

## The World 801

### Chapter 801: Epilogue 15 - Girlfriends (5)

I dug my fingers into Trill's hips, using her as leverage to hammer myself in and out of Myrcella, feeling every wet glide of her pussy clamping down on me, so damn tight it almost felt like I was pulling the inside of her out each time I drew back.

The heat of her folds was enough to melt my fucking mind. It was sticky and slick, and every thrust made this filthy, wet slap that echoed around us and fueled the fire in my gut.

"Ahnnghhh~, ah, ah, ahhh, ah, ah, ah...~!"

Myrcella's moans spilled out like sweet music, shaking and rising every time I pushed back in. My cock was soaked in her juices, the wetness running down to my balls, and each pulse of her pussy made my spine tingle.

But fuck, the way she kept squeezing me, I knew I wouldn't last if I stayed there, so I had to pull out quick.

"Ah..."

The soft disappointment in her voice, the need, it made my cock throb painfully.

Then I shifted, grabbing Trill's ass, palms sinking into the soft flesh as I spread her open and lined myself up to her glistening pussy. My cock brushed her folds, teasing the entrance, and then—

I shoved it deep inside.

"Ahhnghhh~!!!"

Trill's back arched, her head tilting back and her mouth parting in a messy, desperate moan.

"Ahh... Leon's cock... is so good...~" she slurred out, voice hot and trembling, cheeks flushed deep red and sweat starting to bead at her temple.

The moment I filled her, her pussy clenched so tight it nearly made my vision go white, the heat of her walls milking me from base to tip.

I didn't give her time to recover. Gripping her hips harder, my thumbs digging into her skin, I started pounding her with every thrust pulling out wet, lewd noises that made my blood roar in my ears.

"Ahnnnghhh~, ah, ah, ah, ahnnn, ah, ah, ah, ah, ahhh~!!!"

Her voice cracked beautifully, each sound rolling over me and making me want to push deeper, harder and faster. It was like hearing a song that only existed between us, built out of skin, heat, and lust.

Her pussy was soaking me, hot slickness dripping out every time I slammed in. I could feel it running down my thighs as it was sticky and warm. After a while, I pulled out, my cock twitching in the open air.

"Ah... W-Why...?" Trill panted, voice soft and raw with need.

I didn't answer. I just shifted down, aimed at Myrcella's soaked entrance, and buried myself back into her waiting pussy.

"Ahnnnghhh~ ahhh...!"

She gasped, her body trembling, arching so her chest pressed even closer to Trill's body, and I felt every flutter of her walls clamping on me like she didn't want me to leave.

I kept plunging into her, my cock coated again in her slick warmth, before I had to pull out, earning that same little whimper from her lips.

Then I switched back, aiming my cock up and sinking into Trill again.

"Ahhngngh~! Ahh... ah, ah, ah, ah, ahhh...~"

The rhythm turned messy, raw and then desperate. I fucked them both, back and forth, feeling the differences between them, comparing the way each of their pussies hugged my cock, how wet, how tight, and how each twitch and squeeze made my blood boil.

"Ahh...~ L-Leon... you're making our juices get mixed together..." Myrcella gasped out, her breath catching.

"T-This what you like very much, isn't it?"

Fuck yeah. Seeing them pressed together, feeling both of them take me, their moans overlapping—it was fucking heaven.

I picked up speed, switching faster, only a thrust or two in each before moving to the other, and the wet, messy noises got louder, stickier, and filling the air with raw lust.

Their chests rubbed together, nipples brushing and adding even more heat to the mix, and the sight nearly made me lose it.

"Ahh, ah, ahhh...~ Ahh, ah, ahh...! Ahh, Leon, so good...~ Please, cum...~ Cum inside me...~" Myrcella begged, voice soaked in desire.

"Ahhh, Leon...~ it feels good...~ Ahhh, rub it in there more...~ Make me feel good! Ahhhnnnghh~!!" Trill's words came out shaky and hungry, like she couldn't get enough.

They were getting close, the way their voices cracked, the way their pussies twitched and pulsed around me. I couldn't stop now with the heat burning low in my belly, ready to snap.

So I slammed in one last time, cock throbbing, and let it all go.

Cum shot out hard, hot, and deep inside Myrcella, her pussy tightening so hard around me as she came.

"Annnnnnnnnnnhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh~!!! Ahhnghhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

She arched, back bending beautifully, her body shaking as she milked every last drop out of me.

I clenched, cut it off, then slammed into Trill, filling her up too.

"Ahhhhh! S-So hot...! C-Cumming...! I'm cumminggggggggggggggggggggggggg~!!!"

Her pussy clenched in wild spasms, and her lion ears twitched up stiff, tail going rigid behind her as she came hard with me.

When I finally pulled out, both of their pussies dripped thick, messy cum that leaked out, pooled between them, and rolled down onto the sheets.

My chest was heaving with sweat dripping, cock still painfully hard, shiny with our mess.

Then I looked over—and met Zeruel's gaze.

She gulped, but didn't look away. Her cheeks were flushed, breath shaky, but her eyes held steady, silently telling me she was ready.

"Leon, come get her," Titania's voice cut in, soft but firm, almost protective.

"Alright," I said, voice low and husky.

I moved between Zeruel's legs, heart pounding like crazy.

"Are you fine with this?" I asked, softer than I'd meant to.

She hesitated, glanced away, then nodded, voice a whisper. "Mmm... Come."

Just that word from her lips made my chest tighten, like I was about to cross into something sweet, forbidden, and so damn tempting.

She kept her legs open for me, shy but brave.

"M-My panties aren't as elegant as the others... I'm sorry..." she mumbled, cheeks burning.

"I don't mind," I told her honestly, my voice rough. "In fact, seeing something simple like this is... kinda cute, actually."

"I... I see..." she whispered, and for a second, her lips curled into a shy smile she couldn't hide.

"I'm gonna take it off, okay?"

She nodded again, breath catching. "Mm..."

With fingers that felt weirdly shaky, I hooked them into her waistband and slowly, carefully, pulled her panties down her hips, then over her thighs, until I slid them off completely.

For a second, time felt like it stopped. I had my first look at Zeruel's pussy—soft, flushed, and glistening slightly—and fuck, I felt like I was staring at something precious and unbearably hot at the same time.

#### Chapter 802: Epilogue 15 - Girlfriends (6)

Zeruel's pussy was so tightly shut, the soft lips almost shyly hiding everything from view, but fuck, it was impossible not to see how wet she'd already gotten. The slick glisten of her juices spilling out from her slit told me more than words ever could. It made my chest feel hot and I could tell that my cock was twitching painfully, and my breath to come out heavier.

Watching her like this with her spread open as well as so vulnerable but at the same time brave, was enough to make my blood rush to my head and cloud my thoughts. And maybe because she was always

the quiet one as well as the distant one, seeing her like this turned me on in a way that felt sharp and addicting.

