

The World 491

Chapter 491 - The Current State Of The Milham Kingdom (2)

What she said about Leonamon hit hard. The company raked in massive profits, but only because its branches were confined to the Kingdom. This monopoly allowed it to dominate the trade network and funnel cash endlessly. But the second Leonamon spread its reach beyond these borders? That grip would loosen, and the monopoly would shatter.

"If you take Leonamon beyond the Kingdom's borders, Milham's economy will collapse," she warned, her eyes darkening. "Revolts will follow, and the whole country will sink into chaos. Honestly, we're already on the edge. There are insurgencies popping up everywhere. Milham's barely holding on. At this rate, I doubt it'll survive even ten years. The Kingdom will fall."

She wasn't wrong. Ten years? That felt like a stretch. Even now, the Kingdom was dangerously close to imploding. It was as if it was standing on a cliff, staring down into oblivion.

"By the time my father decides on the next king, the kingdom will probably already be gone," she continued, her tone edged with bitterness. "If I sit back and let that happen, all the blood, sweat, and sacrifices our ancestors made will mean nothing. I refuse to let this kingdom die under my watch."

"So, you're thinking of overthrowing your father? Planning a coup, huh?" I mused, the idea sparking something in me. Honestly, it was exactly what I would've done in her position. It was a bold move, but not an illogical one. If she waited until her father appointed the next king—likely her eldest brother—the damage would be irreversible.

"Don't throw that word around like it's nothing, please," Myrcella said. "We don't know who might be listening."

"Relax. No one's eavesdropping," I assured her, my voice low but firm. The Shadows were everywhere, always watching. This place, a gift from Duke Merca, was now mine, and I made damn sure no one dared trespass. Anyone stupid enough to try? They'd be dealt with—quickly and quietly.

"Well, considering you own Leonamon, I suppose you'd have measures in place," she admitted. Then, she turned her gaze toward me, her expression tightening, though that faint, confident smile still lingered. "Which is why I need you to consider something, Sir Faust."

Here we go...

"What is it?" I asked, already sensing the weight of her next words.

"I can't stop you from turning Leonamon into a global empire. It's the only thing keeping this kingdom afloat," she said, voice steady but intense. "But without Leonamon's help, Milham is doomed. So, I need you to hold off on expansion—for three or four years."

She wanted me to delay expansion? I didn't need long to mull it over; the answer was clear. But before I agreed, I needed to know—what's in it for me?

"What's in it for me?" I asked, letting the words hang in the air, my voice calm but deliberate.

I already knew my answer. Of course, I'd say yes—any connection with the royal family was a golden ticket, especially with someone like her. Princess Myrcella wasn't just playing; she was dead set on

winning this war of succession. I could see it in her eyes: determination, desperation, and a willingness to cross any line. I'd help her, no doubt, but not without squeezing out every drop of value.

Princess Myrcella leaned in, the soft rustle of her clothes brushing against the floor as she closed the distance between us. Her gaze locked onto mine, piercing but composed. "I'm willing to go as far as putting my body on the line."

Her words hit like a thunderclap. Offering her body? To keep me from expanding my company for a few years? It was a hell of a move, bold and unexpected, but honestly... kind of uninspired.

I tilted my head, letting the silence stretch. "That's... an interesting offer," I said, my tone neutral, but my mind racing. Sure, she was beautiful—stunning, even. Her body was toned from years of sword training, curves sharpened by discipline. She moved with a grace that hinted at power, every step calculated. But still, her offer felt... lacking. "But I'll need more than that, Princess."

Her shoulders relaxed, just a fraction, but enough for me to catch it. "Oh? So you're after something else. That's a relief, honestly."

"Why offer it at all, then?" I asked, leaning forward, curious to see how far she'd go.

She hesitated for a moment, glancing away before meeting my eyes again. "I don't believe in giving myself to someone without love. Sex, children—it should mean something. It's stupid otherwise. Just like those arranged marriages in royalty. People tying the knot and popping out heirs when they don't even like each other. It's absurd."

Her eyes clouded, the sadness in them raw and unfiltered. "I'm living proof of that kind of union."

So, that was it. Not some forbidden love story. For a second, I thought she'd bring up Johanne, her knight. But no—Johanne's situation was... unique. The whole gender-bending thing still baffled me. Either way, Myrcella's frustration made sense. Her parents' marriage had nothing to do with love. Everyone knew that.

"I was just... a result of something that shouldn't have happened," she said softly, her voice barely above a whisper. Her eyes drifted to some far-off point, as if searching for something that wasn't there. "A chemical reaction in a bottle. Not even conceived through love, just... manufactured."

Wow. That was... heavy. I hadn't expected that revelation. Sure, I knew things like in vitro fertilization existed in this world, but hearing her story? Different ball game. As a note, vitro fertilization is a process where an egg and sperm are fertilized outside the body.

"My father was already old when he married my mother," she continued, her voice steady but bitter. "He couldn't... perform. Erectile dysfunction made sure of that. But he needed an heir, so they turned to science. My brother was the first. The others didn't make it. Then, years later, two more successful attempts. That's how Julius and I came to be."

Her lips twisted into a wry smile, but it didn't reach her eyes. "People call us twins because we were born on the same day. But they don't know... we were created on the same day, too. In bottles."

Ah, so this was how it all went down—those bottles, and how they came to be. I sure as hell hadn't seen this coming. But more than that, hearing the Princess lay it all out like that? It felt like I'd just caught a glimpse of something deeper, something raw and real beneath her polished exterior.

"Anyway, let's drop that topic," she said, her voice steady now as if she'd sealed that part of herself away again. Her eyes locked onto mine, sharp and calculating. "I want to hear your terms."

Looks like she'd pulled herself back together. Good.

"I don't think simply restricting my company's expansion to this kingdom is enough to stop the whole place from crumbling, Princess," I said, my tone measured but firm.

Her brow arched. "Oh? Pray tell, why do you think that?"

"You're missing something crucial. No—several components necessary to truly keep this kingdom from being wiped off the map. And it's not allies or political power. It's..." I paused, letting the weight of my words sink in. "Money."

"Money?"

I nodded. "Money is the root of everything. Even people who wouldn't normally lift a finger will put their lives on the line for the right price. If you want more power, more influence, more allies, you're going to need cold, hard cash. And lots of it."

She tilted her head, clearly mulling it over. "I... I don't fully understand. How does money change anything?"

"I don't know the specifics yet," I admitted. "But trust me, you're going to need it. It's the lifeblood of any kingdom. Without it, everything collapses."

Her gaze sharpened, but there was a hint of acceptance. "You're being vague," she said, narrowing her eyes. "But you're right. If we burn through the royal treasury trying to fix things, the monarchy itself will crumble. And if that happens, the kingdom's finished."

"Exactly. As the saying goes, 'If those at the top can't maintain their power with wealth, those at the bottom will suffer,'" I told her.

"So... you're offering to help me financially?"

I smirked. "That's the idea."

Her eyes narrowed, studying me like I was a puzzle she couldn't quite solve. "It feels like I'm making a deal with the devil."

"Ah, well... There's a saying where I'm from: 'Be careful what you wish for.' It comes from a myth about someone who made a wish that ultimately led to their downfall. But I'm not offering this because I'm a demon," I said, leaning in slightly. "I'm offering because I want something in return. Something even your body can't pay for."

Her brow lifted, intrigue softening her suspicion. "And what exactly would that be?"

I locked eyes with her and said, "I want you to make me the King."

Chapter 492 - The Current State Of The Milham Kingdom (3)

Princess Myrcella's eyes widened, suspicion sharp and immediate as my demand hung heavy in the air. Her lips parted slightly, but no words came at first, as if the sheer absurdity of what I'd just said left her momentarily stunned.

"You... want me to make you the King?" she asked, her voice steady but laced with disbelief, as though daring me to confirm her worst assumption.

Her reaction? Expected.

Most people, when asking for something, knew to keep their demands within reason. Sure, there were those bold enough to push the envelope, even teeter on the edge of absurdity. But what I'd just proposed? It was beyond outrageous—it bordered on a goddamn fantasy. The kind of thing that would get someone thrown out of a negotiation, if not out of a window.

"You're not joking, are you?" she asked again, her voice softer now, but no less cutting.

"I'm not," I replied, meeting her gaze head-on. "I don't joke about matters like this. The only way you'll have my cooperation is by making me the King."

Her expression faltered. For a split second, I saw the raw frustration bubbling beneath the surface. She clenched her jaw, lips pressing into a tight line. Her fingers twitched—she wanted to scratch at her scalp, rake her nails through her carefully styled hair. But she didn't. A princess didn't lose her composure. Not in public. Not even when faced with something this absurd.

"This..." she began, her voice measured, almost too calm. "This is far more ridiculous than what I suggested earlier. Offering you my body, that is." She shook her head, a faint, bitter smile tugging at the corners of her lips. "I can't believe I'm saying this, but I'd rather strip myself bare than entertain such a demand. What you're asking... it's like handing over half the kingdom. And that's not something I can do. Only members of the royal family can rule."

Her point was fair. Monarchies didn't just let anyone take the throne. Unless, of course, someone married in—like the King once did, merging bloodlines and sealing political deals in silk sheets.

"Wait," she said suddenly, her gaze sharpening. "Are you implying I should marry you?"

I smiled, but it wasn't a kind one. "No, Princess. I'm not suggesting marriage. I don't need a crown or a throne. I'm not interested in playing dress-up for the court. What I want is control. You keep the title, the pomp, and the pageantry. You'll still smile for the crowds and wave from balconies. But behind the scenes?" I leaned in slightly, my voice dropping to a near-whisper. "I call the shots. You rule in name. I rule in truth."

