

## The World 451

### Chapter 451 The Capital Is Taken! (7)

"What should we do?" I asked her.

Since she was directly involved in this and held a position as one of the magic knights of the Milham Kingdom, I figured she could come up with a solid plan.

"The first thing we need to do is inform everyone of the situation," Captain Angelica replied. "We're going to need as many people as possible because there's no way we're getting past that mob around the plaza without some resistance. But I don't want to hurt them—they're just innocent people, brainwashed into doing this."

"So, force is out of the question?"

"Yes, but not entirely," she said. "We'll use just enough to subdue them, nothing fatal."

That was a relief. Full-out violence against them would feel like a line crossed. But realistically, without any force, we'd be dead in the water.

"The question is, how are we going to inform everyone?"

"Don't worry about that. With just a few taps, I can let the whole kingdom—and even people outside it—know what's going on," I said, pulling out my phone.

"Is that... a smartphone?"

"Yes, a model from Leonamon. All I need to do is type it up and post it on the internet. Anyone with a smartphone can see it. Pretty handy, huh?"

"That reminds me!" Her eyes widened, like a memory clicked into place. "Before I ended up here, I was held in a facility. Gabrielle was there too."

"Lady Gabrielle?" I asked, raising an eyebrow. She was my tutor back in the day.

"Yes," she nodded. "She works for a company... I think it's Leonamon."

"Leonamon? What was she doing there?"

"I don't know the full story, but it seemed like she belonged there. It was a strange place—all women working. But they didn't look like slaves or anything. Actually, they looked like they were enjoying their work."

The whole thing sounded a bit off. A workplace with only women would definitely raise some eyebrows, especially with all the sex trafficking and exploitation schemes popping up lately. But from how she described it, it didn't sound suspicious enough to warrant an investigation.

"I think Leonamon's involved in the fight against Eclipse too," she added.

"Really?"

"The owner of Leonamon..." She hesitated, her expression turning grim. "Even though I was brainwashed, I remember him clearly. He's terrifying. Absolutely terrifying—like facing a force that's impossible to beat."

"Impossible, how?"

"I fought him while I was under, and even then, I could sense how far above me he was. I lost miserably. And when he spoke to me, it felt like staring into an endless abyss. His voice was so deep, every word dripping with dread. But somehow... he seemed like a good man too."

"A cruel, good man, huh?" I hadn't met Leonamon's owner myself, but rumor had it he'd be attending tonight's noble party. Apparently, this would be his first public appearance. Wait— "You said he's also fighting against Eclipse, right?"

"Yes."

So, if he's attending tonight, he's probably got his own agenda in mind.

That meant he was out there fighting now. If I'd known sooner, maybe I could've forced my way into the noble's party too.

Not that the King and Queen would ever allow it, given the chaos gripping the castle.

"For now, we need as many people on our side as possible. The Royal Knights won't be much help—they're bound to protect the royal family above all. But the magic knights... they might be different, right? What about your unit, Captain Angelica? Have you managed to get in touch with them?"

Captain Angelica's face clouded over as she shook her head slowly. "No, I haven't. Honestly, I don't even know if some of them are still alive. Especially Robyn—I've heard nothing about her."

Robyn was attacked by my brother Julius during the King's Game, along with several members of her unit. I hadn't expected her to make it through that hell, but thankfully, she did.

Closing my eyes for a moment, I braced myself. The capital had fallen, and the kingdom itself teetered on the edge of ruin. With the Empire stirring up trouble all over the world, things were spiraling into chaos.

And my father wouldn't lift a finger, not even if it came to war against the Empire. Meanwhile, my mother was scrambling, working with officials in the Empire to avoid disaster—but who knew if they'd actually keep their promises?

So, was it up to me to overthrow my own father to save the kingdom? I didn't know if I could do any better, but if no one acted, Milham was doomed. Maybe this was my chance to rally the people's

support, even if it meant taking my father's throne. It was a twisted thought for a daughter, but if I didn't do something, both he and the kingdom would suffer.

"There's a more efficient way to get the message out," I said to Captain Angelica, an idea sparking in my mind.

Her gaze sharpened. "What do you have in mind?"

There was a way—far more effective than just posting some article online. Ever since Leonamon introduced smartphones and the internet to this world, people couldn't get enough. They were glued to their screens, spending hours every day, hooked on the constant feed of information.

Because of that, word would spread in seconds. People ignored articles, but videos? They paid attention to those. This was our best shot—and with solid proof.

"Live streaming."

Live streaming had been a revolution sparked by the Starry Knights—the idol stars who captivated the world, not just with their music, but with an almost holy allure. They were the first-ever girl group to be truly worshipped by fans, showered with reverence that went beyond simple admiration. Every song they released, every appearance they made, sent waves of happiness rippling across continents, drawing in fans like moths to a flame.

Every fifth day of the week, now named Friday, the Starry Knights would go live on the internet, connecting with fans in real time. They had created this phenomenon themselves, and it had exploded into a movement. Soon, merchants, sellers, artists, and everyday people started using live streaming to

connect with others. It became the lifeline of buy-and-sell markets, and for anyone with a passion to showcase—art, skills, or just life itself.

With this technology at our fingertips, I realized I could reach people far beyond the kingdom. Streaming myself to show the world the devastation in the capital would bring attention we desperately needed.

"Captain Angelica," I said, "I need you to record me. I'm going to tell everyone on the internet what's happening in the capital."

Chapter 452 Take Back The Capital (1)

"Are you ready?" I asked Captain Angelica, who was getting set to stream me live. My face would be broadcasted across the internet, revealing the truth about what was happening inside the Capital City.

Her hands shook as she clutched the smartphone, her gaze darting between me and the screen. "W-What am I supposed to do again to start the stream?"

"Just press the red button, then aim the camera at me. After that, you're good."

"O-Okay... I think I got it." She nodded, lips pressed tightly as she steadied her hands.

"Let me know when it's live."

She counted to three under her breath, "One... two... three. It's starting."

I took a deep breath, and with a determined gaze, I began my speech.

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Titania's POV

We were back at the Leonamon, where Trill and I would be sleeping tonight. I was lying on my stomach, scrolling through my phone, legs kicking the air absent-mindedly.

"Do you think everything's going to be alright, Trill?" I asked, glancing over at her. She was on the other bed, lying on her back, also glued to her phone.

"Well, as long as Leon's there, I don't think we need to worry," she replied. "Leon's crazy strong, you know?"

"Yeah, I know," I said.

Leon was incredible, no doubt about it. He was powerful, which made me feel reassured, even though the thought of him out there fighting still stirred a bit of anxiety in me.

"It's understandable to feel that way," Trill said, like she could read my mind. "It's kind of like sending your husband off to battle, not knowing if he'll come back. But I have complete faith in Leon. Whatever he's up against, he'll handle it. I mean, I wouldn't have fallen in love with him otherwise."

"That's just like you," I chuckled.

Suddenly, my phone vibrated. A live stream notification popped up. When I checked, I recognized the face on the screen immediately. It was Princess Myrcella of Milham, someone I knew well. In just a month, we'd be competing against each other for the student council presidency at the academy.

"Why is Princess Myrcella streaming?" I mumbled to myself. The stream had just started, but viewers were pouring in, flooding the chat with the same question:

why was she going live?

"Greetings, people of Milham, and everyone tuning in,"

Princess Myrcella began.