But I didn't want to ruin it by rushing in. It was her first time, after all. I wanted to take my time to show her how good it could feel as well as to prepare her so it wouldn't hurt as bad when I finally pushed my cock inside.

I leaned closer, feeling the warmth of her body against mine, until our faces were just a breath apart. She went bright red, eyes flickering with nerves and something softer and something wanting. For a second she looked away, but then she took a shaky breath and pursed her lips at me. Her eyes were timid but inviting.

Fuck, that was too cute to resist. I closed the tiny space between us and kissed her.

Her lips were soft as velvet, tasting faintly of sweetness and something that was just her. It made me dizzy with want. My hand moved almost by itself, sliding from her slender neck down across the trembling rise of her chest, until I cupped her breast over the thin, delicate fabric of her bra.

"Mmm...~"

Her moan slipped out, muffled against my lips with the sound coming out as a half surprise, half shy embarrassment—but instead of pulling away, she leaned in, kissing me deeper.

I pushed further, slipping my hand under her bra and brushing my fingers across her nipple, feeling it pebble instantly under my touch.

"Mnnghh...~ Hnghh...~"

Her moans grew shakier, her breath catching as her tongue awkwardly moved against mine, tangling and sliding. The clumsy honesty of it only made my chest ache with raw heat.

Feeling my cock throb even harder, I let my hand trail lower, past the soft dip of her stomach, until I reached the slick heat between her thighs. My fingertips brushed across her pussy lips, wet and warm, and then, carefully, I pressed one finger inside.

"Ah...!"

She gasped, eyes flying open wide, but before she could overthink it, I kissed her again, swallowing her soft cry.

"Nghhh...~ Mmm, mnmm...~ Mngghhh~..."

She trembled under me, hips shifting helplessly as her pussy squeezed around my finger, so hot and tight it made me curse under my breath.

I pulled back just a bit to look at her, and honestly, the sight almost made me lose it with her flushed cheeks, parted lips wet with our spit, and her eyes hazy with pleasure.

Not stopping, I lowered my mouth, kissing the curve of her neck, then sucking lightly at her collarbone, enough to leave a mark that would remind her later. I traced my tongue down her chest, over the smooth skin of her stomach, pausing at her navel to taste the salt of her sweat.

"Ah...!"

She jolted, realizing where I was headed. Her legs twitched like she wanted to close them as well as to hide herself.

"A-Are you going to lick there?" she stammered, voice breaking.

"Yeah, Zeruel," Titania's voice floated over, gentle but teasing. "He's gonna deflower you, so of course he wants to get you ready. It'll hurt less that way, right, Leon?"

"Exactly," I told her, voice low and rough. "Some girls barely feel it, some feel a lot. You look really tight, so I wanna make it easier for you."

She bit her lip, cheeks burning even redder, and nodded after a moment.

"I-Is that so? T-Then... okay..."

Her legs parted for me, still trembling, but open, trusting, and fuck, that sight almost undid me.

I didn't waste a second. I leaned down and let my tongue flick against her pussy lips, tasting the slick heat of her arousal.

"Nghhh~!"

She clamped her thighs against my head by reflex, but I kept licking, slow and teasing, letting her feel every deliberate drag of my tongue.

Her fingers twisted in the sheets, her breath turning into broken moans.

"Ahhh...! Ahh, ah, ah, ahhh...!"

Each sound she made shot straight through me, making my cock twitch painfully. Her taste was intoxicating, sweet and musky, and I couldn't get enough.

I wanted to push her over the edge, to see her fall apart before I fucked her. I wanted to make her cum first.

Soon enough, her thighs trembled harder, her back arching.

"Ah... ahh... s-something is...~ Ahhh, nooo...~ Ahhh...!"

Her pussy clenched around my tongue, and then she came, squirting hot juice against my mouth and chin.

"Ahhh...~ S-Sorry...!" she gasped, mortified.

But I didn't care. I held her hips and drank it in, licking her even as she shivered and twitched, her legs shaking around me.

"Ahhh, noooo~! Ahh...!"

Only when she finally went limp, breath ragged, did I pull away, my face wet with her cum.

She looked dazed, her chest rising and falling fast, sweat glistening on her flushed skin.

But I wasn't done. My cock felt so hard it hurt.

I moved between her legs, lining myself up to her entrance, her pussy glistening and open now.

She met my gaze, her eyes shy but brave, and nodded.

"I'm going to enter now," I told her, voice rough from restraint.

"Mmm... come..."

That single word, breathy and trembling, pushed me over the edge.

I grabbed her hips gently, took a breath, and then pushed forward, feeling her heat wrap around me, tight and hot, tearing through her hymen as I sank deeper inside.

Chapter 803: Epilogue 15 - Girlfriends (7)

She clawed at the sheets so hard her fingers went pale, nails digging in deep like she was trying to rip them apart. Her knuckles turned ghost-white, trembling from the strain as that broken, pained moan ripped out of her throat, raw and sharp.

My grip on her hips tightened, my fingers sinking into her soft skin, feeling the heat and tension rolling off her body. Her thighs were quivering and twitching under my touch.

"Ahhh...~ Haa, haa...~ haa, haa...~"

Her breath came out in ragged, shaky gasps, chest rising and falling so quick it looked like she couldn't catch air. Her eyes were hazy, swimming in tears and glazed over from pain mixed with something deeper and something new.

"Are you okay?" I asked, voice coming out rough, edged with worry even though my cock was still buried inside her, throbbing hard.

"Huuu... haa...~"

She tried to steady herself, taking deep, uneven breaths that made her chest lift and fall, sweat trailing down her skin. Every inhale looked like it hurt, but she fought to breathe through it.

Blood started to slip out around where I'd entered her, dripping down, warm and thick, and staining the sheet underneath with dark spots of red.

"I-It hurts..." she whispered, voice cracking, tears spilling from her eyes. Her teeth clenched hard, jaw trembling as she tried to swallow the pain.

I didn't move, holding back even though every part of me was screaming to keep going. This pain wasn't like getting cut or bruised because it was deeper and it was something that meant she'd crossed a line she couldn't ever cross back over. It was the pain that meant innocence was gone.

She blinked, looking up at me with glassy eyes, whispering between harsh breaths.

"S-Sorry... It's too painful..."

Well, that was on me. I'd thought she'd hurt less after she'd cum, but I hadn't accounted for just how tight she really was with her being untouched and trembling. Of course it'd hurt.

"It's okay. That's only natural," I told her, my thumb brushing her skin softly. "Tell me when you're ready for me to move again."

"O-Okay..."

She closed her eyes, breathing in slow and deep, her chest moving up and down, small tremors running through her shoulders. Watching her fight back the pain like that made my chest feel tight.

Titania's voice cut in, soft and teasing. "Why don't you hold Leon's hand while he fucks you? It might help dull the pain."

"I-Is that so...?" she asked, voice so small, cheeks flushed hot.

She peeked at me, her gaze shy and a bit scared.

"H-Hold me, Leon," she murmured.

Her hand reached for mine, trembling. I slid my hands away from her hip, and our fingers tangled together, palms pressing tight.

