

## The World 104

### Chapter 104: The Battle At The Black Market, Part 2 (7)

Leon's POV

I glanced down at Norman, who was sobbing uncontrollably. Whether those tears were genuine or not, I couldn't care less. He was bleeding profusely from the stumps of his severed limbs, unable to even crawl in his current state.

As much as I wanted to end Norman's life right then and there, I knew I needed him alive. Resurrection magic only worked if the person needed for the ritual was still breathing. So, instead, I delivered a solid punch to his head, enough to knock him unconscious but not to kill him. As soon as I did, the clones he'd conjured melted into the ground like puddles.

It seemed his powers couldn't be sustained while he was out cold.

Grabbing Norman by the scruff of his neck like a cat, I closed all of his wounds. I couldn't let him die from his injuries, like Martha had. While I focused on Norman, who now appeared to be peacefully sleeping with his eyes closed, someone approached from behind me.

"Artemis," I addressed her. Earlier, I called her Phosporos. Since she sucked at coming up with names, I decided to give her one instead. Phosporos meant light-bringer, which suited her well, especially since she favored light magic. She seemed pleased when I dubbed her that, but she quickly reverted to her poker face.

She still hadn't forgiven me for easily bringing her to climax last night, my actions still fresh in her memory. "Have you completed the task I assigned you?"

"Yes, I've tended to her wounds," she replied, her voice steady. "She's stabilized now. However, she'll remain unconscious for several days."

"That's still good," I remarked. Honestly, I didn't want Shredica to kick the bucket so soon. She had that potential to be like the protagonist of this world, you know? But still, I couldn't shake off the hate I felt towards her. "What about your other assignment?" I asked.

"Well..."

Artemis began recounting her tale of how she liberated Charlotte.

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Artemis's POV

As I arrived at the location Leon had directed me to, I found a woman there, slumbering deeply with her head resting on the table. Her silver hair cascaded around her, and a bit of drool trickled down from her chin.

"Ahhh... I can't eat another bite..." she muttered in her sleep.

Carefully, I approached and slipped into the room behind her. Opening the door, I discovered another woman inside, bound with tape around her feet and her arms restrained behind her back. A piece of tape covered her mouth, muffling any attempts to speak.

The moment the woman laid eyes on me, fear flashed in her widened gaze, and she attempted to scramble away. I swiftly unsheathed my dagger, causing her tears to mix with her already palpable dread. Closing in on her, I raised the blade overhead, then brought it down with a decisive motion. Instantly, the tape binding her feet was severed.

As she timidly opened her eyes and realized she was free, surprise replaced her previous terror.

With a single finger pressed against my lips, I signaled for her to remain silent. She nodded in understanding, her gaze fixed on me as I motioned for her to follow my lead.

Extracting her from the premises proved to be a straightforward task. The woman guarding her remained asleep throughout. Once outside the establishment, I guided her towards the exit of the Black Market. There, I meticulously cut away all the tape restraining her. It seemed the tape had been imbued with power dampening and anti-magic properties, rendering her unable to break free.

Fortunately, it lacked the same resilience as Leon's enchanted clothing...

After escorting her out of the Black Market, I handed her a single gold coin, enough for her to make her way back to the Academy City. With that done, I returned to Leon's side. Upon my arrival, I found him finished with capturing Norman.

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Arianne's POV

Despite the pain coursing through my body from my cracked ribs, I forced myself to approach the unconscious Shredica. Gingerly, I lifted her hand and draped it over my shoulder, using what strength I had left to support her weight. The poison that had turned her face purple seemed to have faded, likely thanks to the efforts of the figure accompanying Mephisto.

Turning my gaze to Leader, I noticed her distant stare. Mephisto and his companion had already departed, taking Norman with them. I could see Leader's clenched fist trembling, and she was biting her lip so hard it drew blood.

I wasn't sure what was going through Leader's mind, but I felt compelled to say something. "Leader, let's head back," I suggested.

Leader finally tore her gaze away from whatever had captured her attention and turned to me. "Right. Let's go back," she agreed.

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???'s POV

"What do you mean?!" Sesillian's voice boomed through the phone, held by his sister, Miss Sara.

