

The World 611

Chapter 611 - Creating A Portal To Another World (4)

Guns were trained on us from every direction. Shadows of rifles and armored figures loomed, pressing in from all sides like a suffocating tide. The air was thick with tension, a silent yet deafening warning—one wrong move, and bullets would rip through us without hesitation.

Then, amidst the rigid formation of soldiers, the ranks suddenly parted. It was as if an invisible force had cleaved them in two, their movements disciplined, unquestioning. From the path they created, she emerged—Lieutenant Zes.

She was a tower of sheer presence, her muscular frame exuding an authority so tangible that even the hardened soldiers around her instinctively stiffened. The closer she got, the more their bodies tensed, as if proximity alone was enough to freeze them in place.

Within moments, she stood before us.

"Hah... Do you really think I'm that dumb?" she murmured, amusement lacing her voice. Yet, beneath that amusement, something far more menacing stirred. The air itself trembled, her words carrying a weight that sent ripples through the silence. It wasn't just a voice—it was a force. An echoing, unseen tremor that made the very atmosphere feel heavier.

I shifted my gaze to Zoey, who stood beside me. Her face betrayed a flicker of shock. Did she seriously think that was going to work? Even I had doubted our ability to deceive someone like this. From the beginning, it had been a reckless gamble. There was no way a woman like this could have been so easily fooled.

"The girl's mistake was in her posture," Zes continued, her sharp, calculating gaze never wavering. "Too stiff. Too unnatural. A trained soldier doesn't move like that."

She stepped forward, and the weight of her presence bore down on us like an impending storm.

"Then there's the scent. Soldiers reek of gunpowder, sweat, and dirt. You two?" Her eyes narrowed.
"You smell... nice. Too nice."

Her scrutiny intensified, picking apart every flaw in our disguise.

"And then, of course, there's the matter of protocol. No salute? Not even a trace of discipline in the face of a lieutenant? Sloppy. You might have gathered some knowledge about our military camp, but it's not enough to fool me."

Her gaze flicked toward Zoey, piercing, unrelenting.

"I'm convinced," she said, her voice smooth yet razor-sharp, "that the woman standing beside you is none other than the general's missing daughter. The very same girl who vanished after being kidnapped... by a human who crossed into this world through a portal."

The corner of her lips curled ever so slightly.

"And you didn't even try to be subtle about it," she added, tone laced with mocking amusement. "A pair of sunglasses? Really? Did you honestly think that would be enough to hide her face from me?"

Zoey remained silent, her fingers curling into fists at her sides.

"And now..." Zes turned her gaze to me, eyes gleaming with knowing certainty. "That would make you the otherworlder, wouldn't it?"

Still, Zoey refused to speak.

Zes exhaled lightly, almost as if sighing at our pathetic attempt.

"Silence only confirms it," she murmured, voice smooth but unyielding. "You refuse to answer because you know the truth. And that truth... is yes."

Her stare deepened, the weight of her words pressing into Zoey like an iron grip.

Finally, I stepped forward, my voice calm but unwavering. "I think you're misunderstanding something."

Zes let out a small chuckle, the sound low, almost predatory. "Misunderstanding?" she echoed. "What exactly? That the woman beside you isn't the general's daughter? Or that you aren't the otherworlder?"

The air between us was thick with tension, a coiled thread ready to snap at the slightest provocation.

"People call me dumb," she continued, her voice slow, deliberate, "because I couldn't care less about numbers and calculations. But my intuition?" Her lips curved into a dangerous smirk. "It has never failed me. I know when something is wrong. And I know when something is right."

I studied her carefully, my mind racing through possible responses. Then, I spoke.

"I see... But don't you think assuming that I have the capability or even the intent to spread information about interdimensional travel—enough to create a full-scale multidimensional war—is a bit of a stretch? You don't even know if I hold any authority or influence over such things, do you?"

Zes's expression remained unreadable. "We have taken every measure to prevent such a war," she stated. "Precautions. Intelligence. Containment efforts. We will not allow it to happen."

Her voice dropped lower, carrying a cold, unwavering finality.

"A war will come, one way or another. And as of now, with no knowledge of your world, we are at a disadvantage. Letting you leave is not an option."

I met her gaze head-on. "You're jumping to conclusions," I said. "If I truly wanted to go back, I wouldn't be standing here, talking to you. I'd already be in my own world. Don't you think?"

Zes tilted her head slightly, studying me as though weighing the truth in my words. Then, her eyes flicked toward Zoey.

"I acknowledge that possibility." Zes tilted her head slightly. "But I also see a device in the general's daughter's hands."

Her lips curled into a slow, knowing smile.

"A device that, more than likely, contains highly classified information."

For someone people called "dumb," she was anything but.

If anything... she was terrifyingly sharp.

"Soldiers—seize the general's daughter. As for the otherworlder... riddle him with bullets until there's nothing left."

The order cut through the air like a blade, sharp and merciless. The soldiers around us didn't hesitate, their fingers tightening on their triggers, their eyes devoid of doubt.

"No! Don't do it, please!" Zoey's voice suddenly rang out, shrill with desperation.

My eyes widened slightly. I hadn't expected her to defend me.

"H-He's not the otherworlder! I swear it!" She stammered, panic evident in her voice. "R-Right! He's my boyfriend! My boyfriend! You can't just kill my boyfriend! I mean... he's the general's potential son-in-law!"

Her words spilled out in a frantic rush, but the weight behind them was undeniable.

A suffocating silence followed.

Zes regarded her, expression unreadable, before exhaling a slow, amused breath. "Boyfriend, you say?"

Her eyes flicked to me, scrutinizing every inch of my face.

"Do you honestly believe I'd fall for that?" she said, her voice laced with condescension.

She took a step closer, her towering frame casting a long shadow over us.

"His face may be somewhat altered from the intelligence we received—longer hair, slight adjustments to his features—but it's still the same. I see it. And I trust my instincts."

A cold smile curled on her lips.

"There's no mistake. He is the otherworlder."

Then, she turned to the soldiers.

"Now—kill him."

Zoey barely had time to react before Zes grabbed her arm and yanked her aside, her strength undeniable. At that moment, all the firearms turned toward me, barrels gleaming under the artificial light.

Then—

A deafening burst of gunfire tore through the air.

A hailstorm of bullets came at me from every direction, each one a promise of death.

But before they could reach me—

I moved.

With a flick of my wrist, Ayuru materialized in my grasp, its steel humming as it met the oncoming storm.

In a single, fluid motion, I swung.

The air screamed as my blade carved through the onslaught. The bullets, once destined for my flesh, split cleanly in half, their momentum shattered. A heartbeat later, they clattered uselessly to the ground, the metallic ringing echoing in the stunned silence that followed.

For a moment, no one spoke.

Then—

"What the hell...?"

"How...?"

The soldiers stood frozen, their disbelief almost tangible. They stared at the remnants of their attack, the halves of their bullets scattered at my feet, the realization dawning on them in waves.

Among them, Zes's lips curled into a smirk.

"Hoh...?" Her voice was thick with intrigue.

She stepped forward, her eyes sharp with newfound interest.

"So, you were armed all along. And not just armed—you're skilled." She tilted her head slightly, as if evaluating me.

Then, in a voice dripping with excitement, she declared, "I, too, am well-versed in swordsmanship."

The tension thickened.

"Why don't we put that to the test?" she mused, gripping the hilt of her own blade. "A battle between swordsmen—to see which of us stands superior."

Her gaze bore into mine.

"If you win, I'll grant you your freedom."

Bold words. Reckless, even. She had just seen me cut through gunfire itself, and yet—she didn't waver.

That meant only one thing—she had the skill to back it up.

I exhaled slowly, my grip tightening on Ayuru.

"Fine." My voice was steady. "Let's fight."

Zes grinned.

"Good."

She turned to her soldiers. "Lower your weapons. Let me have my turn with him first—before we kill him."

Her confidence was palpable.

But this wasn't mere arrogance—this was certainty.

She wasn't just some brute who relied on sheer strength alone.

No... there was something more to her. Something dangerous.

With that, we stepped outside..

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We stood outside the cave, surrounded by soldiers, their weapons trained on me like a pack of wolves waiting for their prey to make a mistake. The tension in the air was suffocating, thick enough to cut with a blade.

Zes stood before me, gripping a long knife with the ease of a veteran. Her stance was impeccable, sharp and refined—the stance of a true killer. Not a single opening. Her muscles tensed, ready to explode into movement at any second. Her eyes locked onto me, filled with the cold, calculating focus of someone who had danced with death more times than she could count.

In contrast, I held Ayuru at my side, her familiar weight grounding me. She pulsed in my grip, drinking in my mana, a silent exchange between weapon and wielder.

Zes tilted her head slightly, her lips curving into a smirk. "Let's make the rules clear." Her voice was steady, firm—filled with the kind of confidence that only came from absolute belief in one's own strength. "Victory will be decided when one of us can no longer fight."

She lifted her chin slightly. "If I win, you die. You won't resist, you won't run. You'll stand there like a good little corpse while my soldiers turn you into a bullet-ridden husk."

A cold smile. "Understand?"

"Fine," I replied, my voice even. "But if I win, you let me walk away. No tricks, no interference."

Her smirk widened. "That's the deal."

Then—the air shifted.

Zes lowered her stance, and an unsettling aura poured off of her, distorting the air around her like ripples on the surface of a still lake.

She was about to explode.

I recognized that sensation—the unmistakable pressure of an opponent who had transcended normal limits.

Her fingers curled around her knife, the tension in her body coiling like a spring pulled to its absolute limit.

A beast waiting to be unleashed.

"Let's get this festival started, shall we?" she said, her voice carrying a razor-sharp edge.

I nodded and lowered into my stance. It looked relaxed—too relaxed. To an untrained eye, I was wide open, an easy target. But the truth was, every muscle in my body was wound tight, ready to react at a moment's notice.

