

The Mafia 35

Chapter 35: Quick Action

Three days later...

It was getting dark in Martell Village, and Vice had just returned home from a long and tiring day at Nina's side.

As he closed the door and headed towards the kitchen, intending to prepare something for Nina, Vicente was suddenly stopped when someone knocked hard on his door.

"Boss, we have a problem." One of the young men brought by Rory to Vicente's group shouted from the other side of the door, drawing this boy's attention.

He immediately ran to the door of his house under his sister's gaze and asked as he came across that young man. "What's up?"

"Jesse, your father's former employee, is moving strangely. Three of our suppliers have been visited by him in the last two days." That young man with blond hair and blue eyes, 1.8 meters tall, said this as he looked into Vice's eyes.

Hearing this, Vicente immediately frowned, 'So he found out! I knew it would happen someday! Good thing I didn't trust him before!'

While clenching his fists, Vicente said. "All right, call Rory and let him know about it. He'll know what to do. In the meantime, I'll start sorting it out."

"Yes!" That young man dressed as a farmer left that place without delay while Vicente ran into his house to get some things.

'We're going to visit someone. But I want you to stay close to me.' Vicente wrote to his sister after getting what he wanted.

"Where will we go?" She asked him.

But Vincent did not inform her about it.

'It's better you don't know.' He thought to himself as he set off at his sister's side.

He quickly made his way to Jesse's house, a much more humble property than his own, one that was at one end of the village.

Upon arriving there with Nina in his arms, Vicente indicated her to be silent while they were hidden in the surroundings.

'Since you have decided to act this way, Jesse, don't blame me for what I will do.' He thought as he waited for the right moment to act.

Vicente had not acted violently against any of his father's old workers for two reasons. The first was that even if he wanted to, he couldn't act since he lacked the support to do so.

All those men had their Magic Gems, so he could only achieve what was necessary to 'silence' them by hiring mercenaries.

However, mercenaries in Polaris Realm were not necessarily unscrupulous men who would do anything for coins!

Most were just people trying to sell their services and pay their families' daily expenses. Most of them were not assassins and did not accept assassination missions.

Those who accepted such missions were usually professional assassins, a type of person who, as far as Vicente knew, did not offer services in Martell Village.

As such, even if he had coins to waste on assassinations, he couldn't hire people capable of handling his father's former employees.

The second reason Vicente hadn't tried to act violently against them was that most of them had accepted their situations without a problem. And some of them were still working for him, so Vice preferred to avoid acting against those he had fired.

However, he had his ways if he wanted to!

Vicente looked at the surroundings of that property and saw that Jesse didn't seem to be around.

He then finished covering his body with black clothes and cautiously approached one of that property's open windows.

Nina was in his arms and did not understand what her brother was doing. But she found it amusing and continued to watch him silently.

Vicente placed a strange instrument on the wall of that house and then connected his ears with what looked like two matching metals.

'Good. He is not at home. Just his wife and their son.' Vicente heard the noises coming from that place and walked away after a few moments.

Then 5 minutes passed, and Rory arrived at that place accompanied by two of their strongest trusted young men.

"Vice, what are we going to do? Jesse trying to steal your business is bad for us."

Vicente nodded and said. "If he is targeting my business, I will target his most valuable things.

Rory, take care of my sister. I will break into the house and kidnap Jesse's son."

Gulp!

"You..."

"... Kidnap the boy?"

Rory and the two young men beside him asked in low voices, not believing Vicente would do such a thing.

"Don't look at me like that. I won't hurt him. I will only use him to lure his father away."

Low-level magicians were not so different from normal humans. They were stronger, their senses were faster, and they could use magic powers. However, it was possible for ordinary people to act against one of them.

The difference between ordinary people and magicians grew along the magic rank, but just as an exponential function grew slower at the beginning, so was it for magic.

Vicente was fully aware of this, and even though he didn't even have a Magic Gem, he wasn't afraid of Jesse or this man's wife.

"But..."

Vicente looked at Rory and said in a deep tone, looking into his friend's eyes, "Make no mistake, Rory, this is the kind of thing I would do for the sake of my family.

