

The Ace at the Apex

Chapter 154 Who Are You?

Since there was still some time left after they had dinner, Javier brought Chessie over to Jonah's house.

When they arrived downstairs, Faye was instructed to wait in the car while Javier took Chessie upstairs and knocked on Jonah's door.

Jonah was listening to some oldies and humming in delight, which seemed like a pretty decent hobby.

After exchanging some formalities with him, Javier got to the point of his visit that day and said, "Samuel has fallen, Jonah."

Jonah nodded his head. "So I've heard. An old friend of mine gave me a phone call today and said that the police have sealed off Sammy-Blue Inc. from the public."

This was as much as the public would know about what had happened, as the FBI would never reveal what had actually happened.

Javier took out the evidence that he had made a photocopy of long ago before handing it to Jonah.

When Jonah read through every single crime that Samuel had committed, he was so furious that his veins bulged out.

After he was done reading through everything, he sat on the sofa and slammed the table with his fist. *D* mn it! Dämnn me to hell!"

Jonah had never thought that his small act of kindness in the past, the young man that he had adopted, would end up becoming an extremely evil person.

This man had done all sorts of things and harmed so many people that Jonah, the man who had adopted him, could not help but feel that he was the one who had caused it all.

Javier gently patted Jonah on the back, not wanting him to feel too agitated about the matter.

"What you did in the past was definitely out of the kindness of your heart, and everything that Samuel did after that had nothing to do with you, so there's no need for you to blame yourself.

"Plus, I think you should reunite with your old friends and subordinates and locate your best friend's children, who were once held hostage by Samuel. I'm sure they've gone through a lot over the past few years."

Jonah, who was a man who valued relationships the most, immediately nodded when he heard this.

"Yes, of course! Of course I will do that!"

Jonah slowly calmed down after working through his thoughts and turned toward Javier and Chessie once more.

"I know you. You're Chessie. I heard from a few old friends of mine in our circle that you're a pretty decent woman."

Chessie politely smiled and replied, "I'm nothing of the sort. On the contrary, I've been hearing a lot of things about how reputable you were when you were still in the circle. I never had the chance to come here and visit you, but thanks to Javier, I finally have, albeit a little suddenly."

Jonah waved his hand. "Please, there's no need for you to be so humble.

"You've done a pretty good job managing the territories you've taken over. I can say for certain that the older generation is pleased with how you've been doing things based on our past ways. You're neither involved in drugs nor forcing women into anything, so I'm very pleased about that."

After saying that, Jonah turned to look at Javier.

"I understand why you brought her here today. Don't worry, so long as those old friends of mine still respect me, I'll make sure that they give her their support, so you'll be able to take over the territories that have just been left leaderless."

Jonah was intelligent and sharp enough to instantly see through Javier's purpose for visiting him that night. On top of that, he very readily agreed to help.

However, after saying that, he turned to Chessie and said, "There's one problem, though. We won't be able to do this right now.

"Thanks to how huge of a mess Samuel has made, I'm sure the FBI will definitely work hand in hand with the local authorities to investigate him. Anyone who tries to grab his territory right now will be getting into deep sh*t themselves, so you mustn't reach out for the time being. Of course, I'm not trying to stop you so that I can claim the territory for myself. It's mainly because..."

Chessie hurriedly shook her head before Jonah could even finish. "Of course not, Jonah! I would never misunderstand you because I know you're coming from a good place. Javier has already analyzed everything you just told me a while back, so I know that whoever tries to grab Samuel's territory will be causing themselves trouble."

Jonah was slightly startled for a moment before he turned to look at Javier.

After five to six seconds, he said, "I actually believe that this little fox was able to analyze what's going to happen. He's already revealed to me through his chess skills that he's a man who wouldn't hesitate to resort to underhanded methods so long as they helped him achieve his objective!"

Javier could not help but feel slightly embarrassed after being called a man who would do anything to achieve his goal, so he just smiled, not knowing what to say.

However, Jonah then said, "You've played your cards very well by taking them all down in one fell swoop with the help of the country's authorities. This way, you'll be able to take over their territories effortlessly when this is all over.

e comes. I'll have my old friends help you both take over. Victory will be in the bag!"

Jonah was a veteran within their circle who viewed promises as a sacred thing, which was why Javier knew he was definitely going to make good on his promise.

Chessie, on the other hand, felt very thankful and went over to shake Jonah's hand. "Thank you, Jonah."

Jonah gave her a kind smile and told Chessie that it was nothing.

"I've actually been paying attention to what you've been doing for a while. Others have told me that you do things like in the olden days and consider promises sacred, which is very rare nowadays. At the moment, our circle is a complete mess full of drug dealers and other people that are harming both our country and its citizens, all because some people are greedy for money. As a result, our circle has become lawless.

"I hope that you'll be able to take over and clean up this mess. I want you to help us get rid of all the filth in our circle."

It was obvious through Jonah's words that he was placing a lot of hope on Chessie and he was expecting great things from her.

This was made even more obvious by his next statement...

"If only I had a daughter who was as competent as you are... Sigh!"

Javier winked at Chessie, and the latter instantly understood what he meant.

Actually, Chessie had already intended to do this even before Javier had given her the signal.

"Jonah, I've also always known you to be a very decent member of your generation who definitely considers promises very sacred. I know that you will never do anything that might harm the relationship you have with your men. In fact, you've been my idol for the longest time and I've always strived to act the same way you have in the past.

"So, if you don't mind, I'd like to be your goddaughter. You don't need to feel sad about what happened with Samuel anymore. I'll take care of you instead. I'll also help you fulfill your dream of seeing the streets cleaned of all this filth."

Jonah instantly felt so overjoyed that he could not even close his mouth.

Now that he had lost a useless son, he had gained the ideal daughter in return, and nothing could be better than that...

Javier and Chessie finally left the house after 10 p.m..

Jonah insisted on escorting them downstairs, but Javier politely rejected him. As a result, he got hit with a scornful retort by the old man.

"I'm seeing my goddaughter off, not you! Step aside!"

Javier felt speechless and embarrassed.

However, he then thought this was indeed a good thing. Now that Jonah was going to help Chessie pave her way within the circle, her position and power would be solidified.

After bidding the old man farewell with Chessie, Javier drove in the front with Faye following behind, all of them heading to the hotel nearby.

On the way, Javier looked at Chessie and asked, "What do you think of Jonah?"

Chessie nodded. "I think he's a pretty nice man with a very straightforward personality. He values relationships very much and lives by his own rules, which is a very typical trait for a man of the older generation."

Javier acknowledged this. "That's good. He'll be able to help you a lot from now on, which will reduce the effort you'll have to make marginally."

Chessie seemed slightly tired as she reclined in her seat and lay down. Then, she turned to look at Javier.

"Tell me the truth. Who are you?"

Javier could not help feeling slightly startled when he was suddenly asked that question. "What do you mean?"

"Do you really have nothing you want to say considering how awesome you are?"

Javier suddenly came back to his senses and understood what Chessie meant.

Thus, with a straight face, he replied, "Of course I do. Whether I'm an awesome man or not solely depends on whether the woman I'm dealing with is beautiful or not. Considering how beautiful you are, I'll make

sure I remain awesome every night to guarantee you'll want to come back for more." Looking embarrassed, Chessie said, "I wasn't referring to that..."

Chapter 155 An Extremely Busy Person

Of course, Javier knew what Chessie was really trying to ask. However, when he saw how beautiful and enticing the woman lying next to him was, he could not help becoming a little flirty.

Then, he said, "I'm actually a..."

Just as Javier was about to say something, Chessie reached out with her finger to silence him, refusing to allow Javier to continue.

*It's alright. You don't have to say anything. It doesn't matter who you are. You still won't be able to stop my urge to pay you 95 dollars."

Javier felt that this urge of hers was really good and deserved praise!

Thus, he sped up and rushed the rest of the way to the hotel.

The moment they both entered their room, it was already guaranteed that they were going to have a very intense "battle" over those 95 dollars...

Three months passed in the blink of an eye. Sure enough, the FBI and the police worked together to apprehend a whole group of people.

A few sting operations to remove some underworld forces had taken place, and almost half of the scumbags within the circle had been wiped out.

During those three months, Chessie did not make a move at all and just lay low of her own accord, which caused the others to feel even more overjoyed, as they had one less competitor to fight with in order to conquer those territories.

In the end, everyone who so much as tried to have a hand in the matter ended up being caught without fail.

After the storm was finally over, Jonah resurfaced in the circle and fully endorsed Chessie, his goddaughter, thus helping her rise.

A lot of the people left from the older generation had the same personality as Jonah. On top of that, they were all past the age when one would try and make a name for themselves, which was why they supported Jonah's endorsement. As a result, none of them fought for the territories with Chessie or caused any problems.

As a result, Chessie was able to claim the territories with great ease and become the most powerful force within the entire state. In fact, it was effortless.

However, on her second day in power, she was called up by the relevant leaders of the state office for a chat.

The chat was actually more of a warning, or to be more accurate, a trade that would not be put on paper.

"The underworld society has existed for the longest time, and it's impossible to wipe it out completely. It was not in the past, it's not now, and it will not be in the future.

"So, rather than trying to remove it, we've come to terms with it and managed it. Since you're now the newest person in charge, I want you to make sure that your forces are well-governed.

"I want you to manage those that you can and stay out of anything that you must never try and grab a hold

1. So long as you ensure your people stay in their lane, we won't cause you any trouble.

"If a foreign force tried to invade our country, it wouldn't be convenient for us to try and interfere. However, I want you all to look into it, as you must know how to show your love for your country."

Of course, Chessie agreed to whatever had been said. She could choose to refuse, but she would undoubtedly end up being wiped out.

After all, no one in their right mind would dare go up against the country itself, who could very easily crush them to smithereens.

Besides, this leader was not asking for much. In fact, it was something that older generations would definitely do on a daily basis.

