

The World 361

Chapter 361: Epilogue 7 - A Brewing Showdown (1)

Leon's POV

I made it to the village. There were about twenty, maybe a little more, but definitely not over thirty houses scattered around the place. Surrounding them were fields where villagers were busy picking crops. The second they noticed me, though, they got spooked and quickly backed away. Not long after, a massive guy, easily several times my height, came out of one of the buildings.

He was carrying what looked like a huge stick with an axe blade on the end—probably a halberd. He had the look of someone who was this village's defender.

"State your business here," he said, voice low and threatening.

I raised my hands. "I'm not here to cause any trouble," I told him. "I just heard this village had been hit by a string of kidnappings—women being taken—so I came to investigate."

"How do I know you're not one of them?" he asked, eyes narrowing with suspicion.

"You can tie my hands if it makes you feel better. You could even tie me to your foot so I can't move," I offered. "I'm willing to compromise."

The guy glanced behind him, where a group of children, women, and elderly were huddled together, trembling like he was the only thing standing between them and danger. He turned his attention back to me, eyes locking on my wrist. He was clearly checking for something—the Eclipse tattoo, the mark those kidnappers probably had.

"Come with me," he finally said, his tone sharp. "And make sure you stick close. You stray more than five feet away from me, and your head will be rolling on the ground. Got that?"

"I got it," I replied, moving closer. When I was close enough, he turned around and led the way, not looking back.

We arrived at what looked like a barn. The big man pushed the door aside with a grunt, and we stepped inside. The interior was dim, the air thick with the scent of hay and dust. But the first thing that grabbed my attention was the sound.

"Mmmpphh! Mmmph!"

There was a man tied up, his hands bound behind his back, his feet secured together, and his ass planted on the ground. His body was strapped tightly to one of the wooden columns, a gag shoved in his mouth, muffling his protests.

"This piece of shit," the big guy growled, his voice dripping with disgust, "is one of them. He raped women in this village and kidnapped them. There were more, but I got lucky catching this fucker. The others ran off with the women they snatched."

"Does he have a tattoo like this?" I asked, referring to the Eclipse mark.

I pulled out my smartphone and showed him the image. "Yeah, that's it," he said with a firm nod. "But there's someone powerful with them. Someone even I couldn't take on. A woman." He paused, his voice dropping lower. "She was dressed like a man, but trust me, she was definitely a woman."

I didn't have a clue who he was talking about. Maybe someone in the Eclipse was disguising themselves, or maybe it was some weird order from Sesillian, given his twisted tendencies, to have his followers cross-dress. Either way, if this huge guy was admitting she was strong, that woman had to be no joke.

"Do you remember any features?" I asked, trying to get more information.

"Yeah," he replied, his brow furrowing. "She had black hair like yours, and black eyes."

That feature was definitely surprising. So far, the only other person I knew with black hair besides myself was my sister, Elise. Could this woman be connected to Lilith? Maybe another sibling of mine? It was a real possibility, but there were way too many variables to consider before jumping to any conclusions.

"Mind if I ask him something?" I turned to the big guy.

"Go ahead," he grunted.

I pulled the cloth gag from the captive's mouth, and he immediately started coughing, spitting out dirt and frustration.

"You fuckers," he rasped between coughs. His eyes shot daggers at the big guy, venom dripping from his words. "You're all gonna pay for this. Our Lord's minions are already on their way, and when they get here, they'll tear this pathetic little village apart."

He was spitting threats, and not just words—his saliva flew everywhere as he ranted.

"All your women here will be raped! I'll taste every last one of them! I'll fuck them up while you watch, drowning in your own despair!"

I placed a hand on his shoulder, squeezing slightly as I let a wave of deathly intent pour out of me. His mouth snapped shut immediately, eyes widening as he felt the suffocating aura I released. His gaze slowly shifted up to meet mine, panic creeping into his expression.

"You really think you're gonna get that chance?" I whispered, my voice low and cold.

"E-Eek?!"

"Let me show you what real fear looks like."

I unleashed every drop of my bloodlust, flooding the air around us with sheer, violent intent. His bravado evaporated in an instant, his eyes darting wildly in terror as his body trembled under the pressure. Every ounce of false courage he had clung to slipped right through his fingers.

"Now then, why don't you tell me what you really are, and what your purpose is?"

The moment I asked that, he started mumbling something in a language I couldn't understand—gibberish. It didn't even sound human, but somehow, I knew exactly what he was saying.

In the shadows, we find truth, and in the darkness, we are reborn. The world will bow to our will, for we are the harbingers of the Eclipse, where light meets its end and our power begins

Then, suddenly, blood started leaking from his eyes, streaming down his cheeks and dripping onto the ground.

I immediately backed away, my instincts flaring as I activated my Guardian, shielding myself from whatever was about to happen. Just as I distanced myself, his head burst with a sickening splatter. Blood sprayed everywhere, and I watched in cold silence, protected by the shimmering aura of my Guardian.

I glanced at the man, and he had already grabbed a piece of plywood lying on the ground, using it as a makeshift shield.

"Looks like you're used to this," I remarked, noticing how calm he remained even after the guy's head exploded.

"I've seen one of them die just like this in a nearby village," he replied nonchalantly. "So yeah, I figured it'd end the same way."

Before I could respond, someone came rushing in.

"Erick! They're back!"

The big man let out a grunt, tossing the plywood aside as he moved quickly toward the door. Without hesitation, I followed him out of the barn.

Chapter 362: Epilogue 7 - A Brewing Showdown (2)

When I arrived, I was greeted by the sight of a massive swarm of people closing in. They didn't look like they belonged here, and I could instantly tell they were members of the Eclipse.

There were so many of them, it was like they'd brought a whole army with them. The guy the big man had stashed away in that barn had to be someone important—some high-level official—because that was the only reason they'd show up in numbers like this. There was no other explanation that made sense.

Erick, the big man, stood his ground, his face calm, but the way his fingers wrapped tightly around his halberd told a different story. His knuckles were turning white from the grip. The tension in the air was thick, and despite his outward composure, you could feel the weight of the storm brewing inside him.

"Visitor, you came here just to investigate, didn't you?" His voice was steady, but the weight behind it was palpable. "Do me a favor—get out of here with the others. Save them."

"You're gonna hold them off?" I asked, feeling a knot form in my stomach.

"Yes. Even if it costs me my life," he replied, his eyes burning with a conviction that was almost tangible. He wasn't bluffing—he was dead serious. "I have a daughter. My wife died before she even knew what it meant to have a daughter. I swore on her grave that I'd protect our daughter, no matter what.