But I am willing to do much more. You should know that."

"I know... I'm sorry, I won't talk about it anymore. But can you do this?" Rory knew that some of Vicente's plans would have far worse consequences than kidnapping a child, and he quickly controlled his anxiety about already starting to act against an innocent.

"Don't worry about it. I know what I'm about to do." Vicente said in a low voice before running to that place.

Upon reaching the side of the previous window, he quickly moved into that house, moving like a thief going toward his target.

Already inside the house he had been in when Jesse's son was born, he immediately moved to the boy's room, which was on the house's second floor.

Vicente noticed that Jesse's wife was there, but she didn't notice him.

When he entered Jesse's son's room, she passed in front of the place and looked in through the open door.

Seeing no one and hearing her son walking up the stairs, she walked down toward the kitchen.

"Peter, go take your bath. The food will be ready in no time, and your father should be here soon." Jesse's wife's voice sounded as Vicente looked through the gaps in that boy's bedroom door.

"All right, Mom!" Peter quickly made his way to his room to get his clothes.

As he walked through the door and turned on the magic lamp, he suddenly ran into someone who shouldn't be there.

'Go to sleep...' Vice grabbed that boy's neck and squeezed, blocking the passage of blood to Peter's brain.

In just 10 seconds, Peter lost consciousness, and his body softened.

Sensing this, Vicente held him and put this 6-year-old boy inside the closet.

He then carefully moved out of the room, checking to see where Peter's mother was.

Noticing that she was busy in the kitchen, he quickly moved to the only bathroom on that floor and opened the shower.

"Time to go!" He hurried back to Peter's room.

A noise of a door closing came from the second floor, and Vicente could hear the voice of a traitor.

"Honey, I'm home!"

But he didn't stay behind and quickly hid a letter in Peter's room before leaving from there as easily as he had entered.

Chapter 36: First Murder?

"How did you do that?" One of the young men with Rory asked as he saw Vicente with Peter.

It had all happened very quickly. In less than 5 minutes, Vicente had broken in and left that property!

As much as there were no defenses in that house and Jesse's wife was weak, magicians could notice disturbances in the mana in the surroundings with relative ease.

Vicente smiled and said. "Let's move first. If you guys want, I can teach you some tricks later."

Vicente's mana control was not high, but he could control it to do numerous things, including combining such a thing with his earthling abilities.

Since he was a little boy, Vicente had trained not only in the martial arts of this world. He trained even more what he had brought back in his memories of Earth, from fighting forms to ways of acting.

The equipment he had used earlier he had made himself, while his invasion technique relied on a breathing and movement style developed by assassins from the Mazzanti family.

Combining this with mana, he could move without disturbing the free mana in the air while keeping his strength within his body. That way, he had entered such a house as easily as a harmless insect could do!

"Are you really going to do that?" One of those young men asked as they ran away from that place.

"Hmm, but you will have to earn it first. At most, I will teach you the basics. To learn everything, you will have to earn merit."

Rory ignored that and asked. "Where will we go now?"

"We are going to my father's estate. Jesse will come looking for us there."

"How will we act against him?" One of those two asked, determined to learn what Vicente had used.

He had a Magic Gem but still had no idea how to break into an estate without drawing any attention.

If he learned this, his chances would be much greater!

"First, let's go..." Vicente immediately told his group his plan.

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Thirty minutes later...

"Jesse, there is something wrong with this boy. He's taking too long in the bathroom." Peter's mother said this after finishing putting the food in and continuing to hear the noise of the shower on the second floor.

Jesse looked in the direction of that seat of the armchair he was in and frowned. "Kid. Finish your shower now!" He shouted as he stood up.

But as he walked to the bathroom on the second floor, this Intermediate Apprentice soon realized that something was wrong because there was no one in that bathroom.

"Uh? Where is this boy?" He went to the bedroom and didn't find his son there either.

"Lexi! Peter is not here! Look for him on the first floor of the house!" He shouted in his slightly altered voice.

His son had never disappeared like this before. As such, he couldn't help but be a little apprehensive.