Thus, Chessie very readily agreed to the request. "So long as our country is involved, I'd even be willing to put my neck on the line if necessary!"

Chessie had given the leader a very firm and powerful assurance, which was why he ended up having a pretty good impression of this newly-appointed person in charge and influencing the entire state in her favor.

Now that Chessie was in control of such a huge force, she became extremely busy.

On the other hand, Javier ended up having quite a lot of free time on his hands. His company was developing very smoothly, and there was nothing he needed to be worried about since he had Chad to help

The mercenaries back in Hyliveskia were also doing pretty well for themselves, growing into a force to be reckoned with under Levi and Gabby's leadership.

However, there was something that Javier could not get out of his mind... National Day was right around the corner.

'The old fox will always be on Glenstock Square that day to see our national flag being raised, so I'm sure he'll be there this year as well.

'Looks like I'm going to have to head to Medb that day. Then, I'll meet up with the rich kids from powerful families who live there.'

Just as Javier stood by the window and pondered this, he suddenly saw a Ferrari arriving at his company building with an Alphard following it.

Then, the cars stopped and a woman with sunglasses got out of the Alphard.

Meanwhile, a man with sunglasses got out of the glaringly red Ferrari. 'Those two seem really familiar!'

Chapter 156 A Picture With You, Starshine!

The man in the Ferrari took his shades off, and Javier instantly recognized him. It was none other than Luca Pangani-the bigshot from the Easton Group who had nonetheless been skewered pretty blisteringly by Javier before in Xerxes Village.

As for the young woman he had managed to woo over this time, it was not hard to guess who she was: Edelgard Weiss. Still, the fact that she had followed Luca here surprised Javier. He had thought he would never cross paths with Edelgard again. Who knew she would come to him herself this time?

While he was pondering this, the door to his office creaked open, revealing Jade, who strode right in." Honey, your darling Edie has come to see you! Oh, Luca's here too."

That night in Xerxes Village, when Javier and Edelgard had had sex accidentally, was not something Jade had missed, which was why Javier could taste the jealousy dripping from the corner of her lips even if he did not look for it.

He stepped forward and pulled Jade-black, form-fitting undershirt and everything-into a face-to-face cuddle. "Oh, did I hear right? You sound jealous! Worried that I might do Edelgard again, are you? Well, if you're that concerned, we could have a quickie or two right now. Drain me off my strength and desire and leave her nothing but a husk even if she has an itch. Sound good?"

Jade struggled out of his arms and snapped at him sheepishly, "God, you're a freak!"

Even she was not sure what exactly had come over her. Now, every time she thought of sex with Javier or anything related to it, she'd automatically feel a surge of flaming thrill coursing through her veins. Javier might be right; Jade's body might have fallen in love with that intoxicating high...

"Okay, that's enough fooling around. I'm here to talk business!" Jade said as she smoothed down and tidied up her clothes. "Edelgard has a product promotion and a meet-n-greet session with her fans, and she told me this morning that she decided to let our company host them."

Javier understood. He knew the girl would not have come here without a good reason.

A few moments later, Edelgard appeared in Reivaj Group's building. She was greeted with enthusiastic fanfare, as employees flocked toward her to get a picture with her and greet her.

"What's with the commotion? Celebrities are just people. Is this even necessary? I soooo don't get it," Jade murmured in an undertone.

Javier flashed her a smile. "It's all because of an inferiority complex. When they see someone who is miles better than them, people don't harbor jealousy. Instead, they become subservient and they're ready to ingratiate themselves. It's a slavish mindset, you know what I mean? And then when it's over, they release all that jealousy they actually felt in their social circle and make others feel jealous of them so that they can feel pleased with themselves."

Jade thought about it. It seemed to make sense! Still, she was perplexed by something else. "Why does it seem like you know everything?"

Javier leaned close to her ear, as though he had a secret to tell, and whispered, "Oh, I know everything. I even know where that sweet spot that makes you go wild is!"

Jade's face flushed bright pink. Javier had been such a beast last night that she had wetted herself very hard. She could not even stop herself from soiling a good portion of their bed. Just thinking about it right now embarrassed her so much that she could die.

She punched Javier as hard as she could to express her sentiment before doing her best to feint a neutral face, hoping that she could banish the flaming pink color on her cheeks.

Edelgard finally broke away from the horde encircling her and approached Javier and Jade to say hello. "The company's way more enthusiastic than I thought about my arrival," she said blithely. "Made me realize that choosing to work with your company was the right call! I even thought that was the meet-n-greet."

Javier grinned. "You spoke too soon. You haven't even met a real fan yet."

Edelgard was puzzled. Heck, even Jade was mystified. When he knocked on Mary Jane's office and showed the actress in the older woman inside yelped and bolted out of the door, throwing her arms around Edelgard.

“Oh. My. Gooooood! I caught her! I caught the Imperial Princess of Hresvelg alive! My eyes have always been on you in that historical fantasy drama, but I swear to the Lord, you’re even more beautiful in person! Look at that doll-like little face and those cute little hands! Oh my god!”

Fortunately for the actress, Mary Jane was a woman. A man with her passion would have horrified Edelgard. Still, a female fan at such an...uncommonly advanced age being gushy and excited to see her embarrassed her enough. “Uh, yeah, m-m-ma’am! I’m definitely alive... Totally.”

Mary Jane finally realized she had gone a little overboard and let go instantly. “Oh, sorry! Pardon my enthusiasm, please. I’ve watched so many of your shows but I’ve never met you in person because I’m always busy. Today is my lucky day! I finally got to see you in person! Come on, let’s take a picture, starshine!”

‘Starshine?’ Now, that was a term of endearment only a woman her age would use!

“This is Mary Jane Gould, our CFO,” Javier explained to a somewhat embarrassed Edelgard. “Luca knows her pretty well.”

Of course Luca knew who she was. Mary Jane had been Easter Group’s esteemed CEO. Then, one day, she had quit and the company had not seen her again.

At least the mystery was solved today: Javier had poached her into joining his team. And he had made her settle for the less distinguished position of the chief financial officer, no less!

Either way, Luca was not going to show any signs of discontent. He remembered just how excited his father had been about Javier back in Xerxes Village. He had not even chastised him for his high-rolling spending. Instead, he had seemed overjoyed.

Luca had managed to find out almost everything about Javier and his exploits through his father’s comments and remarks, and Luca’s conclusion was that Javier was a straight-up example of a “gigachad.” Hell, he was so much of a gigachad that Luca knew better than to offend him, especially since even his old man behaved himself when Javier was around.

This was why hearing Javier mention him by name made him feel very happy. Smiling, Luca stepped forward and greeted him. “My man! Long time no see!”

He sounded as though the two of them were close friends with a history that went way back.

Javier, for his part, had gotten accustomed to people trying to get close to him and exaggerating their connection to him. Besides, since his father was already one of his family’s employees and therefore his inferior, there was little reason for him to linger on Luca’s word choice and attitude,

After everyone introduced themselves briefly, Luca told Edelgard about Mary Jane’s sterling achievements in finance. This shocked her, as she had been under the impression that the older woman was a senior fan. But she was more than the average senior citizen-she was a leviathan in the world of finance. Despite her harmless appearance, she could kill anyone she liked.

Of course, it all ended up strengthening the awe and admiration Javier’s awesomeness inspired in Edelgard. He was so powerful that he could make a titan work for him and his company. Wow, what a king!

“Alright. Let’s head to Jade’s office to talk,” Javier said, beckoning to the actress,

Mary Jane did not stay for long before getting back to work. After asking for two pictures and an autograph, she left. She only asked for these things because she genuinely liked her work and less because she wanted to show off to her friends. Honestly, Edelgard was not worth mentioning to her friends....

Javier, Jade, Edelgard, and Luca were left alone in the office. He encouraged them to take a seat and began making coffee, which made Luca jump and cry out, “Oh, allow me, Javier! Let me.”

How could he be served a cup of coffee by someone so high above him that even his father was deemed unworthy of his service? Luca would never!

Javier patted Luca on his shoulders. “No, you’re a guest now. Sit down.”

Edelgard was stunned. Luca had been an arrogant pr*ck for as long as she had known him. Javier might have taught him a lesson before, but was that enough to tame someone with Luca’s ego into...this? Look at him! He was acting like an obedient schoolboy. Who could have thought?!

When the coffee was ready, they began to talk about the meet-n-greet. After mentioning the usual terms and preparation, Edelgard brought up a less related incident, “For some reason, I think someone has been undermining me in secret lately.”

Chapter 157 You Think You’re Some Bigshot?

Word from Edelgard was that she was somehow getting negative coverage for no apparent reason. She felt that she was being targeted by a rather incessant hater, as the internet was filled with all kinds of anti -Edelgard sentiments. A lot of the hate and slander was just senseless, but it was pervasive enough that she was worried it might cause some trouble at the meet-n-greet.

Jade was confident in their ability to tackle this. “Don’t worry about this. We won’t let anything like that happen. We’ve hosted similar events before in the past, so we know enough to focus on security and all other aspects. We’ll also exercise tight control over what kind of media will be present. In particular, all private citizen media will be banned from attending the events

Hearing Jade explicitly singling out private citizen media was a relief. It was exactly what Edelgard had been thinking. Private citizen media had the tendency to be unregulated and without standards despite enjoying a massive following on the web. Once private citizen media ganged up for a common cause, they became an army of locusts capable of descending upon any field and ravaging it like a plague. Their power was truly unruly.

Seeing Jade mention them explicitly had given her another window into Reivaj Group’s professionalism. It was beginning to seem like a good call that she had made her choice based on him being her old friend.

Edelgard turned to look at a grinning Javier, and her mind drifted to the night when she had lost her virginity. Heat pooled on her cheeks, and she was not sure if seeing her “old friend” was the trigger or something else entirely

Once her manager spoke to the company's representative, Edelgard left with Luca. Jade waited until the two walked away before looking at Javier and pointing out, "Did you see that? I think...I think Edelgard's face turned a little red."

