

The Mafia 291

Chapter 291 Time to Think

Vicente saw no problem in joining a group like Kohen's. In some situations, someone in his position could gain a lot by joining such a group.

The problem for Vicente, which made him hesitate to join a group, was the autonomy he would definitely have to give up by joining someone or some force stronger than himself.

Could he still get his revenge if he joined Kohen's group? What about his business? Would the temple allow him to explore the possibilities of the underworld?

Vicente currently ran a brothel, a casino, bars and offered protection to civilians and merchants in Millfall. He was also interested in getting involved in loans and other services offered by the underworld.

Would a group like this man's accept a guest with such connections?

That was the problem that made Vicente uncomfortable with Kohen's proposal, no matter how good it seemed at first glance.

He was a criminal and knew how to grow up as a person who followed the mafia's models. But what path would he take if he were just another member of the Congregation of Revelation? An ordinary path?

He could do that, give up his business, and still grow with the support of such a group. But he wouldn't be in control of his own destiny, and he would be just another in a crowd of talented people following basically the same paths.

Would that satisfy Vicente in his second life? A path controlled by others?

"Your suggestion is tempting, Senior Reeves. But what would happen to my Mazzanti family? What would happen to my desire for vengeance?" Vicente said in a neutral tone, but one that Kohen immediately noticed was full of determination.

This young man before him wasn't just anyone who would give up everything for guaranteed support and a peaceful future. It wouldn't be easy to convince him!

"The temple is not against personal retribution. As long as it doesn't affect the functioning and continuity of the temple itself, you could get permission for your vendettas after a while". Kohen said, not knowing what kind of feud and adversary Cesar had but knowing that every magician had their own story. "As for your family, there's not much that can be done. Members of the temple have to be totally dedicated to it.

So until you become a full member of our faith, you would have to separate yourself from the Mazzanti family... However, this is not immediate. You could continue to lead your family until you become a High-level Mage. Only then would you have to disassociate yourself from the family completely."

"I see... That's a problem for me, Senior Reeves. As small as my family is, I don't know if I'd be willing to give it up when I'm stronger." Vicente said, indicating to Kohen that he had no intention of accepting the invitation.

Kohen became more serious. "Why don't you think about this for a while? You've come a long way recently, and if you try to absorb a green pentagram when you reach the 3rd-stage, you'll have some problems.

We'll be able to help you solve them, so don't give a definitive answer now. You may regret it in a few years."

The Ironcrest Awakening Temple Mages believed Cesar would try to continue the strange journey that had accidentally begun in the Alpine Woodpecker Forest. Since his second pentagram had a yellow rating, he would probably go in search of a green pentagram when he became a Mage.

When he realized how difficult it would be to hunt down a pentagram from a late 3rd or early 4th-stage creature, he would realize that he would not be able to continue this incredible path alone!

That was Kohen's thought as he said his words and got up from where he was sitting.

Vicente smiled from under his mask. "Thank you for your understanding. I'll think about my options and give you an answer by the time I become a Mage."

Kohen didn't like that very much, but with the 3rd-stage basilisk and the local situation in Millfall, Cesar had a good chance to continue to progress rapidly, even in this simple area of the kingdom.

Not only that, he wasn't sure he could end Vicente's life on his own now, so he would have to retreat for now anyway.

"I will be in town for a few days. If you haven't decided by the time I leave, look for the Mages of the Ironcrest Temple. Someone will negotiate with you then." He said before leaving.

Alone in his office, Vicente took off his mask, feeling a bit tired after dealing with this problem after his return from The Rocky Gorge.

"Sigh... There's no time to stand still. My problems aren't getting any smaller. I must keep moving." He muttered as he prepared to leave.

'I need to increase my family's strength as soon as possible...' He looked at his spatial ring, where the herb he had collected earlier was.

'To do that, I need to develop my partnership with Shelby and get an alchemist.'

With that in mind, he would soon put many of his resources in the safe on his property for his men to use while he prepared to return to his identity as Vicente Fuller.

After giving orders for Bart to stay in position and protect the estate from any possible enemies, he made his way to the exit, intending to travel alone through town to change his identity and meet up with Shelby and Liam.

But just as he was leaving the house, a blue-haired beauty arrived at his estate.

'Nova? What is she doing here?' He wondered as he stopped and looked into his partner's beautiful eyes.

"Cesar... I'm glad you're here!" Nova said with a serious look on her face, looking at him, but from her position, she could see the basilisk above the house's roof.

"You really conquered it. How did you do that? Weeks ago, you ran from it with your life on the line." She said as she approached Cesar, not feeling threatened despite Bart's presence.

Vicente smiled with the mask on his face. "Captain, this is not your business. Unless you are willing to become my wife, there are few things about me that you will understand."

Chapter 292 A Man Without Peace

"What did you say?" Nova took a step forward. "Watch your words, Cesar. I'm an engaged woman!"

"Hehe, I'm not surprised," Vicente said, amused by Nova. "So, Captain, what do you want from me? Do you want to come in and talk to me more discreetly?"

Nova didn't like Cesar's teasing way. But she wanted to talk to him privately.

She took two steps forward and said. "If you don't mind, I wanted to talk to you about what happened at The Rocky Gorge before."

"Oh? I don't mind. But I thought the matter was settled." Vicente made way for her and returned to his office while his men in the surrounding area watched their boss' beautiful woman.

"It was. But I need guarantees. Because of me, you escaped your troubles before. Now, I feel the city could be in danger because of my foolish decision to return the favor you did for me." She expressed as she entered Cesar's office and was alone with him.

"The city is in danger?" Vicente repeated. "How? The city has never been safer. Now there's no threat from a 3rd-stage beast, and the main local underworld groups before my arrival are no longer a problem for Millfall."

"Of course... You've become the problem, concentrating all the danger to the town on yourself." Nova said, not surprised by Vicente's statement, which obviously meant he was now the real controller of the Scarlet Syndicate.

Unfortunately, knowing that wouldn't help Nova at all.

"That's the wrong way to look at it, Captain. I'm an active member of this society. I'm as interested in the welfare of Millfall as you are." Vicente said in his defense.

Nova's eyes narrowed. "I am not sure about that. But from my testimony at the Martial Court, you've had a chance to get where you are. I'm afraid that if you continue as you are, you'll become a danger to the city, and I'll have blood on my hands."

Vicente's eyebrows knitted. "Are you here to charge me, Captain? I thought you weren't..."