"How is it?" I asked, trying to keep my voice calm.

"Mmm... I-I think you're right... It doesn't hurt as much... it's fading a little..." she whispered, breathing steadier.

"Fufufufu... Told you," Titania teased with a soft laugh.

Zeruel's eyes met mine, heavy with heat and embarrassment, lips parting as she whispered.

"N-Now, I think I'm fine."

"Are you sure?" I asked, voice low, heart hammering in my chest.

"Mmm... It's fine now."

Seeing her say that, cheeks red and breathing shaky, there was no way in hell I could hold back.

I started to move my hips, slow at first.

"Hngghhh!!"

Her voice caught, a choked sound mixed with pain and heat. Even though she tried to hide it, I could see it in her clenched jaw and the way her nails dug into my hands. She was trying to put my pleasure above her own, but that wasn't what I wanted.

Sex had to be for both of us, not just me.

I shifted, angling deeper, searching for the spot that might melt the pain into pleasure.

"Ahhh, ahh, ahhngghhh, ah...! Hiiik...~! Ahhh, ah, ah, ah...!"

Her sounds changed, sharp cries turning into wet, breathy gasps.

I squeezed her hand tighter, matching the tremble in her grip. Her hips jerked, and my cock brushed something inside that made her voice hitch.

"Ahh...~ Ah, ah, ahhh...! Ah, ah, ahhh! Nghhh! Ahhhnn! Ah, ahh...! W-What...? Ahhnghhhh~!!"

Her pussy clamped down around me, so tight I had to grit my teeth, pressure making my head spin and my gums ache from clenching.

"Ahh, s-something is...~ W-What is this...? I feel... ah. Ahhh... I feel...~"

"You feel good, right?" Titania teased, smirking.

"Yess~..." Zeruel moaned, eyes unfocused, body arching under me.

"Fufufufu~... Even though it hurts at first, Leon knows how to make it feel good," Titania purred, her voice dripping heat. "Leon, can I suck her breasts?"

"Wah?!" Zeruel gasped, eyes wide.

"That's a good idea. Let's make this special," I told her, breath rough.

"Then, I'll join."

"Me too."

Trill and Myrcella moved closer, gently shifting Yr and Isiliraiellyn, who were knocked out, to the edge of the bed.

I let go of Zeruel's hands and slid my palms back to her hips, holding tight as the wet, sticky sounds filled the room.

"Fufufufu~ We'll pleasure you so much tonight, Zeruel," Titania promised, voice teasing and hot.

She tugged Zeruel's bra aside, freeing her breasts. They weren't as big as Titania's, but still round and pretty with her nipples stiff and flushed.

Titania's gaze locked onto them, hungry, and then—

"Aammmuu...~"

She leaned down, lips wrapping around one nipple, tongue swirling and sucking slow.

Trill mirrored her, lips closing around the other breast, her hand brushing Zeruel's waist. Myrcella slid closer to me, tongue flicking at my nipple with her fingers teasing the other.

"Ahhh, ahhhngg~ Ahh, ahhh...! Ah, ah, ah...!"

Zeruel's voice spilled out, messy and sweet, hips rolling against mine with her pussy squeezing so tight it made my breath catch.

I kept thrusting, deeper and harder, as my cock started dragging against her slick walls, and slid my hands over to the other two, fingers pushing into their hot, wet pussies.

The bed shook under us, breathless cries and wet, sticky sounds mixing into a haze of heat until it felt like the world outside this moment had stopped existing.

Chapter 804: Epilogue 15 - Girlfriends (8)

I could feel their sticky wetness sliding all over my fingers as I kept ramming into Zeruel, her pussy gripping around my thick meat spear so tight it felt like she'd never let me go.

"Annghhh~, ahh...~ Ahh, ah, ahhnn, ah, ah, ah...!"

Her voice spilled out over and over with her breath catching every time my cock buried itself deep inside her. The heat of her body clung to mine, with our sweat making our skin slick where we touched. Meanwhile, my fingers pumped inside Trill and Titania, their wetness spilling out around my knuckles as they kept their mouths latched onto Zeruel's tits, sucking and flicking her nipples with hungry tongues.

"Annnghhh...~!"

Zeruel's eyes met mine, glazed over and half-lidded, looking so lost in pleasure it felt like she couldn't even think straight anymore. Her mouth hung open, letting out soft, broken gasps that made my cock throb harder inside her.

"Ahhngnghh~ Ah, ahh... Ahh, ahh...~"

All the while, Myrcella was teasing me too with her tongue licking across my nipples, and the scrape of her nails brushing my chest made my skin tingle. Every little flick and nip from her had me shivering, the mix of pain and pleasure running like a spark down my spine. The way she looked up at me, with a smirk dancing on her lips and eyes burning, made it even hotter.

"Mnnghh, mmm... mgnhhh~... mmmnnnggmm...~"

"Hmggghh, mmmhgg...~ Hnghhh...~!"

Trill and Titania moaned too with their sounds muffled as their lips stayed wrapped around Zeruel's stiffened nipples, while my fingers curled deep inside their soaked pussies. I could feel every twitch and clench as well as the way their inner walls spasmed around my fingers, milking them for more friction.

The sloppy sounds of sex filled the room, wet slaps, slick squelches as well as the messy slap of skin on skin. Every thrust of my hips into Zeruel pushed out more of her heat, the smell of sweat, cum, and raw desire thick enough to make my head spin.

"Nghgh, ahh...~ Ah, ah, ahhh...~"

"Nnnghhh...~ Ahngghh..."

"Aaaahhh, ah, ah...~"

Their voices overlapped, a messy, breathless chorus that felt like it wrapped around me. Myrcella's fingers slipped into her own pussy as she moved closer, her lips finding mine. Our tongues tangled, wet and greedy, and the sweet taste of her mouth—like cherry and something darker—made my cock twitch again, buried deep inside Zeruel.

They all started to clutch at each other, hands tangled, hair messy and damp with sweat. My cock throbbed, and the slick, desperate tightness of their pussies around my fingers pushed me closer and closer to the edge.

The pressure built fast with the heat coiling in my stomach and pooling at the base of my cock until every nerve felt like it was sparking.

"Ahhh, ahh... ah, ah, ah, ahhh, ah, ah, ah, ah...~!"

"Ahhngghh, ah, ah, ahh, ah, ah, ahhh...!"

"Ngghh, ah, ah, ah, ah, ahhh...!"

Their moans rose higher, trembling and cracking as orgasm hit them. Their walls tightened around me, clamping down so fiercely I could barely move.

"I'm going to cum inside," I managed to rasp out, voice rough and raw. "Alright, Zeruel?!"

"Y-Yeshhh~... ah, ahhh...~ P-Put it... your hot stuff, inshide me...! Ahnnnnnn~!!!"

She was shaking under me, legs trembling as she felt it coming too. Her pussy clenched, pulling at my cock like it wanted to milk every drop. Holding back felt pointless, so I gave in to it.