Javier replied in shock, "Did it? I didn't notice at all I was looking at your silk pantyhose."

He bent and began running his finger across Jade's translucent pantyhose until he grazed her thigh. "Looky-here! Looks like the thread has been pulled apart a little around here. Boo, it's ruining your look."

Jade glanced down at it. He was right. She was not even sure when that had happened.

She reeled back from the comment and murmured, "Hey, I was talking about Edelgard here! Why did you even bring up my pantyhose?"

"Because my wife's too sexy for me to notice another woman," Javier replied matter-of-factly.

Jade shot him a glare and kicked him out of the office, as if letting him stay in the office any longer could result in him doing the hanky-panky with her.

Once she closed the door to the office, though, Jade let her joy out. God, she felt really good! Javier had been watching her instead of Edelgard! That made her feel like she had beaten a celebrity at attracting a man's eyes!

Javier heaved a breath of relief and tossed a paperclip into the trash. Unsurprisingly, the tear in Jade's pantyhose had not appeared out of nowhere. He had done it because he'd needed to distract Jade.

Even if a woman said she did not mind her beau's other exploits, seeing another one would still provoke a little of her ire. That was why he had to come up with ways to show Jade that even ten Edelgards could not rival her.

As for the blush on Edelgard's cheeks-well, how could Javier not notice that?

Night fell.

Javier and Jade had decided to host a dinner for Edelgard and Luca in the name of their friendship and clientele. They had reserved a private room in the restaurant where the four began to catch up and talk about Xerxes Village's progress.

Dinner was pleasant, and Javier was behaving himself too. He had not been doing anything suggestive with Edelgard under the table.

The food had just been served when Luca received a call.

"Yeah, yeah. I'm here. Came in the afternoon. What? No way! You're here too? What a coincidence!"

Judging from the pieces of Luca's answer that they heard, it seemed likely that one of his friends was in the same city. Whoever they were, they also invited Luca to dinner.

"Sorry, man. I'm already in the middle of dinner with another friend. You wanna join us?"

Some people had no problem joining a stranger's table, and not all of them simply wanted to get some free food. They might just like making friends. Javier was certainly not averse to such people, so he placed another set of utensils on an empty seat.

"Your friend's welcome to join us," he said.

Hearing the okay from Javier massively inflated Luca's sense of being seen. He quickly sent the address to his friend.

"The name's Thorin Gerard. His family is into coal mining in Westmount, but he's been making his mark in Medb in the past few years."

Javier smiled and said nothing. It mattered very little to him if his family did business in Westmont or mined gold in Nuggetful Mountain. The only thing Javier cared about when it came to making friends was how much their vibes matched. If he had to use their wealth as a yardstick...well, he would have ended up with no friends because everyone else was just too damn poor.

Some time after the food was served, Luca's friend showed up. One could immediately spot his gold-dyed, spiky pompadour and the smoky makeup before they noticed his horrible fashion sense. Thorin Gerard looked like a freak.

As the man made his way toward them, Edelgard complained under her breath. "God, what is the deal with your friend over there?"

Luca was embarrassed. Before he could explain anything, Thorin had joined their table. He waved at Luca and greeted him in a voice that attracted attention. "Yo, Luca, my man!"

He plopped down on his chair and turned to Edelgard, flashing his diamond-studded teeth as he grinned. "Good evening to you, Miss Popularity. You know how much effort it took our homie to pull you into his arms and kiss you?"

Edelgard ignored him, a fact Thorin took in stride. Unfazed, he turned to Jade.

He was entranced. Jade was so bloody gorgeous that she made Thorin forget to breathe. He gawked at her in a daze for more than 10 seconds before he finally recovered and gasped. "Sh*t, you're gorgeous!"

Jade would not respond to guys like him. She conspicuously dragged her chair closer to Javier and snaked her arms around his arm. It was a palpable, unmistakable statement: 'I'm a married woman and I don't accept anything from other guys. Nope, not even compliments.' 1

Thorin, for some reason, was blind to it all. He excitedly extended his hand toward Jade, as though hoping she would shake it, and exclaimed, "Good evening, beautiful! I'm Thorin Gerard-oh yeah, you heard right! Thorin means thunder, just like the god of thunder! And Gerard means spear-hard! Put them together and you'll get a hunk like the god of thunder with a super-hard spear, if you know what I mean!" 1

Jade eschewed sparing Thorin even a scornful snicker and turned away from him. The only reason she had not leaped to her feet and stormed away yet was because she wanted to save Edelgard and Luca's dignity

If she were to be frank, though, she would have railed against whatever-the-hell this newcomer was trying to be. That offensive fashion sense and those diamond-studded teeth? Really? What kind of trash was this!

Thorin was about to continue his self-introduction when Luca grabbed a crab from a nearby dish and shoved it into his mouth. "Didn't you say you're here to eat, man? So eat! Otherwise, shut up, man. This is my homie Javier, and that is his wife Jade. How about you show some manners like a grown-up instead of letting your mouth run without a filter again?"

"Javier? Who's that? I don't remember this Javier fella being in the gang. How high on the ranking is he supposed to be?" Thorin asked, his gaze turning slightly more careful as he studied Javier.

Javier chuckled, "I'm not in the Medb circle, man. Too inferior to be a member of your part of society."

Luca knew exactly what he was implying. Javier thought they were a bunch of bottom-feeding beggars, whose gang was so far below his pedigree that he couldn't care less about them.

Thorin, though, understood none of that. The information that stood out to him was the fact that Javier did not belong to his circle in Medb.

He let out a snicker. "Oh, I see! Then how are you supposed to be Luca's homie? You don't even look the part. Seriously, y'all expect me to behave myself as if some bigshot's sitting with us when all we have here is this nobody?"

Chapter 158 Quite the Ego There, Pal

Thorin's brazen putdown made Luca's mien change.

Luca's father had always looked down on the "gang" Thorin was currently bragging and being so smug about. His old man had always thought they were below his standards. And then there was Javier, who had dismissed Luca's father because high and mighty Mr. Pangani was way below Javier's pedigree!

Now, under a hierarchy like this, Thorin was sneering at Javier as though he was his superior?! How insane could this guy get?

At this rate, he might as well strip himself naked before prowling around seedy streets to match the degree of his insanity!

Luca opened his mouth, ready to shoot Thorin down, but Javier put his hand up and stopped him.

The lack of opposition from Luca emboldened Thorin even more, and his rant became more and more uninhibited. "Listen, beautiful. A gorgeous sweetheart like yourself gotta make herself known in the entertainment industry, babe. You deserve to be standing in the spotlight, being showered by millions of compliments! You know, I've invested in a few rising stars myself before-and lemme tell you, these ladies were all new, complete nobodies back then, okay? Complete nobodies. I hired some big-name directors, pulled in some talented scriptwriters, and bing-bing-boom, they are now famous! Famous like never before! Rating-pulling babes!

"The movie I funded a while back was a national blockbuster hit too. I bet you've heard of it before. 'Doon? Ring a bell? I'm telling you folks, that movie smashed the box office with 11 million, okay? You know how much my investment was in comparison? 3 million! Would you believe that? From 3 million

to 11-that's 8 million in returns! After removing all the other costs and sh*t, I still have about 4.8 million in profit, okay? Oh, but get this! The lead actress? She won the Best Actress Seirous Award! That's an international accolade right there, folks!

"By the time she got back, boy were people flocking to make her their lead! They had to get in line!

"I also contacted this big-name director-Roman Polaski, you know? That guy is an international household name! The script is also top-notch, and right now, I'm scouting acting talent. I got my male lead, of course. Ever heard of Baelli Park? Famous Mannean actor right there! All we need is a female lead. We've got a world-class director and a phenomenal script, but we haven't found an actress with the grace and dignified aura to stun and bedazzle...until now, that is. You-You're perfect for the role. The air of dignity you give off and your flawless beauty! You're a marvelous candidate to consider!

"So, what do you say? If you're interested, we can arrange a casting audition somewhere. If the role seems to fit you, I'll cast you as the female lead right away! Worried about your acting? Naw, who gives a damn about acting nowadays? All we need to sell is good looks and a sexy, shapely body. Everything else doesn't mean jacksh*t!"

Luca was squirming in his seat. Thorin was there as his friend, and now his friend was humiliating him.

"Excuse me, but you're talking to my wife here." Javier suddenly spoke up. "Don't you think you're crossing a line by telling my wife all this right in front of me?"

"Crossing a line? Crossing a-ha!" Thorin scoffed. "Hey, listen here, homie. Yeah, I'll call you homie for Luca's sake. You think this is crossing a line? You ain't seen nothing yet. This is normal to me, man. This is the life I'm used to living-if you got the money, you earn the right to talk. You dirt poor? Shove it. That's

what I've been doing, smartass. I have the money, so I got to talk to her, and I speak frankly about whatever is in my head.

"You? You've got jacksh*t, so shut that trap up and listen to the man with the moolah. You don't like how this feels? Well, sucks to be you!"

Javier's mirth was bubbling. "Wow. Have you always been this good at conversations?"

Thorin's ego swelled. "What, getting triggered by the way I'm talking again, snowflake? Yeah, that's just who I am. I'll even be transparent about my agenda for your sake: I'm definitely trying to poach your wife from you right in your face. If you don't like it, then show me your money, slick. Let me see your bank account...if you have one. Come on, humiliate me and defend your slipping manhood in front of your wife. Go ahead!"

He was definitely feeling the high of his perceived superiority. Hell, this was a textbook example of hubris.

Javier sniggered. "Goddamn. You really like the smell of your own farts, don't you?"

Thorin sneered. "What am I supposed to do when my farts smell better than everyone else's cologne without even trying? No one's ever been able to top me anyway. God, sometimes I feel so tired of winning and being at the top."