Lexi was startled by this and soon started looking for Peter.

Two minutes later, the two realized he was nowhere to be found in the house and went to the bedroom, where his clean clothes were still waiting for him on the bed.

"Damn it! Someone took our son!" Jesse turned red with anger and immediately thought of Vicente.
"This must be that fucking brat!"

He had been trying to take Andrew's son's business. Still, he had been having trouble doing so since the little imp had cleverly redone several of his contracts.

But by talking to some of Vicente's suppliers about this young man's lie, Jesse was confident of soiling his reputation and eventually getting those suppliers!

Because he was already acting against Vicente, he was suspicious of this young man!

As he furiously walked down the stairs intending to go to the Fuller residence, his wife shouted.
"Jesse, there's a letter here!"

"What?" He looked up and narrowed his eyes.

"It's saying here that if we want to see our son back, you have to go to Andrew's warehouse!" She said, feeling tight in her chest.

"Jesse, what's going on? Why would someone act against our son and go to Andrew's barn?" She asked, already with tears streaming from her eyes.

"Tsk! You stay here. I'll take care of this." Those were his last words before he left without looking back.

'Damned Vicente! Brat, I'll kill you for this!' His mana violently vibrated as he ran at over 25 kilometers per hour.

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Moments later, Jesse arrived at his old workplace, in this rather dark place, due to the lack of lighting nearby.

"Brat Vicente, come out from wherever you are!" He shouted as he slowly walked towards the main building, his fists firmly closed, glowing due to the concentrated mana.

"Jesse, you thought you could act against me and get away with it," Vicente said, drawing this man's attention to the top of one of the silos in the surrounding area.

Jesse looked up and could barely see Vicente there, given the darkness of the night.

"Where is my son, Vicente? He has nothing to do with our troubles!"

"Oh? I disagree with that." Vicente said seriously. "By acting against my business, you acted against my family. Isn't it fair that I do the same to you?"

"Tsk! Brat, don't cross the line, or I will kill you and that girl!" Jesse said as he walked toward Vicente.

But he was not seeing Nina nor his son anywhere. As such, he was being cautious.

"Jesse, you are a fool. I gave you a chance to live with your family. Unfortunately, you were greedy and tried to steal my business.

Now I have to punish you." Vicente said, lying on top of that silo while looking at Jesse through something that looked like a special binocular.

But that item only had an opening to look through and was attached to something else.

Vicente had his hands around a strange item, where one of his index fingers made contact with a trigger.

"Punish me? How? Tell me how a brat like you is going to punish me?" He asked aloud, laughing at this child's words.

"Vicente, give me Peter now. If you don't, I will kill you, even if I risk my son's life."

"I expected nothing less from you. A vermin indeed."

"Tsk! Don't play games with me, brat!"

"This is the end, Jesse. When you go to the other world, try not to be a treacherous, unscrupulous worm."

When Vicente said this, he squeezed the trigger, causing the item in front of him to move backward suddenly, as a glow appeared from part of that metallic thing.

Then a loud noise went off from that rifle, breaking toward Jesse's head.

Simultaneously, the two young men on the outskirts of that property heard the signal they were waiting for and fired their guns in Jesse's direction as well.

Jesse still had an angry expression when he fell to his knees on the ground with a five centimeters-deep hole in his skull.

His shirt turned red with blood in two places on his abdomen, and then he fell face-first to the ground, already dead!

Chapter 37: Firearms

As he looked down at Jesse's fallen body, Vicente was momentarily silent, watching the smoke coming out of the barrel of his gun.

"That is the future of those who threaten my family, Jesse. If it is in my power, I will not spare even old friends and allies!" Vice muttered to himself as he stood up on top of that silo, looking down.

He then looked down at his rifle, something he had done before he left with his family for Saltstar City.

Vicente knew how to construct weapons even with his eyes closed in his time on Earth. He knew step by step what he needed to build weapons, every material needed, and the care required.

When he had managed to scrape together a few coins from the allowance his father gave him, he had gone to a blacksmith in Martell Village and ordered to develop the parts he needed.

