

The World 151

Chapter 151: The Others Who Also Wants It

Erica's POV

It was the dead of night, and the members of our Idol Group, along with Ayane, the beastkin representing our company as its primary model and ambassador, were still wide awake, chatting about random stuff.

Like me, these women had also been victims of kidnapping, nearly falling into the clutches of human traffickers. But thankfully, Leon—well, Master, as we've come to call him—swooped in and saved us all before things got too grim. From that day forward, he's been our guardian angel, looking out for us in every way possible.

Because of that, we'd go to great lengths to fulfill his wishes, like helping to make the company famous.

As the chosen representatives of the company, we were determined to make Leonamon famous, aiming for worldwide recognition. We were currently working on our sixth music track, one that was dedicated to our Master.

The lyrics went something like, "We love you, oh, we love you, our guardian angel♪ Oh, our handsome prince, our saviour♪." Three out of our tracks were inspired by Master, and they were still drawing in a lot of listeners, so I guess it was paying off.

As the night wore on, the conversation took an unexpected turn.

"Anyway, Erica, I heard you've already had sex with Master. I'm so jealous. I wish he'd call me too for some action," Varvara, the main vocal of our idol group, remarked.

When Varvara dropped that bombshell, all eyes turned to me, even Ayane's ears perked up in curiosity.

"W-Well, it was sort of an accident, you know? I just happened to get lucky," I stammered, feeling a blush creeping up on my cheeks.

It was the truth, though. The reason I'd ended up having sex with Master before anyone else was that I accidentally stumbled upon him in the act with Miss Amon. If my curiosity hadn't gotten the best of me while exploring the premises, I probably wouldn't have had that chance encounter. I guess I owe it all to my nosiness.

"Lucky or not, it's a fact that out of the 52 of us, you're the one who got picked first," our main dancer, Latifa, chimed in. She's a beastkin from one of the dog clans.

"How is it, Erica?" asked Tia, the lead vocalist, a demon race member.

"How is it, you ask? Well, I..." I paused, feeling the curious gaze of all the girls, including Ayane, fixed on me.

How should I even answer this question? How should I put it? Well, when asked, how is it... I guess you could say it was amazing. Master was absolutely incredible at it. He could go on for so long that even with three girls with him, he could leave them all breathless.

I can definitely vouch for that. And Master... he was truly exceptional. He could make me climax multiple times and even make me lose consciousness from the intensity of it all. He was an absolute beast in bed. And I loved every moment of it.

I couldn't bring myself to spill the beans, though. It was just too embarrassing.

"It seems like it's pretty incredible," Bella, the visual of our group, commented. She was undeniably the most stunning among us. "I wonder if Maya and the others are having fun right now? They're probably getting fucked by Master as we speak, huh?"

"Right... Lucky them..." Varvara muttered, her gaze drifting toward the direction where Maya and the others were likely enjoying Master's attention.

"Do you think Master will do the same to us if we perform well?" Tia inquired.

"Well, I reckon he will," Latifa replied confidently.

"If we do well in our debut less than two months from now, I'm gonna ask Master to reward me with some action," Varvara declared with determination.

"Count me in too!"

"And me!"

"And of course, me too!"

Latifa, Tia, and Bella were all on board with the idea as well. As the leader of this idol group, I felt it was crucial for me to join in. It would probably be better for Master to get intimate with someone who's already experienced his impressive member, so he can release all his pent-up frustrations from not being able to freely indulge with the others due to their lack of experience.

After expressing their desire to be with Master, they all turned their attention to the only woman who hadn't spoken up yet. Sensing their gaze, Ayane hesitantly spoke up, "W-What?"

"What about you, Ayane? Aren't you gonna ask for it too?" Varvara inquired.

"W-What? N-No, I..."

"You don't want it?" Latifa pressed. "Well, we can't force you if you're not interested, but I have a feeling you're the one he desires the most out of all 52 of us."

"T-That can't be..."

"It really is, when you think about it. He was ready to buy you the first time we met him, wasn't he?"

It was true. Master had shown more interest in Ayane than any of us from the start. It did make me a tad jealous, but it wasn't something I dwelled on too much.

Perhaps due to embarrassment, Ayane buried her head in her bed. It was a heartwarming sight. At the same time, I caught a whiff of something incredibly fragrant wafting through the air. It was such a pleasant smell... it made me feel a bit lightheaded, but in a good way. I wondered what it could be?

After chatting for a bit, we rehearsed our songs and then called it a night, heading off to sleep.

Gabrielle's POV

I stirred from sleep earlier than usual, the clock barely ticking past 4 A.M. With a sense of solitude hanging in the air, I slipped out of bed and made my way to the shower. Tonight, the absence of my Master's comforting presence left me feeling hollow. Where once his arm would cradle my head, tonight I was left with only my ordinary pillow.

Yet, anticipation thrummed within me as I eagerly awaited the conclusion of whatever plans he had brewing for the King's Game. For when that was over, he'd come to claim me, ravaging me with the hunger of a primal beast. The mere thought sent shivers of desire down my spine, igniting a fiery yearning deep within my pussy.

As I stood before the mirror, the dim light casting shadows across my figure, I couldn't help but notice the transformation my body had undergone under Master's touch. Every curve seemed to exude a newfound allure, every contour sculpted to perfection. A satisfied hum escaped my lips as I took in the sight, reveling in the erotic metamorphosis he had wrought upon me.

With clothes adorning my form, I stepped out of the teacher's dormitory, ready to face the day.

Yet, as I emerged into the crisp morning air, the rhythmic sound of footsteps pounding against pavement caught my attention. Curiosity piqued, I ventured closer, only to recoil in revulsion at the sight that greeted me.

"What's with the disgusted look?" The woman, dressed in plain exercise clothes, panted as she shot me a glare of disdain.

"What are you up to so early in the morning?" I inquired.

"Can't you tell? I'm exercising," she replied, her breaths coming in ragged gasps.

"I can see that. But why?" I pressed.

"Well, it's because..." She trailed off, biting her lip momentarily. Then, with a determined look in her eyes, she continued, "It's because some asshole fucked me and then disappeared as soon as he got what he wanted. I spiraled into depression, ended up overeating, and gained some weight in the process. So, what, are you enjoying seeing me like this?"

"I see..." I responded quietly before turning away from her.

"You're such an asshole, Gabrielle," she spat out.

I halted in my tracks but didn't look back at her. "What do you mean?" I asked.

"You were fucking disappointed when I only graduated in the silver class, then had the audacity to tell me we couldn't be friends anymore. You fucking lost it at the graduation ceremony, mocking me in front of everyone for not becoming a magic knight like you. And now? Now you've ditched your job and slinked into the same fucking profession as me, all for some guy?

What was the point of shattering me back then? Do you even realize the fucking devastation you caused? I spiraled into a goddamn abyss of depression and became a fucking recluse because of you! And now, just as I was finally starting to piece my life back together, you fucking strut back into it!

Do you have any fucking clue how many fucking years I spent agonizing over what the fuck to do next after failing to become a goddamn magic knight like you?"

The way she was talking now reminded me of how she used to speak back then. She always had a mouth like a sailor. I kept my gaze averted, refusing to meet hers.

"It's because some dickhead ordered you to become a professor that you gave up being a magic knight, something we both fucking dreamed of," she spat out bitterly. "I want those years back!"

I remained silent, feeling no need to respond. But after a few moments of tense silence, I finally spoke up. "Is that all? Well, I'll be going now," I said, then continued on my way.

"You're a real fucking asshole," she hissed once more. "Mark my fucking words, Gabrielle. I'll steal Leon away from you."

I simply shrugged in response. "Good luck then."

Chapter 152: The Pieces Are Moving (1)

Myrcella's POV

The tension within the castle was palpable, growing thicker with each passing day. Ever since my father, the King, declared martial law in the kingdom, the entire castle and the surrounding lands had been shrouded in this heavy atmosphere.

Outside the castle gates, Johanne awaited me, with a carriage parked behind him. Today was the King's Game, and it was time for us to make our way there.

"Everything's set, Princess Myrcella," Johanne said. "Mr. Harold and Miss Hertrude will be waiting for us at the venue."

Johanne gallantly helped me into the carriage, his actions reminiscent of a chivalrous knight aiding his princess. Today, I eschewed the traditional trappings of royalty, opting instead for practicality. After all, I

was heading into battle. Wearing such fancy attire would only hinder my movements and draw unwanted attention. Instead, I opted for my student uniform: a sleek black military outfit.

It was crafted from the tough hide of a high-grade monster, providing both durability and some protection against magical attacks. It was the perfect choice for the occasion.

Johanne was dressed in attire that mirrored my own, donning the same hues as my military uniform. A sheath adorned his hip, concealing the blade of his sword. Johanne held a unique position as the only son of Duke Whitlock, a figure revered as a sword saint throughout the kingdom.

The title of sword saint was reserved for warriors of unparalleled skill in swordsmanship, and Duke Whitlock held the esteemed reputation as the mightiest swordsman in the land, perhaps even across the entire world. Consequently, Johanne possessed an exceptional mastery of the blade.

If his magical abilities matched my own, he could very well ascend to the pinnacle of the gold class, eclipsing even my standing. Yet, such a prospect didn't trouble me in the slightest.

