

Tech System 261

Chapter 261 Nobody Wants Bored Soldiers

The news broadcast on Arie's tv cut to a man in a suit behind a podium.

"A spokesperson for the local police department made a brief statement, saying, 'We're treating this incident with the utmost seriousness, given the unusual circumstances surrounding it. Our top priority is to bring those responsible to justice and provide closure to the affected families.'"

The broadcast cut to another slow pan across the emergency vehicles blocking the LaGuardia access road.

"As the investigation unfolds, the shocking incident has left the city on edge, and many residents demanding answers. The motive behind the attack, if indeed it was planned, remains unknown at this time. We'll continue providing updates on this developing story as more information becomes available."

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"Finally, that bitch is dead!" Arie jumped in celebration and hugged Charlotte, who didn't even attempt to block his advance at all as he continued jumping up and down.

Although nothing had been confirmed, the number of casualties, combined with one of the wrecks looking like the car she had left in, made him sure the bitch had finally died.

"And now we wait. If the family doesn't receive any news from her, they'll start investigating the incident and testing the bodies from the wreckage to see if there's someone with her DNA. Then I'll be the official heir for the second, and last, time, since I'm sure they won't find anything connecting the attack to me," he said, his secretary still in his embrace.

"But why didn't Terry contact us, sir?" Charlotte asked.

Arie unwrapped his arms from around her and said, "I don't know, but there's two possibilities I can think of. Either he died and his corpse is among those people there, or something's keeping him from contacting us. So there's a slim chance that she's still alive."

Just as he was saying that, he received a phone call on his burner phone. Today, he was holding it himself instead of leaving it with Charlotte. He immediately picked up the call and said nothing, waiting for the other side to start speaking.

"Sir, everything went according to plan," said a voice that sounded no different from Terry's.

"Why'd you call so late?" Arie asked.

"We were inside the range of our jammer, and had to make sure we removed all of our traces from the scene. That way nothing will lead to us, as she put up quite a fight. Well, not her, personally, but the guards she hired for her excursion. I guess she didn't trust her own security team and suspected spies," Terry explained.

"Good. Stay hidden for a few months, and when I take over the family, I'll give both of you a handsome reward. For now, just take the remaining money in the account I gave you along with my appreciation," Arie said, and after receiving the thanks from Terry, he ended the call. He tossed the

burner phone across the room and began undressing his secretary, as he wanted to celebrate in a different way with someone he trusted with his many secrets; someone he could always show his true self to.

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A massive plane was on its final approach to Avalon Island, which was still covered by clouds. Construction was still ongoing on the island, specifically the new server farms that Nova had been building.

Rina was watching the clouds through the windows, as nothing under them could be seen, making people assume there was no power on the island.

"Oh my god," Rina, her secretary, and Alex muttered in unison when the plane sank through the thick clouds and appeared under them, revealing the island in plain sight. Everything was the complete opposite of what they'd had in mind, which was a mildly developed, but still under construction island.

From the sky, things would always appear small, but there was a massive building that was big despite the distance. Its surroundings were brightly lit, and that wasn't all; the island had many different locations that were equally brightly lit, with high-speed maglev trains passing from one location to another acting as the connection between them.

There was no hint of any construction at all, as everything looked like it had been completed and in use for a very long time.

As the plane approached the runway, the real scale of that building became apparent. A nearly ten-kilometer-long wall was just one side of it, and the height also absolutely dwarfed the plane!

The landing was as smooth as a landing could be, and they didn't even realize they had landed until the jet came to a complete stop.

Rina's driver came to her seat and escorted her to the door, then gestured for them to exit the plane, where they were met with the same cars that had escorted them in America.

The airport was... odd. Other than a second jumbo jet, there were no civilian planes. But as for military aircraft, that was a different topic. Helicopters and fighter/bombers of varying designs were everywhere, and despite it being nighttime, soldiers were busily swarming over everything on the tarmac. Some were cleaning and others were doing other maintenance, as Aron had decided to reduce the use of atomic printers for things that could be done by the soldiers. Otherwise, they'd have nothing to do, and bored soldiers were exactly what nobody would ever want. (Ed note: see the kind of shenanigans bored soldiers get up to here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pme1sPcwJP8>)

The visitors were soon escorted to their car and immediately left the airport. There was no need for security checks, or even passport verification, which just went to show the level of power Aron had over the country.

Their car was headed to the massive building they had seen at a fairly high speed, but it was outpaced by the maglev trains coming and going as the visitors marveled at the high-tech city.

When they arrived at the massive building, they finally saw what those trains were bringing and taking away; thousands upon thousands of soldiers were coming out of the building and heading to the trains, while thousands more were stepping off the train cars and heading to the building. Those coming out were more disciplined than those going in, which hinted at what might be happening in the building.

The group entered the building through a different entrance than the coming and going soldiers and headed toward a massive elevator that was already waiting for them. The elevator took them to the top floor, where they got off and were escorted to a luxurious office suite. Inside, they found Aron waiting for them with a smile as he said, "Welcome."

He stretched out his hand and shook Rina's, as this was only their third face-to-face meeting in the offline world and the second to happen in Eden.

Chapter 262 Et Tu, Rothschilds?

After Rina's secretary and Alex were escorted to the waiting room, Rina was left with Aron. They still had a few things to discuss, as they had postponed some of their conversation for when she arrived and they could speak face to face.

"So.... Are you sure you don't want therapy or something?" Aron asked to start the conversation. It was definitely an interesting beginning.

"Not really. I was more angry than afraid, so the fear wasn't really my main focus. And because my safety was assured, I got over it during the flight and can say with assurance that, no, I don't need one," she answered after a brief moment of contemplation to ensure her answer was sincere. "By the way, is there a maximum time that I can stay here after the celebration?" She knew she was in one of the most secret and sensitive places on the planet, but she needed time to decide her next course of action.

"There's no time limit. How long do you plan to stay?" he asked out of curiosity and expectation, something he hadn't really felt for a long time.

"At least a month, as I need to give my brother the illusion that I'm still looking for the culprit and afraid to return home until my survival's guaranteed," Rina answered.

"You're welcome to stay as long as you want," he said with a genuine smile. He had no idea how handsome he was and missed the mild blush that appeared on Rina's cheeks.

"Let me give you a tour of your new temporary home," he continued and stood up from his chair, then walked to the door at a slow pace

Rina easily caught up and walked with him side by side as he showed her the house.

Throughout all of that, Nova was enjoying the show and laughing at Aron and Rina, who were beating around the bush and not talking about what was on their minds.

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Over the next week, the two spent plenty of time together. Aron even introduced her to his parents, who had joined the young pair.

During the week, his parents seemed to have taken quite a liking to her and asked her tons of questions, like a mother-in-law interviewing a prospective bride. It tickled Rina's thin skin, her having never been treated like that before, and she was constantly flushing red. She was embarrassed by the enthusiasm shown by Aron's parents, and nothing had even happened between the two youngsters yet!