He was insufferable. A totally insufferable piece of sh*t who was just begging for someone to rearrange his face. Before Javier could rise to the occasion, though, someone else made their move.

Luca grabbed hold of Thorin's hair and bashed his forehead against the table.

Bang!

The porcelain plate unfortunate enough to be in the vicinity was smashed into pieces.

But Luca was not finished. He grabbed a wine bottle and clubbed it against the back of Thorin's head. Bursting red wine ran down Thorin's matted hair, its crimson color masking the blood oozing out of his new gash.

As he was temporarily silenced, Thorin's head was lifted away from the desk by his hair. Holding the broken bottle's jagged edges close to him, Luca leaned into Thorin and snarled, "You show one more ounce of disrespect to Javier again and I'll make you swallow this broken bottle whole. Want to bet?!"

Luca's face was contorted. He looked exactly like the mafia-fearsome, intimidating, and badass at the same time.

Thorin slapped Luca's hand away from him. He pressed against the back of his head with his other hand before drawing it back out for his eyes to see.

Red, warm blood stained his palm, glaring back at him.

"Motherf*cker. Luca Pangini, you motherf*cking sh*tbag!" he growled. "You laid your motherf*cking hands on me over a backwater sucker, huh? Terrific. F*cking terrific!"

He leaped to his feet, looking apoplectic, and turned away from them. He then stormed off.

Luca watched him leave, his mouth half-open, as if forming a reply. In the end, though, he said nothing.

He turned back to Javier and lifted his wine cup. "I'm so sorry for that embarrassment, Javier. He's never had the best judgment. Here, this is my apology toast."

He drank his wine in one go.

Javier grinned, his eyes boring through Luca as though he was reading his mind. Luca was beginning to feel panic creeping into him.

"Nice save, Luca. Perfect timing," Javier remarked.

Luca felt a chill coursing through his spine.

He remembered what his father had said to him back at home. That he should put his life on the line for Javier's sake-figuratively and literally. 'Your sacrifice will be rewarded in ways you've never imagined before, boy. Provided you don't die due to that sacrifice, of course.'

However, instead of protecting Javier, Luca had rushed to shield his friend. All that thunder had been a pretense. His ulterior motive had been to save Thorin from an even worse punishment.

And Javier saw through his motive.

What kind of retribution would he suffer for this? Javier was the kind of warlord who would make a father sacrifice his son in exchange for a good relationship. How would someone like that react to the fact that his underling had stuck his neck out and engineered a ruse just to protect his friend?

Luca remembered how disgruntled he had been when his father had told him that. When he had asked his father what would happen if he was defiant, his old man had answered, 'If you ever cross that man... Boy, just end your life honorably before your family suffers his wrath.'

Luca had laughed back then, as it had sounded like a hyperbolic joke. But his father had not joined him.

Luca Pangani would not laugh now either. He had wised up enough to know that the truth was no joke. And now, after crossing Javier to protect his friend, Luca felt unprecedented fear.

"Look, Javier, 1—"

Javier waved dismissively. "No, no. It's over now. No offense taken," he said. "We'll replace our wasted red wine and carry on. Of course, you should still be punished for this, Luca. Your punishment is... paying for this meal."

In all honesty, Javier was too rich to worry about the cost of dinner. He just wanted to placate Luca's fear. Although he'd genuinely wanted to teach Thorin a painful lesson back there, Luca flying out of left field with a loud, blustering, but ultimately less painful punishment to rescue his friend had been an eye opening experience. For once, he had seen another side of the erstwhile, arrogant young man. Luca was instinctively protective of his own people and would use tricks to shield them.

Javier was not terribly impressed by Luca's performative trick, but his loyalty to his friend? That was worthy of commendation. And that was why he was willing to turn the other cheek and let this imbroglio

pass.

Javier's answer had indeed pacified Luca's biggest fear. He breathed a sigh of relief and replied, "Alright! Thanks, Javier. Dinner's on me!"

The previous feverie returned to the room, along with the participants' goodwill. It was as if the ordeal had never existed at all.

Outside of the diner, however, things were different. After getting into his yellow Lamborghini, Thorin fumed. "F*cking son of a b*tch!"

God knew if he was referring to Javier or Luca. He just kept cursing and bristling to himself to his heart's content as he started the car and drove up the freeway to the capital.

Now, that was his home turf. His seat of power.

If that backwater sh*tbag Javier ever dared show up in Medb. Well, he would find it a very pleasant experience indeed.

Chapter 159 Trouble at the Meet-n-Greet

Two days had passed since the Thorin Gerard incident. Things had been going swimmingly, and the company was bustling with activity as they planned and prepared for Edelgard's meet-n-greet. Jade also found herself devoting a lot of her time and effort to make it a success.

If she were to personally rank her relationship with the actress, she would have given it a "Not Bad" rating. Of course, she was sure their friendship would have improved even more if it weren't for the annoyingly intimate "misunderstanding" between Edelgard and Javier, which was hovering above them.

Meanwhile, Luca felt both grateful and slightly proud for averting a cataclysm for Thorin's sake. Javier appeared to have moved past the imbroglio since then, because if the man had really wanted to, he would have used his money and connections to destroy the Gerard Family by now. The lack of bad news proved that Javier had really let it slide.

He would remember this, he decided. He would remember this moment of mercy and make up for that imbroglio should he ever have the chance in the future.

Two days later, Edelgard Weiss' meet-n-greet event began in the city's convention center. News of the event had long reached her fanbase and people beyond, attracting hordes of fans and media alike.

Unsurprisingly, private citizens who fancied themselves journalists and live reporters had cropped up among the bunch. To counter them, Javier had resorted to employing a dirty trick: He told all citizen media representatives to gather at another hall, separate from other forms of media. They would be given good recording equipment and an exclusive chance to interview Edelgard if they listened.

Every citizen media representative was stoked over these exclusive benefits, so they wasted no time identifying themselves and moving to their special hall. Once they found a banquet of food and drinks waiting for them, they were overjoyed. This particular meet-n-greet seemed pretty cool to them compared to other similar events. Everyone else had always regarded citizen media with some degree of aversion, but this person was treating them like privileged guests.

Unbeknownst to them, of course, the real meet-n-greet had begun a while ago. Nobody told the citizen media representatives, though...

Meanwhile, thousands of fans from all over the nation had gathered in the main hall of the convention center. Edelgard was already in the middle of a lively conversation with the attendees, as though they were all just old friends having a reunion-a massive group of old friends, of course. The event lasted about two and a half hours, but soon, it was time for it to end.

Jade and Javier, who had been standing by below the stage, exchanged grins. So far, so good. Everything was going swimmingly.

It was at that moment when the most dreaded thing happened.

A few meters away from the stage, one of the audience members produced a handheld flag and chucked it across the stage. Edelgard saw the object get thrown up to her feet and bent down toward it.

Javier shouted as soon as he saw it happen. "Don't-!"

Edelgard thought Javier must have mistaken the object for something other than a small flag, so she picked it up anyway.

As soon as the flag was lifted off the ground, flashing lights and sounds of clicking shutters descended upon her. The act of her picking the flag up was immortalized into a picture: a wide-eyed Edelgard with a Yuzuean flag in hand.

“Oh no.” Jade did not even need Javier to tell her why this was bad. She already understood how Edelgard’s action would seem out of context. She could even predict the kind of headlines crawling all over the internet.

‘Edelgard Weiss waving a foreign flag at her own meet-n-greet.’

‘Weiss: A Yuzuean national now?’

‘Weiss stands with the Yuzueans on international matters.’

of course, all of the headlines would be false and complete hoaxes. But who cared about veracity on the internet? Few would think it was important! All they wanted was the emotional appeal. The bigger the flame, the merrier people would get, so those looking to get clicks for this news would inevitably add more fuel to the haters’ fire.

So what if her name was cleared afterward? The blow to her reputation would be a done deal. How was a bandage slapped over that damage supposed to help?

Edelgard must have gone through the same thought process herself, because she furiously cast the flag away. All she wanted now was to catch the culprit-a cause her fans quickly jumped to help with.

After a thorough search, they found a child about seven to eight years old. The subsequent interrogation proved to be terrifying for the kid, who broke down and cried, “I-I-It was this b-big man! He gave me 15 bucks and told me to toss this flag up on the stage for you! I didn’t even know what it was for...C-Can I give you the 15 bucks? I don’t think I want it anymore...”

It was just a child whose naivety had been exploited by someone else. It could not possibly be fair to hold that kid accountable, could it?

The meet-n-greet ended on a tainted note. Motivated by a sense of protectiveness for Edelgard, many fans attending the event started filming their side of the story on the internet to explain the misunderstanding.

It was soon proven that they had underestimated the severe lengths cyber-violence could go to. By four in the afternoon, Edelgard’s flag imbroglio was trending. It was just as Jade had imagined too. There was a lot of hate, a lot of comments piling on the victim, and a lot of slander. Influencers, professional internet manipulators, keyboard warriors, haters galore. The people who were most incensed by the entire imbroglio were ignorant patriots who decided to take umbrage at Edelgard despite knowing nothing about the actual case.

Just like that, Edelgard’s name turned into a pariah’s epithet. It was impossible to compare the negative attention she was gaining right now to anyone else.

Reivaj Group might not need to be held responsible for the accident, but they decided that an emergency meeting was necessary simply because this had happened during an event they had hosted.

Every employee, ranging from the planning department to copywriters, attended the meeting, as everyone brainstormed what would be the best solution moving forward.

Jade was the acting chair during the meeting, and Chad also joined in. Solutions and suggestions were plentiful during the meeting, but no one knew how to completely change the tide in their favor and stop the damage. It seemed that all they could do was watch Edelgard's career take a swan dive from here on out.

