confusion.

"I just met her less than half an hour ago and don't know much of anything about her. The only reason I'm betting on her is because..."

Everyone focused, but her reason made their eyelids twitch in annoyance.

"...I want to befriend her. It's as simple as that. I know you are going to bet against me, so go ahead and do it. This is a great chance for you to snatch *another* win against me." Kayla smiled before she shifted her gaze to Rima and said, "Go ahead and bet on yourself if you want to."

"Mm." Rima nodded and glanced at Aleena in the arena, "Give me a moment to place a bet, Miss Aleena."

"Hm. Go ahead." Aleena expressionlessly nodded.

Rima went over to Willy's betting booth and handed him her badge, [I'm putting everything on me.]

Willy checked the amount in her badge and looked at her in surprise, "You sure?"

"Mm." Rima nodded.

"Alright then." Willy made a note and swiped her badge across a box on the table before handing her and Kayla's badge to her.

As Rima left, many others came over and began placing their bets.

After a while, Desmond gave his badge to one of his henchmen, who nodded and left to place his bet.

"Young master, what if she is trying to trick everyone?" One of his henchmen asked.

Desmond looked at Rima, his eyes flickering, "That would be interesting!"

...

Rima entered the arena and took out her badge to begin the battle, but right then, Aleena walked out, "Let me go and place a bet of my own. You won't mind waiting for a bit, would you?"

Rima calmly shook her head, "No. Please go ahead."

"Wait here for a bit, Turnip." Saying this to her turtle, she flew out of the arena and landed in front of Willy's booth.

The people waiting for their turn to place bets looked at her with unfriendly gazes, but all of them were weaker than her, so they could only swallow their grievance.

"How much are you gonna bet, Miss Aleena?" Willy asked her with his professional, polite smile. He didn't ask her who she was going to place the bet on like he did not ask Rima because the participants could only place bets on themselves.

Aleena handed him her badge and asked, "How much did she bet?"

Willy just smiled at her.

Clicking her tongue, she thought for a bit and said, "Put... 5000."

"Alright." Willy nodded and swiped her badge.

Just as she was about to leave, he stopped her and said, "Miss Aleena, if you wait for everyone here to place their bets before starting your match, I'll give you a small gift later."

"No problem." Aleena nodded, flew back into the arena and landed onto her turtle.

"Let's wait until everyone is done placing their bets." She told Rima, who nodded in agreement. For her, it was best that more people placed their bets.

After a short while, everyone who wanted to had placed their bets.

"Let's begin." Aleena took out her badge. Rima did the same and covered it with her divine sense, activating it.

Immediately...

Weng~

The barrier around the arena hummed to life.

Swoosh!

Turnip backed off and Aleena immediately cast a spell, creating a rippling barrier around her and the turtle.

But she became surprised when she noticed Rima hadn't rushed to attack.

Then...

"You ready?" Rima asked and her expression fell.

"Are you not looking down on me too—"

Rima ignored her words, focused her elemental mana on her throat, arched her palms and put them around her lips before taking a deep breath and letting out a high-pitched cry.

Waaa~

Everyone, be it Willy, Kayla, Desmond or Aleena, everyone's eyes narrowed seeing this.

Then the next moment...

"What?!!"

Their eyes widened in astonishment.

Chapter 873: Shocking Everyone (Ko-Fi Bonus)

Waa~

The sound waves were lightening fast. The moment Rima cast her spell, they hit Aleena's rippling water barrier and quite effortlessly...

Rip!!

Ripped it into pieces. With nothing in the way and Aleena and her Turnip unable to react on time, taken completely off guard, the sound waves hit them.

Wah!

Immediately, Turnip's eyes became dazed while Aleena felt the world spin around her and before she knew it, she had fallen on her knees and was coughing out blood. She could also feel that if the waves didn't stop, blood would be flowing out of her nose, ears and eyes too.

Fortunately...

Swoosh!

The sound waves stopped. Just as she wanted to get back on her feet and cast a spell to ease her and Turnip's discomfort, she felt a hand touch her head.

Then, Rima's calm though a bit hoarse voice sounded, "You've lost."

Aleena raised her head. When she saw that apart from looking a bit pale, Rima seemed completely fine and her aura and mana fluctuations were also almost as calm as before, her pupils constricted and she bit her tongue before nodding.

"Yes, I have."

...

Not to mention the low rankers and others, even 25th ranker Kayla, 19th ranker Desmond and 11th ranker Willy, were staring at the arena, astonishment clear on their faces.

"A sound elementalist..." They muttered under their breath in unison, their eyes flickering.

The sound elemental mages were quite rare, but they had still encountered a few on their adventures outside. However, none of them were as impressive as Rima, able to instantly incapacitate someone whole three minor realms above herself.

Of course, they knew Aleena being not prepared for it was also a factor, but it didn't make the feat Rima achieved any less impressive.

'Maybe I should try poaching her?' Willy thought but then he glanced at Desmond and Kayla and decided not to.

'It would be more fun watching their struggle.' His lips curled up.

Right then, he felt a few burning gazes lock on to him.

'Hm?' His brows raised, he looked over and when he recognised their owners to be the people who had bet on Rima's, his expression fell.

'My money...!' He cried out in his heart.

...

Desmond took a deep breath and glanced at Kayla, whose eyes were fixated on Rima in the arena.

His gaze deepening, he transmitted to his followers. [Go. Find out everything about this girl as soon as possible.]

[Yes, young master.]

Immediately, they stood up and flew out of the coliseum.

[I see that your eyes are as sharp as ever, Kayla.] Desmond then transmitted to Kayla, his face devoid of any expression.

Ha~!

Kayla took a deep breath.

Though she had *very* faintly felt something from Rima which had made her curious about her, she hadn't imagined she would turn out to be such a genius.

However... Desmond didn't need to know this. So, she turned to him and gave him a polite smile, [Thank you for the praise, Sir Desmond.]

Desmond's gaze darkened, but then he smiled, [Is it true that you have just met her?]