Still, she hadn't offended anyone at all; in fact, she even tried her best to get on their good side, as she could see on their faces that they didn't have any hidden agendas. It was completely different from her family, where people were constantly plotting against each other every day. Trusting a fellow Rothschild—especially a sibling—was a huge struggle and risk, because backstabbing and betrayal was the only constant in that den of villains and thieves. Any display of vulnerability or weakness, like showing trust or true friendship, would only ensure that one would be viciously attacked.

The only way anyone in the Rothschild family would trust each other is if they each held the other's weaknesses firmly in their grasp. A good example would be Hebel and the other board members' "cuck club." The five-person group had formed something of a bond after finding out that their wives actually all shared a lover or, in real terms, bull, though at different times. So they decided to turn it into their own exclusive club and soon started having cuckold orgies together, indulging in their fantasies. They were sure the others wouldn't say a word despite their greed, since they, too, would go down with them.

But Rina saw nothing of that greed in Aron's family, which made her a bit envious. He always seemed to have the best things, sure, but her jealousy stemmed not from wanting to take his place. Instead, she wanted to join his life and enjoy it together with him. He had been nothing but a lifesaver since he'd entered her life, swooping in when she was at her lowest point and was about to give up. Aron had saved her from the husband that she'd been thrown to by her brother, who wanted her out of the competition. It was an especially vicious move, since no Rothschild would want to be led by someone that carried the Morgan family's blood in them, so her line would be permanently disqualified from ever holding a position of power in the family. It would make her even weaker than a branch family, as at least they could sit on the board!

Due to not wanting that, she'd even gone so far as refusing to consummate that joke of a marriage, which had easily been accomplished by just threatening to report the pathetically weak Rottem to the Rothschild family head for abuse. She was sure the old man would do nothing without evidence, but her so-called husband didn't know that, and, in his fear of the possible repercussions, he stopped trying to force himself on her and started getting his validation as a man outside of the marriage. That was exactly what Rina wanted, but she always ended up failing to catch him in the act, due to her brother's intervention... until Aron had intervened and come to her for help, bringing with him ironclad evidence of Rottem's extramarital activities.

She hoped the week would last longer, but alas, time is a bitch and continues on regardless of anyone's begging, wailing, or praying.

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Present day.

Arieh, who had been quite happy during the last week, was about to get the shock of his life from his secretary, who had just barged into his room with a tablet in hand. He was much too happy, to the point that he couldn't even bring himself to get angry at her, so he just patiently waited for her to say whatever she had barged in for.

Charlotte said nothing, just handed him her tablet. The Pangea app was already open and displaying a live stream from the Department of Defense of Eden showing soldiers marching in quite an advanced parade.

Just as he was about to raise his head and ask what there was for him to see in a third-world country's military, who seemed to have spent most of their time training to march instead of fight, the scene changed. It now showed the president of Eden, Alexander, but that wasn't what attracted his attention—rather, it was the woman sitting just two spots away from him as they watched the parade.

CRACK!

The tablet fell to the floor and the screen spiderwebbed. Arieh felt like he was having a mild heart attack at that moment; all of the happiness he had been accumulating over the past week had completely disappeared without warning.

He picked the tablet back up and rewound the footage to a few seconds earlier, where Rina was looking quite happy, completely unlike the dead person he wanted her to be.

He wasted no time and took his phone out of his pocket. In his panic, he didn't realize he was using his normal phone to call Terry's number, trying to get clarification on whether he was hallucinating or not.

The moment the call was answered, his calm demeanor completely vanished and he screamed, "IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, LAST WEEK YOU SAID YOU WERE QUITE SURE THAT YOU KILLED THAT BITCH. SO WHY THE FUCK AM I WATCHING HER ON A LIVE VIDEO OF HER WATCHING A PARADE FROM A FUCKING THIRD-WORLD SHITHOLE INSTEAD OF READING HER DEATH CERTIFICATE LIKE YOU PROMISED ME?"

When he finished shouting, he waited for an answer. But none came, and the longer he waited, the more his anger rose. Then, adding insult to injury, the call was cut off from Terry's end.

BANG!

The phone in Arieh's hand completely shattered and twisted, sending shards of glass into his palm, creating a modern art piece with the artist being the top-of-the-line cellphone.

Blood dripped from his clenched fist, splattering to the floor beneath him.

Chapter 263 The Relationship Between Protection And Ownership

"Looks like we found our beneficiary," Aubrey said as he and his son watched the parade on a tablet given to them by his assistant. It was the same one responsible for leading the investigation on who benefited the most from their loss in Esparia.

The image was the same as the one that had enraged Arieh, showing Aron and Rina conversing and smiling in happiness. It seemed like they really enjoyed each other's company.

"Who's that?" George asked the assistant.

"Aron Michael, the sole owner of GAIA Technology and Connect," the assistant answered.

"What connection is there between an up-and-coming billionaire and the Rothchilds?" Aubrey asked. He knew that company, thanks to the Morgans being involved in forcefully acquiring the technology from them in order to benefit from it. That said, even up until now, they had gained nothing substantial for their efforts. "Is it so he could take revenge on us for stealing his technology using the government?" he continued. He was quite curious as to what had brought the groups of people together, to the point of even causing Rina to return to Eden.

"The closest connection we can see between them is the relationship between Aron and Rottem, who used to be his professor. Aron was a student that was expelled by Rottem for falling asleep in one of his presentations. Shortly after that, he developed BugZapper, and we assume he used it to collect dirt on the professor before releasing the program. Through that, he must've found her and handed her the evidence that led to Rottem's divorce. Shortly after that, Rottem's dirty laundry was aired before to the whole school, resulting in losing his tenure and professorship," the secretary recited, seemingly from memory.

"Any evidence backing that claim?" Aubrey asked. It sounded like that report was also relying on the same guesswork the previous one had, and that was simply too much speculation.

"Though there isn't a direct link to him hacking the university, after going through the financial reports we received from Microsoft, Facebook, and Google with the program in mind, we found that they paid Mr. Michael nearly two hundred million each before he took BugZapper public. That means he must've used it to find the weaknesses of those companies. And if he did that, doesn't it also make sense for him to be the one that found the evidence of Rottem's corruption?" That was how the assistant had reached a conclusion from gluing together bits of speculation with a few pieces of minor evidence.

"But that in itself shouldn't be enough to warrant her going to Eden just to watch a parade with him. All of her gratitude can just be repaid with money, or even a favor or two from her. I'm pretty sure she interfered with the government's attempt to stop his company from moving to Eden, and maybe she was even the one behind the deal between NATO and GAIA," George said, figuring that there should be something else. But the mistake he made was that he thought of how he would do things and didn't consider what Rina was feeling.

"We suspect he's the owner of the PMC we faced in Eden, and that it's funded by the Rothschilds. At least in part, or maybe it's funded by Rina herself and she just has him watching over it for her. That would mean the dog and pony show they're putting on today is nothing more than an excuse for her to inspect the troops. At the same time, she's also announcing to the world that she, or the Rothschilds, have one of the world's most powerful PMCs under their control," said the assistant.