Zes's sharp eyes flickered, taking me in from head to toe.

Then, she frowned.

She hadn't found an opening.

Her tongue flicked across her lips, her excitement barely restrained. "Interesting..." she murmured.

For a fleeting moment, something about the way she looked at me—the hunger in her eyes, the unshaken confidence... reminded me of Trill.

But that had to be a mistake.

Zes wasn't Trill. I must have missed Trill so much that I was reminded of Zes.

She was raw, untamed power. No mind games. No tricks. Just brutal, overwhelming force.

"I will oversee this match as the referee," Zoey announced suddenly, stepping forward. Her voice was steady, but there was a tension in it, like she was forcing herself to stay calm.

She raised a hand. "When I lower this hand, the match will begin. The victor will be decided when one of you is no longer able to fight. Both of you must abide by the winner's terms. Anyone who refuses will be punished under the laws of dueling."

Her words echoed in the silence.

Then, she inhaled deeply, her fingers trembling just slightly as she looked at me.

For just a moment, I saw it—the flicker of worry in her eyes.

I met her gaze, offering her the only reassurance I could.

"I got this," I mouthed.

She hesitated—then, with a sharp exhale, she dropped her hand.

The fight began.

Zes and I launched forward at the same time.

The moment we closed the distance—steel screamed against steel.

Neither of us held back.

A whirlwind of slashes.

A storm of death.

Her attacks came at me like lightning, each strike faster than the last. Her blade blurred through the air—too fast for the eye to follow. The only thing visible was the streaking afterimages left in their wake.

But I met her strike for strike.

I read her movements, anticipating each attack with razor-sharp precision. My blade moved in perfect sync, intercepting her slashes before they could land. But I wasn't just defending. I pressed forward, attacking in the same breath.

Zes's knife snapped up, meeting my strikes with effortless fluidity.

Our blades clashed—a shower of sparks erupted between us.

Her eyes widened slightly, a flicker of surprise breaking through her smirk.

Then—her grin returned, wider than before.

She was enjoying this.

Our blades clashed again, the force of impact sending a shockwave through the air. Sparks flared, illuminating the darkened battlefield in fleeting bursts of light.

And then, we moved faster.

Zes lunged, her knife carving a deadly arc through the air. I twisted, my body reacting on instinct, Ayuru meeting her blade with a resounding clang. The moment our weapons made contact, we both pushed forward, our strength colliding like two raging storms.

The wind howled around us as our footwork became a blur. Neither of us yielded. Each step, each movement, was calculated—a dance of death where a single misstep meant the end.

Her slashes came from every angle, unpredictable and relentless. I countered each one, matching her pace, my strikes meeting hers in perfect rhythm. Faster. Stronger. Sharper.

The soldiers surrounding us had fallen silent, their eyes struggling to keep up with our movements.

Then, Zes smirked. And she sped up.

Her attacks became a storm—an overwhelming barrage of steel and precision. The force of her blows sent tremors through my arms, pushing me back step by step. I adjusted my stance, shifting my weight to absorb the impact, my body adapting to the rhythm of her strikes.

Then, I smirked back. And I sped up too.

My slashes became sharper, faster, more unpredictable. I twisted and countered, shifting my angles mid-swing, forcing Zes to adjust as well. Our blades met again, the impact sending out a shockwave that kicked up dust and debris around us.

The battlefield blurred.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Our weapons clashed again and again, the echoes of metal against metal ringing out like a relentless drumbeat. Each strike sent sparks flying, lighting up our faces in flashes of silver and red.

Zes grinned wildly, eyes gleaming with exhilaration. "Now this... this is what I was looking for!"

Her movements became sharper, more refined—like a beast that had finally found its prey.

But I wasn't the prey.

I was the hunter too.

Our fight escalated.

Steel flashed, bodies twisted, footsteps blurred. The force of our blows sent gusts of wind tearing through the battlefield, rustling the cloaks of the silent onlookers. Neither of us held back.

A downward slash—I parried. A sudden feint—I countered.

We clashed again—this time with such force that both of us were momentarily knocked back.

We skidded to a stop, breathing heavy but grinning, our eyes locked in a silent challenge.

And then we charged again.

Zoey's POV

The battlefield trembled with the clash of steel. Sparks ignited in the air, flickering like fireflies as blades met and parted in a violent dance. The very air rippled with each strike, each parry, as though space itself was struggling to contain the sheer force of their battle.

I had never seen anything like this before.

This wasn't just a fight. This was war distilled into its purest form—lethal, precise, unrelenting.

Leon and Lieutenant Zes moved at speeds that defied logic, their forms blurring with each motion. One mistake. One misstep. And Leon would be dead.

And yet...

Through the relentless storm of blades, through the whirlwind of death that surrounded him—Leon was smiling.

His movements, once cautious, were now bold. His strikes, once measured, were now sharp and decisive. He was keeping up. No—he was pushing forward. The infamous Zes, the strongest woman in this world, was being matched.

Their weapons clashed again, the shockwave blasting dust into the air, momentarily obscuring my vision. I squinted, straining my eyes to follow. But it was impossible.

Their hands, their arms—they were moving faster than I could see. Every flicker of steel was there one second and gone the next, only to reappear in an entirely different position.

Too fast.

My gaze darted back and forth, desperately trying to track the fight. I was watching them, yet I couldn't truly see them. The moment I caught sight of a movement, it was already over. It was like trying to grasp lightning with bare hands.

Then, before I even realized it, my lips parted, and a voice—not my own, but something raw and unfiltered—spoke.

"Leon... Go..."

The words tumbled out, soft, almost breathless.

I didn't even know why I said it. I didn't understand what I felt.

But I knew one thing for certain—Leon's presence had changed something in me.

I didn't want him to die.

No, more than that—

I wanted him to live.

I wanted him to stay with me.

Something swelled in my chest, overwhelming and impossible to contain. And then—I shouted.

"Go!"

My voice tore through the battlefield, loud, desperate, filled with something even I couldn't name.

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Leon's POV

My movements sliced through the air, growing faster with each passing second. Her attacks came at me from every angle, relentless and unyielding. She was gaining speed, but so was I—no, I was surpassing her.

I could feel the sharp currents of wind cutting against my skin as our blades clashed in a deadly dance. The air around us trembled with the sheer force of our strikes, the sound of steel colliding echoing through the battlefield.

"Nnn...!"

A sharp groan escaped her lips the moment my blade slipped through her defenses. She had tried to block it, but she was a fraction too slow. The blade veered off course, missing its intended target, yet still managed to graze her cheek. A thin red line formed across her skin, and a few droplets of blood splattered onto the air before trailing down her face.

She didn't falter. With a swift motion, she retaliated, her blade cutting through the space between us. I barely dodged in time, feeling the tip of her sword graze my clothing. A faint tearing sound reached my ears, but the blade never reached my skin.

Faster. Our attacks only grew more intense.

Neither of us yielded.

The battlefield shrank, consumed by the rapid exchange of blows, each strike carrying lethal intent. The world around us blurred as we moved at speeds beyond ordinary comprehension, our blades a flurry of silver light and streaks of crimson.

Then, another opening—

My blade struck again, slicing through the air before cutting against her skin.

"Ugh...!" A sharp gasp escaped her lips, her eyes widening in surprise. She staggered back, instinctively distancing herself from me.

She raised her hand, wiping the blood from her cheek with the back of her palm. Then, she stared at the crimson smear, eyes dark with exhilaration.

"Ha...! It's been a while since I bled." A twisted smile curled on her lips. "It feels good..."

Even wounded, she looked more alive than ever.

"I was holding back," she admitted, tilting her head slightly, her eyes gleaming with unrestrained excitement. "Didn't want to cause too much damage here—too many people around, too much risk of collateral casualties. But I guess I'll have to stop playing around."

Then—

A shift.

Something unseen, yet undeniable.

Her presence, once restrained, now exploded outward like an untamed wildfire. The air thickened, pressing down like an invisible weight. The very space around her trembled, and the ground beneath us cracked from the sheer force of her aura.

She had been holding back. Until now.

"Don't worry," I said, meeting her gaze with unwavering confidence. "You don't have to hold back at all."

With a flicker of thought, I activated Guardian.

A golden translucent dome materialized around us, enclosing our battlefield in a protective field. The surrounding soldiers and Zoey were now beyond the reach of our fight. With Guardian in place, we could unleash everything.

No restraints. No limits.

No holds barred.

"I appreciate the courtesy," she said, smirking as she ran her fingers along the edge of her blade. Her gaze flicked to the shimmering barrier surrounding us. "I can see now—you're not just strong. You're a problem."

She exhaled, her grip tightening on her weapon. "I won't hold back anymore. But don't take it personally—this is just my job."

"I understand," I said, steadyng my stance. "But I won't be holding back either."

Then—

We clashed.

The impact sent shockwaves rippling through the air, the force of our strikes making the very ground beneath us quake. Each movement was a blur, each attack faster than the last. Blades met, fists struck, and our bodies moved with an unrelenting fury.

If not for Guardian, the sheer force of our battle would have sent everyone flying.

"You really are something!" Zes shouted, laughter lacing her words as she pushed forward with another powerful strike. "You're not just all talk, huh!? You can actually back it up!"

She wasn't tiring. If anything, she was getting faster.

Her attacks reverberated through my arms, the shockwaves spreading across the battlefield like ripples in a storm. She was strong—undeniably so. And her technique only reinforced that strength.

But she wouldn't outlast me.

No matter how boundless her stamina seemed, it had limits. I estimated that she could last for three days in continuous battle before her body gave out.

But I had no intention of waiting that long.

I had to end this now.

"Sorry," I told her, voice steady. "As much as I'm enjoying this, I don't have time to waste."

I dismissed Ayuru, the blade vanishing from my grasp.

Instead, I struck with my fingers.

A precise movement.

Her body froze.