"Tsk! I don't want your support or bribes, Cesar." Nova felt offended. "I want your promise that you won't use your position to oppress the innocent population, as the Scarlet Syndicate and the Defiant Tyranny have done in the past."

If you can't guarantee that, I'm afraid our good relationship will end here. I will have you apprehended for the deaths of the soldiers at my side in The Rocky Gorge!"

"Oh?" Vicente was surprised, not knowing whether to be happy that Nova hadn't come to him to be corrupted or worried about her threat.

"Captain, if you do this, your career will be over. Not only will you lose your position, but you'll be treated as a traitor to the kingdom. You will..."

"I will be sentenced to death if I do this." Nova finished Vicente's words. "But so will you, Cesar. If you don't make a deal with me, your head will be on a pole next to mine."

Vicente fell silent after hearing this, leaning his back against the back of his chair as he stared into Nova's determined gaze.

"Would you be willing to sacrifice yourself to stop me?" He looked at her carefully.

"Your boyfriend would be sad about that, wouldn't he? Don't you care about him?" Vicente asked.

"He'll understand," Nova said as her eyes reddened a little. "But that doesn't have to happen. You just have to make a deal with me. We'll be fine as long as you don't intentionally threaten innocent people and stay away from the army."

"What if I choose a third path?" Vicente asked as Nova moved one of her hands to the sword at her waist.

"Then..."

Just as she was about to say something, he interrupted her. "Captain, my situation is currently more complicated than you think. Maybe you don't need to worry about me. Before you came here, I was visited by a Mage from Ironcrest."

"A Mage from Ironcrest?" Nova was surprised.

"He was here to threaten me. If I don't give up my goals and dreams, he will kill me as soon as he can do so." Vicente said, telling the truth.

Vicente was no fool. He knew that the time Kohen had given him wasn't entirely true!

If he decided to join Kohen's group before that man's group was ready to take action against him, that man's promises would be valid. But if he didn't decide by then, that man's group from Ironcrest would act appropriately against him!

'Mister Reeves, you don't fool me...' Vicente looked out his office window. 'You haven't acted against me just because of Bart. But will that stop your group from eliminating a threat like me?'

The Congregation of Revelations might even agree to coexist with him. However, if Vicente wanted to go down the path of trying to overcome all the limitations of this world and add special pentagrams to his being in his next advancements, then he could become a danger to that faction.

As someone who had already been identified, it would only be a matter of time before the temple decided to eliminate him to prevent them from being harmed in the future!

"Do you understand my situation, Captain? In a few weeks, I may not even be alive to worry you..." Vicente said, trying to get Nova away from this business in a peaceful way.

Nova hadn't expected this, but considering Cesar's current power, she didn't doubt the truth of his words.

"Is this serious? Why would someone do that?" She asked.

Nova had her own reasons for wanting to take action against Cesar. But that was mostly because of her honesty and concern for his position in Millfall, as her actions made Vicente's journey possible.

For other people who might accept strange and not-so-honest deals, as was the case with most people in this world, wanting to go that far with Cesar was strange.

"Because I'm a threat." Vicente bitterly smiled beneath his mask. "The Congregation of Revelations doesn't mess around, Captain. Either I join them, or I'll be branded with the mark of death. Either way, I won't be a problem for you."

She opened her mouth and her eyes wide, understanding why Cesar seemed so pessimistic after such good results on this day.

"I didn't imagine that..."

But Vicente's eyes lit up, and he decided to turn the tables on her.

"If you insist, I'm willing to sign an agreement with you, Captain. That will guarantee my men will follow the terms of this agreement even after my fall. But in return, you'll have to help me with something within the army."

"What do you want?"

Chapter 293 Deal with Nova

Nova didn't like the idea of making a deal with a criminal. But if Cesar's words were true, he wouldn't get far. Besides, a deal with him could protect the army in the city as well as the population.

That was something that could help her in her duty as a soldier of the kingdom, something that pleased her and made her willing to listen to what he had to say.

Vicente then said. "In exchange for an agreement with you, I hope you can help me get information that the royal army must have."

The royal army was the largest organization in the entire kingdom. Although the temples of faith of the Congregation of Revelation were outposts of an even more powerful force, they had fewer members and were not usually involved in many local operations.

As such, the royal army of the Seidel Kingdom was more relevant in the kingdom than the Awakening Temples, and they had the best information about the local powers.

The Congregation of Revelation definitely had good information about the local powers and especially the external forces. But as someone who was committed to his revenge, Vicente would act on as many fronts as he could.

Since Nova wanted to make a deal with him, he would demand something from her, even though Jasmine was already inside the Congregation of Revelations.

From his point of view, it was better to have someone inside the Congregation of Revelations and the local royal army simultaneously!

With Jasmine and Nova by his side, he could get information and identify the Sovereigns who had caused his mother's death, as well as the sect that had kidnapped Lauren.

"Information? What kind of information?" Nova narrowed her eyes.

Depending on what it was, she was willing to make a deal with Cesar. As long as it wasn't anything compromising, anything was possible to ensure stability in Millfall.

"Don't worry, the information I'm looking for doesn't necessarily have to do with the royal family or the army. I want to know about three people. I want their identities, what forces they belong to, in short, everything the army has on them, their families, sects, associations, etc., everything that involves them."

"Who are these people?" Nova asked as Vicente took out three yellowed sheets of paper from his spatial ring, on which there were drawings of the two Sovereigns who had caused Kate's death, while the third represented the man who had kidnapped Lauren.

There was some information on these pictures, such as the names of Malik and Dax, the two Sovereigns, while there was also the name of William, the Barbarian of Nixlas, Lauren's abductor.

Vicente had heard the names of these people during the traumatic events of years ago and had stored them in his memory. Since he had also memorized the faces of two out of three, he was well prepared to search for information about them.

Looking at the portraits, where Cesar had last seen them, their levels, and even their nicknames, Nova didn't recognize any of the names or faces.

'Those aren't members of the royal family or high-ranking soldiers of the army.' She silently thought as she looked at the portraits.

There were portraits of army leaders and members of the royal lineage in every army headquarters in the kingdom. Even though she had never seen any of these people in person, Nova knew very well what the most important members of the army she belonged to looked like.

Then she said. "I can promise you that I will investigate these people. I don't think they are members of the army or the royal family. Still, I can't guarantee they aren't connected to the kingdom's forces. So I won't give you any information about them until I'm sure they have no connection with the royal family and the army."

"That's good enough for me." Vicente agreed.

"I'll see what I can do as soon as..." Nova started to say, but Vicente interrupted her.