Her face paled. Her hands, folded neatly in front of her, clenched tighter, the knuckles turning white. "You're asking for something impossible, Sir Faust. No royal could ever agree to that. To give you such power would be to surrender the kingdom itself. I would be nothing but a puppet."

She wasn't wrong. Her reasoning was sound, and I wasn't about to argue. What I was asking for was the equivalent of handing over the kingdom on a silver platter. It was a betrayal wrapped in velvet, disguised as a favor.

"I'm sorry, Sir Faust," she said, rising to her feet. Her movements were fluid, every step calculated and deliberate. "Your offer, tempting as it may be, is unacceptable. This conversation is over."

She turned, the soft rustle of her clothes the only sound in the balcony.

"Wait," I called after her, voice firm but calm.

She paused but didn't look back.

"You and I both know that money alone won't save this kingdom," I said, watching her carefully. "You didn't come here just to ask for funds. There's something else you need, isn't there?"

Myrcella's POV

The first time I saw that man, a chill had crawled up my spine and settled deep in my bones. It hadn't left since. Even now, as I stood there, his words echoing in my head, that cold, creeping dread lingered. His scaled skin, those blood-red eyes—they were etched into my mind like a nightmare I couldn't wake from.

He was terrifying.

But he had saved the kingdom. Without him, we would have been nothing but ash and rubble. The catastrophe he averted... it wasn't just our downfall he had prevented. If not for him, the entire world might have fallen.

Which is why tonight, I sought his audience. I called for him to cooperate with me, to help save the Kingdom from my father—a man doing nothing but sitting idly, waiting for the Kingdom's inevitable collapse. I believe that was his intention from the start. Since I was old enough to understand the world around me, I noticed how unmotivated he was. He did nothing. His reign was marked by apathy, indifference, and decay.

He wasn't a King. He was a corpse on a throne.

I knew his intentions, clear as glass. He wanted the Kingdom to fall. Maybe he was tired. Maybe he'd given up before I was even born. From the moment I could understand anything, I noticed how lifeless he was. No ambition. No drive. Just a hollow man collecting dust.

He was already old when I was born, and maybe age had dulled his ambitions. Or perhaps he never had any to begin with. The only things that stirred him were wealth and women. Even after his body failed him, after his manhood became useless, he still entertained mistresses—women other than my mother. A wife he had never loved, not even once. Their marriage was a farce. A political union with no passion, no connection.

It made me sick.

I had to save this Kingdom from that hollow shell of a ruler. Not just from him, but from the looming threat that hung over us like a blade waiting to drop.

The Empire was moving—fast and relentless. Their hunger for expansion knew no bounds, and they had already claimed lands across the continent. The Milham Kingdom was next. It wasn't a question of if but when. The people were terrified, whispers of invasion spreading like wildfire. If no one acted, if nothing changed, the Kingdom would crumble.

I had to stop it.

I couldn't allow that.

Which is why I had to meet him. The man who saved the world from annihilation. Christopher Faust. Owner of Leonamon, the largest company on the planet. His influence stretched across borders, and his wealth was unmatched. For now, Milham benefited from his monopoly. But if Leonamon ever decided to expand beyond our borders, the Kingdom's fragile economy would collapse. We'd lose everything.

At first glance, he seemed like a refined gentleman, detached and uninterested in the world's affairs. But I'd seen glimpses of his true power. And it terrified me. Even though I was grateful for what he had done—saving this Kingdom from utter ruin—I couldn't shake the fear he instilled in me. His presence was overwhelming, suffocating.

Yet, I had no choice but to take my chances.

What I didn't expect was the outrageous demand he made in return.

He didn't ask for gold or land. No. He demanded power. The right to rule in the shadows. He wanted to be the true King while I played the part of a figurehead.

It was impossible.

Agreeing to such terms would mean surrendering everything. I would become nothing more than a puppet, dancing on strings he controlled. The thought alone made my skin crawl.

Which was why I had no choice but to end this conversation before it spiraled into something beyond my control. Letting someone else rule the Kingdom from the shadows? Unthinkable. It wasn't just a risk—it was a guaranteed disaster waiting to happen. I couldn't afford to play a game where the stakes were this high. Deep down, though, I knew the truth: nothing good could ever come from a deal like that.

But as I turned to leave, his voice cut through the air like a whip—calm, controlled, and dripping with a confidence that dared you to ignore it.

"You and I both know that money alone won't save this kingdom. You didn't come here just to ask for funds. There's something else you need, isn't there?"

I froze mid-step, my pulse hammering in my ears. Slowly, I turned back to face him.

His long, white hair fell over his shoulders, brushing his back. His eyes—crimson, like freshly spilled blood—glowed in the dim light. His features were sharp, almost too perfect, like something carved from marble. But instead of quickening my heart, it sent a shiver down my spine.

And he was right.

I knew exactly what he meant. Money? It was just a means. But what I truly needed... what I had really come here for... was something far more dangerous.

"You need power," he said, his voice smooth, almost taunting.

I swallowed hard.

When I came here tonight, I had two goals. Simple, on the surface: convince him to keep his company from expanding beyond Milham's borders and secure his help in defending the Kingdom from the Empire's looming threat. Sure, money was part of the equation—but it was never the whole solution. Not for what I was planning.

I needed him. His power.

I'd seen it firsthand. The things he could do... No one else could match him. The Magic Knights were strong, but if I overthrew my father, they would turn on me. They wouldn't follow someone who staged a coup, no matter the reason.

But he could.

I hated how badly I needed him.

"I'll give you what you want," he said, leaning back like this was some casual negotiation and not a life-or-death pact. His crimson eyes locked onto mine, unflinching. "But only if you make my terms happen."

Chapter 493 - The Current State Of The Milham Kingdom (4)

I sank back into my seat, a heavy sigh escaping my lips. This negotiation was supposed to be straightforward—a quick exchange, a deal sealed by something as simple as flesh. I'd expected him to bite without hesitation, but I had clearly misjudged him. I'd misjudged everything.

Men with power were predictable—or so I thought. They always craved the same two things: wealth and women. That's why I came here tonight, ready to offer him my body as leverage. If he agreed to stop expanding his company into other countries, I would be his. If he saved the kingdom from danger—an uprising or an invasion—I would give myself to him again. I was prepared to sacrifice everything if it meant securing our survival.

I thought it would be enough. It had to be enough. Most men would have jumped at the chance, drunk on greed and lust. But not him. Faust didn't even flinch. Instead, he kept dragging this conversation on, spinning his web with care.

"You're making this hard for me, Sir Faust," I said, trying to mask the frustration tightening in my chest. My voice, though calm, carried a weight that made the air feel heavier.

And it was true. His demands and relentless conditions were suffocating, like a noose tightening around my throat. The terms he laid out were dangerously tempting, designed to lure me in and ensnare me. If I gave in now, there would be no escape.

"I know my terms seem unreasonable," he said, his voice smooth but unyielding. His eyes, sharp as blades, didn't waver. "But I want to save this kingdom just as much as you do. And nothing will change unless you make me King, Princess."

I narrowed my eyes, my suspicion now fully on alert. "Why? Why do you think making you the King will somehow protect the kingdom?" I asked, my tone sharp but measured. "I have already identified the kingdom's weaknesses and have plans to fix them once I ascend the throne. I see no need for anyone else to take that role but me."

"You're overlooking more than you realize," he countered, leaning forward, his gaze intense. "Have you truly seen the whole picture? Or are you just keeping it afloat, patching holes as they appear? You haven't considered the bigger threats—like kidnappings and trafficking happening in the villages. Those people will be the first to die when the Empire invades. Slaughtered. Forgotten. Their dreams crushed. And the nobles? They won't lift a finger. They only care about fattening their purses."

Each word hit like a hammer, shattering the fragile confidence I had built.

"I... I've considered those things," I murmured, barely able to keep my voice steady. "But it's impossible to juggle everything. Keeping the kingdom from collapsing is already overwhelming. Sacrifices have to be made."

The admission burned. My father had turned a blind eye to so many atrocities—illegal trafficking, corruption, all of it. I swore I'd never become like him. But could I really save everyone? Could I bear the weight of both stabilizing the kingdom and protecting every life within its borders? The harsh truth loomed over me like a storm cloud. If an invasion came, the only thing I could do was fortify our defenses and hope it would be enough.

Faust's voice cut through my thoughts like a blade. "Your thinking is unbefitting of a leader, Princess."

The words struck deep, a blow that left me breathless. Because he was right. And I had no response.

"You think that if the Empire invades, sacrifices are inevitable—that lives are just currency to buy survival. But, Princess, that logic is weak. Flawed. Death isn't a tool to trade. It's a gamble, and you've already bet more than you can afford." His voice, low and cold, carved through the silence like a blade. "The Empire doesn't need to play fair. They could storm in, slaughter everyone, burn it all to ash—and still win. You think survival is enough? It's not. Your mindset is too soft to lead. You talk about saving the Kingdom from your father, that lazy bastard who sits on his throne like a bloated parasite, fattening himself on wealth and letting a harem of women lick his toes. But your thinking? It's no better. You'd ruin the Kingdom just as easily. Maybe worse."

I clenched my fists, the weight of his words pressing down like a suffocating hand.

"And it's not just the Empire you'd face," he continued, unrelenting. "The people you cast aside, the ones you abandon in the name of survival—they'll turn on you. They'll fight back. A ruler who cuts their own people loose is no ruler at all. You pull up roots you should be nurturing? You don't deserve the throne."

His words hit like punches, each one stripping away any illusion I had left.

And, he was right.

If I abandoned the citizens relying on us to shield them from the Empire's wrath, they'd revolt. Their trust in us was already hanging by a thread, worn thin by the corruption of power-hungry nobles. I felt the truth of it clawing at me, even if I didn't want to admit it. I couldn't argue—not with him. Not with this.