"Huh...?"

Her breath hitched.

She stood there, eyes widening in shock. Then, her knees buckled.

She fell.

The realization hit her like a crashing wave.

"Huh...? Why...?"

I exhaled slowly. "I struck your pressure points," I explained, watching her struggle to process what had just happened. "It should have knocked you unconscious... but it seems you're too strong for that."

She gazed at me, her expression riddled with disbelief, as though her mind refused to register what had just happened. Confusion clouded her once-determined eyes. She had already lost, yet it seemed that realization had yet to dawn upon her.

"Now then," I said, my voice cutting through the silence, "you're going to let me leave without interference, aren't you?"

She didn't answer. Her lips parted slightly, as if about to say something, but no words came. Instead, she continued to stare at me, dazed and frozen in place, struggling to comprehend the outcome of our battle.

Without waiting for a response, I turned on my heel and began walking away. According to the agreed terms, the soldiers stationed here had no choice but to let me exit the military camp without raising a hand against me.

But just as I took another step forward—

I felt it.

A sudden spike in energy behind me.

Zes's aura flared to life, thick and stubborn, an unwavering presence that refused to be snuffed out. The very air around me trembled, a whisper of warning carried by an unseen force.

I turned my head, my instincts already confirming what my eyes would soon witness.

She was rising.

Her entire body quivered violently, her legs barely able to support her weight. Blood dripped from her lips where she had bitten down with such force that the crimson trickled down her chin. Her breaths came out ragged, uneven—but still, she stood.

"As per the rules," she declared, her voice steadier than her body, "the winner is determined only when one participant is completely incapable of continuing the fight."

She lifted her chin despite the exhaustion weighing her down.

"As you can see," she continued, "I am still standing."

It was... unbelievable. The fact that she could still move after everything—hell, even the fact that she was still conscious—was astonishing in itself.

"You have to fight me until I am truly incapable of continuing," she insisted.

My gaze lingered on her for a moment. Even in her current state, she had not yet let go of the fight.

Then—

She moved.

A burst of motion.

She lunged forward, her figure a blur of determination. Though her speed had significantly diminished, she was still fast—fast enough that anyone else might have struggled to react.

But not me.

I read her movements with ease. She was no longer untouchable. No longer the overwhelming force she had been before.

With a single sidestep, I slipped past her, avoiding her charge entirely.

Now, I could see her clearly. No more streaks of light. No more afterimages blinding my vision. She was still swift, but she no longer held the monstrous speed that had once kept her beyond my grasp.

"It's time for you to stop, Lieutenant," I said, my tone calm but firm. "You've already lost."

Her breath hitched, but she clenched her fists, pushing forward.

"I have never lost before... I can't lose here..." she murmured, shaking her head as if trying to reject the very notion. "You think I'll just stand aside and let you leave...?"

Her gaze burned with something raw—something desperate.

"You'll have to kill me if you want to leave," she said. "The rules allow it. If I die, then I am truly incapable of fighting. That's why—"

She took a staggering step forward.

"—I won't stop."

She was relentless.

Like an unbreakable protagonist in a never-ending battle.

Her determination was admirable. But also terrifying.

I exhaled, lowering my gaze for a brief moment. Then—

I moved.

With a swift, precise step, I appeared behind her in an instant.

Before she could react—before she could so much as turn her head—

I struck.

A sharp, controlled chop to the back of her neck.

If pressure points alone wouldn't work, then this combined method would be enough to render her unconscious.

Her body stiffened for a brief second—

Then collapsed.

The fight left her completely.

She crumpled forward, her body falling limply into the dirt.

Face-first.

Motionless.

Only then did I deactivate Guardian, the energy dissipating from around me as I turned away from her fallen form.

"Zoey," I called out, my voice slicing through the thick silence. "Let's go."

Zoey had been staring, lost in thought, her expression frozen. It took a moment before she snapped back to reality.

"R-Right..." she stammered, shaking off her daze.

Together, we made our way out of the military camp, carrying with us the device that contained the portal particles.

None of the soldiers made a move to stop us.

They wouldn't.

They couldn't.

That was the agreement.

As we left, the soldiers moved toward Zes, lifting her unconscious form from the dirt, her stubborn will finally subdued.

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We finally returned to the apartment. The moment we stepped inside, the warm scent of freshly cooked food filled the air. Anne stood by the doorway, wearing a neatly tied apron, her long hair cascading over her shoulders. She greeted us with a graceful bow, her voice smooth and composed.

"Welcome back, Master. And Miss Zoey."

She must have just finished preparing dinner. A faint wisp of steam curled from the kitchen, the aroma rich with spices.

"The food is ready," she said, her eyes briefly scanning us, as if assessing whether we were injured or exhausted.

"Has Chloe eaten yet?" I asked.

"She hasn't moved from where she was sitting," Anne replied. "I brought her food, but she hasn't touched it."

"I see..."

So she had been frozen in place all this time, her mind consumed by her research. It was almost unsettling how deeply she was immersed in it.

"Leon, I don't think it's safe to stay here anymore," Zoey said, her voice tense, eyes darting toward the window as if expecting soldiers to burst through at any moment.

"Yeah..."

We couldn't afford to linger. Our location was likely already compromised. The military would be moving in soon, and when they did, we'd be completely surrounded. The duel had allowed me to escape from the military camp without interference, but that didn't mean they wouldn't come after me once I was out. To them, I was a walking disaster—a potential catalyst for war between worlds. They weren't going to let me slip through their fingers.

A voice called from deeper within the apartment.

"You're here, Leon? Did you bring what I asked for?"

It was Chloe. Her words carried an edge of impatience.

"Yes, but we need to relocate immediately. We don't have time to waste," I said.

"There's no time for that," she countered, stepping out from her workspace. "Where is the portal particle?"

Zoey pulled the device from and handed it over. Chloe's eyes gleamed the moment she took it. She turned and strode back to her workstation with almost unnatural urgency.

The room she had claimed for her research was a mess—scattered tools, open notebooks filled with hasty scribbles, glowing monitors displaying shifting patterns of code. The floor was covered with metal components, tangled wires, and what looked like bits of failed prototypes. The air itself crackled with a strange energy, as if reality itself was bending to her will.

Zoey frowned, eyeing the chaos. "What the hell is all this?"

"Implements," Chloe answered without looking up, her fingers already flying over her keyboard. "They're necessary for my portal reconstruction attempt. If I'm right, I might actually be able to create a working portal."

She plugged the device into a larger mechanism that was linked to her computer. The moment she did, the machine hummed to life, emitting a faint, pulsating glow.

"If not for the fact that I'm free to experiment under your custody, Leon, I wouldn't have had the chance to accomplish something this groundbreaking in just a few days!" she exclaimed, excitement practically radiating from her. Her pupils were dilated, her breath quickening, as if the very thought of discovery sent a thrill through her.

Zoey crossed her arms, irritation clear in her posture. "This isn't the time for that. We need to leave before the soldiers come for us."

I raised an eyebrow at her. It was curious how she was more concerned about avoiding capture than returning home. She was technically in my custody, yet she had every opportunity to escape if she wanted to.

"Isn't this your best chance to get away from me?" I asked, watching her reaction carefully. "Those soldiers are your father's subordinates, after all. Wouldn't it be safer for you to stay here and wait for them? Why are you in such a rush to leave?"

Zoey stiffened, her expression momentarily faltering before she scoffed. "What are you even saying? There's no reason for me to do that." She flicked her hair over her shoulder, her lips pressing into a thin line. "If anything, this freedom exhilarates me. Getting out of my father's grasp... I never thought I'd get this chance. I don't think I'd ever feel this kind of thrill if I had stayed behind."

I smirked. "Sounds like you've fallen for me."

Zoey's entire face turned red. "Stop making ridiculous assumptions!" she snapped, glaring daggers at me.

I chuckled, but inwardly, I noted something important. Whether she wanted to admit it or not, something in her had shifted.

She seemed to genuinely care about me, perhaps even harbor feelings for me, though she refused to admit it. Well, I could live with that.

As a side note, I had successfully gained their attention and fulfilled some of their domination requirements. However, since this world's inhabitants lacked any unique abilities, there was nothing for me to copy from them.

Still, this confirmed my suspicion—my domination ability worked on women from the other world as well.

As I mulled over my thoughts, Chloe remained hunched over the monitor, her fingers dancing across the keyboard with swift, mechanical precision. The glow of the screen reflected in her eyes, a sharp contrast to the dimly lit room. Meanwhile, I turned to Anne.

"Get ready," I ordered, my voice steady but firm. "We might have to leave at any moment."

The air in the room felt heavy, like a storm was brewing just beyond these walls. I stood still, listening to the rhythmic tapping of Chloe's fingers against the keys, each keystroke bringing us closer to either salvation or catastrophe.

"How long will it take?" I asked.

"About half a minute—no, more or less twenty minutes," she replied, her eyes never leaving the screen.

Twenty minutes. It wasn't long, but under these circumstances, it might as well have been an eternity. Still, I had chosen the right researcher for this job, and if anyone could pull this off, it was her.

Just as that thought settled, my instincts flared—something felt off. A shift in the air, faint but unmistakable.

Then, a sound.

A deep, rhythmic chopping that sent vibrations through my bones.

No... This was familiar. It had been so long since I last heard it, but back on Earth, this sound was unmistakable.

A helicopter.

The low hum grew louder, more distinct, as it neared.

Then came the thunderous pounding of boots against concrete.

They had already found us? It hadn't even been a full hour!

"Leon! They're coming!" Zoey's voice rang with urgency.

"I know that," I replied, my pulse steady despite the rising tension. My mind was already calculating the next move. I turned to Chloe. "Can you finish this in under ten minutes?"

"That's impossible, even for me," she said without hesitation.

So we had no choice. A fight was inevitable.

"Is it guaranteed to work? Are you absolutely certain you can create a portal?"