He was not afraid of 'his idea' being stolen since he was the only one who could assemble these weapons, so he had been doing business regarding weapon parts for the past two years.

In this period, he had managed to assemble and hide in his room a long-range rifle, two shotguns, and a revolver.

Unfortunately, on a hunt he had participated in alongside his father a year and a half ago, he realized that his weapons were not very useful against powerful beings.

At the 2nd stage of the magic rank, the bullets from these weapons no longer had any effect.

Upon meeting a beast of this stage during his hunt, he tested it and saw how his gun had almost no effect against the beast's massive body that had attacked him.

After that experience, he stopped developing his weapons and put them aside before traveling to Saltstar City.

At that time, he planned only to gather resources and one day awaken his powers, which could really make a difference.

However, when facing this situation this night, Vicente returned to his plans and decided to reuse his weapons.

"Boss, this thing is amazing! Its power is really otherworldly!" One of the two young men holding a shotgun said as he looked at that thing with glowing eyes.

The other was also looking with satisfaction at that item that had given him much more power than he had.

"This gun is amazing! And I feel like I can infuse my mana into it and strengthen its attacks!" This other said loudly, catching Vicente's attention.

Vice had not shown that to anyone but Rory before today since, to other people, he would have the difficult task of explaining where he had gotten the idea behind it from.

Therefore, he did not know how awakened magicians would react to these weapons.

Upon hearing that, he immediately asked. "Are you sure?"

"Hmm, actually, I think I unconsciously ended up using some of my mana to strengthen that bullet." The young man said.

Vicente immediately ran to the side of Jesse's body and checked to see if this man was really dead before checking the wounds around his body.

Jesse had died, but not because of Vicente's shot!

'My bullet didn't go that deep into his brain... Maybe he could live after that. But these two perforations...' Vicente saw the size of the holes made by the shots of those two.

Each one was so large that Vicente's hands could fit loosely into the places where the bullets had hit.

The organs and bones near these holes had been destroyed.

After seeing this, Vicente's eyes sparkled.

'I was wrong!

These weapons can be affected by the magic of the one using them! I hadn't considered this before because I can use very small mana, but people with their awakened powers can do much more!"

He almost jumped for joy upon discovering the potential of his weapons.

He probably didn't have a good talent, but if weapons like this could be used to strengthen himself and his people, everything could change for them!

Thinking about this, Vicente soon considered the idea of developing more weapons and forming an armed group.

"All right, I want you two to throw this body in the Crow Woods." He said to the two after a moment.

The Crow Woods was a forest that was around Martell Village.

"And what do we do with it?" One of the two asked as he showed the weapon in his hands.

"Give them to me. I will lend you this revolver to protect yourselves. We'll talk about these weapons later, but don't talk about it with anyone else for now." He said, looking seriously at those two.

They both readily accepted the boy's orders and handed their shotguns to Vicente before he gave a revolver to one of them.

As much as they were older and stronger than Vicente, they both had their families to worry about, and more importantly, as poor people, they couldn't be stupid.

After learning about these firearms, they immediately realized the potential of being on Vicente's side.

If they continued with him, there would probably be more guns in the future and also more people in their group. This could certainly improve their situations more than them rebelling against him now.

As people of low talent, their potential was limited alone. But everything could be different next to someone with exceptional knowledge and contacts.

So they quickly left and headed for the Crow Woods.

Seeing them leaving with Jesse's body, Vicente put his firearms in a box and left, returning to his home.

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"Rory, it's me. Open the door." Vice said in a low voice after knocking three times on the door of his house.

While they were acting, Rory returned to this place with Nina and Peter.

Peter was still unconscious, while Nina knew that she had to obey Rory in her brother's absence.

So Rory had had no trouble taking care of those two children, and upon hearing Vicente, he quickly opened the door, unlocking the several locks Vice had placed over the past few weeks.

"Well? How did it go?" Rory asked as he looked thoughtfully at his friend.

"It's all over. We solved our problems with Jesse." Vicente walked over to where he had left the son of that enemy as he spoke.

