

The Ace at the Apex by Nine Linked Rings Chapter 776 ReadOnline

Chapter 776 You Can't Do That The trust-fund kid was convinced some misunderstanding had taken place, but Javier disputed that. Sure, a misunderstanding had occurred, but did it matter?

No. It mattered not a whit. He had given the trust-fund kid time to leave, but he had wasted that chance. A bit too late for regrets now, wasn't it? A wrongdoer had to be punished, so Javier beat him up until he had to crawl under the desk. The poor man shrieked and wailed like a banshee under the desk as Javier brutalized him.

By the time Javier was finished, Iseult had returned with black eyes. No one else followed her. She seemed to have come back alone. Shortly after she had left, she had rounded a corner and found her path blocked by Herschel. The two of them had immediately gotten into a fight.

It was technically a one-sided fight more than anything. Iseult had been the one pommelled, it seemed, which would explain her injuries. Javier looked at her wounds and laughed. "Didn't know you were into smokey eye make-up!"

Iseult hated his schadenfreude, but there was little she could do other than shoot him a scowl. She became a lot less troublesome after that. While eating, she scanned the place vigilantly to look for an opening to run, but she never found it.

After their meal, Javier snaked his arm around her waist and took her to an adult shop. He had exhausted all of his supplies on Kira last night, so naturally, he needed to buy new ones. Iseult had the displeasure of seeing the kinds of things he bought and felt her cheeks burning bright pink. The lewdness in the shopkeeper's eyes as he studied her only twisted the knife further.

Seething, she kicked the shopkeeper down with a trounce before kicking the man two more times. Her intention was easy to guess: She wanted to obstruct the current state of things, and conflict-of any kind — was the kind of distraction she needed.

The shopkeeper reacted the way she wanted. Broiling, he snarled, "What the hell did you do that for, you b*tch?! I'm telling y'all, you ain't getting away with this! I'm calling the cops!"

Iseult glared at him with contempt, though she was secretly delighted upon hearing the threat. It had been her intention to get the cops involved!

Unfortunately for her, she was not the one who could call the shots there. Javier quickly moved in to save the situation. "Sorry, that's our fault. How about this? If you don't call the

cops, I'll strip her naked and let you admire her."

The shopkeeper, who had his phone in his hand, was stunned. He had not expected this at all. Iseult was shocked too, as she had not thought Javier would stoop so low.

Panicked, she snarled, "Don't you f*cking dare, you piece of sh*t!"

No one could say conclusively if Javier was being serious or not, but the shopkeeper himself was as excited as a dog in heat. He crooned, "You serious?"

Javier nodded. "Of course!"

He reached out for the buttons on her shirt. She immediately panicked. She had not expected Javier to act like this. Adrenaline hardened her fists into a prelude of combat, but that son of a b*tch had somehow secretly locked her arms, preventing them from moving.

The last thing Iseult wanted was to be gawked at by some lecherous stranger, but Javier was not about to stop. Eyes watering at sheer alarm, she snarled, "Stop this, Javier! Fine, I was wrong! Don't do this to me!"

She had hated Javier seeing her naked, but she'd had no choice, and it was something she could barely tolerate. Having some fifty-year-old lecher she didn't even know seeing her naked?! Getting gawked at by eyes filled with an obscene amount of lust?!

Iseult could not take it at all. "Fine! Fine, I'm not pulling sh*t like this anymore, are you happy? I won't trouble you anymore! Just let me go!"

It took a lot of nearly slavish begging to get Javier to let her off. The shopkeeper, however, had gotten his horny ball rolling too fast to want to stop. All he wanted was to see her naked body, and he wanted it now!

...Until Javier threw stacks of cash at that horny old man's face and his lust for women mutated into lust for cash. After all, what was the point of seeing a beautiful girl's body? Nothing was as practical as being bribed with money. With money, he could see even more pretty bodies-and touch them too.

Javier led Iseult out of the shop with a big bag of loot. They climbed into his car, and as he drove to their destination, she remained in wordless, understated anxiety.

What was going to happen to her now that it seemed like the inevitable was getting closer and closer?

Javier was silent too, but his thoughts were less on the games he could play with Iseult. He was more worried about the possibility of Iseult being seen by anyone in the know, which would lead to attempts at rescuing her.

Granted, anyone who dared would get a thorough beating from the ever-fearless and mighty Javier Kersey. Still, Iseult was a member of the hyper-elite. She could call herself Skadi all she wanted, but no one would give two damns about her new name when her old family name

continued to weigh this much. She could not just change who she was, nor could she discard the weight of her grandiose family name just by announcing her little pseudonym.

In other words, Javier would end up in a crappy spot if he screwed Iseult a little too hard, as he would have to answer to the all-powerful White Family over it. Javier was reluctant to involve her angry family, not out of fear or inadequate power, but because the trouble he would get into would render sleeping with her obsolete. Ultimately, Javier was only waving the threat of sex over Iseult-with emphasis on the word "threat." He did not really mean to take her to town. Besides, had Iseult been anyone with less family baggage, he would have f*cked her a long time ago.