I slammed into her, deeper and harder, while my fingers curled deep inside Trill and Titania, pushing them over too.

"Ahhh, ah, ahhnghhh, ah, ah, ah, ahh, ah."

"Ahhh, ah, ahhh, ah, ah, ahhnghhh~ ah, ah, ahhh...!"

They all gasped, voices breaking as their backs arched.

"Aaaannggggggggggggggggg~!!!"

The rush hit me like fire with my cock pulsed, cum spilling hot and heavy deep inside Zeruel's pussy, filling her so full it started to leak around the base.

"Nghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

Zeruel's mouth opened wide, eyes rolling back as the warmth of my cum flooded into her.

"Nghggghhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

Her whole body trembled, hips bucking up against me as if to take it even deeper.

"Nghhh... ah, ahhh...~ S-So hot... Feelsh goodd~..."

Her words came out slurred, her face flushed and eyes dazed. Pain was gone and now there was only heat, pleasure, and the mess we'd made together.

Trill and Titania were sprawled next to her, sweat slicking their skin, hair sticking to their flushed faces. Their eyes were half-lidded, lips parted, and breath still catching.

"That so good...~"

"Ahh, it feels good... I felt like my mind had been melted..."

They looked ruined in the best way, ahegao expressions painted across their faces.

They had that perfect, messy ahegao look that made my cock twitch again, still rock hard even as I pulled out of Zeruel. My cum dripped from her stretched pussy, pinkish from her deflowering, glistening under the light.

The wet pop of it echoed, and Myrcella didn't even give me a second to breathe as her hands yanked me toward her, lips crashing into mine.

Her tongue was hungry, tasting of heat and salt, and her nails dug into my back as if she wanted to mark me. I didn't hesitate. I pushed her down, thrust into her dripping cunt, and fucked her until she was gasping and trembling too, filling her to the brim with cum.

One after another, they all came to me—Isiliraiellyn next, then Yr, then even Zeruel again, eyes hazy but wanting more.

The bed rocked and creaked under us, our bodies pressed so close I could barely breathe, skin slick with sweat, cum, and each other's scent. It was messy, raw, overwhelming—and fuck, it felt so good I thought my head would spin off.

Their bodies pressed all around me, heat and sweat mixing with the thick, sweet smell of sex that filled the room until my mind felt fuzzy and heavy.

When it was finally over, they all lay sprawled across the bed, skin sticky with sweat and cum, hair messy, legs spread. The room smelled like fucked-up heaven.

Breathing hard, I pulled away, rolling my shoulders and trying to steady my heart. It was draining to go through that with so many women all at once, but fuck, it felt good.

I stepped to the window, pushed it open, and let the night breeze cool my burning skin.

My phone buzzed in my pocket, breaking the haze.

I checked the screen: "Your plan won't go as planned. Be sure to remember that."

My grip on the phone tightened until my knuckles hurt. Heat and anger curled in my chest, but I sucked in a breath, forcing myself to calm down.

"Come with me with all you've got then."

#### Chapter 805: Irene And Gabrielle (1)

This is the backstory of Irene and Gabrielle, set in the past during their academy days. It tells the story of their friendship—and how it eventually came to an end.

Irene's POV

The Milham Academy for Magic Knights.

It stood there like this massive testament to the kingdom's pride and was built to shape and raise magic knights worthy of the title. Its entire purpose was to polish raw talent until it could shine bright on the battlefield and all for the prosperity of the kingdom.

And yes, I guess, that's the reason I ended up here too.

The Brightspear House—my family, that is—is one of those noble houses that's practically famous in the Kingdom of Milham. For decades, we'd turned out more than our fair share of magic knights. That history was heavy and it was like a weight you could almost feel pressing on your shoulders. And as the daughter of that house... the same path just kind of fell into my lap by default.

To be honest, I never really thought to question it.

Even if somewhere deep down, I didn't quite feel like being a magic knight was what I truly wanted... well, it felt pointless to resist. My father and mother had already drawn this road out for me with every step carefully laid, and planned, as well as expected.

And it would've felt stupid, and very selfish even, to ignore that.

So, I went along with it.

Now, here I was, five months into my first year at the academy. Time flew by, but also crawled in its own strange way.

I was in the Gold Class.

And for a bit of context, the Gold Class wasn't just some fancy name because it was the real deal. Only those in the Gold Class had a clear shot at graduating as magic knights. Anyone else, well... if you didn't manage to climb up by your fourth year, it was pretty much an unspoken rule to start looking for a different future.

Sure, there were ways to climb from the Bronze Class or Silver Class into Gold. But it really wasn't something most could pull off. It meant pouring every hour as well as every breath into catching up, and the gap was huge, especially if you were starting from Bronze. Most would just burn out long before they got close.

Which, despite everything, made me feel weirdly grateful to already be here in the Gold Class.

Anyway, that day, it was about ten minutes before the afternoon lecture. And yes... at this point, my stomach was practically yelling at me, so I found myself walking toward the cafeteria.

Now, you might wonder why I'd wait until the very last moment to go eat.

The answer's simple, really. I didn't want to be around anyone else.

The thought of sitting there, surrounded by loud voices with everyone laughing and talking while I sat by myself, well... It felt... humiliating. It was like being on display. And really, I've always been the kind of person who preferred the quiet anyway.

So, I got into this habit of timing it perfectly, and slipping into the cafeteria just as everyone else had already rushed off to claim seats in the lecture hall.

But that day, when I pushed open the door, someone else was already there.

She sat there, almost glowing under the late afternoon light spilling through the high windows. Golden hair that seemed to catch every stray beam of sunlight, and those blue eyes locked on something in front of her.

There was this calm, composed air around her, like nothing could touch her focus. Something about it pulled your gaze before you could help it.

It was Gabrielle.

She was in the same Gold Class as me, though we'd never really spoken. She was ranked in the top three and considered to be one of the best. People whispered that she had so much promise she might not just become a magic knight but even earn a captain's title someday. Everyone seemed convinced she'd go far.

Her ability was practically legendary already. A barrier ability so strong it made even upper-year cadets hesitate to spar with her.

And here she was, sitting all alone at an empty table, quietly nibbling on a sandwich while reading.

She didn't look worried about the time at all, even though the lecture was about to start. The way she moved, so unhurried, made it seem like the world outside her small circle didn't matter.

She seemed so calm, so absorbed in what she was doing that I almost felt bad for even noticing her.

As for me... studying wasn't really something I loved.

I didn't hate studying—but I never poured my free time into it either. Not because I was dumb or lazy. It just felt empty somehow, throwing everything I had into something that wasn't fully mine.

Trying not to stare too much, I walked over to one of the tables pressed against the wall—the far corner where no one would bother looking. I slipped off my bag, pulled out the lunch I'd packed earlier that morning, and sat down. By this hour, the cafeteria had usually run out of fresh food anyway.