"I think they're the Rothschilds' baby. She's just being used as a spokesperson for them, since it'd be impossible for her to fund it alone. And Mr. Michael's existence there can be attributed to Rina convincing him to move under the promise of protecting his technology from being seized again. She put him directly on an island that she has complete control of," George said in a tone of disappointment. He thought it was Aron's mistake to agree to something like that without considering that 'protection' is the same thing as 'ownership'.

The moment George finished speaking, he picked up the remote and turned on the tv so that they could watch the parade on a bigger screen. Its importance level had just been raised.

As they watched, the parade ended with the unknown helicopters from the earlier online clip flying over the location with the flag of Eden hanging under one of them and the flag of its military hanging under another. The helicopters had officially been introduced to the world and people were rightfully impressed by them, despite the chance of it just being a very good paint job.

As the Morgans thought the parade was about to end, the emcee announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, we have a small speech from our president to wrap things up." The citizens attending the parade cheered.

"Sorry for speechifying on such short notice, but during the parade, I realized that it's the best moment to give you all some very good news. Three months from today, we'll be holding our country's first presidential election...." Alexander was forced to pause for a moment due to the overwhelming cheering at hearing the news. "I decided to announce it today, not tomorrow, because I want it to be a proclamation to both the citizens of my country and the rest of the world. I kept my promise!" he continued once people had calmed down a little.

"Just like I promised, the country was only led by me without being elected until we could be sure that everything's been sorted out. And now, we're ready to welcome the new government officials. So after the presidential election, the next three months will be for the rest of the elections. After safely completing those, we'll have officially begun this new history we're writing in the hop—"

Blip.

Aubrey turned off the tv and said, "There's nothing more of importance to be gained from watching that pointless spectacle." He put the remote control on the coffee table, then ordered his assistant, "Comb through the footage and gather as much information as you can, then deliver a report to me on it. We need to come up with a plan in accordance with some conclusive evidence to return the favor to whoever the real owner of that PMC is. And no matter how long we'll spend doing it, or how meticulous we'll have to be, we absolutely must regain our honor."

"Yes sir," answered the assistant, who then turned to leave.

"Also, find out what Rottem's been up to and bring him back home. It's about time for him to be useful again, and he needs to redeem himself after he failed to impregnate that bitch and give us a chance of taking over the family from the inside. Thankfully, that brother of hers is a fucking idiot, so he'll still keep working for us and doing things that are in our favor even if he doesn't know it," Aubrey added.

The assistant, who had already been on his way out of the room, turned back and bowed again to show that he understood his second order, too.

Chapter 264 Finally!

"That was really impressive," Rina said as she boarded the car to leave. The public celebration had officially ended in the afternoon, although the unofficial one would continue after the lunch provided by the government. But none of the foreign dignitaries would be at any of these celebrations, which would continue until midnight. A few singers had even been booked for the night's events.

"I was impressed, too," Aron said as he started the car and drove toward the tallest building in Edenia.

They continued chatting as he drove, and when they arrived, they got off and took an elevator to the roof, where a helicopter was waiting for them.

"Do you have anywhere you want to visit?" Aron asked.

"How about we tour the city? I want to see the projects you're working on," Rina said, some excitement showing on her face. She was very curious about what Aron was working on.

He agreed and sent an updated route to the pilot's HUD. The new route would take them to all of the in-progress projects being run by GAIA and Connect before returning to Avalon Island.

The tour began, with Aron narrating details about the projects as they passed over them. They flew low over the growing rail network, then gained altitude for a better view of the soon-to-be massive airport. It was already partially completed and in operation for small aircraft, but the entire project would be completed in a few months. Then the helicopter took a long, swooping turn and headed to the first of two massive ports. It, too, had already been partially opened and was taking and sending small amounts of freight. The helicopter then followed the electrical network from there, dancing around the transformers as Rina's glasses showed her the underground network with the help of AR.

"Which of the major projects is going to be done first?" she asked when the tour was over. Night had fallen before they arrived back on Avalon Island.

"The utility infrastructure is going to be done first. By next month, it'll be delivering internet, electricity, and clean water, and will be carrying sewage as well. We'll have a monopoly on all utilities, for Edenia at least. As for the other cities, they'll have service in a month or so as we focused on bringing up the standards in the capital first. After the utility infrastructure, it'll be the airport, then the ports. Finally, we'll wrap up the railways after everything else is done. But we'll be working on the major trunk lines as we go, so it'll have partial service but won't be fully connected as broadly as I'd like it to be until everything else is done," Aron answered.

"By the way... why go into the utility industry? I mean, I can understand the airport, the ports, and the rail network... but why utilities?" she asked.

"There's a few reasons. First, I want to keep the cities clean. Second, infrastructure is expensive and takes a long time and a lot of effort to build and maintain. Since the government doesn't have enough money without hyperinflating their currency and devaluing it, I'll step in. After all, I can do it cheaper and faster if I do it myself.

"Lastly, it's because I can make a good profit from it and wouldn't need to charge high prices to do so, which means I'll be building a positive reputation by doing nothing but sitting back and making money. And I won't even have to manipulate public opinion, either."

"But I haven't seen any construction for your company's HQ—haven't you started that yet?" she asked.

"The construction hasn't started yet, no. I don't have enough people to work on everything at once, so they have to be assigned to the projects in order of importance. Besides, building our HQ would be seen as a vanity project, since we already bought perfectly acceptable buildings to use in the

meantime." The skyscraper their helicopter had taken off from was the tallest building in the country, at the moment, as well as one of the buildings that were being used as offices for his two companies.

They continued chatting as the helicopter headed back to Avalon Island at the fastest speed it could without disturbing people on the ground.

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A few minutes later.

Aron was deeply kissing Rina in one of the luxurious rooms in "The Cube", the massive superstructure on Avalon. As for how they had arrived at that particular moment... after Aron had escorted her to her room and bid her farewell, she jumped on him and kissed his cheek. That provoked him into action, and he immediately pulled her into his arms and started deeply kissing her as he gently pushed her inside her room.

He picked her up like a hug pillow and carried her to the bed as they continued making out. Once they were beside it, he pushed her down on the fluffy mattress, laying atop her as they continued aggressively making out.

He broke the kiss for a moment and took off his shirt, revealing the chiseled sculpture that was his upper body.

Rina was taken aback; she almost couldn't believe he was real. It was her first time seeing him shirtless, and he seemed too inhumanly perfect to exist. 'Ever since I met him, he's only worn baggy clothes, but hiding under those... Wow!' she thought.

Aron didn't stay separated from her for long, but immediately fell on her again to continue the makeout session that he had interrupted by removing his shirt. There was one difference, though: instead of having his arms trapped between her body and the bed, his hands were now free to explore her body, starting with her chest.

But her clothes were limiting his exploring hands, so he moved one of them around and under her dress to fondle her soft, generous blessing. Rina softly moaned, her lips freed by Aron, who had transitioned his passionate kisses to the side of her neck.

Then came the sound of cloth tearing as he grew tired of her being clothed and simply tore the dress she was wearing off of her body.