"I want to inform you about the current situation unfolding in the Capital City. Some of you may already be aware of the unusually large crowd gathering there, filling the streets and blocking anyone from entering."



She paused, closing her eyes as if to let the weight of her words sink in.

"Please understand,"

she continued,

"this crowd isn't here by chance. This is a deliberate ploy to prevent information from flowing in and out of the Capital. It's not that people want to get into the city. Rather, it's an organized effort to contain any news to just inside the Capital."

The Princess glanced over her shoulder, casting a wary eye out the window behind her, her expression grave.

"Right now, a massive cult is preparing a ritual that could endanger not just the kingdom, but the entire world,"

she declared, her voice steady yet lined with tension.

"Some of you might've come across articles about the cult called Eclipse. I know there's been plenty of skepticism, but let me assure you—those warnings were as real as it gets. Just outside this very castle, followers of Eclipse are standing guard, preventing anyone from getting in or out, blocking any attempt to investigate. They look innocent enough, but they're brainwashed, forced to carry out the twisted orders of something they blindly worship—something that might not even be real."

She turned to person holding the camera.

"Could you zoom in on the scene for everyone, Captain?"

"H-How do I...?"

"Just pinch the screen, and spread your fingers out,"

the Princess instructed.

The view zoomed in, focusing on the castle grounds where crowds of people dressed head to toe in thick, shadowy cloaks loomed, like a silent, eerie army.

"This... isn't funny in the slightest," Trill murmured, sliding beside me on the bed, her gaze fixed on the screen. "Brainwashed people... whoever orchestrated this is seriously messed up. How'd they even manage to brainwash this many?" She cast a sidelong glance my way. "You think Leon's out there, facing whoever's behind this situation?"

"I hope he is," I replied. "But... what if even Leon isn't immune to the brainwashing? If it's a mental attack, not even he might be able to resist."

Trill's ears twitched, her tail going rigid—an unmistakable sign of worry.

The camera panned back to Princess Myrcella, her gaze fierce, eyes sharp with urgency.

"To everyone watching this stream, I hope you're safe. And to those who have the power to help us, please—"

She drew a steady breath before lowering her head in a solemn bow.

"Help us reclaim our capital."

The chat box burst into a frenzy, comments flooding in disbelief. A Princess bowing—it was unheard of. Royals never stooped; to do so was to show weakness, to open up questions about their right to rule, to display submission. They were supposed to embody unshakeable strength. They were meant to stand unbending. But here she was, bowing, clearly showing just how dire things had become.

As another Princess, I couldn't help but feel a swell of respect for her courage. Now, I wasn't so sure I'd stand a chance against her in next month's election.

I looked over at Trill.

"Leon told us not to get involved, though," she reminded me.

"I know, but..."

"Alright, alright. I'm coming too," she said, a determined glint in her eyes. "No way am I letting some asshole get away with brainwashing half the city to do his bidding."

A grin spread across my face as I pulled her into a hug. "This is why you're one of my best friends, Trill!"

This situation was too dire to ignore. Leon might not ask for help, but he needed it—or at least, a distraction to ease the pressure. And for my future husband, I'd do whatever it took.

Chapter 453 Take Back The Capital (2)

Random Adventurer's POV

"Hey, everyone! Did you see that stream?!" shouted one of the adventurers, practically crashing through the front doors of the guild hall. His voice echoed, instantly grabbing everyone's attention.

"Yeah, you're late, dumbass," one of my companions replied, already clad head to toe in battle-worn gear that looked built for war. His armor glinted under the dim lights, each dent and scratch telling its own story. "We're all here, gearing up for the fight."

"Wait, everyone's already ready?"

"Right as I saw the Princess bow to us, I couldn't sit still," he said, his voice heavy. "I grabbed my sword in the dead of night and came straight here. Didn't expect to find so many old-timers suited up, either. But here we are." He gestured around the room, where seasoned adventurers in well-worn armor tightened straps, checked blades, and shared grim nods.

"Didn't think this many would show," the guy who'd just walked in muttered, his eyes wide as he took in the crowd.

"Look, we may not be this Kingdom's model citizens. Hell, this place is a mess—nobles treating us like shit with no punishment, corruption everywhere." Another adventurer adjusted his gear, the metal plates clanking softly. "But this is still our home. My family's here, and if I don't fight, they're the ones in danger." His voice grew fierce, that spark of loyalty stronger than any resentment.

"Yeah, we're all patriots, in our own fucked-up way. Even if the officials are assholes, this land's ours," I added, my heart pounding. "I'm from Milham, after all. When I saw the Princess bow her head and ask us to take back the capital... hell, I couldn't just sit back. My blood was boiling."

The image of her bowing, vulnerable and asking us, hit deeper than I'd expected. It felt like her words ran through my veins, an unshakable fire that had everyone on edge.

"I'll be honest," another companion said in a low voice, glancing around. "I'd support the Princess if she tried to claim the throne. She's the only one who deserves it."

"Careful with talk like that; you're gonna get yourself beheaded," I said, giving him a wry grin. "But... I'm with you on that one."

The Princess had proven her worth over and over. She'd shown us she cared more about this kingdom and its people than anyone else. And if that bow had been an act, well, then she was a damn good actress—but I didn't think it was. She was what the Kingdom needed.

"Alright," I said, my voice firm, looking at the determined faces around me. "Are we all ready for this? No pay and a real chance of dying out there. So if anyone wants out, now's the time."

Backing out would've been understandable; most of us had families. I had a son and a daughter waiting at home, after all. For any of us to walk away now would be completely fair—putting our lives on the line wasn't something to take lightly.

A few of the men glanced at each other, but there wasn't a single move toward the door.

"Look, man, it's not that black and white," one of my companions said, his voice rough yet full of pride. "This land's where we were born. If I have to die somewhere, I'd want it to be right here. Sure, the officials and nobles are scum—plenty of them got exposed for their filthy secrets and are finally facing justice. But that doesn't mean I hate this country. This is our land, passed down by ancestors who kept it safe through endless battles. We've been unconquerable for centuries. As their successors, I'll gladly risk my life to protect it."

"He's damn right," another companion said, gripping his weapon tightly. "We're not fighting out of obligation; this is responsibility. If this place falls, so do our families. I can't let that happen. That's why I'm here—to fight."

Their conviction burned, and mine flared up just as intensely. This land, our homeland, pulsed in our veins. We were the living force of Milham, carrying our ancestors' fierce legacy. We'd give everything—for country, brotherhood, and family.

"Alright! Let's take back the capital!" I shouted, hoisting my shield high.

Weapons rose in unison, and our fierce shout echoed through the guild hall, igniting a powerful surge of unity. Our morale? Unbreakable.

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The streets stretched before us, eerily silent, the area deserted after the civilians had been evacuated to safety. The stillness had a weight to it, like something lurking, waiting.

As we crossed into enemy territory, a dark wall of figures appeared ahead—people, but not quite themselves, blocking the path.

"Shit. They really look like cultists," one of my companions whispered, his grip tightening on his weapon as he eyed the silent crowd. "Stumbling into this out of nowhere would scare you shitless. Look at them... just standing there, quiet as the dead. It's fucking eerie."

"The Princess said they're just brainwashed, right? They don't really know what they're doing, just mind-controlled puppets," I reminded them. "She told us to avoid using force if we can."

"Think that's realistic, though? It seems like if we don't kill some of them, we won't break through."

