

The World 556

Chapter 556 - The Sword Festival, Part 3 (7)

Krista arrived just in time. It wasn't exactly prohibited to enter the academy if you weren't a cadet—at least, not during vacation. The real restrictions were placed during school hours to prevent any dangerous individuals from sneaking in.

"What do you want me to do, Leon?" she asked, her voice carrying a playful edge.

"I need you to do something with her," I told her, nodding towards Johanne.

Krista's eyes flickered to Johanne, who was hugging her arms around herself, fidgeting under Krista's gaze. This was the first time she'd ever looked so vulnerable, and she was clearly uncomfortable with it.

"What? A makeover or something? Unfortunately, I didn't bring any clothes with me today. I thought you called me for something else..." she pouted, lips curling slightly.

I had no idea what she meant by 'something else,' but judging by the way she said it, she had something... specific in mind. But we didn't have time to dwell on that. If we didn't act fast, Tris might come back and find Johanne in this state.

"There's no need for a makeover," I clarified. "I want you to do something so that no one can tell she's a woman."

"H-Huh?" Krista blinked in confusion.

"I mean, I want you to make her look like a guy."

Krista's expression twisted as she tried to process my request. Then, as if deciding not to question it, she shrugged. "Uh, I have no idea what you're up to, but sure. I guess I can work with that."

She leaned forward, bending at the waist until she was practically folding in half, scrutinizing Johanne like some sort of fashion scientist dissecting her subject. Her fingers rubbed her chin, eyes narrowing in deep thought.

"Uh, Leon... does she have to stare at me like that?" Johanne asked, voice tinged with unease.

"She's the expert, so yeah, I guess she does," I replied.

Krista's intense inspection didn't stop there. After a long minute, she turned her gaze to me, her sharp eyes trailing over my body like she was sizing me up. I stiffened. It felt like I was being undressed by her stare alone.

"Hmm..." she mused, eyes gleaming with something unreadable.

A few moments passed before she suddenly straightened up and slammed her fist into her palm. "I got it!"

"That was fast," I muttered.

Well, I supposed it made sense. Krista had a keen eye for detail, trained from years of working with fabrics and body measurements. She was a professional clothing designer, and her ability to gauge proportions just by looking was nothing short of impressive. I was lucky I'd met her back in Martha's brothel.

"I just need some materials," she announced, scribbling something down on a notepad. "And we'll be good to go!"

She tore off the page and handed it to me. I skimmed over the list. Most of the items were easy to gather—things that were already in the room. But one thing stood out.

A specific type of cloth.

I frowned. "Where the hell am I supposed to get this?"

Pulling out my phone, I messaged Gabrielle, asking if she could find it for me. Her reply came fast, and with it, the location I needed.

A store just a few blocks away from the academy. Perfect. I could grab it and be back in no time.

After grabbing the items Krista had asked for, she wasted no time getting to work. Her hands moved with precision, each motion deliberate and controlled, like someone who had done this countless times before. She didn't hesitate, didn't fumble—just pure efficiency. It was almost mesmerizing to watch. Well, that made sense. She knew exactly what she was doing.

Time slipped by in a blur, and before I knew it, she was done.

"Here." Krista handed over the binder, her tone brisk yet confident. "Just use this to bind your breasts. Your breasts are pretty big, but if you wrap it tight enough, this should flatten them out."

Johanne hesitated before taking it. "Uh... Okay..."

"It's simple—just wrap it around yourself, and that's it. I made sure it won't put too much pressure on your chest, so you won't feel suffocated," Krista explained, then turned to me. "Oh, I gotta go now, Leon. Still got things to do. See you later."

"Later," I replied.

And just like that, she was gone, leaving us in silence.

Tris arrived a little later than she had planned, just enough time for Johanne to fix herself up.

When she walked in, her eyes immediately found Johanne, her expression shifting from relief to curiosity.

"Johanne, you're awake. Are you feeling better?" she asked, stepping closer.

She studied Johanne carefully. Even though Johanne was now biologically female, the remnants of her former self still clung to her. The strong, defined jawline had softened, but not entirely; her eyes, once sharp and intense, now carried a certain delicate allure. Her body was still tall, still lean, but her hips had widened slightly, and her waist curved in ways it hadn't before. And then there was the voice—softer, smoother, lacking the rough edge it once had.

"Y-Yeah. Thank you," Johanne replied, forcing her voice deeper.

It sounded off. Forced.

I glanced at Tris, hoping she wouldn't pick up on it.

She did.

"Is something wrong, Johanne? Your voice sounds... different."

"N-No, I'm fine," Johanne said quickly, still trying to mask the shift in her tone. "Maybe it's because of the pain earlier. My voice probably got a little strained. But physically, I'm fine."

Tris didn't look convinced. Her brows knitted together as her gaze traveled over Johanne's form, absorbing every tiny difference. Her body language tensed slightly, like her instincts were screaming at her that something was off.

I could see the moment she started piecing things together.