"Huh? Well, this is my first attempt, so there's a chance I won't get it right immediately. But if we're talking about probability, I'd say about 50%."

A coin flip.

Ordinarily, I wouldn't put my faith in such odds. But right now, I had no other option.

"That'll have to do," I said, exhaling slowly.

Summoning Ayuru into my grasp, I felt a familiar, ravenous pull as the weapon siphoned my mana. A chill crept up my arm, spreading through my veins like wildfire.

"Leon, what are you planning to do?" Zoey asked, her voice tense.

"I'll buy Chloe some time to finish the portal," I answered, tightening my grip. "Stay with her. Tell Anne to do the same."

With that, I stepped out of the apartment.

The night air was thick with tension. The apartment complex had four floors, and we were on the third. Below, the rhythmic march of soldiers reverberated up the stairwell.

Beyond them, the sky was filled with movement.

Black silhouettes sliced through the night—helicopters, their searchlights cutting through the darkness, their rotors kicking up gusts of wind that whipped against my skin. The soldiers aboard them moved in tandem, their weapons gleaming under the artificial light. Then, in a synchronized motion, they took aim.

A rain of bullets tore through the air.

My instincts screamed. Ayuru moved before my mind could fully register the attack.

A blur of steel—then a cacophony of metallic shrieks as bullets split in half, their fragments cascading onto the floor like raindrops.

I barely had a moment to breathe before the soldiers reached the third floor. Their rifles locked onto me.

Then—fire.

Gunfire erupted, drowning the hallway in deafening blasts. The storm of bullets came faster, a relentless barrage meant to tear me apart.

Ayuru danced through the chaos, cutting through each round with deadly precision. Sparks ignited mid-air as metal clashed against metal. The rhythmic clang of severed bullets hitting the floor echoed in the narrow space.

I considered using the Guardian, but the moment I summoned it, the first bullet shattered it instantly upon impact.

My eyes narrowed.

Why? These bullets weren't made of power dampeners, so why did the Guardian break so easily?

Then, it dawned on me.

This world wasn't governed by the same rules as mine. Here, abilities weren't part of the natural order. No matter how powerful they were, they could still be destroyed by conventional means.

And that realization sent a cold chill down my spine.

If war ever broke out between our worlds—

Our world might not win.

Chapter 615 - Creating A Portal To Another World (8)

Bullets tore through the air around me, streaking past in a symphony of death, each one screaming toward me with lethal intent. Ayuru flashed, cutting through the storm with razor-sharp precision, slicing the incoming rounds before they could reach me. My body moved in sync with my blade, an unbroken rhythm of slashes and sidesteps, narrowly avoiding those I couldn't cut in time. Every bullet I intercepted shattered into useless fragments, raining down like metallic dust, but the onslaught was relentless.

They didn't need to advance. Why should they? Their firepower surrounded me, pressing in from every direction, a steel tempest determined to rip me apart. Their bullets fell like torrential rain, an unending barrage that left no room for escape. Every second was a battle to survive, every movement a split-second decision between cutting or dodging.

I estimated nearly a thousand rounds per second were being fired at me. My only chance of survival was to move faster than the bullets themselves, my reflexes surpassing the speed of death. The air around me trembled with the force of the gunfire, muzzle flashes flaring like bursts of lightning in the darkness. Each pull of the trigger sent another deadly projectile my way, but I met them all with the swift, decisive strokes of my blade.

Escape was out of the question as long as the barrage continued. Their supply of bullets seemed limitless, and reinforcements were closing in. If this continued, I would be pinned down for hours, possibly days—assuming I could even maintain this pace that long. Worse still, the longer this dragged on, the greater the risk of more soldiers joining the fray, tightening the noose around me.

Waiting for them to reload was not an option. They weren't firing in unison. Some were already in the middle of reloading while others kept their weapons trained on me, filling the gaps with continuous fire. By the time one group exhausted their magazines, another was already locked and loaded. There was no opening. No break. No mercy.

My only hope was that Chloe finished whatever she was doing—and fast.

Then, out of nowhere, something slammed into one of the helicopters above. It was so fast, so sudden, that even I failed to track its trajectory. The impact sent the chopper spinning, flames bursting from its side as it spiraled downward in a fiery arc. Whatever had hit it hadn't just been thrown—it had been launched with incredible force.

But by who?

Then I saw her.

A figure leaped from the ground below, soaring through the air like a missile. My eyes widened as she propelled herself with inhuman strength, landing on the third-floor balcony with the grace of a predator. That level of physical prowess... It was absurd. Even I had to acknowledge the raw power in that leap.

It was Lieutenant Zes.

She wasted no time. Using the momentum from her jump, she drove her fist into the nearest soldier, sending him flying backward like a ragdoll. The force of the impact was so great that his body crashed into the others behind him, knocking them off their feet.

"W-What the—!?"

"Lieutenant!? What are you doing!?"

Their voices wavered with disbelief. One of their own—a commanding officer—had suddenly turned against them. Their hesitation was expected. But hesitation meant death.

Zes didn't answer. She simply kept moving.

Her next punch connected with another soldier's chest, caving in his armor with a sickening crunch. Blood sprayed from his lips as he crumpled to the ground. Another tried to retaliate, raising his rifle, but she was faster. She grabbed the barrel with one hand, shoving it aside just as the trigger was pulled. The bullets meant for her shredded the wall instead.

Without missing a beat, she yanked the rifle forward, dragging the soldier toward her. Before he could react, she drove her knee into his stomach with brutal force. The sheer impact made him fold in half, his body going limp as he collapsed to the floor, unconscious or worse.

The remaining soldiers stumbled backward, fear creeping into their expressions. Their training told them to fire, but their instincts screamed otherwise. This wasn't an ordinary fight. Zes wasn't an ordinary opponent.

And she had just turned the tide of battle.

Meanwhile, the other helicopters remained locked onto me, their weapons primed, and in unison, they unleashed another relentless barrage. One of them shifted its sights onto Zes, intending to take her down as well. Without hesitation, I pulled Ayuru back, gripping her hilt tightly before hurling her toward the approaching helicopters. As she spun through the air, Ayuru let out a high-pitched whistle, her form slicing through the wind with precision.

One by one, she tore through them, changing her trajectory mid-flight to strike those that had been beyond her initial path. Metal groaned and shattered under her force, and in mere moments, the helicopters crumbled, their burning wreckage tumbling from the sky like fallen stars. Just as swiftly, I willed Ayuru to disappear before summoning her once more. She reappeared in my palm, materializing from thin air, but the moment my fingers curled around her hilt, I felt an unusual pull—a hunger beyond the ordinary, as though she were draining more mana than necessary.

"Are you upset, Ayuru?" I murmured, sensing a flicker of emotion from the weapon in my grasp. "I apologize for throwing you like that."

Though Ayuru was merely a Cursed One—a weapon that possess a consciousness—it truly felt as though she had emotions. And, to be honest, if someone had flung me through the air like that, I wouldn't be too pleased either.

"Hmph..."

A soft, almost petulant hum resonated in my mind.

Was that... a sulk?

A small smile tugged at my lips. I couldn't help but imagine Ayuru with a human form—perhaps a delicate yet feisty girl, her arms crossed as she pouted at me in irritation.

"I'm truly sorry, alright?" I coaxed. "As an apology, I'll let you absorb as much mana as you want."

A faint glow pulsed along Ayuru's blade, her aura flickering like a pleased sigh. It seemed my peace offering had been accepted.

With that settled, I turned my focus back to assisting Zes in eliminating the remaining soldiers.

Time passed, and eventually, the last of them fell. The battlefield fell silent, save for our ragged breaths.

Though the soldiers had been no match for us in direct combat, their sheer numbers had stretched the fight longer than expected, and exhaustion had begun to weigh upon us. I leaned against the wall, my gaze drifting toward Zes.

"I have to admit," I mused, exhaling sharply. "I didn't anticipate you turning against your own men, Lieutenant. What exactly brought this on?"

She remained silent at first, her expression unreadable. Then, slowly, she lifted her head, meeting my gaze with an intensity I couldn't quite place.

"Impregnate me."

A peculiar smile curved her lips as she uttered those words.

I blinked.

"Huh?"

Had I misheard? No, I hadn't. She had, without a doubt, just said—

"Our child will be strong. Exceptionally strong. I can feel it already," she declared, her tone brimming with conviction. "I desire offspring of unparalleled strength, ones I can mold and train into warriors beyond compare." Her gaze sharpened. "So, impregnate me. Right now."

Her words left me momentarily stunned, my mind struggling to process them.

"Wait... hold on," I stammered. "You want me to what? And right now?"

"It's simple. You insert your male organ into my female organ and impregnate me. Right here, right now."

I exhaled sharply, pinching the bridge of my nose. "I don't know what part of this situation makes you think that's even remotely a good idea."

She looked at me, completely serious. "We have at least two minutes before reinforcements arrive. That should be sufficient time to conceive."

I nearly choked. "Do you seriously think that's how sex works? That's not even enough time to—! Look, we don't have the luxury to entertain this right now."

I could already sense more soldiers approaching—an entire wave, closing in fast. The rhythmic march of boots against the pavement sent a warning through my veins.

"Is Chloe still not done?" I muttered under my breath.

Though I didn't consider myself powerless in this world, the sheer weight of this situation pressed against me, making me feel—just for a moment—overwhelmed. This world was different, unpredictable, and despite my experience, I found myself struggling to fully grasp it.

Then, the reinforcements arrived.

Less than two minutes had passed, and yet, they were here, moving like a storm toward the apartment complex.

"Looks like round two is about to begin," I muttered, steadyng my stance.

Ayuru pulsed in my grasp, her blade gleaming as I raised her. Helicopters roared above us, their occupants leveling their weapons in our direction before unleashing a fresh torrent of bullets. I moved instantly, my blade intercepting them mid-air, slicing through the oncoming storm with inhuman speed. But this was worse than before—more overwhelming, more relentless. I had to move faster, block with even greater precision, all while dodging what I couldn't deflect in time.