"You don't have to rush. That is information that might be difficult for you to get, so you can take your time to build up your position in the army for now. We'll be fine as long as you go for it when you become a Mage." He said, not wanting Nova to get too involved in his problems while she was only an Acolyte.

Vicente didn't know what could happen if she went after this information. So he preferred that she get a little stronger.

In any case, he couldn't take revenge or go after Lauren in the short term, so Nova would have time to strengthen herself and fulfill the agreement they had discussed.

Nova watched Cesar in silence, not understanding what he was getting at. "Aren't you in danger of being killed? I thought you wanted this done as soon as possible."

"I want to. But having this information now wouldn't help me at all. Besides, it wouldn't be good for me to risk my contact in the army while she's still weak. I'd rather you get stronger before anything." Vicente replied.

"What if you die first?"

"Then you won't have to do anything for me, Captain." He laughed. "But if I'm lucky enough to survive, you will fulfill this agreement when you become a Commander."

I don't know how difficult it will be to find out information about the two Sovereigns, but finding information about William won't be so difficult. Since he's only a Mage and the powers of Saltstar City seem to have information about him, I think it will be easy for you to find out what I need about him when you become Commander."

"Okay." She agreed, feeling that even in danger, Cesar was planning his future as if he would overcome every obstacle in his way.

He was aware of the risks, but he believed in himself and acted with the future in mind, preparing himself for important steps.

At the same time, this was a deal she felt would benefit her more than him, so there was no reason for her to refuse.

Nova would only have to give Cesar information in the future when she was Commander and if he was still alive. Even if she was forced to keep this promise, she would only have to give him information that didn't endanger the organization she belonged to. In the meantime, she would have this man's promise that he would not act against official forces or innocent people, bringing peace to her city.

But Nova was no saint seeking peace without deeper goals. To her, the more peaceful Millfall was, the better because the army's job was maintaining order and harmony.

By guaranteeing these two things, soldiers of such city ranks received merit and gained more opportunities within the army.

As the one responsible for this agreement with Cesar, she would gain many points in the army!

So she soon signed a Magic Agreement with Cesar, guaranteeing she would be his informant within the army.

Chapter 294 Cavern Galangal

Vicente said goodbye to Nova as soon as they had agreed on the terms of their deal and left the Mazzanti estate to pursue his previous plans, satisfied with his conversation with her.

As much as the deal with Nova was more beneficial for her, it was also good for Vicente. With her on his side, he would have more influence with an informant within the army and no longer have to probe the army for information when using his real identity.

Meanwhile, he did not have any interest in acting against innocent people. Getting a promise from Nova without having to promise something too difficult for him to keep had been a bonus for Vicente!

Anyway, he would soon be on his way to change his identity without attracting the attention of the locals, leaving the city as Cesar and returning a few moments later as Vicente.

But with this move, Vicente realized he had attracted the interest of army soldiers, who narrowly avoided starting a chase against him.

Fortunately, he quickly changed his identity and began to return to Millfall with his level suppressed, without the mask and clothes he wore when he acted as Cesar.

Riding a horse he had picked up where his men had left the animal for him earlier, Vicente watched with curiosity the soldiers' movement outside Millfall.

'These are not local soldiers...' He thought as he noticed people he didn't know moving about. 'These are members of the battalions that came to the city to hunt the basilisk. But why did they try to chase me a few moments ago?'

Vicente looked at his spatial ring as the soldiers ignored him while they searched for Cesar and clenched his fists. 'Is it because of the herb?'

Days ago, the soldiers had interrupted his fight with Bart and forced them to flee.

Thinking about it, Vicente connected the dots and saw that it had to do with the herb he had collected.

'Shit! I need to get rid of this weed as soon as possible. As long as I keep it in my possession, I'll be a target for those greedy bastards!' He controlled himself not to show his nervousness as he made his way through the streets of Millfall.

'I'll try to meet Liam before I go after Shelby.' He changed his destination and soon had his horse running faster as he headed for the address of Liam, the alchemist who had sold high-purity items to him and Rory months ago.

Vicente already had all the information he needed about Liam to go to the alchemist's residence and make an offer tempting enough to convince him.

Thinking that Liam would be his way to solve at least part of the problem of the 3rd-stage herb in his spatial ring, the young Fuller soon found himself in front of a simple house on the west side of Millfall.

Liam Young was a talented 1st-stage alchemist when Vicente met him months ago. He was not a member of any local family and was a student of Millfall's greatest alchemist, the owner of Botanica Magica.

When Vicente met him, Liam was close to advancing a level and was selling his 1st-grade items at a discount to raise funds for his advancement.

After weeks, Vicente knew that Liam had advanced and became an Acolyte, having gone into seclusion before even searching for the second pentagram to learn as much alchemical theory as possible before absorbing his new essence.

Aware Liam was still in Millfall and was currently in that simple estate in front of Vicente, this black-haired man knocked on his door.

"Liam, I'm here on business." He said without identifying himself, figuring that saying his name wouldn't get Liam's attention.

After a minute of waiting, Vicente listened. "Who are you? What exactly do you want? I won't cook pills by the hour. Find another alchemist!"

"I'm Vicente Fuller. I did business with you a few weeks ago." He said with a smile, imagining Liam would soon open the door for him. "I have a proposition for you. If you agree to listen to me, I feel your destiny as an alchemist will change 180 degrees.

What I have with me will help you immediately improve your alchemist position!"

"What makes you think you're right?" Liam asked, his voice louder and closer to the front door of his house.

Vicente said. "Give me a minute of your time, Liam. If I do not have enough to convince you, I'll leave without further insistence."

After he had finished speaking, Vicente saw the door in front of him open, revealing the interior of the small dwelling, which had a strong medicinal scent, something common to alchemical refining places.

Liam, the alchemist with the unusual magical form and brown hair, looked at Vicente and remembered he had met this person before.

Vicente's face was not unfamiliar to Liam because he was one of the last customers he did business with before going into seclusion.

"So? What do you have for me?" Liam got right to the point.

After entering the house and ensuring they were alone, Vicente saw Liam close the door and said. "I want you to join my family and be my exclusive alchemist. In exchange, I'll give you something in this spatial ring that I know will interest you."

Seeing Vincent throw a spatial ring in his direction, Liam narrowed his eyes. But he understood what this strange person wanted.

'You don't want to remove what's here so as not to attract attention...' Liam looked at Vicente, holding the ring in his hands.

Curious, he put a strand of his mana into the ring, from which Vicente had temporarily removed the security 'padlock.'