"I know I don't have the right to dictate how a monarch should rule," he said, his voice softer but no less cutting. "But I know how fast a kingdom falls when the wrong person wears the crown."

I swallowed hard, forcing my voice to steady. "So what are you suggesting?"

"It's simple," he said with a shrug. "I'll cover what you lack. Handle what you can't. And in return? I'll make sure you get what you want. That's all I'm asking."

His offer sounded... tempting. No, more than that—it sounded right. In this moment, in this mess, what he was suggesting felt like the only real option.

"But... I can't just hand the crown to someone," I said, my voice cracking under the weight of doubt. "I can't trust someone I barely know. Someone who—who I shouldn't trust."

"Maybe this will change your mind."

Then, reality itself seemed to twist.

"W-What...?"

Sir Faust's face... it melted. No, not melted—shifted, morphed, peeling away like an illusion dissolving into reality. Before my very eyes, it reformed into a face I knew well. Too well.

"I've just deactivated my illusion magic," he explained, removing the glasses perched on his nose. "But maybe you wouldn't recognize me because of the hair? Will this be enough, Princess?"

My heart stopped. "Leon...?"

It was him. Without a doubt. His face, his features—everything about him screamed Leon. The boy I'd met so few times, yet whose image had somehow burned itself into my memory.

The weakest student at the academy. The one everyone mocked for being skillless. And now, standing before me, was him.

"B-But... How?"

I tried to hold it together, clinging to composure like a lifeline. A princess, especially one aspiring to be Queen, couldn't afford to break in a negotiation. But this—this was too much.

Leon. The man who had saved the Kingdom. The owner of the Leonamon. And the boy everyone had dismissed as worthless.

I couldn't believe it.

Leon's POV

If I wanted to shatter the Princess, to truly snap her under the weight of this negotiation, I had to strip her of every ounce of control she clung to. She was gripping the rails of composure like her life depended on it, knuckles white, teeth clenched. One hard shove, and she'd go crashing down. And I was ready to deliver that shove.

"But... I can't just hand the crown to someone. I can't trust someone I barely know. Someone who—who I shouldn't trust."

The moment she spoke those words, I knew it was time to reveal myself. I wanted her to figure it out on her own, but she wasn't catching the hints. My subtle movements, the way I tapped my finger on the table—it was the same habit I had back at the Gold Dormitory. Back then, I'd always tapped with my index finger, a quiet rhythm I thought she might recognize. I was doing it now too.

But no. She didn't notice.

But, of course, she didn't. Why would she? To her, Leon was a nobody. A weakling. Useless. She never cared enough to notice the things I did. The truth is, Leon didn't matter to Princess Myrcella. She didn't

need him. But she knew him. And that was all I needed. She might not know Christopher Faust, but she knew Leon.

So, I flipped the script. I shed Christopher and stepped back into Leon.

And that's when everything shifted.

"I've been using a simple illusion spell," I said, my voice calm. "It kept you from seeing the real me—and it's on Johanne outside, too. But only for you. If he walks in here, he'll still see Christopher Faust."

Her eyes widened, her voice trembling. "S-So, you're really Leon? The owner of Leonamon?" Her words came out shaky, but there was something else there. "C-Come to think of it, whenever Leonamon came up in conversation... it was always you I thought of. Now it all makes sense."

Good. At least I had left enough of an impression for her to piece things together.

"That's right. I am Leon." I let the words hang for a moment, watching as realization dawned in her eyes. "I don't have a last name. Just Leon. Most people know me as Christopher Faust, the leader of Leonamon—but that's just me in disguise."

Chapter 494 - The Current State Of The Milham Kingdom (5)

"I... I see now," Princess Myrcella said, her voice steady but her gaze searching. "So, you're not the skillless man everyone believes you to be, are you?"

I didn't bother answering that. Instead, I cut straight to the point.

"We're not here to talk about how I got this way or what led me here," I said firmly. "What matters is that I've become who I am because I had people who supported me—people who helped me reach my goals. You can succeed too, Princess Myrcella, if you let others help you."

Her lips parted slightly, but no words came out. The flicker of doubt in her eyes told me she was struggling with the idea.

"Like you?" she finally whispered, her voice trembling. "B-But how can I trust you with the fate of this kingdom?"

"You don't need to trust me," I replied, my tone sharp but calm. "You just need to believe I'm capable of fixing what's broken—of seeing the cracks you overlook. I can patch the mistakes, clean up the mess, and ensure the kingdom doesn't fall apart. All you need to do is keep up appearances. Be the graceful queen the people need to see. Behind the scenes, you can do whatever you want within your inner circle. I'll be the King in the Shadows. Think of me as an advisor—a resource to turn to when you hit a wall. I'll find the loopholes you need."

Her breath hitched, her chest rising and falling with an uneven rhythm. "And... is that all you want from me?" she asked, her voice soft but cautious, almost like she was afraid of the answer.

"I don't need anything from you or the royal family," I said bluntly. "What I want is validation. You'll handle the politics, the court's problems, the corruption—everything. Make this kingdom better, not just for the nobles or the elite, but for everyone. I'm just a king in name. Of course, any major decision you make, we'll discuss it together. But ultimately, the burden is yours. I'm here to keep the kingdom standing."

Princess Myrcella fell silent, her brow furrowed in deep thought. My offer wasn't ideal—it was unreasonable, even. I was asking her to give up half her authority as a ruler. But at this point, she couldn't save the kingdom on her own.

I knew she had talent; she'd been pushing herself to become the Student Council President at the academy, gaining connections and trying to learn the ropes of leadership. But talent and a little experience weren't enough to stop the kingdom from collapsing. I was offering her a lifeline. If she refused, I knew she'd come crawling back when things inevitably fell apart.

"May I... think this over?" she asked, her voice delicate but resolute.

"Of course," I replied smoothly. "Take as long as you need. I'll be waiting patiently."

This was good. The fact that she was seriously considering it meant she'd likely accept. Her decision would be the turning point for the kingdom's future.

After a moment of silence, the Princess straightened her posture, the grace in her every movement unmistakable. She took a measured breath before turning toward me.

"I shall take my leave now," she said softly, her voice carrying both elegance and resolve. "Thank you for granting me this audience, Leon."

"No worries," I replied, a faint smirk tugging at my lips. "But, please—don't call me Leon when I'm in this form."

Her lips curled into a small, knowing smile. "Ah, yes... Forgive me. Thank you, Sir Faust." She dipped into a low, graceful curtsy, holding the pose with regal poise. Then, with a final glance, she turned and walked out, her knight shadowing her every step.

The door shut with a faint click, leaving a lingering stillness. Moments later, Amon glided into the balcony, her presence both soothing and seductive.

"Would you care for some tea, Master?" she asked, her voice smooth and sultry. "After such a heavy discussion, I imagine you must be parched."

I chuckled, leaning back in my chair. "Tea sounds nice, but..." I let my eyes trail over her form, taking in every curve. "I think something else would do a better job quenching my thirst."

Amon's lips curled into a sultry smile. "Well then," she murmured. With deliberate grace, she gathered the hem of her skirt and slowly lifted it, revealing her legs wrapped in sleek black stockings. The garters hugged her thighs, accentuating every inch of her flawless skin. Her panties, a thin strip of black fabric, clung to her hips, framing the inviting sight between her thighs. "Will this suffice, Master?" she purred, her voice dripping with invitation.

My breath hitched, my gaze darkening. "It more than suffices," I growled.

With a sly smile, Amon straddled me, her movements fluid and teasing. "It's been some time since I've properly serviced you," she whispered, her lips grazing my ear. Her scent—sweet and intoxicating—filled my senses, making my cock throb in response. Despite the earlier encounters, my body reacted to her as if it was starved. It was impossible not to. Amon wasn't just beautiful; she was lewd perfection. And she was mine.

"Allow me to serve you with my hole, Master," she whispered, fingers deftly unbuckling my belt.
"Please, feel good."

She tugged my cock free, her eyes darkening with hunger. With a quick adjustment, she shifted her panties to the side, revealing her dripping slit. Slowly, she lowered herself, taking me in inch by inch. The heat of her pussy enveloped me, tight and wet, drawing a groan from my throat.

"Mmmh... Master..." she gasped, her voice trembling. Her walls clenched around me as she bottomed out, her thighs quivering. Her breathing hitched, a shiver running through her body. Her body quivered, a telltale sign she'd already cum from the sheer act of taking me in. "Do you... think the Princess will accept your offer?" she asked, her voice breathy as she began to rock her hips.

I exhaled sharply, gripping her thighs as she rode me. "It's inevitable," I said, each word punctuated by the slow, deliberate thrust of my hips. "She can't handle ruling alone. She needs someone to back her up. She's in over her head. Talent won't save her. She'll crumble under the weight, and when she does, the kingdom will fall with her. She needs a foundation."

"Haaa... Th-Then... will you be that foundation, Master?" Amon gasped, her pace quickening. The wet, obscene sounds of her pussy sliding along my cock filled the balcony, mingling with her breathy moans.

"I will," I growled, gripping her thighs tighter. I thrust upward, meeting her movements with deep, powerful strokes. The slap of flesh on flesh echoed, the rhythm growing more frantic.

"Hnnn... Haaah... Haaa... Haaa!" Amon cried, her body trembling as she rode me harder.

The Princess needed stability, and without it, she'd fall apart. A ruler who couldn't handle the pressure would drag their kingdom down with them. A weak ruler meant a doomed nation. I wasn't the only one who could be that foundation, but I was the best option she had. If she didn't accept my help, she'd eventually break. She'd seen what I was capable of—building an empire from nothing, wielding power and strength like no other. Whether she wanted to admit it or not, I was her best option.