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Even though Johanne was still tall, her height had dropped slightly. Her shoulders had narrowed. Her Adam's apple was gone. The feminine softness in her face was impossible to ignore. And even though the binder had done its job in flattening her chest, the shape of her body couldn't be completely hidden. It was subtle—small changes, tiny shifts—but to someone who had known her intimately, those little differences were glaring.

Tris tilted her head, staring, lips slightly parted like she was about to ask something. But then she hesitated.

"O-Okay then..." she finally said, voice laced with uncertainty.

For now, she let it go.

"Let's go. Are you okay to walk? I brought a butler with me. Want me to call him to carry you?"

"I-I'm fine," Johanne said quickly, almost too quickly. "I can walk on my own."

Tris held her gaze for a moment longer before nodding. "I see. That's good, then." She smiled—soft, but unreadable.

She didn't say anything more, but I could tell the thought hadn't left her mind.

"Let's go. Thank you, Leon, for taking care of my husband," she said, still wearing that same unreadable smile.

"No worries," I replied, my tone steady. "Johanne's my friend. Of course, I'd help."

After that, they left.

Tris's POV

The moment I laid eyes on Johanne, I knew something was off.

Something about her was... off. And it wasn't just a minor difference—this wasn't like noticing someone had lost a bit of weight or that they looked more exhausted than usual. No, the shift was stark, blatant, impossible to ignore.

She looked softer. Feminine in a way that hadn't been there before. Her face—still familiar, still undeniably Johanne—had lost the sharp handsomeness I'd always associated with her. The angles were gentler now, more delicate, like the edges of a sculpture smoothed down by time. If I couldn't call her handsome anymore, then what was she? Beautiful? The thought sent a strange sensation crawling up my spine.

And her voice...

It was subtle, but it had changed. The firm, steady tone I was used to was gone, replaced by something quieter, something silkier, something undeniably softer. It wasn't high-pitched or overtly feminine, but there was a smoothness to it, a lightness that hadn't been there before.

I didn't miss any of it. How could I? I've known Johanne for years.

And yet, I said nothing.

Because deep down, I already knew.

I have a secret. A truth I've carried alone for years.

The reason I wanted Johanne to be with my brother instead of me wasn't just because I was obsessed with male-on-male romances. Okay, maybe that was part of it—I loved those stories, devoured them, lived for them—but that wasn't the real reason.

No. It was because of something I overheard when I was twelve.

Something I was never meant to hear.

The Sword Saint—Johanne's father—was speaking with mine. Their voices were hushed, but their words hit me like a hammer.

"Johanne is my flesh and blood, but she wasn't originally male. You already know that, don't you?"

"Yeah. You told me before. The moment she was born, you found a witch who could change a person's gender and had her turned into a boy. But does that even matter? He's a man now, and I have a daughter. We can finally unite our families. For decades, we tried, but our ancestors kept producing sons, so there was no way to tie our bloodlines together. But now, I have a daughter, and you have a son. Wouldn't it be perfect if we paired them?"

I remember standing there, frozen, my breath locked in my throat.

I shouldn't have heard that.

But I did.

And it shattered everything I thought I knew.

Johanne had always been a boy to me. She acted like one, carried herself like one, even fought with a sword like one. But after hearing that conversation, something inside me twisted.

Because Johanne wasn't a boy. Not really. She was born a girl. And the worst part? She had no idea.

That day, I made a decision.

I was going to help her.

Chapter 557 - The Sword Festival, Part 4 (1)

Leon's POV

The fifth day of the Sword Festival came to a close, with Tris carving her way to the Quarter Finals. That meant there was a real possibility we'd clash in battle soon—whether in the Quarters, the Semis, or maybe even in the Finals, where everything would be on the line.

"Congratulations, Trill! You won!" Titania squealed, rushing over and wrapping her arms tightly around Trill. Their breasts pressed together, soft and yielding, a tantalizing sight that was impossible to ignore.

"Thank you," Trill said, flashing a triumphant smile. "Honestly, I wasn't sure I'd pull through. My opponent was pretty strong."

"Oh, please, don't even try that fake humility. You didn't even break a sweat!" Titania teased, a playful pout on her lips.

Trill had dominated the preliminary rounds, winning all three matches effortlessly. Three days from now, she'd be stepping onto the stage of the Quarter Finals, where the real battles began. The tournament lasted a total of eight days—those who conquered the preliminaries would fight in the Quarter Finals, and only the strongest would claw their way into the Semis. From there, the best of the best would collide in a final showdown to determine the champion.

Tris and I had both secured our spots in the Quarter Finals. Titania, however, had been eliminated in the first round, which meant she would be on the sidelines, watching as we tore through our opponents. With three full days before the Quarter Finals, Semi-Finals, and Finals—three consecutive days of intense, merciless battles—we had a rare moment to breathe.

"Let's celebrate with some barbecue, Leon!" Titania practically bounced with excitement, her chest heaving, her golden locks cascading down her back.

I let out a low chuckle, amused by her boundless energy. "Sounds like a good plan."

And just like that, we ended the day surrounded by food, fire, and laughter, indulging in a feast worthy of champions.