It was a painful bind—innocent lives in our way, yet they were our only barrier to the plaza. This was going to get bloody, and it didn't sit right. But we had to make a choice.

"We're getting through to the plaza, no matter what," I said, steeling myself. "The question is how."

I mulled over any possible approach, but nothing seemed viable. So, I stepped forward, taking a chance on words.

"We're local adventurers! We have business in the plaza, so if you could just step aside, we'd appreciate it!" I called out, feeling a faint hope that maybe, just maybe, they'd listen.

They didn't. No reaction at all. Not a blink, not a twitch. They stood there, a wall of flesh and blank eyes—a wall that wasn't going to budge.

With a heavy sigh, I raised my sword. If they weren't going to move, force might be the only path forward.

#### Chapter 454 Take Back The Capital (3)

I pointed my sword at one of them, close enough that the blade nearly brushed against his chest. But he didn't flinch, didn't move an inch. It was like they weren't even human—just a silent, immovable wall.

It was clear now that if we wanted to get through, we'd have to use force. Yet, when I looked into his eyes, something flickered, a trace of humanity peeking through. I sighed and lowered my sword. It looked like killing them wasn't an option. Slaughtering innocents wasn't our style.



"So... are we forcing our way in or not?" one of my companions asked, impatience creeping into his voice.

"No. That's not an option," I replied firmly. "Their eyes may be vacant, but that doesn't mean they're evil."

"But then, how are we supposed to get past them?"

"There's always another way," I said, glancing down at the ground. If there was a sewage system beneath this road, maybe we could slip through without harm. "Let's fall back and see if we can find a different route."

We turned away from the wall of bodies, their vacant stares trailing us as if they'd keep blocking us forever, silent and immovable. Whoever had ordered them to stand here had drilled it deep into their minds.

When we reached the sewer entrance, though, our plan hit another wall—literally. More of them, packed shoulder to shoulder, filled the narrow space, their faces just as blank and unyielding.

"Damn it... it's the same here," I muttered, clenching my fists.

"We can't get through if it's like this everywhere. What now?" someone asked, frustration simmering in his tone.

I had no idea. This was a predicament unlike any I'd ever faced. Each option felt like a dead end, and I couldn't see a way around it.

Just then, the echo of footsteps sounded on the cobblestone floor, cutting through the silence. A woman's voice, smooth and laced with a hint of amusement, echoed in the dark. "Looks like you're struggling, boys. Need a little help?"

We turned, squinting into the shadows. A tall figure approached, and as she stepped closer, dim light traced the outline of her slender, powerful form. She was a woman—unusually tall, standing nearly as high as I was, with a dangerous glint in her dark purple eyes.

Her black hair was cut short, except for a single long braid draped down her left side, reaching her hips. She wore fitted black clothing that hugged her frame, and her purple eyes angled slightly at the corners, exuding an unsettling calmness. A small beauty mark beneath her left eye only made her stare more intense.

"And you're planning to... what exactly?" I asked, trying to gauge her intentions.

"My brother's up there in the chaos, and I figured he could use some backup," she said, flashing a smirk. "After all, it's a sister's job to protect her handsome twin, don't you think? Can't let him get hurt."

"Twin brother?" I asked, raising an eyebrow, the skepticism clear in my voice.

She nodded, her smirk lingering, confidence rolling off her in waves. "Oh, he's the most handsome man you'll ever lay eyes on. Only natural I'd look out for him."

"And do you mind sharing your name?" I pressed, watching her closely. "It'd be a little easier to trust someone if we at least knew what to call them."

She chuckled softly, clearly amused. "Suspicious, aren't we? Well, fair enough," she said before finally giving her name.

I nodded, still wary, but she didn't seem hostile. I could work with her.

"So, any ideas on how to push through this without a bloodbath?"

She cocked her head, frowning thoughtfully. "You mean... without killing anyone? That's a tall order. Anyone in our way has to be taken down, don't they? Aren't these people the enemy?"

"Didn't you see the Princess's stream earlier?" I said. "They're innocent, brainwashed into doing things they don't want to. Killing them isn't an option."

"I see," she said, nodding slowly, as if just realizing the complexity. "Alright, how about this?"

She reached between her breasts, retrieving something hidden there. Heat shot through my cheeks, and I quickly averted my gaze. My companions, some blushing, followed suit as I ordered them to do the same.

"How gentlemanly of you all," she teased, her voice dancing with mischief. "You can look now."

We turned to find her holding a small, round object, something unfamiliar and ominous glinting in her hand.

"If we use this, they might all fall asleep, right?" she said, a sly smile spreading across her lips.

"What... is that?" I asked, warily eyeing the device.

"It's a type of knockout gas. If they breathe it in, they'll be out cold. Of course, if any of us inhaled it, we'd be down too, so cover your noses tight when I toss it." Her tone dripped with confidence. "Lucky for us, this is a sewer system with barely any airflow, so the gas will hang around, filling every corner and knocking out anyone it touches," she explained, a twisted kind of pride coloring her words. "Well? Don't you think it's genius?"

We all stared at her, not quite knowing how to respond.

She rolled her eyes. "Really? No one's excited? What a dull bunch. Alright, just get as far back as you can and make sure your noses are covered."

Following her orders, we backed away, retreating until we were safely out of range. I clamped my hand over my nose.

"Come back in thirty minutes!" she called over her shoulder. "The gas should clear by then!"

"Are we really going to trust her?" one of my companions muttered, eyes narrowed.

"We don't have much of a choice," I replied. "If she can get us through without harming anyone, it's a risk we'll have to take."

Reaching the plaza and taking back the capital was our goal, and right now, trusting this mysterious woman seemed like our only shot at getting past the living blockade without unnecessary bloodshed.

Just as her silhouette faded, a thick cloud of smoke billowed out, swirling in heavy, ominous waves. She'd thrown it. We held our ground, waiting until the long thirty minutes had crawled by, then made our way back cautiously. The sight that greeted us was surreal. Every single person who'd been blocking the path had slumped to the ground, lying there in still, undisturbed silence, like dolls cast aside.

"What... did she do?" I whispered to myself, kneeling to check the pulse of one of them. They were alive, thankfully, and it seemed the woman's plan had worked without any casualties. But she was gone, vanished as if she'd never been there.

Not that it mattered. The path was open. Enjoy new chapters from empire

"Let's go," I said, my voice firm. "We have to reach the plaza and take back the capital!"

Chapter 455 Take Back The Capital (4)

Scarlet's POV

My fist had never felt this heavy before. Was it the murderous energy radiating from the woman in front of me? Or maybe the weight of the blows she'd landed on me over this long, brutal hour.

We'd been clashing for what felt like forever, and neither of us showed any signs of surrender.

I panted, wiping grime off my face—a gift from her last kick that had nearly knocked me off my feet. But despite the damage I'd done to her, she barely looked fazed. Her body was battered and bleeding, bruises spreading across her skin like dark ink, yet she just kept coming, a crazed grin splitting her face. She had more screws loose than I'd realized—maybe every last one.

"Hahaha... This is amazing... This is making me cum!" she sneered, eyes wild.

"You're fucking crazy," I shot back.

"Heheheh! Come on, give me more! Make me cum more!" she laughed, launching herself at me again with that demented glint in her eyes.

I braced myself, blocking her blade with my arm. The collision echoed around us, sharp and brutal, reverberating through the space.

