

The World Is Mine For The Taking

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We strolled through the hallway, drawing surprised glances from everyone we passed. The multitude trailing us was enough to catch anyone's eye. However, the onlookers, well-acquainted with our supposed lack of skill, didn't offer pity; instead, their expressions spoke of sheer disdain.

Being deemed skill-less earned us the label of a nuisance among many students. Even though there were no explicit rules against skill-less individuals enrolling, it didn't automatically translate to a warm welcome. In fact, this academic year marked the only instance in the academy's history where not just one but two skill-less individuals had enrolled.

I suppose it's only natural. If someone held this school in high regard for shaping future magic knights, the revelation of admitting a skill-less individual would undoubtedly shatter their pristine image of the institution. Imagine diligently working for recognition based on your skill, only to be eclipsed by someone devoid of any skill; it would be enough to drive anyone berserk.

I lowered my head, hoping someone would play the classic move of accidentally bumping into me and muttering, "Oops, didn't see you there," or some variation. Stirring up a scene like this would only add to my infamy, reinforcing the notion that I was weak and lacked any skill. On the flip side, Shredica continued her march, unfazed, her gaze unwaveringly forward. It seemed that even under the scrutinizing eyes of many, she wasn't one to waver—an odd woman indeed.

We continued navigating the hallway until we finally reached the exit of the first years' building. Outside, the sun was painting the sky with hues of sunset, and students who had wrapped up their classes were leisurely heading back to the dorms. Just as we distanced ourselves considerably from the building's premises, the goons trailing us swiftly closed in, encircling us in a tight formation.

"What's the meaning of this?" Shredica demanded, her gaze piercing through the encircling tension.

A figure, none other than Hereon, boldly entered the tightly woven circle. His eyes locked onto Shredica, and a silent standoff commenced. "What do you think?"

"Oh? Is this some cryptic message only decipherable to thickheads like you? If that's the case, I'll ask again because unlike you, blessed with a head as dense as a brick, my intellect might struggle with your profound wisdom. Or perhaps you're conversing in a language beyond my humble comprehension?"

Hereon ground his teeth together, a low growl escaping as he balled his fists. "That mouth of yours is just begging for a good pounding..."

"Planning to engage in fisticuffs with me? Here? Seriously?"

"Do I look like I'm joking?"

"With that buffoonish expression, it's hard to tell if you're serious or just clowning around."

Suppressing a sudden burst of laughter, I marveled at her spot-on observation. The uncanny resemblance between this guy and the clown from a certain Earthly fast-food joint was something I thought only I noticed. Apparently, she saw it too.

"You really want to get killed, huh?"

"I'm not so sure about that. I do still love my life, after all. But do you genuinely think you have what it takes?"

"With you surrounded like this, do you really believe you stand much of a chance?"

"You claim superiority over me, yet you're resorting to an ambush? Is that truly your definition of superiority?"

Hereon leisurely stretched, a malevolent grin spreading across his face. "Don't fret. These guys are just my insurance."

"Insurance that if I overpower you, they'll swoop in to lend a hand?"

Hereon cracked his neck, an unsettling sound echoing in the air. "Insurance that you won't make a dash for freedom." After loosening up his legs, he finally shifted his gaze to me. "And hey, that useless, skill-less nerd back there isn't exempt. He's in for a beating too."

Shredica briefly glanced over her shoulder in my direction, then refocused on Hereon. "He's inconsequential. Whatever you decide to do with him is your prerogative. I genuinely don't care."

What a ruthless woman, callously tossing someone to the wolves like that. Yet, there was an intriguing quality about her, in an unconventional way. If she possessed a skill, I'd likely go all out to conquer her. Unfortunately, even if she did, dominating her would

likely be more challenging. This girl appeared to be a formidable challenge, just at first glance.

"Oh~ Then don't mind me if I do!" exclaimed Hereon, a streak of movement so swift that it blurred into a whirlwind, beyond the perception of ordinary people. If I were just a mundane nerd, I would have been blind to his rapid assault. Thankfully, I was anything but ordinary.

'He's unleashing his skill right from the get-go, huh?' I mused.

Now, how would Shredica counter this? I had half-expected her to either dodge his attack or be knocked out by it, but those assumptions were proven wrong in an instant.

