

## The World 54

### Chapter 54: Irene (1)

I woke up with a brutal hangover, struggling to recall the events of last night. All I could dredge up was a blur of excessive drinking. The memory gap included how I ended up in my room, clad in a dainty negligee.

This hangover, though, was a relentless beast. Its claws dug deep, threatening to unleash the contents of my stomach. Summoning every ounce of strength, I managed to coerce my lethargic body into a sitting position, battling the nauseating waves threatening to crash over me.

Casting a bleary-eyed gaze to my side, I discovered a handsome young man with raven-black hair, peacefully lost in slumber. Uttering, "...I'm going to freshen up for a bit," I rolled out of the bed and stretched, unleashing a loud, drawn-out yawn that echoed the impending challenge of the day.

I stepped into the bathroom, letting the cool water splash across my face. Gazing at my reflection in the mirror, a captivating visage looked back at me – a face of timeless allure, framed by scarlet-purple locks and captivating eyes of the same hue. Yet, for all its beauty, this face hadn't secured me a partner.

By the way, I'm Irene Brightspear – second daughter of the Brightspear family, revered as the most trusted knight lineage in the Milham royalty. Currently, I hold the position of a Professor at the Milham Academy of Magic Knights. My own academic journey led me to graduate from the Milham Academy of Magic, albeit only attaining the silver class.

Post-graduation, I made the choice to step into the role of a professor, determined to impart my knowledge. The initial year was a challenge as a newbie, but with time, I honed my skills. Eventually, I earned the title of the most talented professor in the Academy, receiving praise for my teaching prowess. It felt natural – I invested my best in educating.

While my dream of becoming a Magic Knight remained unfulfilled, guiding the next generation on their path to becoming knights was a satisfying alternative.

Even with these achievements, I remained single. It wasn't that I didn't desire a lifelong partner; on the contrary, I did, but my ideal partner seemed elusive. Perhaps I set my standards too high. Yet, that wasn't the sole reason for my single status. Wanting a partner was one thing, but investing my entire life into a relationship was another.

Honestly, I could easily land in a relationship, and even disregarding my profession and career, my looks alone could capture the hearts of countless men. However, the commitment of time, energy, and emotions required for a relationship felt daunting.

I brushed my teeth, then took another look at my reflection. A sigh escaped my lips.

After another sigh, I returned to my room. The young man was still peacefully asleep. Scratching my head, I gazed at him. "...Hey, you need to wake up and get moving now," I insisted.

"Five more minutes..." he grumbled in his sleep.

"I've got some academy work left," I announced. "Don't plan on sticking around."

"Mm..."

"Fine, have it your way," I conceded. Heading to my wardrobe, I searched for my professorial attire – a white long-sleeved undershirt, a black coat, a snug miniskirt, and black tights. I arranged them at the foot of the bed.

"Mind not kicking these off," I warned. "I'm going to take a bath. If you decide to venture off the bed, stay confined to this room. Got it?"

"Mm..."

With that settled, I shed my negligee, my sole piece of clothing, and made my way to the bathroom.

"Guh... My hips ache," I grumbled. "My legs are betraying me too..."

Once inside, I activated my skill, Atlantis, casting a realistic illusion of rain falling from the ceiling, creating the ambiance of a refreshing shower. As I did, my mind began to clear, and some memories from the previous night gradually resurfaced.

Post-bath, I returned to the room, clad only in a towel that clung to my curves. To my surprise, the young man was fully awake, occupying the edge of the bed. His gaze, a mesmerizing crimson red, met my scarlet-purple eyes as I made my entrance. "Mind if I use your bathroom?"

"...Sure," I nonchalantly replied.

With that, he headed into the bathroom. As the door closed, I buried my face in my hands in dismay.

Why in the world did I end up sleeping with one of my students?!

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If you're curious about how everything unfolded to lead to this moment, let me recount the events of last night.

With the midterm examinations behind me, I decided to unwind with some drinks at my favorite bar. Of course, my attire for such occasions differed significantly from the familiar image of the esteemed professor everyone at the academy knew. Gone was the beautiful and strict instructor, replaced by a completely different persona.