While lost in thought, the coachman, responsible for steering the carriage toward the venue where the King's Game would unfold, carried on with his duties. The King's Game was slated to take place at the very fringes of the kingdom, within the Knowledge City.

Nestled upon a solitary island amidst the vast ocean, this event would see one hundred participants pitted against each other in combat, with the last one standing declared the victor.

As the carriage trundled along, I gazed out the window, contemplating recent events. Julius had yet to return to the castle, and rumors swirled among the nobles, clamoring for his exile. While the King had

yet to issue any formal decree, it seemed he was entertaining the notion. Julius held a tenuous claim to the throne compared to myself and our older brother, who was considered the heir apparent.

However, being a prince of the realm, the King couldn't simply cast him aside without consequence. After all, he was still his son.

It was only natural for him to ponder over this for a while. However, unrest was brewing among the nobles, and the commoners were on the brink of revolt. It seemed inevitable that a coup d'état would soon occur if the King didn't decree the Prince's exile.

"...Don't worry, Princess," Johanne reassured me, sensing the turmoil I was going through.

"Thank you, Johanne," I expressed with gratitude. Yet, a lingering worry persisted within me. I pondered how everything would unfold in this game. As I glanced out the window, thoughts swirled in my mind. What fate awaited our kingdom now? Would it crumble before us?

Honestly, I had no clue. "I suppose I'll just have to wait and see..." I murmured to myself, the words drowned out by the rumble of the carriage in motion. Johanne couldn't hear my whispered musings over the noise.

Julius's POV

I woke up feeling refreshed, unlike anything I've ever experienced before. It was the first time in my life I felt so alive. Maybe it was because I did something new for the first time. I glanced at the woman lying beside me. She was a gorgeous prostitute I had hired for the night. Honestly, it was a pleasurable experience.

I had been trying to save my virginity for, you know, that woman who I don't even want to mention anymore. But since she betrayed me, I guess it was only natural to toss my virginity away with other women.

I got up from the bed and stretched, feeling an incredible sensation in my waist. The scent of sex lingered in the air, so I headed to the shower to wash away the residue. After cleaning up, I returned to the room, grabbed my clothes, and dressed myself. Leaving five silver coins on the bedside table as payment, I exited the room.

As soon as I stepped out, a man appeared before me.

"It's about time," he said. "The King's Game is about to begin."

"Right," I replied. "It's time for me to take the stage."

Shredica's POV

"Nghah?!"

My eyes flew open with a sudden jolt. I let out a somewhat undignified yelp as I regained consciousness.

"Mm...?"

Sitting up in bed, I ran a hand through my unkempt hair, scanning the unfamiliar surroundings with bleary confusion.

"Where...?"

This wasn't my usual waking place. The room and everything in it were entirely foreign to me. It definitely wasn't my dorm room. Then, it hit me.

"Oh, right... I rented a room for the night in Knowledge City," I muttered to myself.

The reason for that was simple: I couldn't afford to be late for the event. Missing out on this opportunity wasn't an option. If I skipped it, my chances of becoming a magic knight would plummet. I'd be at the mercy of Lord Gaspard, facing expulsion from the academy. Then, my dream of returning home would vanish into thin air.

I was determined to win at any cost, hence why I arrived in the city so early.

I rose from the bed and made my way to the shower. Studying my reflection in the mirror, I noticed my disheveled appearance. My bed was a mess, as usual, but today it looked like a hurricane had swept through it. There was dried drool at the corners of my mouth, giving me a less-than-ladylike appearance. But I didn't care. In fact, I preferred not to be seen as some prim and proper lady.

After cleaning up in the shower, I returned to the room in the nude and slipped into my usual white uniform, a symbol of my status in the bronze class. Sure, I'd probably get some laughs if anyone saw me wearing it at the game, but I couldn't care less.

Grabbing my phone, I checked the time. It was only 6 o'clock, with the game starting at 9. I had three hours to kill. As I glanced at the screen, a message popped up.

"Princess Myrcella and Johanne are already there. They'll be waiting for you. I hope you don't act rude," it read.

It was a message from Mr. Leon that flashed on my screen. My initial impulse was to fire back a retort, telling him not to dictate my actions. However, after a moment's hesitation, I reconsidered. With a decisive motion, I deleted the message I had drafted and replaced it with a more diplomatic response: "I'll make an effort to maintain decorum."

The reasons behind my sudden change of heart were unclear. Perhaps it was a rare instance of wanting to show appreciation to Mr. Leon. Whatever the motivation, I couldn't deny the invaluable support he provided. Losing his guidance was a risk I couldn't afford to take.

With my resolve solidified, I completed my preparations and set out for the venue, anticipation coursing through my veins.

I rode in a carriage towards the venue. When the coachman mentioned we were nearing our destination, I couldn't resist sticking my head out of the window to catch a glimpse.

"Don't do that, miss. You might lose your head," the coachman warned.

"I doubt I'll lose my head over this, but thanks for the concern," I replied nonchalantly.

The coachman sighed, clearly exasperated by my disregard for his warning. As I peered ahead, a solitary island came into view on the horizon - the venue for the King's Game. Upon reaching the port where contestants were ferried to the island by boats, I stepped out of the carriage and paid the coachman three bronze coins.

I scanned the surroundings, searching for Princess Myrcella. Eventually, I spotted her amidst a small group of people, Mr. Leon conspicuously absent. Rather than calling out to them, I decided to approach quietly. We were all strangers here, after all. As I drew nearer, Johanne, the young man with striking white hair, noticed my presence and informed Princess Myrcella of my arrival.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Shredica," Princess Myrcella greeted me with a graceful curtsy.

I felt a bit out of my element, unsure of how to respond. Etiquette lessons weren't exactly my forte, so interacting with royalty wasn't something I was prepared for.

Remembering that it was customary to bow, I inclined my body at a 90-degree angle. "The pleasure is mine, Princess," I replied.

Chapter 153: The Pieces Are Moving (2)

As I executed the bow, a voice broke through from behind me.

"That's quite a stiff bow," came the observation.

Turning around, I spotted Mr. Leon making his way toward us. Clad in the same white military uniform as mine, his slightly longer hair gave him a disheveled appearance, and he seemed a tad sleepy, even yawning as he approached.

"It's a pleasure to see you again, Leon," Princess Myrcella greeted, though her curtsy seemed a bit awkward compared to before. Or perhaps it was just my imagination.

"The pleasure is mine, Princess Myrcella," Mr. Leon responded, executing a fluid bow that contrasted sharply with my own stiff attempt. It was hard to believe that, like me, he had also dozed off during etiquette classes.

Mr. Leon's gaze swept across the area. "Seems like Hereon's a no-show," he observed.

"He mentioned he'd mull it over," I responded. "But there's a chance he might not be on board at all."

"Well, we've got time. Let's hold out for him," Mr. Johanne proposed.

"Alright, let's give him a chance," I agreed.

"Before he arrives, let's get acquainted and share our skills, if any. I'm Johanne Whitlock. Despite my noble lineage, in this endeavor, we stand as equals. My forte lies in swordsmanship, but I'm lacking in magic. My skill is known as Limit Break. It grants me the power to surpass my limitations, though it comes with its risks if overused.

I trust you all can compensate for my shortcomings, just as I'll do for yours," Mr. Johanne elaborated, his tone resonating with determination.

"I'll follow Johanne's lead in the introduction. I am Myrcella Odette Milham. You're welcome to just call me Myrcella. No need for titles here, as Johanne rightly said, we're all equals in this endeavor. I excel in arcane magic, and I'm also quite skilled in swordsmanship and archery. The one thing I struggle with is cooking.

My skill is Holy Barrier. It allows me to block anything and everything, and within its confines, I can also provide healing," Princess Myrcella declared.

The two turned their attention towards me. I closed my eyes briefly and took a deep breath. "I am Shredica Principilia. My strengths lie in marksmanship and swordsmanship. I'm proficient in various combat styles, whether arcane or martial arts. The only area where I falter is academics.

I don't possess any specific skills to share, as I am skillless," I said.

I heard a disapproving click of a tongue. I ignored it.

Mr. Leon followed suit with his introduction, "I'm Leon. I'm pretty average in every aspect, and as you all probably know by now, I'm skillless."

Another click of the tongue echoed in the room.

"Tch! Two bronze skillless? Am I supposed to believe I'm teaming up with a bunch of no-talents? This is ridiculous."

The speaker was a man, judging by his uniform, also a student from the academy.

Mr. Johanne fixed his gaze on the man. "Mr. Harold, I'd appreciate it if you refrain from looking down on Mr. Leon and Miss Shredica. They're both valuable members of our team.

Princess Myrcella and I wish to avoid any unnecessary tension, so please keep your comments to yourself. Now, if you'd be so kind, please proceed with your introduction so we can learn about your strengths."

The man clicked his tongue once more in annoyance. "Tch! Harold Bladibre. I hail from the lineage of a marquis. Unlike Johanne here, who pretends to be on equal footing with you two, low-born and skillless individuals, you should show me the utmost respect. Not only do I hold a higher status, but I'm also your senior.

Show me the respect I deserve. However, don't expect the same treatment in return. I have no weaknesses to speak of. I excel in swordsmanship and arcane arts. My skill is Landscaping."

