

The World 881

Chapter 881: Interlude - Days In the Demon Continent (1)

For now, I decided to spend my remaining days in the demon continent.

As expected, this land really was dangerous. Everything about it screamed hostility.

The atmosphere felt heavy, as if the very air carried a constant threat. From every corner of the land, you could hear the eerie sounds of beasts crying, growling, and screeching... echoes that mixed into a symphony of danger. It wasn't the kind of place where you could let your guard down, not even for a second.

Honestly, I wouldn't even be surprised if a monster suddenly crawled out from the shadows just to attack me. That's how it was here—death could come from anywhere, and at any moment.

The creatures themselves weren't ordinary either. They were savage, vicious beings, the kind that could rip a human body into shreds before you even realized what hit you. Even if one of them got just a little too close, it could be over. That's the kind of power they carried.

And then there was the land itself. The heat was suffocating.

The temperature here was completely unstable. It was also scorching hot and almost unbearable under the blazing daylight, then freezing cold and bone-chilling once night fell. It was like the continent itself couldn't decide whether to burn you alive or freeze you to death.

Right now, I was walking across this treacherous land together with Elise.

"It looks like there are some trees over there," I said, pointing toward the distance where patches of greenery stood against the harsh landscape.

Elise glanced at them before replying, "That's not just trees. That's a treant. Those are the things demon dryads use to snare people, draining them of their nutrition until there's nothing left. If anyone wants wood for fire, they should leave the demon continent and chop it elsewhere. Doing it here is just asking to get killed."

So... even demon dryads were around here, huh? It wasn't shocking, but it did confirm how deep into hostile territory we were. Still, I wasn't particularly worried. Honestly, I didn't think they could even scratch me.

"You don't have to be so scared, though," Elise said with a confident grin. "Even with all of that, I'd be able to repel them, you know?"

Her tone was bold, almost playful, and though I loved her enthusiasm, a part of me hoped she'd actually take it seriously when danger came knocking.

"Leon, look!" Elise suddenly called out, her eyes shining with excitement.

She was unusually energetic today. Maybe it was because of what I'd done—fucking Mammon and Amon behind her back. Maybe this was her way of pulling me along, making sure I spent time with her, just the two of us.

If this was her idea of a date, then... I didn't really mind.

"What am I supposed to look at?" I asked.

"It's a demon rabbit," she said.

"Demon rabbit?" I turned to where she was pointing, and sure enough, there was a rabbit. Except it wasn't normal. A single sharp horn jutted out of its forehead.

Cute, yes—but I'd seen enough anime to know that in worlds like this, the cuter something looked, the deadlier it probably was. So without hesitation, I launched a fireball at it.

"Ah! Why did you do that?!" Elise shouted, her face twisting into shock as she stared at me like I'd completely lost it.

"Well, it could be dangerous," I said flatly.

"It is

dangerous, but... not enough to kill us!" she fired back.

I paused, realizing she was probably right. Ah... my bad then.

While we were caught up glaring at each other, the ground suddenly shook.

From beneath us, something massive forced its way out.

"What the...?!"

A gigantic bunny burst out of the earth.

This thing wasn't just big—it was colossal. Its body was bigger than a bus, towering high above us. Its eyes glowed with feral rage, and for a second, I just stood there thinking What the fuck is that?!

"Looks like the mother came out," Elise said calmly.

So... that tiny little rabbit wasn't even an adult? That was just the child?

Of course. It was the demon continent. Everything here had to be oversized, deadly, and unreasonable.

Still, we dispatched it without much effort.

"Now don't do what you did earlier," Elise said sternly after it was over. "We don't know if more of them have mothers waiting for them to come back."

She was right. What I did earlier was reckless as hell. I had no idea the small bunny wasn't an adult—it was a thoughtless move, and it really could have gone worse.

"Well, it's still kinda funny how you just blasted it like that," Elise added, giggling softly.

Even though I felt guilty, Elise wasn't angry. Instead, she seemed amused, treating it like one of my clumsy mistakes. Which... to be fair, it really was.

After that, we decided not to venture too far from where we were.

When I wasn't with Elise, I was usually back at the mansion, being looked after by the demon servants.

Not the dirty kind of service.

They were massaging me.

And holy shit, it was incredible.

It felt like my body was melting beneath their hands. Every touch sent waves of relaxation shooting through me. It was like my limbs were being taken apart, broken down, then rebuilt again, only smoother, looser, and lighter. My joints felt as though they were gliding perfectly.

It was so good that I found myself on the verge of moaning.

Honestly... it was turning me on too.

Then I realized what was happening. The oil they were using—it wasn't ordinary massage oil. It was laced with an aphrodisiac, designed to make the body heat up and to make you horny.

Thankfully, I didn't end up doing anything to the maids themselves.

But I knew it was intentional. It was a setup. Because later, when I went to Mammon's room, I ended up fucking her.

"That was very good...~" she moaned, her voice dripping with satisfaction as she sighed.

We had already done it five times.

Her body was something else. It was so good that I couldn't resist her, no matter how many times we went at it. I didn't think I'd ever be able to escape her pull. Her body was addicting.

Chapter 882: Interlude - Days In the Demon Continent (2)

"Don't you want to come with me?" I asked, still catching my breath.

"Fufufu... What, are you going to be lonely without me?" she teased.

"Well, I want to have that sexy body with me all the time, so yeah..." I admitted, not even bothering to hide it.

My desire for her was pure lust. Nothing else. Impure, selfish, but honest.

"As much as I'd like that too, I can't," she said, her tone softening. "I still have to carry out my duty as the current leader of the demon servants."

She leaned in closer, resting her head gently against my chest as she spoke.

"I wish I wasn't burdened with this responsibility. But the demon servants wouldn't prosper without a respectable leader. I can't just throw everything away and live for myself. You understand, don't you?"

I stayed quiet for a moment, then nodded. Yeah, I understood. We weren't so different. I was tied down by responsibilities too—enough that walking away was never an option.

"I understand," I said simply.

"Fufufu, you don't have to worry," she whispered with a smile. "My body and soul already belong to you. Just visit me from time to time... and give me a good fucking."

"I will," I promised.

There was no way I could ever forget her. Not her touch and not her body. Forgetting her would be impossible.

"If I had the time, I would visit you myself," she said, her tone calm yet carrying a kind of softness that felt almost foreign coming from her. "But for now, why don't I lend you some of my servants? They don't have any experience in matters of sex, nor in servicing men, since that part of life has never touched them, but don't let that fool you. They are still very capable women as they are very sharp, skilled, and disciplined. I have confidence they'd be able to help you in countless ways, in whatever endeavor you decide to pursue."

"You mean... the women who massaged me earlier?" I asked, my mind instantly flashing back to the warmth of their hands and the way they carried themselves.