"What do we do now?" Rory was not bothered by Jesse's murder since he knew what kind of group he was part of.

"I will release this boy in the center of the village, and eventually, someone will take him back to his mother," Vice said in a low voice before picking that boy up and throwing him over one of his shoulders.

Chapter 38: Family Development?

After a few hours, the two young men sent by Vicente returned from the Crow Woods while their leader released Peter in the center of the village.

As the day slowly took over the skies, marking the end of that long night, the four involved in the previous action were together at the Fuller residence.

Nina was sleeping peacefully in her room, while her brother had too many things on his mind to rest.

After everyone had finished their business the previous night, Vicente looked at those three and said. "What we did this night will happen many more times in the future.

Many more will die at our hands if we are to grow. Finally, some of us may fall by the wayside.

The battles' reward for some warriors is death, so it will happen to some of us sooner or later.

This is not a safe journey but a thorny path full of problems.

Your families may eventually suffer.

Are you sure you want to walk this course? Once you enter it for good, there is no turning back."

Seeing the deep look in Vicente's eyes, Rory clenched his fists, remembering the misfortune of his friend's life, and readily accepted.

"We will leave the village someday. My mother will be fine if we stay away, so I will take the risks."

"Me too." One of those two young men said. "Better to live at a thousand for 10 years than to live at 10 for a thousand years!"

The other nodded in agreement without saying much.

"Very well, fellows, I welcome you to my family. As your Don, I will provide you with resources and opportunities, but mostly protection." Vicente smiled. "In return, I want your loyalty and strength.

Today it is just us, but we will be much more.

Do you trust me?"

"Yes!"

"Starting tomorrow, we will deal with building this family. For now, we will secure our agreements with local suppliers and develop more firearms.

With the help of you two, I want to discover the limits of these weapons."

They both nodded, eager to help Vicente with that.

"For the rest, don't talk about the weapons or our group with anyone else. Just watch for people with the potential to join us.

When we have more reliable people, we will invite them to our group."

"OK!"

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After Jesse's death, three months would pass in the blink of an eye.

Peter would return to his mother at that time, and searches throughout the village would ensue.

Jesse's wife would accuse Vicente of being around her husband's disappearance, but she could do nothing against him without proof.

She had no resources to act against Vice, and her power was not high enough for her to cause trouble for this boy who had dozens of men who depended on him.

Even after the villagers found Jesse's body days after his death, nothing but rumors about Vice and this man's relationship would circulate through the village.

Either way, Vice was just a child in everyone's eyes, and few believed he really had any involvement with this death.

But of the few who did, some were precisely those suppliers who had talked with Jesse earlier.

They intended only to fulfill their contracts with Vice and then do business with such a man. But with his death, they were confident that this child was not a good-for-nothing and that he was involved in this murder somehow.

However, even these misgivings had not hurt Vice's group in the short run. He had contracts that would last from 2 to 5 years, so even if some wanted to distance themselves from him, he would not allow it.

When signing a Magic Agreement, one could only break it if both sides decided to do so.

And so Vice had been growing his operations with more of his trusted people working for him and the development of new weapons.

In these months, he and those two young men had done many tests and discovered the limit of their weapons.

An Apprentice blacksmith had made these weapons, so they were Red-grade items. But still, the limit of these items was the Junior Apprentice level.

When those two young men had used all their power, they had damaged the weapons and helped Vicente understand that, for the moment, their limit was to infuse about 75% of the mana of a Junior Apprentice.

Luckily this could be improved if they used more talented and well-ranked blacksmiths.

Even though it was an earthbound project, by involving the magical powers of blacksmiths from this world, these items had become magical artifacts with the classic limitations of items made on this world.

Because of this, Vicente had in mind to get more powerful blacksmiths in the future, while he had already increased the number of weapons at his disposal by three times.

But for now, only he and his three family partners would use these weapons since they had not yet recruited anyone else.

Anyway, amid all this, the new period at the Academy of Stars had finally begun, and Nina had started her studies.

At the academy, she spent almost half the day learning, giving Vice more room to busy himself with his plans for his family.