At first, I kept glancing over at Gabrielle, unable to help it. She looked so completely absorbed in her book, barely remembering to bite into her sandwich. And strangely, it didn't feel like she was rushing at all, even with the clock ticking.

After a while, I forced myself to focus on my own meal, pushing away the curiosity.

But then, she suddenly closed her book, carefully tucked the half-eaten sandwich back into her bag, and stood up. It felt almost graceful, the way she moved.

Without a word, she walked out, leaving the cafeteria almost as quietly as she'd been sitting there.

Maybe she'd been there longer than me, and by then, she'd already eaten enough. Or maybe she just wasn't that hungry. Who knows?

All I could think was... my first impression of Gabrielle felt odd.

There was something about her—distant yet focused, serious but strangely delicate—that left me wondering.

And before I knew it, I found myself watching the door she'd walked out of... still thinking about her.

## Chapter 806: Irene And Gabrielle (2)

Fast forward a bit—to the training camp everyone wouldn't shut up about for weeks beforehand.

All of us cadets, from first-year bronzes all the way to the polished top of Gold Class, were dumped into this rural backwater village, ringed by forest and damp morning fog that clung to the ground like a second skin.

The idea, they told us, was "growth through shared struggle."

What it felt like, honestly, was an excuse to make us beat the living shit out of each other under the watchful eyes of bored instructors who drank too much bitter tea.

From daybreak, the air smelled of wet dirt, sweat, and the tang of nervous tension.

Everyone was sizing each other up because in this training camp, year didn't matter and rank didn't matter as well. Out here, reputation only lasted until the first punch landed.

I stood there, boots sinking slightly into soft earth, the training field sprawling wide ahead. There were weapons stacked on stands, like training swords, blunted spears, staves worn smooth from years of sweaty hands gripping them too tight. But a lot of us didn't even bother. Some, like Rose, preferred fists over steel.

Rose.

She was a storm bottled up in human form with her being on top of Silver Class, on the verge of clawing into Gold. Rumor was she refused to rely on her ability, insisting on her raw fists instead. That stubbornness — or arrogance — had half the academy talking. And today, she was on fire.

"Come on! Get some! Get some!" she roared, echoing off the trees. Her dark green hair clung to her face in sweaty tangles, and her knuckles gleamed wetly.

What was it? Blood? Sweat? Probably both.

In front of her, some poor cadet from second-year Gold Class swayed on shaky legs, his face a mess of bruises and swelling. He'd already lost before Rose even opened her mouth.

Rose's grin twisted cruelly.

"Ha... That's it? That's fuckin' boring!" she spat, almost disappointed. "Gold Class, huh? You're nothing but a bore..."

Without warning, her fist snapped forward. The sickening smack of bone on flesh cut through the air, louder than the scattered gasps around us. The guy folded, dropping to the packed dirt.

Rose didn't even spare him a second glance. She straightened, chest rising and falling, neck slick with sweat, and swept her glare over the crowd.

"What? Who's next? I'll fucking take you all on!"

There was a feral gleam in her eyes, like she couldn't wait to taste pain of hers or someone else's.

And for a heartbeat, no one moved. Breath seemed to catch in dozens of throats.

Then, as calm as morning dew settling on grass.

"How about me?"

That voice. Low, clear, cold as polished glass.

Gabrielle.

She stepped out from between two taller cadets, her blue eyes steady like she was almost bored. Her hair shimmered under the overcast sky, the faint breeze lifting a few strands. Even without armor, there was something regal about the way she stood.

A murmur rippled through the watching cadets.

Gabrielle had recently climbed to the very top of Gold Class, scoring perfect hundreds on exams that left the rest of us clawing for seventies.

Rose's lip curled into a sneer. "Oh? Top of Gold Class, huh? You think that fucking title's gonna scare me?" She rolled her shoulders, cracking them loud enough for nearby cadets to flinch. "That's worth jack shit out here."

Gabrielle tilted her head, golden hair brushing her collarbone. "It was earned. Maybe it should scare you."

"Fuck you," Rose shot back, stepping closer, boots scuffing the dirt. "You started at the top. You don't get it. You've never had to drag yourself up from nothing."

Gabrielle's gaze didn't flicker. "So it only matters if you start lower? Then bronze cadets should see you the way you see me. They started even further behind."

"Huh? You think running your mouth about that shit matters now?" Rose spat, spit glinting in the dusty air. "You really think that'll save you?"

Gabrielle shrugged. "Not really. But it'd be fun if it did."

That last sentence barely left her lips before Rose launched herself forward, her figure blurring with raw speed and fury. Dirt kicked up behind her, and her fist drew back, veins standing out on her arm.

"You're fucking slow!" Rose roared, voice breaking from strain.

But Gabrielle... she didn't even move her feet.

Instead, at the last instant, a sphere of golden light flared into existence around her. It was seamless and humming faintly. Rose's punch crashed into it, and the shockwave rolled outward, ruffling clothes as well as tossing strands of hair into faces.

"Ngh...! That fuckin' hurts!" Rose hissed, stumbling back, clutching her knuckles, already swelling red and angry.

And Gabrielle... she smiled.

Not a kind smile. Crooked, sharp, and almost mocking. The first time any of us had seen her drop the composed mask she wore every day in lectures.

"What the fuck are you smirking at?!" Rose barked.

"Nothing," Gabrielle replied softly. "Just funny... watching someone charge in blind, with no idea what they're up against."

"I'm not fucking stupid!" Rose snapped.

Gabrielle's eyes glinted. "Funny. I didn't say a name. Why'd you assume it was you?"

Rose's jaw clenched, and for a heartbeat, I thought she'd stop as well as think. But rage had her tighter than any chain.

"You...!" she howled, throwing herself forward again. Her fist swung wide, a blur of motion with her breath hissing between clenched teeth.

The barrier was there again, golden and cold. Rose's punch hit it, and the dull thud echoed. Pain burst across her features and her eyes squeezed shut, teeth bared in a soundless snarl.

"That fuckin' hurts!!!" she howled, voice almost breaking.

She didn't stop. Again, and again, and again, her fists slammed into the barrier. Each time, the impact rippled across her muscles, shaking her shoulders. Blood began to bead on her knuckles, streaking across pale skin, mixing with sweat and dust.

Gabrielle didn't flinch. She didn't move. She just watched, head tilted slightly, lips pressed into that same faint, cold smirk. The golden barrier held.

Rose's breath grew ragged. Sweat dripped from her chin, splashing onto the dirt. Her arms shook, elbows trembling under the strain.

Around us, cadets watched silently, some biting their lips, others shifting uncomfortably. No one stepped forward. No one dared to speak.

Finally, Rose's legs buckled slightly. She wavered, breathing ragged. Her hands were raw with her skin split, blood trickling down her wrists.

"Y-You... that's cheating...!" she gasped, voice hoarse, eyes glossy with pain.

Gabrielle's voice dropped, almost gentle. "No. It isn't. It's the gap between us. One you can't cross. Guardian is that strong."

Rose's eyes widened with a mix of hate and something almost like fear.

