

The Lustful Time Lord's Revenge

Chapter 231: Chapter 231 - Underground Gathering

I stopped, catching my breath. Cassandra also stopped, her eyes wary, her staff ready.

"Give up," she said, her voice clear despite the wind. "You can't get close. My speed is no less than yours."

I smiled faintly. "Who said I need to get close?"

Cassandra frowned.

I raised [Mindrender], then threw it.

The sword shot forward like a javelin, spinning through the air, straight at Cassandra.

She was surprised, but still managed to create a windshield.

BOOM!

[Mindrender] bounced off, but that was just a distraction.

While Cassandra focused on my sword, I'd already run sideways, using the momentum to approach from a different angle.

Cassandra realized too late. She spun, swinging her staff to release a wind blade, but I was already too close.

My fist struck her wrist. The staff flew from her grasp, tumbling several meters. Cassandra screamed in surprise, but I didn't stop. My other hand grabbed her neck, pushing her back until her spine hit the barrier fence.

"Y-YOU—!"

"Defeated," I said flatly.

Cassandra fell silent. In her eyes, fear mixed with defeat. She couldn't fight at this close range, mages were always weak in close combat.

The referee raised his hand. "CASSANDRA MORWELL CANNOT CONTINUE THE MATCH! VICTORY GOES TO ADAM SOCHERON!"

NINE STARS ACADEMY: 4 WINS – 0 LOSSES

ARCLIGHT ACADEMY: 0 WINS – 4 LOSSES

"FOUR! FOUR CONSECUTIVE VICTORIES! ADAM SOCHERON HAS SINGLE-HANDEDLY DEFEATED FOUR ARCLIGHT REPRESENTATIVES! THIS IS UNEXPECTED DOMINATION!"

I retrieved [Mindrender] from the floor and returned to my position. My breathing was starting to get slightly heavy, but still controlled.

On the Arclight bench, the atmosphere grew increasingly grim. Several representatives already had their heads down, not daring to look. Others bit their lips, holding back frustration.

But the fight wasn't over.

Their fifth representative was a man named Levi Drellan, B-Rank—he descended with a mixed expression of fear and determination.

He fought well, but after a few minutes, I managed to defeat him.

Their sixth representative was a man named Ezra Redmen, also B-Rank—he descended with reckless abandon. He attacked without pattern, without strategy, just swinging his sword desperately. Maybe their instructor told him to "wound" me as much as possible, drain my stamina before Leonhardt descended.

But he was too careless. I dodged his attacks easily, and one punch to the stomach was enough to knock him out.

Their seventh representative suffered the same fate. A man named Darkos Mettule descended with spirit, but without adequate technique, he was like a child playing with a sword before me.

NINE STARS ACADEMY: 7 WINS – 0 LOSSES

ARCLIGHT ACADEMY: 0 WINS – 7 LOSSES

The Host had nearly lost his voice, but he kept shouting with whatever energy remained. "SEVEN! SEVEN CONSECUTIVE VICTORIES! ADAM SOCHERON HAS SINGLE-HANDEDLY DEFEATED SEVEN ARCLIGHT REPRESENTATIVES!"

Arclight's eighth representative was Percy Merres, the remaining A-Rank besides Leonhardt, and now another woman. She descended with heavy steps, her face pale. She knew she would lose—everyone knew. But she still descended, because that was her duty.

The fight against her was quite intense. Percy was an experienced fighter, with solid swordsmanship. But after seven consecutive fights, my fatigue was beginning to show. My wounds were accumulating—small cuts on my arms, bruises in several places, a little blood at my temple.

But I could still fight.

After ten minutes of fighting, I managed to take her down. [Mindrender] slashed across her chest enough to keep her from rising.

NINE STARS ACADEMY: 8 WINS – 0 LOSSES

ARCLIGHT ACADEMY: 0 WINS – 8 LOSSES

"EIGHT! EIGHT VICTORIES! ADAM SOCHERON HAS DEFEATED EIGHT ARCLIGHT REPRESENTATIVES! ONLY TWO REMAIN—WILL THEY FINALLY SEND LEONHARDT HALSTROM, THEIR STAR FIGHTER?! AND CAN HE STOP ADAM'S MOMENTUM?!"

I stood in the center of the arena, my breathing heavy, my body aching in many places. Blood flowed from several wounds, but I was still standing upright. My eyes were fixed on the Arclight bench, on the only representative left.

Leonhardt Halstrom.

He stood. His face was serious, his sharp blue eyes staring straight at me. His hand reached for the long sword at his waist, ready to draw it.

But before he could step forward, a woman who seemed to be their instructor beside him placed a hand on his arm. She said something, and Leonhardt frowned.

Finally, Leonhardt sat back down. Their instructor pointed to someone else—the unfortunate ninth representative, who would be the next challenger.

I exhaled slowly.

Fighting eight times in a row was exhausting. But I was still standing.

And I would keep standing until no one was left.

"Come on," I said, my voice hoarse. "Who's next?"

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An old man with disheveled brown hair and an unkempt beard hurried through a dark underground corridor. His steps were rushed, his robes dragging across the damp stone floor. The iron door before him opened by itself with a soft creak, as if it had been waiting for his arrival.

Eldertree stepped inside.

The room was spacious, perhaps an old basement warehouse or ancient storage chamber. Dim lamps in the corners cast long shadows that danced across the stone walls. And in the center of the room, five people had already gathered.

Each had its own unique presence.

The first sat on an old wooden crate, a large man with arms covered in wolf tattoos that crept up to his neck. Bald, with a thin goatee, his eyes narrowed like a snake ready to strike. He wore a sleeveless leather vest, revealing bulging muscles with every movement. At his waist hung a pair of silver axes.