The way he said that made it clear he couldn't be bothered with introductions, but since Mr. Johanne insisted, he reluctantly obliged. Mr. Johanne seemed satisfied with his introduction, so I kept that observation to myself.

"Well, then..." Johanne started, glancing at the only person who hadn't introduced herself. She had been engrossed in her smartphone the whole time, not even bothering to look up at us. "Um, Miss Hertrude?"

The woman didn't even bother to look up from her smartphone and simply said, "Wait a sec," as she continued typing.

We waited patiently for her to finish whatever she was doing. After a while, she finally looked up from her phone. "What was it you wanted me to do again?" she asked, sounding somewhat distracted.

"I want you to introduce yourself and your strengths and weaknesses," he requested.

"Introduce, huh?" she replied with a sigh. "Well, I'm Hertrude Getrada, daughter of Baron Getrada. I excel in magic, that's my forte. I have this skill called Clairvoyance. It allows me to glimpse events from my own perspective in the future. They've always been accurate, but they're often blurry and confusing.

Plus, my ability kicks in randomly. I can't control it or change the outcome of what I see. And... that's it, I guess," she finished.

With that, the woman returned to her typing.

"This bunch is a tough crowd to crack," I thought to myself.

We waited for an hour for Mr. Hereon to show up, but alas, he was nowhere to be seen.

"It seems he's a no-show, after all," Mr. Leon remarked, his disappointment evident in his voice.

"I believe it's time we boarded a boat to reach the island. We only have an hour left before the King's Game begins," Princess Myrcella suggested.

"Very well. Everyone, let's head to the docks for a boat ride," Mr. Johanne announced, taking charge of the situation.

However, as we turned around, a voice called out to us.

"Hey! You're not leaving without me, are you? That's just plain rude," a man's voice exclaimed.

Turning back, we saw Mr. Hereon strolling towards us, hands in his pockets. He sported a military uniform matching mine and Mr. Leon's.

And with that, our team was finally complete.

??? POV

I was currently at one of the estates owned by an administrator of the Academy of Milham, situated in Knowledge City near the port where contestants would gather for the King's Game. I had already instructed Prince Julius to head there, while I planned to watch over him from a distance, like a father overseeing his son playing in the park.

Accompanying me was the administrator himself, Gaspard Cordelius Argus.

"You seem to have bounced back from your injuries. Last time I saw you, you were on death's doorstep," remarked Argus.

"Well, I have access to someone who can heal and even regrow limbs for me," I replied. "Anyway, this year's King's Game promises to be quite intriguing, wouldn't you agree? Not only is it happening amidst martial law, but a Prince is also entering the competition with the intention of overthrowing the King. I must say, I haven't felt this excited in a long time."

"Well, it's an event I'd like to witness before I kick the bucket," remarked Gaspard. "Honestly, I never thought you'd manage to turn Prince Julius into your puppet. Quite surprising."

"I just did a bit of manipulation," I shrugged. "Even someone like you could pull it off."

"Goodness, me? I'm far too old for such games now," Gaspard chuckled. "Honestly, I envy you a bit. If the previous King had been as weak and cowardly as the current one when I was in my prime, I might have accomplished what you're doing now."

"Well, things aren't going entirely according to plan," I admitted. "I narrowly escaped death at the hands of someone very powerful, after all."

"The man with many faces, huh?"

". . . ."

"I haven't encountered him myself, so I'm quite skeptical. I'd like to know more about him. Can you enlighten me?" Gaspard inquired.

"Well, I haven't quite figured him out myself," I admitted.

"That powerful, huh?" Gaspard raised an eyebrow.

"It was the first time my ego took such a hit," I confessed.

"I'm sure this isn't a conversation you'd prefer to dwell on, so let's change the subject," Gaspard suggested.

"Agreed," I nodded.

"I'll get straight to the point why I called you here. I need your help to eliminate some individuals," he stated.

"Eliminate people?"

"Two of them," he confirmed. "They're slated to participate in the King's Game. This presents a perfect opportunity to finally be rid of them. I want you to take them out and make it look like their deaths were natural, as if they were casualties of the game."

"You seem quite determined to remove these individuals. It appears you harbor... hatred towards them. So, who exactly are these two?"

I could already guess who he meant, even without asking. This man harbored prejudice against those lacking in skill. I had heard that among the students from the academy participating in the King's Game, there were two without any skill.

"Two students from the academy," he confirmed, aligning with my suspicions. "Two without any skill."

Chapter 154: The Pieces Are Moving (3)

"Can you handle it?" Gaspard inquired.

"Of course," I replied confidently. "Taking out two brats is a walk in the park. But, I won't be the one doing the dirty work directly. I'll assign someone."

Gaspard raised an eyebrow. "Is this person trustworthy?"

"Trustworthiness isn't her strong suit. A few scraps of meat, and she'll do whatever you ask. She'd even betray her own kin for a morsel. You've probably encountered her before, in the royal throne room."

Gaspard pondered for a moment, trying to recall who I was referring to.

"I'm considering Sword Saint Whitlock, but I doubt someone as righteous as him would agree to kill two skillless brats at your behest. It's unlikely to be someone from the Magic Knights either... The only person I can think of is the King's executioner," Gaspard pondered aloud.

I grinned, and Gaspard's eyes widened in shock.

"Seriously? You've managed to tame that mentally deranged woman?" he exclaimed.

As soon as Gaspard uttered those words, a voice erupted from behind us, followed by a sudden blur of movement heading straight for Gaspard, blade aimed at his neck. Reacting swiftly, I used my skill to halt the attack just in time.

"Who are you calling a deranged woman?" came the sharp retort.

Gaspard barely glanced back and sighed. "See? This woman is so unpredictable. She'll just come at you with a knife."

"Well, she's been behaving herself lately," I interjected, looking at Miss Sara. "Miss Sara, please put away your blade."

"Grrr..." Miss Sara grumbled but complied. She was like a wild beast, easily tamed with the right approach.

"Did you catch what we were discussing? I need you to take care of two individuals for me," I informed her.

"And what's in it for me?" Miss Sara demanded.

"I'll arrange a reward for you from the Black Market," I promised.

Miss Sara grinned eerily from ear to ear, her smile reminiscent of a serial killer fresh from a kill.

"I understand. I'll take care of whoever you want me to," she declared with a chilling confidence.

Robyn's POV

Our unit received summons to the throne room. Each member, including our captain, Captain Angelica, knelt in deference to our king, who sat regally upon his throne, his hand resting against his cheek while his elbow found support on the armrest. It was customary for monarchs to look down upon their subjects, so his demeanor wasn't unexpected.

We were his subjects, after all, and such behavior was only natural. Yet, despite its conventionality, our captain seemed perturbed.

The only figures not kneeling were the royal knights, adorned in golden armor, stationed on either side of the red velvet carpet. Among them stood two individuals who, unlike the royal knights, wore attire befitting magic knights. Notably, they remained standing, their lack of kneeling adding to our captain's annoyance.

It seemed they considered themselves superior, elevated above even us, their fellow magic knights.

Well, actually, those two held higher positions in the magic knights than us. One served as the commander, while the other was the vice-commander. Interestingly, the latter was notably younger, reportedly just eighteen years old. It left me pondering how someone so young managed to rise to such a rank in the magic knights. And to think she outranked me...

As these thoughts crossed my mind, the King addressed us, "I reckon you already have an inkling as to why I've summoned you here. My second son, Julius, has decided to throw his hat into the ring for the King's Game, aiming to snatch the throne from me should he emerge victorious.

Naturally, I have the prerogative to deny him that opportunity, but I fear he might resort to even more drastic measures if his desires are thwarted. Hence, I need you all to participate in the King's Game, masquerading as referees while secretly impeding Julius' progress."

So, that's the gist of it. Not entirely surprising.

"Though I mentioned referees, your role is simply to observe Julius' progress," the King elaborated. "You needn't intervene excessively, like preventing killings. The game doesn't necessarily demand fatalities for victory. Disabling opponents or convincing them to forfeit suffices. However, killing isn't expressly forbidden either. Even if you witness a murder, refrain from intervention.

Your duty is solely to disrupt Julius' path to victory."

I heard the sound of teeth grinding and cast a glance at the captain, noticing her clenched jaw nearly drawing blood from her gums. The King's words must have struck a nerve with her. It was understandable, really. A ruler should uphold values that ensure the well-being of their subjects. Allowing murder without intervention was hardly kingly behavior.

"I entrust this matter to you two," the King declared, addressing the Commander of the Magic Knights, Lilia Silverblade, and the Vice Commander, Veronica Eclair.

Both women bowed before him. "Yes, Your Highness."

The King nodded in satisfaction. "Very well. You may all depart now."

With that command, the magic knights filed out of the throne room. Our captain, still gritting her teeth, exited alongside us. Once we were a good distance away, she spun around, fixing Commander Lilia with a fierce glare. No words came from her, just a searing stare. Commander Lilia, however, responded with a serene smile.

"What's on your mind, Angelica? If you have something to say, speak up now."

Captain Angelica clicked her tongue and turned her gaze away from the commander.

"You know, Angelica," Commander Lilia began, "I don't appreciate your tendency to unleash your bloodlust on those who vex you. If the King orders it, I'll have no choice. Though personally, I'd rather not spill the blood of my own subordinates."