That's why I'm begging you—get her out of here. Save her, save the people of this village."

"D-Dad!" a voice pierced the air from behind us. A woman, stunningly beautiful with flowing blonde hair, came rushing over. She looked completely out of place here, like she belonged to a world far more polished, more elegant. Honestly, if you told me she was from royalty, I wouldn't bat an eye. "L-Let's go together! You can't fight them all on your own!"

"I have to, Anna!" Erick's voice exploded, ripping from the depths of his lungs. "You need to go with the other villagers! Get to the next village and tell them what happened here!"

Tears welled up in his daughter's eyes, her voice cracking with defiance. "I don't want to! I want to stay with you, Dad!"

The tension between them hit me hard. Watching their pain, I made my decision, stepping forward.

"You go and save them yourself," I said, my tone cold and unyielding. "I'll handle the fight."

Erick's eyes widened in shock. "You can't take them all on," he stammered, disbelief and concern mixing in his voice.

I met his gaze, unwavering. "Don't waste time worrying about me. You should be more concerned about your daughter. If her father dies here, who's gonna protect her from what comes next?"

Even if he was determined now to protect his daughter, it would still be useless in the long run. The danger was always out there, lurking in the future. What if something bad happened to her then? Was he supposed to rise from the dead to save her? That idea was ridiculous.

"Normally, I wouldn't go this far, but I'm moved by your bravery," I told him, my tone softening just a bit. "You're risking everything for someone precious to you. If I was even half the man you are..."

I released a powerful surge of mana, the air crackling with its intensity. I concentrated it until it formed into a blade of pure energy, shimmering with lethal potential.

"You don't need to worry about a stranger like me," I said, casting a glance at his daughter, who was still clinging to hope. "Focus on staying alive for her. She needs you—you're all she has left. And honestly, there's nothing to worry about when it comes to me. Even with all this, they still can't take me down."

Erick's eyes widened in shock as he looked from me to the glowing sword. Then he hesitated before asking, "Do you have someone you've promised yourself to?"

"I have," I replied.

"Then, are you willing to take concubines?"

"D-Dad?" His daughter's voice wavered, her eyes widening as she seemed to grasp the gravity of what he was suggesting.

"Well, the person I'm promised to has no issue with me taking concubines. In fact, she encourages me to have as many as I can handle. So, yes, I'm willing to take concubines," I answered with a steely resolve.

"Alright," he said. "If you manage to survive this, fight off, and defeat all these scumbags, I'll give you my Anna as your concubine. Is that acceptable?"

"Dad!" His daughter shouted.

I looked at him and smiled. "I'll gladly take her," I said.

"Haha!" he burst out, his laughter booming and harsh. "If you manage to save our village, I'll be more than happy to hand her over to you! You seem like a man worthy of her, after all!" he added, giving me a hard clap on the back that stung. "So, best of luck."

He turned to the other villagers, his voice commanding. "Alright, everyone, let's clear out and head to the next village!"

"Dad, you're not seriously going to give me away as someone's concubine, are you?" I heard Anna's voice, full of disbelief.

"The young man seems to have some promise," Erick said with a nod. "I figured he'd be more deserving than any of the dirtbags trying to win you over in this village."

"But how come... I mean... Sure, he's handsome, but I can't just go with him. He's already promised to someone, right?"

"Yes, that's right," he said, his tone matter-of-fact. "That's why you'll need to get along with her when he takes you. And try to be a good wife. It's not entirely impossible that you could end up as the legal one."

"Dad!"

The argument between father and daughter buzzed faintly in the background. I, however, kept my gaze fixed on the throng of people advancing toward us.

I reached into my suit and retrieved my mask—a smooth, faceless piece with no distinguishing features.

With a reward on the line, it was time to get serious.

I slipped the mask over my face.

Then, without a second thought, I hurtled forward into the fray.

Chapter 363: Epilogue 7 - A Brewing Showdown (3)

At first, the people were stunned as I charged straight at them—just one person dashing toward a swarm of soldiers. Normally, no one would be reckless enough to make a move like that, so they must have thought I was insane for trying such a daring stunt. They hadn't realized yet that I was anything but a fool.

As I closed in, they swung their weapons at me and fired their guns. Bullets whizzed past, and steel blades cut through the air, but I danced around them effortlessly, my Guardian blocking every strike.

Their eyes widened in shock as they watched me deflect their attacks. Before they could even grasp what was happening, I had already sent their heads soaring through the air, their bodies slumping to the ground with a sickening thud.

Without missing a beat, I turned my attention to the gunmen. I slipped behind them with lethal precision and swiftly beheaded each one, their heads rolling away in a grotesque display of efficiency.

Someone gulped, their disbelief nearly tangible. They couldn't fathom what I had just done—charging straight into a horde, effortlessly dodging and deflecting every attack, and sending heads flying in mere seconds. The sight was enough to unsettle anyone, if not scare them shitless. I didn't waste a single breath and came at them with even more ferocity.

Heads continued to soar through the air like grotesque, bloody fireworks wherever I moved.

The horde, now completely thrown into chaos, started to panic and flee. They must have realized that something was seriously off and decided it was time to run. But I wasn't about to let them escape. I cut down one, then two, then three, four, fifteen, thirty, forty... I carved my way through them, leaving a macabre trail of corpses.

Then, out of the blue, I felt a sudden, jarring impact as someone blocked my blade.

"Kuh...!"

"Oh?" I muttered, turning to face the source of the sound. It was a woman. Recognition hit me instantly—she was the one who had fought Rose and nearly defeated her. If she could pull off something like that, she wasn't just powerful, she was dangerous.

I took a quick step back, and in the blink of an eye, I was fifteen feet away from her. She locked eyes with me, her expression dead serious, not a hint of fear. The chaos I'd unleashed around her didn't faze her one bit. She wasn't trembling or shaken—just focused and wary. This one meant business.

"Why are you here in this village?" I asked, my voice masked by the coarse, rough tone of the voice changer hidden beneath my mask, keeping my real voice concealed.

"We've come to retrieve a precious member of ours," she said calmly. "But it seems we're too late."

She must've realized that their so-called precious member was already dead.

"A precious member, huh? Tell me, why are you even in that cult? Why are you part of the Eclipse?" I asked. It still blew my mind to find a woman in a group like the Eclipse—a notorious cult known for kidnapping and raping women. I couldn't wrap my head around how any woman could be involved with them.