Such was the devastating effect of getting on the patriots' wrong side. Any celebrity who had to climb out

of that pit would sooner realize that dream by sleeping. Another celebrity had suffered the brunt of this culture war before Edelgard. After a mishap involving a military uniform, she had been forced to reinvent herself into a designer and an investor. No one had wanted to listen to her songs or watch a show she acted in anymore.

Chad thought about it for a moment before whispering to Jade, "I'll talk to Mr. Kersey. He should have some bright ideas."

Jade was not sure what kind of ideas Chad had in mind, but she was willing to try anything by this point. Even if one discounted the budding friendship between her and Edelgard, Jade still wanted to do everything she could to defend the company's reputation.

Javier had been smoking in his office and looking outside the window, his mind churning out ideas to help the girl out. He wanted to send the young woman all the way to Hollawyd, where this scandal would disintegrate into a non-issue, but that would be his last resort.

He racked his brain harder and thought about ways to clear Edelgard's name and get her back in the public's good graces. By the time his cigarette was finished, the door to his office was pushed open as Javier came up with a plan.

"Mr. Kersey, if we have absolutely no idea how to contain this, may I suggest using the black market's power to control the internet? I'm talking about burying the news, censoring keywords, generally making sure that no negative coverage surfaces. I know this is the kind of issue that can possibly be made worse by sweeping it under the rug, but the storm will only last about a few days, right?"

"By then, we could draw everyone's attention to the newest hot topic, and everyone will forget about this automatically."

It was a feasible solution. The only downside, though, was that Edelgard would find returning to her former glory very difficult-hopelessly difficult, one might say.

Javier waved. "No, we're not going to sweep it under the rug. We're going to amplify it. Make it worse. Make a storm out of it. We need to get people to see Edelgard as a troublemaker and a pariah."

"We what?!" Chad was stunned. He was beginning to wonder if Javier had some personal beef with the young woman since he was suggesting something like this.

Javier filled Chad in on his plan once Edelgard became public enemy number one. The more Chad listened, the more impressed he felt, and the more confident he was about the plan working.

Upon hearing the end of Javier's proposal, he gave him a thumbs-up. "Your plans are always the most ingenious ones, Mr. Kersey! Her recovery from this scandal is guaranteed! Alright, I'll begin preparing now. Edelgard's going to rebound from this like a phoenix rising from its fiery death!"

Soon after Chad left the office, Javier's phone began to ring. He picked it up and was instantly bombarded by Luca's panicked voice from the other side.

"J-Javier! It's Edie-she's missing!"

Chapter 160 You Don't Get It

The rumors and overt slander had finally broken kind-hearted Edelgard's back.

She had gone missing.

Nobody had any idea where she might be. Even Luca, who followed her around with the clingy nature of a puppy, had failed to track her down. It was why he'd ended up calling Javier for help. Javier was essentially the baron of the city and had a connection network way more extensive than his own.

After hearing about the predicament, Javier promised he would help out and immediately called Sam. "Mobilize your underlings and locate Edelgard Weiss at once. You can find her picture online yourself." He commanded him severely, omitting even the barest minimum of courtesy. "I don't care what kind of tactics you use. I want her found before midnight. Also, do not frighten her once your men find her. Contact me immediately."

Sam dared not waste any more seconds. As soon as the call ended, he began sending out commands to his

over and joining the search himself. The more manpower they had working on this search, the quicker this womanhunt would end. The last thing he wanted was to fail to find the woman before twelve and face his boss' wrath...

Seconds ticked by. The search had begun in earnest since six in the evening and lasted until 11 at night. When it was almost 12 in the morning, Sam's name appeared on Javier's phone screen. "Found the lady, boss. She's been spotted in We'll Mead Again Bar. I got some eyes following her already. Here, I am sending you the bar's location right now."

One should always ask the local street punks for help with missing person cases. These thugs prowled the streets so often that no corner was too hidden for them to notice.

Javier got in his car and followed the directions Sam sent him.

We'll Mead Again turned out to be a strangely small bar. It was owned by a university student, which made one wonder if the owner had opened the bar on a whim or a need to tick off a bucket list rather than actual profit. Had Javier not asked Sam and his kind for help, this corner of the city would have been a challenge to chance upon.

It did not take Javier long to notice Edelgard keeping to herself in one of the most overshadowed corners in the entire establishment. By now, her table was littered with seven or eight empty 500ml beer bottles.

Javier approached her, snatched a full bottle away before it touched her lips, and finished it.

The young woman fixed her groggy, unfocused eyes on Javier as hard as she could for five dull minutes. "O h, it's you!" she slurred. "And here I thought...I was wondering...who took my beer. I was like...Why would anyone focus on my beer and take it away... instead of focusing on a hot drunken lady...and take her away?"

Javier knew based on her question alone that Edelgard was basically drunk out of her wits. Even her beautiful cheeks had turned beet-red from her lack of inhibition.

"Stop it, Edelgard. Let's go back. I'll handle this issue, okay?" Javier said.

Edelgard waved dismissively and leaned against the back of the couch with the rigidity of a wet sock. "No, no. No-no-no. You don't have to," she replied, slurring. "I know you're rich...but you can't fix this one... No, you can't. You don't know...how hard this can affect an actress... You don't get it..."

Javier rose and stepped closer to Edelgard, his hands ready to help her up. "I do get it, Edie. And I've already come up with a way to fix this."

Edelgard continued to wave and throw hands around. "No, you don't! You don't get it, you don't get it at all... You don't get a...goddamn thing..."

She kept muttering "you don't get it" repeatedly like a broken record. Javier realized he was not going to win a debate with a drunk. "Fine, fine!" He relented, nodding. "I don't get it. You do, though, right? You get it the most, so let's just go already. Let's go back."

"Go back? Go back where?" Edelgard plopped her head on Javier's body, her unseeing eyes locked in an intoxicated stupor. "That rundown shack...in Xerxes Village? Where we had sex? Ooh, wonderful... I love that place...I loved that time...You, me, orgasms. I'm bound to...sleep well after that..."

Javier was speechless. Edelgard had really drowned her brain in booze.

Then, as soon as he helped her into his car, Edelgard proved her drunken lack of inhibition with her actions. From the comfort of the passenger seat, she pulled open all the buttons on her blouse, complaining, "It's so damn hot in here!"

She began to reach behind her back, her fingers groggily feeling for her bra strap.

Javier's alarm went off. If she stripped herself to her birthday suit in his car-well, how was he supposed to drive? There was no way he could drive with only one hand on the wheel...or his entire body off the driver's seat, for that matter.

The only solace he had was that Edelgard was so sh*tfaced that she could not even release herself from her seatbelt, let alone take off her bra. She struggled a bit more before finally falling asleep on her seat while she slurred something unintelligible.

Javier could not tell just what exactly she was mumbling about, so he ignored her altogether and drove back home. It was only when the car stopped at the gate to his residence that a new thought formed in his mind.

Who would one suspect had unbuttoned her shirt if Javier carried her into his home in her current state?

Jade might have said she was okay with him sleeping around, but bringing her home in such an exposed, messy state? Javier could tell that any explanation he could come up with would be a hard sell!

At that thought, Javier drove the car away and changed destination. This time, he went to a hotel. It was the perfect place for Edelgard given her current predicament.

He opened the door to their room and carefully helped her inside, making sure that her face and features were hidden. The last thing he wanted was a new scandal about her bringing a man with her into a hotel. The damage on Edelgard aside, any exposure on Javier would cost him dearly.

Chapter 161 Comparing Infamy and Fame

Who knew if it was the natural process of sobering up or the improved blood circulation from “exercising” that made the alcohol dissipate? Still, Edelgard was no longer intoxicated when things came to an end.

She still felt quite groggy, but her thoughts had cleared up, and she was embarrassed when she realized that the same thing had happened with Javier again. She felt shy when she recalled that she had been the one to initiate the entire thing.

Burying her head on Javier’s chest, Edelgard was too mortified to lift her head up. She was too ashamed to look at Javier. Despite her shame, the hand that was stroking her hair made her feel warm and loved. It felt like Javier had given her courage, as she looked up with a blushing face.

“Javier, I-I got drunk, so what happened tonight w-was a m-misunderstanding...”

Forcing the words out of her lips, Edelgard ducked her head down again, too shy to keep staring at Javier’s charming eyes.

“Alright, don’t think about it anymore. We’re both adults, aren’t we?”

Javier’s coaxing finally made Edelgard feel much more relieved. He then switched the topic, bringing up the flag incident.

Edelgard said, “I suspect that it was Renee Lewis. We competed for the best actress award once, and she kept thinking that she would win before the result was announced. Everyone thought that she would win too, but for some reason, when the best actress award was announced, I was the winner.

“She claimed that the judging was shady and called me shameless, accusing me of orchestrating this behind everyone’s backs. But I didn’t do anything.

“After that, though, she’s been friendly to me on social media. I thought that she was apologizing for her attitude that night but I noticed a pattern later on. Each time I got into a scandal, she’d show support for me on social media.

“Each time, she was applauded when I was slandered. That’s why I’m suspicious of her. I just don’t have any proof.”

Renee Lewis...Javier had heard of her. She was an upcoming actress with a pretty face, a beautiful body, and a decent voice. In short, aside from having the most basic acting skills an actor could have, she was hopeless.

It was a miracle she had even been nominated for a best actress award. The committee probably could not forgo their conscience and bring themselves to pick her as the best actress and had finally fulfilled their obligation and selected Edelgard, a worthy actress, for the award.

Considering what Edelgard had said, Javier thought that Renee could possibly be behind this.

She had reaped the fruit of Edelgard's infamy, and what felt like a suspicious coincidence was that she kept doing it, reaping the benefits of each of Edelgard's scandals.

Nonetheless, all this could not be resolved now.

"Let the storm brew some more tomorrow. We'll turn the tide around for you when the timing's right."

