

The World 901

Chapter 901: Double Pregnancy Announcement (1)

Irene's POV

I was right in the middle of teaching my lecture, standing in front of the classroom with everyone's eyes on me, when suddenly—

"E-Excuse me!"

The words left my mouth before I could stop them, and I hurried out of the lecture hall, leaving a room full of confused students behind.

It was unprofessional and I knew that. Leaving in the middle of a lecture was the last thing a lecturer should ever do, but at that moment, I didn't care. My stomach churned violently, and I felt like if I stayed even one more second, I was going to collapse in front of everyone.

I pushed the bathroom door open with shaky hands, nearly stumbling inside. I barely managed to get into one of the stalls before I bent over and I burst out, gagging and vomiting into the toilet. My body trembled with every heave with the sour taste burning the back of my throat.

This wasn't the first time either. Lately, I'd been like this more often than I wanted to admit—nausea hitting me out of nowhere, constantly feeling sick, losing my appetite one moment and craving food the next.

What was happening to me...?

And then it hit me.

No... it couldn't be... could it?

"Am I... pregnant?" I whispered to myself, my voice trembling.

The thought echoed inside my head, louder and louder, until it drowned out everything else. Pregnant. That had to be it. What else could explain the way my body had been acting lately?

And considering Leon had been cumming inside me so many times, so recklessly and so passionately—it wasn't really far-fetched, was it? Honestly, it would've been more surprising if I didn't get pregnant at some point.

Still, even knowing all that, the realization made my heart pound harder.

I wanted this—of course I wanted this. Being pregnant with Leon's child meant we were bound together in the truest, most intimate way. It meant we had become one, completely, in body and soul.

But even then, I couldn't stop the rush of emotions swirling inside me. Shock, fear, happiness—everything all at once. I couldn't believe it... but at the same time, I felt warmth spread through my chest. For the first time in my life, I felt this strange, powerful joy.

Wiping my mouth with a tissue, I steadied myself and left the stall. But just as I did, the stall beside mine opened too.

"Haaa..."

Both of us let out a heavy sigh at the same time, and then our eyes met.

"Huh? I-Irene?"

"R-Rose?"

I froze. It was Rose.

"W-What are you doing here?!" I blurted out, completely caught off guard.

"I was about to ask the same!" she shot back, just as startled.

And then... it hit both of us at once.

"D-Don't tell me... you're...?"

"You too are...?"

Our voices overlapped, our eyes widening at the same time in disbelief.

Could it really be? Both of us... pregnant?

Considering all the times Leon had pulled us into bed together for those wild threesomes, it wasn't surprising at all. If anything, it was inevitable. Still, knowing that possibility and actually standing here realizing it had come true were two very different things.

We stared at each other in silence, our thoughts racing. Neither of us wanted to say it out loud, but deep down, we both knew.

We ended up in my office, sitting across from each other as the weight of the situation sank in.

"Ugh..." Rose groaned, leaning back in her chair with a dramatic sigh. "You know, I always thought getting pregnant by Leon would be like a dream come true. Like, the ultimate sign that we're truly one with him. But this—" she waved her hand between us, "—this situation? Being pregnant at the same time as you because of all those threesomes? It's... honestly a little conflicting for me. I wanted it to happen in a romantic way, you know? Like something straight out of the stories I read..."

That was Rose. Always a hopeless romantic. She devoured romance fiction like her life depended on it, and of course, she'd want her pregnancy story to be something straight out of a novel.

"Well, there's nothing we can do about how it happened," I told her, though I felt the same unease. "The real problem now is how we're going to break the news to Leon."

I was certain Leon would be overjoyed. I mean, he was that kind of man. But still, the thought of telling him made my stomach twist, not from nausea this time but nerves.

"You know, we might as well just tell him straight up," Rose said, her voice more confident now. "I mean, he won't take it lightly—he'll probably be thrilled. Haven't you seen how much he dotes on his daughter with Gabrielle? He loves her more than anything. I'm sure he'll be the same with our children."

She was right. Leon was a good father, a loving one. I'd seen how he spent time with his daughter, never neglecting her, always making sure she felt loved. There was no doubt he'd be just as devoted to our children. But the question remained—how exactly were we supposed to tell him?

"Well, isn't it fine if we just go and tell him directly? He's not going to be that surprised, right? He's always making those shameless remarks about impregnating us anyway. He probably already suspects something."

"I don't know..." I muttered, frowning. "Leon can be pretty dense sometimes."

Though truthfully, that part of him was something I secretly found cute.

"Actually," Rose said, her tone shifting, "this is kind of bad, isn't it? With us both pregnant, that makes three academy staff out of commission. Leon, what the hell are you doing to us?"

She wasn't wrong. With us unavailable, and Gabrielle still on break after giving birth, that meant three members of the academy staff were out. It was going to cause a lot of strain.

Chapter 902: Double Pregnancy Announcement (2)

"Well, I guess, I don't really think of it as a big issue," Rose said suddenly. Then she pulled out a paper, something I didn't expect.

I blinked. "What's that supposed to mean?"

She gave me a small smile.

"I mean, I never formally resigned last time. So I might as well make it official now and resign for good. I'll just devote myself to Leon and the child inside me," she said, rubbing her stomach gently.

It wasn't even guaranteed she was pregnant yet. Same for me. But she was already ready to move forward. Maybe it was time I started considering my own future, too. I liked being a lecturer... but now that I was pregnant, I honestly didn't know what would happen to me anymore.

As for me, I liked being a lecturer... but now, with the possibility of being pregnant, I had no idea what my future would look like anymore.

"Let's tell Leon," Rose said firmly.

I nodded, finally agreeing.

It was the only thing to do.

So, we decided to call Leon and wait for him at the usual bar we often went to. My heart was pounding just thinking about it.

But when the door opened, it wasn't Leon who walked in.

"G-Gabrielle? W-What are you doing here?" I asked, eyes widening.

"Well, I couldn't just sit still after hearing you called Master to come here, so I came too," she said with a soft smile, calm and confident as ever.

I stared at her, my chest tightening with unease.

What was she thinking?

Somehow, deep down, I had this gnawing feeling that this pregnancy announcement wasn't going to be normal—or easy—at all.

"You seem like a very busybody person to be doing something like this, Gabrielle. Did Leon know about this?" Rose asked, her brows knitting together as if she couldn't quite wrap her head around Gabrielle's calmness.

Gabrielle let out a small laugh, one that carried a hint of pride, before answering, "Well, I was right there with Kana and Master when Irene called him, so I ended up hearing what you said through the phone as well. Although I'm not active anymore, don't forget I've been a member too—and not just a regular one. I even became a captain of the Magic Knights. My hearing is sharper than most people's, so something like that? It's nothing. I could easily catch it." She smiled as she finished, the kind of smug smile I'd never seen from her before.