In the span of a blink, Hereon found himself crashing down, a thunderous thud echoing against the ground.

"Huh?" Hereon muttered, his gaze fixed skyward, a perplexed expression etched on his face.

The circle of goons surrounding me mirrored his confusion. They were utterly clueless about the lightning-fast events.

But not me. I witnessed the entire spectacle. It unfolded with such rapidity that a mere blink could have rendered me oblivious. Luckily, my eyes remained wide open. What Shredica did was leverage the momentum of his speed, using a deft throwing technique that sent him hurtling to the ground with the same accelerated pace.

'Holy shit. Her adaptability is fucking impressive,' I mused. Even without a skill, she possessed a high battle IQ and a remarkable knack for adaptation.

Shredica gazed down at Hereon, her eyes void of emotion. "Now, have we settled the superiority debate? If so, then I'm done here." With a detached air, she released him and elegantly turned around. Yet, in an unexpected turn, Hereon surged to his feet with breathtaking speed, his fist primed for a punch. He unleashed a punch imbued with his skill, and with Shredica merely turning around, she had no means of blocking it.

I had no real reason for this, but a strange thought crossed my mind. If this were a light novel, Shredica might be the protagonist. Would I let this chance slip away to get a little closer to the main character? Certainly not.

Without a second thought, I charged forward, positioning myself between the two and taking Hereon's fist squarely on my face. In an instant, my skull felt like it had been jolted, the impact intensified by the breakneck speed, sending me several feet away.

I, Shredica, glanced at the boy who had just been sent flying after catching a punch meant for me. His intention remained a mystery to me, but as the assailant, having just punched the boy away, stood there, I seized his hand and executed another throwing technique. This time, I harnessed all the force I could muster, intending to bring him to the ground with maximum impact for added pain.

"Urgh!" The moment he collided with the ground, the air escaped his lungs in a pained groan.

Seizing the opportunity, I descended and grabbed his collar, unleashing a barrage of punches on his nose and face. He groaned in agony as blood coated my fist. The goons accompanying him, terrorized by the unfolding spectacle, scattered like frightened rabbits with their tails between their legs. Those who had been watching as mere bystanders stared at me in shock as I continued to rain punches upon the fallen adversary.

The clown on the receiving end of my blows mumbled incoherent apologies through bloodied lips, pleading for me to stop. Ignoring his futile attempts to beg for reprieve, I persisted in my assault. The air was thick with the metallic scent of blood, and the ground beneath us gradually transformed into a grim canvas painted in red. I continued the assault until the onlookers, now bored, dispersed and went on their way.

I didn't know why I was doing this, but witnessing the boy get punched ignited a rage within me.

Was it because we were both skill-less?

No, it wasn't that.

I wasn't angry for him; I was angry at myself for letting my guard down. I felt weak, incredibly weak. Why was I this feeble? I continued to berate myself until my arm grew stiff from the relentless punching.

By the time I finished, it was already night. The clown lay sprawled on the ground, unconscious. I had no idea when he lost consciousness, and I didn't care to find out. I gazed at him with emotionless eyes, then shifted my attention to my bloodied fist.

"Weak," I muttered to myself. A hundred punches to his face had left it battered and bloodied, but it was a superficial injury easily healed with basic magic. His wounds were the kind that simple healing magic could mend. That's why I called myself weak—weak and useless.

"Tsk. And here I hoped I could turn his face into something only hard healing magic could fix," I muttered as I turned around.

Approaching the boy who had taken the punch meant for me, I glared down at him with icy eyes, grabbing him by the collar. My intention was to mete out the same punishment I'd delivered to the clown. Gratefulness was a sentiment I had no intention of offering him. I felt no gratitude toward him, only disdain. Would a hundred punches transform his face into something irreparable, or would it still be mendable with a simple healing spell? I harbored a wish for the former.

However, as I prepared to unleash my fury, I noticed that his face, though bloodied to some extent, didn't bear the severe injuries one would expect from the clown's punch. A blow like that should have left him with missing teeth and a disfigured visage. Yet, he seemed relatively unscathed, teeth intact.

What was going on?

I examined his face closely, nearly nose to nose with him, when a voice called out, "What's happening there?" It was the voice of a woman. I turned around to see Professor Gabriella, clad in a lab coat and rimless glasses, approaching.