"Yes," she answered, a small, knowing smile playing at her lips. "They are very capable girls. And I'm certain they would gladly serve you, Lord Leon. Their loyalty is genuine, and their desire to be of use is unwavering. And besides," she continued, her eyes narrowing ever so slightly, "Amon will be able to guide them. She has grown into her role well, hasn't she? She's become truly capable of serving you."

I didn't know how to respond right away. My thoughts tangled together. On one hand, her words sounded like an outright gift—she was literally offering me girls to serve as mine. On the other hand, I couldn't ignore the unease gnawing at me. I wanted a large harem—no, I wanted the largest one possible. That was no secret. The more women who stood by me, the stronger I became. That much I knew. But forcing anyone into it, dragging them along unwillingly, that was something I couldn't accept.

As if she had read the hesitation in my face, Mammon leaned slightly closer. "You don't need to worry," she said smoothly. "They volunteered themselves. They chose you."

My eyes widened at that. "And what exactly did I do to make them do that? What kind of requirement did I even pass for them to offer themselves up like this?"

Her voice dropped slightly, her smile turning sly. "They are drawn to men with power," she said. "That is how we are wired. We are attracted to those who hold strength, to those who have the ability to stand above. And that... is you."

I let her words sink in. So, that was the mindset they held. To them, their servitude wasn't forced. It was natural. It was a result of their instincts pulling them toward someone they saw as powerful. That's why they decided to serve me.

"Would you accept them, Lord Leon?" she asked, her voice laced with an almost playful edge, though her gaze was sharp, studying me closely.

"Well," I finally said, meeting her eyes, "since you're giving them to me, why not?"

"Fufufufu..." she chuckled, her laughter low and feminine. "Then please, take care of them." She leaned in closer, her face brushing against mine as her breath tickled my skin. "And also... although I don't really need to say this anymore, since she already knows how the world works and understands what it means to serve you, please... take care of Amon as well."

"I will," I replied without hesitation.

Amon was my woman. It was natural for me to take care of her. That was a given. That was something that didn't even need to be questioned.

"Thank you..." she whispered, her words carrying a warmth that felt almost disarming.

And then, without warning, she leaned forward and pressed her lips against mine. Her kiss was soft yet demanding, and before I could even stop myself, I leaned into it, deepening it, and just like that—I couldn't help but go for another round.

Later, Amon took it upon herself to show me around. She led me through the paths and corners of the place, pointing out small details and old spots that held pieces of her past. As she spoke, I could almost picture a younger version of her running through these very grounds, long before she had ever been captured by slavers.

She pointed at a wall, then a courtyard, her voice calm but carrying a subtle excitement that was rare for her.

Watching her, I felt like I was seeing a completely new side of Amon.

"What's funny, Master?" she asked, tilting her head slightly, her expression still carrying that plain, unreadable calm she always had.

"Ah, no," I said, shaking my head with a small laugh. "I just find it funny... how enthusiastic you are about telling me all this. It's like you've gone back to being a child again."

In a way, maybe that's exactly what it was. Amon wasn't just telling me random stories—she was letting me glimpse her childhood, a part of her life she had never shared with me before. Amon had never told me much about herself, especially about the time before she was captured. And now, here she was, finally opening up, showing me the pieces of herself she had locked away.

And honestly, hearing it, seeing her like this, made me happy.

"Thank you for telling me all of this, Amon," I said, my voice softer than usual.

Her eyes flickered, just for a moment, and she nodded.

And with that, the remaining days on the demon continent slipped away, passing faster than I expected. Before I knew it, it was time for us to return to the Kingdom of Milham.

The new academic year began. Our third year had arrived.

The opening ceremony was held, and as expected, Myrcella—still holding her position as president—stood proudly at the podium, addressing everyone with her voice ringing across the hall.

I watched her intently, my eyes fixed on her with a quiet seriousness. She, in turn, looked right back at me, her expression steady and unwavering.

Unlike the previous year, this time there didn't seem to be any troublemakers waiting to stir chaos. There was no one like Estelle among the new first-years. At least, not yet. And that alone was a relief.

Still, as I stood there, feeling the atmosphere of the new term settle in, I couldn't shake the feeling that this year would hold something different. Something important.

It felt like... this would be another good year for all of us.

Chapter 883: Third Year (1)

I was still stuck in the bronze class.

And so were my friends.

It didn't look like they'd managed to climb up even a little since the last time. They were in the same place, going through the same struggles, and honestly, it was starting to feel suffocating.

Raymond had at least reached the top 10, which was an achievement on its own, but looking at the way he was fighting tooth and nail to stay there, I could tell it wouldn't be long before he slipped back down. He was hanging on, but barely. Duncan, on the other hand, was still sitting steadily in the top 50. He

wasn't rising, but he wasn't falling either. It was like he was just... stuck, caught in the middle of mediocrity, neither gaining ground nor losing it.

"It's getting suck," Raymond muttered with frustration, his voice carrying a rough edge as he leaned back and ran a hand through his hair. "I don't feel like we're ever gonna graduate to gold class. The only hope we've got is if Princess Myrcella actually manages to push through that thing she promised to implement during her two years of reigning here at the academy."

"Well," Duncan replied, his tone calm, almost resigned, "what she's trying to do is damn near impossible. Even with the power of a princess, it's still unrealistic to erase something that's been here since the very beginning. This academy's been running on that system for a hundred years already. Breaking that isn't just a change, it's like tearing down the foundation itself. And traditions like that... they're nearly impossible to shatter."

I looked at him with mild surprise, but Raymond spoke first. "I'm surprised you even know all that stuff, Duncan."

"Well, Estelle's been telling me about these things," he admitted casually.

"Tsk." Raymond clicked his tongue and shot him a glare. "How come you two haven't broken up yet...?" His voice had a hint of annoyance, though I couldn't tell if he was serious or just sulking.

"She said she's not going to break up with me. That's how much she loves me." Duncan's answer came without hesitation, his expression calm, almost smug.

Well, I wasn't so sure about that. Something about Estelle always made me feel like she was carrying some kind of hidden agenda, secrets buried beneath her soft smiles and sweet words. Things even I had no clue about.

And then, suddenly—my vision went dark. Someone's hands covered my eyes from behind.

"Who do you think it is?" came a bright, cheerful voice, practically dripping with energy.

I didn't even need to think. That voice, that sweetness in her tone, and even more than that—her scent. She smelled faintly sweet, like flowers in the morning, and it was so distinctly her that I couldn't mistake it.

"Selene," I said instantly.

"Boo...! How'd you know it was me? Ah! You must've recognized my voice, huh? Have you memorized my voice already, Leon? Ugh, creepy."

"You're the one who snuck up behind me and covered my eyes," I said, turning my head back toward her with a deadpan look, "and you're calling me creepy?"