It honestly threw me off. This was Gabrielle, right? The same woman I'd known for years? I couldn't help but stare.

And then there was the aura she gave off now—so heavy and so mature, it almost pressed down on me. Was this what motherhood did to someone? It wasn't just her demeanor, either. It was her entire presence that had shifted. She didn't look or feel like the Gabrielle we had once known. She was different. She was more confident and more radiant.

What shocked me even more was her body. She had just given birth not too long ago, and yet... it was like her body had completely bounced back, maybe even improved. She looked sexier, fuller in some ways, yet refined. It made me feel a sudden pang of envy that I couldn't shake off.

Would we change like that too, once we became mothers? The thought stirred something inside me—an odd mix of nervousness and anticipation. I couldn't help but imagine Leon's reaction. How much love would he give me if my body turned out like that? Knowing him, it would be a lot. He adored that kind of change. He'd probably be overjoyed.

Gabrielle leaned forward slightly, her eyes narrowing in curiosity as she asked, "Well then? What do you two want to say to Master about?"

Her question made both Rose and me freeze in place. We glanced at each other, our expressions reflecting the exact same thing. And that was hesitation. Our lips parted but no words came out right away.

Because... how were we supposed to say this? How could we possibly announce something so big and that we were both pregnant with Leon's child—when Gabrielle had just given birth herself? It wasn't some casual topic you could just toss onto the table like it was nothing.

But the truth would come out sooner or later. Hiding it forever wasn't possible. After a moment of silence, Rose and I exchanged another look, and with a shared sigh, we finally faced Gabrielle.

Then, almost instinctively, we said it together.

"We're pregnant."

Our voices blended, overlapping so perfectly it was like we had rehearsed it. There wasn't even the slightest delay and not a single word out of sync. It was almost eerie how in unison we sounded.

The weight of the words settled between us like a stone thrown into still water. It wasn't the kind of thing you could say loudly in a place like this. If we had, people around us would have turned their heads in confusion, some maybe even judging us with sharp eyes. But luckily, the place was already noisy enough, the chatter of strangers loud and constant. Our voices stayed low, barely escaping the space between us. No one else heard.

Gabrielle listened quietly, and then... she smiled. Not a surprised one, not even a shocked one, but a knowing smile. "I knew it," she said.

That was all. Just that.

Her response caught me off guard. I expected more—something or anything—but that was it. She already knew. Maybe it wasn't that she literally knew, but rather that she had sensed it. Or maybe it was because of how close we had all grown recently. The words she chose felt almost too simple, but somehow, they carried weight.

Still, it made me wonder. Even though there was still a thin barrier between us—something invisible that hadn't fully gone away—it felt like that wall was slowly breaking down, little by little, the more time we spent together.

"That's all you have to say?" I asked, genuinely confused, maybe even a little annoyed.

"Well, what else could I possibly say?" she replied calmly. "I guess... congratulations. That's about it, really. Anyway, I am happy for you both." Her smile was soft, not smug this time, just genuinely warm.

I looked at her and realized just how much Gabrielle had changed. This was not the cold, distant woman we once knew. I didn't think she was even capable of being this gentle. It was strange... but also comforting. I guess Leon had changed her more than anything else.

And maybe I had changed too. Maybe not as much as her, maybe not in a big way, but even if it was only a little, I could feel it.

"Fufufufu... Master is surely going to be overjoyed. I have no doubts about that," Gabrielle said with a small laugh, her smile widening.

Her words lingered in my mind as the silence stretched.

After a while, we waited in anticipation, hearts beating faster with every passing minute.

And then... Leon finally arrived.

Now came the moment we had been holding back.

It was time to announce the double pregnancy to him.

Chapter 903: Double Pregnancy Announcement (3)

We told Leon about it.

The words slipped from our lips in unison, almost rehearsed, though we hadn't planned it that way.

"We are pregnant."

For a moment, the room felt heavy, like the air itself was holding its breath. Normally, this should've been a celebration, a joyous announcement, the kind of thing that would make anyone's heart soar with happiness. But strangely, it didn't feel that way for us right then. There was hesitation, a meekness behind our voices that neither of us could quite shake off. Even Rose, who usually carried herself with confidence, looked slightly dazed, like her thoughts were drifting somewhere else entirely.

It wasn't calmness we carried, I guess, but it was nerves and it was tangled up in anticipation. And honestly, thinking back, this was a bombshell of an announcement to just toss out all of a sudden without buildup. But then again, it was only natural to tell him. After all, we were carrying his children inside of us. It was something that couldn't be hidden forever.

Still, that didn't stop the unease bubbling inside.

What if he didn't like it? What if Leon had been content with just one child and wasn't ready for more? Would that mean he'd push us away, discard us now that the bond had been made? That thought alone made my stomach twist. But deep down, I knew Leon wasn't that kind of man. He wasn't someone who would so easily cast us aside—not after everything he'd done, not after going so far as to convince me, personally, to accept my place in his harem.

Leon looked at us, and instead of shock or anger, his lips curved into a smile.

"I see..." he murmured, his tone steady. "Well, I can't say I'm surprised. I've actually been expecting this. I could feel the two of you starting to act a little different. And Rose—" his eyes flicked toward her—"you've become quite an eater, you know. But I didn't say anything. Honestly, I was waiting for you both to come out with it yourselves. It would've made it more... you know, surprising."

I blinked at him, speechless for a beat before finally speaking. "Well, you definitely ruined the surprise element since you already knew."

Rose's cheeks puffed out as she glared at him. "You ruined the mood, Leon. And wait—how did you even notice I was eating a lot? I-I didn't get fat, did I?"

Leon chuckled softly, almost carelessly, but Gabrielle cut in before he could answer. "Master doesn't always have tact, so sometimes he ends up ruining the mood... but that's exactly one of the reasons why I love him."

Leon's gaze shifted between the three of us then, his smile lingering, softer this time. "To think... the three of you, like this. It really is something. I feel truly blessed—to have the bombshell instructors of the academy as my women."

Heat rushed to my cheeks instantly. "You really are stupid, Leon," I muttered, but there was no bite behind it. His words wrapped around me, overwhelming, and I hated how easily they made me feel weak, and how they made me feel so much like a woman hopelessly in love.

"Still," Leon continued, his voice firm now, "the two of you—congratulations." For the first time since this exchange began, his expression shifted into something pure and something genuine, a smile that radiated pride and warmth. "I'm truly happy. Thank you... for carrying my child."

And just like that, something bloomed inside me. It was warm, bright, and so overwhelming it almost stole my breath. The sensation spread through my chest, down into my stomach, into the very core of me. It was pure joy, unlike anything I'd felt before. It was so strong that I almost cried right then and there. For the first time, I felt something that truly, undeniably mattered.

