

The World 88

Chapter 88: The Kidnapping Incident (7)

Shredica's POV

The fifth day of joint training had arrived, marked by the incessant ringing of a bell. I woke up, puzzled by the premature call. It wasn't time for roll call yet, so why were they summoning us now?

With a grumble, I dragged myself upright and checked the time. It wasn't even 8 yet; too early for the day to begin.

Sighing, I cleaned up and dressed in my uniform before heading to the large plain where the bell had been incessantly tolling. The sound felt like it was drilling into my ears, threatening to burst my eardrums. Some students were clutching their ears, trying to block out the noise, but it persisted relentlessly. They were probably ringing it to rouse everyone from their slumber.

Once all the students had gathered, grumbling as they stood bleary-eyed on the plain, the bell finally ceased. Bedheads, yawns, and drool adorned some, evidence of their interrupted sleep.

As the students finally gathered, a professor with striking green hair positioned herself at the center of the stage, commanding attention with her presence. With a sweeping glance, she surveyed the entire field of students before raising her voice to address them.

"We've got both good news and bad news," she declared, her words ringing out across the expansive space. "Let's start with the good news." Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes momentarily, building suspense. When silence enveloped the crowd, she opened her eyes once more.

"The student reported missing during the event has been found safe and sound at home," she announced. "It turns out he missed the event due to illness. A mistake in the records led to the assumption of his disappearance."

A wave of frustration rippled through the students at this revelation.

"What?! So, we wasted the entire day yesterday for nothing?!" erupted a voice from the midst of the crowd, echoing the collective sentiment of disappointment and annoyance.

"I understand your frustrations. It might feel like we squandered a whole day yesterday, but we have to handle every situation seriously, even if it turns out to be a false alarm," the professor addressed the assembled students. "To address this, we're considering extending the event by one day to make up for the lost time. However..."

The students initially reacted with excitement and relief at the prospect of the event being extended to compensate for the wasted day. However, their excitement quickly turned to disappointment as the professor continued.

"...that's not going to happen."

"Eh? What do you mean?!"

"Come on! We need to make up for the lost time!"

"What the hell does that even mean?! Why the hell isn't it going to happen?!"

The disappointment was palpable in the air as the students grappled with the realization that their hopes of compensation had been dashed.

The professor remained composed in the face of their frustration and despair. "Because someone else went missing last night," she explained calmly.

Immediately, the complaints ceased as the gravity of the situation sank in. The news that someone had disappeared overnight sent shockwaves through the crowd.

"I think it was appropriate to withhold the identity of the missing individual, but since you'll find out eventually, I suppose it won't hurt to tell you now," she continued. "It's the daughter of Duke Sierra. Miss Charlotte Sierra."

I had known about Charlotte Sierra being targeted by Eclipse even before the announcement, so her disappearance didn't come as a surprise to me. I was aware that she had gone out last night, which meant she went missing during that time. It was evident that someone had kidnapped her.

The mission of the Silver Blades was to ensure Charlotte Sierra's safety. However, since the leader hadn't issued any orders to protect her, I saw no reason to stay awake at night and keep watch over her. It seemed pointless to waste my time on that.

Nevertheless, the fact that someone I knew was supposed to protect had been kidnapped right under my nose left a bitter taste in my mouth.

"Furthermore, with this incident..." the professor's voice echoed across the field, her words weighted with solemnity. "The joint training will be abruptly concluded. The administration urgently demands your return to the academy to prevent any further disappearances. That is all." With those final words, she departed from the stage, leaving behind a palpable sense of unease and urgency.

"Don't screw with us! What the hell do you mean go back?! We haven't even had a chance to enjoy this damn joint training, and now you want us to bail?!" bellowed an enraged student, his voice reverberating with frustration and disbelief.

"Maybe she ain't really gone missing like the other dude! Do a damn thorough search and bring us some proof she's actually gone! Don't go shutting down the joint training just like that!" another student demanded, their words punctuated by the rising uproar of dissent against the faculty's decision.

While they were busy with that, I glanced over at Mr. Leon. His gaze seemed fixed on something... or maybe it wasn't fixed at all. His eyes looked empty, like there was nothing behind them.

They were devoid of any reflection, just dark and blank.

In that moment, I caught a glimpse of Mr. Leon's true nature.

Charlotte's POV

Halfway conscious, I sensed the cold floor beneath me. I struggled to open my eyes.

"H-Huh? W-Where am I?" I whispered weakly. "O-Ouch...!" A sharp headache pierced through me, as if someone was hammering my skull. I attempted to touch my forehead to ease the pain, but my hands were bound behind me with some kind of tape. Trying to stand, I realized my feet were also tied up. I could only crawl from my current position.

Where the hell am I? How did I end up here?

My eyes scanned the dimly lit room, finding nothing but a lone chair positioned in front of me.

As I eyed the chair, my memories flooded back. Right. I was supposed to meet Professor Sesillian outside the village. But then someone attacked me. Did that mean I got kidnapped?

It wasn't hard to figure out why I was snatched. I was the daughter of a duke, and being tied to someone so influential could fetch the kidnappers a hefty ransom from my father. It was a scenario I'd encountered many times before. So, in a way, it was just another day for me. I was getting tired of this routine.

I wasn't exactly calm, but I didn't panic either. I had no clue what fate awaited me or when my father would intervene. But I held onto the belief that someone would eventually come to my rescue.

First things first, I needed to understand the kidnapper's motives. There were two possibilities: either they wanted money or they had more nefarious intentions, like selling me into prostitution. The former seemed more likely, and I preferred not to entertain the thought of the latter.

I'd faced similar situations in the past, with kidnappers attempting to exploit me in such ways, but they always failed, thanks to the intervention of a Magic Knight.

I fervently hoped that wouldn't be the case this time. The mere thought of my body being violated by unknown men sent shivers down my spine.

Lost in these distressing thoughts, the door creaked open with agonizing slowness, allowing a shaft of light to pierce the dimness of the room. A figure emerged, a dark silhouette against the luminous backdrop. The glint of her eyeglasses hinted at something sinister, casting a foreboding shadow over her presence.

Though her features remained obscured by the blinding light, I breathed a small sigh of relief at the realization that she was a woman.

"You're finally awake," her voice rang out, carrying an unsettling calmness. "Did you manage to get some rest?"

I had no clue who this woman was. She stood before me, her figure still concealed by the radiance pouring in from the doorway. Yet, amidst the illumination, I caught a glimpse of her hair—a cascade of silver strands dancing in the faint breeze. It bore a striking resemblance to Professor Sesillian's distinctive silver locks.

"And who might you be?" I demanded, my voice laced with apprehension. "And where, pray tell, have you taken me?"

"A place where many bad people find joy," she remarked. "But don't fret. Nothing untoward will happen here. At least not in this place," she added with a hint of finality. Her glasses gleamed in the light, casting an eerie glow over her features as she surveyed me from head to toe. A subtle flick of her tongue across her lips sent a shiver down my spine before she turned and closed the door behind her.

"Alright," her voice echoed from the other side. "She's the one."

"Does this mean Eclipse will finally cooperate with me?" A man's voice, darker than the shadows enveloping the room, rumbled from beyond the door.

"My brother will be the one to confirm that, not me," the woman replied.

"Oh? Well, in that case, I'll await your brother's arrival to claim the gift I'm presenting for our collaboration," the man said.

Their conversation didn't align with the motives I had assumed, leaving me in a state of uncertainty. I trembled at the thought of what lay ahead.

"Professor..." I whispered, tears welling in my eyes. "Please, save me."