I donned a plain and modest outfit, exuding a clean and ladylike aura that contrasted sharply with my usual professorial attire. A long, flowing skirt concealed most of my skin, presenting a reserved appearance. I even opted for a different style of glasses – round frames, unlike the ones I wore while teaching.

I was confident that, even if someone I knew stumbled upon me in the bar, they wouldn't recognize Professor Irene Brightspear in this ensemble. I projected an impression of quietness that matched my subdued appearance.

When I arrived, I promptly ordered my favorite drink and indulged until the line between sips and gulps blurred. At some point, the atmosphere shifted, and numerous men began eyeing me with a newfound interest, their gazes laced with unmistakable lust. I recognized that look all too well – a familiarity born from the stares of even my own students.

Undeterred, I brushed off their attention and continued drinking.

Yet, my naivety led me to believe they would merely gaze from afar and not approach me as my students typically did. My assumption proved false.

"Hey miss, I noticed you're drowning your sorrows alone. Care for some company?" one man ventured. Judging by his appearance, he was a noble.

"...I'm sorry, but I prefer to be alone," I replied, offering him a polite smile.

"Oh, don't be so coy. I can see the pain in your eyes. You're drowning those sorrows for a reason, sweetheart," he said with a sinister grin. Despite his noble appearance, there was nothing refined about the lecherous leer in his eyes. He repulsed me.

What was he implying? Was it inconceivable for a woman to enjoy a solitary drink without being shackled to some heartbreak narrative? Why did he automatically assume I was nursing a wounded heart?

"Excuse me, but I have no clue what you're babbling about. I've got a lot on my plate, so could you kindly back off and get out of my space?" I retorted, sending him a withering glare.

"Don't be a buzzkill. I know your type. You're the kind of woman who gets wild when she lets her hair down, right?" he continued, his voice dripping with sleaze. "You may look like a sweet angel, but I've danced with many devils like you. They play the modest game at first, and then, once the curtain falls, they unleash their inner vixens. I bet you're no exception," he taunted.

"Let me guess. Your man is a bore, and you've had enough. That's why you're here, sipping alone. You came solo, hoping to lure in some attention, right? Seeking a fresh plaything. Well, guess what?

I'm ready to be your toy for the night. But mark my words, by the end of this evening, you'll be begging for more. How does that sound?"

I was teetering on the edge of delivering a punch to this man's face. He wasn't just being rude; his words were bordering on sexual harassment. I'd had enough. Deciding to abandon the bar scene and continue the night at home, I stood up. However, as I moved, he grabbed my arm.

"Now now, where are you going? We're not done here yet, are we?"

"I'm heading home because someone just ruined my day. So, please, get your hands off me."

"Leaving so soon? Do you really want it that badly?" he smirked, his arrogance irritating me further. Why were there always men like him? This was precisely why finding an ideal partner seemed impossible; men behaved like wild animals.

I didn't want to create a scene, but since he persisted in invading my personal space, I decided to use my skill on him. I was ready to render him unconscious. Before I could act, though, I heard a voice behind the man.

"What are you doing?"

"Huh?" the man clutching me turned, fixing his gaze on the other man who had spoken. "Can't you fucking see? I'm about to head home with my girlfriend here; she seems practically begging for some action."

"Girlfriend?" the other man scoffed. "By 'girlfriend,' you mean that lady over there?"

"Yeah. Got a problem with that?"

"Oh, I do have a problem with that. That woman there is my girlfriend."

I was taken aback by their exchange. Why were these men claiming I was their girlfriend? I was nobody's girlfriend! I wanted to shout at them, but the words wouldn't come out. The man who asserted that I was his girlfriend was someone I recognized. I had seen him around in my class.

In fact, it was impossible not to know him. He was famous at the academy, and even the professors were familiar with him. Not for any positive reasons, though. He was one of my students.

"...L-Leon?" The name of the student labeled as the weakest at the academy slipped out of my mouth.