She pulled her hands away, and I finally saw her. She was dressed in her academy uniform, neat and crisp, almost too proper. The way she wore it made her look... modest, but at the same time it only highlighted how naturally pretty she was. I could already tell she was going to end up in the silver class with her uniform color.

"Fufufufu... isn't my uniform so crisp? I look really cute, don't I?" she asked, spinning slightly with that playful smile of hers.

Well, she was Zeruel's sister, after all. She didn't even need to try—her beauty was something impossible to ignore. Both of them had that kind of striking charm that made people turn their heads without even realizing it. It wasn't just them either—their mother had that same aura too.

"Yes, you're very cute," I said honestly.

"Hey, Leon. Who's this?" Raymond asked, his tone curious.

"Ah... she's Zeruel's sister," I explained.

"Nice to meet you, seniors. From now on, I'll be your underclassman. I look forward to getting to know all of you," she said, bowing slightly with a smile that radiated politeness and elegance.

She really was polite.

But just as she was talking to us, a voice suddenly called out.

"Selene!"

I looked to the side and noticed a group of girls waving in our direction. Friends of hers, no doubt.

"Y-You're close with this senior?" one of them asked, their voices carrying a mixture of curiosity and caution.

"Yes," Selene answered brightly. "He's like a big brother to me. Right, big bro?"

I didn't answer.

"Um, have you heard the rumors about him?" one of the girls whispered.

"Rumors...?" Selene tilted her head.

"Y-Yes." They threw a side glance at me, hesitant, almost like they were nervous about even speaking. Their voices lowered, but I sharpened my hearing just enough to catch every word. "T-That he's a womanizer who struts around with different women in his arms...?"

Selene blinked, then smiled. "Hm... Well, I already kind of knew that. What of it?"

"W-What of it? D-Does that mean... you're one of them too...?"

Her cheeks turned red, but instead of backing down, she leaned in with that teasing glint in her eyes. "I-It's not like that... but if Leon decided to take me in too, I wouldn't resist~"

I had no idea what she was trying to tell them, but looking at their faces, they didn't seem like they were outright judging me. No, it was more like they were worried—worried that Selene might get herself tangled with the wrong man. But Selene herself seemed determined, almost eager to fall into it willingly, and that left her friends speechless, unable to argue further.

"Well then, Leon! See you soon!" Selene said, waving with the kind of enthusiasm that spread like wildfire. She looked like someone eagerly waiting to receive a present.

And honestly, her energy was infectious. I couldn't help but raise my hand and wave back.

"I didn't know you had someone like her, Leon," Raymond said after she left.

"What do you mean?" I asked, tilting my head.

"Closer to a sister, I mean," he clarified. "I didn't know you were capable of smiling at anyone, honestly, much less someone younger. And to put up with her antics too? I can tell. I've got younger sisters myself."

Do I really see Selene like that? I wasn't sure. But I did notice that I felt warmer toward her compared to others younger than me. Maybe it was because she was really cute—hard to treat her coldly when she looked at me like that.

"Come to think of it, didn't you say you also had a real sister?" Raymond asked suddenly.

"Did I really say something like that?" I replied.

"I just felt like you did," he said, shrugging.

I did have real sisters. In the past world, and here too. Four sisters in this world, all of them crucial to the resurrection of Lilith. And the truth was—Estelle was one of them.

But there was no way I was telling them that. If they knew I was connected to Estelle, they'd start swarming me with questions, asking me for details about her, pestering me about how to win her over.

Honestly, that would just be a huge drag.

So for now, I kept my mouth shut, letting the truth stay buried.

Chapter 884: Third Year (2)

The third-year lectures were on a completely different level compared to the first and second.

Back then, it was all about theories, formulas, and memorization. But now... now we were at the stage where everything had to be applied. Every single principle we'd learned was no longer just words on a chalkboard—it was expected to be practical, to be usable, to be bent and shaped into something we could actually make useful in real situations.

It was honestly fascinating. The kind of thing that made you lean in closer, thinking, Ah, so that's how it all comes together.

But as much as I wanted to keep my head in the game, my body was already betraying me. My eyelids felt heavy, my shoulders ached from sitting still, and my focus slipped further and further away from the lecturer's words. I was too damn tired to properly listen.

"Psst. Leon."

The sound snapped me out of my daze. Someone was calling me, quietly but insistently.

I turned around, scanning the rows of students until my eyes caught sight of Titania and Zeruel.

They were sitting way up at the top of the lecture hall, waving me over in that secretive, mischievous way of theirs. Both of them looked too calm, too collected for it to be anything innocent.

I sighed, but curiosity won out. I gathered my things and made my way up the steps until I reached them.

"Here. Sit in the middle, Leon," Titania said, patting the seat between them with a sly smile.

I lowered myself into the spot she indicated, still not sure why I had been summoned. But the answer came quickly enough.

The moment I sat down, soft hands slid against me. Both Titania and Zeruel's fingers began stroking along my thighs, slow and deliberate, teasing touches that sent a faint shiver racing up my spine.

Titania leaned in, her lips dangerously close to my ear. "It's been boring ever since the lecture started. I wanted to have some kind of enjoyment. Thankfully, Zeruel is here with me to experience it too. Don't you think having fun right now would be a good way to kill this boredom?"

Her tone was playful, yet sultry. I felt her nails lightly drag against my leg, and I couldn't stop the small twitch in my body as she moved.

"What kind of enjoyment are you talking about?" I asked, though my voice came out lower than I intended, almost betraying the thought already forming in my head.

If this was the kind of "fun" I thought it was... then it was about to get sexual. Maybe I was assuming—but Titania never really left much to the imagination.

"Well..." She gave me that teasing grin of hers, and then her hand traveled upward, slipping dangerously close. Before I could react, her fingers brushed against my cock, already stiff from the build-up of her touch.

My breath hitched. 'Well... this is enjoyable in its own way... but...'

I glanced to the side where Zeruel was.

Her face was flushed crimson, her hands trembling slightly as she tried to mimic Titania. She looked like she was burning up inside, struggling with herself. It was clear she wasn't used to this kind of thing—sex in public, right in the middle of a lecture hall.

"How did you even manage to rope Zeruel into this?" I asked Titania, arching a brow.

"Fufufu... actually, I caught her earlier," Titania said with a smug smirk. "She was staring at you from across the hall, blushing so hard it was practically glowing on her face. So I figured, maybe she's incredibly horny for you, Leon."

"N-Nia...!" Zeruel gasped, mortified, her blush deepening until it almost looked painful.

That reaction alone told me Titania wasn't lying.

I looked at Zeruel directly, and she immediately turned her head away, unable to meet my eyes.

Yeah... Titania hit the mark.

"Well, it can't be helped, can it? The academy had that long break, and now that things are back to normal, naturally we'd crave you again," Titania whispered, her voice dripping with temptation.

It hadn't been long since I was with them—just about a week ago, if memory served. Still, my lower half was already reacting eagerly. As much as my head tried to reason with me, my body had already made its decision.