Kayla's lips curled up, knowing what was going on in his mind, [So what if it is?]

Desmond didn't respond and shifted his gaze back to Rima.

...

Weng~

Following her words, Aleena used her divine sense and accepted her defeat, causing the arena barrier to buzz open.

Rima removed her hand, turned around and walked out, leaving Aleena staring at her back, feeling complicated inside.

After a few moments, she smiled bitterly and shook her head before patting Turnip's shell, [You alright, Turnip?]

[Yes. I'm good, sister. What about you?] A young, girlish voice asked back.

[No worries. Just need to meditate for an hour or two and I'll be fine.] Aleena replied, [Now, go rest.]

Swoosh!

With a wave of her hand, she sent Turnip into her beast storage ring, wiped the blood off her lips and walked out of the arena.

...

People have already flocked over to Willy's booth, but when they saw Rima walk over, they shifted to the sides.

Rima silently nodded in thanks, arrived in front of Willy and handed him her badge.

Willy took the badge, swiped it on the box on his table and as he handed it back to her, he said, "Miss Rima, I assume there is no need to introduce myself since miss Kayla must have told you about me already—"

"No. She hasn't. I only know your name and that you facilitate betting." Rima shook her head.

Willy awkwardly looked at her before coughing lightly and continuing, "Ahem, that's no problem since I was going to introduce myself anyway."

"I'm Wilson Grant, and everyone calls me Willy, which I prefer. You can do the same if you wish." He put his right hand across his chest and bowed lightly in greeting.

Then he took out a communication crystal and offered it to her, "As you said, I facilitate the betting and if I say so myself, am quite trustworthy. So, if you are ever in need of my services, you can contact me."

"Thank you." Rima took the crystal, nodded in thanks and turned around and left.

'Not too friendly, huh?' Shaking his head, he sat down in the chair and began handing the winnings to the lucky people.

'Why did she have to show so much trust in her? Couldn't she have acted as if she didn't know it and Miss Rima had called me over? I would've won quite some merits that way.'

Once he was done, he checked the amount he had left after excluding 20,000 merits, Kayla's winnings, and nodded in satisfaction.

'I guess this is not too bad.'

...

Rima met Kayla and Nia on her way back to her seat.

"Congratulations on your spectacular win, milady!" Nia excitedly congratulated her.

Rima nodded at her. She then looked at Kayla who said, "That was very impressive and... unexpected if I have to be honest."

Rima nodded and then said, "Thank you, miss Kayla for the help."

Saying this, she took out her communication crystal and offered it to her, "If you ever need my help, please contact me. I won't ever refuse."

"Thank you." Kayla took the communication crystal and was about to say something when...

Clap! Clap! Clap!

Thank you **Glenn Loriaux** for the support~! (Bonus Chapter 1/2)

Chapter 874: 60,000 Merit Points

"Well done, Miss Rima! Though short, the battle was marvelous." Desmond walked over with two guys following him, a gentlemanly smile on his face.

Rima looked at him, and nodded in acknowledgement before looking at Kayla, "We are going for a meal. Would you like to come along?"

Kayla smiled, "I'm free right now. So, sure."

The trio walked away without sparing Desmond another glance, causing his frozen expression to darken.

...

"So, how much did you earn?" Kayla asked after they sat in a restaurant within the Inner Hall and ordered some dishes for Nia and themselves—because Nia was quite weaker than them, she couldn't digest the food prepared for Five Star mages.

"60,000." Rima said, feeling relieved as she now had the required merit points to enter the minor realm. Now, she just needed to speedrun to the King realm and enter Golden Rankings. At that time, she would be able to enter the minor realm and look for her beloved.

As she thought this, her brows furrowed because she knew unlike in the mortal realms, One to Four Star, progressing within the spirit realm wasn't easy.

"Wow! You had bet all your merit points. Quite a daring move." Kayla remarked while Nia's eyes widened in astonishment.

'60,000 Merit Points... It would take me 50-60 years to earn that much from my job.'

While Nia marveled at the difference between them, Kayla noticed Rima's frown and asked, "What's wrong?"

After thinking for a moment, Rima decided to tell her, hoping she would have some solution for her predicament like she had for the Merit Points.

"I told you how I need to enter the minor realm, right? With the points I now have, I have fulfilled the first condition. Now, I need to enter the Golden Ranking to fulfil the other. But I can't see how I can do that in a short time."

"I understand." Kayla nodded in understanding. Even if Rima's talent in cultivation was supreme, she would still need months to enter the King Realm, especially considering she had just broken through to the Five Star realm.

Of course, it wasn't impossible. She just needed the whole-hearted support of a Peak Emperor, preferably a Monarch.

However, if she had such support, she wouldn't have needed to worry so much about entering the minor realm. They could have taken her inside.

After thinking for a moment, she said, "There is a way, but I'm not sure it'll work."

Rima's eyes lit and she hurriedly asked, "What is it? Tell me."

"Golden Rankers often go into the Hall's minor realms to train or gather resources. And sometimes, they need more manpower, so they take unranked King Mages along. I have heard that a few times, they have taken the top Silver rankers too upon their request.

So, if you can enter the top three in Silver Rankings, you can try finding a party who might be willing to take you."

Rima became excited upon hearing this, but she composed herself and asked, "Just entering the top three would suffice?"

Kayla shook her head, "No. As I said, you would need to find a party willing to take you in. This isn't easy because there are several King Mages, who are not ranked within the Golden Rankings, but are stronger than the top three of Silver Rankings.

The Golden Rankers choose from them as not only they would get decent strength, but they would also not have to go through the formal hassle of allowing lower-rank disciples to go with them and pay fines if they die inside."

Seeing Rima's brows furrowing, Kayla added, "Therefore, if you want them to take you, you would have to get in their good graces somehow or pay them a significant amount of Merit Points."

Rima didn't even consider the first option and directly asked, "How much?"