Behind me, Zes had grabbed a fallen rifle, taking up a defensive position. While she lacked the ability to deflect bullets as I did, she made up for it by providing cover fire, taking out enemies with calculated shots.

The battle was far from over.

Chapter 616 - Creating A Portal To Another World (9)

Bullets tore through the air, a relentless hailstorm of lead converging on me from all directions. The sheer velocity of each round blurred them into streaks of death, but my blade was faster. Ayuru whistled through the air, its edge cleaving through metal like paper, splitting the bullets before they could reach me. My body moved instinctively, each slash a desperate act of survival, my muscles burning from the sheer speed required to keep up with the never-ending barrage.

Time itself seemed to slow, my mind accelerating to perceive every detail—each bullet's trajectory, the shifting shadows, the sharp glint of metal slicing through the dimly lit space.

I swung Ayuru with precision, my blade a blur as it carved through the incoming projectiles, each impact sending shockwaves rippling through the air. The force of my slashes vibrated through my arms, the razor edge of the weapon cleaving bullets cleanly in half, their fractured remnants spinning away like dying embers. Those I couldn't cut, I dodged with the grace of instinct honed by countless battles.

The storm of gunfire left me no room to breathe and no space to retreat. The soldiers didn't even bother advancing. They didn't have to. Their strategy was clear—suppress me under an unyielding downpour of bullets until there was nothing left to cut and no place left to dodge. I could hear the casings clattering onto the ground, spent shells piling up like a testament to their intent to kill.

A bullet streaked past, mere inches from my skull. I jerked my head aside just in time, but not before its searing heat grazed my cheek. A sharp sting blossomed as a thin line of crimson painted my skin, the warm rivulet trailing down my jawline, pooling at the edge of my chin before dripping to the floor. The scent of burning gunpowder and iron filled my nose, mingling with the distant echoes of gunfire.

A thousand bullets per second—at least. That was my rough estimate. To avoid being shredded to pieces, I had to surpass human limitations, my reflexes honed to an inhuman level. My body blurred between the streaks of death, weaving through the smallest gaps, contorting at impossible angles. Each near miss left behind the faintest kiss of heat on my skin. A single misstep would be the end.

But escape was impossible unless they ceased fire, and that wasn't happening. Their magazines were staggered in reloads, ensuring an uninterrupted onslaught. When one soldier ran dry, another took his place, their rifles never silencing for even a second. They were professionals. Merciless. Efficient. And they had me pinned.

Chloe needed time. But how much more? She'd said thirty minutes—more or less. Yet, in this hellish crossfire, every second stretched into eternity. My focus wavered for a fraction of a moment, and a bullet grazed my cheek again. Pain flared, hot and sharp, as blood trickled down my jawline. Still, I couldn't stop. Couldn't falter.

Then, something ripped through the air with terrifying force. A new sound. A deep, guttural roar unlike the sharp cracks of gunfire. My instincts screamed. I barely had time to register the incoming projectile before my eyes locked onto it.

A rocket.

"What the—!? Are they seriously going to level the entire complex!?"

My breath hitched. They were going all in. Then it hit me. Zoey had once told me that if it was for the country's benefit, her father would do anything. Even if it meant killing his own daughter. To him, I was a threat to the nation, and I needed to be eliminated, no matter the cost. The realization sank in like cold steel—Zoey's father would stop at nothing, not even if it meant sacrificing his own child.

I had no choice.

I activated Guardian, knowing bullets wouldn't be stopped, only obliterated by its force. But the rocket... that would need a more layered defense. I quickly created a thick barrier, reinforcing it several times over to ensure it wouldn't be destroyed by the impact. The rocket collided with the shield, and a massive explosion erupted, filling the air with the roar of fire and a shockwave that shook the building.

"Leon!"

Zoey's voice cut through the chaos. That was all I needed.

I broke into a sprint, weaving through the bullet storm and diving inside the apartment. My gaze immediately locked onto the shimmering rift at the room's center.

"I did it! I managed to do it!" Chloe's voice trembled with excitement and exhaustion. The portal pulsed with unstable energy, smaller than the one I had originally entered to reach this world. Barely wide enough for one person at a time. A tight squeeze at best.

"The question is, does it even work?" Zoey murmured, her brow furrowed in uncertainty.

A valid concern. This was an artificial portal, unstable and untested. It might not even function. Worse, it could send us somewhere unintended—maybe even tear us apart mid-transport. The risk was immense, but staying here meant certain death.

"What are all of you talking about?" Zes interjected, her voice filled with suspicion.

Zoey leaned in closer, whispering, "Uh, what exactly is Lieutenant Zes doing here?"

For a brief moment, amidst the chaos, I found myself wondering the same damn thing.

"I don't even know myself," I muttered, my voice barely rising above the chaos.

"Huh?" Zoey frowned, confusion etched into her face.

Even she didn't understand what was going on.

"Tell me, what the hell is that thing? Wait... is that a portal? Why the fuck is there a portal here? And why is it so damn small?" Zes demanded, her sharp eyes locked onto the swirling vortex.

Before any of us could answer, the sky roared as more explosions detonated around us, their fiery bursts sending tremors through the building. The very air felt like it was tightening around my throat, suffocating me in the intensity of the moment. We were on the precipice of certain death.

Should I just dive in now?

Before I could even decide, Zes suddenly moved. With a sharp breath, she darted forward and squeezed herself through the narrow portal. My eyes widened as her form twisted and vanished into the swirling abyss. A split second passed, then another. The portal shimmered, rippling as if swallowing her whole.

"Did it... work?" Zoey voiced the unspoken question that lingered between us.

Then, just as suddenly as she had disappeared, Zes came barreling back through the portal.

"Hey! Why the hell are you all just standing around!? It's safe! Move your asses!" she barked, waving us forward.

A wave of relief crashed over me, but I didn't have time to dwell on it.

"The portal is too small for us to go in together," I said quickly. "One at a time. I'll hold off the incoming soldiers until everyone is through. I'll be the last one in."

Chloe hesitated, her eyes flickering with something unreadable. "Leon, make sure you come back."

For a brief moment, I thought she was actually worried about me. But then—

"My research wouldn't be complete without you."

Of course. It all came back to her damn research. Still, I couldn't help but smirk slightly. That was her way of saying she cared.

Zes had already disappeared inside, and now it was Chloe's turn. She clutched the flash drive from the facility and hauled her equipment through, vanishing into the swirling void.

Then, just as Anne stepped forward, a squad of soldiers stormed in. Without missing a beat, I spun and delivered a crushing kick to the first one, sending him hurtling backward like a ragdoll. The others hesitated for a fraction of a second—but that was enough time for me to react.

Gunfire erupted.

I swung Ayuru, the blade carving through the air in a blur, slashing incoming bullets into fragments before they could reach me. The relentless barrage didn't stop. More bullets tore through the air, forcing me to push my body to its limits, intercepting as many as I could while weaving through those I couldn't deflect in time.

Zoey was next. She hesitated for just a second, her gaze meeting mine.

"Go!" I ordered.

She nodded, then disappeared into the portal.

Now, it was just me.

The soldiers pressed forward, their rifles spitting death in my direction. I backpedaled, slashing through the onslaught, my heart pounding like a war drum. The moment I reached the portal's edge, I threw myself into it.

The world twisted.

Darkness swallowed me whole before I stumbled onto solid ground on the other side. The air felt different—thicker, charged with something unnatural.

I turned sharply. "Chloe! Shut the portal!"

I didn't even know if it was possible, but I barked the order anyway.

Chloe yanked a cable from her device. The portal convulsed, its swirling surface distorting violently. A soldier had managed to push halfway through—only for the vortex to suddenly implode with a sickening crunch.

His severed torso collapsed onto the ground with a wet, heavy thud, blood pooling beneath the jagged wound where the rest of his body had been.

I exhaled sharply, my muscles still tense. We had made it.

Chapter 617 - The Felianne Clan (1)

"Now then, where exactly are we?"

Darkness loomed around us, thick and impenetrable, yet my vision remained sharp. The air was damp, carrying the scent of earth and vegetation. Towering shadows swayed in the distance—trees, perhaps—indicating we were near a forest or some vast wilderness. The ground beneath my feet was uneven, covered in damp soil and fallen leaves, as if we had been unceremoniously dropped into the heart of an unknown land.

"Leon, where are we...?" Zoey's voice wavered slightly, her unease evident.

"I have no idea myself," I admitted, scanning our surroundings. "But considering the circumstances, it's entirely possible that we've entered another world."

Zoey sucked in a breath. "This is... another world?"

Zes turned, her sharp eyes narrowing as she took in the unfamiliar landscape. "So the portal we entered actually led us beyond our world?"

Zoey, still tense, turned to me with a hardened gaze. "Leon, explain something to me. What exactly is Lieutenant Zes doing here with us? You haven't told me a single thing."

"As I said, I have no idea," I replied, exhaling slowly. "Maybe she hit her head or something. For some reason, she suddenly wanted to have sex with me."

"Sex?" Zoey's arms folded over her chest, her stare dripping with skepticism. "Leon, I get that you're handsome, but assuming that a woman wants to have sex with you—that sounds like something a deluded narcissist would think."

I ran a hand through my hair, sighing. "I wish I were just a narcissist assuming things."

Zes, unfazed, stepped closer and met my gaze head-on. "Now that we're free from danger, let's have sex. Procreate with me."

I glanced at Zoey and gave her a knowing look. "See?"

Zoey recoiled. "T-This is absurd! Lieutenant Zes, why in the world would you, of all people, want to have sex with Leon?!"

Zes tilted her head, blinking at Zoey as if she had asked an absurd question. "Is it not natural for a subjugated and defeated woman to offer herself to the one who bested her? He has defeated me, therefore I must yield to him. Together, we shall create the strongest offspring. Now, come, Leon. Let us procreate."