Edelgard could understand what Javier meant but did not know what he was going to do. When she voiced her doubts, the latter waved his hand. "Don't bother. Just pretend you don't know a thing and move

on with your life as you should. Keep up your usual routine and act like you always do. As for tonight... come back with me!

"Jade's been pretty worried about you. Luca too. That guy's probably still looking for you in the streets right now!"

Edelgard felt quite bad and a little guilty that she had to meet Jade just after sleeping with Javier. When she tried to refuse, however, he asked, "Then what will we do if you're found drunk on the street and the headline tomorrow is 'Edelgard Weiss found drunk at night?'"

Usually, such news did not matter, but given the current crisis, Edelgard would make headlines even if she were to just fart.

Hence, she was well aware that Javier's words made sense. Despite her guilt, she could only agree to the suggestion.

After getting dressed, she went back to Javier's place with him. The man had called Jade while they were on their way and, fortunately, the latter agreed to let Edelgard stay with them for the time being.

It was only then that Edelgard was relieved. However, she felt guiltier about seeing her close friend Jade.

When they got back, Jade spent some time comforting Edelgard before leading her to the guest room. As she went back to her bedroom, she told Javier jealously, "There's only one pillow in the guest room tonight. You taking another one there?"

Javier pounced on Jade directly, trapping her alluring self on the bed. "Of course not. My darling Jade is the best..."

The next afternoon, Edelgard's flag scandal reached its peak, as the whole internet was enraged and lambasted her. Even an older woman like Mary Jane, who could care less about entertainment news, had heard about it, which showed how widespread the scandal was.

Like Edelgard had said last night, Renee spoke up on her social media again that day. However, she took the netizens' side this time.

[This is too much. I've always considered you my best friend, but you went behind my back and everyone else's backs and did something that hurt us and insulted our patriotism. From now on, I'm cutting all ties with you. I won't be contacting you anymore. I feel ashamed of you!]

There was no name mentioned, but everyone knew who Renee was referring to. As expected, she had successfully reaped some brownie points for herself and she even began trending just under Edelgard's trending topic. The keyword at the top was Edelgard's flag scandal, while the one right below it was Renee going no contact with her.

Both trending topics stemmed from the same incident, but their infamy and fame created a stark contrast.

Edelgard fumed when she saw it, wanting to crash the laptop she was using, and locked herself in the room to cry for some time.

Javier got busy working then, already making contacts in the black market to delete the flag scandal. The speed was incredibly fast, as even the latest post would be deleted immediately. It seemed that in the blink of an eye, Edelgard's flag scandal had disappeared.

The thing was, accounts instantly began to post about Edelgard's constant disappearance for half a year in the past few years, interviews of people in Xerxes Village, and news about Xerxes Village starting to build a factory thanks to Edelgard pulling strings and helping. The chief of Xerxes Village, Thomas, made the rounds in videos online too and went viral, as he moved the internet to tears.

Chapter 162 Stinking Reputation

"I'm the chief of Xerxes Village, Thomas Bloom. I heard that you guys are accusing Edelgard. As an old veteran who's joined the army and fought in wars, I'm very disappointed and sad about everyone's wrongful accusations.

"Edelgard comes to our village every year to teach voluntarily, making monetary and non-monetary donations. She's sponsored a few university students from our village, as well as numerous ill villagers who needed treatment. It's also her donations that have allowed us to have a water supply in the village,

"On what grounds are all of you accusing Edelgard and calling her a traitor of Yuzuia? Are we, the villagers of Xerxes, Yuzueans?"

Thomas berated everyone angrily in the video, letting a few curses slip as he spoke. When his anger crested, he even fished out a cigarette pack with worn-out corners and pulled out a roll-up cigarette to smoke. No one knew if it was due to the smoke or the rage caused by the netizens, but his eyes were moist.

“I held a gun and chased our enemies away, not caring if I’d bleed or die, all to protect our nation back then, but you guys are blatantly accusing a kind soul who’s done nothing but help our village despite the war and cozy environment you live in. Was bleeding not enough? You want me to tear up too?”

Thomas’ clip online made him top the trending list that night.

[Who did the senior chief of the village bleed for back then?]

[Who is our veteran fighter crying for now?]

[A young woman has been helping his village in silence, but we’ve been stabbing her again and again in the back.]

[Is Mr. Bloom tearing up over the girl’s wrongful accusations or our flagrant recklessness?]

Two more videos were published on the internet after that. One of them was a recording of Edelgard’s meet-n-greet, when someone had purposely thrown the Yuzuean flag on stage before Edelgard had picked it up subconsciously. The other one was a video of a young boy at the tender age of seven or eight trembling in front of the camera.

“I didn’t know that pretty lady. She looked as pretty as a celebrity. She gave me 15 dollars to throw the flag on the stage!”

The first video was real and completely unedited. The second one was fake. In reality, the person who had taken the boy there was a man. However, when all three videos were watched in sequence, in combination with Renee’s trending post, they caught everyone’s attention...

Edelgard’s name was cleared. The whole internet began apologizing to her that night. Both in forums and official accounts, netizen apologies flooded in. Entertainment news channels reported on it too. For a moment, the internet was filled with apologies to her.

At the same time, Renee’s social media account was under attack, as people rushed to criticize her. Initially, Renee promptly deleted her post about cutting ties with Edelgard and posted an apology, but the netizens were relentless. They chewed her out with increasing intensity until she locked her comment section.

Before long, her social media account was hacked, and someone logged in to post a photo. The photo showed her kneeling on the floor without wearing anything and was more like a screenshot of a pain star,

but Renee’s face had been edited on. The caption stated: (Sorry, I, Renee Lewis, am a b*tch. I apologize to the nation’s netizens. I was wrong. I only deserve to act in Yuzuean p*rn...)

In one night, things had taken a complete turn, as fame and infamy changed sides.

Even though the boy had not pointed out who had framed Edelgard, everyone connected the dots and concluded that it was Renee instantly. The cyber-bullying came like a tidal wave, as her previous scandals and dirt were dug up. There was even a verified recording of her working as a club hostess before becoming famous.

Javier did not even have to step up or get a hold of concrete evidence, but he managed to completely quash Renee so that she would not be able to rise again.

That very night, Renee's management company announced that they'd ended their contract with her, while the film studios that had signed a contract with her previously began pressing charges either because their productions could not be released or because they couldn't start shooting due to her issue.

The internet was filled with two voices, and fame belonged to Edelgard, while infamy belonged to Renee. The stark contrast resembled the way Renee had set Edelgard up previously.

Now, in a certain mansion in Haeside, Renee was throwing things around in a fit.

"How is this possible? The netizens were burning her thoroughly just now. She couldn't have turned the situation around. Why has it all turned into this? Why?!"

Makeup products were strewn everywhere on the floor, filling the room up with their fragrance. Even so, the smell could not cover up Renee's heart, which reeked from the desire to profit.

She simply had not expected this. Edelgard, whom she had used like a puppet and had already kicked into the deepest pit of doom, never to rise again, had risen and was now soaring. Meanwhile, she had ended up like this within a day. How had she done it?

"It's impossible. The recording of her in that stupid village must be fake. She must've gotten extras to act with her. I must know that limping village chief. He looks absolutely familiar. He must've been an extra in my films before."

Like a frenzied lunatic, Renee tore her house down before fishing her phone out to call her boyfriend.

"Hello, babe. Hurry up and run a check for me. That b*tch Edelgard must've hired extras. Dig the b*tch's dirt up for me. I'm going to stomp her into unsalvageable pieces this time so she can forget about ever coming back!"

While Renee huffed at the phone, her boyfriend replied, "Alright, save yourself some trouble. Xerxes Village is real. Many official media have reported on it. Just be good and lay low in the future."

"Why should I? This is not even real. Is it right just because the official media say so? They were deceived as well. Babe, I don't care. I want it done, so help me. People are running me down like crazy now. You have to help me..."

Throwing both a tantrum and a cute plea in, Renee pestered her boyfriend on the line...only for her to get dumped by him.

"Renee Lewis, enough. My father has already called me in hopes that the rumors of me being with you won't affect our company shares. This is it. Let's not contact each other anymore. We're breaking up!"

Before Renee could react, the call was hung up on her. When she snapped out of it and called the guy again, the operator's "the number you've called is unavailable" line greeted her.

Renee kicked her slippers away in a rage and threw herself on her bed, punching the mattress and spitting out curses.

“You b*stard! You promised me everything when you slept with me and got scared that I’d affect you now that I’m down. You jerk...”

After hurling curses, Renee picked up her phone again and called an old businessman. The latter had courted her rather diligently in the past, and now was a good time for her to go back to him.

“Hello, Mr. Jackson, it’s Renee. I’ve considered your previous offer and find you rather sincere.”

“Sincere, my *ss! You’re the target of public rage now and you want me to spend money to f*ck you? Have you lost your mind? You’re worth nothing now, I’ll have you know. F*ck off!”

Renee was baffled. The rich businessman had shown his interest in her multiple times before this, but now

While she was in a trance, the doorbell of her mansion rang. Renee dashed to the door, thinking that her boyfriend had changed his mind, but the moment she opened the door, the landlord told her, “Please move out of my house right now. I don’t want to rent my mansion to a piece of trash like you. I’m scared of being implicated!”

Chapter 163 Will You Miss Her?

Renee’s notoriety had completely ruined her. Any show that had employed her stopped working with her, while the ones that were already filmed edited her part out.

In comparison, Edelgard’s fame shot through the roof. She had been less popular as an actress but was now rapidly rising in popularity due to this incident and she grew even more famous than young actresses with a large fan base. More importantly, she had decent acting skills.

The internet was flooded with compliments about her. Veterans actors and famous directors posted to sing her praises, while some official accounts reposted and commented on her kind deeds. Instantly, Edelgard became an example for actors everywhere and experienced incredible honor.

The next night, she booked a whole hotel floor of a banquet hall to host Javier, Jade, and everyone else in Reivaj Group.