Gabrielle's POV

I watched as Irene and Rose smiled at us, still holding that soft glow from Leon's words, before heading back together to their house.

A small smile tugged at my lips. I honestly felt happy for them. The two of them had been my friends since our academy days, though things between us hadn't always been simple. For years, our

relationship was strained and was weighed down by misunderstandings and childish grudges. We ignored the real issues, acted like it was easier to stay distant. But over time and mutual understanding of each other's feelings, we'd managed to find closure. And now... now we stood here as something more than friends. We stood as women bound by the same man, and strangely, that realization no longer hurt.

"Fufufufu..." I let out a light laugh, unable to stop myself. "Seeing the two of them so happy... it really drives the point home, doesn't it? They love you, Master. They love you so much they're overjoyed to carry your child inside them."

Leon's eyes softened. "Well, I love them. And I'll love their children equally. If they weren't happy about it, honestly... I don't know what I'd do."

I studied him for a moment, remembering his words from before. Lately, Master had confessed to me that he felt too busy and too distracted, like he wasn't giving enough time to Kana. He worried he'd end up being a bad father. But to me, those fears meant the opposite. The fact that he thought so deeply about it only proved he would be a good father—because he cared enough to question himself.

Yes, he was still young, younger than me even, so of course parenting wasn't something that came naturally yet. But that was why I was here. I was Kana's mother, and I loved her with everything I had. I would always support him in the little and big things, especially in raising our daughter.

Still, a tiny pang of envy welled inside me.

"I'm kinda jealous of them now," I admitted with a smile.

"Jealous?" he asked, tilting his head.

"Well, they're going to have all your attention for the rest of their pregnancies. You know how delicate women's feelings get when they're carrying a child. You were like that with me, right? You treated me with so much care back then. So yes, I'm jealous... that they'll be the ones soaking up that attention now. But at the same time, I know it can't be helped." I paused then, my lips curving into a different kind of smile, one heavier with meaning. I leaned in closer, my voice dropping to a sultry tone. "But I did think of a way to balance it out. Why don't we make a sibling for Kana, Master? And I don't mean from another woman—I mean one from me."

Leon blinked, slightly stunned. "You want to get pregnant immediately?"

"Why not?" I whispered. "It's not like I have any other dreams besides serving you. My life belongs to you. So if I can make you happy, if I can give you another small us inside my body... then that's all I want." I smiled, softer now, but with conviction.

Leon's eyes darkened slightly, the corner of his mouth twitching upward. "You really know how to make me feel horny, Gabrielle. Or..." he leaned in closer, his voice lower, "are you suggesting this because you're horny yourself?"

I winked playfully. "Well... that too."

I knew I'd struck the right chord, because his eyes sharpened with hunger. In one swift motion, he grabbed me, pulling me close, and without hesitation dragged me into the nearest inn.

And there, without mercy, he fucked me senseless.

Chapter 904: A Month Before Summer Vacation (1)

Summer vacation was creeping closer with each passing day, and you could almost feel it in the air with the restless energy of the cadets and the way their voices carried further with it filled with anticipation. The whole place seemed brighter and livelier, as if the world itself was preparing for a break. And along with that came the unforgiving heat of the sun, pouring down relentlessly on us with its rays stinging the skin and making the stone walls and training fields radiate waves of warmth.

But for me, the arrival of summer wasn't just about the season itself. It meant that the time we'd been waiting for... I mean, the plan we had been preparing all this time, was drawing near. Soon, we would infiltrate the Empire of Rodonia. Soon, we would set out to free the elven slaves suffering there.

The thought of it alone carried weight. It was no small task at all because it is dangerous and demanding in every sense—but that was exactly why we'd prepared as much as we could. The plans were drawn with the groundwork already laid, and everything was in place. Now it was simply a matter of adapting when the time finally came.

Still, we weren't there yet. There was a whole month before we'd move. So, for now, I allowed myself to breathe and to just sink into this fleeting calm, letting the peace wash over me before the storm arrived.

The first thing I did with this spare time was visit the two women carrying my children.

They didn't show much on the outside yet and there was no obvious signs that anyone else would notice—but I could see it. I knew they were pregnant.

Rose had developed a noticeable appetite with her eating more than usual, while Irene carried herself differently with her body hinting at the new life inside her.

In fact, Rose already had a faint bump forming on her stomach. It wasn't sticking out much, but when I looked closely, I could see it. And I knew—it wasn't just fat.

That realization alone hit me with a strange feeling. On one hand, there was this overwhelming pride, this primal sense of conquest, as though I had achieved something deeply instinctual, almost intoxicating. I felt like I was being drowned in it, softly but steadily, losing myself in that victorious warmth.

And yet, alongside that came something even deeper and that was an immense tenderness. A warmth that wasn't about pride or conquest but about love. About being bound even closer to them.

"Leon, you're really such a doting one, huh?" Irene asked suddenly, her eyes narrowing with a teasing glint. "Is this really you, or are you just like this because you got me pregnant?"

I chuckled softly. "Well, I guess that's part of it," I admitted. "I never had much of a relationship with my parents, and... I want to give my kids more attention than they ever gave me."

The words came out heavier than I expected, carrying the weight of a past I rarely spoke of. In this world, I didn't have parents. But in my previous life, I did. They had died in a traffic accident, leaving behind more absence than presence.

I had loved them, or at least I thought I had. But the truth was, my bond with them had always felt distant and shallow. I cried at their funeral, yes, but once the tears were gone, so was the sadness. I loved them only because they raised me, not because I had truly been close to them. If not for Kana-nee, I probably would have crumbled. She had been my anchor and the one who filled the void they left behind.

"I see... that sucks," Irene said softly. "But we're kind of the same. And Rose too."

She wasn't wrong. Both she and Rose had their own scars with their own broken ties with their parents. Our circumstances had been different, but the end result... it was similar. We all carried that hole inside of us.

She smiled then, a gentle, radiant smile that softened her whole face.

"Well, I guess that just means we should do better than them," Irene said. "We should be great parents to our kids."

The sincerity in her smile, the warmth behind those words... it hit me harder than I expected. Before I even realized it, I leaned in and pulled her into a kiss, unable to stop myself.

"H-Hey, Leon, I have something to do later!" she protested, flustered, pushing lightly at my chest. "I can't exactly be doing this right now. And more than that—if we do, I'll smell like sex! P-Please, save it for later... L-Like tonight."

I pulled back with a small grin. Well, she had a point. I decided not to push things further. But the way she stumbled over her words with her embarrassed face... it just made me anticipate tonight even more.

The days weren't just filled with responsibilities—I was also enjoying the time I spent with my other girlfriends.

Johanne and Tris were two of them, and even now, people couldn't help but be surprised when they saw us together.