When he sensed what was inside Vicente's ring, Liam Young's expression immediately changed, ignoring the gold coins and 2nd-grade artifacts to focus on a green cocoon emitting a strong sensation.

"That... Is that what I think it is?" He muttered as he looked at Vicente with a shocked expression, not believing the man in front of him was carrying something like that.

"Yes, this is a 3rd-stage herb."

"It's not just a 3rd-stage herb!" Liam shook his head negatively. "This is a Cavern Galangal! As a living being, it can form Magic Pentagrams, but not only that, its cultivation method increases the density of mana in the environment. That means magicians of all kinds can progress faster in their meditation by having such a plant around them.

When dead, a single plant of this type can be used as the main ingredient to produce at least 10 different types of pills and potions, and it is even possible to use it to refine 3rd-grade resources.

When used with 2nd-grade resources, it can produce 2nd-grade pills and potions that are almost 100% pure!

But that's not all. Its use can significantly benefit the alchemist who manipulates it!"

Vicente listened to Liam talk about the great effects of that herb and realized it was even more valuable than he had previously thought.

Chapter 295 Plans

As Liam's eyes lit up and he spoke of the wonders of the herb Vicente had collected, the black-haired young man smiled, seeing he had successfully captured the alchemist's interest.

"Would you like to join my family, Liam Young? I'll give you this herb to use as you wish, but you'll be my family's exclusive alchemist, and you won't be able to do any side business.

Of course, I'll pay you a good salary and cover all the expenses for you to advance as an alchemist. But you must be free to work for me." Vicente made his proposal, taking some of Liam's attention away from the item in the spatial ring.

Liam clenched his fists, feeling he had much to gain by accepting this tempting offer.

However, he wasn't stupid enough to accept such a deal without getting some guarantees first.

He could gain a lot from this herb. But the chances that he would die from it were not small!

"Vicente Fuller, this herb is precious. As much as I'm tempted to accept your offer and use it right away, I'm afraid I'll die if I do it carelessly." Liam said as he handed the ring back to Vice.

He looked seriously into Vicente's eyes. "The moment I remove the Cavern Galangal from your ring, all the Mages in Millfall, especially all the 3rd-stage alchemists, will notice its medicinal scent. Then I'll be dead in less than 10 minutes.

What will you do to prevent that from happening? Not only will I need protection to remove this herb from your spatial ring, I'll need protection while I absorb its pentagram, and not only that, I'll need to stay hidden for weeks.

Its medicinal fragrance is too strong for someone of my level to get rid of in a short time. So, my body would be marked by it after I absorb its pentagram and try to use it to make pills and potions.

If I'm not protected, I will be killed, and our agreement will be worthless."

Vicente nodded in agreement when he heard all this.

That was what would happen if they were careless!

"If you join my family, I'll guarantee your protection while you absorb its pentagram. I have a Mage on my side who will guard the place where you will hide for a short time.

In addition, I have plans to lure the greatest local dangers away from Millfall while you absorb its pentagram." He said, planning to lead the warrior Mages out of town as bait.

After realizing the local Mage warriors, the army soldiers, were after him, Vicente had already formulated a plan.

While Liam, under Bart's protection, would absorb the pentagram of the 3rd-stage herb at the Mazzanti family headquarters, he would lead the strongest in Millfall at the moment away.

That would leave only non-warrior Mages in town, who wouldn't be able to enter the Mazzanti mansion with Bart guarding it.

Vicente's only concern was Viscount Symons. If this nobleman went after him with the kingdom's soldiers, Liam would probably have no problem. But if he stayed behind, things would be more complicated.

As for the dangers of using himself as bait, Vicente didn't have much of a choice. Keeping the herb with him wouldn't solve his situation and would only increase the dangers as time passed.

'Since you want my head, I'll play you against each other.' Vicente clenched one of his hands, thinking of the 3rd-stage soldiers in town and the Mages Kohen would probably bring to town in the next few days to deal with him.

"Do you have a Mage on your side?" Liam opened his eyes wider, not expecting Vicente to have so much influence.

In the Seidel Kingdom, only those who were able to influence Mages could be considered relevant.

For Vicente to be able to do that at his age was something quite impressive and promising.

'If that's true, he can suppress my needs as an alchemist.' Liam thought silently, tempted to take a chance.

"Yes, I have someone like that. Anyway, if you accept the deal I'm offering, we'll do everything we can to make sure you're as safe as possible. I also promise you that we won't act until you are sure about our actions." Vicente assured him.

"Well, I'm willing to join you if that's true," Liam replied to Vicente. "Do you have the papers for the contract?"

Vicente smiled and nodded as he picked up the material to make a Magic Agreement with Liam.

The terms of this agreement were simple, and they both agreed on all the important points. So, in less than 10 minutes, they had written their versions of the agreement between them, leaving their marks on both versions of their contracts.

Afterwards, Vicente said. "Well done, Liam, welcome to the Mazzanti family."

Hearing that, Liam was surprised, but he didn't find it so strange considering how impressive Vicente's offer was.

"Not for nothing." He said as he smiled and picked up the mask Vicente had thrown in his direction. "The Mage who's going to protect me is that basilisk?"

Even Liam had heard the local rumors of Cesar Mazzanti's triumphant return from The Rocky Gorge!

"Yes, it should be enough to deal with the non-warrior Mages of the city... Anyway, you'll have to go to my estate to settle this matter. When can you do that?"

"I'm ready right now. I just have to gather my things here." Liam said, eager to plan what they would do next.

Vicente smiled. "Good. Then give me two days. I'll plan some things related to our plan regarding your herb, and then I'll meet you at my family's headquarters to work out the details of the operation."

Vicente left Liam's estate and headed to his house to meet Nina and Eve.

Before arriving at Liam's estate, he had been informed by one of his men from House Fuller that Shelby wanted to meet him later at one of her friend's estates. So he wouldn't look for her now since it was too early and Shelby's preparations weren't finished yet.

'It's time for me to relax with my family...' Vice sighed at the sight of his house as he pulled up in front of the property where Nina lived.

'After I've sorted out my situation with those pesky magicians, I'll try to spend more time with Nina. I think I'll be able to follow her last year at the academy before I have to deal with Lauren's kidnappers.' He thought as he realized how little time he had spent with his little sister lately.

Aware that he would have to become much stronger to deal with Lauren's kidnappers, he knew that he would have to prepare himself for months, maybe even more than a year or two, before he could finally go after his older sister. In the meantime, he wanted to be more present for his little sister!