And so, while the professor droned on at the front of the hall, chalk scraping against the board, the two of them played with me under the desk. Their hands teased and stroked, drawing shudders and quiet gasps from me as I tried to keep my composure, acting like nothing was happening.

By the time lunch break finally came around, I was utterly drained. They had taken me three times in secret, squeezing me until I was left weak and hollowed out.

Those two... they'd gotten so much bolder lately. Especially Zeruel. The shy, hesitant girl I once knew had thrown herself into this without much resistance. I hadn't expected her to go through with it, but she did. And honestly? I didn't mind. In fact, I kind of loved it.

Walking down the stone path toward the library, I planned to rest my body and clear my mind. But as I moved through the crowd, I started to notice the stares.

Eyes followed me. Whispers trailed behind my steps.

Well... it wasn't exactly a secret anymore. Among the younger years, my name had become tied to certain rumors—rumors of my promiscuity. I'd overheard plenty about Leon doesn't care who it is, as long as it has a vagina, he'll do it.

It was ridiculous. But also... not entirely baseless.

My reputation had clearly taken a hit. Not that I cared too much. When you've got so many women by your side, naturally people will grow jealous. Rumors spread like wildfire, and envy fueled the flames. My reputation was the casualty.

Still, I wasn't about to waste my energy addressing any of it. Most of them were probably jealous, anyway. Let them talk.

When I stepped inside the library, the shift in atmosphere was immediate. The air was hushed, heavy with the scent of old paper and ink. Cadets were scattered around—some I recognized, others were strangers. The sound of pages turning filled the silence as I walked between rows of shelves.

And then, out of the corner of my eye, I caught sight of someone unexpected.

Duncan.

And sitting beside him was Estelle.

That was new.

It wasn't a secret to anyone that the two of them had been dating for a while now. A year, if I remembered right. Still, seeing them here together caught me off guard. Duncan looked relaxed, his usual serious demeanor softened, while Estelle leaned close, smiling at him in a way that looked... genuine.

I had always suspected Estelle of having some hidden agenda, of playing some deeper game. But as I watched them quietly from afar, I couldn't deny it—she looked happy. She wasn't scheming or pretending. She was just... enjoying herself with him.

Well, I guess as long as they were happy, I had no reason to interfere.

With that thought, I turned away and headed deeper into the rows, straight to the history section. My mind was still restless, and right now, I wanted to bury myself in something solid.

Chapter 885: Third Year (3)

It was finally the end of the day—our first official day stepping into our third year at the academy.

Honestly, being back here again had this weird mix of emotions. On one hand, it was fun—the halls felt familiar, the sight of uniforms and the chatter of students bouncing around the corridors made it feel like we had never left. But at the same time, it was exhausting. Even though it was only the first day, it was like we had been thrown straight back into routine without warning. Classes started, instructors lectured, and we were already being told to take notes and look into assignments. Honestly, it felt like we hadn't gone on a break at all, like spring break was just an illusion and life inside the academy never stopped. But I guess that's just the kind of place this was—no matter how much time passed, the grind stayed the same.

"Guess I should head back to my dorm room. It's been a while since I last slept there," I muttered to myself, my voice echoing faintly as I walked down the stone path.

The campus felt quieter than usual in the late hours. The sky had already dimmed into shades of navy blue, lanterns casting flickers of light against the buildings. But as I walked alone, I couldn't shake off this uneasy sensation crawling up my spine. For a while now, I had felt... like a pair of eyes was following me. A sharp, unsettling awareness, like I was being studied from the shadows.

I tried to casually glance around, but nothing stood out. I couldn't even pinpoint where it was coming from. Left? Right? Behind me? The presence was there, but vague, like smoke in the air. Still, I could feel it clinging to me with every step I took.

I exhaled and forced myself to shrug it off. Maybe it was just the exhaustion making me paranoid. I turned a corner, pretending I hadn't noticed anything.

But instead of walking on, I quickly slipped behind the side of a building, pressing my back against the cold wall. My instincts were screaming at me now, and I wasn't about to ignore them.

A few seconds later, soft footsteps followed, and then a figure appeared from the corner.

"Ah!"

"Huh?"

I blinked. The mysterious stalker was... Ella.

It had been a long time since I'd last seen her—probably more than a year, maybe longer. From what I had heard around the academy, her popularity had soared for some reason during that time. But even with that, I could tell she hadn't been able to catch up to me, not after everything that happened with Sesillian. That incident alone had drawn a thick line between us, one she hadn't managed to cross again.

"Hello," I greeted her calmly, stepping out from where I had been hiding.

"H-Hello..." she replied quickly, ducking her head, her voice small and hesitant.

She didn't even acknowledge the fact that I had just caught her following me. Instead, she brushed it off completely and tried to keep walking, pretending nothing had happened.

But I wasn't letting that slide. I reached out and grabbed her hand gently but firmly, stopping her in her tracks.

"Do you want to talk?" I asked, my voice softer this time.

"Ah... eh..."

Her eyes darted away, and her tone was filled with hesitation. But after a brief silence, she gave in and nodded.

We ended up in her dorm room.

The silver-class dorms were noticeably more spacious compared to the bronze-class ones. The air here felt less cramped, the layout tidier, but it still didn't hold a candle to the luxury of the gold dormitories. Bronze rooms could only really hold two, maybe three people, before it felt suffocating. Silver could fit about five to seven comfortably. Gold, though? Gold was like walking into a small mansion, housing ten to fifteen people with ease.

I sat myself down on the chair near her desk, while Ella sat nervously at the edge of her bed. She didn't look at me, her eyes fixed on the floor as her fingers fidgeted in her lap. The silence in the room stretched, heavy, as if she was struggling to figure out how to put her thoughts into words.

"What is it?" I asked her gently.

"C-Can I..." she started, but her voice faltered, and the words died in her throat.

The silence lingered again. She looked like she was fighting with herself, but after a few moments, she seemed to gather what little courage she had and finally spoke.

"C-Can I join your company?!" she blurted out.

I raised an eyebrow. That... I hadn't been expecting.

Of all the things I thought she might say, asking to join my company was nowhere on that list.

Of course, it wasn't a secret to her that I was the CEO of Leonamon. She must have figured that coming straight to me would be a more direct path than going through the formal application process at the office. But still... what suddenly drove her to ask this?

"Why?" I asked simply.

"I-It's because I'm already in my fourth year," she said, her voice quick and nervous, "and I don't think I'll be able to climb up to Gold Class before the end of the academic year. So I wanted to at least secure a career that would be good for me."

"So you're choosing my company instead? Just to have a career lined up after you graduate?" I asked, watching her carefully.

"Yes..." she admitted softly, almost like she was embarrassed to say it out loud.