Johanne's case, especially, caught people off guard. After all, for the longest time, everyone had believed she was a man. And in truth, she had lived for twenty years as one before her gender was revealed. But now, she was embracing her femininity little by little with her leaning into it as best as she could, even if it wasn't natural for her.

She tried hard to be as feminine as possible, but the years she had lived as a man were still etched deeply into her habits.

At one point, she confessed to me with her cheeks flushed pink.

"I can't wear a skirt. It's too embarrassing..."

Her voice was shy and it was almost trembling, and the way she blushed as she said it... it made her look unbearably cute.

Chapter 905: A Month Before Summer Vacation (2)

"Well, I guess doing that all of a sudden would be a bit too much, even for you, Johanne," Tris said, her tone playful but supportive. "But honestly, if you just let yourself be, you'd look amazing. You're an absolute bombshell now! You were such a hunk as a man, but as a woman, you're breathtaking. Your face alone could put so many women to shame."

"I-I don't even know how to take that all at once," Johanne muttered, fidgeting. "I mean, I'm still not used to bras and panties, let alone taking care of my body the way women do. I never had to worry about that when I was a man."

Her words made me laugh quietly to myself. Those old mannerisms of hers, the way her past still clung to her—it wasn't a negative thing. If anything, it made her all the more endearing.

Besides, I liked a little tomboyish charm in my harem too.

Tris, on the other hand, seemed to be enjoying herself way too much. She loved dressing Johanne up, experimenting with different outfits and cosmetics, like she was a doll to play with.

It wasn't surprising, though. Tris had been Johanne's fiancée back when everyone thought Johanne was a man. And when Johanne eventually joined my harem, Tris followed, becoming one of my women too.

Now, watching the two of them together—the way they bickered, teased each other, and laughed—it filled me with a kind of warmth I couldn't put into words. Something quiet but deep, like watching two pieces of a puzzle fit perfectly together, and knowing I was part of it all.

After hanging out with the two of them, I eventually decided it was only fair to spend some time with my other friends as well.

At first, I didn't think much about it, but the more I paid attention, the more something felt... off. Maybe it was because I kept seeing those three sticking together so often lately. But the thought kept nagging at me—did Estelle actually build herself a harem out of my two friends?

I mean, when I really looked at it, I couldn't imagine Estelle having genuine feelings for either of them. Sure, Duncan and Estelle were technically dating, but I honestly didn't see that relationship heading anywhere meaningful. The way they acted around each other—it didn't give off the impression of something that could grow into anything serious. Nothing about them suggested they had crossed any kind of line or deepened their relationship beyond what they already had now.

From my point of view, Estelle was either just playing around with both of them or maybe she was carefully drawing boundaries somewhere. Where exactly that line was supposed to be, I couldn't tell. But the more I thought about it, the more I felt that this whole thing wasn't really part of Estelle's original plan. Something about her approach didn't sit right with me, and it made me think I needed to be cautious whenever I was around her.

As Estelle and Duncan walked a little ahead of us, I found myself side by side with Raymond. We were just casually walking, when out of nowhere, he spoke up, his voice carrying just enough weight to catch my attention.

"Hey, Leon. Have you heard the rumors?" he asked.

"Rumors?" I repeated, glancing at him.

"That Professor Rose and Professor Irene are pregnant."

The words hit me harder than I expected. Until then, I hadn't even realized rumors like that were spreading throughout the academy. The fact that people were not only noticing but gossiping about it shocked me.

"I don't know anything about that," I told him flatly.

Of course, the truth was different—I did know. They really were pregnant. But to hear it was already circulating as a rumor among students... that was something else.

"What's even the basis for that rumor, though?" I asked, trying to sound casual.

"Well, for one, they've started showing certain signs that you'd normally associate with pregnant women," Raymond explained. His tone was calm, almost analytical. "I'll admit, I was skeptical myself. But when I saw Professor Irene earlier, I swear her stomach looked like it was sticking out just a little. Maybe it was just my imagination... but honestly, it really could be true. As I said, the possibility of both of them being pregnant is actually pretty high."

I was honestly taken aback by just how much detail Raymond had paid attention to. He'd put enough thought into it to draw his own conclusions. But then again, that was always like him. He had the kind of sharp eyes and mind that noticed things most others wouldn't.

"And there's something else I heard," Raymond continued. "People are saying you're the father, Leon."

"...Huh?"

That caught me completely off guard. I didn't expect anyone to connect the dots that far. Sure, the students here were clever enough to observe things, but for them to push it to this level... that was beyond what I anticipated. Still, as long as I kept quiet, nothing definite could ever come out.

"Where did that even come from?" I asked, keeping my expression neutral.

"Well, a lot of people are assuming you've got some kind of relationship with the Professors, and that you ended up knocking them up. I'll be honest with you, Leon—I'm kind of starting to believe the rumor a little myself," Raymond said.

"Why's that?" I pressed.

"It's not like I can help it," he replied. "I've seen the way you interact with them—it's weird. And considering your almost frivolous, debauched relationships with so many girls in this academy, it's hard to think otherwise. The rumor just... makes sense when you put it all together."

I let out a small breath. Well, I couldn't deny it. I did have that kind of frivolous streak. My relationships with girls here weren't exactly subtle either. People had seen me walking around with them openly, sometimes more than one at a time. With that kind of reputation, it was only natural for people to think the way they did.

"And to be honest," Raymond added after a pause, "I also feel like you might be the father of Professor Gabrielle's child too. Your reputation's already being dragged through the mud because you're connected with so many women. So it's not surprising that all these rumors are backfiring on you. People are putting the blame on you."

"Well, I guess I have been making a lot of enemies lately," I admitted with a bitter smile. "I've noticed plenty of men glaring at me whenever I walk around with Nia."

It made sense. The more I thought about it, the clearer it became that all of this was probably just jealousy. Men who couldn't stand the fact that I was surrounded by some of the most beautiful women in the academy would obviously want to paint me as the villain. Framing me as the father of Rose's and Irene's children was just their way of putting me down.

"So? Are you the father?" Raymond asked, his eyes narrowing slightly, like he was trying to read my reaction.

I smiled at him, calm but unreadable. "I don't want to talk about that."

The moment those words left my mouth, Raymond fell silent. What I said wasn't a denial, but it wasn't a confirmation either. And from the look on his face, I could tell his mind was already racing, the gears turning as he tried to piece together what I really meant.

Chapter 906: A Month Before Summer Vacation (3)

Days passed, yet it felt like the entire world had frozen in place, as if time itself refused to move forward.

Even though only a few weeks remained before the end of the first semester and the long-awaited summer vacation, everything around me still carried the same weightless stillness. It was like being stuck in a loop where nothing changed, no matter how much I waited.

While I was drowning in that feeling of stagnation, Titania, Zeruel, Tris, and Yr suddenly invited me out on a date—together, all four of them at once.