Her words dripped with unwavering conviction, as if this was a universal truth carved into stone. The customs of her world were strange—especially regarding matters of sex. I couldn't tell if this belief was widespread or simply a product of Zes's personal logic, but either way, it was unnerving.

I pinched the bridge of my nose and sighed. "We can do it later, as much as you want," I said. "But right now is not the time. I can feel multiple presences closing in on us."

Zoey stiffened. "Really?"

Zes furrowed her brows. "I sense nothing."

"That's because the people of your world and those here are fundamentally different," I explained. "This might truly be another world altogether... and if I'm right, this might be my world."

This might be the world where I had got reincarnated into.

Zoey's breath hitched. "So we really are in another world...?" Her voice was a whisper as she turned in slow circles, taking in the alien-yet-familiar surroundings.

Turning to Chloe, who was gathering her scattered research papers and securing her computer, I asked, "What does this mean, Chloe? Do your calculations explain any of this?"

She adjusted her clothes, barely glancing at me as she continued organizing. "It's possible that the portal particle we used was the reason," she explained. "That is, assuming this really is your world. Can you prove it?"

I exhaled, feeling the air settle in my lungs, the sensation deeply nostalgic. "There's no need for proof. I can feel it in the very atmosphere. This is my world. I've lived here for nineteen years."

A long silence followed. Then, Zoey suddenly turned to me, her eyes wide with shock. "Wait... Leon, you're only nineteen?"

"Yes. Is that an issue?"

Zoey stared at me as though she had just uncovered some deep revelation. "I was certain you were older than me..." She hesitated, lowering her gaze. "I see. You're still nineteen. I can hardly believe it. Meanwhile, I'm already twenty-seven... and yet, you've experienced so much more in life than I have."

The shift in conversation caught me off guard. Of all the possible directions our discussion could have taken, she had chosen to dwell on our age difference.

I raised an eyebrow. "You dislike men who are younger than you?"

Zoey crossed her arms, her lips pressing into a thin line. "Preferably, I'd want a partner close to my age," she admitted. "At most, a two- or three-year difference is acceptable. But anything more than that... it's not what I imagined for myself."

"I see..." I murmured, letting her words settle. It was a simple preference, nothing too unusual.

"By the way, Leon," Chloe said, her expression unreadable. "If this truly is your world, does electricity exist here?"

"It does," I confirmed. "But whether it'll power your computer is another question entirely."

If the laws of this world were different, then the very essence of how devices functioned might follow different rules. There was no guarantee her technology would work here.

"Master," Anne's voice cut through the air, sharp and alert. "I saw movement in the forest."

"I know," I said, eyes narrowing as I shifted my stance. The air around us felt wrong—charged with an energy that sent the hairs on my arms standing on end. "Stay on guard. I doubt whoever's lurking out there is the kind of company we'd want to meet in a forest at night."

"Don't tell me... ghosts?" Zoey's voice trembled, her fingers clutching my arm as she took a step closer.

I let out a breath. "Relax. There are plenty of terrifying things in this world, but ghosts aren't one of them."

Then, before another word could be spoken—

A figure lunged from the darkness.

A shadow, quick as lightning, tearing through the air with feral speed. Its form was humanoid—almost. But larger, bulkier, and wrapped in raw, unrestrained power. A glint of something sharp flashed in the dim light.

A tail.

Beastfolk.

I moved instantly. My arms shot up, intercepting the attack with Ayruru in a precise block. The impact sent a shockwave through my body, but I held firm. The beastkin skidded back, claws raking deep into the earth, a low growl rumbling from its throat.

And then—more emerged.

From the shadows, they stepped forward, one by one, until we were completely surrounded. Dozens of eyes gleamed in the darkness, watching, waiting.

"We're surrounded..." Zoey whispered, her breath shaky.

"Hah! This much is nothing." Zes cracked her knuckles, eyes gleaming with anticipation. "Let them come. I'll pummel every last one of them." Even in an unknown territory, she was more than eager to dive straight into a fight.

But I raised a hand. "We don't need to fight."

Because I had recognized something.

Their fur. Their hair. The distinct color, the way it shimmered beneath the faint moonlight—it was too familiar to ignore. It matched someone I knew. Someone with feline features.

I stepped forward, making Ayuru disappear from my grasp. Slowly, deliberately, I raised both hands, signaling my lack of hostility. No weapons. No aggression. Just intent.

Then, I spoke.

"Take me to your leader."

Silence.

The beastfolk didn't move, their golden eyes locked onto me, unblinking. The tension in the air thickened, pressing against my skin like a heavy weight.

Then, one of them stepped forward.

A towering figure, his presence alone enough to command attention. His frame was massive, muscles carved like stone beneath a thick coat of fur. But what set him apart—what made him truly imposing—was his face.

Not human.

A lion's head, regal and fierce, his mane a wild crown of untamed power. His amber eyes burned with suspicion, studying me with a predator's scrutiny.

"Give me one reason why we should take you to our king," his voice was a low, thunderous growl, "instead of killing you where you stand."

I met his gaze, unwavering. Then, I spoke a single name.

"Trill."

The moment the name left my lips, everything changed.

The lion-man stiffened. His ears twitched, his tail straightened in shock. Around us, the other beastfolk exchanged glances, their expressions shifting from aggression to something else—uncertainty.

So I had been right.

This was the Feliann Clan—a tribe of lion-like beastfolk. And judging by their reaction, my assumption had been correct. The resemblance in fur and hair color had led me to believe they were connected to Trill. Thankfully, I was right. If I had been wrong... this could have gone very, very badly.

"You..." The lion-man's voice was lower now, tinged with something almost hesitant. "Why do you know that name?"

I didn't falter. My eyes locked onto his. "Because," I said, voice steady, "I'm her lover."

A murmur rippled through the gathered beastfolk. Their stance shifted, no longer entirely hostile but not yet welcoming.

The lion-man narrowed his eyes. "Lover...? Are you telling me that the Princess has—?"

I didn't break eye contact. Beastfolk had a keen sense for lies. If I had been bluffing, even slightly, he would have known. But I wasn't.

Another moment passed before he spoke again.

"What you claim... may hold truth," he admitted, though his tone remained cautious. "But further knowledge must be unearthed before we can deem it so. The Princess left our clan over a year ago in search of a husband. However, she is not here. Without her presence, I cannot yet determine the validity of your words."

Chapter 618 - The Feliann Clan (2)

That was only natural. They had no reason to believe I was truly Trill's lover. All I had done was speak her name and claim her as mine—without presenting even a shred of proof. In their eyes, I was just another outsider, and my words alone carried no weight.

"How can I prove it?" I asked, my voice steady.

The lion-headed warrior studied me, his golden eyes sharp and unyielding, like a predator assessing its prey. The surrounding beastfolk remained still, their collective gaze fixed on me with an intensity that made the air feel heavier.

"Princess Trill is strong," he finally said, his deep, rumbling voice carrying authority. "As one of our kin, she follows the old ways—choosing her mate through combat. The one who defeats her in a duel earns the right to stand by her side. If you truly are her lover, then you must have bested her in battle. And if you defeated our Princess, it means you are even stronger than her." His muscles tensed. "I intend to confirm that myself."

I exhaled softly. "And how do you plan to do that?"

"In a duel. With me."

Oh? That was fair enough. And judging by his sheer presence alone—the way his towering frame loomed over me, the way his clawed hands flexed with barely restrained power—he wasn't just strong. He was formidable. Possibly even stronger than Trill herself.

"I see..." I murmured, my fingers curling slightly.

"If you refuse, we will not force you to fight," he continued, voice steady but edged with warning. "You will be free to leave this place unharmed, as a gesture of respect for speaking of our Princess. However..." He leaned forward slightly, his piercing gaze locking onto mine. "You will not be granted an audience with our chief. If you accept, we shall battle—and I will personally allow you to meet him." A heavy silence fell between us. Then, he asked, "What will you do?"

It seemed he was willing to let us go without bloodshed, which was a relief. However, I needed a place to rest. It had been months since I last set foot in this world, and the remnants of my previous battle still weighed on my body. I was running on endurance alone, and sooner or later, I'd need proper shelter.

And judging by our surroundings, we were deep within the Great Forest. Trill had once told me that her tribe resided somewhere within it, but not entirely in its depths. That meant there was likely no civilization nearby—no inns, no villages, no safe havens. If I wanted a roof over my head for the night, I had no choice.

"I accept," I said, my voice carrying through the clearing. "But I want one condition—no killing. I was already in a duel earlier where my life was on the line, and I'd rather not repeat that ordeal."

I turned slightly, my gaze landing on Zes. Her eyes were gleaming with anticipation, a wild grin tugging at her lips. She was practically vibrating with excitement. How the hell did she still have this much energy after putting me through that mess earlier?

"Already begging for your life before the battle has even begun?" The lion-man scoffed, baring sharp fangs in what almost resembled a smirk. "And you claim to be our Princess's lover?"

His condescension was palpable, but I didn't rise to it. Instead, I met his gaze evenly.

"Very well," he said, cracking his knuckles. "Do as you wish."

I barely had time to register those words before—

A shift in the air.

A violent tremor shot through my instincts.

A blur of movement—

He was fast.

Too fast.

The ground beneath him shattered as he lunged, a monstrous force propelling his body forward. My pulse slammed against my ribs as I barely managed to twist out of the way, narrowly evading the deadly arc of his claws. The air where I had stood moments ago split apart, his attack tearing through it with a sharp whoosh.

I landed a few feet away, the ground trembling beneath my boots. A second slower, and I would've been torn apart.

So that's how it was going to be.

I straightened, rolling my shoulders. My body hummed with tension.

If he wanted a fight, I'd give him one.