I leaned back in the chair, considering her words. Honestly, I couldn't deny it was a smart move. If you're not confident about reaching your first choice, the next best thing is to prepare an alternative. And she was doing just that. Thinking ahead, securing a backup plan before it was too late.

In a way, it was impressive. There was still about a year left before the fourth-years graduated, but she was already making sure she wouldn't be left empty-handed. That kind of forward thinking... yeah, it was sharp.

"Why don't you just wait for Princess Myrcella's project to finish? I mean, I heard she's been making progress lately," I asked.

Princess Myrcella had been pushing hard for her initiative—the one that aimed to let all cadets, no matter if they were bronze or gold, graduate as magic knights. It was a big change, one that could shake

the foundation of the academy itself. She had made a lot of progress, but there was still so much left to do. And honestly, there was a real chance it might not even be completed in time. After all, Myrcella herself was in her final year, the same year as Ella. She had to graduate this year too.

Still, plenty of cadets had their faith placed in her. They were willing to wait, to see if she could pull it off.

But Ella... clearly wasn't one of them.

"I don't think I can wait," she said, her eyes firm for the first time tonight. "Not to offend Princess Myrcella, but I don't believe it's that easy to break a hundred-year tradition that's already rooted so deeply into the academy. Not in just two years. That's why I'm trying to be realistic."

Realistic.

And honestly... she wasn't wrong. In a place where almost everything felt bound by rigid tradition, maybe realism was the only card worth holding on to.

Chapter 886: Third Year (4)

"Which is why I'm taking my shot now," she said firmly, her voice carrying a kind of conviction that didn't waver.

Her eyes locked onto mine, filled with determination that made it hard to brush her off. For a brief moment, I actually felt compelled to accept her into my company right then and there. But the reality wasn't that simple. I wasn't the one making all the final decisions. That authority lay with Amon.

And that was the problem—I was the one running around, checking things, giving the green light to the people and plans Amon put together, but when it came down to it, the ultimate call wasn't mine. Which was why I honestly had no idea how to handle her right now.

"I don't think it's really that easy to get recruited into our company," I finally told her, my tone calm but firm. "I mean, if you truly want to work at Leonamon Company, then you can just apply directly to the company. That's the proper way."

"I see..." Ella muttered softly, her voice carrying a hint of disappointment. "So, I can't get hired directly by you, right? I have to go through all the legal requirements first before I can get in."

"Well... yeah, that's basically how it is," I admitted.

For a second, silence stretched between us. Then, out of nowhere, a soft flush crept across her cheeks.

I frowned, confused. I had no idea why she was blushing, but it felt like something was building in the air, something unexpected. And then, before I could even react, she reached up to her chest and began unbuttoning her military uniform.

"Wait—what are you doing?" I asked, my voice sharper than I intended.

"I-I'm just... going to guarantee my success rate," she stammered, her face red, but her hands kept moving. "I don't think I'll ever get a more stable, livable career outside of your company. So I... I'll make sure of it."

"By going naked?" I asked bluntly, not believing what I was hearing.

"W-Well... if you want it to go that far, then I wouldn't really mind," she said, her voice trembling but her words steady enough to make me freeze.

So that was it. She was basically saying she was fine with offering herself—sex, her body—in exchange for a higher chance of being recruited into the company.

"If it increases my chances," she continued, her fingers twitching nervously as if she wasn't sure if she should keep going, "then I'll do anything... even if it's sexual."

Her words hit me hard. I hadn't expected her to go so far, but it wasn't shocking either. People will do whatever it takes to climb upward. Even if the path in front of them is like a rope lined with blades, they'll still grab onto it and pull themselves up, bleeding if they have to.

"B-But... please," she added quickly, her eyes darting down shyly, her voice almost a whisper, "be gentle. It's... going to be my first time."

She was really trying to go through with this. But even now, beneath all that determination, her shyness clung to her like a second skin.

I let out a long sigh, shaking my head slightly. Right now, it felt like I was talking to someone who wasn't thinking straight at all.

"I don't really mind having sex," I said after a pause, my voice steady. "But I don't like sex that happens just because there's no other choice, you know?" I looked at her seriously, letting the words sink in. "If sex comes from the heart, then I'll do it without question. But if you're just forcing yourself into it—because you think you have to, just to achieve something—without even caring about what you feel... then I don't like it."

"Ah..."

Her small sound was enough for me to know the words hit her. I could see it in her eyes—the realization as well as the conflict.

I didn't want sex that was empty, without love. I couldn't bring myself to enjoy it. Sure, I'd done it before out of necessity, but liking it? Not at all. In fact, I hated it.

"If that's all you wanted to say, then I'll head home now," I said, starting to turn away.

"W-Wait!" she cried out suddenly, her hand shooting forward and grabbing my wrist tightly.

I turned back to her. Her expression was conflicted, as if she was wrestling with something inside. Her lips trembled before she finally spoke.

"I-It's not like... I don't have feelings for you," she admitted, her voice soft but filled with sincerity.

So she did have feelings for me. But even then, it was obvious—she wasn't ready. She wasn't prepared to take that step.

"It's fine if you have feelings for me," I told her gently. "I'll accept them. I won't ignore them, and I won't treat them like a nuisance. In fact, I'll treasure them. But if you're not ready yet, then I won't push you. I won't do it with you until you're ready."

For the first time since this whole conversation started, I smiled at her.

"Take your time. Sort out your feelings first. I'm not going anywhere. And when you're ready, I'll come and get you."

"O-Okay..." she whispered, her cheeks still burning red.

Somehow, I'd managed to get her to agree. Ella was a nice woman. She might've been plain, and her body wasn't particularly busty, but none of that mattered to me.

Being plain wasn't something to look down on. In fact, simplicity had its own beauty. Something average, something unadorned—it carried a charm of its own.

After that conversation, I finally decided to head back to my dorm room.

And when I opened the door, the sight that greeted me made my breath catch.

Titania and Zeruel were there, waiting.

"We've been waiting~...!" Titania purred with a seductive grin.

Both of them were dressed in revealing, lacy outfits that clung to their figures and accentuated every curve. The fabric teased more than it covered, leaving just enough to spark my imagination. They looked undeniably sexy.

Naturally, my eyes were drawn to them immediately.

Earlier, they had told me to look forward to something once night came. And now, standing here, I finally understood exactly what they meant.

And honestly? I wasn't going to complain. Not one bit.

With a rush of excitement flooding through me, I stepped forward without hesitation, diving in like a majestic swan, ready to lose myself in the night that awaited.

Chapter 887: Epilogue 17 - Moriarty (1)

I came back to Leonamon, and the first thing I noticed was that Elise was still here.

She told me earlier that she wanted to hang around for a little while before heading back to the underworld, and honestly, I didn't have the heart to refuse her. I told her she could stay, and she was actually enjoying herself here more than I expected.

I wasn't going to complain, though. If it meant I could get my hands on that ass one more night, I'd be willing to do just about anything.