Looking back, it must have been because of how preoccupied I'd been these past months. I had been spending nearly all of my energy working with Solaris, planning every step of how we'd eventually invade the Empire. Without realizing it, I had left my girls feeling lonely. That thought stung a little.

Well... even with my busy days, I still made sure to give them as much affection as I could. I showered them with my attention whenever possible—and sometimes, quite literally showered them with it.

This time, though, they wanted more than just the usual. They asked me to go with them to Lala Land.

Honestly, I was caught off guard when they suggested it. I never would've guessed they'd ask to go there. But then again, knowing them, they enjoyed surprising me with things I wouldn't expect. So, while it shocked me at first, it didn't really at the same time. It was just... them being themselves.

After a while, we finally arrived at Lala Land.

The place stretched out in front of us like a dreamland come to life—an amusement park filled with rides, attractions, and countless games. The air was full of noise with the laughter, music, the clattering of rides, and the sharp bursts of cheerful screams echoing from what you'd call rides similarly on the things back on Earth.

The four of them were practically glowing with excitement. They looked so sweet, so innocent—like they'd suddenly become children again, running around wide-eyed and smiling at everything.

"Leon... tired..." Yr murmured softly.

I looked down at her. Yr's voice was faint, her body swaying a little as she rubbed her eyes. She looked like she was about to collapse into sleep at any second. She had never been the most active among us, and something this loud and overwhelming must've drained her completely.

Well, I knew what I had to do. I bent down, letting her climb onto my back.

This wasn't new. Whenever she got like this, it usually meant one thing and that she wanted me to carry her while she drifted off.

The moment I lifted her, she buried her face against my shoulder. Within seconds, her breathing evened out into soft little snores. She had already fallen asleep. She slept so peacefully, it was as though I had turned into her personal bed.

"Ahh...~ Yr's already asleep?" Titania asked, her tone a mix of amusement and fondness.

"Well, she tires out easily, so I guess it can't be helped," Tris said, shrugging lightly.

"Do you want me to carry her for you, Leon?" Zeruel asked, tilting her head.

I shook mine with a smile. "No, it's fine. I just want you all to enjoy yourselves. I'll carry Yr here and watch over you while you have fun. Honestly, I think she's enjoying her nap more than she would any of the rides."

"Is that really okay? But... we wanted to have fun together with you..." Titania said, her voice carrying a trace of worry.

She was right. The whole reason they brought me out was to enjoy this day with me. And now, with Yr asleep on my back, I couldn't exactly share every ride or run around with them like I should. Unless I put her down—which wasn't an option—it felt like there was a distance between us.

I thought for a moment, then smirked. "Well, I think I have a better way for us to have fun."

Titania's eyes widened, and her cheeks flushed pink. "Leon, that's... lewd..." she muttered.

The other two glanced at me with the same embarrassed blush. Clearly, they misunderstood what I meant.

"That's not it. Not now, anyway," I said with a chuckle. "We can save that for later. For now... just follow me."

With Yr still sleeping soundly against my back, I led the three of them through the lively crowd until we reached our destination.

"What is this place, Leon?" Tris asked, curiosity lighting up her face.

"An arcade," I replied.

"Arcade?"

"Yeah. It's a place where you can play all sorts of games without needing to run around. It won't wear you out—you just use these controls to play," I explained, pointing to the rows of machines.

Their eyes widened in unison. "Ohhh~..."

Good. I had their attention.

"You made this, Leon?" Titania asked.

"Well, not exactly by myself. I had a lot of help. It was a project of the Leonamon as a whole. But I did plan and design it. It'll be opening soon for business. Right now, it's still in trial mode since a few of the games don't work properly—we're still fixing them."

I remembered my own surprise when I first learned that even in this world, the term "bug" also existed.

In case you're wondering, a bug in a game is basically a mistake. It is an error in the code or logic that causes weird or unintended behavior. Sometimes it's something small, like a graphical glitch, and sometimes it's big enough to crash the game completely. Bugs happen when the programming isn't perfect, and the results are things the developers never intended.

The team was still hunting down those bugs, but at least a good chunk of the games already worked fine.

The girls eagerly started playing. At first, they fumbled with the controls, clumsy and unsure. But with time, they grew more comfortable, and eventually, they managed to master the games, laughing and shouting with every win and loss.

At some point, Yr stirred on my back, shifting as her eyes fluttered open.

"Where are we...?" she murmured sleepily, her voice muffled against me.

I explained the place to her, and immediately, her eyes lit up. She wanted to try too.

Not long after, she joined the others, and to everyone's surprise, she got so good at the games that no one could beat her anymore—not even me.

I couldn't help but laugh. I guess we had found her true calling.

Chapter 907: A Month Before Summer Vacation (4)

I think that for a while, there were a lot of times when I felt like maybe I should've been doing something—anything—but strangely enough, just lying there and doing absolutely nothing had its own kind of soothing charm. Almost like the world could burn and I'd still feel fine.

My weird girlfriend, Isiliraiellyn, was sprawled across my lap under the shade of a tree. People kept staring at us as they passed, their eyes full of judgment, throwing looks sharp enough to pierce through. But honestly? I couldn't care less. Their opinions meant nothing to me. We just did what we wanted, and we'd been in that position for almost an hour now.

Her head rested gently on my lap, her chest rising and falling softly as she slept.

And even though she was still rough around the edges, I could already see the traces of her beauty showing. Her features weren't polished, but there was this exotic pull to her—something mysterious and wild in her eccentricity that made her impossible to look away from. It wasn't just beauty, it was allure, and I doubted many women could come close to the kind she had.

"Ahhh! That was a good nap!" she suddenly said, stretching out her arms as she woke up.

"Good morning," I told her with a smile, though the sun was already setting behind us, painting the sky orange and red. "You seemed like you were sleeping well."

"Yes! I slept like a baby!" she replied, her grin bright enough to outshine the dying light of the day.

Honestly, when she made human-like expressions like that, she was really cute. But it wouldn't be Isiliraiellyn if she wasn't being her dramatic, chuunibyou self. That strange mix was what made her, her.

"So, where are we going next?" I asked.

"Someplace else! I want sweets!" she declared, striking a bizarre pose that made her look like she was about to summon some forbidden magic.

For a moment, I swore she was glowing.

But no—it had to be the sunset. The fading light hit her just right, illuminating her in a golden halo that made her look like something out of a dream.

"Well then, let's go to Leonamon Cake Shop," I told her with a grin.

When we arrived, Amy greeted us warmly, her voice light, her smile soft. She quickly took our orders.

At first glance, she seemed her usual self—calm, collected, maybe a little airheaded—but for some reason, her smile looked brighter this time, fuller and almost too genuine.

I wasn't sure what her deal was, but it piqued my curiosity. It had been a long time since I last saw her, after all.

While she was preparing, I leaned in and asked her to come somewhere else with me.