The second stood near the wall, a middle-aged woman with long grey hair tied in a ponytail. Her body was lean, clad in tight black clothing, and on both hands she wore steel gauntlets with sharp claws like a tiger's. Her eyes were cold, showing no emotion as they scanned Eldertree from head to toe.

The third sat cross-legged on the floor, a young man with pale white hair and dark circles under his eyes. He looked to be in his early twenties, but his aura was strange—like an undead creature that shouldn't exist in the world of the living.

The fourth leaned against an iron pillar in the center of the room, an athletic man with blazing red hair and a thin beard. He held a bottle in one hand, occasionally taking swigs while smirking cynically. On his back, a large dark red sword was sheathed—a blade whose heat could be felt even from here.

And the fifth...

A woman with long flowing blonde hair, her olive skin glowing softly in the dim light. Her body was proportioned with tempting curves, wrapped in a thin black dress that accentuated the beautiful lines of her waist and hips. She sat in a wooden chair with one leg crossed, her left hand propping up her chin, her green eyes watching Eldertree with a mixture of curiosity and amusement.

Yumi.

But the one who commanded attention and radiated authority wasn't any of them. Not even the seductive Yumi.

In the center of the room stood a large chair, and in that chair sat a middle-aged man.

His black hair was streaked with silver at the temples, his face harsh with a firm jaw and sharp grey eyes like an eagle's. He wore a long coat in dark grey, almost black, with a slightly worn standing collar. On his head, a black cowboy hat was tilted, casting a shadow over part of his face. In his left hand, a cigarette smoldered, its smoke curling slowly toward the ceiling.

Ashen Tide. One of the highest leaders of the Abyss Syndicate. Currently hiding in Gatehaven city.

Eldertree stopped before them, breathless. His aged eyes moved from one face to another, searching for something—perhaps signs or clues.

"What really happened to Black Dragon?" His voice trembled, half angry, half afraid. "Did he do something? Who killed him?"

He stared directly at Ashen Tide. "Was it you?"

Ashen Tide didn't answer. He simply drew on his cigarette, exhaling smoke slowly.

Yumi spoke first. Her voice was sweet, slightly teasing, as if discussing the weather rather than a murder conspiracy.

"Old man, why are you so tense?" She smiled, her eyes sparkling mischievously. "Relax! You should know better than to be tense in the wrong place and atmosphere."

The wolf-tattooed man on the wooden crate chuckled softly. "She's right. Sit down, old man. You're making me nervous just looking at you."

The clawed woman by the wall snorted. "Tense or not, Black Dragon is dead. That's the problem."

The pale-haired young man with dark circles murmured softly, barely audible, "He died... beheaded... his head separated from his body..."

The red-haired man with the hot sword took another swig of his drink, then said, "The important thing isn't how he died, but why. And who did it."

Ashen Tide finally spoke.

"Black Dragon's death has nothing to do with us." His voice was deep, calm, like a flowing river. "That's also why we called you. We want to find out the reason."

He stared at Eldertree with his sharp grey eyes. "What was he involved in that led to his death? Did he offend someone?"

Eldertree frowned. His wrinkled hands twisted the edge of his robe.

"I... I don't know." His voice wavered. "So it wasn't you? I thought... I thought maybe he was caught, or maybe he tried to flee, or..."

"Or what?" interrupted the clawed woman.

"Or maybe he had his own business without our knowledge," Eldertree continued. "But I don't know anything. All this time, he only reported ordinary things—Guardian Council movements, internal decisions, things like that. Nothing suspicious."

Ashen Tide drew on his cigarette again. "Then who killed him?"

Eldertree shook his head.

"I don't know. Perhaps another criminal organization?" He paused, then added, "Or maybe... maybe someone inside the Guardian Council who suspected him."

"Maybe," said Yumi, her tone now more serious. "But if someone was suspicious, why act only now? Black Dragon has been with you for years."

"And why only him?" added the wolf-tattooed man. "Why not you too?"

Eldertree flinched. "M-Me? Perhaps because I'm more careful. Or maybe... maybe they don't know about me yet."

"Or maybe they do know, and they're keeping you alive as bait," said the red-haired man sharply, smirking cynically. "To find us."

The atmosphere in the room suddenly shifted. Eldertree paled.

"What do you mean?"

Ashen Tide raised his hand, signaling for calm.

"Don't jump to conclusions. There's no evidence yet." He looked at Eldertree again. "But you need to be more vigilant. From now on, reduce contact with us. Report through indirect channels. Don't let them trace you here."

Eldertree nodded. "Yes, yes, I understand."

"And find out what happened," Ashen Tide continued. "Who killed Black Dragon and why. That's the top priority."

"Alright, I'll do it."

The wolf-tattooed man stood. "Then the meeting is over. Old man, you'd better go back quickly before you're caught."

Eldertree turned, walking quickly toward the iron door. His steps were still hurried, his robe nearly catching on the door frame. Soon, he disappeared behind the automatically closing door.

Yumi stretched her body, yawning sweetly. "I'm bored. Do we have to keep hiding here? This city is stifling."

"Just don't go out without an escort," said the clawed woman. "Your pretty face is too easily remembered."

Yumi smiled. "Oh, Lia, are you jealous?"

"Don't call me Lia, you bitch."

Ashen Tide drew on his cigarette once more, then extinguished it in his palm. The last smoke curled upward, then vanished.

"We'll wait a few days. Once things calm down, we'll move the headquarters again."

The others nodded.

They didn't know that outside, in an abandoned building not far from that underground room, two figures were watching them.