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"Vice, here are your things. See you." A middle-aged lady said as she smiled at Vicente while standing across the counter from a bakery.

After getting his change and the bag of loaves of bread, Vicente said goodbye to that person with whom he bought bread daily.

He walked out of that place amidst the stares of the people in the surrounding area, several of whom looked at him with different eyes than they would look at a child.

Everyone in this village already knew what had happened to Vicente's family and how he had been dealing with his late father's affairs.

But the rumors about how he led exceeded those about how unlucky he and Nina were.

So the whole village no longer saw him as a 12-year-old boy.

"I hear that he and his group are targeting all the local merchants." A customer commented on this to the establishment's owner, looking ugly at Vice. "He wants to steal everyone's business in the village."

"Don't say that. He's just trying to expand his business. Is it really wrong for him to do that?" That woman asked.

"The rates he charges are absurd. How are we going to compete with that?" That disgruntled person said in an irritated tone. "And he's just a 12-year-old brat."

What will happen when he grows up?"

"If he grows up..." A 13-year-old muttered as he looked sharply in Vice's direction.

If Vicente watched him now, he would identify the young man who bullied Rory years ago.

Chapter 39: Merchants' Society?

"Vicente, you have to change your current moves, kid. Do you think you can target all of our business?" A middle-aged man exclaimed against the boy across the table in the Fuller family warehouse.

On the outskirts of this former Jesse office, Vicente was sitting in an armchair, and Rory was standing next to him, both looking at the local merchant who had just arrived there demanding to speak to them.

Next to this man was a level 6 General, looking at them like an adult trying to scare a child who had messed up.

Vice smiled at the words of this old local merchant and said. "Mister Damian Cohen, you are mistaken. I am not trying to steal anyone's business.

In fact, I would like to get closer to local merchants. If you are willing, we can make a mutually beneficial partnership."

"Partnership?" That man made a confused expression. He was there to talk about this boy stealing his business, but Vice had suggested a partnership out of the blue...

Was this boy crazy, or was there something else behind it?

"Kid, don't think I won't act against your group because you are a child." He said.

"Hmm, but mister, what do you want me to do? I merely offered better prices to my suppliers and customers. It's not my fault if people I wasn't even doing business with found out about it and now want to approach me..." He said. "Or are you saying that they have an obligation to do business with you?"

"What? That's not what I'm saying!" This man raised his voice.

"Then what is it? If you are bothered by rumors from your suppliers, just lower your prices, and you won't lose any of your business."

"That's absurd! Are you telling me to lower my profits?" He felt outraged.

Vicente grinned. "That's how the market works. There are already groups imitating us, so even if I get out of this business, those charging abusive prices would still have to lower their prices to stay competitive with other groups."

"But this is your fault. You started this madness!"

"Hmm, so you can become my ally. You won't get the same returns you had before, but you can profit greatly from me." Vicente spoke, negotiating more support for his group.

He had been lowering some costs that groups like his typically had in trading the products of their suppliers. For example, normally, groups of merchants traveling with their products had to hire warriors to protect these resources.

The cost of mercenaries was not cheap, so to maintain his profits, a merchant like this angry man in front of Vicente had to promise lower prices to their suppliers and sell their products at higher values to consumers.

However, Vicente had firearms on his side and people willing to take their chances with these weapons!

With these, he no longer hired mercenaries and had been using his own people to protect his wagons.

Through this and other actions, he was able to offer better prices to his suppliers and customers without decreasing his profits too much!

'Vice was very clever.' Rory thought as he looked at his friend talking to that merchant. 'With the advent of guns, he was able to increase the prices we pay to our suppliers and thereby please these people.'

Now the risk of Andrew's former suppliers leaving us has decreased significantly, and we can act with less worry of losing what we already had in the beginning.'

Vice continued to smile at that stressed man. "Mister, I will not tell you how I am improving prices for my customers and suppliers, but I assure you my profits are almost equal to what my father had in his time.

If you join me, I will guarantee you the same profits I have been making."

"How?" That man asked, still agitated at dealing with this bold child.

"I won't say. You would have to sign a Magical Agreement with me for me to tell you that."