"Master..." she murmured, her cheeks flushing red as she looked away.

I tilted my head, confused.

I hadn't done anything, yet the way she acted made me feel like I had somehow wronged her.

Her thighs pressed together, rubbing slightly against each other.

That's when it hit me.

She was horny.

"Are you horny, Amy?" I asked bluntly.

Her eyes snapped open wider, no longer carrying that dreamy, airheaded softness I was used to. Instead, she looked like someone completely honest, stripped bare of pretense. Slowly, she nodded.

"It's because it's been a while, Master. And seeing you again after so long... I couldn't help it. I'm sorry for showing you such a disgusting display," she admitted, her voice trembling but genuine.

"I don't like that word—disgusting," I told her, my voice low. "Something like this... it doesn't deserve to be called that, you know?"

As I spoke, my hand slipped under her skirt, sliding slowly up her smooth thigh until it reached her crotch.

Her panties were already soaked through.

I didn't waste time and I leaned in, pressing my lips against hers in a deep kiss.

But just as our kiss heated up—

"Leon?" Isiliraiellyn's voice called out, catching me. "Ohhh..."

Her reaction wasn't shock or outrage. No, her eyes glimmered with curiosity and amusement, like she was watching an interesting play unfold.

Without hesitation, I reached out and pulled her toward me too.

"Ah...!"

"You're fine with joining, right?" I asked.

"Well, I guess I could... though, I left the sweets behind," she said, smirking. "But oh well, I like the taste of you even more, so I'll go with that instead."

And just like that, I was buried inside Isiliraiellyn, fucking her hard.

Her pussy was insanely tight, pulling me in deeper, clenching and sucking around my cock with a rhythm that made my body shudder.

It was almost impossible to even think straight with every thrust pulling me further into the haze.

"Ahhhhnnnn... ah, ahhh... ahhh... it feels so good...~ Ahhhnghhhh...~!"

Hearing her moan like that—her, the eccentric, unpredictable girl known for her dramatic antics—was surreal. She was bending over, offering her ass to me as I pounded into her sloppy, dripping pussy, making it wetter with each thrust.

"Nghhhh...! Ahhhh...!"

Her walls were tightening rapidly, a clear sign she was close to cumming.

Her hands braced against the wall, fingers curling in so hard her knuckles went white. Every part of her body screamed of the overwhelming pleasure rushing through her veins.

And then it hit—

"Nghhh...! Ahhhhnnnnnghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Her orgasm exploded through her body. Her back arched sharply, her eyes rolled back until only the whites showed, and her pussy clamped down on me like a vice, milking me for everything.

I couldn't hold it either.

I pulled out just in time, and she collapsed to her knees, trembling violently. Grabbing her head, I shoved my cock into her mouth, and the moment I did, I burst.

Thick ropes of cum shot into her throat, filling her mouth so quickly her cheeks ballooned outward, puffing from the sheer volume I was unloading inside her.

When it was finally over, she swallowed, gulping down every last drop slowly. I pulled out, and she opened her mouth wide to show me with it clean and not a trace left.

Then, my eyes fell on Amy. Her legs were trembling lightly, her body quivering with anticipation.

I moved behind her, gripped her waist, lined my cock up against her soaked pussy, and then...

Chapter 908: A Month Before Summer Vacation (5)

Instead of putting it where it usually went, I suddenly shifted my cock's direction and aimed straight for her ass.

Her butt was small, round, and so damn cute from this angle, completely exposed and defenseless. The sight alone made my blood boil with hunger. I pressed the head of my cock against that tight ring, feeling the heat radiating from her untouched hole.

The second I did, her eyes—which were usually always closed, dreamy, and half-lidded—snapped wide open in shock. She froze and looked back at me, face flushed, lips trembling.

"M-Master...?"

"Sorry, Amy," I muttered, my voice low and rough with lust. "But your butt's just too cute. I couldn't help myself."

She gulped hard, her throat bobbing nervously, and I felt her tiny hole twitch against me. Her sphincter tightened, then loosened again, as if it were kissing the tip of my cock—like it was secretly begging to swallow me whole.

Gripping her hips tightly, I pulled her firmly against me and began to push. My cock slowly pried its way into her ass. There was resistance at first—it was tight and unyielding—but the slickness left behind after fucking Isiliraiellyn earlier coated me well, letting me slide in without a single hitch. It was smooth... almost dangerously smooth.

"Ahhh... nghhhh!"

Her body stiffened immediately, her voice breaking into a strangled cry. The foreign intrusion invaded her insides, forcing her body to adapt to the sudden stretch. Her teeth clenched hard enough to creak, and her delicate fists curled so tightly that her knuckles turned ghostly white from the pressure.

"Nghhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

Bit by bit, I sank deeper, until at last I was buried all the way inside her asshole. I was balls deep, in fact. The grip around me was insane. Her ass hugged me tightly, squeezing my cock with faint, pulsing contractions that sent sharp jolts of pleasure straight to my spine. If I hadn't just cummed earlier, I would've exploded right there on the spot.

I leaned forward, pressing my chest against her back, my lips brushing her ear as I whispered.

"Are you alright, Amy? How's your first time doing anal?"

Her voice trembled, shaky but honest. "I-It's really weird, and it hurts... but... at the same time, it feels good. And the pain... it's fading. I don't feel it as much anymore..."

Good. The pain dulled faster than I expected. I took a slow, steady breath, tightened my grip on her hips again, and then started to move—dragging my cock out before slamming it back in.

"Ahhh, ahhh, ahhh, ahh, ahhh, nghhh, ahhh, ahhh, hhhnnnghhhhh...~"

Her moans spilled uncontrollably from her lips, her eyes rolling back in pleasure. It was the first time I'd ever seen her like this. Amy had always been the airheaded, dreamy, slow girl who floated through everything without much expression. But now... her face was twisted with raw lust, her lips parted in a look of pure debauchery I never thought I'd see from her.

I rammed into her harder, my cock stretching and dragging her inner walls with every brutal thrust, her ass clinging desperately to me as if refusing to let me go.

"Gnhhhghhh..." Her voice broke into a guttural moan, too heavy to hold back. "Ahhnghhh...!"

I kept pounding into her, slamming deeper and deeper until the pressure inside me began to boil over. My jaw tightened, my teeth grinding together as the tightness of her ass overwhelmed me. I couldn't hold back anymore.

"Fuaaaaaaaaaaaaah~!?"

Her eyes flew wide at the suddenness of my release. My cock throbbed violently as hot cum spurted inside her ass, flooding her insides. Her walls clenched rhythmically around me, milking me for every last drop as her rectum squeezed tighter and tighter, as if trying to crush me in pleasure.

The heat of it, the squeezing, the overwhelming sensation—it was almost too much.