She didn't say anything and just stared at me. But after a while, she answered, "The purpose of the Eclipse is to bring back the natural darkness that was our Lord. Those women who have those unfortunate incidents were nothing more than a piece of the puzzle in order to realize the dream of the Eclipse. We want to shroud this world back to darkness."

There was nothing but silence hanging between us for a moment before she spoke again.

"We are simply fulfilling the prophecy," she said calmly. "Our Lord desired many women for his own life, and he wanted them all. We're just making that prophecy a reality."

"By raping and kidnapping them?" I shot back, my voice dripping with disgust.

"If that's what it takes to make it happen, then yes, it's important for us to do it," she responded, without a hint of shame.

This woman pissed me off. I had never felt this kind of rage toward a woman before, but she was every bit as disgusting as the rest of the Eclipse. How could she allow all this to happen around her, and still stand there like she believed in it?

Maybe she was so blinded by this so-called Lord of theirs, or maybe she was just another brainwashed pawn, twisted by Sesillian's influence into thinking this shit was justified. Either way, it made my blood boil.

I let out a slow breath, then dashed toward her, closing the distance fast—but she was even faster.

Our weapons met with a sharp clang, the force of it sending a jarring vibration up my arm. She was using a sword now—something she hadn't done when she fought Rose. Back then, she relied only on her fists and feet. Clearly, she had realized that trying to take me down with just martial arts would be a huge mistake.

I attacked relentlessly, slashing at her, but she dodged every strike with fluid, almost effortless movements. Her reflexes were insane, quick and precise, but there was a glaring problem—her swordsmanship was sloppy. She had the control and stance of a trained fighter, but the way she handled the blade? Amateur. Her movements were too rigid, too slow in comparison to her dodging.

It was obvious she wasn't used to this.

"You really suck with that sword," I taunted, jumping back out of her range with a smirk curling on my lips. "Not really fair to fight you like this if you can't handle a blade." I flicked my wrist, deactivating my mana sword, letting the light fade away. "So let's make it even. I'll take you down on your own terms."

Her eyes narrowed, wary of my move. But then, with a sharp inhale, she dropped her sword, the clatter echoing between us. She shifted into a proper fighting stance, her muscles tense and ready, showing off

the posture of someone who knew how to brawl. The hesitation was gone. Now, she was ready to get serious, to take me on with her real skill.

Good. She'd just set the stage for her own downfall, and I was more than ready to make her taste defeat in the one thing she thought she could win at.

Chapter 364: Epilogue 7 - A Brewing Showdown (4)

The woman moved first. She was fast—really fast. One second she was standing there, and the next, she became a blur, reappearing right beside me with a sharp kick aimed straight for my head. I didn't bother calling on Guardian to shield myself because I wanted this to be fair and square. Instead, I raised my arm and blocked her kick head-on.

The impact rippled through my arm, sending a jolt of force through me. She was strong—really strong—but even with all that power, she didn't move me an inch.

Her eyes widened in surprise, a flicker of disbelief crossing her face before she quickly recomposed herself. She came at me again, more aggressive this time. But just like before, I didn't flinch.

"What the...?"

"Is that all?" I asked.

"Not yet!" she screamed, spinning around with a flurry of punches aimed at my chest and head. She was moving faster than before—faster than Rose, even. It was clear she wasn't just some normal human. The precision and speed of her attacks made that obvious.

But it didn't matter. No matter how hard or fast she swung, every single hit was blocked, my arms moving to deflect her blows like it was nothing. I didn't even shift from my spot. The ground beneath my feet felt solid as ever. I didn't budge.

"What...?" she gasped, her voice filled with confusion, her eyes narrowing as she realized just how pointless her attacks had been.

Her strikes were deadly, meant to kill, but they were all useless. Not only had I blocked every single one, but I hadn't even moved from my position.

"Is that all?" I repeated, my voice colder, cutting through the air like ice.

She stepped back, her eyes wide, the reality of the situation finally hitting her. The entire time, I'd left openings—plenty of them. I'd made it easy for her to come at me. But now she realized that even with those gaps in my defense, she couldn't move me, couldn't touch me. Her wariness was written all over her face. She wasn't about to make another reckless move.

She was smart, careful, preferring to methodically pick apart her opponent rather than charge blindly. I had to give her credit for that—it was the right strategy.

"Who... who are you?" she stammered, disbelief flashing across her face. It was clear she couldn't comprehend that someone like me existed, much less that she had no clue about it.

"Mephisto," I said, the name slipping from my lips like it carried the weight of the underworld itself.

"Why are you attacking an organization that has nothing to do with you?" she pressed.

"Nothing to do with me? You're wrong." I told her. "I'm here because it has everything to do with me."

I couldn't allow Eclipse to continue. They couldn't be left unchecked, running wild, thinking they could compete with me for control. I was the only one who could rule this world—the only one who would. Eclipse was nothing more than a cancer, a disease eating away at the very core of this world. The longer they existed, the more they'd devour everything.

If left unchecked, they'd consume this world whole.

"The thing you're chasing—the dream you're trying to make real," I said, voice steady and cold, "that very dream will be the thing that destroys you. Be careful what you wish for."

"Our dream is the perfect solution for this vile world. To blanket it back in darkness—that's the way we should live. Nothing's more perfect than the quiet, calm of the deepest darkness," she said, her voice dripping with zeal. She squared up, her eyes locked on me, and prepared herself for another assault. "That's why we will realize our dream."

With a powerful kick off the ground, she closed the distance between us in one fluid motion, fast as a bullet. She faked left, her body a blur, then came straight at me with her arm outstretched—not a fist, but an open palm, aiming to lock me in a grapple. I dodged easily, slipping just out of her reach. My own fist shot out like a reflex, tightening as it flew toward her face, aiming for her nose.

CRACK.

Her head jerked back as my punch connected, and a strangled grunt escaped her lips.

"Ngh?!"

Blood poured from her nose instantly, dripping onto her lips, her eyes wide with shock. For a second, she just stood there, stunned, still well within my range. Then, with a gasp, she scrambled backward, putting space between us again.

She wiped the blood from her nose with the back of her hand, staring at it, dazed, before swiping it onto her clothes. With renewed determination, she rushed at me again. But each time she attacked, I blocked her easily. My movements were effortless compared to her increasingly desperate swings. And each block was followed by my fist slamming into her body.

She couldn't hit. Every attempt was met with another punch, knocking her off balance again and again.

Eventually, her steps became shaky, her legs wobbling beneath her. She was clearly disoriented, swaying on her feet, but somehow, she still held her stance. She looked like she might fall over any second, but sheer defiance kept her upright, fists raised, refusing to back down.