The expensive dress was torn from her, revealing the beautiful body hidden beneath it and leaving her in nothing but the frilly lace lingerie she had been wearing.

Aron, now with access to her skin, trailed kisses down her throat as he removed her bra, revealing her plump bosom. His wandering hand teased one of her mountains while his lips climbed the other, eliciting another round of moaning from the beautiful woman.

What was weird, though, was that Aron was acting like he had experience. But he could swear that he had no knowledge of bedroom activities other than the porn he'd watched growing up. It was almost like someone had downloaded the knowledge into his subconscious mind, and it was only now coming into focus!

Chapter 265 How to Upgrade Your Girlfriend

Aron woke up feeling quite happy. He couldn't help but smile when he remembered last night. Although they were both first-timers, he really hadn't disappointed at all, going five rounds before he was forced to stop as he realized the difference between his stamina and Rina's. He had to give her a breather, as she had nearly passed out from that many orgasms. And with it being her first sexual experience, he had nearly broken her, but they still fell asleep in each other's arms with smiles on their faces.

He turned his head and looked at Rina, who was sleeping with her head pillowed on his arm. It would have been a nightmare, if he was a normal person, but he was feeling nothing of the sort at all; his blood supply couldn't be interrupted by such a light head. It was just another benefit of being overpowered.

He watched her for a few minutes without doing anything until Rina's eyes fluttered and opened, meeting his.

Aron, who had been caught gazing at her, flashed an embarrassed smile that was mirrored by Rina as she remembered the events of the night before.

"Morning," Aron greeted her.

"Morning, how're you?" she replied.

"I'm fine, but I don't think you are," he said when he saw her expression.

Rina hid her face and mumbled, "I'm sore down there."

Aron was reminded of what he had done to her.

He pondered for a moment, then asked, "Do you want to undergo a round of genetic enhancements? It seems like your body won't be able to hold on and might break down if this continues any longer." He didn't think the soreness was just because of it being her first time; it was likely because he was just way too strong.

"You have genetic enhancement tech already?" she asked, quite surprised. She knew that since Aron had mentioned it, it meant that it was ready for commercial use. She was sure he wouldn't use her as a guinea pig.

"Yes. We've been using it for months now—nearly all the soldiers who come to the cube are receiving it the first time they log into the VR pods for military training."

"If it's like that, I'll thankfully accept it," she agreed. She didn't even consider turning it down, as the thought of feeling this pain every time they were intimate frightened her.

"Sure, let's do it now. The earlier you undergo the treatment, the earlier we can enjoy ourselves without worry." He smiled and immediately got out of bed, revealing the toned muscles that had been hidden by the bed sheet. The view elicited another gasp from Rina, who was struggling to stand as her legs were giving out on her.

"Let me help," Aron said as he picked her up to a seated position and helped her dress. Then he picked her up in a princess carry, brought her into the waiting elevator, and headed down.

Rina, still embarrassed, could only hide her face against his chest.

Reaching on the same basement floor where he had undergone the latest system evolution, he put her inside his pod. There were only two there—his, and the one that had been used by Vladimir. The Russian spy was now back in his country, still undergoing an investigation into his disappearance.

"This is one of the pods. It's mostly the same as the ones being used by the soldiers, but this one's my personal pod. Once you get in, you'll be anesthetized and the treatment will begin. The treatment takes a week, during which you won't be able to log out from the universal simulation. Once you're done, you'll wake up feeling much better," Aron said as he ruffled her messed-up hair as cover for applying a calming rune that he had prepared when he noticed how anxious she was.

"There's nothing to worry about. I'll join you in a few hours after the process starts," he said to the now completely calm Rina, who was quietly listening to him.

With a nod from her, the breathing apparatus dropped down and sealed itself to her face before the capsule door closed, then released the same fog it had when Aron was using it. She immediately drifted off to sleep before she could grow anxious again.

The following procedure was the same one that every soldier underwent; the only difference was that she had been injected with a current-generation serum that'd just finished going through trials in the lab city. It would also be rolled out to the soldiers, but not everyone would be given access to it. Instead, it would be used as a benefit and incentive in conjunction with other rewards.

Among the first batch to receive the new serum would be those that had performed well in both the war and the peacekeeping mission in Esparia. Once all of the soldiers finished their basic training in the cube, the pods would be upgraded and the new serum would be administered to those who had earned it.

When Aron saw that the process had begun, he locked the door and returned to his room. Logging into the simulation, he was immediately met by Nova, who had a knowing smile on her face.

[I expected you to drag it out for a while and only make a move when she was about to return home,] she teased. Aron had taken a huge leap in his relationship status and she was pleased, as she'd spent a long time watching their interactions with each other. She'd even been about to give up on waiting and personally act, but thanks to Rina's leap of faith, Aron had wasted no time in making a move of his own. With one stroke, he'd taken their relationship to the next level; not even one thought of taking it slower had come to their minds.

"I didn't expect it either," he said with a smile as he was once again reminded of the night before.

[Well congratulations on giving up your V card,] Nova chuckled, then added, [You could've asked me for help in that department and I would've created a beautiful woman to help you release your desires and gain experience. Then I wouldn't have been forced to resort to putting that knowledge in your subconscious.] She confirmed that Aron's weirdly experienced performance of the night before was all to her credit.

"How's everything going?" he asked, changing the topic. It was his first time feeling like this and he was still having trouble figuring out how he should react, so he decided to push it off until later to give him time to think and process things.

[I've already injected the genetic serum you picked out for her, and started the process of assimilating some of the important knowledge for her safety and other few important things. Once that's done downloading, I'll wake her up in the simulation. You'll have plenty of time there to deepen your relationship with her, as just having sex doesn't mean everything's sorted. You need to at least sit down and confess your feelings to her and reassure her that she isn't just a one night stand to you. After all, she gave you her first time,] Nova said, giving him solid advice despite her teasing tone.

Chapter 266 Oil, That is. Black Gold, Texas Tea

A week later.

Aron was going at it with Rina in one of the mansions built for him in the universal simulation, their tenth round of the day. That had been a frequent activity over the past week, since Aron had spent most of his time with her doing many different things... including skinship. And since there was no pain in the simulation, they constantly did it as if they were trying to make up for all of the time they had lived without it.

They had become completely addicted to each other.

Everything had happened after they'd clarified their relationship the moment Rina had woken up, as Aron didn't want to delay the conversation. He had seen many movies where any kind of delay at all would result in the main character losing their chance, so he went for it. And it seemed that she'd seen the same movies, since she had wanted to have 'The Talk' as soon as she woke up as well. Thus, they had officially started dating; it was a first for both of them.

In the real world, nothing much had happened over the week. The citizens of Eden had spent most of it discussing who the candidates in the upcoming presidential election would be. They were still sure that Alexander would win, though, as everyone who was asked had claimed that they would vote for him.

But all of that was before Friday, when Alexander took to the podium and announced something that no one had ever expected to hear: they'd discovered oil in their Exclusive Economic Zone. The citizens went ballistic, but the celebration was overshadowed when they heard that with the discovery of oil in just that location alone, they had become one of the top ten countries in the world in terms of oil reserves.