The next three days blurred into a haze of routine and indulgence. I kept a close eye on Leonamon, poring over financial reports, watching as our wealth skyrocketed at an almost frightening pace. The gold flowed like an unstoppable river, an obscene accumulation of power that could drown nations if left unchecked. Concern gnawed at the back of my mind—if I hoarded too much, I might end up breaking the economy itself. Inflation was a real problem when you had more wealth than entire kingdoms.

To counter that, I funneled a significant portion into orphanages and boosted my employees' salaries. They were the ones working their asses off to make this possible, and I wasn't about to turn into some greedy bastard hoarding wealth like a dragon. I had more money than I could ever spend, enough to live in absolute luxury, drowning in riches, women, and fine wine for a thousand years. And more than enough to keep the women in my life satisfied and cared for.

But that wasn't the only thing I did.

I indulged. Fully.

Soft, supple bodies wrapped around me, eager mouths trailing over my skin, their wet, hot tongues sending shivers through my spine. The heat of their pussies, tight and slick, clenched around my dick, milking every last drop of cum from me. Breasts—soft, pillowy mounds pressed against my face, smothering me in warmth and pleasure. My body ached from the sheer excess, my muscles worn from the constant fucking, my mind teetering between exhaustion and euphoria.

I spent those days buried in the bliss of sex, drowning in the moans and gasps of women eager to please. Their bodies molded against mine, the scent of sweat and lust thick in the air, the sound of wet slaps echoing through the lavish chambers. I was constantly drained, yet always craving more, reveling in the sheer decadence of it all.

I felt like a king.

Everything was fresh, indulgent, and utterly satisfying.

At this point, I had conquered many women. The Starry Knights members were now fully dominated, their abilities absorbed into my arsenal. Bernadette, one of the Shadows, had also fallen under my control. Her stealth ability was a damn good asset—perfect for tailing someone without being noticed or slipping through enemy lines undetected.

Some of the other Shadow members were still only halfway through their domination. Their requirements weren't too hard at first, but things really ramped up by the time I hit the fifth, sixth, and seventh conditions. It seemed like the difficulty scaled up the closer I got to dominating them completely. Then again, some of the last conditions turned out to be surprisingly easy, so maybe it just depended on the situation. Either way, I was making progress, and that was all that mattered.

Every one of them would be mine in due time.

After days of indulging in debauchery and basking in the warmth of soft, naked bodies, the day of the Quarter Finals finally arrived.

"Hmmm..." Titania's sharp eyes scanned the bracket board, her lips curving into a knowing smirk. "Looks like you won't be fighting Trill—not at the Quarter Finals, at least."

"Well, I wouldn't wanna fight my boyfriend right off the bat," Trill mused, rolling her shoulders. "Besides, let's be honest—I don't think I'd stand a chance against him."

"Come on, Trill. Don't sell yourself short," Titania chided, nudging her playfully. "Even if Leon's strong, you've got some serious skills too. You can take him on."

I smirked, tilting my head lazily. "If it came to that, I'd probably just throw the match and let Trill take the win."

The moment those words left my mouth, both of them turned to glare at me, their eyes flashing with irritation.

"Don't you dare."

I chuckled, raising my hands in surrender. They wanted a real fight. No freebies, no holding back. Fair enough—I respected that.

My opponent for the Quarter Finals was some nobody named Hickwad. Never heard of the guy, which meant he probably fought in one of the later preliminary matches I hadn't bothered watching. Meanwhile, Trill's opponent was a familiar face—the dude who went up against Johanne in the prelims. Huh... Well, that made sense. He managed to claw his way into the Quarter Finals, after all.

"Trill, be nice to your opponent," I murmured, watching as she stretched her arms with an almost lazy grace.

"Hm?" She blinked at me, tilting her head slightly, clearly confused.

I didn't elaborate. The guy was decent—a genuinely good fighter and, from what I could tell, not a total asshole. If possible, I wanted Trill to go a little easy on him.

Unfortunately, she didn't.

Yeah... I should've known better than to ask her to hold back.

By the time I noticed, it was already my turn.

The referee droned on in that same monotonous tone he'd used throughout the preliminary rounds, barely injecting any life into his words. Meanwhile, my gaze settled on my opponent. He didn't seem all that special at first glance, but I had to admit, the way he handled his sword had a certain efficiency to it. No wasted movements. Just the essentials. To an untrained eye, his stance might've looked full of

openings, but in reality, those gaps were few and deceptive. Most wouldn't even realize the difference—until they were cut down.

Unfortunately for him, I wasn't most people.

The moment the referee dropped his hand, signaling the start of the match, I ended it.

In an instant, my opponent was on the ground, defeated before he even had the chance to react. The arena fell silent for a beat—then came the jeers and boos from the crowd.

I expected as much.

These spectators didn't like me. I'd ruined their entertainment by ending my fights too quickly during the preliminaries. They wanted drama. They wanted long, drawn-out battles. Instead, I gave them results. Even after my fight with Zeruel, it seemed I hadn't earned any favor from them. Oh well.

With that, Trill and I secured our spots in the semi-finals.