"Looks like you're on your last leg," I said, my tone icy and unyielding. "Is this really all you've got?"

With a primal roar, she surged at me again, her resolve burning fiercer than ever. But something was off—her fists were shimmering with a dangerous glow. I activated Guardian immediately, preparing for whatever she had in store. When her glowing fists struck the barrier, the impact was cataclysmic. An explosion erupted, filling my vision with a dense, choking cloud of smoke.

As the smoke slowly dissipated, I saw her sprawled on the ground, her arm nearly incinerated, the bones splintered and destroyed.

"An explosive attack, huh? So that's your skill," I said. "But it seems like there's a major drawback—using it also fucks you up pretty bad."

I deactivated Guardian and took in the sight of her ruined arm. "Looks like she's got some sort of emergency measure to keep her alive," I noted.

I scanned the area, noting the Eclipse members who had seen their comrade fall. They quickly decided to cut their losses and flee. I made no move to chase them, simply watching as they scrambled away.

Chapter 365: Epilogue 7 - A Brewing Showdown (5)

Sesillian's POV

I sat in my estate, savoring the taste of the tea my butlers had prepared, the faint clink of porcelain as I set my cup down echoing through the quiet room. The air was calm, almost serene—until the heavy thud of footsteps announced a visitor.

"You're looking really relaxed, Sesillian," a familiar voice said. I glanced up, meeting the gaze of a man with jet-black hair and piercing dark eyes. His body was ripped, every muscle defined. The last time I'd seen him, he was a wreck—missing an eye and a limb. But now, he stood before me, fully restored, like nothing had ever touched him.

"You don't look like someone who went through hell," I replied, raising an eyebrow.

He smirked, a cold glint in his eye. "Yeah, my grandaunt's got a talent for fixing souls. She patched me up so well, even my limbs grew back. But that's not why I'm here. Why are you so relaxed, knowing Mephisto's coming for you?"

I leaned back in my chair, the leather creaking beneath me as I took another sip, unfazed. "Mephisto? He's not worth my time. And Angelica? She's nothing. Just a failed product of the kingdom.

A pawn in a much bigger game. There's more to this than some broken knight. She was never important, just another failure."

Angelica had been one of the captains of the Magic Knights. She was left for dead after the King's Game, barely clinging to life when we found her on the island's shore. I used every resource at my disposal to rebuild her, reshaping her into someone new—someone perfectly loyal to our Lord. She became flawless. Until Mephisto took her out.

This same Mephisto had been the one to tear apart the man standing in front of me. He said Mephisto's power was so overwhelming, he couldn't even see its limit. I'd thought it was just an exaggeration, but looking at the wreck he'd been, I knew he wasn't lying. Still, no man is without weakness. No one. The only being without flaws isn't a man at all—He's our Lord.

"Anyway, you got any good news for me, or is it just the usual bad things?" I leaned back in my chair, my eyes locking onto his. "I figured since you came here in person, you'd at least have something worthwhile to tell me."

He smirked, but there was something darker behind his eyes. "Oh, I do. But there's something that's been gnawing at me lately."

I raised an eyebrow, intrigued. "Oh? And what's this something that's got you all worked up?"

"It's this... thing called Leonamon."

Leonamon. The moment he said it, I felt a twinge of recognition. Anyone who wasn't completely out of touch knew that name. You'd have to be living under a rock on the far side of the world to not have heard of it. Leonamon was a behemoth, a company that had rewritten the rules of modernization, obliterating every other competitor and leaving them in the dust.

They were rolling in cash, probably the richest company on the planet right now. Even some of my own prized possessions were from them.

"And why is Leonamon bothering you?" I asked, sitting up a bit straighter now.

"It's the way the company's been growing—so fast. It's unnatural. They've only been around for less than a year, but they've already taken the top spot, outpacing every single company in the world," he said, his voice carrying a weight of suspicion.

He had a point. Leonamon's rise was nothing short of mind-blowing. Sure, they had some insane tech, but no company, no matter how advanced, should climb that fast. Normally, it would take decades, maybe half a century, to achieve what they had in just months.

"Which is why I've got a proposition for you," he said, his eyes narrowing, his tone deadly serious. "Something that only you could pull off."

"What is it?" I asked, watching as he leaned in closer.

"Destroy Leonamon for me," he said, his voice low and cold.

"Why?" I asked, narrowing my eyes at him.

"Because something about it feels... wrong." He paused, the weight of his words hanging in the air. "I don't like how much that company is changing the world."

I raised an eyebrow. From where I stood, the changes Leonamon brought seemed more than beneficial. As far as I was concerned, the company had made life easier in ways that were unimaginable before. Smoother roads for better transportation, cars that cut down travel time, smartphones that kept us connected to the world, blending information and entertainment seamlessly.

Leonamon had done more good than harm. Yet, here he was, asking me to bring it all down.

"I don't think it's gonna be that easy," I said bluntly. "Not unless I get something I want in return."

I let my gaze trail over him, sizing him up from head to toe. But he wasn't fazed.

"That's not something I can offer," he replied flatly. "Besides, I'm like you—I only see men as my love interest. And I've already got my eyes set on someone." He leaned back slightly, giving me a sharp look. "So, choose something else you need."

I already knew this man shared the same proclivities as me. Despite his rugged, muscular frame, his true desires lay elsewhere. His sexual attraction was strictly reserved for men, and it wasn't hard to see. There was something undeniably feminine in the way he moved—graceful, deliberate, like he was always holding back a part of himself.

I had my suspicions the moment we first met, and every glance, every subtle gesture had only confirmed it.

"Alright," I said, letting my voice carry a mix of intrigue and command. "Then, give it to me."

I let the words hang in the air for a moment, savoring the tension as I stared him down, my eyes locking onto his.

"Give me the secret to traveling between worlds."

Amon's POV

The reports were coming in, routine but always impressive—Leonamon's growth was unstoppable, a force that dwarfed any competition. The smartphone sales were through the roof, as expected. But what truly caught my attention was the fact that our wine had skyrocketed to become the second-best-selling product, followed closely by our cakes.

It seemed like people were fully embracing modernity, and the influence of Leonamon was shaping the world in ways no one could have predicted.

Our current revenue... it was larger than anything any other companies could even dream of. Combined, they couldn't match us. Master would be ecstatic when he saw the numbers. The moment he returns, I'd rush to him with the news.

But then, an urgent knock shattered the stillness of my office.

"Vice President!" a voice called out, shaky with panic. "O-One of our branches has been attacked!"