I felt a shiver run down my spine at the commander's ominous words. Her abilities were beyond formidable. Just a simple utterance from her could spell the end for anyone. Captain Angelica's prowess was nothing to scoff at either, but the commander operated on a whole different level.

"I have nothing to say to you, Commander," Captain Angelica retorted. "I trust you to lead us well and ensure none of my unit members meet their end in this operation."

"You don't need to fret. I'm quite skilled at giving orders, you know? Who knows, I might have even ordered you to kill yourself," she quipped with a smile, though her words hardly warranted one. She chuckled gracefully. "Just kidding. Like I said, I'd rather not see any of my own subordinates perish."

I don't wish for any of you to meet such a fate. I'll do my utmost to issue orders that ensure everyone's safety."

I could sense the sincerity behind the commander's words. It provided some measure of reassurance, at least.

"Well, if that's all you need from me, Angelica, then I'll be on my way. I need to make preparations for this operation," she concluded before departing.

Commander Lilia strode past us, with Vice Commander Veronica trailing behind. Captain kept her gaze fixed on them until they disappeared down the corridor. Then, with a growl, she punched the wall.

"That woman!" she spat.

The rest of our unit remained silent, as did I. I couldn't comprehend why the captain would resort to such language toward the commander. Nothing in their conversation warranted such hostility.

"Why are you reacting this way, captain?" I inquired. "Didn't the commander already assure us that she'll do everything in her power to ensure no one gets killed during this operation?"

"Don't believe a word that woman says," she growled. "Have you not figured out why they've assigned us, the lowest of all units, to this operation?"

We were clueless. I simply assumed it was because we were the only available unit, given that all the others were occupied with maintaining public order.

When we remained silent, she continued, "They're trying to purge us."

"What...?"

"P-Purge?"

"T-That's insane. Why would they want to purge us?"

Restlessness spread among the members of our unit. Indeed, this revelation was deeply unsettling. Why would they even consider purging us? What possible reason could there be?

"A-Are you absolutely sure you're not jumping to conclusions, Captain?" I ventured, seeking to gauge her certainty. Personally, I hadn't sensed any impending doom looming over us.

"I'm not mistaken, Robyn. That woman and the King are plotting our demise. As for the reason behind it, I'm clueless," Captain asserted.

Captain possessed a keen intuition. She had a knack for sensing things before they unfolded. While she was often right, occasionally she missed the mark. That was only natural. Her intuition wasn't some form of clairvoyance; it stemmed from her instincts as a woman. I couldn't predict the outcome of this situation.

Would it merely be a case of her jumping to conclusions, or were we truly in danger during this operation?

Honestly, I hoped it was the former, because regardless of the reason, we were still obligated to go.

Chapter 155: The Pieces Are Moving (4)

Gabrielle's POV

It was 5 o'clock, and there I stood in a dark alley, feeling like some shady character trying to pull a fast one on unsuspecting passersby. I waited for the person I was supposed to meet.

After a few minutes of anticipation, the person I was supposed to meet finally arrived. She was draped in a cloak, obscuring her tire figure. I couldn't help but wonder about her choice of attire. Wouldn't she attract more atttion this way? Th again, it was still dark out, so I supposed it was probably fine.

"Are you here?" the woman inquired. Her name was Vicky. She served as the personal maid to Duke Sierra's daughter.

I emerged from the darkness, revealing myself to Vicky, who visibly flinched at my sudd appearance.

"Don't just pop up like that out of the blue! Give me a heads-up next time!" she scolded.

"I don't have time for chitchat, let's get down to business," I retorted.

"What business? Fork over what you owe me first!" she demanded.

This woman had been assisting me in keeping her master from meeting Professor Sesillan. Essentially, I was cockblocking her master. And her payment? Well, just a bottle of wine.

Not just any ordinary wine, though. This was crafted by Leonamon.

"Here you go," I replied, handing her the bottle.

"Yes! Finally! After so long, I've managed to get my hands on this! I've been yearning for the divine taste of this wine ever since I first sampled it for free! But with my meager salary, I couldn't afford it," she exclaimed with delight.

She wasted no time in uncorking the bottle with her teeth. Was this woman a barbarian or what? After popping it open, she took a swig straight from the bottle. Quite unladylike, if you ask me. Sure, I may have been a bit unladylike back in my teens, but I don't think I was ever this rough at the edges, right?

"Puhah! That really hits the spot! This wine is incredible!" she exclaimed, her voice carrying a bit too much enthusiasm. If she kept it up, she'd probably wake up the whole neighborhood.

"Keep it down," I cautioned. "Anyway, I'll provide you with more of this if you cooperate with me."

"Seriously?" she asked, eyes widening with excitement.

"Absolutely," I confirmed, my lips unconsciously curving into a smile. It must have be a habit picked up from Master, who always seemed to wear the same expression. Regardless, it appeared she was taking the bait eagerly. That was promising. "You just need to do one thing."

"What is it?" she inquired eagerly. I wondered if she'd be willing to follow through once I revealed my plan to her.

I explained my request to her, my grin taking on a creepy quality. Ev though I couldn't see my own face at the momt, I could sse that my smile was utterly terrifying. As Vicky comprehded what I was asking of her, shock painted her expression.

"Y-You... You want what?" she stammered in disbelief.

"You heard me correctly," I affirmed. "All you need to do is that, and in return, you'll have an dless supply of wine every month. It's a pretty sweet deal, if you ask me."

"But that's... you're basically asking me to betray our Masters!" she exclaimed. "I can't do it! Both my mother and father work for the Duke. If they catch wind of me doing something shady behind the Duke's back, it'll mean the gallows for me. Or worse, it could put my whole family in jeopardy - my parts, siblings, ev my husband and son!"

It seemed like Vicky was wrestling with the idea of betraying the Sierra family.

"And besides, I can't just turn my back on Lady Charlotte. My mother made a promise to Lady Alette, Lady Charlotte's deceased mother, on her deathbed to watch over her daughter. Since my mother passed that responsibility to me, there's no way I can..."

"You're not exactly betraying Lady Charlotte, Vicky," I interjected. "And let's refrain from using such harsh language as 'betray' because it's not quite like that."

Over the years, I'd come to realize that most high-ranking nobles in this country were corrupt to the core and deserved punishment for the atrocities they inflicted upon the lower classes. As a former magic knight, a title I once believed symbolized justice, I had learned the hard way that it was anything but noble.

Master had expressed his intentions to take action regarding the state of the kingdom, laying the groundwork by expanding his connections. He had already established a relationship with the Princess of Bethlan, a neighboring kingdom, becoming her lover. Now, he aimed to establish ties with the Princess of this kingdom as well.

Right now, I'm laying the groundwork, starting with purging those nobles who pose a threat to society. It's not betrayal, in my eyes. It's justice.

"I'm just doing what needs to be done to those who deserve it, and Duke Sierra deserves every bit of it," I asserted.

Currently, I'm working on dismantling corrupt noble houses, reducing them to mere shadows of their former selves. I'll erase their names from nobility and bring them crashing down. Starting with Duke Sierra feels right; I want to witness their downfall just as much as my Master desires to claim the daughter.

"That Duke isn't some saint. He might have played the part in front of you, but he's got a dark side too. Murders, kidnappings, human trafficking, rape—you name it, he's done it," I stated firmly. And I wasn't just spouting nonsense; I had plenty of proof to back up my claims. "If you need clarification, I've got something for you to read. All of Duke Sierra's atrocities are documented in there.

Read it all, and if you still choose to turn a blind eye, well, that's on you. So, what's it gonna be? The ball's in your court." With that, I handed her the book.

She took it, clutching it to her chest as if trying to shield it from prying eyes. Inside that book lay all the evidence of the Duke's crimes.

"All you need to do is plant enough information to expose everything and bring down the Duke. I'm counting on your cooperation with this, Vicky. I promise you'll get the reward you desire," I assured her before spinning around and disappearing into the shadows.

Chapter 156: King's Game, Part 1 (1)

Leon's POV

An uninhabited island of perpetual green stretched out before me, as far as the eye could see. Endless azure skies hung above a clear, boundless ocean. This island was undeniably vast. Even from our position on the large boat, occupied by us students of the academy on our way to participate in the King's Game, we could feel the intense heat of the sun beating down upon us. It was evident that its blazing rays were scorching the sandy beach. Understandably so, as summer was nearly upon us. On this particular day, the temperature had to be nearing forty degrees Celsius.

"I wonder if people used to live here... a long time ago," remarked Johanne, who stood beside me.

"Perhaps," I replied, lacking any certainty. It could have been an uninhabited island for many millennia. Or perhaps it had inhabitants once, who had long since departed. There was no way to know for certain.

We gradually approached a well-maintained harbor, which stood in stark contrast to the rest of the island. Many participants had already gathered there, preparing to venture into the dense forest. The game had yet to commence; this was merely the preparation stage. Participants would scout for the perfect base within the forest to maximize their chances of survival.

Despite the calm expression on his face, Johanne gripped the deck railing tightly. We were on the brink of the game's commencement.

In the days ahead, we would compete against other participants, eliminate them, and fight tooth and nail to survive. It was, essentially, a battle royale.