Chapter 296 Promise

After reuniting with Nina after a few days away tending to the Mazzanti family's business, Vicente spent some time with her, listening to what she had been doing at the academy lately.

Things were going well for Nina. Though she was ostracized by some prejudiced students from local wealthy and aristocratic families, she had her friends and was well-liked by her teacher.

At the same time, a new director had recently been appointed to the academy, and some of the new staff hired by this person were very kind to her.

All in all, Nina was doing well and was learning a lot. If everything continued the way it was going, she might become a scholar in the future, which would be the best scenario of all from Vicente's point of view.

He even planned to speak to Newton on Nina's behalf when she turned 10 to ask him to welcome her to his study place. But that was something Vice wanted to wait for.

As for Nina's physical situation, she still had limited mobility. Since Vicente had not yet been able to hire 3rd-stage professionals, he had no idea what would happen when she turned 14.

Fortunately, that was still more than five years away.

One of his goals, however, was to influence at least one 4th-stage doctor during that time, someone who would be his hope for repairing possible sequelae in his sister's body that could still be treated until she went through the Awakening.

In short, these were Vicente's long-term concerns. In the short term, given the speed of his progress and the contacts he was making, he was more or less at ease.

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After dinner with his sister and Eve, Vicente left Nina in her room and watched her fall asleep next to him for the first time in many weeks.

He looked at his watch and realized it was time for him to leave for his meeting with Shelby, preparing to leave as Eve walked beside him.

"Eve, I intend to spend the next few days dealing with the family's most pressing problems. After that, I'll try to spend more time with Nina."

"That's great. She'll be thrilled." Eve smiled as she looked into Vicente's eyes. "Nina always says she misses studying with you."

"Hmm, I'll do that soon. Then you can take a few days off to hunt for your second pentagram and visit your sister in Martell Village." He declared as he stopped at the exit door of his residence.

"Thank you, Vicente. I'll make good use of my time." She thanked him as she bowed her head.

"Don't do this. We're family." He stopped her from completing the gesture by grabbing both of her shoulders.

Eve closed her eyes and smiled, partly in joy, partly in regret that she hadn't met Vicente sooner.

Seeing her eyes open, a little red and wet, Vicente understood what was on Eve's mind. "Don't worry. As much as the past can't be changed, the future is within our reach. One day, I will help you save your parents, Eve. I guarantee it."

Eve had been 'rescued' by Vicente from becoming a prostitute in Rory's mother's brothel. She had an older sister who was an "employee" of the Heidi Point establishment in Martell Village back then, having almost become the third in her family to enter the world's oldest profession.

But Rory had chosen her and introduced her to Vicente, who had then brought her to his side to look after Nina.

Vicente had already rescued Eve's older sister from a life of prostitution, and she now served as secretary to the Fuller family in Martell Village.

Meanwhile, Eve's mother, who had been forced into prostitution when her daughters were 7 and 5 years old, was still in the same situation, having been forced to leave her two daughters with Heidi Point.

Eve's father and her sister had gotten into trouble about 10 years ago, incurring the wrath of a troublesome person in Saltstar City. This person had decided to punish him in the worst way, sending him to prison, taking his wife, and forcing her to become a prostitute.

Eve knew all this from her mother's letters. Her mother had been forced to write letters to her daughters and husband about the things she had to do for a living!

The man behind it all was that cruel!

Aware of his friend's story, Vicente had already promised Eve that he would help her. But now that he was getting stronger, he repeated his promise, showing the blonde woman he hadn't spoken without the intention when he heard her story.

"Don't worry about it, Vice. You already have a lot on your mind. If I'm strong enough in the future, I'll take care of it myself." She said as she wiped her eyes and smiled at him. "Now go. I don't want you to be late."

Vicente looked at her in silence for a moment and then left, but without changing his plans to help his friend's family.

He already wanted to save Lauren. Doing so with Eve's parents would add absolutely nothing to the difficulty of his journey!

With that in mind, Vicente made his way to the Burt family estate, where Eve had arranged to meet him.

...

Arriving in the more affluent area of Millfall, Vicente was soon at the doorstep of the Burt family, a local rising power that had a good chance of becoming a noble family in the near future.

There were two ways for a family to become a noble power in the Seidel Kingdom. The first was by appointment by the king, which usually involved the overthrow of other nobles. The second and more complex was to buy the title of nobility, which was extremely expensive and difficult to achieve, but it was possible.

Most of the land in the kingdom was already owned by the many noble families in the state. But some lands might be less attractive to own than others. With the right offer, nobles of higher status, like Dukes, would agree to sell part of their territories.

In such a sale, the buyer would become a noble by owning land in the kingdom.

But why would anyone do this? Simply because nobles had rights that went far beyond the use of land!

Just by having the title of nobility, families could pay less taxes and have access to strategic materials, independent military groups, resources, and people with great power and influence.

In a way, the title of nobility was like a ticket to important events that only those with an "invitation ticket" could attend to.

Without such an "invitation," you wouldn't even know about the important events around the state, sometimes outside the kingdom's territory!

Thus, noble titles were of great value.

The Burt family was a power trying to obtain a noble title through the second method. Vicente knew this, and as soon as he arrived at this family's estate, he saw this was a power that really had the necessary conditions to become a noble house.

This family's estate was as luxurious or more luxurious than some of the noble estates Vicente had seen in recent years.

The front door opened as he looked at it, and a beautiful woman dressed as a butler invited him in. "Vicente Fuller, welcome to the Burt estate. Please come with me. The lady is waiting for you in the garden."

Chapter 297 Secret Meeting

Arriving in a colorful garden with lots of pink, yellow, and blue flowers, Vicente soon spotted three women next to a fountain, two sitting on opposite sides of a table.

On one side was a blonde woman, Mira Burt, the eldest daughter of the Burt patriarch, level 2. On the other side was an orange-haired woman Vicente knew well, who was currently at level 3.

Behind Shelby was her trusted servant, a red-haired beauty, Molly, who was currently at the same level as her young lady.

As Shelby and Mira played a chess-like game, Molly noticed Vicente's arrival and alerted her young lady.

"Young lady, Vicente Fuller is here," Molly said as she looked at the man with black hair walking behind a woman in a feminine suit.

How Molly looked at Vicente at that moment was completely different from how she had looked at him in the past.

After mastering a level 3 Basilisk, Vicente's power and influence had increased exponentially in Molly and Shelby's estimation.

Shelby looked at Vicente when she heard his name and stood up from where she was, feeling her heart beat faster.