My heart pounded as I shot up from my chair, eyes narrowing. Attacked? What did that even mean?

No... I knew exactly what it meant. This wasn't just a random event—it was the beginning. The prelude to something bigger. A confrontation. The Eclipse and Leonamon were on a collision course. The war... it was about to begin.

Chapter 366 - The Demon Rages (1)

Rose's POV

I glared down at the man whose balls I'd just crushed, his body limp and useless on the floor. His face was twisted in agony, even unconscious, but he'd survive—though probably wishing he hadn't. The sight of him, broken but alive, was almost pathetic. I crouched down, tying them up tight so they couldn't pull any bullshit when they came to.

Grace stood off to the side, her voice shaky as she protested.

"You don't need to tie them up like that..."

I shot her a sharp look, cutting her off. "You want them loose? It's dangerous to leave them like this."

She went quiet after that.

Once they were bound, I splashed some cold water over them, and Philip was the first to stir. His body twitched, a painful gasp leaving his mouth. Even with his dick practically obliterated, he was still alive, barely clinging on. His eyes fluttered open, unfocused, his mind still scrambling to understand the pain ripping through his body.

"Geh... hehe..." He let out this sick, delirious laugh. His eyes were glazed at first, but then something dark snapped inside him. They locked onto me, wild and full of madness. The look of a man completely broken, mind shattered beyond repair. Then again, getting your balls crushed could do that to anyone.

My eyes trailed down to his wrist, where the tattoo of the Eclipse stood out, dark and clear. He was one of them.

I turned to Grace, explaining that he was part of the Eclipse, a twisted cult that kidnaps and rapes women. When I told her that, she was in shock. But then again, Grace had been through hell herself, raped while her husband watched and approved of it, so it didn't take long for her to accept the truth.

"Still... I can't believe the man I married turned out to be this kind of monster," she said, her voice filled with disbelief. "I loved him, you know? Truly. I wouldn't have married him otherwise. I told you that, didn't I?"

She told me she loved her husband, that she wouldn't have had his child if she didn't. The way she said it, like she was still trying to hold on to a shred of that love, made me wonder. Maybe, once, Philip really was a good guy, and the only reason he turned into this monster was because of that cult.

The last guy I caught told me something similar—he said the cult felt like it was hypnotizing him, breaking down his will until he couldn't resist. Maybe that's why Philip became what he is now.

"His mind's probably been rotted by the cult," I said, my voice steady but dark. "He's not the man you loved anymore, but he was, once. Now all that's left is his face and body. The rest—every memory of you, everything good—it's been twisted into something sick. That's what made him do what he did to you. And even if he's not fully in control, it doesn't change anything."

He's still unforgivable."

Even if he didn't want it, even if he was brainwashed, the blood on his hands was still real. He was guilty.

"Kekeke..." Philip's laugh was a rasping, twisted sound that echoed through the room. "Unforgivable? There's nothing unforgivable about what I've done. Every single thing I did was by the command of our Lord, the Great Darkness. His will is absolute! As a faithful servant, I was honored to fulfill his desires.

I'm not guilty. I will never be guilty."

My hand shot forward, grabbing his chin and squeezing until I could feel his teeth grinding together under the pressure.

"You think you're getting away with that? Talking like you're innocent when you're soaked in sin? You think I'm fucking stupid?"

Philip sneered through the pain, his eyes wild but filled with a twisted certainty. "Stupid? That's putting it lightly for someone like you. You blindly oppose what you can't understand. If you just put your faith in our Lord, you'd be promised wisdom beyond your comprehension. But you're too much of a fool to see it.

You're nothing but a puppet that defies Him."

"Tell me, then, what's so special about this Lord of yours? What's so great about him that you'd throw your wife's body to the wolves, letting other men use her? Huh?" My voice dripped with disgust, every word like venom.

"You wanna know what's so great about Him?" Philip's lips curled into a twisted grin, his eyes gleaming with unhinged zeal. "Fine. I could talk about the Lord forever and not even feel tired. Our Lord, the Great Darkness, is beyond anything you could ever understand. Not even the Great Red could touch Him.

He's the one who stands above it all, the one who will take this broken world and reshape it into what it was always meant to be. You think you're stopping something? You're just a fucking idiot playing in the dark. The prophecy will happen—nothing can stop it. This world is supposed to be swallowed by the darkness He created. And it will come back.

We've sworn it—it will come back!"

His words were filled with deranged conviction, spilling out like a flood of insanity. This "Great Darkness" he was raving about meant nothing to me. It was all gibberish. I'd heard of the Great Dragons, like the Great Red, but this so-called darkness was just the ramblings of a lunatic.

"You mean to tell me you did all that things to Grace—let her get used by other men—just for some nonexistent god?" I growled, my hand gripping his chin so hard I could feel the bones shifting under my palm, my nails digging into his skin.

The second I said that, Philip's whole demeanor snapped. His eyes narrowed, filled with a blazing, animalistic fury. It was unreal—how he could still glare like that after I'd crushed his dick and balls. The

pain alone should've shattered his spirit, but no, he clung to this madness like it was the only thing keeping him alive.

"Nonexistent?" He practically spat the word, his voice seething with hate. "You don't have a fucking clue! Our Lord exists! He's here, in this very realm, watching and waiting. And when He returns, you'll regret every word you just said, every time you opposed Him, you fucking moron!"

Chapter 367: The Demon Rages (2)

Philip's eyes glowed with a madness that barely teetered on the edge of sanity. It was like he'd fully given his soul to this "Great Darkness," clinging to the twisted belief that he was on some righteous path. Even now, beaten to the brink of death, with his dick and balls crushed beyond repair, he held on to that insane faith, like it was the only thing keeping him breathing.

My jaw clenched so tight I could feel the tension in my skull. If this was the real Philip now, I could snap his neck without a second thought. Grace's pleas were the only thing keeping my hands off him, but even that was hanging by a thread. The man was clearly hypnotized, brainwashed by that damned cult. Grace had said he used to be kind, loving, before the Eclipse sank its claws into him.

If I wasn't holding onto that small sliver of hope for her sake, his neck would've already been snapped like a twig.

"You can't stop it," Philip rasped, his voice dripping with venom. His eyes gleamed with a twisted sense of triumph. "The Great Darkness is coming. We're preparing for His return, and when He rises, nothing—not even you—can stop Him." His laugh was a sickening mix of arrogance and insanity, like he was daring me to challenge his delusions.

