

## The World 82

### Chapter 82: The Kidnapping Incident (1)

Many students were ushered back to their respective cabins, a sense of urgency palpable in the air as they were instructed to remain inside until the missing student was found. It was revealed that the vanished individual was a second-year student who had mysteriously disappeared on the very first day of the joint training.

The curfew would remain in place until the missing student was found. With only three days left of the event and already on the fourth day, frustration and agitation were palpable among the students, who had been eager to enjoy the remaining days of the event. Some even placed blame on the missing student for the disruption to their plans.

I couldn't really blame them; to them, this was supposed to be a break from their usual routine, but now they were confined to their cabins.

"...But, I must confess, I never anticipated Artemis could orchestrate such a trap with such swiftness," I remarked, a hint of admiration lacing my words. "I had expected it to take at least a day, if not more. Yet, here we are, and thanks to her efforts, Norman's nefarious escapades within the perimeter have been thwarted."

There wasn't actually a missing student. The student who was supposed to be missing had actually missed out on participation due to illness. Artemis, being the president of the student council, wielded considerable power within the academy, possessing the authority to access the list of participants for the joint training. Even the professors didn't hold such sway.

With this knowledge at her disposal, Artemis orchestrated a manipulation of the participant records to create the illusion of a missing person.

But why go through all this trouble, you might wonder? Well, it was to prompt the staff and professors to heighten the alertness level across the plains. Unbeknownst to many, there existed a powerful magic circle encompassing the entirety of Hertan Village beneath our very feet. This circle served as a surveillance tool, monitored diligently by proficient academy staff.

They could track the movements of every individual within its boundaries, providing a comprehensive overview of the situation at all times. They could track the number and whereabouts of individuals within the circle, as well as detect any unauthorized entry from the outside.

However, it turned out that this magic circle wasn't as formidable as it sounded. While it seemed powerful in theory, in reality, it was rather weak. It lacked the capability to alert authorities if someone managed to breach its perimeter or if a person went missing outside of it.

It fell short of being a truly effective surveillance tool, almost as if it were merely a convenience rather than a security measure. But this incident forced the staff to take action; they were now working to rectify its shortcomings.

Repairing a magic circle of this magnitude would be no small feat, but with the collective effort of the staff, it was estimated to be completed by tonight. Unfortunately, this meant that the entire fourth day had been wasted dealing with the fallout from the missing student incident.

Once the magic circle was enhanced, any unauthorized individuals who dared to enter would trigger an alert. This would make it significantly harder for someone like Norman to sneak in and carry out his nefarious deeds without detection.

"...So, what's Norman going to do about this?" I pondered aloud as I reclined on my bed.

The pieces on the chessboard were slowly maneuvering into position.

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Charlotte's POV

Many students seemed on edge, and it was perfectly understandable. With one student reported missing since day one and still unaccounted for, even the strongest-willed individuals couldn't help but feel unsettled. It wasn't just the fear of becoming a victim themselves; many students genuinely worried about the missing student's well-being.

However, amidst the general atmosphere of apprehension, I found myself preoccupied with another concern.

"He's... not picking up," I muttered, frustration evident as I stared at my smartphone, which stubbornly displayed the missed call notification. I attempted to call the person again, but the ringing went unanswered, leaving me feeling disheartened.

I let out a sigh, feeling overwhelmed by the chaos unfolding in my life. Three men vying for my attention—or rather, just two now, since Daemon had backed off. But regardless, the situation remained a daunting obstacle. Choosing one would undoubtedly leave the other hurt, adding to the weight of my dilemma.

I was at a loss, to be honest. Slowly, I found myself falling for Professor Sesillian, but choosing him meant hurting Prince Julius. Prince Julius had been by my side since childhood, and while I viewed him more as a clumsy little brother due to our long history together, I couldn't deny the bond we shared. He was, well, a bit unreliable, but I couldn't bear to see him hurt.

The night he ran off with a saddened expression after seeing me with the Professor only reinforced my reluctance to hurt him.

But if I chose Prince Julius over the Professor, I'd only be lying to myself, wouldn't I? I wanted to be honest about my feelings, to embrace them fully with Professor.

"...But I just don't know how to navigate this," I admitted, feeling torn.

Choosing either one would undoubtedly cause pain to the other. That much was certain, and it's why I hadn't made a decision yet. I knew I needed to give an answer eventually, but I couldn't bring myself to do it.

I sighed once more, setting my phone down on the bed before stepping out of my room. In the hallway, I came across a first-year student with striking purple hair, her scowl so intense it felt like she was glaring daggers, though some claimed it was just her default expression.

"What?" she snapped, her scowl deepening—or maybe not. Honestly, it was hard to tell.

"...Nothing," I replied, deciding not to engage further.

With a flick of her hair, the woman strode purposefully toward the living room of the cabin. Intrigued, I trailed behind her, my curiosity piqued.

"What's your deal?" she demanded, her eyes narrowing as she caught sight of me.

"...Just thought I'd hang out in the living room," I replied nonchalantly.

"Now? Can't it wait?" she shot back, her scowl deepening.

"...I don't see why not," I shrugged. "I'm bored out of my mind in my room."

"Why now, at this hour?" she persisted, her tone growing more accusatory. "Everyone else in the cabin is fast asleep. Why aren't you?"

"What, are you my mom or something?" I retorted.

"No, I'm not," she snapped back sharply. "But you should still go back to bed. The professors made it clear we're not supposed to be roaming around unless it's necessary."

"I'm pretty sure they meant we can't leave the cabin altogether, not just our rooms," I argued, suspicion creeping into my tone as I regarded her with narrowed eyes. "So why are you so insistent on keeping me out of the living room?"

She fell silent at my accusation.

As I scrutinized her, a realization dawned on me. "You're planning to slip out, aren't you? That's why you're so insistent on me going back to my room—to avoid drawing attention to your exit," I accused.

Before I could react, something struck my face with surprising force, sending me careening backward.

Though the impact was powerful, I didn't feel any pain. I had coated my face with Aura, ensuring I wouldn't be hurt. Her punch, lacking any Aura, wasn't particularly painful either. But the sheer force of it was staggering. How powerful was that punch? I had been sent flying by a blow with no Aura behind it?

I glanced at her clenched fist, noticing it lacked any Aura coating or weapon. So why...?

"I was sure I put enough power into that to knock you out," she remarked, examining her hand with a furrowed brow. "Guess I didn't pack as much punch as I thought."

"What did you just do...?" I demanded.

She met my gaze evenly. "I'm sorry, but it's time for you to get some rest."

I rose to my feet and assumed a fighting stance. Though I lacked any weapons, my knowledge of martial arts would have to suffice for self-defense.

"You're really going to fight me?" she remarked. "I highly doubt you stand a chance against me, but if you insist, I suppose I'll have to indulge you."

She remained remarkably calm, clad in her bronze class uniform while I sported my silver class attire. I expected her to at least show some apprehension about facing off against someone from the silver class, but there was no trace of unease in her demeanor. In fact, she appeared even more composed than I did.

"Do you even know who I am?" I questioned, expecting her to recognize my status as the top-ranked student in the silver class, with a potential move to the gold class looming on the horizon.

But her response revealed otherwise. "I don't know who you are... and frankly, I have no interest in finding out," she replied, assuming her fighting stance. "But if you're going to stand in my way, it doesn't matter who you are or what privileges you have. I won't hesitate to take you on."