With her wedding to Marcus Symons only a few weeks away, Vicente's recent accomplishments had relieved her heart greatly.

"Vicente!" She called his name as she clasped her hands behind her back, not expecting to be so happy to see this man in front of her.

"Shelby, it's good to see you again." He smiled at her as he greeted her, kissing one of her cheeks as she asked him softly.

"Did everything work out?"

"Yes, your things are here." He slipped a spatial ring he had received from her earlier into one of the pockets of Shelby's dress without drawing attention to what he had given this beautiful woman.

Shelby felt excited, and her heart beat faster, making her face a little red at the wrong impression she gave her friend.

Seeing how Vicente and Shelby had greeted each other, Mira raised her eyebrows as she looked at her best friend's face.

"Shelby... Don't tell me the rumors I've heard..." She murmured in a low tone, but everyone beside the fountain heard her.

"No!" Shelby's expression changed as she looked at Mira. "Vicente and I are friends. Don't misunderstand this."

"But..." Mira found Shelby's manners and how she blushed when standing beside Vicente bizarre.

Vicente laughed and said. "You must be Miss Mira Burt, right? I've heard wonderful things about you. It's a pleasure to meet you." He showed one of his hands.

"Hmm, Shelby's told me fantastic things about you, too." Mira stood up and gave Vicente one of her hands. "But I'm curious, what exactly is your relationship?"

Shelby had arranged this meeting at Mira's house because of pressure from her family. After Marcus' moves, her stepmother pressures and watches her so she won't see Vicente.

Even Shelby's father had given orders to the men in the family to prevent her from seeing Vicente and even threatened to put her under house arrest if she was seen with him.

However, Shelby wanted to talk to Vicente about recent events and get her share of what he had collected in The Rocky Gorge.

Shelby had given Vicente a lot of information that had helped him move around that forest area, maps, and also descriptions of the terrain. She had even warned him about the groups of local nobles that would be near the groups of army soldiers that Vicente had cleverly avoided meeting in the last few days.

Anyway, to meet him, she had decided to use her friend Mira to camouflage who she was meeting.

With no choice but to confide in her friend, Shelby explained to Mira. "Vicente and I are business associates. Our relationship is not what Marcus thinks it is. Unfortunately, there's no way to persuade my family or him of this, so I have to meet Vice this way.

I'm sorry to bother you like this, Mira. But without your help, I couldn't meet with Vicente to discuss some of our important business moves."

"Oh? So that's it?" Mira didn't mind that her friend used her to get to know Vicente. It was a perfectly normal thing for friends to do for each other.

But she was a little disappointed to hear that nothing was going on between Shelby and Vicente. As a young woman who loved romance novels, Mira was disappointed to discover that her friend's reaction moments before had been just a misunderstanding.

"Yes, that's exactly it," Vicente confirmed as he sat down next to the table where they were playing.

"Anyway, you must be curious about my next steps, right?" Vicente looked at Shelby.

"Yes. I think it's time we talked about my plans. We need to combine our movements so we don't block each other's." She agreed, not bothering to ask Mira for privacy.

She could discuss Vicente's plans in front of Mira without her friend understanding what they had in mind.

"What do you have in mind?" He asked her.

"I'm going to marry Marcus soon... At least that's what's on the schedule for the Symons and Staples families." She said with a complicated expression, obviously disgusted with the situation.

Mira sighed and asked. "Is there any way to avoid this? We're so close to the wedding."

"If something happens in town, there is," Shelby said as she looked at Vicente.

Vicente closed his eyes. "I don't know if I can help you with that. I have challenging problems to solve that are dangerous even for me.

Since I'm not sure they will be solved in the next two weeks, I can't guarantee that I can help you today."

"A difficult problem even for you?" Molly opened her mouth in surprise.

Shelby was shocked, too, because, considering Vicente's current power, he must be one of the strongest individuals in the city. "Are you serious?"

"Hmm, I am. I'm a bit unlucky... I've got this problem, and after that, there's a local auction that I'm told will have something valuable for me in it."

Mira and Shelby also planned to attend the auction, which would take place a few days before her wedding to Marcus.

"Do you intend to enter the fray over the items to be auctioned at this event?" Shelby asked.

"Yes, that is the intention of my associates."

"Then perhaps we can help each other on the day!"

Chapter 298 Shelby's Plan

"What do you have in mind?" Vicente asked Shelby.

Shelby replied. "The days following the auction will be hectic. This will be the perfect time for the local powers to make more aggressive moves while those most interested in the auction items are busy."

Depending on how we act in those days, we might be able to pit some of our rivals against each other to weaken both sides. In the meantime, we can consolidate our positions with other powers." She pointed at Mira with one of her hands.

"For example, some local powers want to raise their social standing in Millfall and become powers with noble titles. But as much as some, like House Burn, are willing to spend a lot of their reserves to negotiate with a wealthier noble family, others don't have as much buying power, despite their interests."

But that doesn't diminish their greed!

They can be very receptive to people like us and help us achieve our goals."

"Even my family would be interested in the downfall of the noble powers," Mira said and understood what her friend wanted.

Mira didn't see the nobility as the scum of society like Shelby did. But just because she didn't despise the nobility didn't mean she couldn't profit from their downfall.

"We're willing to make a proposal to the Duke of the province, but if the noble family falls, we'd rather not have to spend our precious resources to buy a territory of little value." She said, smiling at Vicente.

"I see... Some wealthy families would be willing to encourage a certain amount of chaos in the city." Vicente muttered as the two smiled at him.

Those families wouldn't send their own members or people close to them to cause chaos. But if they knew of someone crazy enough to try, many would be happy to help.

Was there anything better than chaos for groups looking for opportunity?

Aware of this, even young Mira, who didn't usually plan dangerous things, wasn't surprised by her friend's intentions and even approved of someone moving around the area.

Vicente looked into Shelby's eyes and imagined that she needed chaos to get rid of her commitment to Marcus.

'With the town in flames, she'd have the opportunity to kill the guy.' He was silent momentarily, wondering how that would benefit him, who had his own issues to settle with the Symons family.

"Hmm, okay, we can help each other after the auction." Vicente agreed. "I'll prepare my group to act on the auctioned items, but I'll also talk to my friends about making their moves locally. If it's flames you want, it's flames you'll get."

Shelby clenched her fists in satisfaction while Molly understood the real level of chaos that would ensue that day, something Mira couldn't imagine, being in the dark about Vicente's identity.

"If my family can obtain a noble title more easily, we will support you. Right now, the most I can do is provide you with information and some resources. But if we succeed, you can expect a much greater return," Mira commented.