Gabrielle turned, golden hair swaying, and walked away without another glance. The crowd parted before her like water around stone.

As she passed, the breeze caught the hem of her uniform, making it flutter softly. She didn't look back. Didn't need to.

Chapter 807: Irene And Gabrielle (3)

The joint training here at camp had been rolling on pretty smoothly—or at least that's what the professors kept saying.

Every day, they'd drill into us what we were supposed to do during the joint training—like group activities, special drills, and a bunch of exhausting stuff like that. And honestly... we'd been at it so long that the excitement all of us first-year cadets had back when we first got here had pretty much vanished. Instead of that initial thrill, we were left with a mess of frustration, exhaustion, and a bunch of other feelings I didn't even know how to name.

The worst part was that there was barely any structure to anything here. There was no proper schedule to take a bath and there was no real bathrooms.

It was just the endless stretch of woods for whenever nature called.

According to the professors, all of this was "necessary," because someday, when we became real magic knights, we'd face stuff like this on missions. So, they figured they'd toughen us up now rather than later.

But me... well, I felt like I was slowly losing my damn mind in this state.

There wasn't even proper food... just bland rations that barely filled you up. There was no real way to wash off the sweat and grime sticking to your skin day after day. And to top it all off, I had to share a bed with someone I wasn't even friends with.

I swear, it felt like my entire sense of privacy had been ripped away.

"Ugh... This is seriously the pits..." I grumbled under my breath, sitting up on the stiff, narrow bed that felt like it was made of stone.

My eyes drifted to the person sleeping right next to me. It was another Gold Class student. She was out cold, snoring loud enough to rattle the walls.

How the hell was anyone supposed to sleep through that?

I let out a sigh that felt like it carried days of pent-up frustration, then quietly slipped off the bed and tiptoed out of the cramped, musty cabin.

Outside, the night air felt cold against my sticky skin, and I took a deep breath, trying to shake off the claustrophobic feeling gnawing at me. Sleeping packed in like that, especially for someone like me who wasn't exactly the social type, was like torture. I just needed a moment to breathe as well as to let off some steam before I lost it completely.

But the second I stepped out, I realized I wasn't the only one who couldn't sleep.

Just a short distance away, under the pale, silver glow of the moon, was Gabrielle.

She was doing jumping jacks with her silhouette moving rhythmically in the dim light. Sweat glistened on her skin even at this hour.

A part of me couldn't help but admire how insanely dedicated she was...

But in the dead of night? That was something past dedication—it was borderline obsession.

She must've noticed me standing there because she turned her head and stared right at me, the moonlight flashing against her glasses.

Feeling weirdly embarrassed for some reason, I lifted a hand, gave a small, awkward wave, and whispered, "Hi."

Even as the word slipped out, I wondered what the hell made me say anything at all.

"Hey you," she called out, her voice oddly steady.

Crap. Now I'd really done it. My mouth had worked faster than my brain again, and now I was stuck.

"W-What is it?" I stammered, trying to play it off.

"Spar with me," she said without missing a beat.

"H-Huh?"

"You woke up at this hour because you wanted to train too, right? So why don't we do it together? It's better to spar than train alone."

"Huh? No," I said quickly, shaking my head. "I didn't wake up because I wanted to train."

"Huh? Then why'd you wake up?"

Seriously, what was with this girl? Did she ever think about anything other than training and grades?

"What do you think people wake up in the middle of the night for? To get some fresh air... or maybe take a potty break in the woods or something."

"I see..." she murmured, her glasses catching the moonlight again. "Then... can I come with you? My bladder's about to explode too. And honestly, I don't really feel like going into the woods alone at night."

Great. There went the tiny hope I had of getting some real alone time.

Still, I guessed it was better than being dragged into a sparring session in the middle of the night.

So, the two of us ended up walking side by side toward the edge of the forest.

The air felt colder under the trees, and every crunch of leaves underfoot echoed in the quiet night, making the silence between us feel even heavier.

I kept stealing glances at Gabrielle, still a bit weirded out by how I'd ended up doing this with her of all people.

After a bit, we reached the shadowy entrance of the forest.

"Y-You go first," I muttered, looking away. No way in hell was I dropping my pants while someone else was doing the same nearby.

Gabrielle just gave a small shrug and stepped further into the trees.

A few seconds later, I heard it... It was the unmistakable hiss of her pissing.

The sound felt embarrassingly loud in the stillness of the forest, echoing off the trunks. It kept going... and going... until it finally stopped.

Then I heard the faint rustle of her pulling her pants back up.

I let out a small breath. Okay, she was done.

But before I could even think about stepping forward, she suddenly grabbed my arm and yanked me deeper into the woods.

"H-Hey, w-what...?" I whispered, startled.

"Shh."

"W-What?"

She pressed a finger gently against my lips, her eyes narrowing as if telling me to shut up and listen.

At first, I didn't get it—until I heard it.

"Ah, ah... Y-Yes... you're going so deep..."

Both of us froze, eyes widening, then turned our heads toward where the moans were coming from.

"Shh, you're gonna wake the cadets... s-slow down, hnghhh~!"

"You don't have to worry. The camp's far enough away, and no one's gonna wake up at this hour—unless they're out here doing the same thing we're doing."

"Oh, you... you're really naughty~..."

"Well, I can't help it. You're freaking sexy."

Hearing those words, my whole face burned up.

I'd never in my life heard anything like that, but it didn't take a genius to know what was happening.

They were having sex.

"G-Gabrielle, we should get out of here before they notice us," I whispered, my heart pounding in my chest.

"Doing something like this is very inappropriate as per academy rules, right?" she murmured back, her glasses glinting coldly. "So I think it's only right that we see who they are and report them."

"P-Please, just calm down for a sec," I pleaded softly.

Sex wasn't exactly forbidden for cadets, technically speaking. Loads of people did it. The real problem was only if you got caught by academy staff.

But the look on Gabrielle's face told me she was dead serious. She was really going to catch them and report it.

And honestly? That scared me even more than getting caught ourselves.

#### Chapter 808: Irene And Gabrielle (4)

"W-Wait a second, please...!" I blurted out, my voice cracking a bit from panic.

Gabrielle shot me this sharp, unwavering stare, her glasses catching a faint shimmer of moonlight as she spoke, "Why are you stopping me? It's obvious they're doing something wrong, and that's already written in the academy's rule book. There shouldn't be any illicit relationship going on between cadets."

My throat felt dry as I swallowed. "Y-Yes, I get it. I mean, even though I haven't actually read the rule book cover to cover, I know for a fact no one's supposed to have an illicit relationship. B-But you've gotta see that just because it's in the rule book doesn't mean it's really that strictly prohibited," I tried to explain, stumbling over my words.

Gabrielle narrowed her eyes, looking almost offended by what I'd said. "Why wouldn't it be prohibited? It was clearly explained during the assembly the morning on our first day, and it's printed in the rule book. It says it's prohibited to do something like this."