"Aaaah, haaah... Now, your goal is almost within reach," Amon purred, her voice dripping with desire, her gaze soft and reverent. Her lips curled into a smile as she caressed my chest. "I can't wait for the day you conquer everything, sitting on top of the world like the king you are. When that time comes, and countless women are yours... I only hope you won't forget about me."

I slammed into her with more force, gripping her soft thighs as they trembled under my hands. "That's impossible," I growled, my voice rough and hungry. "I'll never forget you, Amon. Not a single fucking day will pass where I don't think about the first pussy I claimed."

"Aaaahn~! Haaaan, aaaaah! M-Master! I-I'm so thankful for that...! Aaaah... C-Cumming...! I'm cumming!"

Her whole body quivered violently, her pussy tightening like a vice around my cock, pulling me deeper. I felt the coiling heat as her walls spasmed uncontrollably. A gush of her juices soaked us both as she squirted, her release intense and raw. At the same time, my cock throbbed hard, erupting inside her with thick, white cum. I emptied everything, filling her completely.

"AaaaaaaaaaaaaahnnnnNnnnnnnNnnnnn~!!!"

Amon arched her back, her scream a mix of bliss and surrender. My cock pumped relentlessly, each spurt shooting hot cum into her womb, leaving me feeling like I was pouring my entire being into her. Every pulse sent shivers up my spine, the sensation so overwhelming it felt like I was losing myself in her warmth.

"T-Thank you, Master... for feeling good with my hole," she whispered, her voice trembling, eyes glazed with pleasure.

But I wasn't finished. My hunger burned hotter, my cock still rock-hard and ready. I grabbed her by the hips, lifting her onto the table. Her black stockings clung tightly to her toned legs, the garters digging into her soft flesh, framing her like a perfect, lewd masterpiece.

I spread her legs wide, pushing her panties aside again. With a low growl, I plunged back into her drenched pussy, feeling her walls envelop me once more. The sound of our bodies colliding echoed in the balcony, each thrust sending shockwaves of pleasure through us both.

I didn't care who might hear. The world outside didn't matter. All that existed was this moment—her body beneath mine, taking everything I had to give. Her moans grew louder, matching the wet, rhythmic slaps of skin against skin as I fucked her relentlessly, pouring more of my seed into her with each powerful thrust.

Amon wasn't just another conquest; she was the cornerstone of everything I'd built. Without her, none of this would've been possible. She was the catalyst that set my ambition in motion, the reason my goal was within reach. She was the catalyst for all of this. Everything I'd accomplished, every plan set in motion, was because of her. Without Amon, none of this would've been possible.

I was grateful for her, and more than that—I loved her. I'd never cast her aside. Never.

Chapter 495 - The Current State Of The Milham Kingdom (6)

She was wrecked. I had fucked her so thoroughly she was completely out cold now, sprawled on the bed like a used canvas. Her face—flushed, swollen, dripping—was the very image of debauchery, streaked and glistening with my cum. Every drop that clung to her skin told the story of how much love, lust, and need I'd unleashed on her. I had poured everything into her, every ounce of desire, leaving no part of her untouched.

Maybe I went too far.

But judging by the blissed-out smile curling her lips, she wasn't complaining.

Well... at least she looked satisfied.

I stepped out onto the balcony, letting the cool night air hit my skin as I gripped the railings. Below, the crowd gathered in waves, their energy electric. They buzzed with anticipation, waiting for the concert to begin, their faces lit with a rare joy.

Just days ago, terror had gripped them, fear so thick you could taste it. But tonight, that fear had loosened its hold, replaced with something lighter. Sure, a concert wouldn't erase the trauma or fix everything, but it could ease their minds, even if only for a little while.

These people—all of them, whether saints or sinners—were part of the kingdom. Every life mattered, from the brightest soul to the darkest shade of gray. And the Princess bore the responsibility of

protecting them all. Not just from the empire looming beyond the borders but from the cracks within the kingdom itself. She needed to choose wisely. It was the only way to stop this kingdom from tearing itself apart from both the inside and out. The fate of everyone depended on it.

Myrcella's POV

I chose to stay in the plaza tonight, renting a small room at a modest inn. It wasn't much—just a single bed, plain walls, and little else. Johanne had insisted we find something bigger, maybe a suite with better security. The place I picked didn't even have proper guards, just a man with a sword lazily strapped to his hip. But we couldn't afford to draw attention. Discretion mattered more than luxury.

Johanne rented the room next to mine, making sure he could hear if anything happened. He was on edge, ready to burst in at a moment's notice if needed. He wanted to stay closer, to protect me. It was logical, especially given the risks of assassination. The Milham royal family had enemies everywhere—outside the borders and within.

But tonight, I needed space. Time alone to think.

Sir Faust—no, Leon—had made his intentions clear. He wanted the crown once I overthrew my father. His demand was bold, audacious even. The risks were staggering. Giving him that power meant betting everything on his vision.

When he laid out his reasoning, pointing out my weaknesses, it struck a nerve. He wasn't wrong. His suggestion, as outrageous as it was, felt like a lifeline. If I didn't accept his demand, there was a chance

that it would cost me dearly—trust, loyalty, and perhaps even my claim to the throne. The people might turn against me, casting me aside before I could secure my rule.

And if that happened, the kingdom would crumble.

However, as much as I wanted to follow his lead, it felt like doing so would only steer the kingdom toward ruin. I was torn. This was a dilemma that left my thoughts in a tangled mess. While I did feel a sliver of relief knowing he was someone I could somewhat trust—kind of, giving him the title of King, with me as his Queen, still felt like a massive gamble. He planned to rule from the shadows, meaning there would be no visible King in the eyes of the people—a dangerous move, no matter how I looked at it.

"What are you planning, Leon?" I whispered aloud, the question hanging in the air. Seeing him forming relationships with two princesses from different kingdoms, it was clear he was plotting something.

But what exactly? I had no idea.

The concert arrived with a surge of energy that swept through the streets like a tidal wave. As the concert began, the plaza came alive, vibrating with music and excitement. The idols' voices rang out, carried by powerful beats that pounded in sync with the crowd's heartbeats. Everywhere, faces lit up, joy spilling over as the rhythm took hold.

People sang along, their voices merging into a chorus that reverberated through the night air. Feet tapped, bodies swayed, and soon, the whole crowd was moving, lost in the moment. Children bounced

eagerly, their laughter cutting through the night with infectious energy. When the bass dropped, even the most reserved adults couldn't help but throw their hands up, shouting in exhilaration as the idols commanded the stage.

It was surreal. Just days ago, this same plaza had been a scene of devastation, lives shattered and homes reduced to rubble. Now, it pulsed with life, a beacon of hope and resilience. For a brief moment, the weight of their grief lifted. The memories of loss and destruction still lingered in the shadows, but tonight, they were banished by music and light.

The night stretched on, each hour weaving joy into the hearts of those who had forgotten how to smile. Even past midnight, the crowd's energy refused to wane. Eventually, as the music faded, people began to drift home, their faces glowing with happiness. The trauma remained, but tonight, they found solace.

Memories of tragedy never fade completely. But for now, they were living in the moment.

Leon's POV

I woke up with a deep sense of satisfaction, my body heavy and sated. My eyelids fluttered open, and the unfamiliar ceiling above came into focus. Though this place was mine now, it was the first time I'd actually spent the night here. The bed was warm, surrounded by the soft, tangled bodies of the idols who had collapsed beside me. Their limbs draped lazily over my naked form, a testament to the night's indulgences.

Even after their concert, they'd been brimming with energy. I'd fucked them until their cries turned to whimpers, and their bodies gave out, completely spent. Now, they lay sprawled around me, their chests rising and falling in peaceful rhythm.

Carefully, I peeled away the limbs clinging to me, each movement deliberate to avoid waking them. The cool air kissed my skin as I stood, stretching the stiffness from my muscles. I made my way to the bathroom, where Amon waited, her eyes lighting up at my arrival.

Without a word, she began to wash me, her touch gentle but firm, every stroke deliberate. The warm water cascaded over my skin, mingling with the soft scent of the soap she lathered.

The concert had been a success. Even though it hadn't generated any revenue, it served a greater purpose. The event was for the victims—a reprieve from their suffering. Distracting them from their trauma, even temporarily, was worth it. I had also arranged for my women to hand out free medical coupons at the Leonamon Hospital. Care wasn't just about tending to wounds—it was about healing minds, too.

As Amon worked, she suddenly coated her body in soap and pressed herself against me. Her soft, supple breasts molded to my back, the heat of her skin seeping into mine. It felt like sinking into clouds—plush, warm, and inviting. The sensation sent a shiver down my spine as she moved, her body gliding against mine, every curve teasing with deliberate intent.

Her hands trailed lower, slow and purposeful. The warmth, the softness—it was heaven. Pure fucking heaven.

Once she had thoroughly lathered me, I turned to face her, pulling her close. Without hesitation, I pressed her against the tiled wall and fucked her right there.

Afterward, breathless and content, I finished the bath. Amon, ever attentive, dried me off with meticulous care.

Amon dressed me herself, her hands moving with care as she adjusted each piece of clothing. The soft rustle of fabric and her lingering touch made the whole process feel more intimate than necessary. Once she was done, she stepped back and bowed, her gaze never leaving me.

I made my way to the balcony and sank into the chair, letting the cool morning air brush against my skin. Amon soon returned with a steaming cup of tea, placing it gently on the table in front of me. I hummed softly, savoring the calm.

Then, I felt it—a presence.

My eyes flicked to Amon, silently instructing her to bring whoever was lingering near the manor's entrance. She caught the command instantly, bowing once more before gliding away to carry it out. I leaned back, humming again as I waited.

The sun here was... different. I hadn't really noticed it before, but now, its light felt alien compared to Earth's. Another reminder that this world wasn't just a distant land—it was an entirely different universe, maybe even another dimension altogether.