"Hmm, then I appreciate the support. Anything we can get in advance is welcome." Vicente said.

After that, they chatted for a few more moments until it was time for Shelby and Vicente to leave.

As they said goodbye, Shelby slipped a note into Vicente's clothes before leaving for the Staples estate.

Vicente then went to the Fuller estate while looking at what Shelby had put in his clothes.

'Vicente, in addition to what we discussed, I want you to know something I couldn't tell you in front of Mira. As trustworthy as she is, I don't want to involve her in everything I have in mind.

Part of my plans for Millfall involve a much wilder situation for the province as a whole.

There is about to be a shift change at Long Bay Correctional Facility.

In that prison is a notorious criminal of the province, Jonah Keen, also known as Snow Claw. He is a High-level Mage who has a history with some of the Millfall families and some of their supporters in the province.

If he escapes during this shift, we'll have perfect chaos for our plans!'

Vicente's eyes lit up at this part of Shelby's note.

'Once released, Snow Claw will take revenge on those who imprisoned him, who are exactly my targets and your future enemies.

You may not see Senior Snow Claw's targets as your enemies now, but trust me, they will be.

If you're interested in becoming stronger and expanding your operations throughout the rest of the province, sooner or later, you'll be fighting the largest noble-backed group in the province, the Ruby Devils.

The Ruby Devils control human trafficking in the province, as well as various underworld businesses, such as the alternative trade of jewels and precious resources.

This group is supported by at least 30 noble families in the province and was responsible for Senior Snow Claw's arrest.

Therefore, Senior Snow Claw's freedom could benefit both of us. So I hope you'll consider it. The shift will take place in less than two months. That's when we'll have our big chance to plunge the whole province into chaos.

Think about it carefully.'

After reading all this, Vicente would soon destroy that note while thinking about the alternative Shelby had started.

'A High-level Mage... Someone like that could really cause chaos in the whole province.' He imagined what someone close to the 4th stage would be capable of.

'Shelby and I probably won't be able to take advantage of the opportunities that the chaos of this person's escape would bring, but the opportunities would be great.

If he dealt fatal blows to some of the local noble families, that alone would allow our groups to more easily grow in influence in and around Millfall. That would make it easier for the Mazzanti family to expand their operations to other parts of the province.'

Any weakening of the noble families of the province, whether in terms of strength due to the death of key members or in terms of support due to the loss of followers, would greatly benefit groups like Vicente's.

To recover or even prevent their downfall, damaged noble families would have to make deals less advantageous to them, paving the way for groups like Vicente's.

On the other hand, new noble families could emerge from the chaos, and they would naturally need to ally themselves with groups like Vicente's to gain access to more resources.

Through these two types of nobles, Vicente knew he could get permission from several noble families to operate in cities other than Millfall, which would increase his social and financial position in the province.

'If all goes well, I'll be able to expand my family's numbers and reach truly important resources.'
Vicente clenched his fists, feeling that Shelby's plans were worthwhile.

Of course, there would be countless risks before, during, and after the chaos that someone like Snow Claw could cause in the province.

But he was willing to risk it!

Chapter 299 Impure Thoughts

While Vicente was writing a reply for Nina to deliver to Shelby the next day, the orange-haired woman arrived at her residence.

As Shelby entered the Staples mansion, she was met by her family: her father, Baron Staples, her stepmother, Amy Staples, and her younger brother, Cole Staples.

"Shelby, what were you doing so late at night?" Amy asked as she sat next to her husband in the living room of the Baron's residence.

Seeing her stepmother looking at her with narrowed eyes, Shelby stopped halfway to her area and turned back with a smile. "I was at my friend Mira's house. Is there a problem?"

"It's good that you are seeing your friends, Shelby. I'm just concerned about the future of the family." Amy said as she picked up a glass of wine next to her.

Shelby's father looked at his daughter and remembered his late wife. He closed his eyes and said. "I hope you are ready for your wedding, my daughter. This is for the good of the whole family, so don't give your fiancé any more trouble."

"You should be happy, Shelby. You'll soon be the wife of a Viscount!" Young Cole commented to his sister, feeling this was very good for her.

For a wealthy, handsome heiress like him, there was no way he could understand what was going on in the mind of a woman like Shelby.

He saw her as a lucky woman who would become the wife of a Viscount, who even had the potential to become a Count one day. But for Shelby, the reality was very different. She felt like a broodmare being sold for the sake of her family.

Others could accept that with pride, but after all she'd been through, she couldn't help but hate every word her brother said.

However, like a good actress, she smiled. "I will certainly be happy. I understand the family's needs, and I'll do my best to return everything House Staples has offered me."

With those words, she climbed the mansion's stairs until she reached the room of the youngest of her siblings, Levi, Amy's son, who was nothing like this woman.

"Sister, have you come to finish the last story?" A little eight-year-old boy asked as he jumped into Shelby's arms.

"Of course!" She said as she ran a hand through her brother's orange hair and smiled at him.

As she went back to telling her brother an old story, Molly watched the two of them through the cracks in Levi's bedroom door.

'Poor boy... Hopefully, your sister loves you and needs you. Otherwise, your fate would be the same as the others in this house.' Molly thought but without regret for taking her lady's side.

As someone who had been rescued from slavery by Shelby and who knew her lady's troubles, Molly had no sympathy for the Staples family.

Meanwhile, Shelby seemed as loving as ever to Levi, but inside, she was burning with anger at her family for using her and having the audacity to say the previous words to her face.

'You will pay me back! Your punishment is not far away!' She thought as she felt that Vicente would agree to her proposal, and soon everything would change for her.

...

The next morning, Vicente had trained a little that night, but he had also taken the opportunity to sleep, something he probably wouldn't have much time for in the next few days.

His plans with Liam would start soon, so he stayed home with Nina for another day and woke up without much haste for breakfast this morning.

When Nina awoke, he ate with her and Eve before they left for the academy a few minutes later.

"Nina, I want you to give this to your teacher, Shelby Staples. Can you do that for me?" Vicente leaned down and said to Nina as he looked into his sister's eyes.

Nina saw the rolled-up sheet of paper with a seal on it and readily accepted this 'mission.' "I'll do my best, big brother!"

He then watched her enter the academy while standing next to Eve at the entrance.

"Don't worry. Our undercover men work around Nina practically all day now," Eve commented, smiling as she watched the girl enter the classroom. "The new academy director is much more receptive to our needs than the previous one."