Kayla raised a finger, "From what I heard, last time a silver ranker had paid 100,000 Merit Points."

"So, I, at least, need another 40,000?" She murmured and began thinking if one more bet on a battle with a high ranker where her chances of winning might seem abysmal could earn her the amount.

However, she then heard Kayla say, "No. You would need at least 150,000 at that time because you would need to pay for your entry fee yourself. Moreover, this amount would increase if the party demands more than 100,000."

"Mm." Rima nodded in agreement. She also knew that she needed to spend a significant amount of Merit Points on resources to increase her strength to enter the top

three of the Silver Rankings. So, the total number of merit points she needed was a lot more than just 150,000.

Seeing her get lost in thought, Kayla leaned back in her chair.

After a few moments, Rima took a deep breath and looked at her, "Miss Kayla, thank you for all the help."

Kayla smiled, "No need for thanks. Just don't forget me if I need your help in future."

"Of course, I won't." Rima said, "Whatever problem you have, just tell me. I'll do my best to help you and if I'm not capable of doing it, I'll ask my husband to do it."

"Your husband?" Kayla asked, surprised, "You are married?"

"The reason I want to enter the minor realm is because my husband has been left stranded in it." Rima told her.

Hearing this, Kayla got a rough picture of what happened and her delicate brows furrowed. Then, seeing the glint of melancholy and longing in her eyes, she sighed in her heart, feeling pity for her.

She could tell Rima loved her husband a lot and was in denial of his death.

"There is no need to feel pity, Miss Kayla, because I know for a fact he isn't dead." Rima said with a smile, but this only made Kayla feel even more bad for her because she saw the hidden sadness and other suppressed emotion in her eyes.

However... she smiled, "Yeah. I have heard of a few people who weren't transported out of the minor realms due to all sorts of reasons, but they were alive. One of these people is our current Inner Hall Master."

Rima could tell she didn't really believe Max could be alive and was just saying this to give her some hope, but she really felt better upon hearing this and clenched her fists, "Yeah. If even they can survive there, he can definitely do it."

She had just murmured this when a cold hurrumph sounded out in the restaurant, immediately silencing the chatter.

"Humph! *'Even they?'* You think your pathetic man can be compared to our hall master and others who survived those hellish trials on their own and came out alive?"

As the restaurant became pin-drop silent, everyone's gazes focused on two tables—one Rima's and the other of the one who spoke just now.

"Hey, isn't she...?"

"Shh! Keep quiet."

Someone recognised the person who spoke just now—a beautiful, green haired woman in an elaborate green dress—and spoke up, prompting his companion to shut him up.

'What luck!' Kayla's expression turned ugly when she saw her.

The woman was sitting on the table just a few meters away from Rima. She turned her head around, her expression cold as she scolded, "Did you become mute? I asked you some—"

Swoosh!

[Rima, no—]

Kayla had just noticed Rima's expression and feeling a premonition, she hurriedly began transmitting a message to her, wanting to stop her from doing anything rash, but before she could do it, Rima had disappeared from her chair.

Slap!

Boom!!

Chapter 875: Isolde

Rima appeared before the green-haired woman. Her glinting coldly, she threw a slap towards her face without any hesitation.

However...

Slap!

Her pupils constricted when the woman, very easily, raised his hand and blocked her. At the same time, she kicked her in the abdomen.

Boom!

Rima saw the attack coming, but she couldn't dodge it in time, clearly showing the green-haired girl was stronger than her.

The kick landed on her upper abdomen and she was sent flying so fast that before she could utilize her mana and stop the momentum, she had crashed into the restaurant's stone wall.

She was stuck to the wall, which now had a human-shaped imprint in it, for a moment before she slid down to the ground and lay there unmoving. She wanted to stand up and charge back at her, but she was frozen and couldn't even breathe.

Step! Step! Step!

The green-haired woman walked over and looked down at her, naked disdain and contempt clear on her face.

"You overestimate yourself, worm!" She coldly spat out the words before raising her leg, ready to stomp Rima.

Seeing this, Rima's eyes blazed with intense ferocity and her body began to tremble.

Noticing this, the woman sneered, "You think you can break my spell? Pathetic!"

Right as she said this and was about to stomp Rima's face...

Huuu!

She saw Rima take a deep breath, which made her pupils' constrict, 'She broke the lock?'

Swoosh!

Rima disappeared from beneath her leg, but she didn't look bothered.

Then, in the next second...

Bang!

She slammed Rima against the wall, her delicate hand clenched around her neck.

"You really overestimate yourself!" She said in contempt, looking into Rima's bloodshot eyes. Then, she raised her other hand, "You attempted to slap me, right?"

Swoosh!

Bang!

She swung at Rima, but her slap landed on an Ice shield and shattered it into pieces.

"You dare interfere?" She turned her gaze toward Kayla, who took a deep breath and said, "Lady Isolde, please show some mercy. She had just lost her husband and wasn't in her right—"

"Does that excuse her impudence?" Lady Isolde coldly interrupted her, her aura flaring and pressing down upon Kayla.

She then raised her hand to slap Rima once more and said, "I dare you to block me again."

Kayla looked at Rima and felt conflicted.

If she didn't have to worry about other things that would get complicated after she offended Isolde, she would have done her best to stop her even though she wasn't a match for her.

Isolde was the daughter of Inner Hall master, a very powerful Monarch Level Mage and someone who commanded very high authority. Because he only had one daughter and several sons, he doted on her the most and whenever she got into any trouble he would take action.

For this reason, people, even stronger than her, often didn't dare to offend her.

Fortunately, Isolde rarely abused her position. However, she was a very hot headed woman and everyone knew the one thing she couldn't endure was people disrespecting her father, who she idolized.

Since Rima, although unintentionally, had disrespected him, she knew Isolde wasn't going to stop until she had vented her anger. If someone tried to stop her, she would attack them too and would view them as her enemy.

Kayla felt helpless.

She hadn't joined the Beast Emperor Hall to make enemies and create trouble for her family. This was why she avoided butting heads with even Desmond.