Lost in thought, I almost didn't notice when Amon returned, stepping through the doorway with Princess Myrcella following close behind.

"I've considered your proposal," Myrcella said, her voice poised and regal.

I arched a brow. "You only gave it a night's thought?" I asked, letting a bit of disbelief color my tone. "I was pretty clear—you could take as much time as you needed. There's no rush. We've got plenty of time before you need to make any moves against your father."

"Yes, but I wanted clarity," she replied smoothly. "Lingering on this decision would only allow doubts to fester. I prefer to confront things head-on before they consume me."

I leaned forward, intrigued. "So? What's your answer?"

"I accept."

Her response caught me off guard. I hadn't expected her to reach a conclusion so quickly. The weight of what she was agreeing to wasn't trivial—it was massive. I'd assumed she'd deliberate for weeks, maybe even months, or years, waiting until after the usurpation to give me an answer.

But, of course, there was always a catch.

"However," she added, "I have one condition."

Of course, I thought. Nothing's ever that simple.

"Go on," I said, folding my hands in front of me. "What is it?"

"Marry me."

Chapter 496 - Election Day (1)

The day of the election had finally arrived. Energy buzzed through the air as the showdown between the candidates for student council president kicked into gear. Even though it was still early morning, the academy was alive with chatter. Students huddled in groups, discussing who they wanted to vote for. The excitement was so infectious that even those who couldn't care less about the election were swept up in the conversations.

Today was the day a new president would rise, and no matter the outcome, it was clear the entire academy was invested in seeing it through.

When I reached the front gate, Titania was already there. As usual, she was leaning casually against the gate, clearly waiting for someone. The moment she spotted me, her face lit up, and she practically bounced over, latching onto my arm. She pressed her soft breasts firmly against me, making a series of happy little noises as we started walking.

"What brings you here so early, Nia?" I asked, raising a brow. "Don't you have an election to attend?"

"That's not until later," she said with a cheeky grin. "I'd much rather spend my morning like this—with you, Leon." Her grin was so contagious I couldn't help but smile back.

"Is that so? Still, shouldn't you be preparing instead of clinging to me?"

"Everything's already taken care of on my end," she replied confidently. "I've been working so hard, you know? Come on, praise me!" She started pouting, pulling off an adorable cutesy look. Damn, she was too cute for her own good.

"Good job, Nia," I said, chuckling as I reached up to ruffle her hair. She let out a delighted giggle, her face practically glowing with happiness.

Of course, this blatant display of affection wasn't going unnoticed. A few students were throwing us dirty looks for being so touchy in public this early in the day, but I didn't care.

After walking for a bit, we finally arrived at the building. It was time to part ways.

"See you later, Leon," she said, flashing me a bright smile as she waved.

"Yeah," I replied, watching her leave before heading to my classroom.

When I got there, the room was already buzzing with activity. Just as I was about to step in, someone jumped on me from behind, practically knocking the wind out of me.

"Leon!" Trill's familiar voice chirped as she wrapped her arms around my neck and her legs around my waist. She clung to me like a backpack, her tails wagging excitedly. "Good morning!"

"Good morning to you too, Trill," I replied, completely unfazed.

I started walking to my seat, carrying her on my back like it was the most normal thing in the world. Our classmates didn't even bat an eye. By now, they were used to her antics. Most of them just looked exasperated, including my friends Raymond and Duncan, who stared at me like I'd grown a second head.

"Are you going to watch Nia later?" Trill asked, her tone casual but curious.

"Of course," I said. "It'd be pretty shitty of me not to show up for her big moment. She's one of the contenders, and I'm her boyfriend, after all."

Besides, I was curious about Princess Myrcella's speech. She clearly had something up her sleeve—her determination to win at all costs wasn't just for show. The perks of being student council president would definitely help her with whatever ambitions she was chasing.

"Do you think Nia's going to win?" Trill asked, her voice softening slightly.

"I'm not sure. It's a tough call," I admitted. "Her chances aren't zero, but they're not guaranteed either. Right now, it's a toss-up, fifty-fifty at best. Myrcella definitely has the upper hand, though." I paused, then added, "But no matter what happens, we'll support her. She's already said she'll be happy regardless of the outcome. She's achieved what she wanted, so whatever happens next is just icing on the cake."

"You're right," Trill said with a wide grin, her tails wagging even faster.

Once we reached her seat, I gently set her down before heading to mine.

As usual, Irene was still throwing me those flirty looks. I couldn't lie—it was starting to get a little disturbing. But this time, something was different. No, it wasn't her usual lusty glances. It felt like she was trying to make me aware of something, though I couldn't figure out what. After class that morning, curiosity got the better of me, so I decided to approach her.

"I'm heading to the cafeteria, Leon!" Trill called out with a cheerful wave, leaving me behind as she skipped off.

I lingered in the classroom until all the students had left. For some reason, Irene took the opportunity to close the door. I knew exactly what she was trying to do, but I wasn't about to entertain her antics right now. I had questions, and I wanted answers.

"It's been so long, hasn't it?" she began, her voice dripping with a sultry tone. "I thought you were going to ignore me forever."

"I'm not here for small talk, Professor," I replied bluntly. "I just want to know what you were trying to tell me earlier."

"Haaa... You could at least indulge me for a moment, you know?" she said with a dramatic sigh. "I'm willing to give you everything, down to the very core of my body. Doesn't that deserve at least a little of your time?"

She was laying it on thick, her words dripping with seduction. I won't lie—she was tempting. It had been a while since I'd last been with her, and her body had only grown more alluring. She was dressed modestly enough in her usual professor's attire, but today, she'd ditched her coat, leaving her in just the crisp white blouse and black bow tie. Somehow, that made her look even sexier.

"I don't think I have time for this," I said, trying to shut it down.

"There's always time for something, you know," she teased, stepping closer and grabbing my shoulders. She pushed me back gently until my hips bumped against the podium. Her eyes locked on mine, and her voice dropped to a whisper. "You've been on my mind a lot lately, Leon. It's been so long since we touched. Sometimes... I touch myself while thinking of you, imagining you touching yourself while thinking of me. Or maybe you're fucking another woman but still thinking of me. Do you do that?"

"I don't," I said firmly. "It's rude to think of another woman during sex. It completely ruins the connection of making love."

"Fufufu... That's exactly what I love about you, Leon," she said, her tone thick with amusement.

"Then why don't you just be my woman if you love me that much?" I asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I don't want to be just another one of your women," she replied, her voice suddenly serious. "I want to be with you and only you. I want you to be mine, Leon. No harems, no sharing. That's why I'm not holding back. I'm going to make sure none of those other women can even come close to me until you have no choice but to choose me."

"That's a tall order," I said with a small laugh. "I love all my women."

"You underestimate a maiden's heart," she said, her voice low and intense. "We'll do whatever it takes to get what we want."

Before I could respond, she leaned in and captured my lips in a heated kiss. Her tongue slipped past my lips, tangling with mine.

After she pulled back, a thin strand of saliva lingered between our lips before it finally snapped. Irene's eyes locked onto mine, filled with a seductive hunger that made my pulse quicken. Her smile was wicked, like she was savoring the thought of devouring me. Honestly, the way she looked at me was driving me insane. I wanted to fuck her right here, right now.

The setting was perfect for it, the tension unbearable. My dick was already straining against my pants, practically begging to be inside her. Her body was made to fit in my hands, and the only thing stopping me from taking her right then and there were the clothes between us. But as tempting as it was, I held myself back. Not now. Not yet.

"I'll make sure no other woman can top me," she said, her voice dripping with determination. "Not the Princesses, not Gabrielle, not Rose. I'll steal you away from all of them, Leon."

Her smirk was pure seduction, but then it faltered slightly, her confidence dimming just a bit. "Speaking of Rose..." she trailed off.

Oh, so this was what she'd been trying to tell me earlier. I was guessing something had happened with Professor Rose. Still, I didn't notice anything wrong with her the last time we met at my manor back in the capital.

While I was piecing it together in my head, Irene finally spoke up, her voice quieter now.

"Rose retired from being a professor."

Chapter 497 - Election Day (2)

At that moment, the fog clouding my mind from the intoxicating lewdness Irene was exuding cleared up.

"Retired?" I asked, needing to confirm. "She retired from being a professor?"

"She also retired from being an agent for the administrators," Irene replied.

That threw me off completely. Rose loved her job as a professor. Sure, she hated the bullshit orders from the administrators, but she endured it because teaching was her passion. And now, she'd just up and retired?

"Did she go back to her house?" I asked.

"Doesn't seem like it," Irene said, shaking her head. "I mean, you probably know this, but Rose hates her family. She'd rather die in a ditch than go crawling back to them."

She wasn't wrong. Rose always carried this bitterness about her family. Anytime something reminded her of them, her face twisted into a scowl that practically screamed disdain.

"If that's the case, where is she now?" I pressed.

Irene sighed. "No idea. I figured she'd be fine since it's her, but... considering it is Rose, I can't help but worry. Even after everything—finding out we'd fallen for the same man and all—I still see her as a friend."

It was concerning that she'd disappeared, but knowing Rose, I wasn't too worried. She could take care of herself. Hell, she wasn't called the Green-haired Demon for nothing. She was an incredible fighter, and anyone dumb enough to cross her usually ended up regretting it.

Irene's grip on me tightened as she leaned closer. "More importantly, Leon..." Her voice dropped, husky and teasing. "Don't you think this is a perfect situation for us to fuck?"

I swallowed hard. Irene's body was stunning, and somehow, it looked even more enticing now. The way her curves pressed against me was maddening. But as much as I wanted to give in, I couldn't.

"I'm sorry," I said reluctantly. "Trill is waiting for me."