"Leon! You're back!" Elise shouted the moment she caught sight of me.

Her eyes lit up, and in an instant, she rushed forward, throwing herself into my arms. It had only been a week since I'd returned to the academy, but for her, it seemed like a year had passed. She hugged me so tightly it was as if she was terrified I'd disappear again.

"Are you enjoying yourself here?" I asked with a small smile, though my ribs were already starting to feel the pressure.

"Everything feels wonderful when you're with the one you love," she said softly, her voice warm, her arms squeezing around me even tighter as if she never wanted to let go.

At that rate, I was genuinely worried my back wouldn't survive. It felt like my spine was about to be crushed into powder, so after a while I gently asked her to ease up before she broke me for real.

"Oh, right," I said, remembering what I'd come for. "I forgot to tell you something. I came here to get Estelle."

"Really?!"

Her eyes widened so much it looked like they were about to pop out of her skull. Her whole face lit up, like she had just heard the best news in ages.

"Where is she?! Where?!"

"She's right behind me," I told her, stepping aside slightly.

"Hello."

Estelle walked forward, her usual cheeky smile plastered on her face, almost like she had been waiting for this exact moment.

Elise froze for a second, then immediately smiled.

This was the very first time Elise had ever laid eyes on Estelle.

Estelle was the youngest of the fragments—Lilith's fragments. Pieces she created to serve as her backup, a way for her to eventually revive herself. There were five fragments in total and those were Elise, Estelle, Veronica, Leonora, and me.

Five parts of one whole—and I was the one capable of gathering them back together.

The resurrection of Lilith, of course, was a terrible idea. No one knew exactly what would happen if she came back, but I was certain of one thing and that I was her main vessel. The moment all the requirements for her revival were complete, I'd be erased, and she'd take my body as her own.

And now that I'd already found all the fragments, the possibility of her revival was higher than ever.

But it wasn't like it would happen instantly. There were specific conditions that needed to be fulfilled, a ritual or a process—and as long as I avoided completing those, I was safe. That was the only reason I wasn't panicking yet. As long as I didn't get too close to Estelle, as long as I didn't "conquer" her with my ability, then I could still breathe easy for now.

The instant Elise laid eyes on Estelle, she broke into a run and practically tackled her into a hug.

Her arms wrapped around Estelle so tightly it was like she had found someone she thought she'd lost forever.

And honestly... that's probably exactly how it felt.

"I missed you so much," Elise whispered, her voice trembling slightly.

Estelle didn't answer right away. Instead, she glanced at me for a moment, her expression unreadable, then slowly wrapped her arms around Elise and hugged her back. It was awkward, like she didn't really know what to do in this situation, but at least she tried.

I guess that's the reality for us now.

Two fragments of Lilith, standing together here in front of me.

It was strangely heartwarming to watch.

Was my reunion with Elise anything like this?

No... not at all.

Back then, I immediately tried to drag her into bed the first chance I got.

It seemed Elise's return to the underworld was going to be postponed for a while longer.

Later, as I sat reviewing the reports of the company's current state of affairs, I found myself being "assisted" by three maids attending to me.

They weren't just any maids. These were the demon servants Mammon had told me to bring along. And now, they were here, faithfully serving me.

Their presence felt almost too fitting—like they weren't simply attendants but personal maids crafted for me. And maybe, in a way, they were.

Counting them, I realized I had six maids now.

There was Amon, and then the three demon servants who were Camarath, Ruth, and Cersei.

The three of them carried themselves with an almost frightening loyalty, doing everything they could as if desperate to please me.

Mammon hadn't been lying when he said they wanted to serve someone truly capable.

And then there were the other two. Anne, an artificial intelligence built solely for service, and Maya.

I didn't know why, but having all of them under me like this felt good.

It was like I had built myself a harem of maids. And honestly, saying it like that wasn't too far off from the truth. Though admitting it to myself really hammered the point home.

"Camarath, Ruth, Cersei," I called out to them.

Immediately, the three turned toward me, moving in perfect sync, and bowed their heads deeply.

"Yes, Master," they said together.

The way they bowed—flawless, simultaneous, almost mechanical in its precision—already told me enough. They were going to be damn good maids.

"Can I ask you to help Amon with the tasks of running the company?" I said. "Not in the sense of putting you at the front, but in helping to get the work done more efficiently. Would that be alright with you?"

"As Master commands," they answered without hesitation.

Yeah... they were loyal to the core. Loyal enough to throw themselves into even something as mundane as company expansion without batting an eye.

And for some reason, that loyalty stirred something inside me.

I couldn't help but look forward to what was coming next.

Chapter 888: Epilogue 17 - Moriarty (2)

Estelle met up with me in the garden.

The place was quiet, only the faint rustle of leaves and the distant chirping of birds filling the air. Yet, despite the calm surroundings, she didn't carry her usual cheeky, mischievous smile. Instead, her expression seemed stiff, almost strained, like her face was struggling to hold itself together.

She looked... tired. Not just physically, but as if something had drained her spirit. I figured it must've been exhausting for her to deal with Elise. And honestly, I couldn't blame Elise for reacting the way she did either. After searching for so many years, only to finally come face-to-face with her again... it was no wonder she completely lost control.

"You good?" I asked, watching her carefully.

"You really are such a naughty upperclassman, aren't you?" Estelle said, forcing a smile. "I never imagined you'd drag me into meeting her like that."

"Well, technically, she's your sister. It only made sense for me to let you two meet before she left for the underworld," I said simply.

"Well... I wasn't really complaining. In fact, it feels... good. To finally know she's alive," she admitted softly. "I still have these faint fragments of memory about her, you know?"

"I see..." I muttered, not really knowing what else to say.

She turned her gaze to the garden, the sunlight touching her pale face, and then she spoke again, quieter this time. "You know, Leon... do you think it's fate that we've slowly ended up like this?"

"What do you mean?" I asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I'm asking if it's fate that pulled us together like this. It feels like... something bigger than us is drawing everyone together," she said. "Don't you think it means Lilith's resurrection is inevitable?"

Her words lingered in the air. I couldn't deny it. At some point, it really did feel like all of this wasn't coincidence. Like fate itself had been moving the pieces, step by step, pulling us closer, making sure each fragment fell into place. And when you thought about it that way... Lilith's return almost seemed unavoidable.

"Are you scared about that, Senior?" Estelle asked suddenly.

"What do you mean?" I asked back, meeting her gaze.

"I mean... there's no guarantee that you'll even remain yourself when she wakes up," she said. "A body can't carry two souls at once. Imagine a bottle already filled to the brim with water. If someone keeps pouring more into it, it'll just overflow."

Her analogy was spot on. And what she was saying was true.

A bottle has its limit. No matter how much you try, once it's full, the rest has to spill. And if one body tries to contain two souls, one will have to be pushed out. I mean, it simply won't work otherwise.