Together with that announcement came another about how they planned to extract it. And furthermore, Alexander mentioned how the citizens would benefit from having such vast natural resources. He had said with conviction that they were going to open the bidding for a contract to extract the oil, with all of the rights going to a single company that would be responsible for all of the drilling. So long as they followed the agreement to the letter, they would be fine; but if they were found to be malfeasant, they would immediately lose the rights to exploit the reserves and, if appropriate, issued further punishments according to law.

As for how the citizens in general would benefit from the discovery, he said the profits would be invested into implementing a universal health care system, while reiterating that their health care would be different from the rest of the countries that had it. Theirs would be focused on guaranteeing that everyone would get the treatment they need when they need it, without delay.

The rest of the world had different reactions based on where they were. Esparians were both envious and worried that the Edenians would discover similar resources in their country, and based on the surrender accord they had signed, they knew they would be doomed to forever share the profits from any discoveries. Some of them that didn't want it to happen went so far as praying that they didn't have any of the resources in the first place. And if they did discover anything, they definitely didn't want it to be discovered by the Edenians within the next six months. The article that they had thought was put into the accord just to fill space seemed to have backfired on them.

As for America and Europe, there were different reactions. The governments congratulated Eden on their massive discovery and hinted at being open to cooperation—as long as Eden awarded the contract to one of their oil companies, with this being the result of the lobbyist hired by these companies—but the citizens were split between congratulations and condolences. Congratulations on the discovery, and condolences on the soon-to-begin exploitation of their so-far unspoiled natural environment. In America, in particular, there was a flood of memes targeted at spreading their democratic ideals "a thousand pounds at a time".

But jokes aside, there was actually a real chance of some shady American oil lobbyist causing turmoil in Eden so they could have access to the oil there.

Still, the happiness of the Edenians didn't diminish at all; they were thrilled at having made such an important discovery.

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Aron, who had been cuddling Rina in bed and watching Alexander's press conference, said, "It's time to wake you up so you can meet your new body."

Their lovey dovey behavior had continued throughout the week, causing Nova to roll her eyes so many times that she risked her irises getting stuck to the top of her eye sockets. The constant PDA was cringey to the extreme.

"See you on the other side," Rina said, then kissed him and chose to log out so she could wake up.

Aron logged out as well, then headed to the secure pod room so he would be the first person she saw.

PSSSSSST

The mana was drained out of the pod as the lid opened, revealing Rina, whose evolved body had reached a divine level of beauty that had even Aron mesmerized for a moment.

The changes were enormous. And it wasn't just her breasts, as everything about her had become bigger and better than it previously was.

"Wow..." Aron said when Rina rose naked from the pod. The clothes she'd been wearing had been disintegrated to prevent any issues from arising due to ill-fitting clothing.

He picked up a towel and moved to cover her, while etching the appearance of the new Rina into his memory at the same time. Despite having done it in the VR moments ago, his body hadn't been involved; it was only satisfying for his brain.

As he covered her with the towel, he hugged her and kissed her forehead. Then he moved away so she could see herself in the mirror. She was shocked to find that every one of her features had been either enhanced or enlarged to fit the proportions of her new body. She had gone from 1.65 to 1.75 meters tall, reducing the height difference between her and Aron.

Her hair was more smooth and shiny, yet still thick. Her hazel eyes had lightened and gained something of a golden tint to them, and her lips had filled out, enhancing the appearance of her already naturally beautiful face.

Her breasts were bigger, along with her butt, and her hips had widened. And she had also lost all of the hair on her body below her neck, something that every woman would wish for if they found a genie's lamp.

"What inner enhancements did she receive?" Aron asked the empty room while Rina was busy marveling at her new appearance.

[Her bones and muscles have been strengthened. The increase in strength was gradually mirrored in the simulation, so she should be able to control it. Also, a few more enhancements were made to the rest of her body so it can function as it's supposed to. For instance, she's now immune to diseases and will never be allergic to anything. Her memory has been enhanced, and she has perfect eyesight. She'll never....] Nova listed all of the changes Rina had undergone while she and Aron listened to the AI's report.

Rina hugged Aron hard and murmured, "Thank you so, so much for this."

"No need for thanks. I also did it because I wanted to ensure your safety," he said.

Rina raised her head and gazed at Aron, who wasted no time and immediately moved his head down to make out with her and start the first in-person round of 'battling' of the day.

Chapter 267 A New Era Begins For Eden

The rest of the month, the citizens of Eden had wide smiles on their faces whenever they remembered the announcement, and speculation on who would win the bid ran rampant.

Together with that, a few opposition parties had already been formed and announced their candidacy for president. Leading the officially formed parties were the other revolutionary leaders, who were very jealous of Alexander's position. They each trusted that they had enough support to win, between their followers and the recognition they had as leaders of the revolution against Adolf. This belief stemmed from believing that Alexander just got lucky and was missed when they got arrested as he was the leader with the fewest direct followers, after all.

Although many people would have thought that forming an alliance would make it a bit easier for them to win the election, that wasn't an easy thing to do. Not many people would give up their opportunity to grasp power when they had it, something an alliance would require. There was only one president, after all. It was the same dilemma as Jack Sparrow faced, with everyone voting for themselves until they decided to go their own ways.

Other than those parties, there was another one that attracted quite a lot of attention. Not because of the benefits they promised the citizens, but because of what they promised to do to Alexander when they won the election.

Their first promise was that they would immediately investigate Alexander for embezzling government funds during the transition. And they didn't stop there; they wanted to pardon Adolf. And with that, people knew who they were: former beneficiaries of the Adolf dictatorship that used to live like kings.

Their party was supported in large part by the people who had been living their best lives during the dictator's regime and were fondly looking back on those times.

What people didn't know was that nearly all the members of that party were still being investigated for things they did during Adolf's reign and had chosen to enter politics in hopes of being able to avoid prosecution. If the government moved to prosecute them during the campaign or anytime after that, they could frame it as Alexander using the government to suppress his political opponents rather than seeking justice; it would point to him as being just another dictator—like the man he had 'illegally' deposed—covering himself in the false flag of democracy.

Alas, Alexander didn't care about them at all, as he wasn't worried about the pressure from the criminal community in the first place.

And that wasn't the only thing giving him confidence. While the other parties were rushing from one place to another, kissing babies and shaking hands in an attempt to gather as many votes as possible, he remained focused on his work as the president of the country. He wasn't planning to campaign at all, and whenever he was asked about his lackadaisical approach to campaigning, his answer was, "As the interim president, people already know how I plan to lead and what my goals are. If they don't know that by now, then I've already failed."

He didn't care at all about all of the political mudslinging and other 'rules of the game'.

While the presidential campaigns were in full swing and with the reminder of other elections, which were still five months away, those who were aiming to run for a governmental position started joining different parties and announcing their intention to run for office as members of parliament. Alexander's party received the highest number of potential candidates, as everyone was sure that the moment they received the endorsement and support of his party, winning would be the rule and not the exception.