"I'm gonna break that arm of yours and make a stew out of it!" she howled, darting forward again. When I blocked her, she just sprang back, only to hurl herself at me with even more force.

Her reflexes were almost unnaturally sharp, her movements unpredictable. But as strong as she was, I knew I was stronger. Just as she leapt toward me again, I drove my fist into her side, feeling the shock ripple through her. She staggered, stumbling back until she crashed against the side of a building, leaving cracks in the wall.

"Hehehe..."

Even with all the pain she must've felt, she kept that smile, that deranged, broken smile. I'd never met anyone like her before. If I had to measure her level of insanity, she'd be just a step below the infected.

I thought that last punch would be enough to end it, but somehow, she started moving again, shoving herself upright like she didn't even feel the pain.

"You still wanna fight?" I growled. "It's obvious you're done for. Why don't you just stay down?"

"Are you jesting?" she sneered. "There's no winner if neither of us is dead yet. Either I kill you, or you kill me. That's the only way to settle it—the conqueror and the conquered, the glory and the fall. That's why you haven't won yet."

"You're completely insane."

"I've heard that a lot," she laughed, licking blood off her chin as her eyes blazed with twisted excitement.

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She was truly out of her mind.

She lunged at me again, and I blocked her dagger with my arm.

"Got ya!"

My eyes widened as I felt the blade slice right through my metal arm like it was nothing. Before she could revel in her strike, I drove my other fist into her solar plexus, pouring every ounce of strength into it. I felt something crack beneath my metallic knuckles, and she coughed up blood, flying back and slamming into the wall once more.

This time, she didn't move at all. No twitch and no breath. Was it finally over? After everything, it felt almost inevitable. But then, slowly, she started twitching, then straightened back up, pushing herself onto her feet without a single ounce of hesitation.

"Are you serious? She's still can fight?"



How much could this woman take before finally breaking? Was she even serious? I only had one functioning hand now, my other arm sliced clean through. Luckily, with the right tools, I could repair it later. But for now, I had to make do with one arm. She was already at her limit, and with just a bit more effort, I'd win this.

Just as I tightened my grip and braced for another clash, she sank to her knees, then collapsed, sprawled lifelessly on the ground.

"...She's down?" I moved closer, nudging her body, watching for even the faintest reaction. When she didn't stir, I finally exhaled, then turned to assess my cut arm and Gabrielle, lying unconscious a few feet away.

Around us, a silent sea of onlookers had gathered, hollow-eyed, watching with unnerving stillness.

I huffed, pulling Gabrielle up before launching us both into the air. Below, the view stretched out—a human tide spilling across every street, people packed shoulder to shoulder. The sight clawed at me, flashing me back to Earth, to campaigns of smoke and screams as we fought infected hordes. But this was different. These people weren't monsters. They were human, fully alive. The idea of dropping a missile on them was almost instinctive, but... they were still people.

As I drifted, Gabrielle's eyes cracked open, glazed but focused enough to lock onto me. Her voice, strained, managed to rise above the wind.

"Take me... to the center of the city," she murmured. "I have to go to Master..."

"You're not going anywhere," I said, my voice sharp. "You're bleeding out. I won't let you go back like this."

Gabrielle was hanging on by a thread herself, barely conscious and bleeding everywhere. I had to get her to Natasha, fast.

"N-No... I need to go... to Master," she whispered, her voice desperate, pleading.

I sighed, frustration brewing. "If you keep this up, you're going to bleed out, you know? Like it or not, I'm taking you back to Natasha. You've got to take care of yourself first."

"B-But... Master..." she stammered, eyes filling with raw panic.

"Master, Master, Master! You're getting ridiculous," I muttered. "Is your Master so helpless that you have to throw yourself at him now?"

She looked beyond desperate, like she was on the edge of breaking down. It wasn't about him at all—it was about her. She looked like she'd shatter if she couldn't see him, her mind reverting to some kind of childlike dependency. I understood, though. She was seriously hurt, bleeding, and barely holding it together. In moments like this, people called out for those they relied on the most. She was panicking, and he was her anchor.

"Master... I need to see Master," she whimpered.

I sighed, softer this time. "Alright, alright. I'll go and bring him back to you, but first, I'm taking you to Natasha. You'll let her patch you up, okay?"

#### Chapter 456 Take Back The Capital (5)

Myrcella's POV

"Father," I said, addressing the King of Milham. I had requested a private meeting, but instead of granting me that courtesy, here we were in his chambers. A maid—she looked to be in her forties—was kneeling at his feet, licking his toes as he sat on the edge of the bed, seeming entirely unbothered by my presence.

I held back a sigh, wishing he'd at least dismiss the woman for our conversation. But my father was the type who relished his own decadence, the kind who rarely concerned himself with the respect or comfort of others.

Since I could remember, he had never been anything but dismissive toward his family, especially my mother. He adored his concubine more than us and certainly more than his queen. His marriage to my mother had been purely for convenience, lacking any true bond of love, which explained why my brother Julius and I weren't exactly conceived out of affection either. We were here as a result of duty, not devotion.

"What is it, Myrcella?" he asked, his voice laced with mild boredom.

"The capital is in danger," I replied bluntly. "I need you to do something about it."

I didn't mince my words. There was no time for subtlety; if he didn't take immediate action, the kingdom itself could fall apart.

"Oh? And what would you have me do about it?" he smirked. For a man pushing eighty, he retained the brazen charisma he'd wielded as a younger ruler. That cocky grin suited him, I supposed—reminding me why he was still King.

"I want you to deploy every knight in the castle to help us retake the capital. The Eclipse cult has taken control, and it's only a matter of time before they spread further."

He raised an eyebrow. "Oh, is this what you mentioned in that broadcast earlier?" He sounded amused, barely interested. "I don't see why the chaos in the Capital concerns me right now. This is

my

time to rest, not my time to work."

"Father, this is an emergency," I pressed, my tone insistent. "We can't sit here and let the cult gain more ground. This is the time to act."

He chuckled, crossing his arms. "Well, if you feel so strongly about it, then why don't

you

order the royal knights yourself? You've already been playing the part well enough, bowing your head in that broadcast. Isn't it all about showing them how deeply you care for the kingdom, so they'll rally behind you when the time comes?"

He was dead on, and I knew it. That broadcast wasn't just for show—it was part of a larger plan. If I could demonstrate my devotion to the kingdom, if I could convince them I was on their side, then when the day came for me to usurp my father, the people wouldn't resist. They might even welcome it.

"You even had the nerve to bow before them," he said. "I know you didn't mean a word of it, but that's exactly what makes you my daughter. We're both born manipulators."

He was half right. It hadn't been all a lie; there was truth in my words, even if they were laced with ulterior motives. My kingdom meant more to me than my pride, and if I had to lower myself to protect it, I would. I was a princess, and this was my responsibility. But my father? He didn't share that burden.

"It's a pity Julius never became like us," he mused, shaking his head. "If he had, he might've been the best of my children. Your eldest brother may be strong, but he's a fool if he thinks combat experience alone makes him fit to rule. What makes a king isn't brawn, it's cunning and intellect. And while you are clever, do you really think I'd ever hand the throne to a woman?"

Father's views on women had always been despicable, unyielding in his belief that we existed solely to pleasure men and bear their children. No matter the strength a woman might show—even if it could rival his own—he never wavered. Women, to him, were merely flesh to serve and satisfy him, something he could own, wield, and discard. As the King, he believed his right to do so was absolute. His refusal to name me as his heir had nothing to do with merit; it was simply because I was a woman.