"Both of you, congratulations!" Titania beamed as she grabbed my arm and Trill's, pulling us into a tight embrace. Her ample breasts pressed against us, and I could feel the warmth of her body radiating through her clothes. "I'm so happy for you two! Even though I didn't win, it feels like with you two winning, I'm winning too! I just wish Yr was here so she could watch!"

She looked up at us, her face glowing with excitement.

As for why Yr wasn't here... well, same old, same old—she was sleeping. These days, she barely slept in my room at all, opting to curl up with Titania and Trill instead. My three girlfriends had grown incredibly close, their bond deepening in ways that honestly still took me by surprise.

Back in my previous life, in my old world, having multiple partners was something most cultures frowned upon. Mine especially. Even after spending nearly nineteen years in this world, the reality of my situation still sometimes felt surreal. But my perspective had shifted. This world played by different rules, and I'd long since adapted.

The next day marked the semi-finals.

And this time, I had a real fight on my hands.

Because the person standing in my way was the same woman who had fought Titania.

Chapter 558 - The Sword Festival, Part 4 (2)

The referee let out a long, tired sigh as he glanced between us. It was clear—he still remembered the day this woman had nearly killed Titania. That moment had almost led to a full-blown clash between us right then and there. And now, here we stood, facing each other once again. The air between us was suffocating, thick with something unspoken. I had no idea if the referee was dreading this match or looking forward to it, considering we were both clearly strong fighters. But the crowd? The crowd was ecstatic.

The spectators were roaring with excitement, their cheers echoing through the arena like rolling thunder. Their eyes were hungry, eager, like they were about to witness the bloodiest spectacle of their

lives. Their energy was electric, a chaotic blend of adrenaline and anticipation. It was like they had been waiting for this showdown for ages, their anticipation feeding into the very ground beneath us.

The referee's voice cut through the noise as he repeated the rules—over and over again. No killing. That was the biggest rule. If broken, the maximum punishment was disqualification. He made sure to stress that point specifically to us. The way he hammered it in... it was almost like he wanted us to snap, to break the rule, to give this audience the carnage they were starving for. Or maybe he really was trying to prevent bloodshed. I couldn't tell. Either way, it didn't matter.

All that mattered was the person in front of me.

When the referee finally finished his droning speech, he raised his hand, and in the next breath, it came slicing down.

The fight had begun.

And yet, neither of us moved.

We just stood there, staring at each other, our bodies tense, our grips tight on our weapons. The air was suffocating, crackling with pressure so heavy it felt like the very ground beneath us was straining under the weight. A slow, invisible force pressed down on my shoulders, thickening the silence between us.

She didn't move. I didn't move.

It was like we were waiting—measuring, calculating, seeing who would crack first.

Did she already understand my strength? Was that why she wasn't charging in recklessly? Or was there something else? Something more?

One thing was certain—this woman was different. There was no bloodlust in her stance, no burning rage in her gaze. Her eyes were hollow, emotionless, an abyss that swallowed everything and reflected nothing back.

I finally broke the silence.

"You're a member of Eclipse, aren't you?" My voice was low but steady. "Or at least a former one. A survivor from that already defeated organization."

She didn't answer. Not even a twitch. Her expression remained empty, her silence colder than ice. It was like Eclipse meant absolutely nothing to her. No anger. No regret. No pride. Just... nothing.

Tch.

"Whatever." My fingers curled around the hilt of my sword, the grip firm, controlled. The Cursed Sword hummed in my grasp, almost like it was responding to me. Lately, I had been using this sword more than anything else, and for good reason. It felt perfect—almost too perfect. Unlike when I had fought the Great Darkness, this blade didn't drain my strength or sap away my mana. It resonated with me in a way that no other weapon ever had.

And I knew why.

Because this sword wasn't just a weapon. It wasn't just an "it."

She was alive. And the soul bound within it... was a woman.

Across from me, my opponent finally shifted. Her stance was razor-sharp, precise in a way that sent a shiver crawling up my spine. The way she handled her sword—it was something I had never seen before. It wasn't just skill. It was something beyond that.

There were no wasted movements. No exploitable openings. No hesitation.

And that?

That was exciting.

The restless murmurs of the crowd turned into outright jeers, their patience snapping like a brittle thread. The spectators were done waiting. They wanted blood. A fight. Something to tear through the dull anticipation clawing at their minds.

"Quit stalling and fucking fight already!" someone shouted. Others joined in, their voices overlapping, a cacophony of hunger for violence.

Fine.

We'd give them exactly what they wanted.

The moment I lunged forward, she moved in perfect sync. It was almost unnatural—like our instincts had aligned in that one fleeting instant. The air split with the force of our speed, a shockwave rippling outward as our swords clashed with a brutal clang. The impact rang through my arms, the vibration sinking into my bones, but it wasn't intimidation I felt—it was exhilaration.

Something primal stirred in my chest, bubbling up from within. My pulse thrummed in anticipation, my breath steady despite the rush of battle. I could already tell—this was going to be fucking good.

So, I decided. I wasn't holding back.

She felt it. The change. The way my strikes suddenly carried more force, more precision. And in response, her sharp eyes flickered—not wide, but just enough. A tiny shift, a subtle reaction. But I caught it.