Grace stood beside me, her body trembling uncontrollably. She looked at Philip, her eyes wide, uncomprehending. This man, this deranged shell, was no longer her husband. I could see the heartbreak

and disbelief etched across her face, like the man she'd once loved had completely vanished, replaced by this fanatic. She didn't even recognize him anymore—and how could she?

The man she married was long gone, devoured by the Eclipse.

"In the shadows, we find truth," Philip's voice grew louder, swelling with fervor, his eyes wild with zeal. "And in the darkness, we are reborn. The world will bow to our will, for we are the harbingers of the Eclipse, where light meets its end and our power begins!"

Philip's eyes blazed with unhinged fervor, like a man possessed, the madness bubbling just beneath his skin. His twisted grin widened as the other five bodies around him began to stir, their limbs twitching unnaturally, like marionettes jerked by unseen strings.

Then came their voices—low at first, guttural—before rising into an unsettling chant, dripping with fervor that clung to every word like venom. The room seemed to vibrate with the weight of their twisted belief.

"In the shadows, we find truth, and in the darkness, we are reborn. The world will bow to our will, for we are the harbingers of the Eclipse, where light meets its end and our power begins!"

"In the shadows, we find truth, and in the darkness, we are reborn. The world will bow to our will, for we are the harbingers of the Eclipse, where light meets its end and our power begins!"

"In the shadows, we find truth, and in the darkness, we are reborn. The world will bow to our will, for we are the harbingers of the Eclipse, where light meets its end and our power begins!"

Again. Louder. More forceful. As if each repetition gave life to the madness swirling in the air. Their eyes, wide and glassy, locked onto me like I was the key to some twisted prophecy. Grace took a shaky step back, her skin pale, her body trembling in fear.

To her, this wasn't just a chant—it was a death sentence. The man she once loved was long gone. In his place stood a stranger, one who had been consumed by something far darker.

I stood still, my fists clenched at my sides, trying to make sense of the chaos. The deeper I dug, the worse it got. What the fuck was the Eclipse? What was their goal? And who the hell was the mastermind behind this insanity?

My jaw tightened as the questions piled up, each more maddening than the last. It was like diving headfirst into an abyss with no bottom. No answers. Just an endless descent into the unknown.

Before I could process it, the chanting stopped. Abruptly. Their mouths fell open, heads snapping back, and they started gasping for air—like drowning men surfacing from the depths. But the sound that came out was unnatural—deep, ragged croaks, like they were being strangled by an unseen force. Then, without warning, their eyes began to bleed, dark, thick blood spilling down their cheeks like rivers.

And then—crack.

Their heads burst, one by one, like grotesque balloons. Blood sprayed everywhere, painting the room in viscera. The slick warmth of it hit me full force, soaking me from head to toe. The walls dripped crimson, the air thick with the coppery scent of death.

"Aaaaaaaaaah!" Grace's scream pierced the chaos, raw and primal. She was paralyzed in terror, her eyes locked onto the headless bodies that littered the floor, blood still spurting from the gory stumps of their necks. One of them was her husband—his body now nothing more than a lifeless husk.

I didn't waste a second. I grabbed her, pulling her out of the room as fast as I could. She stumbled after me, still screaming, her mind shattered by what she had witnessed. It wasn't just death. It was something far worse—something vile, unnatural. She wasn't just seeing people die.

No, these fuckers had been executed, brutally, right in front of her eyes.

Grace had finally fallen asleep, her body completely drained after everything that had happened. Before putting her to bed, I'd made sure to clean her up, wiping away the blood and sweat that clung to her skin. Her breathing was shallow, her face still contorted in the remnants of fear, but at least she was resting now.

Over in the crib, her daughter, Hana, was crying, the sound piercing through the dimly lit room. She must've heard Grace screaming—or maybe it was the eerie chant from those lunatics, still ringing in the air before their heads exploded. Whatever it was, it left a mark on the poor kid.

I scooped Hana up, cradling her in my arms, trying to soothe her while my mind raced with thoughts. Once she settled down, I set her back in the crib and finally took a moment for myself. The blood still clung to my skin, sticky and warm. I stripped down and sank into the bath, letting the water wash over me. The heat didn't just cleanse my body; it gave me space to think.

This wasn't just some small-time thing. No. There was something far bigger going on here. Something dark—something deeply connected to whatever the hell those freaks had been chanting about. The Eclipse. Their cryptic bullshit wasn't just some fringe cult nonsense.

It felt like the tip of something massive, something that could consume everything in its path.

I bit down on my lip, my teeth sinking into the skin, frustration boiling up inside me. There was a name... a name Grace had mentioned. The one person who might have answers.

"James Moriarty..." The name slipped past my lips. "Just who the hell... is that man?"

Chapter 368: The Demon Rages (3)

I went to the backyard of Grace's house to burn the dead bodies with fire magic. I set Philip's body aside so Grace could have his ashes for the urn. As I watched the bodies go up in flames, my eyes stayed cold and emotionless. I wasn't feeling any sympathy for them. As far as I was concerned, they were scum who deserved to die.

Once Philip's body was fully burned, I poured his ashes into a jar. Then, I went to Grace's room. She was still fast asleep, with Hana peacefully dozing in her crib. I had no idea how to break the news to her. She had just seen people literally blowing their heads apart right in front of her. Even I had been shocked the first time I saw something like that.

While they were both sleeping, I took the time to clean up the bloody mess in the room. There was so much blood that the whole place was practically painted red. As I scrubbed the floor, something caught my attention—a gap in the boards. It looked like there was a hidden door, a trapdoor leading to a basement. I paused for a moment before lifting it open. Sure enough, it led down to a dark basement.

The place looked like it hadn't seen light in ages. No candles, no lamps, nothing. Philip or Grace must've used magic to light the place up when they were down here. Cobwebs covered the walls, which told me

they hadn't bothered cleaning it in forever. I stepped down into the basement, lighting the way with a small flame in my hand. There wasn't much here, except for a study table sitting in the corner.

Who it belonged to, I was about to find out.

I walked over to the table, my steps slow and deliberate, and glanced at the book lying on top. The air was still, almost suffocating, as I reached for it, my fingers brushing the worn cover. There was nothing special—just a basic notebook, the kind you could get from wandering merchants. As I scanned, something small and thin slipped out and fluttered onto the table.

"Hm?"

I bent down, picking it up between my fingers, realizing it was a photo. In a place like this, something as modern as a photograph shouldn't exist, but ever since Leonamon introduced their advancements, even capturing moments like this had become easy. I stared at the image, the dim light of the torches in the background illuminating figures draped in hooded cloaks, their faces hidden in shadow.