"I mean, honestly, it's not like it'll do me much good if the world itself decides it wants Lilith back," I said, exhaling slowly. "If fate moves on its own to bring her back, then I won't have a choice but to go along with what it demands of me."

"You sound like you've already given up," Estelle replied. "It doesn't even sound like you're trying to fight fate. It's more like you've already accepted it... like you're walking straight toward it."

"Well, maybe resigning myself to something inevitable is inevitable in itself," I said with a bitter smile. "But that doesn't mean I'll just let it happen without a fight. I'd rather struggle for my right to this body than simply hand it over to her."

The moment those words left my mouth, Estelle's face shifted. Her strained expression melted away, and her usual cheeky grin returned at last.

"I suppose that's only natural," she said lightly. "I like that tenacity, Senior. But..." Her grin widened, sharper than usual, her eyes glinting with a teasing challenge. "I don't think you'll win against her. She's our creator, after all."

Whether she was my creator or not didn't really matter. As long as I kept myself from getting too close to resurrecting Lilith, then I'd be fine. That was all I needed to focus on.

"Well then, my dear brother, I hope you'll have success in your endeavor moving forward," she said, her tone both playful and mocking.

With that, Estelle turned and walked away. I didn't bother following her or even turning to watch her go. I just kept my eyes on the horizon.

For some reason, despite the sunlight, the air felt colder than usual.

After that conversation with Estelle, I went down to where Marie was.

She hadn't moved much. She was still sitting in the same place, her delicate hands picking at the food they had left for her. She looked calm, almost too calm, as if the world around her didn't matter.

"Finally, you came back to see me, Leon," she said, her voice smooth, carrying that same quiet smile she always wore.

I sank down into a seat across from her.

"You look like you've been buried in thought. Did something happen?" she asked gently.

"Nah, nothing," I lied. "Hey, would you mind telling me about yourself?"

Her eyes widened slightly, almost in surprise, before a soft laugh escaped her lips.

"Fufufufu... Not about James... but about me?" she said, tilting her head.

"Well, I'm tired of trying to make you spill something about Moriarty. So, I figured I should just ask about your life instead," I said, half-joking, half-serious. "I feel like... after all the time we've spent together, I barely know anything about you."

"I'm an old lady now, you know," she teased with a small smirk. "So it's not exactly right for you to try and seduce me."

The funny thing was, while her appearance was still youthful, glowing even, the truth was far from it. She was over a hundred years old. Her ability to manipulate souls must've had something to do with her age-defying look.

"Well, I wouldn't really mind if I had you," I told her with a small grin. "I mean, I've had sex with women far older than you."

Chapter 889: Epilogue 17 - Moriarty (3)

"Fufufufu..." Marie let out a low, almost mocking chuckle, her voice carrying a sly tone that seemed to linger in the air. "Well, I guess as long as it has a hole, you'd go for it, huh? That's the kind of man you are. Honestly, I find myself baffled by your way of thinking—completely absurd, really—but at the same time... I can't exactly say I dislike it." She tilted her head slightly, her smirk sharpening as she studied me.

"Don't make me sound like some kind of degenerate," I shot back. "I'm not so much of a horndog that I'd try something with just anything that happens to have a hole in it." My words came out firmer than I intended, and I caught myself narrowing my eyes at her, though I couldn't stop from glancing at her face again, trying to read what was really behind those expressions.

"You really are persistent," she continued, her eyes narrowing with amusement, "trying so hard to peel away at me, to get to know me. But you should understand one thing—I won't give you anything that could be useful for James. No matter how much you push, you're not going to get it."

"Like I said already," I told her, leaning back slightly, "I'm not that desperate to know about James. And even if I was, there's no way I'd get anywhere with you clamping up like that. So, instead of wasting my breath, I'd rather just ask about you."

Marie's expression shifted—softened, almost. She let out a small, dry laugh before speaking again. "There's nothing interesting about an old woman like me," she said flatly. "I've lived my whole life alone, never tied to anyone. I never felt sparks with any of the men I met. The concept of love, of falling in love—it's something I've never come to understand. And truthfully... I don't think I ever will."

Her words hung heavy in the room, a mix of confession and dismissal.

"So, what you're saying," I said slowly, trying to keep the sarcasm out of my tone, "is that there's absolutely nothing about you that's worth noting, and even something like love—a basic thing everyone else feels—completely slipped past you?"

That's what it sounded like anyway. Either she truly had no interest in the subject, or it was because she never bothered to care that love had never taken root in her life. Whichever way it was, I still felt there was more beneath the surface—something Marie was deliberately keeping tucked away.

"I don't have anything worth your time," Marie replied calmly. "So if you're trying to use me as some roundabout method to get at James, you're wasting your efforts. It's not going to happen."

I already knew that. She was iron-willed, the type who could be tortured, threatened, beaten within an inch of her life, and still not say a damn thing. If there was anyone capable of taking secrets to the grave without flinching, it was her.

I exhaled, long and tired. "Well then... looks like I'll just have to come back again another day," I said. "And if I want to pry something out of you, maybe I should lean on your so-called wisdom. You've been around long enough, after all—you're old enough to have something useful buried in there."

Her lips curved faintly, as if she found amusement in my jab. "Well then, I'll be looking forward to seeing you again," she said, her voice calm and steady.

With that, I turned and stepped out of the cell.

That's when I noticed Elise waiting for me outside.

"Here you are, Leon," she said, relief in her tone. "I've been searching all over for you. You told me you needed me for something."

"You're the leader of an organization, right?" I asked directly.

"Yes," she answered without hesitation. "I'm the leader of the Arachnid Sisters."

That admission made things much simpler.

"Earlier this month," I began, my tone sharpening, "an assassin was hired. The job was some kind of theft—I don't know if it was production goods or company secrets—but she was caught by the shadows before she could get far. That assassin just so happens to belong to the very organization you lead."

Her eyes widened instantly. Shock spread across her face. The idea that someone under her command had the nerve to move against me clearly rattled her.

We made our way to where the assassin was being held.

When Elise finally stood in front of her subordinate, her gaze sharpened. She looked down at the woman's wrist, and there it was—the unmistakable mark of her organization.

"I would've never expected someone from my own group to have the audacity to target you—my brother," she said, her voice cold. "I guess I never made it clear enough just how important you are to me."

"Did they even know I'm the leader of the Leonamon?" I asked.

"I didn't tell them," Elise admitted.

"Then it's not really their fault for not knowing," I replied. "Still, we should question her. Since you're her leader, you should have more sway over her than whoever hired her."

Right then, the woman stirred, her eyes fluttering open. The moment she registered Elise, her body tensed.

"L-Leader?! W-What are you doing here?!" she cried, her voice panicked.

"You should be the one answering that," Elise shot back, her tone razor sharp. "What are you doing here, trying to steal something from my brother?"