The Kingdom of Milham was built on the sweat and sacrifice of countless generations. While men fought and defended the land, women were relegated to the background, regarded as mere bedwarmers for the men who "shaped" this kingdom. This belief had only grown stronger over time, reinforcing the notion that a woman could never be suited to rule, that our role was to lie beneath men, not lead them.

Despite everything I'd accomplished, no matter how many times I'd proven my worth and strength, Father would never acknowledge me as a successor.

"Father," I said, my voice unflinching. "I will take your throne. I'll tear you from your rule."

But he didn't even flinch. He looked at me with that same arrogant, unconcerned gaze.

"Oh, is that so?" he replied with a slight smirk. "Are you willing to die for it? You know the price of usurping a king, don't you? You'd have to kill anyone in the royal family who opposes you. That includes me. And do you really think I'll sit idly while you try to slit my throat? I still command every royal knight within my reach, and each one will defend me to their last breath." Read latest chapters at empire

His grin widened as he leaned forward, menace glinting in his eyes. "If you're so determined, come back here with an army, and kill me with your own hands."

His words weren't bluster; the threat in them was real. I knew full well what it meant to overthrow a king, especially one as ruthless as him. The weight of killing my own blood wasn't something I took lightly. But I was prepared, even if it meant facing Father on the battlefield to ensure the kingdom's future. I wasn't about to falter.

He leaned back, stretching his arms wide as if to welcome my challenge, his gaze chilling. "If you think you have the strength to take me down, then come. I'll welcome you." A slight smile played on his lips. "I'll show you no mercy, even if you're my daughter. I'm that kind of king, after all. Right?"

#### Chapter 457 Take Back The Capital (6)

"Are you really planning on letting the capital fall?" I pressed, shifting the topic. For a reigning king to abandon his own capital—it was bold, almost reckless. That kind of move would be like declaring he'd given up on the kingdom. If word got out, it wouldn't be long before the citizens would rise up, attempting a coup or maybe even pushing to turn the kingdom into a republic. There were countless ways this could end badly.

"As King, I honestly don't want to," my father replied, his tone dismissive. "But it's not exactly my responsibility right now. Maybe I'll deal with it tomorrow morning."

"There

is

no tomorrow morning, Father. It's now or never," I insisted, my voice firm.

Captain Angelica had told me that the cult wanted nothing less than the eradication of light itself, to make the dawn as dark as nightfall. My father couldn't afford to stay indifferent.

"It's already late," he replied, sighing. "Can't you see I'm in bed, about to rest?"

He shot a lazy glance at the woman licking his toes, completely unfazed by my presence. She didn't stop, her lips running along his skin as if I weren't even there.

"If you're so eager to rush off and play hero instead of just relaxing, be my guest. Go make a fool of yourself alone." He scoffed, clearly amused. "What, you expect me to hold your hand? And here I thought you had ambitions of usurping me. You expect to rule the kingdom with that thinking?"

He was mocking me, his sneering gaze enough to make my skin crawl. Why was I cursed to call this man my father?

"Well, I guess I shouldn't have expected much from a woman," he sneered, his voice dripping with contempt. "Is that all, then? I've made it clear I want no part in this, so if that's everything, get out of my room."

Bowing stiffly, I turned and left his chamber. As I closed the door behind me, I exhaled sharply. If I couldn't sway him... then I had no choice but to take matters into my own hands.

\*\*\*

I made my way to the barracks, where the royal knights rested when they weren't on duty. I'd never been here before, so I had no idea what to expect.

"I'll handle it, Princess," Captain Angelica assured me. "Wait here."



With a forceful kick, she flung the double doors open, the loud crash echoing through the room.

"Wake up, you shitheads!" she bellowed.

The knights stirred in surprise, some tumbling out of their hammocks, others who had been gambling in the corner freezing mid-coin toss.

"W-Wha—?!"

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"You lazy fucks are sleeping while the kingdom's in danger? And some of you are gambling?! And you call yourselves knights?!"

Angelica's voice reverberated throughout the room, each word like a slap. The knights looked bewildered, caught completely off guard.

"W-Who the fuck is this?"

"I have no idea."

"A crazy woman?"

"Who called me a crazy woman?!" Angelica shouted, her voice so loud that the knights instinctively raised their hands to shield their ears. She stomped forward, grabbing the nearest knight by the collar.

"Was it

you

who called me crazy?!"

"N-No! It was him!" The knight pointed to another, throwing him under the bus without hesitation.

That knight shrank under her glare, beads of sweat forming on his brow.

"Do you think I'm some nobody you can ignore? Do you want me to shove you so far up his ass you'll never get out?!" she snarled.

Seeing her like this was honestly shocking, my eyes widening at the display. This was nothing like the Captain Angelica I'd met earlier. Was this her true self? Then again, she

was

a captain—maybe this was exactly how she needed to command respect.

"Hey, woman! You think you can get away with insulting us? Who the hell are you, anyway? This isn't a place for someone like you. Do you even know where you are?"

A massive knight with a barrel-like chest and arms thick as tree trunks cracked his knuckles, stepping forward to tower over Captain Angelica.

"This is the knights' barracks.

Our

rest chamber after finishing

our

duties. So if you know what's good for you, scram. Get out of the castle before I do something you'll regret."

Captain Angelica released the collar in her grip, raising her gaze to meet the massive man towering over her.

"And if I don't?" she taunted, her voice dripping with defiance.

Her words seemed to strike a nerve. The large man's eyes narrowed, and before I could react, he drew back his arm, launching it at her with all his might. Angelica sidestepped, her movement precise and barely noticeable as she dodged his massive fist. In one swift motion, she seized his tree-trunk-like arm, twisted her body, and lifted him off the ground. In an instant, she slammed him down, sending a rumbling shockwave through the floor as he hit the ground with a thundering crash.

"W-What—?"

I stood there, stunned, my mind struggling to process what had just happened. This man was at least three times her size, yet she'd hoisted him like he was nothing more than a sack of grain. It took me a moment to truly register her strength.

"Still want me to leave?" Angelica said, planting her boot firmly on his chest, her gaze unyielding.

The man's expression was a mix of shock and bewilderment, much like the other knights who stood frozen, their eyes darting between their fallen comrade and the woman who'd just put him there. But then...

"Hahahaha!"

The man burst into laughter, his hearty voice echoing through the room.

"You're really back, sis!"

Wait. Did I hear that right?

"Well, I'm not so easy to kick the bucket," Angelica replied, a slight smirk tugging at her lips. She then turned to me. "Princess, no need to worry. He's my younger brother."

My mind stalled, and judging by the expressions around me, the knights were just as surprised. The realization that these two were siblings was shocking enough—but their astonishment grew when they registered Angelica's use of "Princess."

All eyes shifted to me. I swallowed, feeling the weight of their stares.

"Princess," Angelica affirmed with a nod.

I nodded back, gathering my composure as I prepared to speak. With the knights' full attention, I laid out the situation before them. Whether they would stand with me or remain loyal to my father, who refused to act, was something we'd soon discover.