"Oh? You actually managed to dodge that?" His voice carried a note of amusement, but beneath it lurked something sharper—interest, maybe even the slightest trace of respect.

"Well, if I hadn't, I'd be scattered across the ground in bloody chunks," I replied, rolling my shoulders. "So much for keeping this a non-lethal duel."

A smirk tugged at his lips, his golden eyes gleaming with predatory delight. "No need to worry. We have a healer back in the tribe. Even if you're ripped to shreds... or sliced clean in half, they'll patch you up."

"That doesn't sound very reassuring. I'd rather not experience being put back together, thanks."

"Well then—" His muscles tensed, his stance lowering into a deadly crouch. The air around him crackled with raw energy. "It's time."

And in the next heartbeat—

We collided.

A thunderous shockwave erupted from the impact, shattering the silence of the forest. Leaves and dust whipped through the air as my blade, Ayuru, clashed against his claws with bone-rattling force.

Then, the real battle began.

A storm of relentless strikes followed. The world blurred into flashing steel and razor-sharp claws, the sheer speed of our movements distorting the air. The force behind his attacks was monstrous—every strike sent violent tremors up my arms, threatening to shatter my guard.

He was fast—unbelievably so.

Faster than Zes.

But where Zes relied on precision and technique, his strikes were raw, untamed brutality. The sheer weight behind them felt like a mountain crashing down with every swing. My muscles screamed in protest. Fatigue gnawed at me, a reminder that I had been fighting all day. Every ounce of exhaustion that had accumulated now threatened to drag me under.

Then—

A claw slipped through my defenses.

A cold rush of air scraped against my skin, my instincts flaring with alarm.

But just as his strike was about to rip through my torso—

I activated Guardian.

A translucent barrier shimmered into existence just in time. His claws scraped against the barrier with a deafening screech, sparks bursting from the impact. He recoiled, golden eyes narrowing.

That was close.

If I had been even a fraction of a second slower, my abdomen would be in ribbons.

"You're skilled," he admitted, straightening. His lips curled into something between a grin and a snarl. "Now I understand why our Princess has taken an interest in you. But—" His aura darkened, the air around him thick with tension. "That does not mean you are worthy of being her chosen mate!" His voice thundered. "Come at me, human! Show me your strength!"

Then—

The world exploded into motion once more.

Steel and claw clashed in a furious storm, the force of each impact shaking the earth beneath us.

He was fast—inhumanly so.

My eyes strained to track him, but his movements were erratic, unpredictable. One second, he was in front of me. The next—

Behind.

A flicker of movement—

I barely managed to block.

Another flash—he vanished again.

Before I could react, I felt the whisper of air at my back. A blade-sharp instinct screamed in my mind. I twisted—

And just in time.

His claws raked through the space I had occupied a split-second ago. The sheer force behind it sent a violent gust tearing through the battlefield.

He was fast.

But—

I could be faster.

The moment I decided to unleash my true speed—

He froze.

Completely.

"...Huh?"

The silence that followed was deafening.

By the time his mind registered what had happened—

Ayuru's blade was already at his throat.

I was standing behind him.

Deadly. Silent. Untouched.

The entire battlefield stood still.

"No way..." A voice trembled in disbelief.

"...Kirk just lost?"

"Did you see that?"

"No... It was too fast—more than that, I didn't feel anything. How did he move so quickly without even stirring the air?"

Kirk.

So that was his name.

Slowly, he turned his head toward me, those golden eyes locking onto mine.

There was no anger. No frustration. Not even surprise.

It was as if he had already accepted this outcome.

"...Now I see." His voice was quieter now, thoughtful. "I understand why that girl acknowledged you."

Something shifted in his words. He no longer called Trill 'Princess.'

Now, she was simply 'that girl.'

"You've won."

His voice carried weight. Finality.

"You can lower your blade."

I let Ayuru dissolve into the air, stepping back as the tension drained from the battlefield.

Kirk turned fully, his stance no longer aggressive. "I acknowledge you. You have proven yourself worthy. And as promised—" His golden eyes bore into mine. "You will accompany us to our village. You will meet our chief."

"All of us, I assume?" I asked.

He nodded. "Yes."

A quiet breath escaped me.

Good.

At least now, we wouldn't have to sleep on the cold forest floor. That alone made this encounter worthwhile. I hadn't expected to land so close to Feliann territory, but it worked in my favor.

More than anything—

I was finally back in this world.

And for the first time in a long while—

I felt relief.

Chapter 619 - The Felianne Clan (3)

We moved through the thick jungle path, the sounds of rustling leaves and distant beast calls accompanying each step. The humid air clung to our skin, and the faint scent of wildflowers mixed with something more primal. As we walked in silence, Kirk suddenly spoke, his voice casual yet loaded with intent.

"To be honest, I already knew you're the Princess's lover," he said, his eyes glinting with mischief.

"Huh? How so?" I turned toward him, brows furrowed.

He smirked, tapping the bridge of his broad nose. "I can smell her scent all over you. It clings to you like heat to flame. I was already sure you were her mate the moment I met you."

My mouth parted slightly. "Huh? Then what was the point of the duel?"

He gave a soft chuckle, the low rumble of his voice echoing like a distant growl. "Part of it was curiosity. I wanted to know what kind of man managed to claim a woman like her. The rest... was just for fun."

...Well, I guess that's fair enough.

The jungle gave way to a clearing, and what awaited us beyond it pulled an audible gasp from Zoey's lips. Her eyes widened in astonishment as we stepped into the view of the beastmen's village.

Massive trees—each towering over twenty meters tall—loomed above us, their thick canopies shading the village nestled atop their branches. Suspended walkways connected large wooden structures, creating a thriving settlement in the air. The scent of bark, fresh leaves, and fur filled the atmosphere, and the soft glow of tribal lanterns gave the village an ancient, mystical aura.

"Welcome to the Feliann Clan," Kirk announced proudly. "The clan acknowledged and revered as the royalty of the beast people."

The villagers bustled above, many of them lion-type beastfolk. The males were immense, their bodies carved with muscle and blanketed in fur. Kirk was no exception—his mane, tied in a rough ponytail, trailed down his broad back, and his thick tail swayed with every step. He towered over me by at least three or four heads.

The women were a more diverse sight—some bore the fierce heads of lionesses, while others had soft human features. Yet, even the lion-headed women moved with grace and femininity. The absence of manes made them distinct from the males, and their posture, confidence, and eyes made their gender clear. There were also males with human faces, further showing the variety among the Feliann bloodline.

"It's been a year since our Princess left for the academy in search of a mate," Kirk muttered, a rare softness entering his voice. "I often wondered if she was alright..."

"Are you perhaps related to her?" I asked, noticing the subtle shift in his tone.

He turned, raising an eyebrow. "What made you think that?"

"You reminded me of her," I answered truthfully.

Kirk let out a deep, rumbling laugh that vibrated in my chest. "Well now, aren't you observant? Yes, I'm the Princess's uncle."

"I see..." I said with a small nod. "That makes you my uncle-in-law then, doesn't it?"

He grinned, sharp canines flashing. "There's no real need for titles like that, but if it pleases you, call me what you will."

Soon, we reached a large wooden structure nestled into one of the tree trunks, its thick timbers bound tightly together and reinforced with ropes and bone ornaments. It exuded strength despite its natural material. Several guards stood by the entrance, clad in primitive armor with spears resting on their shoulders.

"Our chief is inside," Kirk said, gesturing toward the building.

"Alright," I replied with a nod.

Kirk then turned to the others. "Now, the rest of you—come with me. I'll see that you're given proper accommodation."

Zoey and the others followed him, vanishing down a different path.

I stepped toward the chief's dwelling, placing a hand on the carved wooden door. The moment I pushed it open, a wave of heat and scent rolled out—a pungent, unmistakable aroma.

My nose twitched.

Sex. The raw, musky smell of fucking saturated the air.

The interior was dimly lit, warm and humid. Furs lined the walls, and the earthy tones of the room were overpowered by the scene before me.

At the center of the room sat a hulking lion-headed beastman, lounging comfortably on a throne-like wooden seat draped in animal hide. His immense form radiated raw power—muscles bulging under fur, his mane wild and untamed. A large scar slashed across his broad chest, and another ran over his left eye, forcing it shut permanently.

Behind him, sprawled across a massive bed, lay several naked women—some with the heads of lionesses, others with alluring human features. Their bodies glistened with sweat, limbs tangled together, some still twitching slightly in post-orgasmic haze. Cum glistened between their thighs, staining the sheets. The scent of sex hung heavily in the air—thick, dizzying, impossible to ignore.

His golden eye slowly turned toward me, the pupil narrowing like a predator sizing up prey.

"Hm?" he growled, voice deep and gravelly. "Who are you...? And why are you here, human?"

I froze.

...Did I just walk in at the worst possible moment?

I stood my ground, though tension coiled within me like a spring ready to snap. "Um... I can step outside for a moment if you're busy," I said politely, already turning on my heel. This didn't feel like the right time.

"Hm?" The low rumble of his voice cut through the silence as he suddenly sniffed the air, his nostrils flaring like a beast catching prey. His golden eye narrowed, the other hidden beneath an old scar. "You're Trill's mate, huh?"

"Yes," I replied, turning back around, meeting his gaze without flinching.

"I see..." He inhaled deeply again, a faint growl rising in his throat. "There's no mistaking it. My daughter's scent is all over you." He leaned back slightly, his gaze sharper now, colder. "And since Kirk was the one who brought you before me, it means he has already confirmed it himself."

"Yes," I said once more, voice steady despite the pressure bearing down on me.

"Mhm..." He closed his eyes for a brief second, exhaling slowly through his nose. His large, furred elbow rested heavily on the carved wooden armrest of his throne, while his square jaw was propped against his knuckles. Then his eye opened, piercing into mine like a blade. "Now, tell me, boy... Why are you here? What business brings you to our clan—and without my daughter?"