Then, like a whisper from the abyss, a metallic chime resonated in my mind.

A sign.

She was interested now.

Seizing the brief opening, I peeled my focus away just enough to check the message that had appeared before me.

--

You've captured the interest of Yurishia. You can now proceed to dominate her.

Name: Yurishia

Race: Unknown

Requirements to dominate Titania:

1. Defeat Yurishia

2. Unlock

3. Unlock

4. Unlock

....

--

Unknown race?

That was new. What the hell was that supposed to mean?

I pushed the thought aside. I'd figure that out later. Right now, there was only one thing that mattered.

I grinned, letting the heat of battle seep into my voice.

"Now, do I finally have your attention?" I taunted, my grip tightening around my sword. "Just so you know, I'm the one who killed that thing Sesillian summoned."

Her reaction was instant. A flicker of something deeper, something sharp. Her eyes widened—not in fear, but in revelation. It told me everything I needed to know. She wasn't Eclipse. Not exactly. More like someone circling around them, drawn to their ambitions, but not quite part of the core.

Interesting.

"Do you know Marie?" I continued, watching her closely. "She's my prisoner. I remember her saying that whatever the Eclipse tried to pull at the capital was exactly what she wanted. No idea if she's got people she's working with, but I figured I'd bring it up."

That was the trigger.

The moment those words left my lips, the air cracked.

A suffocating pressure crashed down, a pulse of raw bloodlust so thick it felt like the world itself recoiled. The sheer weight of it was enough to send a shockwave rippling through the arena. The spectators closest to the platform didn't stand a chance—several of them collapsed on the spot, unconscious before they even hit the ground.

It was the kind of bloodlust that could stop a weak bastard's heart mid-beat.

And yet, standing right at the center of it, drowning in its murderous intent, I didn't even flinch. It washed over me like a tide, like a brutal wave trying to crush me under its weight—but it did nothing. It didn't shake me. Didn't make my pulse waver.

I just stared right back at her.

Her gaze burned with something unreadable—something dangerous.

"I see..." I said. "Seems to me that you two are related somehow."

"Where is she?"

Her voice cut through the chaos like a blade. Sharp. Cold. Unyielding.

It was the first time she had spoken. Not a single word had left her lips when I stopped her from killing Titania. No anger. No frustration. Just silence. But now? Now, she demanded.

I smirked, tilting my head slightly, watching the fire simmer in her eyes.

"That's a secret," I said, my voice laced with amusement, taunting her just enough to push her further.

I could feel the pieces falling into place. The Eclipse—it wasn't Sesillian pulling the strings. He was just another pawn, a disposable cog in something far bigger. A shadow loomed behind it all, something pulling the strings from the darkness. And Marie... and this woman—they were tied to it.

Which meant...

The Great Darkness wasn't the real threat.

Something worse was coming. Something that made the Eclipse look like nothing more than a distraction.

Before I could dwell on it any longer, she moved.

One second she stood there, tension coiled in her muscles—then in a heartbeat, she struck. A blur of speed. A force like a storm breaking loose. This wasn't some half-assed exchange anymore. This was war.

I felt it before I even saw it.

A shift in the air. A sudden pull, like gravity itself had been thrown off balance.

"Huh..." I muttered, eyes narrowing.

And then—her eyes.

Molten gold flared in her irises, burning like miniature suns. The glow bled outward, threads of luminous energy wrapping around her arms like living chains. It pulsed, flickered, crackled like an unstable supernova, raw and volatile.

Her jaw clenched, teeth grinding together. She glared at me—no, she hated me. It wasn't just rage. This was deeper, sharper. Like I had personally slaughtered her entire family right in front of her and laughed about it.

She didn't care about the fight anymore. She didn't care about winning.

She just wanted to break me.

And she was ready to use that—her ability.

Which meant, by the rules?

She was already disqualified.

But that didn't stop the grin from stretching across my lips.

Before the referee could step in, before anyone could blink, I moved.

A single step—and then I was gone.

Dashing straight for her, faster than thought, sword raised high.

And the instant our blades collided—the world shattered.

A blinding explosion erupted from the clash, shockwaves ripping through the air like a detonation. White-hot light erupted outward, swallowing everything in a blinding inferno of gold and silver. The sheer force blasted through the arena, ripping through the air, shaking the ground beneath us like an earthquake.

The audience? They weren't cheering anymore.

Because in that moment, it wasn't just a fight.

It was a warzone.

Chapter 559 - The Sword Festival, Part 4 (3)

The battle between us wasn't just a fight—it was a storm. A violent, chaotic force tearing through the air, sending shockwaves with every clash of our blades. It felt like the world itself was shaking under the weight of our strength. The sound of our swords meeting didn't even resemble steel anymore. It was something heavier—thicker—like thunder crashing down, sending ripples of force through the battlefield.

Every swing carried enough power to crack the earth beneath us. The sheer force behind each strike sent gusts of wind howling across the arena, kicking up dust and debris like an unstoppable tempest. The spectators had started with jeers, but now? Now they were dead silent, too stunned to even breathe properly.