'But... Can I just stay still and watch her get humiliated?' She thought and immediately got her answer.

'I'm sorry Dad...' She muttered in her heart, her expression becoming determined. If she couldn't even help her friend, how would she help her family?

Immediately, she circulated her mana, about to conjure an ice shield.

However, before she could do that...

Shua!

A figure appeared beside Isolde and grabbed Isolde's hand mid swing.

Isolde narrowed her eyes and looked at the new arrival.

"Meredith!" She coldly spat before letting out a growl, "Let go!"

Meredith stared at her, her expression indifferent, "You let go. Fighting outside the arena is against the rules."

"The hell with your rules. I'm not stopping today without punishing this impudent worm." Isolde barked and flared her aura, trying to wring her hand free off her grasp.

However, she failed which angered her even more.

"Do you really want to go against me?" She asked,

"No. I'm just asking you to follow the rules." Meredith calmly said. "I'm sure the Hall Master would also not like it if you so blatantly break the rules."

Isolde stared at her and Meredith met her gaze, completely unperturbed.

"Good." He said through gritted teeth and released Rima's neck, causing her fall to the floor.

Meredith looked down at her and seeing she wasn't able to move, she frowned at Isolde, "Aren't you going to release your spell?"

"You wish!" Isolde scowled, pulled her hand out of Meredith's now loosened grasp and walked out of the restaurant.

Meredith watched her leave and sighed. Then, she waved her hand and made Rima float in an upright position in front of her.

Placing a hand on her forehead, she released her aura and guided her mana carefully... and soon, Rima regained her mobility.

Wiping the blood off her mouth, Rima adjusted her robes, and took a deep breath before she bowed her head lightly toward Meredith, "Thank you, Elder Sister.

"Just be careful." Meredith indifferently said before disappearing from the place.

Kayla came over and asked, "You alright?"

"Mhm." Rima nodded, her expression and voice completely calm, "Can you tell me about her, the green-haired woman?"

Kayla nodded and glanced at the people staring at them, "Should we go change the place?"

Rima shook her head, "No. There is no need. Besides, we have yet to eat."

Saying this, Rima walked back to her table and calmly took her seat, completely ignoring the looks people were giving her.

Kayla couldn't help but feel some admiration toward her for this.

"M-Milady. Are you alright?" Nia hesitantly asked.

"Mm. Don't worry." Rima nodded and after Kayla took her seat, she tapped the table a few times, each time releasing her mana that took the shape of a formless barrier around their table. Then she looked at her.

Without wasting any time, Kayla began speaking, "She is the only daughter of Inner Hall Master, ranked 3rd on the Silver Rankings..."

Chapter 876: Vanished Clouds (Ko-Fi Bonus)

After she was done telling everything she knew about Isolde, Kayla tentatively said, "Rima, I think it's not advisable to make her an enemy."

Rima's expression stayed the same, but the look in her eyes became a little indifferent as she asked, "So, are you suggesting I go and apologize to her?"

Kayla noticed the change and inwardly sighed, "Since you don't want to, let's forget it. Just make sure you don't get into her line of sight until you become strong enough to defend yourself."

"Oh? You are implying she wouldn't come find me or make things difficult for me if she doesn't see me?" Rima asked, for the first time feeling Kayla wasn't as good judge of character as she had thought because she had seen the look in Isolde's eyes and she could say for a fact that it wasn't a look of someone who would forget things so easily.

Besides...

Her eyes blazed.

She wasn't going to let her forget either. This humiliation and disrespect for Max... she would surely avenge them.

Kayla raised her brows, "Yeah. I mean until now, I haven't heard of anyone she had deliberately targeted and made things difficult for."

Rima didn't argue and just nodded.

Soon, their ordered food arrived and Rima took down the sound barrier.

...

After having their meal, Rima bid Kayla farewell and went to the resource hall with Nia where she bought some things that could help in stabilizing the foundation before returning to her residence.

"You don't wait outside for me. Go to your place. I'll call you when I need you." Saying this, Rima entered her residence and activated the formations.

"Milady..."

Nia lingered outside for a while before reluctantly leaving.

Arriving in her cultivation chamber, Rima sat down cross-legged and took out the things she bought.

A moment later, she put a grape-sized pill in her mouth and closed her eyes, beginning to cultivate.

...

"Argh~! Ha~! Damn, how painful!"

In the minor realm, on the thunder mountain, a completely charred figure was rolling around on the ground, crying out in pain.

This figure was none other than Max, who had been *diligently* being struck by the lightning in his bid to grow the Thunder Energy traces for the past five days.

Yes, he had thought he would only need two more days, but he had underestimated the amount of energy the Traces would need to grow after strengthening.

However, this wasn't the only reason the time required to grow them was stretched.

The other reason was—the lightning strikes he attracted after the Traces grew stronger were increasingly stronger and dealt him quite some damage, not to mention the excruciating pain, especially during the fifth day when he just wanted to give up on growing the Traces to stop the torture.

However, he did not, knowing it would only serve to weaken his will, which he couldn't afford to happen.

As a result, the lightning strikes thoroughly *cooked* him and broke his bones in uncountable places.

They also, however, provided the required nourishment for the Thunder Energy Traces to grow to equal in size to the Fire Energy Traces.

...

Huu~

After a while, Max stopped rolling around when the pain became tolerable. Lying on his back, he peeled his eyelids open, stared at the beautiful sky and breathed through his nose.

While the experience may have been tortuous, the sense of accomplishment he felt on achieving what he aimed for was even more sweeter.

After a short while, he *tapped* on the Thunder Traces and began sensing the world around him.

Crackle~! Boom~!

Immediately, a world of lightning enfolded in front of him where the thunder element was abundant and it rushed toward him like it was a long lost part of him.

The lightning in the sky crackled more violently, but no thunder bolt fell on the mountain peak. As for why...