Chapter 458 Mephisto Vs. The Eclipse (1)

## Leon's POV

Many people were packed into the plaza, but none of them looked like regular citizens. Each one of them was completely under Sesillian's control, hypnotized and brainwashed, their wills stripped away to obey his every command. Seeing so many people crowded together, all draped in identical red cloaks with hoods pulled low over their faces, drove home the unsettling reality that I was standing in the heart of a cult. The sight was surreal, like something out of a nightmare. Not even the idol concerts I'd gone to in my past life could compare to this.

Sesillian held a dagger in his hand, taken from the edge of the platform where he'd placed Charlotte. She lay still as stone, not even attempting to resist. Watching her, I had to admit I found it kind of darkly funny that she just lay there, motionless and heartbroken, too devastated to fight back. Discovering that the man she loved had only been using her—that he didn't love her, didn't even love women at all, and was infatuated with men instead—must've crushed her in ways that ran deeper than betrayal.

Still, I couldn't afford to let her die. I'd be lying if I said it was because I cared about her; I needed her alive because she was useful to me. Cruel as it sounded, that was just the truth. As much as she'd been valuable to Sesillian, she was even more valuable to me. Her skill was rare, the kind that couldn't be replicated or inherited. Skills weren't like objects that could just pass on when someone died; they disappeared entirely. And losing a skill like hers was out of the question.

"Our Lord! With this sacrifice, you will be reborn! Bless us once again, cover this world in your darkness, and reign supreme!"

Sesillian had begun the ritual, lifting his gaze to the sky as he spread his arms wide. The fervor in his eyes was so intense it almost looked inhuman. But oddly, for the first time, I could see him as the man he was, not the woman he'd been trying to appear as. Maybe the mind manipulation spell he'd cast on me had worn off after he shot me in the head. The shock must have broken through. If that was the case, maybe I could use the same shock to undo his influence on the people here. But how would I go about it without risking their lives or causing them to kill each other?

As Sesillian looked down at Charlotte, he raised the dagger above his head, ready to plunge it down into her. But just before he could...

"Do you really think that will work?" I called out.

"Huh?" Sesillian halted mid-motion, his dagger hovering above Charlotte's throat. "Who are you?!"

"I'm just someone who likes lurking in the shadows," I said, my voice echoing across the plaza. "Or maybe I'm someone who grants people their deepest desires, only to make them realize that what they wanted will be their undoing. I'm here to make sure you regret what you wished for."

"You think this is the end for me?!" Sesillian sneered, his voice dripping with arrogance. "I've already reached the pinnacle! There's nothing you can do to stop me!"

"We'll see about that."

"What was that?!" he howled, his face twisting in rage. "You really think something can stop me now?! Look around! I have dozens of followers protecting this ritual, ensuring my victory! All I have to do is slit this virgin's throat and let her blood complete the ritual. What can you possibly do to change that, whoever you are?!"

He wasn't just screaming now—he was howling, his voice echoing like a crazed animal.

"Virgin, huh?" I smirked, my voice dripping with amusement. "So, you're telling me the ritual requires the blood of a pure woman? What if she's not... a virgin?"

"That's impossible!" he spat, his voice brimming with indignation. "I manipulated her mind, made her love only me! I confirmed her purity myself, long before I even approached her! I altered her thoughts to obsess over me, to ensure she'd never even consider another love interest. She has remained pure for this purpose alone—her virginity preserved because I commanded it!"

"And why the obsession with purity?" I taunted.

"Because that's what our Lord desires," he replied, his eyes gleaming with fanatic devotion. "He wants women, pure and untouched. I love Him—I'll give Him everything! If He desires purity, I'll deliver it to Him. If He wants a virgin with royal blood, then this woman is the perfect sacrifice!"

So that was it—the twisted reason for preserving Charlotte's chastity. But it just confirmed what I already suspected: Sesillian wouldn't be able to finish his ritual. Because, well, I'd already fucked her.

"Is that so?" I chuckled. "Check your phone—I sent you something."

"Huh? Why should I—"

"Trust me, you might want to see it before you continue. It could save you from a wasted effort."



He hesitated, confusion clouding his face. But eventually, he pulled his phone from the pocket of his dress and clicked through a message. I watched his fingers freeze, his eyes widening with horror as he absorbed what he saw on the screen.

"W-What... What is this?" His voice broke, filled with dread.

"Do you see now why your sacrifice won't work?" I asked, my tone mocking.

His face contorted with disbelief. "H-How... How could this be...?"

I'd sent him a video of me and Charlotte having sex. I'd blurred my face, of course, but left Charlotte's fully visible.

"Charlotte's no virgin," I said, each word slicing through his shattered faith. "She's already... used."

The realization washed over him, leaving him visibly crumbling. His face went blank, and he dropped to his knees, as though his entire world had caved in. Watching him fall apart was, admittedly, quite amusing.

"Charlotte..." He gritted his teeth so hard I could see blood seeping from his gums. "You fucking slut!"

Charlotte didn't respond. She simply lay there, staring blankly at the sky, utterly indifferent to his anger.

"You slept with someone else?! How could you do this to me?!"

Sesillian was livid. The rage in his eyes was like that of a man realizing he'd been cucked, helplessly watching his world burn.

"Ugh! Nooo! Fuck this! Fuck all of you!" Sesillian howled, clutching at his hair as his voice cracked. "After years—years of painstaking manipulation, planning, bending your mind to make you only see me! And after everything, you just fucked someone else behind my back? What the fuck! What the fuck!"

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He stomped the ground with fury, each impact thundering through the plaza, his whole body trembling as the truth unraveled his composure. Now, realizing the woman he'd preserved so carefully for this moment was no longer "pure," he let loose a guttural scream—a raw release of disappointment and frustration that seemed to echo into nothingness.

Then, suddenly, he froze.

"Never mind..." he sighed, shoulders drooping. "This is really the pits. All those years, wasted." His voice was hollow, drained. "I never expected much from you, Charlotte, but I thought... maybe if you devoted yourself to me, I'd love you in return. But now?" His lips twisted in contempt. "Guess I'll just murder you now."

With a chilling calm, he raised his dagger, poised to strike her down.

But I wasn't about to let him. I surged forward, pushing my way through the sea of people, the crowd a blur as I moved. Reaching the platform, I raised my mana sword just in time, catching his dagger with a force that sent his arm recoiling back.

"Kuh!" He stumbled, his grip faltering as he fought to regain control.

Charlotte looked up at me, her previously lifeless eyes now flickering with recognition, a spark of life.

"Leon..." she murmured, barely audible.

Sesillian's face twisted with rage, and he threw his arms up in disbelief. "All of you people, ruining everything! What do you want from me?! All I want is to be with my Lord! Why are you stopping me?!"

I met his glare. "I don't know. Maybe because the way you're trying to get what you want is completely wrong."

He growled, teeth bared, and his eyes narrowed as he finally took notice of my mask. "Wait... that mask... I know you. You're that Mephisto, aren't you?" His voice rose with a tremor of fear. "What have I done to deserve this?! Moriarty told me to stay clear of you, so I did! So why?! Why interfere when this is none of your business?!"

"Why?" I repeated, lifting my mask to show my face. His eyes widened, terror dawning as he recognized me.

"H-Huh? W-Wait... you're..."

My voice turned cold as I met his gaze. "I know you're the one responsible for blowing up one of the Leonamon branches and killing countless employees. I didn't think I'd have to go this far to make you pay for your misdeeds, but here we are. You pushed me to this, Sesillian. Now you know why it's my business."