We both knew it.

I was strong. She was strong.

But neither of us would back down.

Her eyes—those eyes—burned with something wild. It was like she had woken up from a long-ass slumber and was only now remembering what it meant to fight, to truly fight. Every movement of hers carried lethal precision, her sword carving through the air like a streak of pure light. And her attacks had gotten even stronger. My arms rattled with every impact, my muscles screaming under the relentless assault.

"Now then... shall we, Ayuru?" I whispered to my sword, feeling the wicked hunger stirring within it.

The moment I called to her, Ayuru answered.

A brutal, violent pull shot through my body as the Cursed Sword drained a massive amount of mana from me, drinking deep like a starving beast. It wasn't a gentle pull—it was ruthless. The sheer intensity

of it could've turned any weakling into a dry, withered husk in an instant. Ayuru's power wasn't something to wield lightly. It was a force meant to tear apart anyone foolish enough to try.

She was a Cursed Sword, after all.

A weapon feared across the lands, a blade that had killed more of its wielders than its enemies. Most who held her barely lasted a day. She was a raw advantage in battle but a brutal liability to her wielder. Without an absurdly large mana pool, one swing would be enough to kill you. A perfect example of a double-edged sword.

But after the battle at the capital—after I used her to cut down the Great Darkness—something changed. Maybe she liked me. Maybe she recognized me. Either way, she stopped feeding on me without permission. Now, she only drank what I willingly offered.

And right now, I was feeding her everything I had.

Ayuru's power surged through me, a black, writhing energy wrapping around the blade like living shadows. My mana pulsed through her, thick and heavy, dark as the abyss itself. The sheer pressure of it made the ground beneath my feet crack.

I grinned.

And then, I swung.

Her blade was a streak of blinding white, but mine was a deep, consuming void.

The moment our swords met, the air around us detonated. A violent eruption of raw mana exploded outward, blasting through the arena with the force of a goddamn bomb. The impact sent a deafening shockwave rippling through the crowd, forcing spectators to stumble back. Some were even thrown clear off their feet. The referee, realizing how insane this fight had become, abandoned the platform altogether. That poor bastard had already abandoned the platform, realizing he was way too close to ground zero.

Those who had been unconscious from her earlier intimidation were dragged away by the ones still standing, but even they were struggling to hold on under the sheer pressure of our clash.

And then, the dust settled.

I saw her.

Still standing.

Panting.

But still standing.

I had expected my strike to rip through her, to tear her down, to make her body remember the force of my attack—but she was still there.

I narrowed my eyes. Could she... take a hit strong enough to bring down a dragon?

The Great Darkness had recognized my power that day, yet this woman—

She dropped to one knee.

Her breaths came in sharp, ragged gasps. The radiant light that had once enveloped her sword flickered, weakened. The strength she had poured into it was crumbling away. She pressed the blade into the ground, using it to keep herself upright, but then I saw it—

A crack.

Thin at first, but spreading.

Her sword was breaking.

One more hit, and it'd shatter completely.

She had lost.

I pressed the tip of my sword against her throat, the cold steel grazing her skin, a hair's breadth from cutting deep. Her ragged breath shuddered against the blade, her body frozen in place, but her eyes—those sharp, burning eyes—still held defiance.

"You lost," I murmured, my voice low but absolute. "I won. Now, tell me—who are you, and what's your connection to the Eclipse? Or better yet, spill everything about the sick fuck who created that twisted organization. Why the hell are you trying to rip open a rift and let those otherworldly bastards pour into this world?"

She said nothing.

Just glared, lips pressed into a thin line. The silence stretched between us, thick with tension, but I could see it in her eyes—she wasn't going to break easily. Stubborn. Arrogant. But that was fine. I had all the time in the world.

Then—

Something shifted.

A faint vibration beneath my boots. A presence.

Without hesitation, I drove my fist through the concrete platform, the sheer force sending cracks spiderwebbing outward. My fingers closed around something solid, and in one brutal yank, I dragged it out into the open.

"Nhggg!?"

The thing I pulled free—

Was a woman.

Bare naked. Her pale skin glistened under the arena's lights, sweat dripping down the curves of her body, her chest heaving in shock. How the hell had she even gotten inside the platform? That thing was solid concrete—no gaps, no space to slip through.

Phasing ability.

Had to be.

But none of that mattered now—I had her by the throat.

"W-Why... can't I... get out?!" she gasped, her delicate hands clawing at my wrist, nails scraping against my skin in a desperate attempt to pry herself free.

She was panicking.

Because no matter how much she struggled, she couldn't use her ability.

I smirked.

"Because I'm holding you," I said, lifting my hand slightly to show her the obsidian ring wrapped around my finger. A power-dampener. Weak, sure—but enough to shut down low-tier abilities like hers. "Looks like your little escape trick doesn't work on me, sweetheart."

Her pupils shrank. Fear flickered across her face.

"And?" My voice dropped lower, colder. "What exactly are you?"

I tightened my grip around her throat.

She let out a strangled gasp. Her body twisted, legs kicking slightly, muscles tensing—then suddenly, her fingers twitched.