"Ahhh... nghhh...~"

When the last spurt left me, I finally pulled out. A wet pop echoed through the air as my cock slipped free. Her ass, now red, swollen, and stretched, gaped wide open. My thick semen oozed out of her and trickled down the soft curves of her ass, sliding between her thighs, dripping down her legs.

Panting heavily, I stared down at the absolute mess I'd made. The sight alone was breathtaking, enough to make me sigh in deep, content relief.

But before I could even recover, Isiliraiellyn seized the moment. She moved closer, her body swaying with temptation, her lips curling into a sultry smile. She seduced me so easily—and of course, I ended up fucking her too.

And so, the days leading up to summer vacation blurred into one endless haze of sex. I lost myself in the bodies around me, fucking whoever I could until my mind couldn't tell one day from the next.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, summer vacation had arrived.

There was still joint training scheduled, something meant to sharpen us further, something said to be beneficial in the long run. But I wasn't interested. I made my excuse that I have a poor health—and stayed out of it.

I couldn't waste this chance. The Empire awaited, and with it, the plan Solaris, Artemis, and I had laid out. I couldn't afford to disappoint them—not now and not when everything was at stake.

It was time to move forward.

The invasion would take about a week before it bore fruit. But that, as always, is a story for another time.

Leonora's POV

The Empire was alive, its streets overflowing with activity, its people loud, vibrant, and restless. For all its militaristic pride, it wasn't so different from other nations. Life still flourished here. People still sought their joys, their little moments of pleasure and fun, even in the shadows of soldiers marching down the streets.

I walked down a narrow, dimly lit alley, the echoes of the crowd fading behind me. The air was heavy, damp, filled with the faint smell of smoke and steel. Then, without warning, someone appeared.

It was sudden—so sudden I hadn't even sensed it. No footsteps. No aura. There was absolutely nothing. It was like the person didn't exist until the moment they stood there before me.

"You're certainly skilled at sneak attacks, James," I said calmly, turning my head toward the man behind me.

He was dressed in a sharp suit, his lips curled into a smile that carried a strange weight—something sly and something dangerous.

"How's the Emperor?" he asked, voice smooth.

"So-so, I guess," I replied with a shrug, not breaking eye contact.

Chapter 909: Empire Of Rodonia (1)

"I see..." James replied with that cryptic smile of his.

That smile. I swear, even now, it lingers in my head like a carved brand that refuses to fade away. It wasn't just an ordinary smile... it was sharp and cutting, like the edge of a blade held against the throat. A smile that felt unnatural, wrong, yet perfectly controlled. To anyone else it might've looked harmless, maybe even charming. But to me? It was the kind of grin that reeked of danger. The kind of smile that belonged to someone who would burn the world down if it meant getting what they wanted. It wasn't the smile of a friend, nor even of an enemy—it was the smile of a demon in human skin, testing how much destruction he could cause before anyone dared to stop him.

"Well," he continued, the corner of his lips never faltering, "I guess that sounds really promising. If he's doing good, then I suppose there's no need for me to worry."

The way he said it, though, was anything but comforting. His words carried a casual tone, but behind them there was that low, almost mocking undertone, like he already knew the ending of a story I hadn't even begun reading.

I narrowed my eyes. "You came here to meet me personally... just to say that?"

The question left my lips sharper than I intended. But really—what other reaction could I have? James had dragged me out to this desolate, forgotten part of the Empire. There was no people here at all and there was no witnesses. Only the dry sand that was still hot beneath our feet with the dead wind cutting across the alley, and the silence stretching between us like a taut rope ready to snap. For him to go this far, to choose here of all places, just to ask if the Emperor was fine? That was far too suspicious to brush off.

James tilted his head slightly, as if amused at my skepticism. The moonlight, weak as it was, caught in his dark eyes, making them gleam with something unreadable.

"Well," he said smoothly, his voice carrying just enough weight to feel intentional, "I came here with a warning as well."

His eyes locked onto mine, unblinking, and for a brief moment it felt like the entire place around us quieted further, as if even the air itself was holding its breath. And in that gaze, I caught something—an intensity, a glimmer of knowledge, maybe even danger—that pressed against me like an invisible hand.

"Christopher Faust is planning to come here sometime this summer, am I right?"

I blinked, momentarily thrown off. "Christopher Faust? Ah, you mean the owner of Leonamon. I did hear the officials and ministers talking about that, but I didn't exactly expect to hear it confirmed from the Emperor's own mouth."

James chuckled lightly, but it wasn't out of humor. It was more like a confirmation, like he'd expected my answer.

"Well," he said, "the Emperor doesn't always know the ins and outs of every official's schemes and what they're trying to implement. Christopher Faust isn't coming here for the Emperor, but for the officials. Three of them, to be exact. They're planning to ask him for business opportunities—to expand their own ventures—and more importantly, they want to buy some of the blueprints of the products he's monopolized these past few years."

I felt my brows furrow. "I see..."

The words slipped out quietly, more to myself than to him. My mind wandered, tracing old threads of thought.

There were indeed three businessmen in the Empire who thrived off commerce, who treated the market like their personal battlefield. But when the Leonamon company had erupted into existence, their paths to glory were suddenly blocked with their profits swallowed up by the overwhelming wave of Faust's innovations. Leonamon's sudden boom had crippled their chances to flourish, no matter how much money or influence they threw into the mix.

That desperation had led to underhanded tricks. I'd heard the whispers that thieves slips into Leonamon facilities as well as assassins lurks in the shadows of it with all hoping to uncover the secrets behind their technology. But none of it had worked. Faust's empire was impenetrable. His security was ironclad, built with paranoia and precision, making it nearly impossible to breach.

"Well," I finally said, shaking my head at the absurdity of it all, "it's certainly amusing that they're going about this in such roundabout ways. They could've just waited a few more years. Once the Empire strikes the Milham Kingdom, they'd get the items and blueprints easily, after Leonamon was crushed under the imperial army's boot. But no... I suppose those people are far too impatient for that."

James let out a low laugh, one that made my skin prickle. "Being impatient is only natural when it comes to money. That's the very reason business exists at all. If money isn't involved, people don't bother. They won't work, won't build, and won't create. Greed is the fuel, and impatience is the fire."

His words hung in the air, heavy but not untrue. I hated to admit it, but he wasn't wrong. People craved money. Always had. Always would. Everything else—like loyalty, honor, even survival—came second.

"And so?" I asked, my voice cutting through his philosophy. "Why are you telling me this?"

James's smile widened just a fraction, and somehow that tiny change made it far more sinister. He leaned slightly forward, lowering his tone just enough to make the air between us feel suffocating.

"Well," he said, "I think you've been assuming it's perfectly normal for someone like Christopher Faust to step into the limelight like this. But think about it—he's traveling to another country, not to meet its ruler, but its officials. And he's doing this while sitting atop an empire of his own, larger than almost anything else in the world. Doesn't that strike you as suspicious? I can't shake the feeling that there's a hidden agenda here."