The flames flickered ominously, casting long shadows.

"So, this is the Eclipse..."

It had to be their headquarters, or maybe one of the many places they operated from. But as my eyes traced the figures, something stopped me cold.

"Huh?"

One of them... I knew that silhouette. My chest tightened, and I squinted at the photo. It couldn't be... could it? The person's hood was drawn over their face, but just as the photo was taken, they turned slightly, catching the light.

It was enough to make out some faint details—enough to give me that sinking feeling in my gut. The hair, the way they stood... it felt too familiar.

No, this couldn't be the person I thought it was... right?

It was then that something else caught my eye. There was a faint marking on the back of the photo, like someone had scrawled something in a rush. My fingers trembled slightly as I turned it over, squinting at the words in the dim light.

"This might be the last time. I'm sorry, Grace and Hana."

That single sentence hit harder than I expected. My chest tightened, and for a split second, I felt a pang of something—maybe guilt, maybe understanding. So, Philip wasn't just a heartless bastard. He'd been caught up in the Eclipse, manipulated like a pawn. The bitter taste in my mouth grew. Maybe...

maybe he wasn't as much of a scumbag as I thought.

But then, I turned back to the book in my hands. The first line jumped off the page, practically smacking me in the face.

"I have a sin to confess. I cheated on my pregnant wife."

Yeah, I take that shit back. He was a scumbag.

I kept reading, my grip tightening on the edges of the book as the words continued to unfold like a slow, sickening revelation.

"This guilt... it's something I'll carry to my grave. But the woman I cheated with... she's part of an organization known as the Eclipse. They worship an ancient dragon—one of the beings who created worlds. At first, I didn't care.

The woman I was fucking behind Grace's back was like a sweet, forbidden angel. She gave me the kind of comfort I couldn't find with my wife. That was all it took to turn my heart, to make me betray the woman who was carrying my child."

It looked like the start of a diary—Philip's diary, detailing his dirty affair with some woman other than Grace. I wasn't planning on giving a shit, but something about it pulled me in. The fact that the woman he was screwing around with belonged to the Eclipse... that got my attention. Something about this whole thing just felt off, so I kept reading.

"I told her I'd join in whatever organization she was involved with. It seemed harmless at first, like a regular church, just a place to pray. But it wasn't anything pure like that. People were wearing hoods,

chanting praises to a Lord I'd never even heard of. At first, I was skeptical. Was the woman I was fucking around with really tied up in this lunatic shit?

I couldn't believe it. She was an angel."

"Maybe I was blinded. The woman I fell for... deep down, I knew it was too good to be true. She was lying to me the whole time. I found out the real reason she came to me—it wasn't love. She needed something from me.

An artifact, one that supposedly had the power to leap between worlds. It was said that humans once used it to summon Jeanne into this world to fight off the demons. Apparently, my ancestor was the one who hid it—under the very house me and Grace live in. But I had no clue where it was, and I was sure I'd never find it."

"I wanted out of the cult. I was done. I saw her... the woman I thought I loved... having a three-way with two other men, right in front of me. She didn't give a damn, didn't even try to hide it.

I didn't feel despair, though. I felt guilt. Guilt for cheating on Grace. But by the time I realized how deep I was in... it was too late. I already belonged to them."

Chapter 369: The Demon Rages (4)

The next few pages detailed his involvement with the Eclipse—his vile acts, and the guilt he initially felt. At first, the weight of what he had done burdened him, but the longer he stayed with the Eclipse, the more his mind unraveled. Eventually, the guilt stopped holding him back.

"I committed a grave sin. I kidnapped a woman and killed her as an offering. Her blood, still warm, stained my hands, yet... I felt nothing. It was the most repulsive thing I'd ever done. But somehow, the guilt didn't come.

Was it gone for good? Maybe it was the cult leader's relentless brainwashing, twisting my mind. I couldn't run anymore. If I did, they'd blow my head apart. I saw what happened to others who tried to escape. I would be next.

I wanted to go back to Grace, even though I fucked up by cheating on her. But what choice did I have now? I don't deserve to even face her, not after the things I've done."

"The cult leader asked me about the artifact. I didn't know shit, so he stopped bothering with me."

"I bought a camera from Leonamon. With it, I captured images—proof of everything I witnessed in this twisted place. Evidence to document the cult's sins."

"They caught me. The cult leader punished me. He told me he wanted my wife fucked by many men. And I... I agreed."

"As I watched my wife get fucked, her body used and violated by a line of men, I felt nothing but pure satisfaction. No guilt. Just an overwhelming, sick delight. My eyes never left her, as I soaked in every moment. The pleasure surged through me like I was reaching some kind of divine connection. It made me feel like I was getting closer to the lord."

I gritted my teeth, unable to believe what I was reading. Was it really necessary for him to be punished like that? And did it have to be in such a twisted way? The Eclipse was making me sick to my core.

I flipped through the pages, each one detailing his descent into depravity. It was clear he had sunk so deep that there was no coming back. I suddenly stopped at one particular page.

"I finally got to know his name."

That was all that was written. Just those few words, nothing more.

I turned to the next page, but it was blank. And the one after that was blank too. And the next, and the next, and the next.

"Who the fuck was it?!" I shouted, staring at the empty pages. There was nothing—no text, no clues. Just blank pages that mocked me.

I slammed the book shut and let it fall to the ground. It was worthless. There was evidence of his twisted actions, sure, but nothing substantial. To me, the book seemed like nothing more than the ramblings of a delusional man who had lost his way. The Eclipse was far more hidden and insidious than anyone realized.

"Fuck..." I muttered to myself, frustration and confusion thick in my voice. Then something flickered in the corner of my vision, just outside the reach of the flame in my hand. It was shrouded in darkness, hidden from view. I moved closer, letting the firelight reveal whatever was lurking in the shadows. When it finally came into focus, a sharp gasp escaped my lips.

It looked like a bulletin board, similar to mine, where I pieced together all my evidence, pinning the puzzle pieces in place. But this wasn't neatly pinned—it was all plastered messily on the wall, like someone had thrown it together in desperation. And there, scrawled across the wall in dried blood, were words. But it wasn't written with a finger. It looked like the blood had been used as ink.

"I couldn't say it in the journal because my mind wouldn't let me. But strangely enough, writing it in blood didn't stop me. So I decided to write in blood," it read.

"I hope you see this, Grace. I can't speak to you anymore. After everything I've done, I don't have the right. And I'm too far gone in this hellhole to ever crawl back out. Not even you could save me now. I've lost all my love for you, but I hope—even if you've lost your love for me—that you'll still love our daughter.