Something—no, something dangerous—manifested in her grasp.

A remote.

The moment I saw it, I knew.

Before I could rip it away, she slammed her thumb down on the button.

And then I felt it.

Guardian's warning slammed into me like a shockwave. Every nerve in my body went rigid, my instincts roaring in alarm.

A large-scale detonation.

A catastrophe waiting to happen.

The kind of explosion that wouldn't just level this arena—it would wipe out every single person inside it.

Titania. Trill.

Two of my girls were in that crowd.

I clicked my tongue, then launched the bitch away from me.

In the same breath, I activated Guardian, pouring every ounce of my will into its expansion. The gold translucent barrier erupted outward, stretching, spreading—covering every single inch of the arena with an unbreakable dome.

And then—

BOOM.

The explosion detonated beneath my feet.

A firestorm erupted from the ground, a monstrous inferno swallowing everything in its path. The shockwave blasted outward, the force so violent that it would have torn flesh from bone if it weren't for Guardian's protection. The sound—It wasn't just loud. It was deafening.

The kind of explosion that didn't just echo—it ripped through the air, a brutal, concussive force that nearly shattered my eardrums. Flames roared against the barrier, sparks flashing like miniature stars against the translucent shield.

But Guardian held.

The arena—though scorched and crumbling—stood.

I exhaled sharply, smoke curling through the air around me.

I scanned my surroundings, my vision slightly hazy. Titania and Trill were safe—thank goodness for that. As for the other spectators... I didn't care much for them, but I sure as hell didn't want them dead.

But the woman I had been fighting—along with the naked bitch—were both gone. Vanished.

The only thing left behind was a nearly shattered sword, lying pathetically amidst the rubble.

Then the panic set in.

The once-rowdy crowd—so eager for bloodshed just moments ago—was now in complete disarray. Screams filled the air. People shoved past each other in a desperate scramble to flee. Not that I blamed them. They had all almost died.

A wave of dizziness suddenly crashed over me. My body felt heavier, sluggish—my mana reserves were nearly drained.

The edges of my vision blurred. My knees buckled, and I nearly collapsed then and there—until—

"Leon!"

Titania and Trill's voices rang out in unison, thick with worry.

I barely had time to process their frantic steps before they reached me, their movements causing their generous tits to bounce with each hurried stride.

Soft. Round.

The next thing I knew, my body gave in, tilting forward—

And landed right into those plush, pillowy mounds.

Chapter 560 - The Sword Festival, Part 4 (4)

A heavy fog of drowsiness wrapped around my mind as I drifted back to consciousness. My body felt sluggish, weighed down by a strange warmth cradling the back of my head.

The moment my senses sharpened, I realized something—something soft was underneath me. Not just soft. Warm. Comforting.

I blinked through the haze and looked up.

Two beautiful women.

That's when it hit me. Their thighs—I was resting on both of their laps. A double lap pillow.

A deep, satisfied exhale slipped from my lips. This was pure bliss. The kind of peace that made a man never want to move again.

Their sleeping faces were serene, their slow, even breaths brushing against my skin. They must've been exhausted. I had no idea how I ended up here, but the surroundings were familiar.

After a few seconds, my mind pieced it together.

This was the academy park—a quiet retreat for students to relax during breaks.

They must've carried me all the way here.

I glanced at them again. Their bodies leaned against a large tree, their heads gently pressed together as they slept, rising and falling in sync with each breath. Their hair tangled slightly, catching the golden light of the late afternoon sun.

Something about the sight made my chest tighten.

Slowly, I pushed myself upright, shaking off the lingering fog of sleep. Then, without thinking much about it, I leaned in, pressing a soft kiss to each of their foreheads. A silent thank you.

But then, something felt off.

I noticed it immediately.

Ayuru was gone.

I didn't see her. Didn't feel her weight.

I didn't need to search—she was always with me. Always there, waiting.

I closed my eyes and called for her, reaching out with my mind.

A split second later, she answered.

A flicker of warmth. A pulse of raw energy.

Then—

Ayuru materialized in my hand.

My grip tightened around her as the realization settled in.

This was why I'd been feeling so tired lately.

Back then—before I had Ayuru—I barely needed sleep. My body could push itself for days without exhaustion even touching me. But now? Now, I was constantly drained. Every battle, every fight, left me feeling like I'd been crushed under an invisible weight.

And I knew why.

I exhaled through my nose, staring at her glowing form.

"Ayuru," I murmured, running my fingers along her edge. "I'm still not compatible enough to wield you properly, am I?"

A soft hum vibrated through my palm as she glowed faintly.

So I was right.

I could still remember it. That fight against the Great Darkness—how I'd used Ayuru at her full potential.

But back then, it was different.

Back then, Lilith had lent me her power.

That dragonized version of myself—that raw, unrestrained strength—I didn't have access to it anymore. Now, I was back in my normal form. Just me.

I needed to get stronger.

If I wanted to wield Ayuru without limits, I had to keep moving forward. I had to dominate more women—completely.

Once I reached ten, I'd see Lilith again.

I was sure of it.