“Thank you, everyone. Thank you for not abandoning me during my hardest time and for the effort you guys have made to help drag me out of the dirt. Thank you so much.”

Edelgard thanked everyone there and personally thanked Jade and Chad again. The last person she thanked was, of course, Javier.

She already knew the whole story and knew that Javier was the mastermind behind it, so she was incredibly grateful. Because Jade and many people were around, however, she could only express her emotions and gratitude with a “thank you”. The two words felt insignificant, but she honestly did not know how else she could thank the man.

Therefore, she retrieved a check from her purse—a check worth 800,000 dollars.

“Javier, I know you don’t need the money and I know this isn’t much, but it’s a token of my gratitude. I’m really thankful for your help, so please accept this regardless. I’ll feel bad otherwise.”

Javier chuckled. "You won't feel bad anymore once I accept this 800,000 dollars?"

"Uh..." Edelgard did not quite know how to answer. Even if Javier were to accept the sum, she would still feel that it was insufficient.

They had turned the situation around beautifully. A professional crisis PR team might have been able to do as much, but they would have asked for a few million dollars. Even if Javier accepted the 800,000 dollars, Edelgard would still feel that she owed him a favor.

"Edie, keep the money. We're doing this because we're your friends. Just like you chose our company. Isn't it because we're friends? Friends should help each other out.

"We're good friends too. It'd be distant of you if you brought up money again. But you've got to reserve tickets for all our company employees when your new movie is screened-you can't say no to this!"

Jade spoke from the side, making Edelgard feel embarrassed. She could only put away the check before she toasted everyone, feeling thankful and grateful for the help of her friends.

Lowering his glass, Luca praised Javier. "Javier, beautiful work, man. Not only have you cleared Edie's name, but you dragged Renee completely through the mud. She won't be able to get up after this even if she wants to

"Plenty of people in showbiz are asking for Reivaj Group's contact number because they want to get in touch to hire you guys as their business partner and PR team. They told me that Reivaj is awesome for knocking Renee down with just one move and making Edie the biggest name right now.

"Numerous PR teams are using this incident as a case study to analyze your strategy!"

Javier merely smiled and said nothing about Luca's compliment.

Nevertheless, what Luca had said was the truth. At the very least, the company's phone had been ringing nonstop today, with every caller expressing their wish to work together. Reivaj Group's reputation was very widespread this time due to the flag and the cutting-ties incident, becoming a known name among celebrities. There was even an international superstar who personally called with the intention of clearing their son's name.

Reivaj's name was unparalleled and instantly shot to the top of the industry.

After the compliment, Luca said, "Right, Javier. Why aren't your name and photo on every news report? There are articles about Jade and various execs of the company. You aren't even mentioned in the charity reports on Xerxes Village.

"This isn't fair. You were the one overseeing all this, so you are the one who deserves this honor the most."

Javier replied jokingly, "That's 'cause I'm a laboring cow. I can only work silently to contribute."

After cracking a joke, he raised his glass for a toast and changed the topic. No way would he appear on the news. If he remained unknown, certain trouble would not befall him. Once he showed himself and took credit, people would keep him in mind.

At the very least, his elder cousin, William, would not mind secretly causing him trouble. Javier could not be bothered by such unnecessary issues. If he wanted to provoke the guy, he would make sure the latter could only glare at him in heat without having the courage to even sabotage him!

After some more drinking, Edelgard mentioned that she was leaving.

“So many programs and shows have contacted me recently, as well as a lot of films. I’m going to be Xerxes Village’s spokesperson as well, so I’ll be flying off after leaving the hotel tonight. Jade, Javier, Mr. McCool, Ms. Gould, thank you for taking care of me in the past few days. Thank you.”

Edelgard was leaving, but when she looked at Javier, she felt an inexplicable emotion. It was not love, but saying she liked him did not feel as strong. Upon mulling over it, she felt that her body had grown dependent on Javier. After all, Javier was the only one who had brought her that kind of deep pleasure to date, giving her joy and an immense thrill.

However, when she faced Jade, she felt full of guilt and thought that she had wronged her. Jade was so nice to her, yet she had gone behind her back and done this with her man.

Due to these mixed feelings, Edelgard did not say anything else, nor did she dare do much more. After drinking some more and bidding everyone goodbye, she left with Luca’s company.

As the banquet came to an end, Javier took Jade’s hand and they strolled along the street.

Jade felt cheerful, maybe because of the gentle night breeze or Edelgard’s departure. Looking at the man who was currently only hers, she felt great, especially when she rested her head against his shoulder. This deep sense of longing and security made her feel more than great.

Nevertheless, she was still a little worried, so she said softly, “Darling, Edie left. Will you miss her?”

Javier chuckled in response to Jade’s careful question, completely understanding what she was thinking.

He answered seriously, “How could I miss her? I’m thinking of something very important now—more important than everything else.”

Jade paused, having no clue what else was so important.

After hearing her curious question, Javier pinned her against the wall. “I want to spend time with you, of course. And then...”

Jade was embarrassed. “Gah, get up. We’re on the street. Do you want others to broadcast this live? It’d be so embarrassing!”

Finally pushing Javier off her, she rested her head against his shoulder again and hugged his arm to continue strolling with him.

Completely appeased, she thought that it was enough that her beloved loved her the most. The more she thought about it, the more blissful she felt, and she whispered next to Javier’s ear, “Darling, I studied a new position on the computer secretly today. It looks fun and addictive. Let’s go back and test it out...”

Chapter 164 Here Comes the Old Fox

Time passed in the blink of an eye, and half a month flew by just like that.

Within two weeks, Reivaj Group went from being unknown to becoming a household name. The beautiful boss, Jade Odell, the ace management head, Chad Floyd McCool, and the finance tycoon, Mary Jane Gould, became famous along with Reivaj Group, while Javier remained an unknown boss.

Thanks to his manipulation, no one knew his real identity. Only a few people knew about his existence.

This half a month had made Edelgard a real celebrity as well. She hogged the very top of popularity with no competition, and even the bureaucracy department hired her for a movie that was based on her voluntary teaching time in Xerxes Village.

Basically, everything was developing and progressing positively. Things were going great.

Javier did not have to worry about work anymore during this period of time, as he went to work leisurely each day to flirt with Jade, then took full advantage of her when they went home after work. This caused Jade to complain when she saw him, claiming that he had broken her...

That afternoon, Javier had nothing to do. He was on his way to flirt with Jade when his phone rang before he could walk out the door. The customized ringtone told him who the caller was without him even looking

Answering it, he asked, "Old fox, how come you're calling me?"

"Brat, I'm on the ground floor of your company. Your security's quite responsible. They didn't believe me when I said I'm your grandfather."

Holy sh*t! Javier was alarmed. "Old fox, you declared war without telling me, huh? What brings you here?"

"Hurry up and come down now. Mackenzie will make way for me otherwise."

The security had really stopped Zephiel because they thought that the latter was old and flippant. How could he just blurt out "I'm your chairman's grandfather!"?

The security guard wanted so much to retort "Yeah, right, and I'm your grandfather", but considering the former's age, he had swallowed it down. He had only huffed in response, "Sir, I respect that you're old, but I hope you can have some sense of respect."

That was fine. Fortunately, this was what he had said, and not the sentence he'd wanted to retort with in the first place. Otherwise... he probably would not have been able to see that day's sunset. Mackenzie would have helped Zephiel twist the guard's head around to make him look at his own back.

When Javier went down, he spotted the old fox and Mackenzie right away.

The security guard was panicking a little by now, as he had not expected Javier to actually come down and approach the old man.

"Mr. Kersey, 1--"

Before Javier could even speak, the old fox waved his hand. "It's fine. You did well. This is your duty anyway."

Javier nodded and replied with a smile, "This is really my grandfather. It's not an act."

The security guard was scared witless and felt frantic, as he did not know what to do.

The old fox patted his shoulder with a chuckle. "Calm down. It's fine, young man. Don't be scared. Keep taking your work so seriously!"

With a pat on the security guard's shoulder, the old fox headed inside the company. After Javier greeted Mackenzie, the two of them followed the old fox.

As discreetly as he could, Javier asked, "Kenzo, why's the old fox here all of a sudden?"

Mackenzie lowered the volume of his voice and answered, "How would I know? He called and asked me to go out with him. I didn't know we were coming to see you."

As the two of them chatted, the old fox spoke up. "I'm not deaf. You think I can't hear you when you both hide behind my back to whisper?"

The two men stopped speaking and got in the elevator with the old fox, taking him to Reivaj Group.

The old fox kept his hands behind his back upon entering the company as he watched the employees busy about with beams on their faces. It felt like the president was overseeing his troop. However, he was kind, unlike the commanding presence that felt so pressuring one could hardly breathe when he was facing his own subordinates.

"The CFO's office? This room's great. I should check it out!"

Zephiel opened the door, murmuring as he walked to the front of the CFO's office. Twisting the doorknob to enter, he then saw Mary Jane, who was catching up on her drama with some snacks in hand.

Mary Jane, who was enjoying the drama, spoke up without even looking. "You brat, you're here to steal my snacks again, aren't you? Why are you so much like that old fox in your family? You grab whatever you can get your hands on-it's shameless!"

The smile Zephiel had on his face as he walked into the office froze, as he felt embarrassed.

Javier could not help feeling amused. "Old fox, what did you take from Mary Jane, huh?"

Zephiel glared at Javier. "How rude. What could I take from her? You should stop poking your nose into adult matters, kid!"

Hah, that statement itself made Javier discover something even more surprising.

Mary Jane had been a gorgeous beauty too when she was younger. Many young men in the company currently feasted their eyes on her, as they thought that she was mature and sexy, with an alluring charm.

Connecting the dots based on what Zephiel had just said, Javier thought that the old man had been no proper gentleman either when he was younger!