That phenomenon gave him a massive political following that were constantly being given reasons on why they should like him more and more, as there were new and beneficial things happening in Eden. Plus, he had won a war with their historical enemy, setting his influence in stone; even if he somehow failed to win the presidency, he would still be a kingmaker.

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Today was one of those days where his followers were being given another thing to brag about, as Alexander was standing in front of a massive power transformer surrounded by a tall fence. He was waiting for the perfect moment to address the audience and cameras.

In front of the transformer's fence were two posts with a brilliant red ribbon suspended between them, tied in a bow. It was the day that Aron's utility infrastructure would go into operation in Edenia, and at precisely noon, Alexander would cut the ribbon.

"During the previous regime, most of our national funds were being used to enrich the former dictator. There was little to nothing being used to nurture the citizens of this great nation. And the corruption trickled down from there. The little money that was spent on enriching the lives of our citizens was embezzled by lower-ranked officials after most of it going into the pockets of a dictator, leaving only crumbs of the initial amount. Our citizens have faced unclean water, constant interruptions in electrical services, and raw sewage spills, all while paying high prices for the 'privilege' of service. But no longer!

"It ends today, as this date marks the beginning of a continuous supply of electricity and clean water at affordable prices. Though we begin today in Edenia, over the next month, the citizens in every city will enjoy the same clean water, reliable internet, consistent electrical power, and the comfort of working plumbing. Today is the dawning of a new era for the people of our great Eden, the era of unlimited services!" Alexander said, eliciting applause and cheering from those attending the ribbon cutting ceremony.

"With this completion, a few changes will come into our life along with the new utility infrastructure. From today onward, the price of electricity and water will start and continue falling until it reaches a stable price point. The same holds for sewer assessments, as well as internet service. We've worked hand-in-hand with Connect, who has guaranteed stable service at the lowest possible prices thanks to their investments...." Alexander continued his speech as people periodically cheered and applauded, then finished by inviting Felix to join him in cutting the ribbon.

As Felix walked to the podium, he also received only slightly less cheers than the president, as his was one of the most-loved companies in the country. Their reputation had even been stellar during Adolf's regime, as it had been providing cheap, consistent, and fast internet. And even with a country-wide monopoly, it didn't seem as if they were planning on increasing the fees to an exorbitant level. In any normal country, that would force the government to intervene and break the company apart; but in a dictatorship like the one Adolf headed, everything was negotiable... for the right price. So the fact that Connect hadn't gouged them had won their hearts, not to mention the active propaganda campaign run by Nova.

Felix joined Alexander on stage as the president moved in front of the podium and offered one handle of the oversized ceremonial scissors to him. He took the offered handle, glanced at the time in the HUD of his glasses, and said, "Let today be written in history as the day that the citizens of Eden witnessed the dawning of a new era."

He cut the ribbon with a smile on his face as cameras flashed.

Chapter 268 Parting

"Even after being enhanced, I still can't handle you.... What the hell did they inject you with?" Rina asked as she crawled away from Aron, still feeling the aftereffects of their last battle. She still couldn't believe the stamina of that man.

"Mine was made specifically for me, not for general use. So it was specifically tuned for my body," he answered as Rina moved to his side and laid her head on his chest.

"I need to talk to you about something," she said after catching her breath. A certain calm washed over her as Aron ran his hand up and down her spine; she quite enjoyed it.

"Is it about returning home?" he asked, as he knew it was bound to come.

"Yes. I need to finish dealing with my brother now that enough time has passed. He should be fully assured that I'm still looking for evidence of the attacker, so now's a good time for me to surprise him and end this farce once and for all. Then I'll take my place as the family head in waiting, which should allow me to be of more help to you. After all, it seems like you've unintentionally started a fight with the Morgans... and they'll never take it lying down. They'll try their hardest to return the favor many times over, and I need to at least try and help you with that," she said as she idly fingerpainted his chest using shadows as paint.

"So, when do you plan to return?" he asked, as he knew that he would only be able to occasionally see her in real life, unless she decided to permanently move to Eden. He knew he could ask her to stay, and she most likely would, but he also knew that she wasn't suited to be a trophy wife. She had spent her entire life in a bid to overtake her brother, and asking her to remain for him would leave a shadow in her heart and cost her many things in life.

"Next week. There's an upcoming board meeting that I can use to surprise them with my evidence so he won't have time to come up with excuses. Although I could solve them, it'd take some effort, effort that I don't wish to expend." Rina had already thought up a rough plan.

"No problem, you can take my plane back. Also, you don't have to worry about him pulling any more bullshit, as Alex should be enough to handle them now," Aron said. He wouldn't ask her to stay for himself. He was only a luxury private jet flight away, if they missed each other, and the moment she became the heir she could just move to Eden with him. Plus, they could always meet in VR while they were separated.

With that out of the way, they continued enjoying each other's company and touring places on the island they hadn't yet seen over the past month.

He had already introduced her to his parents—this time as his girlfriend—but they didn't seem surprised at all and just jokingly revealed that he was as dense as lead to have taken so long to realize her hints. His younger brother had just laughed and asked her to play some games with him; he had taken quite a liking to the beautiful lady.

When they asked if they had mistaken something about her, as they remembered her being shorter, Aron explained that she'd always been this tall. Maybe they were just experiencing a Mandela effect. His parents grudgingly agreed, as they couldn't find any evidence to disprove that she wasn't tall before other than their memory.

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"Have you already submitted the bid?" Aron asked Felix during their monthly meeting.

"Yes, and it's passed the first round so we won't need to submit a corrected one," Felix replied at the same time as he forwarded a copy of the bid.

"Who else is submitting bids?"

"Nearly everyone in the oil industry from around the entire world tried using their experience in the field to gain an advantage over the others. Some are even using their countries to pressure Alexander and the committee into choosing them. Russia and China hinted that they're in the final

phase of their evaluation and would be making their decision on whether to allow Eden into the UN soon," Felix sneered. Alexander was in quite a dilemma.

"You don't have to worry about that, as we're guaranteed to win the bid. We're basically the only option for him, since by picking our company, he'll be supporting the domestic industry. Plus, he won't be siding with any specific country. That neutral stance will prevent any of them from trying to use the situation to retaliate, since doing that would only show their pettiness and result in other countries coming to our defense," Aron said in a single breath. He had long planned for that exact outcome before they'd even announced the discovery to the public.

"Makes sense," Felix responded. He wondered how his friend had gotten so good at politicking and scheming, which would be considered abnormal behavior from the person he'd known for so long.

"Sarah, how many users are we at?"

"We've got 1.5 billion active accounts, but the growth has started stagnating. Nearly half of everyone on the internet has already created an account," she answered.

"You can stop focusing on attracting new users and move to figuring out how to keep the ones we have active. As for drawing in new accounts, there's no need to worry about that. Soon, Pangea will be integrated into every product we make, meaning they'll require an account in order to use anything of ours," Aron said, shifting the company's approach toward making Pangea the most addictive app they could. It was a necessary move, since in order to control the public narrative outside of the tiny country of Eden, he needed all eyes on Pangea, not any other social media app.