Chapter 459 Mephisto Vs. The Eclipse (2)

Sesillian's eyes widened as I revealed my true identity, his face contorted with a mix of shock and something else—something I couldn't quite decipher. That expression, filled with disbelief and a flicker of despair, made every bit of this unmasking worth it.

"I see..." he muttered, his voice trembling ever so slightly. "So all this—this interference, these countless acts of sabotage—it was all because of the misfit I created? And now, what... you want me to apologize for it? Get on my knees and beg at your feet for pardon?"

The very thought of him even attempting to brush off what he had done was laughable. There was no way any of this could ever be excused. I wouldn't forgive him even if he threw himself on the ground, licking my feet—every inch, from each toe to the sole, down to the last detail on both feet. There was nothing, absolutely

nothing

he could do that would make up for his crimes. As far as I was concerned, this bastard deserved everything that was coming for him.

Seeing my unwavering expression, Sesillian let out a low, bitter chuckle. "Figures. I suppose I can't exactly resurrect the people I've killed," he laughed even more, a twisted glint in his eye. "Moriarty warned me to steer clear of you, said you were an anomaly—coming from an anomaly himself, mind you. He said it was best to keep my distance, to avoid mistakes... but I guess I slipped up. If that's the case, then I'll just have to make sure you can't come after me!"

No sooner had the words left his lips than one of his brainwashed lackeys lunged at me, followed by others who'd been standing by. They surged forward, hands grasping, trying to hold me back in some desperate last-ditch effort orchestrated by Sesillian. He knew I wouldn't kill them—they were just pawns, victims of his mind control. But it was too bad for him that I had the Guardian by my side.

With a forceful push, I sent them sprawling back, clearing a path straight toward Sesillian.

"Guardian?! How the hell do you have that?" he stammered. Then, his eyes narrowed as he pieced together his own explanation. "Ah, I see! A skill to copy other skills, perhaps? But such skills usually have limitations, don't they? And aren't copied abilities only half as powerful as the original?"

He wasn't completely wrong, but he didn't know the whole story either. If I copied a skill from someone I hadn't fully dominated, its strength would be weakened, sure. But if I took it from someone I'd fully claimed, then the power was mine—unlimited and unbreakable, and I didn't need to worry about its strength dropping. Not that I'd share that info with him; he wasn't even the real enemy here. The one pulling the strings was Moriarty.

"Then it's not as unbreakable as the true Guardian, right?" he sneered, a hint of desperation in his eyes.

As he commanded, his brainwashed followers swarmed me from all directions, their fists hammering against the Guardian's shield. Each blow echoed, a reminder of their relentless obedience.

"Let's see how long that Guardian will hold up!" Sesillian jeered, watching with a twisted smile.

In the chaos, Sesillian slipped out of the crowd, disappearing into the masses. It was clear that knocking a few of these people unconscious was the only way out of here. I didn't have much choice.

With a quick, forceful command, I expanded the Guardian, forcing everyone around me to stagger back. Then, I braced myself, planting my feet on the ground before launching into the air. As I rose, I activated Levitation, slowing my descent as I scanned the area, searching for any trace of Sesillian. He'd likely bolted, but it was hard to tell with so many people in the way. I needed to end this before he had another chance to manipulate anyone else.

"There you are," I murmured, channeling mana into a concentrated, laser-like beam at the tip of my finger. I aimed it directly at Sesillian, but just as I was about to fire, he ducked behind a crowd of people. A sea of bodies shifted around him as he hid, using them as shields. So, this was what they called a meat shield, huh? It was sickening, but I couldn't say I was surprised—Sesillian had always been a coward.

Sesillian had never been one for close combat, which was exactly why he'd only made it to the silver class and opted for academic pursuits instead. The man had no spine. But I couldn't lose him now.

First, though, I needed to put Charlotte somewhere safe, but I couldn't afford to let him slip away. I summoned Air Magic, lifting myself off the ground, and with Levitation activated, I rose higher for a better view. I scanned the crowd from above, trying to pinpoint Sesillian's location.

There he was—silver hair sticking out like a beacon as he cowered between two people. Perfect. I pointed my finger, ready to fire another concentrated mana beam at him.

But then I felt a chill creep up my spine, a prickling sensation of danger coming from behind. I turned, just in time to see a swarm of fireballs streaking toward me. Mages? I hadn't expected him to have mages under his control too. This was a real mess. It made sense, though—if he could brainwash a magic knight, he'd clearly managed to rope in a few capable mages as well.

I swiftly summoned the Guardian, absorbing the brunt of the fireballs. But before I could even breathe, I sensed more danger from behind. I whirled around to see a barrage of arrows slicing through the air, heading straight for me. Archers now, too? How the hell had Sesillian gathered so many people? He was using his mind-controlling skill to its fullest, turning an otherwise minor ability into a genuine threat with his twisted ingenuity.

Blocking each arrow and projectile, I fortified the Guardian around me, feeling the weight of Charlotte in my arms as I defended us both. This fight was getting intense, and carrying her wasn't helping. Every second counted.

"Hahaha! How's that?!" Sesillian's voice rang out, the sneer unmistakable but his position unclear. "This is for all the trouble you've caused me!"

The sound grated against my nerves, but I couldn't pinpoint where he was. It was like trying to catch a shadow.

"Now die!"

Suddenly, projectiles shot from every angle, a relentless wave from all directions—top to bottom, left to right, hemming me in from every radius. I activated Guardian once again, surrounding myself in its barrier to block the onslaught. It was as though he'd orchestrated it all to keep me at a distance, barring me from coming even a step closer. Sesillian wielded his control over these people with terrifying efficiency, forcing them to attack with unerring precision.

Guardian held strong, shielding me from every attack, but it felt like being trapped in place, suspended in the air with no room to advance. I glanced at the tallest building nearby. It was far, but I could make it. Blocking another barrage of projectiles, I shot toward the building. I needed to get Charlotte to safety first. Without missing a beat, I deflected everything that came at me and, reaching the building, set her down.

I activated Guardian around her, enclosing her in its protective glow.

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"Leon..." she murmured softly.

I didn't respond. Leaving her safe, I shot back into the sky, eyes scanning the crowd below. I hadn't lost him yet—he was still there, lurking, hiding among his brainwashed puppets.

Then, as if on cue, another volley of projectiles tore through the air, closing in from every side. This time, my hands were free, allowing me to block each one with renewed force. Sweeping down toward Sesillian, I landed amidst the crowd. People began to swarm me instantly, but I spread Guardian wide, pushing them back in a powerful surge. Some of the people he controlled were swordsmen, others had



talent—yet they were no match. I overpowered them with quick, precise strikes, each one falling unconscious at my feet.

At last, I was face-to-face with Sesillian again.

"You are persistent, aren't you?" he muttered, breaths heavy. "Do you really want to kill me that badly?"

"It'd be a pleasure," I replied, summoning my mana blade, its edge gleaming in readiness.

"Well," he sneered, "you'll have to step over a pile of bodies before you even try!" With a command, he sent a fresh wave of people charging my way.

I wielded my mana blade with precision, hitting just enough to disrupt their nerves and send them into unconsciousness. It was as though I was brushing through air, sweeping each attacker aside until they dropped in unison, collapsing around me.

But Sesillian wasn't finished yet.

"Think it's that easy? You're wrong!" he barked. This time, a squad that bore the unmistakable insignia of the royal knights charged forward, eyes glassy and unseeing.