If someone very familiar with the Thunder Element was here, they would have realized that the Thunder Energy, Thunder Mana, responsible for charging the lightning bolts for so much energy that they would strike down, was dissipating from the clouds and rushing towards Max.

Within a few moments, the concentration of Thunder Element on the mountain peak had increased by several folds and it was continuously increasing.

Surprisingly though, not even a tiny bit of all this Thunder Mana was entering Max's body. It just moved around him, as if waiting for something.

Of course, this wasn't really the case since the Mana wasn't sentient.

This was happening simply because, unconsciously, Max was refraining from absorbing any of it.

Seconds turned into minutes and soon half an hour had passed.

The concentration of Thunder Element had become so dense on the mountain peak that the mana was now visible to the naked eyes and some had begun to turn into

liquid, the droplets of which fell on Max before sliding to the ground, creating a puddle around him.

...

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Three figures, dressed in white robes with neat golden stripes on the edges, streaked through the skies at a speed so fast that ordinary people and even some weaker mages wouldn't be able to see them even if they were looking up the sky.

"Hall should just establish the teleportation nodes on all the cultivation sites. Being randomly teleported and then wasting so much time finding them is just too wasteful and frustrating." A handsome young man, who looked to be the same age as Max, and was flying on the left side, grumbled.

Right then, a gorilla-type beast shot toward them from the dense jungle below.

Bang!

The other man, flying on the right, threw a punch and the gorilla burst into pieces of gory flesh, blood and bone matter.

The man then swung his hand, caught the beast core and chuckled at his companion, "If they do that, how will these maddened beasts encounter us and meet their end?"

"I can't understand just what the higher ups are thinking. If they want these beasts to die, can't they just issue missions? I'm sure all those guys would jump at the chance to earn some Merits."

The other man looked at him strangely. "How do you know there aren't missions already put up?"

"Huh? There are?"

"Of course."

"Then why are these beasts not being killed?" The young man looked confused.

"They are. You just feel they aren't because their rate of multiplying is strangely fast." The person in lead, a slender, black haired woman, answered.

She then continued, "Also, the Hall can't afford to keep the teleportation formations active all the time for disciples to enter whenever they want and complete the mis— Hmm?"

Mid-speech, she stopped and furrowed her brows while looking into the distance.

"What is it, Lady Isabelle?" The young man asked and the other also looked at her.

But the next moment, Isabelle didn't need to tell them what was wrong because they felt the anomaly at their cultivation site too.

Swoosh!

Isabelle suddenly increased her flying speed and zoomed into the distance.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The duo did the same and soon a barren but tall mountain came into their view.

"What's going on? Where are the thunder clouds?" The young man asked, taken completely off guard by the surprising absence of the dense thunder clouds.

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Chapter 877: Comprehending The Thunder Law

"Look at the mountain peak." Isabelle said, stopping in place and observing the mountain peak.

"Woah! How is the concentration of Thunder Element so much higher there? Wait—Is that a person?" The young man was astonished sensing the presence of Thunder Element, but then his brows shot up when he felt a human presence on the mountain.

"It seems so." The other man nodded, his brows knitted together in confusion.

"But shouldn't we be the only ones from Thunder Group to be here today?" The young man asked.

"That's right." The other man nodded and said, "Let's just go and find out who he is."

Saying this, he was about to move, but Isabelle raised her hand, and stopped them. "Don't rush."

"Hmm?"

The duo looked at her in confusion, not understanding why she wasn't rushing over to find out the reason for this anomaly.

But then they heard Isabelle say, "Focus your divine sense and sense the Thunder Element carefully."

Though confused, the duo obeyed and did as she asked them to, and a short while later, astonishment colored their features, this was especially true for the younger man.

"There are Thunder Law fluctuations—that person is about to catch a glimpse of Thunder Law!" They exclaimed in unison.

After feeling this, they understood why she stopped them. If they went over, that would surely have disturbed the person cultivating and it would have dispersed the gathering Thunder Law.

But if they went over after he began comprehending it, as long as they were careful, that person wouldn't be disturbed and they could reap some benefits too by deepening their understanding of the Thunder Law.

Immediately, they became excited and became completely quiet, as if afraid that the tiniest sound would ruin things for Max.

But after a while, the younger man seemed to have become restless and transmitted it to both the other man and Isabelle, [I hope it doesn't take more than a month.]

[Why? You think waiting for a month or two would be a waste?] Isabelle asked, raising her brows teasingly.

As for the other man, he silently chuckled and shook his head.

The young man's expression became a little awkward, [It wouldn't be a waste per se, it would just be too boring.]

[Little Ryu, you need to cultivate more and eliminate this flaw of yours—the impatience.] Isabelle advised,

[No matter how high your talent is, at some stage, just it wouldn't be enough to achieve some things. At that time, you would need to spend time, months and even years. If you are still so impatient at that time, you would just get stuck and that would end your cultivation journey.]

[I understand, Elder Sister.] The young man, Ryu, sheepishly nodded.

This wasn't the first time she had called him out on his impatience, and he knew what she was saying was true—Impatience wasn't a good thing for a mage.

However... ever since he began cultivating, his journey had been very fast and smooth and he just got used to it.

'Alright. This time, no matter how much time that guy takes to comprehend the law, I would force myself to wait without feeling—'

[It seems we don't need to wait at all. He is about to begin comprehending.]

Just as he was cementing his determination to patiently wait, Isabelle's transmission sounded in his ears.

"..."

He was dumbfounded. Raising his head to look at the sky, he thought, 'My Gods, you really don't want me to correct my flaws and become a better person, do you?'

Jokes aside, he, just like Isabelle and the other man, Mike, was shocked at the speed at which Law Fragments were gathered because when they first noticed the law's presence, it was still solidifying around Max and was in its initial stages.

Normally, it took several days to weeks for it to progress from the initial stage to all the way to the final even in the superior Law cultivation sites.

Since this site, the mountain peak, was just a middling site in terms of law presence, it should have taken at least one and a half months even if Max's affinity with the Thunder Element was really high.