And I had to train, too. If I slacked off, if I let myself grow weak, Ayuru might lose interest in me.

I couldn't afford that.

She was too powerful. Too rare. Too dangerous to let slip from my grasp.

With a slow breath, I let Ayuru vanish from my hand.

She faded like mist, disappearing into whatever space she always hid in. Another dimension? A pocket plane? Some unknown void?

Didn't matter.

If I called her, she'd come.

I tilted my head back, gazing at the sky. The sun had dipped lower, washing the world in a deep orange glow. Long shadows stretched across the academy park, painting everything in warm hues.

"Now then..." I muttered under my breath.

I had something to focus on.

The bastards behind the Great Darkness—the real masterminds. The ones Marie had been working with.

I needed to find out exactly what the fuck they were planning.

The finals of the festival had finally arrived, though not without setbacks. The entire event had been delayed thanks to those people who thought it'd be a great idea to blow up the arena. The only reason there weren't corpses littering the place was because I had managed to shield everyone with my Guardian just in time.

Still, after everything, I had lost interest. Winning didn't mean a thing to me anymore. The thrill had faded, leaving nothing but a hollow sense of disinterest. So, I withdrew from the tournament entirely.

Even so, I still came to watch, sitting in the stands with my two girlfriends, Titania and Yr.

Yr was behind me, clinging to my back like a koala, her warm breath tickling my neck as she snored. A bubble formed and deflated with each slow exhale, a thin strand of saliva escaping from the corner of her mouth. It trailed down onto my shoulder, pooling slightly before soaking into my shirt.

Meanwhile, down in the arena, Trill was in the middle of her final fight.

She was the last one standing, fighting for the grand prize.

Her opponent was a massive hulk of a man, his sheer size making her look small in comparison. He carried a longsword, his grip steady, his stance disciplined—an adventurer, no doubt. But despite his intimidating build, his movements were orthodox, predictable. He wasn't particularly fast, just strong.

And strength alone wasn't enough.

The fight ended with Trill knocking the sword from his hands, leaving him completely disarmed.

A moment of silence stretched across the arena before the tension snapped.

It was over.

It made sense. Trill might've been a woman, but she was a beast person, and beast folk naturally had enhanced physical abilities far beyond that of humans. The guy might have been a wall of muscle, but Trill was still stronger.

The defeated man exhaled heavily before letting out a bitter smile. Accepting his loss with grace, he gave a short nod, though there was no doubt the sting of defeat still burned.

He didn't leave empty-handed—he still walked away with a decent cut of the grand prize, but Trill took the majority of it.

With a triumphant grin, she lifted her sword high into the air.

The remaining spectators—fewer than before, likely thanks to the recent explosion incident—burst into cheers, clapping and calling out her name in celebration.

I found myself smirking. Seeing her win like that made me feel oddly proud. She earned it.

When she finally made her way up to us, her arms wrapped around a hefty sack of gold, her grin stretched from ear to ear.

"This is gonna help my tribe," she said, patting the bag with satisfaction. "I'll be heading back to my village soon to give it to them. Also, I wanted to announce something—I've already found my mate."

"That's great," I told her, nodding.

Titania perked up. "I want to introduce you to my father too," she said excitedly. "But I doubt he'd appreciate me showing up unannounced, considering how dangerous things have been lately. Still, if the chance comes, I'll definitely bring you to meet him, Leon! I know he'd be happy for me!"

Both of them were practically glowing with excitement, their happiness so infectious that I almost felt lightheaded, like I was floating—like I was being pulled into a wave of euphoria.

Well, except for Yr. She was still dead asleep, drooling all over my shoulder. So much for euphoria.

And with that, the Sword Festival finally came to an end.

And with it, the new school year officially began.

The first day of the new school year arrived.

Walking through the halls, I made my way toward the classroom assigned to us second-years.

"Good morning, Leon."

A familiar voice greeted me, smooth and composed.

I turned my head to see Raymond approaching with his usual relaxed expression.

"Long time no see," he added.

"Morning," I replied. "Yeah, it's been a while."

Raymond had spent his spring vacation back home with his family, away from the academy.

He sighed, stretching his arms above his head. "Ugh, another year in the Bronze Class. I really hope I can at least make it to Silver this time."

"Well, considering you're already in the top ten of the Bronze Class, I'd say it's not that far off, don't you think?"

"I don't think it's gonna be that easy. Spots in the Gold Class are way more contested now, especially since we only have three years here."

Three years was still plenty of time to climb ranks. And considering how fast Raymond had already worked his way up, I had no doubt he'd make it to Silver before graduation.

Gold, though? Yeah, that was a different story. I wasn't about to bet on that one.

As we walked, a wave of hushed whispers caught my attention. The kind of gossip that sent a ripple through the air, carrying an unusual energy with it.

I glanced at Raymond.

Raymond glanced at me.

For a split second, neither of us spoke.

Then, as if we had the same thought at the exact same time, we both turned on our heels and made a beeline toward Duncan.

Because according to the whispers, Duncan had gotten himself a girlfriend.

And not just any girlfriend—someone from the first-year batch.