"There were circumstances that brought me here. Honestly, it was pure coincidence," I explained, carefully choosing my words.

"Circumstances?" His voice dropped into a menacing growl, the air seeming to vibrate with his displeasure. "You stand before the Chief of the Feliann, human. Here, we do not entertain vagueness. Speak with full truth—bare your soul if you must. There is no room for riddles or cowardice in my presence."

I lowered my head slightly in respect. "Forgive me. But for now... I cannot disclose everything. The knowledge I carry could shake the very balance of the world. Still, I ask that in time, you be willing to listen."

His eye narrowed into a slitted glare. The room grew colder—or perhaps it was the gravity of his presence pressing down on me. After a long, tension-laden pause, he leaned back into his throne, the wood creaking beneath his massive frame.

"As long as you swear to tell me when the time is right," he said with a low growl, "I will forgive your insolent deflection—for now."

That was... surprisingly generous. I hadn't expected that level of understanding. Though, I still couldn't quite sense any resemblance between him and Trill. She must've inherited more from her mother.

"Due to those circumstances," I continued, straightening my posture, "I found myself deep within the forest in the dead of night. I wasn't alone. I had several women with me—two of whom are unaccustomed to surviving in the wild. The idea of sleeping under the trees, surrounded by the unknown... it shook them. For their sake and mine, I request temporary shelter."

"Hmm..." He considered my words, his thick mane shifting as he tilted his head slightly. "You shall have it. Since you are my daughter's mate, I will not cast you aside. But I must ask something—something sacred to us Feliann." His voice lowered, more solemn now. "When we find our mate, it is for life. We may have many mates, as I do... but we hold each of them dear. As the one who has touched my daughter's heart, do you swear to remain by her side for the rest of your days?"

There was no hesitation. No need to think. I looked him directly in the eye and answered, voice unwavering, "I will."

He stared into me, as though trying to peel back the layers of my soul with his gaze alone. Seconds passed—silent, intense—until he finally exhaled and gave a low, approving growl.

"Very well... I acknowledge you."

"Thank you," I said, bowing my head slightly in a show of respect.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Leon," I answered, standing tall.

"Leon, huh...?" A small smirk tugged at the corner of his lion-like mouth. "A strong name. Fitting. Similar to my own." He thumped his fist once against the armrest of his throne. "I am Lionel Feliann. Chief of the Feliann clan. King of this land."

Chapter 620 - The Feliann Clan (4)

After my conversation with Chief Lionel, I headed toward the quarters where the others were temporarily housed. The evening air was thick with humidity, carrying with it the faint scent of earth and burning torches. As I approached, I caught sight of Kirk emerging from one of the larger huts, his silhouette lit from behind by flickering flames.

"Oh? Done talking with our Chief?" he asked, his voice deep and leisurely, laced with the weight of familiarity.

"Yes," I replied with a slight nod. "He was much more accommodating than I imagined."

"Well, it seems the old lion has a soft spot for those acknowledged by his daughter. And let me tell you—there's only ever been one person she's acknowledged. That person... is you. That alone should tell you everything." A small, knowing smile curled his lips. "Our Chief's very lenient with her. She's his only daughter. His only child."

"I see..." I murmured thoughtfully. "Is there any way I could contact her while I'm staying here?"

"Oh?" Kirk tilted his head, as if amused by the question. "Well, we don't exactly have a post office where you can send letters and such," he chuckled. "But one of the younger ones around here has this magical device called a smartphone. Apparently, it's the most wondrous object our tribe has come across."

"Would it be possible to meet this person?" I asked.

"It's late," he said, stretching slightly, his toned arms flexing beneath the hide-bound fabric draped over his shoulders. "But I'll arrange for you to meet him in the morning. I'll make the call, tell him what you need."

"Thank you. That means a lot," I said earnestly.

He nodded once, then turned slightly to leave—only to pause. He leaned in, his mane brushing forward, shielding the sly grin on his face as he muttered under his breath, "The accommodation I gave you... isn't soundproof. So if you plan to mate with one—or all—of the women inside, I suggest you keep the sounds under control... unless you want them to be heard. Our people enjoy doing it loud, and we've never seen the need for soundproofing. Around here, the louder the moans of your women, the more respect you gain. The more of a lion you become in the eyes of anyone who hears. You understand, don't you?"

"I completely understand," I said with a calm nod. This tribe was built on pride—intense, unapologetic pride. After meeting the Chief earlier, it was already abundantly clear to me: these people didn't shy away from the sound of sex—they celebrated it.

Kirk burst into a hearty, growling laugh, his chest rumbling as he slapped his thigh. "As expected from someone the Princess herself has acknowledged. I thought for sure, being human, you'd be embarrassed by the thought of someone hearing you while you fuck."

"That would ruin the concept of freedom itself," I said, looking straight at him. "To be able to moan freely—without caring who hears—that, to me, is what true freedom looks like."

It may have sounded like something an unrepentant exhibitionist would say, but that was exactly how I felt. No shame. No hesitation.

"I see..." Kirk smirked, his lion's fangs flashing in the firelight. "You truly are a lion. You may be more of one than I am." He gave me one last nod, the look in his eyes both amused and impressed. "Well then. I've said my piece. Enjoy your night."

With that, he turned and walked away, his massive form gradually swallowed by the darkness of the village paths. I stood there for a moment, his words lingering in the air, before turning toward the hut where Zoey and the others waited.

Inside, four women were gathered—three human, and one automata whose synthetic skin shimmered faintly under the candlelight.

"Leon, I thought you said there was electricity here. How am I supposed to conduct my research?" one of the girls complained, arms crossed in mild annoyance.

"Now, now. This is a tribe," I said smoothly. "It's only natural that such conveniences don't exist here. But I plan to call someone I know, and the morning after tomorrow, we'll head to my place. There, electricity is guaranteed." I paused, then added with purpose, "I'll also ensure you're given proper accommodations. That is, of course, if you wish to stay with me."

I emphasized the choice. I didn't know if they still yearned to return to their old world. It was entirely possible. And that possibility was why I left my words open—respecting whatever decision they might make.

"It's truly impossible for us to return now, especially after the chaos we left behind in our world," Zoey said, her voice laced with finality. "In fact, it'd be nothing short of suicidal to even consider it. We'd be cuffed the moment we set foot back there—or worse, executed for that stunt. My father wouldn't hesitate to tell me what a complete fool I was."

"I won't leave you until you've put a baby inside me," Zes added, her voice enthusiastic, her gaze smoldering with heat. That same intense look was back again. Now that the dust had settled and I could see more clearly, I noticed something unusual—her teeth were jagged and sharp, almost like a predator's, glinting faintly in the dim light like a shark's bite waiting to happen.

Chloe remained silent, but her expression spoke volumes. She didn't object—if anything, her quiet demeanor hinted at agreement. She was staying, no matter what. Anne said nothing, but she didn't need to—she was an automata, and she had already registered me as her master. Her loyalty was built into her very being.

And so, we waited. I would eventually contact Gabrielle, Amon, or Maya. Honestly, I missed them all. When I return, I'll need to arrange a proper foursome with them. At the very least.

Night had fallen over the Feliann tribe, wrapping everything in a hush of serenity. The stars above shimmered gently, and a soft breeze carried the scent of leaves and earth through the air. It felt like I had become one with nature itself. Everyone was sound asleep. Even Anne was in rest mode, lying quietly beside us. Apparently, her recharging cycle resembled sleep, much like a human's.

I lay motionless, eyes tracing the wooden ceiling above us, lost in thought—until something shifted. A faint, almost imperceptible rustling broke the silence. Cloth brushed softly against skin. Someone was moving. I froze.

If Zes had decided to crawl over and straddle me, desperate for sex, I wouldn't have minded in the slightest. But her loud, unmistakable snoring filled the air. She was out cold. Which meant—this wasn't her.

Then the figure revealed herself. A silhouette at first, moving with graceful intent. As she approached, her body took shape under the pale moonlight. She was a woman—and not just any woman, but the kind made for fucking. Her body was soft, like clouds pressed together, marshmallowy and yielding to the touch. Every curve seemed sculpted for pleasure. I could already feel myself sinking into the memory of her skin. Her breasts—larger than any I had ever taken—rested heavily on her chest, jiggling slightly with each step. Her proportions bordered on excessive, yet they were flawlessly balanced—wide, supple hips, a round, full ass, and thighs that looked like heaven to grip and thrust between. She was sex, personified.

It was Chloe. Her hime-cut bangs still veiled her eyes, casting shadows on her porcelain skin. But beneath the curtain of dark strands, I caught the soft glint of purple—a pair of eyes that stared at me with hunger.

"Leon..." she murmured, voice thick with drowsy heat. "I'm horny. Let's have sex."

There was no hesitation. No pretense.

I stared at her for a heartbeat before answering, "Alright. But I'm not exactly hard right now. If you want to fuck, you'll have to make it hard yourself."

"Okay," she whispered, her lips brushing my ear.

Her hand slid down with deliberate grace, fingers moving toward my crotch with practiced ease. She freed my cock from beneath the sheets, her movements fluid and unhurried. Then, she brought her palm to her lips and ran her tongue across it—leaving it glistening and wet with her saliva.

With that same hand, now slick and warm, she wrapped her fingers around my shaft. The moment her wet palm made contact with my skin, a jolt shot through me. A shiver traveled up my spine. She began to stroke slowly, her hand sliding up and down with a squelching, erotic sound—wet flesh against flesh. Each motion was deliberate, coaxing life into my cock, bit by bit.

Heat flooded into me. My shaft pulsed and thickened with every stroke. Her hot breath fanned across my cheek, heavy and ragged, and the fine hairs on my arms stood upright. My body was reacting to her, helplessly.

"It's hard now..." she panted, a faint tremble in her voice.

"Alright," I said, voice low and steady. "Now, I want you to straddle me—ride my cock."