Following those instructions, the three discussed different things regarding the development of the company and what their next product would be. Aron only said it would be a physical product, not just software, but to get it into production, Eden's industrial foundation needed to be built first. Otherwise, it would just be a big fat nothing burger.

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Later that day, after the meeting.

"Where's Rina?" Sarah teasingly asked, as she and Felix had also been introduced to her as Aron's girlfriend. It was their second simultaneous shock—first, Aron had a girlfriend? Since when? How did she manage to drill through the bedrock his skull was built out of?

The second shock was her new appearance. They had both seen, and worked, with her before her enhancement, so since Aron couldn't gaslight that away as they had knowledge of the serum and he had already offered it to them before but they had postponed it due to working on the projects, so when he told them it was the result of the serum they wasted no time and had asked to use it and undergo an abbreviated enhancement procedure.

"She's already headed home, as she needs to finish something," Aron answered.

"That's too bad. I wanted to talk with her for a bit, as she's quite knowledgeable in business and has given me quite a few insights."

"You can always see her in VR—you know that, right?" Aron replied, knowing that Sarah was just teasing him about his girlfriend having left.

Chapter 269 Aliens Did It!

As Aron's jet was carrying Rina on its final approach to LaGuardia airport, she was looking out of the window, not tired of the view at all.

Although the Rothschilds could afford such a massive plane, they wouldn't use it as a personal jet; the upkeep needed to have it continuously flight ready was massive. And for a family that already had more than ten private planes and could afford to charter any aircraft from any airline in America at a moment's notice, it didn't make sense to buy them.

The landing was as smooth as it was in Eden, and the unloading proceeded apace. Rina disembarked the plane, got in one of the cars, and left without wasting too much time. She even bypassed the security screening again, having already handled it at the immigration checkpoint at the airport in Eden.

No Rothschild would ever have to stand in the long lines at immigration like normal people.

As the convoy was driving back to her house, she passed the location where the previous attack had taken place. Although everything had been taken away for the investigation, traces of yellow crime scene tape remained. Some people had even put flowers up at a makeshift memorial for those who'd died there.

Although it had been more than a month since the attack, the case was still ongoing. Every time they found a piece of evidence, it would disprove one or more of the investigators' theories. At this point, they were almost ready to throw their hands in the air and claim it was an alien attack just so the FBI agents could go home to their families for at least one night.

As they passed through, Rina was watching the news when a story attracted her attention and, after watching it, she found herself smiling.

"Moments ago, armed attackers, who were trying to rob what they thought was a secret bank, ended up assaulting a DARPA research facility. The attackers were apprehended by security after successfully entering the building...."

Rina immediately knew what the event they were talking about was without even having to watch the report any longer, so she turned off the satellite tv and returned to staring outside the window. She couldn't wait for the board meeting; anticipation had her almost as twitchy as an ant on a hot frying pan.

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In the Rothschild compound, a board meeting was taking place with one of the chairs in the room empty, as if someone was supposed to be sitting there.

"I suggest we should invest in Eden, as, with the recent discovery of oil there, I suspect they'll discover more of it. It'll either be in Eden or Esparia, and I think it'll be within the next five months. If we invest now, we should be able to steal a march on the Morgans, who seem to have already invested in Esparia. Even if we don't count the military support they gave to that third world shithole during their playground spat, the Esparian government is still heavily indebted to them from the monetary support that went along with the materiel support for that joke of a conflict.

"By investing now, we'll be flipping a middle finger to them, both financially and physically, and it would count as our first act of retaliation. Especially if we support Eden and help them discover as many resources in Esparia as possible within the remaining five months as stipulated in their surrender accord. Doing so would put us in the position to benefit from the Morgans' losses, while they'll be unable to do anything of significance to stop us," said a board member, bringing up the topic of choosing when to invest in Eden and Esparia.

"It should also be easy for us, since Miss Rina seems to have already formed connections with the higher-ups of Eden. She'll be a suitable person to be responsible for our investments there, as she already has a foundation," said Hebel, inserting a plug for Rina, who wasn't in attendance.

"It seems like you people continue to forget your position, or has the quality of our branch families fallen so low?" Arieih entered the conversation when he saw the discussion turning in favor of Rina, who wasn't even there! Besides, it was coming from one of the people he knew had betrayed him and chosen her side, though secretly. That was the last straw, and he decided to cut through and start with a disrespectful remark. He didn't even care that the family head was in the room with them.

"What do you mean by that?" Hebel asked. He wouldn't take that insult without doing anything, so he asked for clarification to see if Arieih would take back his statement or not. That in itself would count as a humiliation for him, and if he decided to double down, it would provoke a reaction from the family head.

Arieih, knowing what Hebel meant by that question, didn't care and continued, "We're the fucking Rothschilds, and we get what we want no matter what! But we do it while maintaining our family's dignity. So how disrespectful is it when someone from the board is heard proposing we cooperate with some third world shithole like they're our equal? Are you that dumb, or is your self-esteem just that low? With countries of that level, we don't cooperate—we demand! They have no choice in the matter!" Arieih stared Hebel down.

"You're right about that, but don't you think you look like someone who just wants to flaunt his superiority when it isn't needed?" Hebel said. He didn't deny anything Arieih had said, as that would just make the meeting go off on a tangent and waste everyone's time.

"We need to create a first impression that won't allow any disrespectful behavior in the future," Arieih said. He was adamant that they go there with their noses in the sky.

"And how do you imagine that'll happen?" Uria cut in and asked.

"I think I'm more suitable than my dear sister. Especially with my position in the family... I need to do something to return the favor of the Morgans, no?" Arieih said, finally revealing his fangs.

"I'm against it. Everyone knows that Miss Rina is already established there, unlike you, who only discovered its existence when the news showed her being there. By which point, may I remind you, she seemed to have already established her channels of communication. So I think we should make her the point of contact for the relationship between Eden and us, as she discovered them first. I'm sure she already has an idea on how to approach them and build business relationships," Uram said. He wanted to directly block Arieih from taking Rina's place and credit.

When Arie had heard about her spending a month there, he couldn't help but smile. He knew that the month she had spent there wasn't because she was building some bullshit 'business relationship' or anything, but because she was investigating the attack on her and was too afraid to come back.

At least until she knew no more attempts would be made on her life, that is.

He was positive that she wouldn't call for help from the family, as that would be seen as a sign of weakness. It would also lower her value in the eyes of the board members. And as long as she didn't have any evidence backing her accusation of who her attacker was, no one would believe anything she said, let alone who she suspected, so she would be punished for accusing someone without evidence.

Although he was curious and angered by the disrespect Terry showed him by ignoring his calls, all of that rage had disappeared earlier when he received the news that Terry and Katrina had been arrested while attempting to rob a DARPA research facility. It seemed absurd to him, but he didn't care at all; he just called a few people to have them "commit suicide in their cells", as he didn't want the man to be brought back to the compound at all. That wouldn't be a good thing for Arie, no matter the circumstances of the man's return.