Killing wasn't a requirement for the game, but it wasn't off-limits either. There were always participants who joined just to indulge in unrestricted violence, as past King's Games had shown.

This prospect weighed heavily on Johanne's mind. With the Princess by his side, he was undoubtedly concerned for her safety. No wonder he unconsciously clung to the railing so tightly.

Finally, the boat driver announced that it was time to disembark.

"Are you ready, Johanne?" I inquired.

"Yeah," he replied.

With that, we stepped off the deck.

It was 8:40 in the morning, and the large boat began its slow docking process. In other words, the curtain was about to rise on the King's Game on the uninhabited island. There were a total of 100 participants in the game, although that didn't mean there wouldn't be others besides those 100 in the island. Magic knights were also present.

We placed our participant tickets on the designated spot for confirmation. I glanced at the paper first. It stated that once we were on the island, everything was fair game and entirely our responsibility. The King wouldn't intervene in any way. Essentially, if we were killed, it would be considered an accident rather than murder. Furthermore, it mentioned that by participating, we acknowledged the possibility of death, and confirming this meant I accepted the risk of being killed. It felt surreal, like signing my own death warrant.

"It's finally starting, huh," remarked Shredica, now beside me.

"Feeling nervous?" I asked.

"No way," she replied confidently. "I'm certain I'll emerge victorious, so why would I be nervous?"

She was definitely brimming with confidence. "You could try being a little more humble, you know," I said.

Behind me, I heard a disapproving tongue click. It was Hereon. Seems like he was getting jealous with me chatting up Shredica. Deciding it was best to create some distance, I moved away from Shredica. But just as I did, someone else approached from the side. It was Hertrude.

She strolled along, engrossed in her phone, texting away. I wasn't sure who she was messaging, but it presented a perfect opportunity for me. Hertrude was one of the women I had my eye on dominating.

And this one seemed like a piece of cake. I've heard she's quite the serial dater, always hopping from one fling to another. She's had more boyfriends than I can count, so you could say she's a bit of a free

spirit. Currently, though, rumor has it she's single. I've got no clue about her preferences, but judging by the fact that her exes were all good-looking, I'd say that's her type.

It's a bit disappointing she's not a virgin anymore, but who cares about that now?

She must've felt my gaze because she glanced over and greeted me with a simple "Hi" before returning to her phone.

"What are you typing?" I inquired.

"It's none of your business," she retorted.

"Is that so?"

"Yep."

Despite hearing rumors about her being easy, Hertrude's guard was surprisingly high. Even though she shot me down, I heard a mechanical sound echoing in my head.

--

You've captured the interest of Hertrude Getrada. You can now proceed to dominate her.

Name: Hertrude Getrada

Race: Human

Requirements to dominate Titania:

1. Ask Hertrude about her opinion on teaming up with you
2. Unlock
3. Unlock
4. Unlock

....

--

Well, that sounds simple enough.

"Can I ask you something?" I queried.

"Hm... Sure, go ahead," she replied, her eyes still fixed on her phone screen.

"What's your take on me joining your team for this game?" I inquired further. "Considering the hostility Sir Harold displayed earlier, it seems he's not exactly thrilled about the situation. I couldn't help but wonder what your thoughts are on it."

My question caught her attention, and she stopped typing to look at me. "Why do you care what I think?"

"Well, I suppose you find it tough too, having two skillless on the team?" I pressed.

Hertrude resumed typing, "It's not really bothering me," she admitted. "I mean, winning isn't my top priority. I was actually planning to sell my ticket, but then the Princess asked me to join her, so I went along with it. I mean, who would turn down a chance to connect with royalty? Coming from a low-class noble family, practically on the verge of being commoners due to our low rank, forging a connection with the Princess could be a game-changer for us. I hope to get even closer to her during this game. As for not being bothered by two skillless teammates, well, my mother is skillless too. I can't bring myself to despise people like her, can I? It would be like hating my own mother."

That response caught me off guard. I had expected her to be the type to disdain skillless individuals and simply ignore us, but it seems I was mistaken.

"Also," she continued, pausing her typing to look at me, "You're hot. You're exactly my type. That's probably another reason why I wasn't bothered."

With that, she returned to her typing. Wow, this woman really knows how to quicken someone's pulse. If I were still a virgin, I might have been tempted to ask her out.

"Can I ask you something too?" she inquired, still focused on her typing.

"Sure," I replied.

"Are you really dating the Princess of Bethlan?" she asked.

"I am," I confirmed.

She came to an abrupt stop, and I followed suit, turning to face her.

"What's up?" I inquired.

She seemed hesitant, then shook her head. "It's nothing," she replied. "Anyway, let's head to the forest now. Our team is already ahead of us."

"Okay," I agreed.

I couldn't shake the feeling that she had something to say but held back. Oh well, best not to dwell on it too much.

The forest was dense, shielding us from the scorching heat outside. As we ventured deeper, the cool breeze offered a refreshing respite from the sweltering weather. It was already 9 o'clock, indicating that the King's Game had commenced. Nearby, we could hear the sounds of skirmishes, but we opted to steer clear of the fighting for now, intending to prolong our participation in the game. Thankfully, during our search for the perfect hideout, we hadn't encountered anyone.

By 9:30, we stumbled upon the ideal base. It was concealed by thick foliage, making it difficult to spot. Additionally, there was a cave nearby, its entrance small enough to go unnoticed. We sealed off the entrance to prevent unwanted visitors. Inside the cave, there was a river system, providing us with a water source. It was the perfect hideout.

"Now all we need to worry about is food," Princess Myrcella remarked.

"We men can go hunt for something," Johanne suggested.

Immediately, Harold snapped, "Can you quit ordering us around like that, Johanne? You're not fucking the boss of me. And why just men? Are you implying the women in the group are useless and can't hunt too?"

"I'm not saying that at all," Johanne countered. "I'm suggesting it because men typically have more stamina than women. Since we've just found a hideout, it makes sense to let them rest first."

"Tsk! I'm not buying that. I can't accept the women staying here while us men go out. What about me? I'm tired too from following you around as you scouted for this damn hideout."

Princess Myrcella clapped her hands. "Okay, enough of this," she interjected. "I won't tolerate any infighting in this team. Besides, Harold has a point. Drawing distinctions isn't helpful. Even if women sometimes have less stamina, that doesn't mean they're useless."

Johanne hung his head, visibly ashamed. "Y-You're right, Princess. I'm sorry."

"It's okay," the Princess reassured him. "Now, with food as our only concern, I'll volunteer to find some."

Johanne and I exchanged surprised glances. It was unexpected, to say the least, hearing those words from a literal princess.

"Why are you all so shocked?" she questioned. "Didn't I say we're all equals in this partnership? Being a princess doesn't entitle me to special treatment, you know."

Chapter 157: King's Game, Part 1 (2)

It was decided that 5 out of 7 of us would head out to find and hunt for some food: monster meat, fruit, and if we came across any fish, we'd grab those too. Johanne, Shredica, and Hereon formed one group, going in a different direction. Princess Myrcella and I were paired up.

Initially, Johanne insisted on accompanying Princess Myrcella, but she firmly rebuffed him, asserting her ability to handle herself. And I believed her, especially considering she was currently ranked number one in gold class in our second year.

As for the two who stayed behind at the cave, Harold and Hertrude, well, they had their reasons. Harold claimed he couldn't be bothered and needed some rest, while Hertrude simply admitted she was feeling lazy. Convincing those two to pitch in with the effort might prove challenging.

"Ahh, ahh, ahhh..."

I heard an unusual sound of breathing behind me. Given that no one was there, I realized it was coming from the Princess herself. I kept glancing back at her, checking if she was tired or out of breath, but instead, she had a blush on her face as she gazed at me. Her breathing was heavy, her chest rising and falling with each breath, but it wasn't due to exhaustion. It was something else entirely.

It felt like she wanted to breathe me in completely.

"Are you alright, Princess?" I inquired.

"Ah, yes. I'm fine," she replied.

Despite her words, I had my doubts. She didn't look fine at all. Just to be cautious, I turned and approached her.

"Ahh..." she gasped.

As I drew near, the flush on her face intensified. I reached out and touched her forehead.

"Hmm... You don't feel too warm, so it couldn't possibly be a fever, could it?"

After a while of checking her forehead, her body suddly convulsed. It was as if she'd be hit with a surge of electricity. Her eyes wided, her legs shook uncontrollably... and a small puddle began to form at her feet.

What...? Was she urinating? No, but this... Why does she have such a look of ecstasy on her face th? Clearly, she was expericing pleasure from this.

"Ahhh... ahhh..."

This girl is intriguing...

Princess Myrcella managed to regain her composure after a while. At that momt, she seemed completely unfazed. You wouldn't have guessed anything had happed at all. Since her underwear and skirt got soiled, I took it upon myself to wash them. For the time being, I instructed her to hide in the bushes to maintain her privacy.

After carefully removing her underwear and skirt, she handed them to me, damp and heavy.

I wasn't the type of person to indulge in the perversion of sniffing a princess's urine-soaked underwear, and I wouldn't stoop so low. However, the act of a princess giving me her damp panties felt somewhat lascivious in itself. After cleaning her underwear and skirt, I handed them back to her, freshly cleaned.