However, just a few minutes had passed since then and things had already reached the final stage.

[Get ready!] Isabelle said, feeling Max was going to begin comprehending the law at any moment.

Ryuu and Mike got ready to rush over at a moment's notice, not wanting to waste even a single moment of this heaven-sent opportunity.

A second passed...

Then another...

In the third second, all the Thunder elemental mana on the mountain peak, both liquid and gaseous trembled which gave the illusion that fabric of space around Max was twisting. At the same time, the Thunder Law Fragments became active, creating a unique forcefield around Max.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Isabelle didn't need to speak this time as the three of them shot toward the mountain peak at the same time.

Just a moment later, they arrived in Max's vicinity, but maintained the distance of 100 meters, barely touching the boundary of the forcefield. They then sat cross-legged on the ground, closed their eyes and began sensing the ambient thunder Law.

As for Max, within the forcefield, he was lying on the ground, unmoving, seemingly asleep. However, this wasn't the case at all—just like when he comprehended the Fire Law, he felt as if he was facing a terrifying entity that was about to crush him. The sensation of impending death was extremely clear which activated his fight and flight instincts.

The only difference this time was that he wasn't feeling as if he was set on fire. Instead, he was feeling as if he was being electrocuted while deafening booms sounded in his mind, throwing his mind in chaos.

If it was his first time comprehending a Law, he would surely have failed even with his bloodline's assistance. Fortunately, it was not.

After an undetermined amount of time later, Max felt his senses become clear and the world around seemed to become vibrant.

At the same time, an extremely pleasant sensation coursed through his entire body, causing each and every one of his cells to cry out in joy—it was a heavenly feeling.

Unfortunately, it disappeared not long after, making him frown in displeasure.

Then, just as he intended to scan himself to examine the changes within his body...

"Hey naked guy, did you fail?"

A crisp voice asked, and he immediately shot to his feet, his guard up.

Swoosh!

Chapter 878: Gutsy (Ko-fi Bonus)

Swoosh!

At the same time he moved, he had launched a thunder arrow in the direction of the voice.

Bang!

Ryuu side-stepped. quite easily dodging the arrow which then crashed into a distant rock and punched a fist sized hole in it.

"Woah! Easy man, I'm not an enemy." Ryu raised his hands while glancing at the rock, his brows moving up slightly in surprise.

"Nice control you got, impressive." He said before asking, "But who are you? Why haven't I seen you bef—Wait!"

While speaking, his eyes suddenly widened in shock, "How come you are *just* a Four Star mage?!"

Max swept his gaze across the trio and seeing they didn't seem to have any ill intentions, he lowered his guard because despite the rejuvenation post Law Comprehension which healed most of his wounds and burnt skin, he was drained, both mentally and physically and was in a state where he could afford to keep 100% alert.

Then, while Ryu stared at him, waiting for a response, he took out a loose, sky-blue robe from his spatial ring and wore it without feeling embarrassed that they had seen him naked.

He then waved his hand and the broken tower and the beast storage bag shot toward him from behind a rock where he had put them before undergoing the lightning *torture*, not wanting to damage them, though he doubted it would happen since they had stayed completely undamaged in the boiling hot lava earlier.

While he understood that the tower didn't get damaged because even though it didn't have any energy left, it was still an artifact more powerful than a Supreme Grade one, how was the beast storage bag fine?

This confusion was natural because this storage bag, unlike the tower, was just an ordinary grade artifact.

After thinking for a while, he got his answer—it was because of the Golden Python inside it.

"Because I have yet to break through to the Five Star." Max finally gave Ryu a response which made him stare at him blankly.

After a moment, he muttered under his breath, "So this is how it feels meeting someone more talented than you..."

Slap!

Immediately, Mike rapped the back of his head, saying, "So, you have indeed been looking down on us, Mr. Genius?"

While rubbing his head, Ryu hurriedly shook his head, "N-No. Why would I look down on my respected senior brother and Elder Sister?"

Even though he said this, he didn't meet his gaze which made Mike's lips twitch, "You deserve a good thrashing." He scowled and slapped his head again.

Max watched their antics, becoming more relaxed. He then looked at Isabelle and asked, "Miss beautiful, do you have something to eat?"

Hearing these words, Mike and Ryuu stared at him as if he was not a human. Then they looked at Isabelle, awaiting her response to his flirting.

However, contrary to what they expected, Isabelle didn't get angry and calmly waved her hand, producing a silver tray of steaming hot food which she sent floating towards Max.

"Thank you." Max said, grabbed the tray and began devouring the contents. Most of it was some high grade beast meat, full of energy, just something he needed right now.

Isabelle looked at her companions and seeing them looking at her strangely, she shook her head in exasperation.

Did they think she couldn't tell when someone was trying to flirt?

Just now, Max was not. He just addressed her that way because he didn't know her name and wanted to be polite...

'Hm? If he wanted to be polite, he could have called me something else, Milady, or maybe just Miss?'

She mused, narrowing her eyes at Max, who seemed to feel her gaze and raised his head, asking, "Is something wrong, Miss?"

"No, I was just thinking something. Go on, finish your meal. Then we can talk." She shook her head before glaring at Ryuu and Mike, who hurriedly shifted their gazes away.

Soon, Max finished eating and felt energy returning to his body.

With a wave of his hand, he cleaned the silverware and returned it to Isabelle, "Thank you, Miss. It was delicious."

Isabelle pursed her lips, thinking, 'Is he trying to flirt again?'

But then she shook her head, 'No. He doesn't know I was the one who cooked it and besides...' She stared into his crystal clear sapphire eyes, '...It doesn't look like he had any other meaning.'

Storing the dishes away, she asked, "Now, tell us who you are, why you are here and were you the one who made the thunder clouds disappear?"

Max waved his hand and four chairs appeared, "Let's sit down and talk, shall we?"

'This guy... He really isn't afraid of us.' Mike thought, seeing how at ease Max was and couldn't help but feel some admiration towards him.