"B-Brother?" The woman's eyes widened even more, her head snapping toward me. "H-He's your brother?!"

"That's right," Elise said.

"Eeek!"

A shrill cry tore out of her as realization slammed into her. Her whole body trembled, fear written all over her face.

"I-I'm so sorry! I didn't know!" she babbled. "I was just following the job my employer gave me, nothing more!"

I looked at Elise, and she only shrugged, as if to say she wasn't surprised.

"Unfortunately, I don't keep track of who employs my subordinates," she explained. "I have no clue. Our policy allows them to take jobs anonymously. But we don't accept jobs that would endanger us or the entire organization. So—tell me. Who's your employer?"

"I... I don't know his real name," the assassin stammered. "But he told me to call him J.M. That's what he went by."

For anyone else in this world, those initials would've been meaningless. But for me, who carried knowledge beyond this place, the answer was clear. J.M. could only mean one thing.

James Moriarty.

The elusive bastard himself.

And now... that man had made his move against me.

As my thoughts turned heavy, piecing together what that meant, a sharp sound suddenly cut through the silence.

Beep.

"Kuh...!"

Instinct jolted through me. I didn't even know what was about to happen, but my body reacted before my mind could catch up. Guardian wrapped around the woman's body like a shell—

And a split second later, her body convulsed violently.

She exploded from the inside out.

The sound was deafening—blood, flesh, and heat bursting into the air like a grotesque firework.

Chapter 890: Epilogue 17 - Moriarty (4)

When I looked at the Guardian, the entire inside was smeared with red. It was thick, wet, and dripping.

The assassin trapped within couldn't have survived that. There was just no way. The instant I saw it, I knew she was gone.

I let out a slow breath and stopped channeling into the Guardian. The moment I released it, the blood that had been clinging to its surface poured downward, streaming like a waterfall onto the floor.

The sight was jarring. The vivid, dark crimson against the sterile whiteness of the room—it almost hurt my eyes, like the two colors weren't meant to exist side by side. And yet, that was all that remained of her. No body, no flesh, no trace of who she had been. Just blood.

Her body must have been shredded into nothingness the instant that blast went off. Ripped apart from the inside out.

"W-What just happened...?" Elise's voice cracked, the words trembling as they left her lips.

She was frozen, wide-eyed, staring at the bloody remains of what used to be her subordinate.

"She exploded from the inside out," I said, my voice calm but heavy. "And the kind of explosion that powerful... it could have leveled this entire building."

The truth was brutal. The bomb wasn't on her—it was in her. The moment it triggered, she was torn apart instantly. For her to end up like this, it meant the blast had been planted deep inside her body, strong enough to destroy everything around us if it wasn't contained.

Whoever set this up didn't just want her gone. They wanted her to get caught. They wanted her to explode and take all of us with her. If I hadn't locked everything down with Guardian, the workers, Elise, every single thing inside this place would have been annihilated.

"W-Who would do something like that?" Elise asked, her voice shaking.

She was pale, her hands trembling at her sides. I couldn't blame her. To see her own subordinate—someone she probably trained with, worked with, trusted—turn into nothing but blood and fragments right before her eyes... it was only natural for her to be shocked.

But I wasn't shocked. I knew the hand behind this the moment I saw it.

"Moriarty..." I growled, my jaw tight.

I didn't know how he managed to plant a bomb inside her, but the tactic was devilishly clever. Nobody would have thought to look inside. From the outside, she was just another assassin. But deep within her body, the trap was waiting. Unless you dissected her, there was no way to notice.

"Moriarty...?" Elise repeated, her voice quieter now. She seemed to recognize the name. "So it was him?"

"He's the kind of man who's filthy enough to do this. To use someone like that—someone who didn't even know what was happening to her. How could he..." she trailed off, staring at the pool of blood with horror etched all over her face.

"I suppose it's time for me to go all out on him," I said, my voice low, carrying weight. "If he already knows who I am, then there's no reason for me to hold back anymore."

"What do you mean?" she asked, looking at me, uncertain.

"I mean I'm going to hunt him to the ends of the earth. And I won't stop—not until I kill him with my own hands," I said.

Meanwhile...

James's POV

In my hand, I held the object that symbolized my control. A remote. Small, simple-looking, but holding the kind of power that could decide life and death on a massive scale.

This wasn't just some toy. It was linked to the bombs I had planted across the entire world.

Right now, those bombs were already in place. And with just a single press of my thumb, I could ignite them all. Whole streets, cities, lives—snuffed out in an instant. No matter where I was, no matter who my enemies were, I could erase them just like that.

That was how easy it had become.

And just moments ago, with that same remote, I had already blown someone apart.

The weight of it was nothing compared to the destruction it unleashed.

"You really are ruthless, huh?" Claire's sultry voice slid into my ears, and at the same time, I felt her warm, naked body pressing against my back.

This woman had been with me since I started to truly settle into this world. Saying she had been there the entire time would be exaggerating, but she had been there when it mattered. She had helped me more than once.

But that didn't mean she wasn't irritating. Her constant seduction, the teasing, the touch—it gnawed at my patience.

"I'm honestly impressed," she purred, her lips brushing close to my ear. "So... are we going to conquer the world next?"

"The conquering will happen soon enough," I answered, eyes fixed on the remote. "But right now, we need preparation. That means crushing every enemy standing in our way, tearing down anyone who dares block our rise. We'll worm our way into the highest seats of power. But before that, anyone threatening to take root against us... they have to be eliminated."

"You really are such a cunning man." Her voice dripped with admiration. "That's exactly what I like about you." She pressed her breasts tighter against me, soft and unrelenting.

I clenched my jaw. It was honestly getting on my nerves.

Even though I wore the body of a man now, I hadn't always been one. I was once a woman. And having someone with a body more voluptuous than mine rubbing against me constantly—it was irritating on a level I couldn't even describe.

"Claire, stop doing that."

"Doing what?" she teased innocently.

"Pressing your breasts against me. And you're naked on top of it," I said flatly.

"Well, I can't phase through things if I'm clothed, right? Clothes just phase off my body. So it's easier to stay naked." She grinned against me. "Besides, don't pretend you don't secretly enjoy it."

"I don't," I said coldly.

"Aw, don't be so cold," she giggled.

That was enough. My irritation boiled over. Darkness wrapped around me like a cloak, and in the next instant, I slipped away from her embrace.

"Ah, you're so stingy."

"Don't pull things like that—you're wearing me down," I said, my voice sharp. "More importantly, did you get what I asked for?"

"Yup," she replied, smug. "But give me a kiss first. Do you even know how much trouble it was getting this? I thought I was going to melt out there."

"Just give it," I said, my patience thin.

"You're always so stingy," she pouted, but she handed it over anyway.

I looked down at the object now in my hand.

Something essential. Something powerful. Something that would change everything.

The bone of a Great One.