"I do apologize for that display, Leon," she said softly as she delicately slipped her underwear over her luscious, alabaster legs. The fabric clung to her skin, accentuating every curve.

"I don't mind," I replied.

"I'm kind of relieved," she confessed.

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"I'm not talking about the state of my bladder, Leon. I mean I'm relieved that you're not the kind of man who would pounce on a vulnerable, half-naked woman," she clarified.

"I don't think I could even if I wanted to. You're stronger than me," I admitted.

"Oh, you never know. A woman can be quite weak when faced with someone attacking her with unbridled lust, you know?"

I couldn't help but notice her flushed face and heavy breathing, making me wonder if she had some kinky thoughts running through her mind.

"Anyway," she coughed and cleared her throat, "let's go find some food," she suggested.

"Got it."

With that, we set off in search of sustenance. Fortunately, we didn't have to search for long. Being an uninhabited island with plenty of trees, it was teeming with wildlife and fruits ripe for the picking.

I scaled a tree and gathered as much fruit as I could reach, while Princess Myrcella stood guard below. From my vantage point atop the tree, I took a moment to survey the island. As expected, it was vast.

As I gathered fruit, I spotted smoke rising in the distance, indicating someone was camping nearby. Should I launch an attack? Clearing out as many enemies as possible seemed like a good strategy, but Princess Myrcella had instructed us to avoid conflict and wait for opportune moments to strike. Reluctantly, I decided to heed her advice and leave the campers alone for now.

Once I rejoined Princess Myrcella on the ground, I informed her about the presence of others nearby. She suggested we steer clear of them. After hunting for a while, we managed to gather as much food as possible before returning to our cave. However, the other group that had ventured out with us had yet to return.

They were probably just running behind schedule, but as darkness descended, their absence started to become concerning.

"Should I head out and look for them?" I inquired.

"It wouldn't be safe for you to go alone, Leon," Princess Myrcella replied.

"What do you suggest we do th?"

Princess Myrcella glanced at the two who hadn't budged from their spot since we left them. All they'd done during this time was join us for a meal, showing no concern for the missing members. The Princess regarded them with a hint of reproach in her eyes.

Princess Myrcella sighed. "Let's go find them, just the two of us," she suggested to me.

"Alright," I agreed, noting her apparent resignation in dealing with the uncooperative pair.

"Wait," suddenly called out Hertrude.

Both of us turned to look at her.

"Let me handle it," Hertrude proposed.

"...What?" Princess Myrcella questioned.

"Let me be the one to accompany Leon instead of you, Princess," Hertrude clarified.

Both Princess and I exchanged confused glances.

Hertrude and I traversed the darkness of the uninhabited island without lighting any torches. Having light in such darkness would only increase our chances of being spotted, and I wasn't willing to take that risk. Despite knowing I could easily brush aside any threats, I had to maintain the facade of being skillless.

As we walked, I cast side glances at Hertrude, wondering why she insisted on taking Princess Myrcella's place. It seemed odd, especially considering her previous behavior of being glued to her smartphone throughout the game. Ev now, she continued to stare at the device.

"You must be surprised," she remarked, evidently noticing my gaze.

"On what?" I asked.

"On me doing something like this. You must have figured that I'd be uncooperative during this King's Game," she explained. "While I might give off that impression, I'm actually gaged in something important here."

"And what's that?" I inquired.

She showed me her phone, and when I glanced at the screen, I was met with a list of bullet-pointed items. My eyes widened as I read through them. Each entry detailed events we had experienced, with five in total. Three of them were already crossed out, indicating they had already occurred. The first crossed-out entry was Harold's frustration about having skillless teammates like Shredica and me.

The second was my inquiry to her about joining the team for the game. The third noted the absence of the other three team members who had gone to find food but hadn't returned. The last two entries, which were yet to happen, were me rescuing Hertrude and Princess Myrcella facing the threat of being killed.

"What's all this...?" I inquired, perplexed.

"I owe you an apology, Leon. When I mentioned wanting a connection with the Princess, it was a lie. Truth is, I'm here to save her," she confessed.

"So Princess Myrcella is in danger?" I pressed.

"Yes," she affirmed. Then, locking eyes with me, she continued, "I possess a skill called Clairvoyance. It allows me to glimpse into the future from my perspective. Last month, I foresaw a future where several academy students partake in the King's Game, and in that scenario, the Princess meets her demise," she explained. "But that's not the only reason I'm determined to save her."

If Princess Myrcella perishes, her brother, Prince Julius, will seek vengeance against the royal family, sparking a chain of events leading to something incredibly dire."

So Princess Myrcella is destined to fail her mission, huh?, I mused.

"I'm asking for your help, Leon. Help me save the Princess," she pleaded.

"...Why me?" I questioned. "You do realize I'm not exactly powerful, right? If the person aiming to kill the Princess is skilled enough to succeed, they must be formidable."

She already had an inkling of who I was. Given my reputation at school, it was unlikely she hadn't heard of me.

To this, Hertrude replied, "It has to be you, Leon. In every future I've glimpsed, you're always present."

Chapter 158: King's Game, Part 1 (3)

For every vision she had, I was always there. It meant I was present when Princess Myrcella was killed. Perhaps I tried to save her, but how did she still end up dead? I wasn't overly confident in my ability to defend her, but I had some faith in myself. This implied whoever was going to kill her must have been exceptionally powerful.

"Can you provide more details?" I inquired. "If you want to prevent that future from becoming reality, you need to give me more information, don't you think?"

Hertrude locked eyes with me, then closed them briefly, taking a deep breath before reopening them. "Okay," she finally said.

With that, she proceeded to recount everything she had seen in the vision. Every detail.

The vision began at the dock, followed by me posing a question to her, then the others failing to return on time, despite the night having fallen.

"I can't control the vision. I only see what my skill allows me to see. It sends me fragments, never the whole picture. That's why I jotted down everything I saw on my smartphone," she explained.

She could only see fragments. Meaning that the vision wasn't showing her everything. To what reason that specific fragments happen, the vision didn't show it.

"Also, that's why I'm glued to this phone. It allows me to record everything that happens, giving me a comprehensive view of each specific incident and its causes. So far, three of the events I foresaw have occurred. Now, I'll tell you about the remaining fragment."

Fragment? She didn't use the plural form. There were five events listed on her phone, so logically, there should be two fragments left, right?

As I pondered that, she took a deep breath before speaking.

"Tomorrow, two events are on the cards. I don't know who we'll encounter, but both the princess and I will be in danger. You'll be the one to save me in that scenario."

As she spoke, it all clicked into place. I finally understood why I hadn't be able to save the Princess. Hertrude's use of the singular form made sse now.

"Let me guess, wh your life was in danger, it coincided with the momt the Princess was also in danger, right? And in that critical momt, I chose to save you instead of the Princess," I surmised.

Hertrude nodded in confirmation.

Ah, I see. But still, how was that possible? If it were up to me, I'd have saved both simultaneously. I wasn't one to boast, but I was confidt in my abilities. If that's the case, th something must have compelled me to choose only one person. The circumstances must have be exceptionally dire, forcing me to make a split-second decision.

But if that's true, th what were those circumstances?

Changing the future seemed like a daunting task, especially without knowing the circumstances that led to it. Was altering destiny ev possible?

"Let me ask you something, Miss Hertrude," I began.

"Go ahead," she replied.

"You mentioned needing my help to save the Princess and prevent the dire events that would follow her death," I said. "What exactly do you need my help with? And why me? Why not inform the Princess herself so she can seek safety? And furthermore, is changing the future truly within our grasp? Can we really avert the course of fate?"

I didn't fully comprehend the workings of fate, but I knew it was the most absolute and immutable force of all. Fate had snatched away my parents in an accident, led my childhood friend to choose someone else over me, and drove my sister to take her own life. Yet, fate also brought me into this world and introduced me to the beautiful woman I have now. It was both powerful and perplexing.

Fate dictated events as ordered or "inevitable," shaping the course of our lives. This concept stemmed from the belief in a fixed natural order to the universe. If that were true, then everything that happened to me was predestined and unavoidable. Hertrude's ability to see her fate implied that her visions were immutable, unable to be altered. I hoped my understanding of fate was flawed, though.

"I honestly have no idea," she confessed after a moment of silence. "I've never attempted to alter the future before, not once. This is the first time I've countered a future so dire, which is why I'm determined to change it."

So, this would be her first attempt at defying fate, huh?

"Leon," she called out to me. "Fate is predetermined. Actually, everything in this world, and perhaps even in other worlds, is predetermined. Nothing occurs by chance. Every event unfolds according to the laws of nature. Even as we speak, I believe this conversation, me telling you all this, is simply nature's law at work."

We could be hurtling toward that bleak future regardless of our discussion."

She was spot on. Ev with her warning, we might still be hurtling toward the Princess's demise. In fact, this conversation could be the catalyst for it.

"Our dilemma is our lack of understanding of nature's laws. We're oblivious to what lies ahead, and we act accordingly. However, until we grasp the essence of these laws, we must strive for a deeper understanding. We need to unravel the mysteries until everything is laid bare, revealing the complete picture of nature and its unfailing order.

I want you to observe every event, every detail, and try to discern the circumstances that lead to that future. I'm trusting you with this task because I believe you're capable," she concluded.