Back home, Javier tossed the entire bag onto the bed and told Iseult to pick whatever she liked.

She did not want to at all, but she also knew she had not changed her underwear and bra in quite a while, and this was all stuff that Javier had bought for her. Unfortunately, his purchase preferences were obviously less focused on functionality and more on performativity. All of the pieces featured see-through lace.

Then, there was the goddamn boob-window. How could any of this even be called "clothes" when she felt less covered after putting them on?! All they did was accentuate her assets, regardless of whether she wanted it or not. And let's not get into the other things he had

bought, such as a leather whip, rope, a blindfold, a dildo, and god knows what else...

Iseult was so embarrassed that she could burst into flames. She was not going to pick any of these things!

Javier, though, had made the choice on her (unexpressed and nonconsensual) behalf out of the "goodness" of his heart. After that, he lunged and moved her onto the bed...

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Chapter 777 Ambitious, Aren't we?

Iseult's fear grew exponentially. The closer Javier loomed over her body, the more terrified she became. By the time she could feel his breath on her skin, her fear reached a fever pitch.

He took a long, hard sniff of her skin while Iseult's cheeks burned at the humiliation. She blushed so hard one might think her face was bleeding.

"Delicious," he crooned, being utterly shameless. "You're a disgusting, despicable bastard and a sh*t stain of a human being!" she screamed.

Javier considered her anxiety and laughed. "Then you can just tell me what I want to hear."

Iseult knew exactly what he meant, but the last thing she wanted to do was oblige. In fact, she tried threatening him. "If Piers knows I'm still alive, you know his guilt and conscience will compel him to save me, right? And once he finds out what you did to me today, you know he'll be livid. He won't let you live after this! The Whites will wage war against the Kerseys, and your losses will be immeasurable!"

Iseult had a point, but her argument was based on one small detail: Piers had to catch wind of her whereabouts first. Javier grinned at her and replied, "What if Piers doesn't know? If you're too much of an embarrassment to be claimed as one of their own, or if your reputation has sullied the family's dignity and all that, so what if Piers knows you're alive? He's the family head. Why would he let the family suffer to save you, a discarded child in the wild? I don't think he would sacrifice the family for you at all. He has Renly as a grandson, and Maya is his granddaughter. What's the point of accepting Iseult, whose existence will just bring more succession strife, right?"

Iseult felt her heart sinking into a cold abyss in her stomach. She knew Javier was bluffing, but she also knew that it was all-too-possible for Piers to do that. The head of the family would always put the family's interests above everything else.

Worse even, she had been abandoned before. There was little reason to believe things would

end up differently this time.

Javier considered Iseult's silent visage and produced a fluffy, cheap synthetic feather. One could brush it against their face, and it would feel like being tickled by a lover. Javier thought Iseult would enjoy it, so he reached out toward her with the feather.

She saw it coming and had an idea what this was. She screamed at the top of her lungs, begging him to stop with her misty eyes. She seemed so pitiful as she did so

Javier was not interested in how pitiful she looked, though. He wanted her to spill the beans on the Raiders.

Frankly, Iseult was in the know. It was why when the feather was a hair away from her, she relented. "Stop and I'll tell you why I came here!" she yelled.

Javier smiled and tucked the feather in. He lay next to her, kissing and pecking her burning cheeks. "You should have said this right from the start, sweetheart. Didn't have to make both of us horny."

Iseult had never planned to talk, though, and the fact that she had to do it to save herself was both humiliating and frustrating. After a lot of thought, she declared, "I'll tell you one fact

about our organization every week. In return, you cannot touch me!"

Javier was not going to let that fly. He took the feather and tickled her armpit.

Panicked and infuriated, she changed her terms to three days. Then, finally, she shortened the waiting period to a day.

Javier could accept this new arrangement. He would need time to act according to the new information anyway, so one piece of new information per day would work in his favor.

Iseult began to talk. She told him that she was there for aircraft engine development at the university

An aircraft engine, as Javier remembered, was the power source of an aircraft propulsion system. It was one of the country's least developed technologies. Now, though, the country had developed engines that could barely count as hi-tech, and there was still a long way to go before China could reach the likes of Sammius and other developed countries.

What baffled Javier even more was why such hi-tech development could possibly be carried out by some C-list university like the one he attended as Xavier. How the hell could they possibly have the technical know-how or resources? "The university doesn't know," Iseult answered. "All it knows is that it provided a highly secure underground basement. The director of the university and many members of the Education Department had zero idea about the details of the project.

"You know what it's like with top national secrets. The new engine takes technological cues from your hydrogen-fuel system, and the chief engineer of this entire project is Professor Liam Jepsen. You bought his tech, remember? I hope you haven't forgotten who he is by now."

No way would he forget. Javier's immaculate memories served him well. He also remembered hearing about Liam's plans to research aircraft engines and whatnot, but since the details concerned national security, Javier had not pressed Liam for more.

What he had not expected was to discover that the base of that development had come to this.