"Tsk!" Damian looked away and then tried to control himself a little.

He couldn't just hit this child. That would be an embarrassment to him.

At the same time, merchants were not people who used violence at the first sign of disagreement. The opposite of this, people like him would try to talk and negotiate before drawing their weapons.

In this situation, Damian sighed and asked. "What would that be like? I don't understand what kind of partnership I could have with a boy like you."

Vice explained. "Very simple. Join my group. We will merge our merchant caravans."

Damian frowned his eyebrows. "Do you want me to subordinate myself to you?"

"No. I will be the leader of this group, but you will have almost as many freedoms as they have now. The big difference is that you will be part of a society with several merchants under my rule.

I will provide you with the methods to offer better prices to your customers and suppliers, and in return, you will give me a share of that business. Of course, you would also have to follow some rules."

Hearing this, such a man asked. "And why would other merchants join you? We can simply lower our prices and maintain our independence.

We'll have to give you something for it anyway, so we could simply give up some of our profits for our freedoms."

Vicente then said. "Yes, that is a possibility. But you should know not everyone will go along with it. And when I have more merchant groups on my side, I will naturally use my influence to put pressure on those who are not with us."

Vicente looked at that mercenary and said. "But if they are on our side, not only will they not have to worry about losing their suppliers and customers, but they won't have to hire mercenaries anymore.

I will provide protection, transportation, and more." He opened his arms, smiling confidently. "As our society grows, we can even achieve things we could not alone.

The influence of a group will always be greater than that of a single person."

There were societies like the one Vicente was planning to create in this place. However, associations and guilds in this model took away much more of the freedom of their members than this boy intended.

For this reason, many preferred to stay away from such groups.

Yet, what Vicente was promising was indeed tempting.

"And why you?" That man did not disagree with this boy's words, but he still had a hard time accepting Vicente as a leader. "Why wouldn't we unite under the command of someone more capable?"

Vicente said at once, "Because only I have the ability to lead you. Besides being the only one with the method to lower your costs, I already have 37% of the suppliers in the area.

Besides me, counting you, there are six merchants who share the rest of the local suppliers. But none of you even comes close to my position.

You see, Mister Damian, I have prepared myself for this. Unlike you, I have been working to create this group for almost a year now.

None of you could replace me and take this group to the position I will take."

This man knew that most of this business was in the hands of Vicente's group and could not deny the advantage of the time this boy had been planning everything.

"Can you give me some time to think?"

"Of course. You have until the end of next month to think about it. After that, I will consider you have given up."

Chapter 40: Secret Society

Three months would pass quickly as Vicente's group developed.

After the previous negotiation, Damian agreed to join Vice's group with two other merchants from Martell Village.

Through this, Vice had created his local merchant society a few days ago, when the deadline for their agreement to take effect had begun.

After days of waiting, the three merchants associated with the Fuller family had finally been called by Vicente this morning. They were now in the Crow Woods with this boy and some of his men.

It was the middle of the day in this region, and the blue sky of this warm day illuminated the forest, making this ordinarily dark place much more peaceful.

The small animals took advantage of the day to escape their burrows while others rested in hiding.

Amidst the sparse vegetation of the area, Vicente stood next to Rory and 10 of his trusted men.

After months since Jesse's death, Vicente and Rory had brought more trusted people to their side, having trained some of the workers from the Fuller family warehouse to become marksmen.

Hence, when the older people arrived there, the three merchants and their trusted men soon looked at Vicente's group with curiosity, waiting to see what these low-level magicians had for them.

Damian looked at those two young men and saw how they were getting a little bigger, each day closer to their biological maturity.

Magicians grew vertiginously between the ages of 12 and 14. In this maturation period, they left their childish features behind and reached adult appearances within a few months.

Vicente and Rory did not stop growing and maturing; today, one of them was 1.76 and the other 1.83 meters tall. Both were between 70 and 75 kilograms, and hair could be seen growing on parts of their faces.

Considering how they dressed in formal and well-tailored clothes, they both looked even older.