I blinked in surprise. "Why do you think that?"

"Because you have the capability to fight fate, Mephisto," she replied, her tone casual enough to catch me off guard.

I couldn't help but ask, "How do you know that...?"

"I saw it in one of my visions," she revealed. "I also know about your ability to copy the skills of women you've had sex with."

"So you knew all of that, huh?"

"If we succeed in saving the Princess, I'll be willing to let you have sex with me to copy my skill," she stated.

That was perhaps the most surprising thing I'd heard from her today. She was actually willing to do that?

"And please, be gtle with me," she added. "I'm a virgin."

Just wh I thought her previous offer was the most surprising thing she could say, she proved me wrong.

After staring at her in surprise while she blushed, I heard a rustling sound from behind me. We both spun a, ready to confront any pottial attackers, but the source of the noise revealed itself.

"Leon? What are you doing here?" inquired a man with a strikingly handsome face. It was Johanne. Behind him stood Hereon, lugging a hefty boar over his shoulder, and Shredica, carrying a basket brimming with what appeared to be food. They had clearly gathered a considerable amount, oblivious to the possibility that we might not be staying on the island for long.

"We've be searching for you," I informed him.

"Apologies, but we ran into some trouble along the way," he replied.

"Trouble? Enemies?" I inquired.

Johanne nodded solemnly.

"We handled them," he affirmed. "However, it was a formidable skirmish. It appears that some of them realized collaboration was their most viable strategy for victory."

"Well, provided everyone is unharmed, let us return to the cave," I suggested.

As we wrapped up, we made our way back to the cave. The anticipation of the King's Game hung heavy in the air, but the first day seemed to be a bit of a dud. Yet, as we ambled along, a prickling sensation crept up my spine, like someone's gaze burning into the back of my skull. With a quick pivot, I caught a glimpse of figures soaring above us, dancing among the clouds.

Two of them, dancing through the air like ethereal specters. And there, nestled in the arms of the flying one, was the one who had fixated their gaze on me. Their presence pulsated with power, sending shivers down my spine.

I shot a glare at the one eyeing me up.

"Something bothering you, Leon?" Johanne asked.

"Nah, just zoning out," I replied, turning away and falling back into step with them. But those eyes stayed locked on me, like they were trying to read my mind.

Lilia's POV

"Did you see that, Laurel? That boy just shot me a glare. How adorable," I remarked. We were cruising through the sky, taking in the view of the island below. Laurel was hauling me up with her Flying skill, which pretty much does what it says on the tin—lets her fly. As we soared, I happened to spot that black-haired, red-eyed boy who bore a striking resemblance to the stunning yet icy Veronica.

"You're more surprised by that than the fact he managed to spot us, even with us being way up here and dressed in dark gear to blend into the night?" Laurel questioned, eyebrows raised in disbelief.

I found it quite surprising, indeed, that a young man from the academy managed to locate us here.

"I'm curious about his identity. He appears to be rather intriguing," I remarked. "Could you conduct some inquiries regarding him, Laurel?"

Chapter 159: King's Game, Part 1 (4)

That night, we made the decision to rest. Rest played a significant role in this game. Previous reports indicated that some participants hadn't slept a wink due to fear of being attacked while asleep. They failed to recognize that adequate rest could enhance their performance the next day, leading to their elimination due to sleep deprivation.

Naturally, we didn't opt for rest without considering the risk of being attacked during sleep. Thus, we devised a system to take turns keeping watch. Each person would remain awake for an entire hour before being relieved by another. This way, we could obtain sufficient rest even in such dire circumstances.

Hereon abruptly woke me by nudging me with his foot.

"It's your turn," he declared, glaring down at me.

I rose from my makeshift bed of grass and assumed my watch duty. Meanwhile, Hereon took his turn to rest.

How uncouth of him to wake me with his foot like that. He lacked finesse. Well, I suppose I can comprehend his behavior. Love has a way of clouding judgment. Anything that threatens to disrupt that love becomes an adversary. Hereon harbored jealousy towards me, which I could empathize with.

I ought to clarify that there's no romantic involvement between Shredica and myself. Shredica is the last person I'd consider as a romantic partner. I might even suggest to Hereon that I support their relationship. Would he appreciate that, or would it only irritate him? I suspect the latter.

As I kept watch, my mind wandered to my earlier conversation with Hertrude.

"Seems like something significant is happening on this island. Something substantial," I murmured quietly. We might be venturing into territory even beyond my ability to intervene.

While lost in these thoughts, I sensed someone behind me beginning to stir from their sleep. Without turning around, I allowed them to sit beside me.

"Struggling to sleep, Miss Shredica?" I inquired.

"Are you kidding me? Not at all. I can sleep like a baby even amidst danger because I have this innate sense that alerts me when danger draws near. Besides, I can even doze off with my eyes wide open, just like you. I picked up that skill from observing you snooze in class with your eyes open," Shredica remarked.

"That's quite observant of you, managing to mimic that," I remarked.

"Don't underestimate me, Mr. Leon. While you may not be aware yet, I happen to be quite the genius."

"A genius who doesn't excel in academics?"

"Academics aside, I consider myself an all-around genius," she asserted. "Anyway, the reason I'm here awake with you is to have a chat. Is that alright?"

"Well, as long as it doesn't jeopardize the secret you're keeping, I suppose it's fine."

Shredica began, "What are your thoughts on this game, Leon? Do you think we'll emerge victorious?"

"It's hard to say, really. Our success depends on various factors. If we continue to make good progress, then we're likely to fare well. From what I can see, our progress seems promising. We've established a solid base, you've defeated some of the other participants, and while cooperation hasn't fully materialized yet, we should be alright if we maintain our current trajectory."

"Is that your stance?"

"Well, I'm not overly confident about our chances," I admitted. Considering the future Hertrude had foreseen, there's a possibility we might not emerge victorious. Additionally, there's someone formidable here, and even I might have to put up a fight. Though I'm confident I won't lose, flaunting my skills wouldn't be wise. Besides, I'm a wanted individual.

Revealing my abilities could jeopardize my secret identity and hinder my mission to conquer the hearts of the women at school.

At that, Shredica sighed, "If we fail here, we'll be expelled from school," she remarked.

"And whose fault do you think that would be?" I asked. I anticipated her deflecting the blame onto me, but surprisingly, she didn't. What surprised me even more was her acknowledgment that it was her fault.

"I know. It's on me," she admitted.

I blinked several times, trying to process whether I had misheard her.

Seeing my reaction, she clicked her tongue in irritation. "Ugh. Do you really believe I'm incapable of acknowledging my own faults? You've underestimated me to the lowest degree, Mr. Leon," she scolded.

"I mean, I've never heard you acknowledge your faults, so I assumed you couldn't. Well, I suppose that's just my assumption. My bad," I admitted.

"That's understandable, I suppose. I've never really questioned why I'm acknowledging my fault like this until now," she mused. "What would you do if we lose and get expelled from the academy?"

"Hmm... Maybe I'll look for a job, I guess. Being a magic knight isn't my top priority anyway," I replied.

"I feel guilty for dragging you into this. It's going to be my fault if you get expelled," she said, showing an unusual level of remorse today. Did something happen? "For that, I apologize, Mr. Leon."

"You're worrying me. Are you sure nothing bad happened to you?"

She glared at me.

"I'm sorry," I apologized immediately. "I know what you did was wrong," I added. "But there's nothing we can do about it. If we lose here, it's not just your fault, it's mine too."

"Don't worry, Mr. Leon. Even if you're useless, I'll carry you," she reassured me.

Well, she's still the same old Shredica. I thought she might have changed, but it seems not.

"I'm going to sleep now. Take care of the watch," she said.

"I will," I replied.

With that, the first day of the King's Game came to an end.

I woke up much earlier that morning than I had anticipated. The heat and humidity had me tossing and turning in my sleep. It finally roused me, and I wasn't very well-rested. My bed felt warm, and I recalled that Johanne was on watch duty after me. However, when I woke up, it was the Princess herself who was on duty. She was...

dozing off, propped against the cave wall. Perhaps her sleep wasn't sufficient, causing her to nod off during her watch. It wasn't a major concern though. As long as there wasn't any threat of attack while we slept, it was acceptable for her to doze during duty.

I adjusted her position to ensure she could rest comfortably, then stepped out of the cave. The sun had just begun to rise, and I couldn't detect any presence near our base. Despite this, I decided to conduct a thorough check of the vicinity. I tend to be somewhat paranoid about such matters, wondering if there might be someone nearby with a skill enabling them to evade my senses.

That concern turned out to be unnecessary since I hadn't spotted anyone nearby.

I climbed up into a tree and scanned the area. The sounds of battle reached my ears, blades clashing and gunfire echoing. It seemed like someone was already engaged in combat this early in the morning.

"I suppose I'll allow them to settle their dispute. It'll only increase our chances of victory," I muttered to myself.

Suddenly, I sensed something approaching me rapidly in a straight line. It was moving so swiftly, with clear intent to do me harm. Without hesitation, I activated my Guardian to deflect the impending attack.

However, my Guardian suddenly vanished into thin air as soon as the attacker closed in on me. Fortunately, I managed to dodge the attack without any issue.