Irene pouted, her lips forming a tempting little pout. "So, you're really going to ignore a woman who's practically begging you to fuck her and go to someone else instead? You're such a scummy womanizer,

Leon." She sighed dramatically but then smirked. "Oh well, I suppose doing something like this here would be risky anyway."

As she pulled away, I arched a brow. "I didn't think you'd back down that easily."

She shrugged. "I don't feel like fucking someone who's thinking about another woman the whole time. You're off to see one of your girlfriend for the election, right? Probably to cheer her on too. If we fucked right now, I'd just feel like some side chick, and I have zero interest in being just that."

With a casual air, she grabbed her glasses and used a handkerchief to wipe them clean. The heat from earlier had fogged them up. As she cleaned them, she glanced at me, her sharp gaze piercing through the act. "Which is why I'm not going to stop until you're mine, Leon."

Then, with a confident stride, she headed to the door, unlocked it, and paused to look back at me.

"You can go now," she said, her tone dripping with smug satisfaction. Then, with a wink, she added, "Oh, and I'll be waiting at my house later. I'll have some brand-new clothes on, just for you."

With that, she put her glasses back on and walked out of the classroom, leaving me staring after her.

That was as clear an invitation as I'd ever heard.

After that, I headed to the cafeteria, where I spotted both of my girlfriends sitting together. As soon as they saw me, they waved, motioning for me to join them. Without hesitation, I made my way over.

A chair was already prepared for me, so I sat down, taking in the bustling atmosphere. It was still early for the election to start, but the preparations were in full swing. The current student council was hard at work coordinating everything. Even though they were technically on their way out, their duties didn't end until the new president officially took over at the start of the next school year. For now, they were still in charge.

Titania let out a deep breath, her unease written all over her face. It wasn't election time yet, but it was clear she was starting to feel the pressure.

"Are you nervous, Nia?" I asked, watching her closely.

"Oh no, I'm fine," she replied, though the tight smile on her lips said otherwise.

"It's not like you to get this worked up," I said.

"Well... I'm not exactly a fan of speaking in front of big crowds," she admitted, glancing away.

"Really? Even though you're a princess?"

Titania shrugged. "I didn't do much public speaking back in Bethlan. My father handles most of the political and national matters. He's the one always in the spotlight."

That was interesting. Most royal families I knew of loved to parade their heirs in front of the public, showing them off to prepare the people for the day they'd take the throne. It helped them establish familiarity and trust. But it sounded like Titania's father had taken a different approach.

Could it be that he didn't plan to make Titania the heir? That possibility lingered in the back of my mind.

"But you don't have to worry!" she said suddenly, flashing me a smile so radiant it was almost blinding. Her confidence seemed to return in that moment, and I couldn't help but feel reassured. If she believed in herself, then the least I could do was support her.

Before I could say anything, the atmosphere in the cafeteria shifted. A wave of tension swept through the room as one of the candidates for student council president entered. Not just any candidate, though—it was her.

Princess Myrcella, Titania's main rival for the presidency, walked in like she owned the place, her regal presence impossible to ignore. She was accompanied, as always, by her knight, Johanne, whose stoic demeanor and knightly aura made him look like he'd stepped straight out of a fairytale. Honestly, the guy—girl, I mean, was cool as hell.

The air grew heavier as the two powerhouses of the election found themselves in the same room. Both were strong contenders, and it was clear that the next president of Milham Academy of Magic Knights would be one of them. The sheer weight of their presence was enough to make everyone in the cafeteria sit up a little straighter.

What made it even more surprising was the fact that Myrcella was here at all. She rarely, if ever, showed up at the cafeteria. Being a princess of this kingdom, she had access to luxurious meals delivered straight to her dorm. She didn't need to step foot in a place like this.

Yet here she was, walking up to the register to order food. The servers behind the counter looked stunned, their expressions a mix of awe and confusion. Cafeteria food was good, sure, but it was nothing compared to what she could have at her beck and call.

And of course, the servers were nervous as hell, but they still managed to serve her with meticulous care.

"W-What can I get for you, Your Highness?" one of them stammered, clearly flustered.

"I'd like your suggestion. I'm not familiar with the menu, so I don't know what's good here," the Princess replied, flashing a warm smile.

That smile was enough to melt hearts. Everyone watching seemed utterly smitten, and even the server turned beet red.

"I-If that's the case, I'd recommend..."

The server quickly whipped up the dish most popular among the academy's students. It turned out to be the same meal I was eating. It wasn't bad—not on par with what I had back on Earth, but good enough.

My taste buds were still adjusting to the flavors of this world, though. The ingredients and meat here were nothing like Earth's, but the food was still enjoyable.

Johanne, her knight, ordered the same meal as the Princess. Once their trays were ready, they paid—though the server was so nervous they could barely make eye contact. Then, instead of searching for seats like most people, they turned their attention directly to us.

It was clear they had been planning this from the start. Their intention was obvious the moment they walked toward our table. Johanne carried the trays carefully, his stoic demeanor unshaken despite the growing whispers in the cafeteria.

When they reached us, Princess Myrcella asked with a polite yet deliberate tone, "May we join you?"

Her question landed like a bombshell. Hours before the election, here she was, openly sitting with her main rival. Naturally, everyone in the cafeteria perked up, their curiosity piqued.

"Sure," Titania replied without a shred of hesitation. Suspicion wasn't even on the table for her—it didn't seem like she was the type to assume ill intent unless someone gave her a reason.

With that, both of them pulled out chairs and joined us at the table. The air felt thick with unspoken tension.

Trill immediately turned to me, her gaze full of questions. It was clear she wanted to know what the hell was going on. I simply shrugged, unable to offer her any answers.

Honestly, I didn't have a clue what these Titania and Myrcella were thinking either.

Chapter 498 - Election Day (3)

The cafeteria, usually alive with chatter and noise, had fallen into an eerie, almost suffocating silence. It felt unnatural, like the calm before a storm. If someone walked in without knowing the context, they'd probably turn tail and run, thinking something ominous was about to go down. Hell, even I might've done the same if I weren't in the thick of it.

The reason for the tension? The two leading candidates for the next student council president were sitting at the same table. Not just near each other—directly across, separated only by the table between them.

And yet, weirdly enough, neither of them spoke a word while eating. They just focused on their meals, radiating that regal air they were likely trained to exude since birth. I suppose that's the life of a princess—always composed, always maintaining appearances to avoid showing vulnerability in front of others. Since both of them hailed from their respective kingdoms, it made sense for them to act this way, especially toward each other.

The tension in the room grew heavier with every passing second. I couldn't help but wonder how long they were planning to keep this charade up.

Once they finished eating, setting down their utensils and cups, Princess Myrcella finally broke the silence, her tone as smooth and practiced as ever.

"It's truly an honor to have the privilege of competing against you, Princess Titania," she said, her voice warm and diplomatic. "Though, calling it a competition might be a bit of a stretch. It's more of an election to decide who will lead next. Still, I must admit, I'm surprised at how much support you've garnered. You've changed so much."

Her smile seemed genuine, but there was something almost calculated about it.

"I haven't really changed that much, Princess Myrcella," Titania replied, her voice steady. "I'm still the same as I've always been. The only difference now is..." She suddenly latched onto me, clinging to my arm like a cicada. "Leon is with me."

Myrcella's gaze shifted to me, her expression soft but probing. "Leon must be quite the life-changer. I'd like to have a man like that in my life too."

"Too bad for you," Titania said with a smirk, holding me tighter. "Leon is one of a kind. You won't find another man like him anywhere."

Even Trill, sitting next to us, nodded in enthusiastic agreement, bouncing her head as if it were the gospel truth.

"I see," Myrcella said with a knowing smile. She turned her attention to Johanne, her knight, who had been silent until now. "As a man yourself, Johanne, would you agree with such a bold claim? That there's no one better than Leon?"

Johanne glanced at me, his expression thoughtful. "I can't say for certain," he admitted, his voice carrying a deep, commanding tone. "But from what I've seen, Leon must be an exceptional man to win the heart of Princess Titania. As a fellow man, I respect him deeply. In fact, if Leon were my younger brother, I'd enjoy training him with the sword. It'd be an honor."

His words caught me off guard, and I felt a slight heat rise to my face. Damn it, was I actually blushing?

"I agree with that assessment," Myrcella added, her eyes lingering on me. "In another life, I might have even pursued him as a lover."

At that, both Titania and Trill frowned slightly, their expressions darkening just enough for me to notice. It was surprising, honestly. Considering the situation we were in, where monogamy was clearly out of the picture, I didn't think they'd be this bothered. Then again, maybe it wasn't the idea of Myrcella joining my harem—it could've been something about her specifically that rubbed them the wrong way.

Myrcella chuckled softly, her laugh light and unbothered. "Don't worry," she said with a wave of her hand. "I'm not planning to steal Leon from either of you or anything like that."

Titania's eyes narrowed, her tone sharp but composed. "That's not the issue. I'm lenient enough to allow another woman into Leon's life—if she genuinely loves him. That's my only condition. But judging from your eyes, Princess Myrcella, I don't see any real affection for him there." Her words carried a subtle but biting edge. "If anything, I think you'd use him for political gain rather than love him for who he is."

That brought me back to the conversation I had with Princess Myrcella a while ago. She had mentioned that if I married her, she'd make me a King. Honestly, the offer was very tempting. Who wouldn't want that kind of power and status handed to them? But something about her made me hesitate. I didn't accept, not yet anyway. I couldn't figure out what was going on in her mind.

"Oh? So, if I simply pretend to be in love with Leon, I could join his harem too?" Myrcella teased, her words carrying a playful yet unsettling undertone.

Titania's glare could've cut through steel. "I'm not going to just hand Leon over to you."