If he was in Max's place, he would have been really uneasy because he would have been way weaker than them, unable to resist if the strangers were to do anything.

Isabelle also looked at him, her eyes flickering. She then nodded and gracefully sat down in the chair Max placed beside her.

After Mike and Ryuu also took their seats, Max also sat down and began speaking, "I was one of the participants in the recent recruitment. I was in the vicinity when a peak King Beast and one who I think was the Elder of the Beast Emperor Hall began fighting. I got caught in crossfire and before I knew it, I had been knocked unconscious.

When I came to, I found that my badge had shattered. I tried to look for other people, but it seemed the 30 days were over and everyone had been sent out and I was left stranded here.

While wandering around, I found this place and began cultivating here. But something seemed to have gone wrong and the lightning bolts began raining down and almost killed me.

Fortunately, I had some life-saving trump cards that helped me survive until the thunder clouds ran out of energy.

I wanted to leave but then I realized the Thunder Mana had become a lot denser here, so I just decided to cultivate... and then I saw you."

The trio stared at him for a few moments, but Max remained calm and looked at Isabelle with a soft smile on his face.

"For a Four Star mage, you are quite gutsy, man. Anyone else in your position wouldn't have dared to lie to our face like this."

Suddenly Ryuu broke the silence and his words made Max raise his brows.

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Chapter 879: Max is a Shifter?

Max glanced at him, opened his mouth to say something, but then shook his head, "It's up to you whether to believe me or not. I have told you everything that happened."

"Hah!" Ryuу scoffed, "Truth? I have the ability to determine whether someone is speaking the truth or not, and you have not."

Max stopped himself from giving him a mocking look because he still needed their help to get out of this minor realm.

Did he think just because he was a Four Star mage and they were King Mages, they could tell whether he had lied?

If he did not have his Bloodline Sense, this could have been true, but unfortunately for them, he had it and it could perfectly hide all the signatures that gave away a person.

He was sure even if Ryuу had a peculiar ability like he claimed to have, it still would have been almost impossible to go past his Bloodline Sense's protection for no reason other than that currently his Bloodline Sense was way superior to their Divine Senses thanks to the enhancement two Law Comprehension provided.

"Like I said before, it's up to you whether to believe me or not." He calmly stated.

"You—" Ryuу scowled, but before he could say anything, Isabelle spoke up, "Let's leave it at that, Ryuу."

"But Elder Sister, what about the thunder mountain? It's no longer suitable for cultivation." Ryuу protested. Since Max had ruined their cultivation hotspot, they at least should find out what actually happened, no?

"We'll just have to find some other place." Isabelle said.

Ryuу wasn't convinced, but since Isabelle had spoken up, he could only let the matter go.

"I hope you don't mind him." Isabelle said and immediately, her expression froze.

'What's going on? Why am I being so polite to him?' She thought and released her Divine Sense, scanning herself and everything around her before focusing on Max.

'Hm? There doesn't seem to be anything wrong.'

Ryuу and Mike were also surprised to see how she was catering to him. It was as if she didn't want to make him angry.

'Don't tell me it's because he is *somewhat* handsome?' They both thought of the same thing and couldn't help but become envious of Max.

Then, they felt her Divine Sense flare up and their expressions hardened and they raised their guards, thinking something was wrong.

...

After staying silent for a few moments, Isabelle stood up and asked, "You want to leave with us, right?"

Max nodded, "Yes."

"You can do so, but you'll have to wait for a couple of days. We need to hunt some beasts and gather medicine and other resources to make sure we don't lose out on this trip." She said,

"No problem. I'll wait." Max nodded in agreement before saying, "But can I accompany you guys?"

Ryuu and Mike frowned, clearly opposed, but they didn't speak up, awaiting Isabelle's response.

Isabelle shook her head, "No. We would be hunting King ranked, and maybe even Emperor ranked beasts and would be visiting some danger zones too."

With your strength, any accident could take your life. So, you should stay here or find some other safe place since it has lost the protection of thunder clouds."

Max didn't insist and after a moment's thought, he nodded, "Alright."

They then exchanged communication crystals and the trio left. But before leaving Ryuu sent him a transmission, [Be careful. There are shifters in this minor realm. They might take our appearance and come to deceive and kill you.]

[I understand. Thanks for the warning.]

Ryuu's eyes widened hearing Max's transmission.

...

Not long after leaving the thunder mountain...

"What's up, Ryuu?" Mike asked, seeing Ryuu frowning.

"I think the kid had really lied to us." Ryuu said.

"Just let it go, man." Mike said, exasperated, and Isabelle also gave him a look.

"You are saying that not because you guys don't want to know what happened there, but because you think he hadn't lied, right?" Ryuу said,

Mike nodded, "Yeah. Neither Senior Sister, nor I picked up anything wrong." He then gave him a look, "You did not either."

The duo knew Ryuу didn't have the ability to discern the truth. He had just felt something was wrong, so he had told Max that, wanting to scare him and reveal the *truth*.

"You are right." Ryuу nodded before saying, "But I think that's because he somehow prevented us from detecting anything."

"How will he do that? He is just a Four Star Mage." Mike argued, "And don't tell me he might have used some external object, because if he did, we would have sensed its fluctuations easily. After all, a mere Four Star mage isn't capable enough to hide them from our senses."

Ryuу let him speak. Once he was finished, he looked at him and Isabelle before saying, "A *mere* Four Star Mage doesn't have Divine Sense either."

"Mm?" The duo frowned hearing his retort.

"Yes. Before leaving, I warned him about the shifters and he transmitted a message back to me." Ryuу said,

"While the fact he has something similar to Divine Sense surprised me, what surprised me even more is that you two didn't pick up any fluctuations. I don't need to spell it out for you to understand what this means, right?"

Hu!

Mike sucked in a cold breath before saying, "He can hide from our Divine Sense... and the chances are... he is a shifter himself."