Chapter 910: Empire Of Rodonia (2)

His words made the back of my neck tingle.

"Oh? So you're saying he didn't accept the invite for profit, but for something else?"

"Exactly." James's tone was sharp now, his smile unwavering. "Christopher Faust is already a king in all but title, thanks to his wealth. He doesn't need their money. He doesn't need their approval. And besides—have you ever seen him make public appearances? He doesn't. He always sends his maid to represent him. He avoids the public more than a king avoids war. If someone like that suddenly goes out of his way to a foreign country... shouldn't you be concerned?"

I exhaled slowly, the weight of his words sinking in. "Well... if you put it that way, then yes. I suppose it is a cause for concern."

James's gaze hardened, his smile never faltering. "You must absolutely watch him. You are his sister. Make sure you know what he's planning."

The word sister made something in me twist.

It wasn't a secret anymore—not to me and not to James—who Christopher Faust really was. He was none other than Leon. A fragment of Lilith, split from the original just as I was, along with four others. That was the only bond we shared. Calling me his sister was misleading. We weren't family. We weren't allies. We weren't anything.

"I'm not his sister," I said flatly.

James tilted his head, studying me with that same maddening calm. "Well, the two of you certainly look alike," he said. "But you already know what he's capable of."

"Right," I admitted. "But he doesn't know what I can do."

Although Leon had been born with a much more powerful ability, one inherited from Lilith herself which was her most powerful ability, I wasn't afraid. I refused to believe I could be defeated so easily. Because I had something he didn't. I had the mind, and I was certain that I have the sharpest edge of all the fragments. I was confident—no, certain—that out of all of us, I was the smartest.

And in this game, intelligence was the weapon that mattered most.

Leon's POV

The invasion was so smooth it almost felt unreal. Every step we took, every move we made—it all slid into place as if the Empire itself hadn't even noticed we slipped under its skin. It wasn't chaotic, it wasn't messy—it was clean, fluid, almost too easy. Honestly, it went so perfectly that I caught myself thinking, hell, even a toddler could've done this if they just followed the plan. That was how simple it turned out to be.

But really, the Empire made it easy for us. The heat here wasn't just hot—it was suffocating, the kind of sweltering air that clung to your body, seeped into your lungs, and made your skin feel like it was cooking under the sun's fire. You couldn't survive here without wrapping yourself up head to toe, shielding your skin from the sun's wrath. And because of that, people walking the streets looked more like bundles of cloth than human beings. That single custom—that survival instinct—was the key to our infiltration.

I didn't even have to try too hard. I already had an invitation in my hands, which made the whole thing laughably easy. There was no need for elaborate disguises and no sneaking in shadows for me. All I had to do was change my hair, and suddenly, I was just another face lost in the crowd. The others, though, had to work harder. They slipped in through the route Artemis had prepared, every inch of their bodies wrapped in heavy layers to conceal their pointed elven ears. In this place, a single exposed detail could mean death.

And so, the first part of our mission was complete. Infiltration: successful. Now came the next step, and it was far heavier and that was the creation of the base of operations. We had two long, burning months of summer ahead of us, and in that time, our mission was clear. We were here to free the elves who had been dragged into chains, stripped of their freedom, and forced into slavery.

That was the heart of it. But we weren't blind. We knew there were others here too, not just elves. And if fate allowed it, if chances fell into our hands, we would save them as well. Human, demi-human, anyone. But still, we had to be careful. We couldn't just storm in and break chains left and right like some heroes in a fairy tale. The Empire wasn't weak. It was strong, armored, and heavily guarded. It was a machine built for war, and we were ants crawling through its gears. Thinking we could take on the entire structure at once? That wasn't bravery—that was insanity.

Even just slipping inside its walls had been bold, reckless even. To go further than that? To try and break the foundation of their system? That would require a plan without a single mistake. One flaw, one slip, one overlooked detail could doom us all. And in a place crawling with soldiers, filled with spies, and thick with politics, perfection wasn't realistic. There was too many variables and too many moving pieces.

Even if the Empire wasn't

a militaristic powerhouse—even if it were just a soft, unsuspecting country—trying to save every slave would still be an absurdly bold move. That was the weight of what we were facing.

"Which is why I'm drawing up the plan myself," Clarett's voice carried through the phone pressed to my ear.

She was far away, sitting on her chair back at the Kingdom of Elves, but her tone carried the same sharpness as if she were right beside me. Clarett wasn't just good at strategy—she was a natural, someone whose mind spun webs of logic and foresight with ease. It was only natural she'd stay behind, away from the field, where her head could stay clear, where her eyes could see the whole board.

"I'll compose the plan for us," she said, steady and precise. "So update me with everything that happens there. Don't leave out a single detail."

"Roger," I answered without hesitation.

But even as I listened, there was something else I couldn't ignore. The sound of her breathing. It wasn't steady—it was heavy, ragged, filling the silence between her words. It made me pause, frowning, wondering what the hell she was doing on her end of the line. She didn't explain, and I didn't ask, but the sound clung to my ears even after the call ended.

I slipped the phone away and turned. Beside me was Aegis.

She had been adamant about it, refusing the idea of staying back, rejecting the role of a mere backup. So she had insisted—demanded, actually—that she would infiltrate directly, right at my side. And now, here she was, clearly regretting at least one part of it.

"Ugh... why am I wearing such breezy clothing?" she groaned, tugging at the thin fabric and glaring down at herself as though the outfit had personally offended her.

I couldn't help but grin, amusement tugging at my lips. "Well, I can't exactly let you hide your beauty, can I? This is the Empire. Customs here are different. A woman's considered well-loved by her man if her skin looks healthy and radiant. And you—" my gaze trailed over her, catching the golden hue where the sun had kissed her skin, "you might be slightly tanned, but that only adds to it. It's still healthy and still beautiful. Perfect for the role you're playing. Since you're going to be my lover for the rest of this mission, it's only natural that I, as the owner of Leonamon, make sure you look the part. Letting you cover yourself head to toe would make me look careless, even unworthy."

Her glare sharpened, eyes burning into me like knives. "I don't want to be well-loved by you," she snapped, her voice as sharp as her stare.

I only shrugged, unfazed. "Well, this is the setting you chose, isn't it? So naturally, you've got to commit to it. Play your part. Be lovey-dovey with me, like you mean it."

Her jaw tightened. I could hear her teeth grinding together in frustration, see the tension in her shoulders as she fought against the idea. She hated it—every word as well as every implication. But still, she wasn't walking away. She wasn't backing out. Even if it burned her pride, she was going to play along.

And watching her bristle like that, cheeks faintly flushed, biting down her protests just to stay on track... I couldn't lie. It was ridiculously cute.