"Y-Yes, but think about it... it really only matters if they get caught, right? Sure, I mean, we could go and tell the staff or the professors about what we saw, but if we don't, technically they're not caught yet, right?" I said, my voice a shaky mix of pleading and frustration.

She tilted her head a little, eyes still locked onto mine. "I don't... understand your reasoning. Why wouldn't they be caught? We're literally seeing and hearing them with our own eyes and ears," Gabrielle insisted, sounding almost robotic in how certain she was.

Honestly, listening to her talk felt so stiff it was painful.

At first, after I saw her smile that time she fought Rose, I'd actually believed there was something playful or lighthearted buried inside Gabrielle. But right now, staring at her stubborn expression, it felt like that side of her never really existed at all.

No. Maybe it really wasn't there in the first place. Maybe she was all rules and zero softness.

"You know what, Gabrielle, if you keep thinking the way you do, you'll end up going bald," I blurted out, not even thinking.

Her eyes widened behind her glasses. "W-Wha...? Bald? How dare you? I'm extremely careful about everything related to my body, especially my hair," she snapped, voice rising a bit.

"That's not gonna help if your way of thinking is too stiff," I shot back, letting out a breath I didn't realize I'd been holding.

"S-Stiff?" she echoed, frowning like she couldn't quite process it.

"Look, why don't we just turn a blind eye this time? Let's call it their first offense. If we catch them doing it again later, then we can report them," I suggested, forcing my voice to sound calm even though my heart was beating like crazy.

"But why not now? It'd be better to report them right now so they couldn't deny it or do anything about it later," she argued, her voice still weirdly calm but firm like stone.

"Okay, but think about it from another angle: if you were caught doing something that's clearly against the rule book—something that'd make you feel really guilty—would you immediately run and turn yourself in?" I asked her, leaning in slightly.

"Of course. If I did something I'd feel deeply guilty about, then yes, I'd surrender myself. That's what a guilty person should do," she replied without even hesitating.

I let out a sigh so deep it almost hurt. "No..." I muttered. "Look, let's just leave. For now, let's ignore them, okay...?"

Gabrielle looked at me, confusion clouding her face, and she seemed completely unsatisfied with what I'd said. But after a moment, she still ended up following me as I turned to leave the forest.

It felt strange—like suddenly, she was trailing behind me, quietly, like a chick following its mother hen.

This was supposed to be the top student among all of us first-years.

But watching her now, I kind of understood why she was top of Gold Class.

She was rigid, unbending, and absolutely obsessed with sticking to the rules, no matter what.

"You know," I started, glancing back at her, "you could break a few rules sometimes. Breaking a few isn't going to kill anyone."

Gabrielle just looked at me blankly, like I was speaking a completely different language.

"Do you know what a necessary sin is?" I asked, slowing my pace a bit.

"What is that?" she asked, her tone almost genuinely curious.

"You know, when someone does something bad, but it's for the sake of something good—that's what you call a necessary sin. Like, imagine a mother and her son, alone because the father's already dead. They're starving, so the mother steals, say, a loaf of bread. In that case, she's committing a sin, but it's necessary so they don't die. Do you think it's evil for her to do that?" I asked, my voice softer now.

Gabrielle's gaze lingered on me for a long second before she slowly shook her head sideways.

Good. At least there was still something human inside this girl if she could see that.

"Now, would you report her if you caught her doing that?" I pressed gently.

She opened her mouth like she was about to say something, then stopped. Her expression wavered, and she just looked really conflicted instead.

Well, at least that showed she wasn't entirely made of steel inside.

"I'll take that as a no," I said with a tiny sigh of relief.

"But what they're doing back there in the forest isn't really something you'd call necessary," she mumbled.

"You know what? Forget it," I sighed again, shaking my head. "Just... for now, leave them be."

It seemed like I managed to get through to her somehow, because she stayed silent after that.

Of course, just because she didn't say anything right now didn't mean she wouldn't run to the staff later and tell them about the two cadets having sex in the woods. But for the moment, I really wanted to believe she wouldn't.

Strangely enough, after that night, Gabrielle and I became something close to friends... but not really.

Chapter 809: Odd Pair To Odd Trio (1)

Gabrielle and I had somehow ended up becoming... well, something kinda like friends.

But honestly? Not really.

It was weird. Ever since that night in the woods, she'd started following me everywhere.

I couldn't even begin to figure out why. She stuck to me like some lost little puppy with her literally trailing a few steps behind almost all the time, and no matter what I tried, I couldn't get her to stop.

At some point, it even turned into this awkward routine where we'd go to the cafeteria together.

And you know what, I guess looking at her, it wasn't that surprising.

Just like me, Gabrielle seemed to be pretty much a loner too.

I mean, I'm quiet and barely speak unless I need to, and my thick glasses pretty much complete the whole "please don't talk to me" vibe. Gabrielle wasn't that different. She have that stern face with that glasses, and she was serious about everything.

It was kind of strange, but... I guess we made a weirdly fitting pair.

"I think the academy really needs to add stricter curfews or something," Gabrielle said out of nowhere, her voice flat but tinged with frustration as she poked at the food on her plate. "It pisses me off how the current council president runs things. He has no clue what he's doing, and it's obvious he only ran because of his high noble family name. People who don't actually deserve it shouldn't even be allowed to run."

"You do know you're kinda talking really loud right now, right?" I told her, glancing around because people, and I mean those who works at the cafeteria, were definitely starting to stare at us. "And besides... I don't think it's completely terrible that he's the president. I mean, sure, all the stuff he promised back when he was campaigning never really showed up, but it's not like it's a disaster either. Some presidents push too many rules, trying to force their own vision on the academy, and it ends up sucking all the fun out of being here. Even if the current president feels like he's just... there, it's better than someone worse. I just hope next year someone worse doesn't run, honestly..." I muttered, turning back to my food and stabbing at it without much appetite.

"Hmmm... then I guess I'll just have to run next year."

The words slipped out of her mouth so casually, but it hit me like a brick to the face.

I literally coughed and almost choked, feeling my face burn from the embarrassment of spitting some food out.

What the fuck was she thinking?

No, actually, scratch that. If she actually ran and won, wouldn't that be even worse?

What I just described about pushing too many rules? I mean, that would literally be Gabrielle.

"A-Are you being serious right now?" I stammered, my voice cracking a little.

"Well, yes, I guess. I've been thinking about it for a while now," she said, her tone so annoyingly calm like she was just saying the sky was blue. "Honestly, this academy has been stuck in the same spot for generations because incompetent leaders keep getting elected. It's time to fix that."

God, she really had no filter, did she? And honestly, I didn't think that was a bad thing.

But then again, it wasn't really helpful either.

And from that day on, my peaceful days were officially over.

For months after, I found myself constantly trying to talk her out of it. Talk gently, or directly, or even sideways—you name it. But it didn't matter. Gabrielle wouldn't back down.