"This is good. As long as he's useful to us, give him the support we promised. Those who are loyal to us deserve all the support they can get." Vicente commented as he prepared to leave for one of the taverns in his territory.

Halfway there, he encountered two people in hoods, their identities concealed.

"Vicente, we're glad you're back. We're waiting for your orders to take action." One of the two said, and Vicente understood who it was.

"Don't worry, I'll send you my orders later today," Vicente expressed as he looked at the one who had greeted him first, Lukas. "We can talk business later at the association. What do you say?"

"That sounds good."

The other person next to Lukas said. "This man sent us a message to pass on to you."

Seeing the note in the woman's hand, Vicente immediately recognized who had sent it when he saw Casey's signature on the paper.

"Thank you. You should leave now. It's not good for us to be seen in public." He made his way to Zander's tavern, where he always left orders for his men to collect and pass on to the rest of the family.

On his way there, he learned of Layla's return and the fact that this woman was willing to make a deal with him. Not only that but according to Jasmine and the other woman Casey had met the day before, Mark was about to reach Millfall in trouble.

According to Casey, these [women were going into hiding to prevent Mark from finding out about their situation with Vicente, so he should be prepared to deal with such a person at any moment.

'That's perfect!' Vicente destroyed Casey's note, seeing more enemies to include in the cover he would have to prepare to allow Liam's movement.

'I will play all these local problems against each other when I move on, Liam!' He smiled as he thought of the Commanders of the royal army but also of Kohen.

'I will give them three days to prepare. Then it will be my time to move!'

Chapter 300 Actions Behind His Back

That same day, a group of hooded people on horses and in a carriage arrived in Millfall through the town's main entrance.

As they drove slowly along the main avenue that crossed the entire town, they made their way slowly, looking at their surroundings as if they were tourists in the area for the first time.

"Where is the headquarters of our target's family?" A bald man asked an old acquaintance of Jasmine and Layla.

Mark looked at the man and answered. "I can take you to his estate later, but we must be careful. Cesar Mazzanti is a member of the local underworld. If we're careless, he'll realize who we are, and Jasmine will be finished."

"Victor, I want you to go with Mark and look at our opponents. We won't act until we have accurate information about them." The strongest Mage in this group said from inside the group's carriage, a simple vehicle that looked like an ordinary farmer's cart from a distance.

Since everyone in Mark's group was hiding their mana and dressed like peasants, nothing about them would catch the eye of local observers.

A tall young man with a straw hat heard this and jumped out of the carriage just before Mark did the same.

"You should look for us at Mount Doom later. It's a great place to decide what to do next." Mark said as he jumped out of the carriage and walked next to Victor.

"Come with me." He said to his companion, moving quietly through the Millfall area, quickly moving through the town's narrow streets towards the Mazzanti estate.

After about five minutes of moving at a brisk pace, the two arrived not far from their point of interest when they stopped approaching, sensing a powerful aura coming from their destination.

"Hey, what the hell is that?" Victor shoved Mark against a wall. He felt his back break into a cold sweat as he looked up at the massive creature on the Mazzanti estate!

Mark was also surprised to see the 3rd-stage basilisk on Cesar's property, as there had been no beasts in the Mazzanti family before.

"What? Where did this basilisk come from?" He exclaimed in surprise, ignoring Victor, who was pinning him against a wall, both hiding in an alley near the street of the Mazzanti family home.

"Don't you know? Don't play dumb, Mark. Did you set us up on purpose?" Victor asked, keeping his voice low but showing his irritation and surprise at Mark.

"Do you think I'd have the nerve to do that?" Mark looked seriously at Victor.

This man and the others he had hired to deal with Cesar were members of the second-largest underworld faction in the Scott Province, a group that had several Mages and even the support of a Marquis!

This Ironcrest faction was nothing like the Congregation of Revelation. Yet, Mark didn't have enough influence within his faith to be able to move it enough to not have problems with groups like that.

Being much smaller than those people, he would never dare to go against them!

"Do you think I'm stupid?" Mark's face turned red, and the veins in his neck popped. "If I take such a risk, wouldn't it be better if I gave up my freedom? Do you think I don't know how you deal with problems?"

"Then how do you explain this damned beast?" Victor knew Mark's words were reasonable, but he wasn't satisfied.

"I don't know. It must have happened during the time I was with you. That damned Cesar is too crazy, I told you not to underestimate him!" He almost shouted but managed to keep his voice down so that only he and Victor could hear his exclamations. "We need to investigate this. I doubt it will be difficult to find out exactly what happened."

"Okay. How do we start?"

"Let's check out the local taverns. We'll surely find some whisper who'll tell us what's been happening in town lately. That will give us a clue as to what we need to do to answer our questions." Mark said, thinking that returning to the local Awakening Temple wouldn't do.

If he did, he would inevitably alert Cesar he was already there. By then, Jasmine would be in an even worse situation than she already was, and he would probably be forced to negotiate with the enemy before he could prepare with his group.

To have time to prepare well enough to act against Cesar, Mark would not return to Millfall's Awakening Temple.

'When my group is ready, I'll see what that damned grey-haired woman has done to get in my way.' He thought of Layla, imagining she was already there, probably doing whatever Cesar wanted.

...

Meanwhile, Mark's companions were still in the dark about the situation with the Mazzanti family and the start of the investigation against them.

The two Mages of the party were in the carriage from earlier, arriving at an inn in the northern part of the city where the party would be staying.

As they surveyed the cobbled streets of this part of Millfall, the two strongest of the group discussed their plans for this mission.

"This Cesar... He did us a great favor. Will he give us what we want without too much trouble? He's just an Acolyte." One of the two strongest men in the group commented to the other.

The other man looked at his companion, who had many tattoos all over his face and body, and said. "Let's not underestimate him. Mark isn't stupid, even if he was wrong to trust us. If what he said is true, this Cesar is a genius. Then let's kill him the right way."

"But what about the Barber girl? I've heard the Mazzanti family has excellent weapons. One shot from one of the Mazzanti soldiers, and we'll lose our chance."

"Hmm, we need to make sure her life is guaranteed." The group leader commented with a deep look on his face. "What good would it do us to get such a valuable hostage if she's dead? Her father is very powerful. He won't let us get away with this if we don't bring her back in one piece."

"What about Mark?" Mark's friend, a level 5 Acolyte, who had 'helped' him with this group, asked.

"We'll kill him after this is over." The man with tattoos all over his body said as he looked at the Acolyte. "That will be your mission."

"I'll do my best, elder." Mark's 'friend' smiled, not bothered by his superior's order.