But now that that had been handled, he could be said to be the most happy man in the compound. With a huge smile on his face, he said, "Her being there for more than a month and not even coming back for a meeting should be indication enough that she's struggling to establish relationships there. That's another reason I nominated myself for that position, as she's still inexperienced in the field of business." He was trying to paint Rina's absence from the meeting as incompetence and disrespect, seeking small gains at the cost of big losses in the competition between the siblings.

"You don't have to worry about that," came a cold voice as the door was opened and Rina entered the room. Her confidence gave Arie a mild scare, as he had a hunch that things were about to go very, very wrong for him. But he didn't understand how, as he was positive that he had cleaned up after himself very well.

Rina walked around the table and took her seat while maintaining eye contact with her murderous brother.

Chapter 270 He Done Fucked Up

Aron was in his uniform, inspecting the fourth batch of graduating Esparian soldiers. They stood at attention in front of him as he passed through them.

It had become a tradition for him to inspect each batch of graduates. Every man had had a dream of being the general of a massive army at one point in their lives, and Aron had actually accomplished it. Thus, he didn't skimp on the pomp and circumstance at all.

As he walked through their formation, he couldn't help but smile when he remembered the reaction of the first batch of Esparian soldiers who woke up and found themselves in VR for training.

When the knowledge of what was going to happen to them had been assimilated into their minds (Athena had determined that explaining it in words was a waste of time, so she had begun using direct assimilation instead), the expressions on their faces were truly something to behold. They even had goosebumps all over their virtual bodies when they came to the realization of what kind of monsters they had fought in the war.

And with that realization came gratitude. They felt nothing but grateful to Eden, who, despite having such massive power at their disposal, had decided to go easy on them and not massacre them like chickens in a slaughterhouse.

Even from the little knowledge they had received to get them accustomed to VR, they could extrapolate that if Eden were to go all out, the entire war would have lasted less than an hour. But Esparia would have to spend more than a decade to recover from that single hour of damage that would have rained down upon them.

With the start of their training, they realized that their assumptions seemed to have stemmed from having eyes but being unable to see Mount Tai. That was especially the case when they discovered the enemies they would be fighting against in their training with their lives on the line.

They had begun by fighting enemies that made them feel despair, despite the advanced tech now at their disposal, and those weren't even the worst enemies they had to face in their training.

Upon finishing his inspection, Aron left to allow the ceremony to continue and the graduates to enjoy themselves. They wouldn't be able to do that if he remained there, so he invited Athena to take over and continue the ceremony. Once it was over, the soldiers left their pods and headed to their assigned rooms to rest and wait for transportation to take them to the port. Then they would be returned to Esparia to begin their mission as members of the ARES Esparia division.

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"Did it start already?" Aron asked as Nova teleported him to one of his mansions inside the universal simulation. It was surrounded in a time field that was synchronized with the time in reality. From there, he would watch the Rothschild board meeting through Rina's glasses. Naturally, it was with her knowledge and consent, of course.

[Yes, she just entered a few seconds ago,] Nova said as she accelerated the time dilation in the mansion to 2:1 and restarted the recording, showing him what had taken place earlier. Then she returned the time dilation to 1:1 so Aron could watch things play out in real time.

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"Eden is my domain. Don't reach your grubby hands out to take what's mine. I've been working on it for a long time," Rina said with confidence. She wasn't worried about it being taken from her at all.

"It would've been that way if you'd gone there with the family's blessing. But since you didn't, then the family rules apply. When it comes to the family's interest, it supersedes your own and the board members will vote to decide what's yours and what's the family's," Ariei sneered. He was positive that, if it really went to a vote, he would win. To the best of his knowledge, Rina had only successfully managed to buy three board members. And that, in and of itself, didn't guarantee that they would vote for her. At least if Hebel wasn't included, as he seemed to have completely chosen her side.

"Sure, let's vote," Rina said. She turned and looked at the board members and said, "Those in favor of Ariei being responsible for the family's plans in Eden, raise your hands." She had a calm smile on her face, causing Ariei to feel anxious.

Not one single person raised their hand, catching both Arieih and the family head off guard; neither had expected such a unanimous vote.

'Looks like I'm getting old,' the family head thought to himself when he realized that Rina had already brought all the board members to her side.

"Those in favor of leaving me to continue my business without interference?" she asked.

Once again, Arieih and the family head were left dumbfounded as the vote was unanimous. Every board member, other than the family head and Arieih, had raised their hands.

The secretary took over and said, "With the votes tallied, the board has unanimously decided that we won't be entering Eden and will leave Miss Rina to continue her plans. The family will completely support her in her goals." With that, the vote was officially over and could only be overturned by bringing evidence that the initial decision was wrong, prompting another vote.

Rina turned to Arieih and, with a smile that hid daggers behind it, asked, "Anything you want to say?"

"H... how!?" he stammered, his brain still not registering what had happened. He'd thought that Rina only had three board members on her side and was being naive to think that they would even vote for her! But instead, it seemed that he was the naive one, as he hadn't even realized that he had no support on his side any more.

"It doesn't concern you," she said as she turned to the family head, who had a proud smile on his face. As he looked at his daughter with the eyes of a proud father, she said, "I'd like to report a member who broke the family rules and made an attempt on my life."

The smile completely disappeared from the family head's face, then was replaced by rage at the idea that a family member had attempted to take the life of a main family's descendant. "Who is it, and what evidence do you have to back your accusation?" he asked, speaking for the first time since the board meeting had begun.

"It's all here," she said and removed a USB stick from her purse—a custom luxury gift from Nova—then extended it to the secretary.

Immediately understanding what was wanted of her, she took the thumb drive and inserted it into the computer that was linked to the projector. There was one folder on the thumb drive, and within it was an audio recording of what had transpired in Arieih's office shortly before Nova had her unplanned meltdown, and a few image files.

When the secretary clicked on the recording, the computer was immediately taken over by Nova and what was being shown on the projector changed.

It began playing the recording of the conversation between Charlotte and Terry. The sound visualization had Terry and Charlotte's headshots on either side of it, alternately brightening and dimming when to show which of them was speaking.

Arieih couldn't believe what was happening. He was almost convinced that he was in a nightmare as he felt the weight of consequences looming over him and settling on his shoulders. He'd been so sure that it would be impossible to record anything in his or his secretary's office, since he had them

swept for bugs on a daily basis. And as impossible as it would be to bug their offices, it was even more so for the phone call that was taking place, since it was from a brand-new burner phone to another brand-new burner and had taken place in one of those 'secure' locations!

But what he had failed to consider was the possibility of the recording being taken straight from the memory of one of the participants in the call. Who could blame him for missing that, though?

"You need to finish what you started," said the caller, Charlotte.

"I need time, money, and information to accomplish it without any problems," Terry's voice replied.

"I'll email you an account number. Use that money to solve any problems that arise. You have a month to take action," she replied.

As the recording reached that part, the screenshot of a bank account appeared on the projector screen. It showed the amount of money in it from before the call, and what had been used over the month following the call. Everything was annotated, noting how much was withdrawn or transferred and where or to whom it went.

When Ariele saw the beginning of the recording, he knew he done fucked up.