She was completely locked in on her goal to become the next council president. She even started doing early campaigning with her talking to cadets and trying to spread her ideas. But the problem was that Gabrielle was about as friendly as a brick wall. She had no clue how to actually connect with people.

And guess who got dragged into helping her?

Yeah, me. Reluctantly, of course.

All it did was pile on nothing but embarrassment. Seriously, standing next to her while she talked about stricter rules and watching everyone's faces go stiff... I thought I'd melt into the ground from secondhand shame.

And the worst part was that Gabrielle didn't even seem to notice. She just kept going, completely oblivious to the awkwardness she was leaving in her wake.

"Those two really think they can take over the academy? Against Sir Richard? They're insane if they think they'll pull something off," someone muttered loudly behind me, not even bothering to hide it.

"What an odd pair... I mean, look at them," another one chimed in.

"They'll never win. Who'd vote for that girl when she wants to kill everything that makes life fun for cadets?"

Their voices weren't hushed at all. I could hear every word crystal clear, and each one felt like a tiny stab to my side.

All I could do was sigh quietly, staring at my food that was getting colder by the second.

And honestly, they weren't exactly wrong.

Gabrielle was so focused on tightening the academy, making it more rigid than it was ever meant to be. It clashed so hard with why cadets actually liked being here.

Even I could see how dangerous that idea was.

But still... I couldn't just leave her to figure it out on her own. So I stayed by her side, even though it made my stomach twist into knots every single day.

Then, as if things weren't chaotic enough, the door slammed open one day, and someone barged in, practically crackling with energy.

"Hey, you, four-eyes! Guess who's here!" she shouted, grinning so wide it almost looked painful.

It was Rose.

The same Rose that Gabrielle fought during the joint training.

She'd been promoted to Gold Class.

Which could only mean... someone else had been kicked out to make room.

And that someone... I saw them trembling, their shoulders shaking as reality hit them.

#### Chapter 810: Odd Pair To Odd Trio (2)

The professor walked in, his steps echoing against the walls, and without even the slightest hesitation, he made the announcement that cut through the air like a blade. His tone was so casual it almost made it worse.

"Unfortunately, someone from the Gold Class will now be transferred to the Silver Class, effective immediately," he declared, not even blinking. "As of now, you're no longer part of this class, and you'll be replaced by Miss Rose."

The moment those words landed, the whole room froze. And then, it was like something inside that guy just shattered.

"No... No...! Ahhhhh!" he screamed, voice cracking, raw with panic. His hands flew up to his head, clutching at his hair like he was trying to rip it out. "I can't get demoted! I can't get demoted! S-Stop this! T-This is a lie!"

It was hard to look away. His voice was hoarse and almost broken, like the floor had vanished under his feet and he was desperately clawing at empty air.

Getting promoted in this academy was so rare that most cadets didn't even dream about it. And being demoted... well, that was even worse. It felt like falling from the clouds, smashing face-first into the ground, and then being told to keep crawling.

I could almost guess what was running through his head. He probably thought he was safe and that there was no way in hell anyone would catch up to him. But Rose had been steadily grinding her way up, and that last physical exam last month must've tipped the scales.

And because the academy could only hold a strict hundred cadets in Gold, someone always had to fall when someone else climbed. And unlucky for him, it was the one at the very bottom.

"T-This has got to be a mistake! Y-You can't do this to me! I'm a son of a viscount! I-I can't go down to the Silver Class! What does that even mean?! Are you sure this was the administration's decision? Are you all sure?! T-This can't be happening! If I get demoted, my family will kill me! P-Please, just give me another chance! I can prove myself! I can do it! Just please... please!"

But the professor's expression didn't waver. The decision had been sealed. And that was it.

All that begging, all that desperation. All of it didn't matter.

He was quietly led out of the room, his shoulders hunched, steps heavy as if he was dragging chains behind him. I couldn't help but watch him leave. Someone I'd seen so many times in this class, but never really spoke to was gone just like that.

And in exchange, we got someone new and that Rose.

"Now I'll be able to get up and destroy you from up there!" she practically shouted at Gabrielle, voice dripping with challenge and fire.

Neither of them even seemed to care about the fact someone had just broken down crying right in front of us.

Gabrielle tilted her head, looking genuinely unimpressed. "What do you mean? And honestly... who even are you?"

That was like throwing oil on a fire.

"What did you just say?!" Rose snarled, lunging forward and grabbing at Gabrielle's tie. But instantly, Gabrielle's Guardian barrier kicked in, and a sharp, translucent barrier flickered into place. Rose's fingers slammed into it so hard I swear I heard them crack.

"T-That freakin' hurts!" she screamed, clutching her hand and glaring daggers.

"Oh? I remember who you are now," Gabrielle said, her voice calm and almost bored, like the sound of Rose's pain had flipped a switch in her memory. "You really don't learn anything, do you?"

"What did you say?!" Rose shouted again, lunging forward a second time. And once again, the barrier flashed into place and once again, she smacked right into it, recoiling in pain.

Just watching them made my head pound like it was about to split open. The frustration bubbling in my chest felt so strong I nearly wanted to scream just to let it out.

Honestly, all of this felt so damn ridiculous that, at that point, I didn't even feel bad for the guy who just got demoted.

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From then on, Rose wouldn't leave Gabrielle alone for a second.

She kept throwing herself at her, spitting out challenge after challenge, calling Gabrielle her "rival" like it was the only thing keeping her alive. And Gabrielle? She just handled it like she'd done this dance a million times with her being completely unfazed.

Every time Rose's face got too close, Gabrielle would calmly summon a barrier, pressing it right against Rose's nose. Rose would end up squishing her face into it, glaring, but never backing down.

Sometimes, it really felt like I was stuck babysitting two stubborn, loud, impossible kids who refused to behave.

I mean, I sort of got why Rose kept going at her, but it felt so damn excessive, like she had something personal and deep-rooted against Gabrielle.

"Hey, you—woman that is very unbecoming and unladylike," Gabrielle said, voice cool as ice, every word measured. "Please put that face away from me."

"Why? Scared of my face?" Rose shot back, eyes narrowed as she pressed her forehead right into the shimmering barrier, her breath fogging it up.

"No. It's just that your face right there is incredibly distracting," Gabrielle said, barely blinking. "I'm trying to think of more ways to get people to see why I should be the next president."

"Next president?" Rose echoed, blinking like she'd just heard something weird. "Is that the position where you have to say stuff in front of the crowd every week and do all the monitoring and stuff?"

"At least you understand what a president is," Gabrielle replied, deadpan.

Rose pulled back slowly, hand resting under her chin as if she was thinking really hard.

Then, without a single warning, she pushed herself away from the table so hard that the chair clattered and nearly toppled over. And just like that, she bolted out of the cafeteria at full speed, not saying another word.

Watching her run off like that, my stomach sank. It was so obvious she was about to do something absolutely stupid.

And sure enough... the very next day, there she was. She was standing right in front of the academy's main gate, shouting her head off that she'd run for president too.

All I could do was sigh so hard it felt like my whole chest deflated.