As the grandfather and grandson talked, Mary Jane heard a voice she should not be hearing. Turning her head in a daze, she was surprised to actually see Zephiel's sly face!

"M-Mr. Kersey Sr, what brings you here?!"

Mary Jane sprang up and threw whatever snacks she had in her hand. She was like an elementary school student playing with her toy in class when the teacher suddenly approached her.

Looking at the panicking Mary Jane, Zephiel asked with a huff, "I grabbed whatever I could get my hands on? What did I take from you, huh?"

Mary Jane was embarrassed. This had been a familiar sentiment back when she was younger, as Zephiel had frequently flirted with her. the Old Fox

Now that both of them were old, Zephiel was actually still talking like this. She could only reply with a low grunt, "You old flirt."

Zephiel, who was exasperated, whispered close to Mary Jane, "Watch out in front of my grandson. Don't let him know about the ridiculous sh*t we did when we got drunk back then."

Mary Jane was incredibly flustered, feeling as shy as a 17- or 18-year-old young girl despite being in her fifties now.

What had happened back then had been truly ridiculous. Both of them had gotten drunk, and she'd assumed Zephiel was her man, while Zephiel had assumed she was his woman. Due to their primal instincts, both of them had mated based on a misunderstanding, causing Mary Jane to feel awkward each time she had seen Zephiel in all these years.

Nevertheless, what had happened in their youth could not be discovered by any of the young ones now, so the topic of conversation was changed in time.

Getting back to a more serious matter, Zephiel spoke up. "Thanks for the effort, Mary Jane. You should be retiring by now, but you're still babysitting for me."

It was Javier's turn to feel awkward now, as he felt like he was being treated like a toddler.

Mary Jane answered, "It's not hard work. Mr. Kersey Jr. is ambitious. Let's see if he'll let me achieve another glorious feat in this lifetime."

Mary Jane's most glorious feat was, of course, the battle back when she had attacked a foreign corporation by using a massive fund, so another glorious feat could only mean a battle like that one-one that took place while she was working for Javier.

Zephiel, who understood what Mary Jane had said, smiled in reply. "There'll surely be a chance."

His response acknowledged Javier's ability, as well as his status as the future heir, so Mary Jane was quite happy.

After a short talk, the old fox left with Mackenzie and Javier. Javier led the way, and the old fox was right behind him, while Mackenzie was all the way behind the two of them as they headed to Javier's office.

Then, Jade left her office to look for Javier. When she saw Zephiel and Mackenzie, she nodded with a smile. "Hello."

She did not know who these two were, but she told Javier after nodding, "Go back first tonight. I have some documents to take care of. I'll be fine with Ing keeping me company."

Javier had always agreed in the past without saying anything, but he opted to refuse today. As for the reason...

He held Zephiel, who was smiling kindly, and told her, "Jade, this is our grandfather."

Jade was startled. She had thought that he was some company boss who was there for a business deal and had felt that he was a little old to be the boss, but he had turned out to actually be Javier's grandfather.

Feeling awkward and nervous, she shyly told Zephiel, "Sorry, Mr. Kersey Sr. I thought you were a client!"

Zephiel waved his hand. "It's okay, no worries. Come on, let's have a seat in the office."

The few of them went to Javier's office by following Zephiel's instructions. After he sat down, Jade got busy making coffee and pouring water like a server.

Javier gestured for her to be less formal and courteous. "This old fox is a dryland toad. He doesn't drink." 2

Zephiel lifted a leg and aimed for Javier's butt. "You're the dryland toad. What are you talking about!"

Javier chuckled while Jade gave him a light shove, warning him softly. "How could you say that to your grandfather?"

Accepting the coffee that Jade passed him, Zephiel grinned and replied, "Yes, yes. She's more sensible."

The old fox seemed to have quite a good impression of Jade. Would he stop Javier again like he had stopped him from being with Selena, though? That was hard to tell. Javier also understood that the old fox was not only there to see him today-he was there to see Jade!

Chapter 165 She's a Decent Girl

Zephiel and Jade chatted a lot in the office. It was regular small talk without much meaning of reasoning. At least Javier did not notice anything important. However, after Jade left, Zephiel told him while sipping on his coffee, "She's a decent girl."

Javier had no idea how Zephiel could tell. Perhaps it was true that one saw the truth in the most mundane matters. Maybe he was not as trained now, so he could not understand what the old fox thought and how he looked at things.

Zephiel continued to speak. "Your instinct... has always been decent. Selena is a great girl too, so stop resenting her. Different environments result in different people, that's it."

Putting the cup down, Zephiel reminisced.

"I couldn't figure this out back then, didn't understand why people would change because of money. I asked your great-grandfather after that, and he replied with another question. He asked if I'd surrender if we were attacked by old enemies.

"Of course I wouldn't. I answered him without even thinking that I'd fight until my last breath. We're Chinese, bom and bred. How could the foreigners step over our heads? We would kill them all!

"That's what I said, and your great-grandfather believed me. But he later asked me, if my friends and comrades around me all surrendered, would I? He made me think about it and asked me not to answer in a rush.

"So I thought about it carefully, like your great-grandfather had asked, and hesitated. If my friends and comrades around me surrendered, why would I persevere? But I later still thought that I wouldn't surrender. I'd have gone on.

"When I told your great-grandfather my answer, he chuckled and asked me, if my wife, my family, and everyone related to me was held under the enemy's blades, would I still go on?"

Zephiel took a jade pipe from Mackenzie-no one knew if it was real or fake-and took a few inhales after lighting the tobacco. The wisps of smoke rose slowly as the old man looked like he was not going to go on speaking.

Despite that, Javier wanted to know his answer, so he asked, "And then?"

Zephiel took a few more puffs and replied with smoke interlacing his words, "I didn't answer him back then, and he didn't ask again. But if you were to ask me today, I'd tell you that I might surrender."

It was hard to imagine that such words would tumble out of Zephiel's mouth so righteously, especially when he was a patriot who had contributed so much to his country. Since they were in Javier's office, though, his answer was contained within four walls.

Zephiel added, "Your great-grandfather taught me to consider the issue from different points of view in different scenarios.

"It's just like with Selena. I wasn't looking down on her back then-I was looking down on the circumstances you both were in at the time. If I, Jade, Ciara, and all your friends and lovers were held under the enemy's blades, would you dare say that you wouldn't surrender?"

"Let's cut the crap. So-called loyalty only exists because there isn't a good enough reason for betrayal. The reason doesn't have to be profit. It could even be a threat or something else. From Selena's point of view,

that was year after year of mockery and ridicule.

"Javier, try picturing that you're a regular person with 400-600 dollars of monthly expenses, but your friends all drive BMWs or Audis without exception. Believe me, by that time, you'd save up every penny you could to buy one, even if you had to apply for a loan or go to a loan shark for a second-hand or third hand car."

Patting Javier's shoulder, that was all Zephiel said as he gestured for Mackenzie to leave.

Javier quietly led them down the building as he reminisced about the lesson the old fox had just given him.

Before they left the building, Zephiel turned back to tell Javier, "Jade's a decent girl, and the current circumstances are right. Treat her well."

This was the old fox's intention for visiting him today. Zephiel was there to check out his granddaughter-in-law. He had met her and found her to be decent, so he was leaving.

Looking at Zephiel's retreating back, Javier chased after him.

"Grandpa, don't go elsewhere. Remember to come home for dinner at night. My place is your home."

Zephiel had planned to get a ride to the airport and fly to Medb directly, but when he heard Javier's words behind him, they touched his heart. Javier was the only one who would offer his own home to Zephiel, while others had only ever seen Zephiel's home as their home. 1

This was the reason he had loved Javier the most all these years.

Shaking, Zephiel looked up with moist eyes without turning back. "Sure, okay. I'll come home tonight."

Javier could not see what the old man looked like but he could see Mackenzie's gesture from the side. The guy was showing imaginary tears to let Javier know. At that moment, a leg went up, kicking Mackenzie's butt.

Zephiel huffed, "Busybody!"

Mackenzie chuckled. "Yes, yes, yes. I understand."

Nobody had asked him to do that, so why was he being such a busybody? Mackenzie had deserved to be kicked but he did not mind.

As they'd be having dinner at home, Jade did not stay in the office to work overtime. Instead, she went home early. As the exemplar of a woman who had conquered both a career and housework, she had to show what she's got.

While she got busy in the kitchen and Javier helped, Ingrid was "summoned" by Zephiel.

"Oh, Ingrid, it's been tough on you to have to take care of the brat's woman."

Ingrid was as dutiful as a child before her teacher when she stood in front of Zephiel. She dared not show any hint of casualness as she replied seriously, "It's nothing. Ms. Odell is a kind woman. She's very nice to me."

Zephiel smiled. "She must really be a decent girl if she's made you say good things about her."

Ingrid, who felt like he had read her mind, had an embarrassed smile on her face but she said the same thing. "Ms. Odell is really great."

Zephiel hummed in agreement and replied, "Let's see if she's lucky enough to be your boss' wife then!"

Ingrid was delighted. What Zephiel had said meant that he had indirectly approved of Javier being with Jade

As Ingrid went to the kitchen to help Javier and Jade, Mackenzie spoke up. "Mr. Kersey Sr, didn't you want to keep the position of the family head's wife for the girl of the Sorroys?"

Zephiel answered, "I planned on it initially. I wanted to keep the spot for Angelina. But I figured it out later. Why have I worked so hard all these years? It's just so my children and the future generations could have freedom

"The Kerseys are doing alright now. At the very least, we don't need an arranged marriage to maintain our current status

"I considered Ciara for the main position too. But her identity, even though she isn't a blood relative, would more or less have its effect.

"Besides, both Angelina and Cici are unquestionably loyal to Javier. They wouldn't care about this. They only care about Javier. In that case, I might as well let Javier decide." Mackenzie nodded in understanding and told Zephiel, "Jade Odell is truly decent."