This is the secret the cult was trying to keep hidden."

And right in the middle of all that chaos, there it was...

"He was behind it all."

My blood ran cold as I stared at the photo pinned to the center of it all. It was someone I knew.

It was dark out. My fists slammed into the tree over and over, knuckles raw and bloody. Anger surged through me with every hit. How could he...? I thought he was a decent person, but it turned out he was worse than all the others. A fucking scumbag.

I wanted to kill him. The one behind all of this—behind the kidnappings and the horror—was someone I knew. Someone who had been right beside me the entire time.

"Fuck..." I gritted my teeth so hard my lip split, a drop of blood rolling down my chin. "How the fuck could he do this?"

Just as I muttered that, a voice broke through the quiet night.

"Can you stop hitting the tree?"

My head snapped up. There, right in front of me, was a woman, her bottom half literally fused with the tree. At first, I was taken aback, but with everything I'd been through lately, I was too exhausted to be surprised for long.

"Who the fuck are you?" I asked, my voice rough with frustration.

"I am Morthea," she replied, her tone calm, almost indifferent. "One of Master's women, and a member of his Shadow."

"Master?" I asked, narrowing my eyes. "Who the fuck is that?"

"You already know him," she said, her voice almost teasing. "I can smell his life force on you. That means you've had sex with him already."

"...Leon?"

"That's right."

So, this woman was another one of his? It wasn't just the Princess, Irene, Gabrielle, and me? There were others? How much of a fucking scumbag was Leon to have this many women wrapped around his damn finger?

"Master said he's coming back," she continued, her voice smooth. "He's found someone who might lead you to all the answers you're looking for."

Chapter 370: Reward, Concubine/Bride (1)

Leon's POV

I was headed back to Grace's place. I'd already told Morthea that much. But first, I needed to tie up this woman—I wasn't about to let her slip away.

"You really took them all down," Erick said, still in shock. He couldn't believe I hadn't even broken a sweat while slicing through the heads of the Eclipse members.

"Well, I've got some experience dealing with their kind," I shrugged. Then I noticed his daughter standing next to him. As soon as our eyes met, she ducked behind Erick. She was around my age, maybe a year or two older. Blonde hair, blue eyes, and while she wasn't exactly fit, she had the kind of body that came naturally to someone her age—fleshy, but not quite chubby.

The type that never seems to gain weight no matter how much she eats, yet would flat-out deny it if someone pointed out she looked different.

"Oh... are you gonna get your reward now?" Erick grinned. "You know, I'm real protective of Anna. I've always kept her safe from the bad guys who try to sweet-talk her. I don't let just anyone near her unless they're a man of their word. But you?

You're brave, strong, and you stick to your word, so I've got no problem giving her to you."

This guy was seriously set on giving his daughter to me. We barely met, just earlier today, and here he was offering her up as a "reward"—and it didn't exactly seem like a reward that was appropriate for the situation.

"Are you really sure about this?" I asked, raising an eyebrow. "For all you know, I could actually be a bad guy, you know?"

"If you were a bad guy, you'd have let this village burn at the hands of the Eclipse," Erick said with a grin, giving my shoulder a hard smack. "And if you were some piece of work, I'd admit I was wrong. There wouldn't be much I could do about it, but trust me—I'd do everything in my power to get Anna back. But hey, I've never been wrong before.

I trust my gut, and my gut says you're the one, so I'm giving her to you."

"But is that really what she wants?" I asked, glancing over at Anna.

Erick let out a deep laugh, his voice booming. "Hahaha! I know Anna better than anyone! I've never seen her look at someone the way she's looking at you right now!"

"D-Dad...!" Anna protested, her face turning crimson.

"Look at her! She's blushing from ear to ear!" Erick grinned, clearly enjoying himself.

Anna lowered her head, shyly glancing up at me. "Um, I might not have much experience, but... please take care of me from now on," she said with a small bow.

It was clear she wanted this too. I couldn't exactly turn the offer down, not when it was laid out like this.

"You want to stay at our place tonight?" Erick asked, a grin on his face. "I can set up my daughter's bed for the two of you."

"D-Dad?!" Anna blurted out, her face turning red.

"Well, it's already late, so I might as well take you up on your offer," I replied. I could always head back to Grace's place tomorrow morning. The trip wouldn't take long.

Erick grinned wider, glancing at Anna, who could only blush deeper. I wouldn't do anything she didn't want, but if she didn't say no, I wasn't planning on holding back. Honestly, I'd been planning to relieve myself with one of the Dryad sisters since I was already pent-up. But if Anna was down for it, I could easily go for her instead.

Their house was small, as expected for a village home. It was all wooden, the kind of place that would go up in flames if someone sneezed too close to it. That's probably why their kitchen was set up outside, with a sign posted that read, "Fire Magic is prohibited in this village."

"I'm sorry my dad forced you into that situation," Anna said. She was keeping quite a bit of distance between us, clearly a bit nervous.

"It's fine, really. I actually appreciate it. I'm exhausted after that fight," I told her, offering a smile. She blushed even harder at that.

"D-Do you want me to wash you up?" she asked, her voice trembling slightly.

I looked at her, a bit surprised. She actually said that pretty boldly, not gonna lie—I wasn't expecting it.

"You don't have to force yourself into this, you know?" I said, giving her an out. "You could just laugh it off as some kind of joke your old man made. No need to take it seriously."

She lowered herself slightly, pressing her thighs together nervously. "W-Well, that's the thing... I want to..."

Oh. So this wasn't because of some order or pressure from her dad. This was something she wanted on her own. If that's how it was, then I sure as hell wasn't gonna hold back. I'd be more than happy to take her up on that offer.

"Alright then. How about you wash my back?" I asked her.

"S-Sure..." she mumbled, clearly flustered.

"Oh, by the way," I added, remembering something important. "There's something I need to ask first. What's your skill?"

"S-Skill? Um, my father doesn't have one, but I do. Mine's Electroreception. I can detect any life within my skill's radius, or anything that releases electric energy."

Hmm, that was interesting. Kind of like how certain aquatic animals use it to detect prey, similar to bats using echolocation to "see" through sound. That would be pretty damn useful to add to my repertoire.

"Alright then. I'm heading to the bath now. You coming?"

"I'll just get ready real quick," she replied, her voice still a bit shaky.

I stepped into their bathroom. It was small, cramped even—definitely not the kind of place built for two people. I wasn't sure if we'd even fit in there together, but I figured we'd make it work. After a bit, Anna finally came in.