Chapter 460 Mephisto Vs. The Eclipse (3)

Sesillian smirked, gloating with a twisted satisfaction as he taunted, "How about this, huh?! I have so many knights under my control that I practically have my own army! They're loyal, strong, and will do

anything to protect me—even if it means being killed. They'll keep coming at you, over and over. And as long as you don't kill any of them, I'll never die!"

The knights had resilience and skill with their weapons; they wouldn't be knights otherwise. What he said wasn't wrong—without stopping them, I'd never get to him. But they chose this life, knowing full well that death was a risk. I didn't want to kill them, but maybe taking a limb or two could snap them out of this brainwashing. Limbs could always be regrown with the right healing magic.

With a swift, sweeping strike of my mana sword, I severed the legs of the knights in a single arc, the blade humming with energy. Blood splattered across the ground as each one of them collapsed, screaming as their legs were sliced clean through at the thigh.

Sesillian's eyes widened with a mix of disbelief and horror. "You... you're heartless," he whispered, looking at me as if I was the monster.

I met his gaze coolly. "Throw whatever you want at me. It won't work."

"Oh, is that right?" he sneered, his voice dripping with mockery as his eyes glinted with madness. "Then how about

this?!

"

With a flick of his hand, every person nearby lurched toward me, their eyes vacant, bodies jerking as if they were puppets yanked on strings. They lunged at me, and I moved swiftly, knocking them out with precise martial arts moves, hitting pressure points that sent them into unconsciousness. But there were so many, and I couldn't avoid all of them. When necessary, I drove my fist hard enough to knock them out cold.

Sesillian's laugh echoed around us. "You'll never get to me this way! This will be endless! An infinite battle for you. You'll just keep knocking them out, only for them to rise and come at you again. Kill them! You're heartless, aren't you? If you could be so ruthless as to slice off knights' limbs, why not go all the way?!"

His taunting grated on my nerves, but I kept my focus. I couldn't even get close to him with these waves of bodies piling up around me, attacking relentlessly like swarming bees, giving me no moment's reprieve.

"Oh? I have an idea," Sesillian drawled, his eyes gleaming with wicked intent. He raised his hand, and suddenly, several controlled people started throwing fireballs toward the area, each blazing with deadly heat.

"What?!" My heart raced as I realized the imminent danger. If those fireballs hit, everyone around me would be engulfed. Reacting quickly, I extended a large dome of Guardian energy, shielding the innocent people around me from the fireballs, each one colliding with the dome in bursts of flame.

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Sesillian laughed maniacally, clutching his stomach. "Oh, I see it now!" he howled. "You're too soft to let them die! Amazing! If we weren't enemies, I'd love you for that—hell, I'd fuck you with every bit of my strength! But alas, you're a thorn in my side, a nuisance that has to be removed!"

The way he controlled so many people so skillfully, like some twisted puppet master, was beyond anything I'd anticipated. I'd underestimated him, and the situation was spiraling.

He sneered, his voice low and mocking. "So, what are you going to do when I do

this

?"

With another wave of his hand, several people, their hands trembling, raised their own swords and pressed the edges against their throats.

"Shit!"

Before I could react, a sickening chorus of slashes filled the air as those people, under Sesillian's control, slit their own throats.

I summoned a spell, a wide-reaching, radiant glow spreading through the area as I channeled healing energy in a large radius around me, honing in on the wounded. The magic quickly closed the gashes on the throats of those injured before their blood could fully spill out. I didn't know how much this would do for them, but it would at least stop them from dying.

Now I had to keep my attention not just on myself but on everything happening around me. This was far beyond what I'd bargained for.

If these people were corrupt scum, it would be simpler; I could take them down without a second thought. But most here were innocent. Sure, there were likely some scumbags mixed in, but who was I to judge who deserved to live? A massacre wasn't an option—I couldn't stoop to Sesillian's level. But with wave after wave of people coming at me, it seemed impossible to reach him.

"Is this really all you've got?!" Sesillian sneered, his laughter shrill and grating. "James Moriarty warned me about you, but look at you—nothing! You can't even get close to me unless you're willing to kill them!"

The constant swarm was wearing on my patience. They were like a relentless swarm of flies.

"Luckily for me," I smirked, "I've got a little help on the way."

Suddenly, vines erupted from the ground, winding around everyone in my vicinity. The thick, twisted tendrils slithered like serpents, wrapping around the crowd and rooting them in place.

"What the...?" Sesillian gaped, caught off guard.

"If you're going to use people, then I'll use my own allies." I stared him down as three Dryads appeared, their hands pressed firmly to the ground, channeling energy. The vines continued to snake around anyone nearby, binding them tightly so they couldn't move. Of course, the vines didn't capture

everyone; they had their limits, and each tendril cost the Dryads significant mana to sustain. But they'd taken out a large portion, leaving only a few able to fight. Behind the Dryads, the Shadows stood ready, prepared to engage anyone the vines hadn't caught.

"Why are there Dryads with you...?" Sesillian's voice was tinged with disbelief as he stared at the three figures.

"It's all about strength and allies, Sesillian," I replied. "You have puppets to control; I have those I trust. Now then, shall we continue?"

And with that, the true battle between Leonamon and the Eclipse began.

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Charlotte's POV

I had no idea how long I'd been sitting there, just staring blankly at the sky. I didn't think I'd blinked once. The truth that had hit me felt like a massive stone dropped from nowhere, crushing my thoughts and leaving me in stunned silence. My head throbbed, the weight of realization bearing down as I pieced together what had just happened. The professor—someone I thought I adored—had lied, betrayed me, even hated me. He didn't love me, nor did he care for me in the way I'd convinced myself he did. And, to top it all off, he was drawn to men. Strangely, though, while my head hurt, my heart was... quiet. Was it the betrayal itself that stung, rather than any real heartbreak?

Yet... as strange as it seemed, my heart was calm, unnervingly so. I'd braced myself for the worst heartbreak, but what I felt was a serene emptiness. It made me question the sincerity of my own

feelings—had my love for Professor Sesillian been just as shallow as his pretense of love for me? I thought I'd been deeply in love, but now, faced with this revelation, I felt like my emotions had been built on nothing. Was my passion for him ever real? Why did the truth leave me feeling this way?

"Oh, right... Leon saved me, didn't he?"

The man I had despised, the one who had done unforgivable things to me, was the very person who saved me from someone I thought I loved. The man I had loved had been prepared to sacrifice me in some twisted ritual, and the man I hated had protected me from it. And in that moment, something clicked, a clarity settling over me like a slow dawn breaking after a long night.

I turned to look at Leon as he fought, my gaze lingering on him. My heartbeat quickened, the rhythm of it pressing against my chest. I brought my fist to my chest, feeling each pulse through my fingers. This feeling... I knew it. I'd felt it once before, but now, it wasn't for the professor. It was... for Leon.

It stunned me to think of it—how could I possibly feel this way for someone I had once despised? The warmth in my chest contradicted every memory I had of him, memories filled with anger, hurt, and shame. He'd humiliated me, degraded me in ways I thought I'd never forgive. And yet, knowing that once these "sessions" were over he'd completely sever his ties with me—it shook me more than the professor's betrayal. It was as though I didn't want him out of my life, even though I'd once longed to be free.

Now, watching him, I could no longer deny it.

I'd fallen for Leon.