"No. You are thinking too ahea—" Ryuу began saying when...

Swoosh!

"We go back."

Isabelle came to a halt, turned around and shot towards the thunder mountain.

'Tsk!' Ryuу clicked his tongue. And then...

Swoosh! Swoosh!

He and Mike followed after her.

[Why didn't you tell us before we left?] Mike growled at Ryuu, [He might have escaped already. And if he really has, you know Senior Sister would be angry.]

Ryuu pursed his lips, and stayed silent. He couldn't tell them the reason he didn't inform them about it earlier because he *felt* Max wasn't a shifter just like he had *felt* Max was lying.

Chapter 880: Unstable Core (Ko-fi Bonus)

After the trio left, Max stored the three chairs away with a wave of his hand and then closed his eyes to examine himself.

The light blue Thunder Energy Traces in his bloodline were now the same size as the Fire Energy Traces, and exuded a very subtle charm of the Thunder Element.

After observing them for a moment, however, Max noticed that both energy traces didn't *feel* equally strong. The Thunder ones seemed more powerful.

'Advantage of my Thunder Bloodline, huh?' He thought, nodding to himself.

He then scanned his body and realized all the injuries he suffered from the lightning bolts had been healed.

As for when it happened, he knew it happened when he successfully stepped over the threshold of the Thunder Law comprehension.

All the mana around him had entered his body. While most was absorbed by the Thunder energy Traces, and his Mana Core, the remaining was used to heal the injuries.

Thinking of the Mana Core, he shifted his attention inside his dantian and to his Mana Core. Seeing his Mana Core was now divided into two sections, half occupied by the Fire Mana and the other half by the Thunder one, he knit his brows.

While it was good news that his core, mainly constructed from the pure Fire Mana had *allowed* the Thunder Mana into it, seeing the Thunder Mana reacting, causing sparks when it rubbed against the Core's walls or the Fire Mana, he knew he had to resolve this situation as soon as possible.

'I need to leave this place as soon as possible, find Rima and refill my reserves of Nascent Energy. When I have enough Nascent Energy, it wouldn't be difficult to resolve this situation.' He mused and then gingerly began to pull on the Thunder Mana.

Chi~!

Immediately, sparks flew up inside his Mana Core, causing it to tremble and piercing pain shot through him, prompting Max to quickly cease his actions.

When he had instinctively conjured the Thunder Arrow upon feeling the threat to attack Ryuу, he had felt the same pain, but at that moment, he didn't have time to check what caused it.

'Now, this is bad.' He thought before pulling on his Fire Mana.

Sizzle~!

This time, fire sparks flared up and made his core tremble.

'Yeah, really bad.' His expression hardened. Then he let out a deep sigh, not knowing how to feel.

Same as before entering the minor realm, he had once again become unable to use his mana.

After a few moments, he shook his head and glanced at the now clear skies.

"I should find some other place to wait for them to return." He murmured and stood up, putting his chair away.

This mountain was in the middle of a dense forest where innumerable beasts roamed. The constant thunder strikes were the only reason they avoided this place. Now, however, the cloud had disappeared, so the beast would definitely come over to claim it as their territory.

However...

"Hmm?"

Just when he had stood up, he felt something and looked into the distance.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Followed by Isabelle, Mike and Ryuу flew over and landed in front of him.

"What is it?" Max asked in confusion when he saw Isabelle stare at him.

"Give me a drop of your blood." Isabelle commanded.

"Why?" Max asked, her tone and the unreasonable demand making him frown.

Chi~!

A blade of crackling lightning appeared in Isabelle's hand and Mike and somewhat resigned Ryuu circled around him before she said, staring dead into his eyes, "To verify whether you are a human or a shifter."

"Oh? You can't tell it by scanning me with your Divine Sense?" Max curiously asked.

"We could have if you didn't have Divine Sense." Isabelle answered and her expression became ugly. She didn't like that she wasn't herself when facing him.

Moreover, now that she was suspicious of him being a shifter, she also felt he was one of those shifters who charmed their targets.

"I see." Max nodded, glancing at Ryuu, who smiled wryly.

The next moment, he extended his hand toward Isabelle, "Take it."

"What do you mean?" Isabelle narrowed her eyes, becoming more cautious.

Max's lips curled up into a charming smile, "You need my blood, right? Take it."

Isabelle stared at him for a few moments in silence before she said, "Mike, Ryuu... Grab him. Also, attack to kill if he does anything strange."

Max's smile deepened seeing her expression and hearing her words.

Perhaps because it had been over a month since he last had sex, or because he needed Nascent Energy and she could give it to him, he found himself becoming interested in her. Her high realm and the fact that she was very beautiful only helped the case.

Mike and Ryuu stepped forwards and pressed their hands on his shoulders. Max acted oblivious and continued looking at Isabelle.

Feeling uncomfortable from his gaze, she frowned before carefully stepping forward and poking his finger tip with her lightning sword.

Hiss!

Max hissed, feeling an electric jolt course through his body.

"So—" Isabelle was about to apologize instinctively, but she realized it on time and stopped herself, increasingly sure he was a shifter if not a demon.

Mike and Ryuu had been noticing her strange behavior and felt confused.

Apart from them who she thought of as family and few others in their Thunder Faction, she never interacted with any male. Even when someone initiated a conversion, she would say a few perfunctory words and leave.

And when someone tried to flirt with her, she would outright attack them. This made them believe she hated men.

But facing Max, she had been acting as if she was a teenager in love and if they had to be honest... they didn't like it because even though they wouldn't admit it in front of anyone, they harbored feelings for her.

'I hope I'm wrong and he is a shifter.' Ryuu maliciously thought, pressing his hand harder on Max's shoulder.

Max didn't need to use his bloodline sense to feel the jealousy radiating off the duo on his either side. It made him grin and made him more interested in pursuing Isabelle.

'How enjoyable will their expression be when I make her mine?' He thought, licking his lips. Then, a distant memory surfaced in his mind and his expression darkened.

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