"Fufufu... Well, it's good to know I have a chance, at least," Myrcella said with a sly smile. "Now then, we should be going. There's still a lot to prepare for the election. Good luck, Princess Titania."

"Good luck to you too, Princess Myrcella," Titania replied, her tone cool but civil.

The two of them exchanged a look that spoke volumes. Despite being rivals, there was an unspoken respect between them. It was almost admirable, like the kind of sportsmanship you'd see in a competition.

With that, Myrcella and Johanne turned and left, their departure finally allowing the cafeteria to breathe again. The oppressive tension dissipated, replaced by the familiar hum of life returning to the space.

Two hours before the election, I decided to skip class and head back to my dorm. Honestly, whether I attended or not didn't really matter. Irene had my attendance record under control, so it wasn't like skipping was going to mess up my grades. Sometimes I wondered why I even bothered going to school at all.

Since I still had time before the election, I decided to take a nap.

I set my alarm to wake me 30 minutes before the election started, giving myself a little time to get ready. Then, without a second thought, I crashed into bed and let sleep take over.

When the alarm blared an hour and a half later, I groggily rolled out of bed and started getting ready. There were still 30 minutes left before the election began, but I didn't want to cut it too close. After freshening up and dressing, I left my dorm room.

Stepping out of the bronze dorm building, I immediately noticed someone standing nearby.

"Oh, Leon! Are you heading to the gymnasium for the election? Want to go together?"

It was Johanne. I froze for a moment, caught off guard. Why the hell was she here? And, yeah, I said she. It was still a little weird thinking of Johanne like that. He—or rather, she—had been gender-bent, which made things... confusing.

Honestly, the whole situation with Johanne was a damn mystery. I'd even asked Gabrielle if gender-bending was a thing in this world, but so far, I hadn't gotten any clear answers. If this was a rare case, then Johanne might be the first one of her kind.

Judging by her expression, she'd been waiting for me for a while. She didn't seem to have any ulterior motives, so it was probably safe to humor her.

"Sure," I said, shrugging.

For some reason, Johanne had this weirdly happy smile on her face when I agreed to walk with her. It felt strange, honestly. Calling her she still messed with my head, considering she looked like a man. But since she was technically a woman now, it didn't feel right to call her he either. Yeah, sticking with she seemed like the best option.

"Isn't it surprising that we're almost done with the school year?" she asked out of nowhere, her tone casual but curious.

"I guess time does fly fast," I replied. "It feels unreal, honestly."

"You know, it's not too late to climb up to silver class," she said with a pointed look. "You could still make it if you tried."

It sounded like she was encouraging me to climb the ranks. Sure, I could do it without breaking a sweat if I wanted to, but honestly? I couldn't care less.

"I don't really care whether I'm in gold class or not," I said bluntly. "All I want is to graduate. Being a magic knight feels like it'd be suffocating as hell."

"Well, Professor Gabrielle did quit being a magic knight. Maybe the job wasn't what she'd expected. But I've heard it has its perks," Johanne said thoughtfully. "Still, I can't help but feel like there's some shady political stuff going on there. That's concerning, don't you think?"

She wasn't wrong. Politics and corruption seemed to worm their way into every organization, even the magic knights. It was one of the reasons I wasn't keen on that path. Thankfully, my own company was free of all that crap.

Then, out of nowhere, Johanne changed the subject.

"I have to apologize for what Princess Myrcella said earlier," she said, her voice softer.

"Huh? About what?" I asked, genuinely confused.

"The whole thing with her provoking Princess Titania. I'm sure she didn't mean any harm by it," she said, her tone apologetic.

Chapter 499 - Election Day (4)

"You don't have to worry about that," I said, keeping my voice steady and calm. "And Nia didn't look like she was bothered either. If anything, she might see this as Princess Myrcella's way of saying, 'No hard feelings, no matter who wins.' Sure, it's possible the Princess is trying to provoke her, but I seriously doubt it."

"Well, that's a relief, I guess. I'm glad for that."

Johanne's lips curled into one of those infuriatingly perfect smiles, the kind that seemed to glimmer in the light and was so goddamn charming it had me blushing. Yeah, blushing. It was insane how good-looking Johanne was, even when I knew—knew—she was a woman under all that. My mind wandered for a second, picturing her as her true self. Would those chiseled features soften? Would her smile still be this disarming? Most likely, yeah.

"Now I get why those two princesses fell for you, Leon," she said, her voice warm. "You're a good guy."

"I don't really feel like one, though," I replied, my tone dropping.

It wasn't just a passing thought; it was a fact. People loved to paint the world in black and white, but reality was messy, full of grays. Hell, most of the time, I felt like I was barely scratching the surface of being decent.

"Not to change the subject, but..." Johanne's voice softened. "I'm getting married in spring."

That didn't exactly shock me. In this world, people married young—sometimes as early as 18. Once you awakened your unique skill, you were considered an adult, so tying the knot at 19 wasn't unusual at all.

"Oh, it's that fiancée of yours, Triss, right?" I asked casually.

"Yeah," she said, her voice tinged with something I couldn't quite place.

Even though Johanne was biologically a woman, she had no idea. I hadn't told her either. Maybe she'd started to suspect, or maybe not. It wasn't like I had concrete proof, but knowing her father—the Sword Saint—it wouldn't surprise me if he'd messed with Johanne's gender from birth. A son, after all, was what he likely wanted.

"Are you okay with that?" I asked, my gaze narrowing. "If I remember right, you said your engagement was more about politics than love."

Her smile dimmed, just a fraction. "Well, Triss is beautiful," she admitted, her voice soft but steady. "I think I could come to love her, even if I don't have feelings for her now. Honestly, I don't think Triss has feelings for me either. If anything, she'd probably prefer I marry her brother."

I blinked. "She thinks you should marry her brother?"

Did she... know? Was Triss aware of Johanne's real gender?

"Yeah," Johanne said with a chuckle, shaking her head. "It's hilarious, actually. Every time she tries to push us together, she gets this ridiculous nosebleed."

Nope. Triss definitely didn't know the truth. But holy shit, she was clearly a fujoshi through and through. It was bizarre to think fujoshis existed here, too. Where the hell did she even pick that up? There weren't any BL mangas or novels in this world. No doujins, no nothing. And yet, here she was, bleeding from the nose at the thought of two guys together. Unreal.

Well, this world sure had a knack for dropping lessons on me every day, whether I wanted them or not.

"Anyway," Johanne began, her voice carrying that measured calm she always had, "Triss is a good woman. Smart, lovely... honestly, I'd really like her as a friend at the very least. But, well... having her as

my wife... I think I'd be fine with that too. I don't see any reason to oppose it, and she doesn't seem like she'd oppose it either."

"Maybe you two are secretly in love with each other and just don't realize it yet?" I teased, letting a smirk slip onto my face.

"Maybe," she admitted with a slight shrug, her tone almost dismissive. "But right now, I don't think that's it. I mean, I don't feel anything romantic for her. It's just... I want her to be my friend, you know?"

I wasn't sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing. Given Johanne's biology, it made sense that she might not easily fall for another woman, even if her body was male now. I'd assumed that being in a man's body would change things, make it easier for her to develop feelings for women, but it seemed I'd underestimated how much her inner identity as a woman still defined her. That probably explained why, despite growing up side by side with Princess Myrcella, she hadn't developed feelings for her either.

"Here we are," Johanne announced, snapping me out of my thoughts as we reached the gymnasium.

"It's packed," I muttered, scanning the sheer mass of bodies crammed into the space.

"It's an election," she said, matter-of-factly. "And a heated one at that, with two strong contenders for the presidency. Of course, it's packed."

"Can we even get inside?"

"We'll just have to push our way through."

What followed was nothing short of torture. Navigating through a suffocating wall of bodies was like trying to swim against a raging tide. Sweat clung to the air, thick and sour, as if the entire gym was a breeding ground for BO. By the time we made it inside, I was about ready to bolt, my patience hanging on by a thread.

"God, it smells like someone's been marinating in their own filth for days," I grumbled, nose wrinkling in disgust.

Johanne chuckled, the sound low and almost teasing. "It's not great, but we're here now."

The gym buzzed with restless energy, voices overlapping in a chaotic hum. There were still about 10 or 15 minutes before the election would start, and the crowd was already fidgeting, their impatience palpable.

"Can we just start voting already?" someone groaned nearby, the frustration dripping from their tone.

"Not yet," another voice replied with a huff. "We have to wait for the current student council to make their entrance, and then the candidates have to give their speeches again."

"Ugh, seriously? I'm so sick of hearing those speeches. They've been repeating the same crap for weeks now."

"I just wanna know who's gonna win..."

The atmosphere was thick with tension, the kind that made the air feel heavier with every passing second.

"It's getting intense in here, huh?" Johanne said, glancing at me with a raised brow.

"Yeah," I replied.

You'd have to be blind not to feel it. Today wasn't just about picking a new student council president—it was about shaping the academy's future, and everyone here knew it.

"Wait," someone behind me spoke up, their voice laced with genuine curiosity. "We're just voting for the president today, right? How do they choose the representatives?"

"You don't know how that works?" another voice snapped back, exasperated. "The president gets to pick the representatives and council members. Everyone knows that."

"Oh... So, do you think Princess Titania will pick, you know, that guy?"

'That guy.' There wasn't much doubt about who they were referring to.

"Well, it's possible," came the response, a little too smug for my liking. "I mean, he is her boyfriend. If I were president, I'd definitely pick my girlfriend."

"Isn't that... kind of bad, though? I mean, that guy's weak, right? No abilities, no nothing. What's the point of having him on the council?"

"Right? I wish I'd hooked up with someone running for president. Then I could've secured an easy spot on the council too."