Seeing his guests arriving, Vicente smiled and said. "My associates, all of you have already promised not to talk about what we have here, so it is time to introduce you to my armed group.

These ten young men here are the security guards you will use in your travels from now on. With them, the safety of your resources will be guaranteed."

"Are you serious?"

"That's a joke..." One of them muttered as he turned away.

This comment did not bother Vicente, and he merely signaled for one of those men to act.

When he saw his leader's signal, one of the ten young men pulled out the pistol he had in his waistband and pointed it toward that merchant with his back turned.

The others in the vicinity were surprised by the shape of the thing but thought it was some kind of weapon.

As they quirked their eyebrows, that merchant felt someone pointing something at him and turned around. "What's that? Are you trying to scare me with a toy, Vicente?"

Vicente's man changed the direction of his pistol and then fired.

Bang!

Everyone heard a gunshot and a very fast flesh coming from that gun. Then something shot at great speed from it, passing by the side of that merchant's left cheek, so he felt something passing close to his head.

In the next instant, the bullet hit the trunk of a tree behind such a merchant.

When this happened, the trunk of that tree, almost 60 centimeters in diameter, was suddenly hit.

A part of that trunk 1.9 meters above the ground was totally destroyed, and the tree swayed, leaning in the direction where the bullet lodged in its trunk had come from.

Seeing the destruction caused by such a weapon, the merchant paled as he felt an indescribable chill run through his body.

If it had hit him, he could have died!

The others also realized this and readily understood the power of that small weapon in the hands of one of Vicente's men.

Vice grinned when he saw this and said. "This is my firearm! A simple Junior Apprentice armed with the simplest of these weapons can even kill a Senior Apprentice with their defenses up.

If they act against an unwary and inattentive opponent, seriously injuring an Acolyte is not out of their possibilities!"

"Is that really possible?"

"If that's true, then if Acolytes use those weapons..."

Gulp!"

"For the moment, we can't do that. We need Acolytes blacksmiths, and we don't have any of them... So this is not possible. However, we can have such weapons compatible with Acolytes in the future." Vicente said, encouraging these men.

"But, Vicente, how does that work? How did you get such magnificent items?" Damian asked, understanding how Vicente planned to lower their costs.

Vicente smiled but did not reveal.

In Polaris Realm, there were weapons that increased the power of their users. But there was nothing like Vicente's firearms.

However, he had not intentionally developed these items and was unsure how they worked. All Vicente wanted when planning his weapons was to have valuable items to be used against low-level people.

Ordinary weapons on Earth could kill even animals weighing hundreds of kilograms, so he thought they might have a positive effect for the beginning of his journey in Polaris Realm.

But the weapons he had assembled there differed from those on Earth and could do much more damage.

He then said. "Don't worry about the how. I will try to develop these weapons so that people of your level can use them in the future. But for now, I believe this will be enough for us to start our strategies."

They agreed, but soon one of them raised a crucial question. "But Vicente, how do we deal with these men? The royal family forbids group formations like the one you have here."

According to the royal laws of Seidel, ordinary people could have a maximum of 3 magicians or warriors working as guards. Above that, such groups would be considered unauthorized military organizations and would be targeted by the forces of the kingdom.

Nobles could have more men on their side depending on their rank. But for ordinary people, the limit was really high.

Vicente already had ten armed men, which could threaten the lives of some relatives of nobles or low-level royalty.

Vice knew about the difficulties of publicly maintaining a personal guard in this place and said. "These are merely farmers and merchants..."

Until they draw their weapons, these men are not warriors.

Finally, our society will naturally be of the secret type. So in public, some of these men will work for you and have no relation to each other."

"Oh?"

Rory added. "No one but us needs to know about our arrangements. We are just merchants who meet from time to time to talk business—nothing out of the ordinary.

No one needs to know we are associates and work together."

After those words, the men in Vicente's group smiled along with those merchants. Everyone there knew that the local rules could limit them in many ways, but there were ways for them to act in the shadows without running big risks.

Vicente then signaled to two of those men. "Here, we have some weapons for you. Please try them out, but don't use more mana than my men could use at their levels."