Miss Sara winced at the volume, pulling the phone away from her ear before adjusting the volume and bringing it back. "The woman managed to escape!" she replied, her tone oddly cheerful despite her failure.

"Why?!" Sesillian demanded, his frustration evident.

"Because I nodded off!" Sara lightly thumped her head with her fist, then playfully stuck out her tongue with a wink, emitting a mischievous tee-hee.

"You had one job, Sara!" Sesillian's voice thundered through the phone. "Ugh. I guess it's my damn fault for entrusting you with such a simple task, but it's infuriatingly easy, and yet you still managed to screw it up... All the meticulous preparations we made have gone down the drain. Why the hell did this happen?"

I gestured for Miss Sara to pass me the phone so I could have a word with Sesillian.

"Mephisto intervened," I informed him.

"Mephisto...? The man who bested you?"

"Yes," I replied, though the reminder of my defeat by Mephisto stung, I managed to keep my composure. "He assaulted the Black Market and took out Norman."

"What? Norman's dead?" Sesillian's voice crackled with surprise.

"Yes," I confirmed. "Losing one of our most valuable pawns is regrettable, but we still have others in play, Sesillian. Our focus should be on reclaiming Charlotte."

"I'll handle that myself," he grumbled. "Anyway, I'll be heading over to pick up Sara. Tell her to stay put."

"Got it," I acknowledged before the call abruptly ended. Turning to Sara, I remarked, "Looks like things have fallen into place."

All of these events unfolded according to my meticulous plan. Even Norman swallowing the pill was a calculated move on my part. I needed to ascertain its potency, which is why I maneuvered Norman into a corner where he had no choice but to ingest it. Mephisto's unexpected intervention threw a spanner in the works, but I adapted, ensuring that everything still fell into place as intended.

Charlotte's escape was not a setback, but rather a vital step in securing a powerful pawn—a pawn crucial to my ultimate goal.

"Hehehe... Indeed. Now, where's my reward?" she demanded eagerly, her eyes gleaming with anticipation.

"I'll have beastkin meat ordered and prepared for you. Please, take a seat and wait patiently," I replied calmly.

"Alright! I'll be eagerly awaiting," she responded with a smirk.

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Leon's POV

The next day, Friday at the academy, as every student returned from the abruptly terminated joint training, we heard the news.

"Charlotte Sierra has been found!" exclaimed one of the students. Immediately, everyone rushed to the front courtyard of the school. I joined them to see for myself.

As we approached, our eyes fell upon a woman being escorted by a female professor. It was none other than Charlotte herself. Wrapped in a towel, she was led with care and compassion into one of the school buildings, presumably the infirmary. Despite it only being a day since her disappearance, the toll on her mental well-being was evident.

She appeared fragile, in need of immediate attention and support.

As she walked, Charlotte cast her gaze around the gathered students. One student in particular, Prince Julius, sprinted towards her.

"Charlotte!" he exclaimed.

Charlotte smiled and made her way towards him... or so it seemed. Instead, she passed him by and headed straight for another person. Without hesitation, she enveloped that person in a tight hug. It was none other than Professor Sesillian. As Charlotte buried her face into his chest, tears streamed down her cheeks, as if a dam had burst within her.

Professor Sesillian simply patted her back soothingly as she sobbed.

Prince Julius turned to observe the emotional scene unfolding before him. With a pained smile, he turned away and silently walked out.

At that moment, an unwelcome memory from my past life resurfaced, hitting me like a freight train with an intense headache. The image of a girl lingered in the memory, though her face remained blurred and hazy, like a distant dream I couldn't quite grasp.

"...I can't believe we're finally seniors in high school. Feels like we were just in middle school yesterday, doesn't it? Time flies, leaving us in its wake. And now, you're even taller than me! I used to tower over you last year, but now you're towering over me! Boys have it so unfair, don't they?

Oh well, I guess I'll just have to catch up with my growth spurt. Still waiting for that to kick in, though. But I think these are the only things that kept growing on me. Anyway, here's to another year with you, Ts—"



At that moment, memories of the girl I'd loved throughout my childhood flooded back, stretching into my high school years. She was my constant companion, my childhood friend from my past life.

The image of her merged with Charlotte in my mind, blurring the lines between past and present. In that instant, it felt like I could resent Charlotte for a lifetime.