"Well, that just proves it's better to vote for Princess Myrcella. She wouldn't be biased, right? I bet she'd pick someone like Johanne. I mean, come on—Johanne's the son of the Sword Saint."

Thankfully, I had zero interest in being on the council. It honestly sounded like a massive pain in the ass, and I didn't want any part of it.

Out of nowhere, Johanne turned her attention toward the guy who'd been running his mouth. Before I could process what was happening, she grabbed him by the collar and yanked him close.

"What did you just say?"

"H-Huh?" The guy looked like a deer caught in headlights.

"You heard me. What did you say about Leon? Repeat it. Right here, right to my face." Her glare could've burned holes through steel, and even though I knew Johanne, it still sent a chill down my spine.

She didn't just look terrifying—she was terrifying. Even if Johanne was a woman inside, her current body was that of a tall, broad-shouldered man. It gave her an edge, and right now, she was using it to her full advantage, lifting the guy off the ground like he weighed nothing.

"I-I'm sorry...! I didn't know you two were here!" he stammered, his voice cracking. "I was just... just saying my opinion, that's all! Honest!"

To be fair, the guy was just saying his opinion. Sure, it wasn't flattering, but it wasn't like he'd threatened me or anything. Still, something in Johanne had snapped, and she wasn't letting it slide.

I stepped in, trying to defuse the situation. "It's fine, Johanne. Really, it's not that big of a deal," I said, keeping my tone calm. "Like he said, it's just his opinion."

"But it's still wrong," she hissed, her grip tightening on the guy's collar. "I won't stand by while someone badmouths a friend of mine behind their back."

Friend? Hearing her call me that made my cheeks heat up a little, though I quickly shook it off.

"Even so," I said, keeping my voice steady, "I think it's better to let it go. It's not worth the trouble."

Johanne glanced around, finally noticing that we'd attracted a crowd. Dozens of eyes were locked on us, whispering among themselves. Slowly, she lowered the guy back to the ground. He stumbled as his feet touched down, coughing and gasping for air.

"If you say so..." Johanne muttered, her tone reluctant.

I still didn't fully understand why she'd reacted so strongly, but I couldn't deny that it was kind of touching. She'd stood up for me without hesitation, even going so far as to lift a guy off the ground just to shut him up.

"Thank you," I said, meeting her eyes. "For sticking up for me."

Her face flushed instantly. It was such a strange sight—a masculine face tinged with a soft, feminine blush. Somehow, it was both odd and endearing at the same time.

"N-No worries," she stammered, her voice faltering slightly.

Chapter 500 - Election Day (5)

After a while, the current student council finally appeared, their entrance precise and commanding, led by Artemis, who walked with the confident grace of someone who had held the reins of leadership firmly. Her council members moved in sync, taking their positions at her sides as she stepped forward, her presence alone enough to command attention.

"Hello, fellow students," she began, her voice carrying effortlessly, resonating through the room with clarity and authority. "Today, as in years past, we gather to hold the election that will decide the next student council president of the Milham Academy of Magic Knights. This election isn't just a tradition—it's a pivotal moment to choose someone who will shape the future of our academy. I'm sure many of

you have been eagerly awaiting this day, and rightly so. This decision impacts all of us. Personally, I'm excited to see how it unfolds."

Even though her opening was more formal than inspiring, the room seemed to hang on her every word. It wasn't what she said—it was how she said it. Even those who usually couldn't give a fuck about speeches had their attention pulled in, like moths to a flame. Charisma like that wasn't something you could fake; it was raw and magnetic, the kind of pull that made her stand apart.

"With the election now upon us," Artemis continued, her tone softening slightly, "my time as your student council president nears its end. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who voted for me and believed in my leadership. Truly, thank you. Your trust has driven me to give my all.

"While I may not have achieved anything as grand as some of my predecessors, I've reached a goal that matters deeply to me, and that is making this academy not just a place for training and studying, but a place where living feels good, where life can be fun. To my successor, whoever you may be, I leave this legacy in your hands. I hope you'll honor it, rise above it, and create something even greater.

"This might sound like a heavy burden, and it is. But I mean it as encouragement—push yourself to do better, or at the very least, make sure no one here feels alone. That, more than anything, is the heart of leadership."

Artemis' words echoed through the air, their weight pressing down on the room. She wasn't just saying goodbye. She was laying down a challenge, a bar set so high that anyone who dared take her place would have to reach for it with everything they had.

In my time here, I'd seen how much she'd done for this academy. The dorms, once barely more than cramped, miserable spaces, were now comfortable and livable. The food had improved too—though my Earth palate still found it a bit lacking, I could see how far it had come.

I'd heard that, in the past, both the dorms and cafeteria were barely worth mentioning compared to now. On top of that, she'd implemented new rules and policies to keep the academy clean and created quiet study spaces where people could focus without interruptions. The campus itself felt alive in a way that seemed deliberate, with new study areas and policies that kept it clean and orderly.

And now, Artemis was stepping down. Her successor would have to shoulder the immense pressure of not just maintaining her legacy but pushing it even further. That kind of expectation could crush anyone not ready for it.

But as I looked at the two frontrunners, Titania and Princess Myrcella, I couldn't help but feel confident. Neither of them seemed like the type to crumble. They weren't just rivals—they were the kind of people who thrived under pressure, who could take what Artemis had built and make it their own.

"I would also like to thank my council members who have stood by me since day one," Artemis said, her voice a steady mix of emotion and authority. Her words seemed to wrap themselves around the gymnasium, sinking into the hearts of everyone listening. "Without all of you, I'm certain I would've crumbled under the weight of this responsibility. The sheer pressure would've flattened me, and I'd have buckled. But you—each and every one of you—held me up. You carried the burden alongside me, turned the impossible into reality, and stood by me right to the end. I can't even begin to express how entirely thankful I am to you for making this journey possible."

As she spoke, there was a gravity to her words, a pull that drew even the most inattentive students into her orbit. The council members beside her shifted, their expressions softening, their pride in being acknowledged glowing like embers in their eyes.

"Now that my reign is over," she continued, "I trust that my successor will surround themselves with individuals as capable and steadfast as you all have been. To those who will join the council, I hope you support the new president with everything you've got. They're going to need it, just like I did."

Remember, the president isn't just one person—leadership is a shared effort, a bond, a trust. Never let them carry the weight alone."

The council members flanking her moved in unison, bowing deeply alongside her. Their actions spoke volumes about the respect and admiration they held for her. It was Artemis who had shaped them into the cohesive unit they were, and it was clear her leadership had imprinted itself deeply on them.

Watching them, you couldn't help but feel the ripples of her impact. The changes she'd made to the academy weren't just surface-level—they reached deeper, touching lives in ways that weren't immediately visible. Even as someone who didn't give a thought about the student council, I couldn't deny the mark she'd left. But those shoes she was leaving behind? They were enormous, and whoever tried to fill them was going to feel the weight immediately.

"Being a leader doesn't mean a thing if you don't understand how the people you lead feel," Artemis said, her tone sharpening like a blade. "And being an incompetent leader will only make the ones you lead just as useless. To whoever follows me, I want you to do your absolute best. Don't let anyone, or anything, drown you in pressure. Yes, the responsibility is massive, but that's why you have a team. You're not meant to shoulder this burden alone.

"Lean on your council members. Trust them. Let them carry some of the weight so it doesn't crush you. That's what they're there for—to make the impossible manageable. And I know you can do this if you just keep that in mind. As for me," she continued, her voice softening, "I'm endlessly grateful for the chance I've been given. To everyone who voted for me, who believed in me, I owe you everything. I've felt truly blessed to serve in this role."

She bowed low, her long hair cascading over her shoulders in a graceful curtain, like the final act of a perfect performance. When she rose again, her eyes scanned the crowd, locking with faces here and there. Her smile was bittersweet—pride mixed with the sadness of letting go.

"And now, I'm signing off as president. It's time to pass the reins to the next generation."

The room erupted into cheers and applause, a wave of appreciation washing over her. The chapter of her presidency had come to an end, and now the academy was poised to enter a new era under someone else's leadership.

The vice president of the student council stepped forward, her sharp, commanding presence immediately shifting the atmosphere. Artemis nodded to her and stepped aside, giving her the floor. Her name was Anya von Estus, a woman who carried herself with the kind of authority that made people shut up and listen without needing to raise her voice.

"Now then, the election will officially begin after the candidates deliver their final speeches," Anya announced, her voice crisp and steady, cutting through the low murmurs of the crowd like a blade.

One by one, the candidates were introduced. Each had their own little fanbase, some larger than others. Whenever a name was called, clusters of supporters erupted into cheers, clapping, and whistling. It wasn't like these candidates were total nobodies—they had put in effort to gather at least some backing. Even though the bulk of the student body was clearly rallying behind two specific candidates, it was obvious these underdogs weren't going down without a fight.

It was kind of surprising, honestly. Even though Princess Myrcella and Titania had the lion's share of the support, these other candidates were still trying to claw their way into relevance. It was obvious they'd worked their asses off to drum up a following, even if their chances of winning were about as slim as squeezing through a tight hole without any lube.

When the two main contenders finally got their turn, the room erupted into chaos. The divided student body of Milham Academy practically exploded with cheers, each side trying to out-scream the other for their chosen candidate. The intensity on both ends was so equal that it was impossible to tell who had the upper hand. It wasn't just a contest. It was a full-blown war of loyalty.

Never before in Milham's entire existence had a vote been this closely contested between two candidates.

"Well then," Anya said, her voice cutting through the noise with practiced ease, "now that the candidates have been introduced, it's time to hear their final speeches. Let's give it up for the individuals who might just become the next president of this academy."

Her words were met with a fresh wave of applause and cheers, as though the energy in the room had been reignited.

And with that, the final speeches began.