"...?" The attacker, a woman with black hair and red eyes, looked at me with confusion evident in her expression. Though her eyes remained cold and devoid of emotion, I could sense her perplexity.

"Who are you?" I inquired. She gazed back at me, and as our eyes met, I felt as if I were staring at my own reflection in a mirror. She wasn't me, merely a striking resemblance. I recognized her as the woman who extinguished the fire during that arson incident. The manner in which she quenched the flames was instantaneous, as if the fire itself were unreal. I already knew this woman.

She was Veronica Eclair. Despite my knowledge of her name, I still posed the question, adding an extra layer of dramatic effect. It wouldn't be plausible for a random woman to suddenly attack me out of nowhere. Naturally, after surviving her initial assault, it was only fitting to inquire about her identity.

Instead of responding to my question, she launched into another attack. Her speed was remarkable, making it increasingly difficult for me to evade. I attempted to activate one of my skills to retaliate, but each time I tried, the skill would inexplicably vanish. Was her sword capable of nullifying powers? No, while her blade wasn't ordinary steel, it didn't seem to be a power dampener.

So what was causing my skills to be nullified?

Since skills seemed ineffective, I decided to resort to magic. I gathered mana in my hand, shaping it into a precise swirl.

"Hm...?" The woman raised an eyebrow, sensing something was amiss, and promptly vanished from my sight.

Suddenly, she materialized behind me, attempting to sever my neck from my shoulder. I solidified the mana to form a barrier, blocking her blade from reaching my neck and sparing me from decapitation.

The woman's eyes widened in surprise, but she swiftly reverted to an aggressive stance once more.

While all of this was happening, I felt eyes on me once more.

Chapter 160: King's Game, Part 1 (5)

Lilia's POV

It was 18 years ago when a baby, barely a month old, appeared on the doorstep of our house. At the time, I was merely 7 years old.

My father and mother were astonished to find a baby there, but their shock turned to adoration upon laying eyes on her. It was no surprise, really. Even to my young eyes, the baby exuded beauty. Her hair resembled the darkened, starless night sky, and her eyes gleamed like flaming rubies. I, too, fell in love with her instantly and pleaded with my parents to take her in.

The child was a girl, swathed in a white cloth upon which rested a letter. It bore the words, "Veronica Eclair is the name bestowed upon this child. I beseech you, those who chance upon this young one, to provide it with care and protection."

Upon reading those words, it was as if we were under a spell, compelled to obey the directive as though it were a universal decree. Yet, simultaneously, we found no objection in adhering to it. In fact, we rather fancied the name bestowed upon the baby; it seemed to suit her perfectly.

Given that we lacked a surname at the time, being of commoner status, we decided that "Eclair" would serve as her second name, not her family name. However, when I ascended to the rank of commander within the magic knights, and the King granted me the surname "Silverblade," her name underwent a change as well, becoming Veronica Eclair Silverblade.

Nevertheless, she predominantly uses Veronica Eclair when introducing herself. Moreover, her official designation within the magic knights remained Veronica Eclair.

Let's set aside discussion of her name for a moment and reflect on her journey after joining our family. As she matured, it became evident that she possessed remarkable abilities. From a young age, she demonstrated proficiency not only in the arcane arts and swordsmanship, but also in marksmanship and blademanhip. She was a true polymath, a prodigy in every sense.

I felt immense pride in being her elder sister, which motivated me to push myself harder. I was determined not to let my little sister surpass me. After years of effort, my latent skill finally awakened.

Absolute Command.

My ability, Absolute Command, grants me the power to impose unyielding and irresistible directives upon anything, whether living or non-living, natural or supernatural, including myself. With a mere utterance, I can compel someone to kneel, halt a conflict, or even declare myself ruler of the world. I possess the authority to command someone to take their own life, and they would obey willingly.

Such is the extent of my power.

I wield control with a word from my lips, yet there are individuals whose indomitable wills resist my Absolute Command. While manipulating the King proved effortless, the Queen's formidable will posed a challenge. Hence, despite my capabilities, usurping the throne from the King remained beyond my reach. Not that I harbored any intentions to do so, of course. I lacked the motivation.

After awakening my ability, I pursued four years of education at the academy, emerging as the top graduate of my class. Subsequently, I embarked on a career as a magic knight, steadily ascending the ranks until I reached the pinnacle as commander. Admittedly, I may have employed a bit of manipulation, leveraging my skill to secure my position, but ascend I did.

Upon Veronica's seventeenth birthday, I commanded her to join the ranks of the magic knights and serve under my command. Despite the typical requirement for formal training, my ability allowed her immediate induction. By the age of eighteen, she rose to the position of second-in-command. It was at this age that her own latent abilities awakened, possessing formidable strength.

Notably, her skill stood as the sole counter to my own.

Veronica was the sole individual capable of ending my life—my own sister.

I assumed Veronica would remain the only one to evoke such feelings within me. However, upon encountering that boy, I experienced a similar sensation. It seemed he possessed the capability to challenge and resist my power.

Returning to the present, I found myself reclined on a towel spread across the sandy shore, while Laurel kneaded my back. Although the sun had yet to rise, here we were, on the beach, at this early hour. Clad in a bikini, it was evident to any observer that my purpose here was not work, but rather relaxation and enjoyment.

After all, this island only opened once a year, so I intended to make the most of it.

Nearby stood my dear sister, Veronica.

"Why have you summoned me, dear sister?" she inquired.

Her endearing address never failed to bring a smile to my face.

"Well, my dear little sister, there's something I need you to do for me. Can you grant your dear big sister this request?" I inquired.

"If you wish it, then I shall."

"I'm grateful," I replied.

"What task do you have in mind?" she inquired.

"I need you to engage in a fight for me."

"With whom?"

"Laurel, could you provide her with the details regarding the boy I saw last night?" I requested.

Laurel paused her massage and headed towards a nearby tent, returning moments later with a portfolio in hand. Passing it to Veronica, we waited as she perused its contents.

"This individual is a participant in the King's Game. He hails from the academy, sharing your age, Veronica. Do you sense any familiarity?" I queried, intrigued by the resonance between Veronica and the boy. After conducting an investigation into his background the previous night, I discovered he was an orphan.

Given the striking resemblance between him and Veronica, it seemed plausible to entertain the notion of a connection between them. After all, such a coincidence demanded consideration, didn't it?

Veronica's eyes widened momentarily before returning to their usual cold demeanor. "I don't sense anything in particular," she replied. "Shall I eliminate him?"

"While I harbor such thoughts, I'm reluctant to extinguish a rare specimen. Hence, engage him in combat, but refrain from lethality. Project a veneer of hostility, yet spare his life," I instructed.

After perusing the information, Veronica raised her gaze to meet mine. "I'll proceed as instructed," she affirmed. With that, she returned the documents to Laurel and ventured into the forest, likely in pursuit of the young man.

Laurel returned the portfolio to the tent before resuming her massage. Midway through, she voiced her thoughts. "What's with the fixation on that young man? Personally, I fail to see anything particularly intriguing about him. He strikes me as quite ordinary. I mean, isn't he the weakest among the first years at the academy?"

And isn't he lacking in skills?"

I chuckled at Laurel's remarks. "Oh, Laurel, perhaps your eyesight has faltered. Didn't you notice the extraordinary feat this young boy accomplished? He managed to locate us even while we were high in the sky and in the darkness of night. That's not something an ordinary individual could achieve under any circumstances."

"I concede that his actions were remarkably impressive for someone I initially considered unremarkable. However, I remain skeptical of his capacity for further extraordinary feats," she retorted.

"Well, if you're doubtful, why not observe whether that young man can withstand a confrontation with someone like Veronica? If he manages to evade even a single one of her attacks, it would signify that he is far from ordinary," I proposed.

Veronica possessed formidable strength. Should the young man evade even one of her strikes, it would indicate his extraordinary nature. Perhaps he hailed from the lineage of Eclair, akin to Elise Eclair, a renowned member of the Fangs, famed within the underground society. Given Veronica's shared surname, there might be a familial connection to consider.

"Commander," Laurel interjected, her tone noticeably altered.

"What is it, Laurel?" I inquired.

"It has come to my attention that there's an ongoing petition for your demotion from the commander position. Your recent mismanagement of the magic knights, coupled with your failure to retain Gabrielle within the ranks, has spurred a movement seeking your removal. What do you intend to do about this?" Laurel disclosed.

I halted Laurel's massage and rose to my feet. Turning to Laurel, I drew close to her. "It's rather inappropriate of you to bring up such matters while I'm trying to relax. You've truly tested my patience," I reprimanded.

"I-I apologize," Laurel stammered.

"Let them try. The ultimate decision lies with the King and the court nobles, not those insignificant individuals seeking my demotion," I declared confidently.

"Do you truly believe you'll prevail?" Laurel inquired.

I grinned at her. "One thousand out of one hundred people will choose me, without a doubt," I asserted, then playfully stuck out my tongue and licked her cheek. After the playful gesture, I flashed a smile at Laurel. "I won't merely sit back and await the King's decision, naturally. Circumstances can shift, after all," I remarked.

"And your plan is to eliminate those advocating for your removal in this game, isn't it?" Laurel queried, wiping the spot where I had licked with the back of her hand.

I maintained my smile, offering no confirmation or denial. It was enough for her to grasp my intent.