Iseult then explained more about the research. Apparently, the engine had become so advanced that it could now fit into next-gen unmanned stealth crafts. It would be the leading stealth plane engine in the entire world, and every aircraft engine henceforth would be based on the fruit of this research.

In other words, it was a keystone product. Very impressive.

There was still one thing bugging Javier, though. “Why are you people interested in that sh*t? That’s the stuff of nation-states!”

Nations went toe-to-toe with nations, while prominent families butted heads with other families. While it was hard to tell if a nation or a prominent family was stronger—especially since uber powerful elites like their own families could rival even nations—the two never overlapped too much. Some tried, but they were generally considered immature megalomaniacs too drunk on their power. They would always be duly punished.

Things that were important to a nation typically never ended up being the business of prominent families. Even if they wanted to get a slice of that pie, the motive was usually about trying to poach other nations’ technology into their home country.

So why would the Raiders care about aircraft engines?

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Chapter 778 Are You That Shameless? Conviction maketh man, they said. But conviction, especially faith, could also bring a man to ruin. Such was its nature as a double-edged sword.

People who gathered over shared interests would sooner break away than people who gathered for the same cause. A shared conviction would turn them into a force of terror shaped by the singularity of their minds, with nothing as momentary as interests to distract them. They marched in a single direction in unison, unbreakable and unwavering.

If the conviction was good, then such a force would also be good. But the Raiders’ cause was not. Building their own empire was just a means to an end, and one could tell because nothing seemed beyond the pale for them.

What they-or what the leader of the Raiders-really wanted was to be the ruler of the world. It was a mortifying thought in an age when most wars could be fought on a

technological front. A megalomaniac madman could bring the whole world down with him. The number of a -bombs in the entire world was a few, but it was enough to destroy the planet several times over.

Javier considered the sheer gleam of faith in Iseult's eyes. It was a harrowing sight, the type that made one's blood freeze. She was just an individual. Now imagine a whole group of people in power sharing the same kind of burning conviction.

Javier thought he should drag her out of this and gather more information on the Raiders while he was at it. The news about the advanced aircraft engine was unimportant in this regard. Iseult was his prisoner now, so the supposed theft had effectively been foiled. That was why she felt less compelled to keep this a secret.

In other words, there were even bigger secrets held back by her tongue. It would take a lot to make her spill them all.

Javier did not ask any more questions. He just lay next to her ultra-sexy body, his mind too distracted to think about sex. Iseult had fallen silent too, only because she was worried that at any given moment, her beauty might trigger him.

She spied his profile every once in a while to gauge what he might want to do, and yet all Javier did was keep glaring at the ceiling. The clock kept ticking, and slowly but surely, Iseult calmed down and felt a little more at ease.

Javier put away his phone, put on his shirt, and left. Before he did, though, he showed his nice side and tucked Iseult in with a comforter.

Iseult, though, was suspicious of his self-proclaimed "niceness". It was the middle of the day, in the middle of August, when the blazing sun was hanging in the middle of the sky! Being tucked with a dense, thick comforter at a time like this did not feel nice. It just felt passive aggressive!

Javier had other things on his mind. He left the room and contacted some government officials through his connections, thus alerting the nation about the possible theft. Since the Raiders had set their eyes on the aircraft engine, with Iseult compromised, they might send someone else to finish the job.

By the time he was done, it was 8 at night. Javier returned to his residence and saw that

Iseult's hair was matted with sweat. Upon seeing him, she thundered, "You b*stard! Remove this comforter right now! I'm melting in here!"

"But you're not wearing anything underneath...other than bondage," he reminded her with faux-care. "How could you ask me to do something like that? Have you no shame?!" Iseult was flustered. But then again, Javier had seen all of her just this afternoon. He'd even had his hands all over her, so why should she care that much?

And how could any thought of modesty ever be important when it felt like an oven in there?!

Gah! I don't care!" she cried. "I don't care anymore!

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Chapter 779 Escape Is an Impossibility Once Iseult stopped caring about modesty, everything lost its gravity. It was just as Javier had predicted. Once the worst and the inevitable came to a heel and one's fear reached its apex, everything else would feel like a gentle slope down.

Javier removed the latex binds around her under the comforter. Now, I seult reclaimed some of her freedom. Of course, "some" did not mean "all", to the point that it would be a stretch to call this freedom. Going anywhere beyond this room was out of the question.

The first thing she did was leap out of bed, switch on the AC, and stretch her limbs. Having her arms bound while her legs were spread wide over that extended period of time was certainly tiring.

Iseult was relishing in her bodily freedom so much that she forgot she was just as free of clothes. Javier considered her stretching, sexy body and suddenly wrapped his arms around her from behind.

Iseult froze. The delight of being free died down. Her nerves became frazzled at once, and she knew what Javier was going to do, as she could feel his hard-on poking her from behind.

To her immense relief, the worst did not come. Instead of boning her, Javier simply asked, "If I take you out to hang out, will you promise me you won't try to run?"

Iseult fell silent. Saying she was not going to run would be akin to lying about this being an impossibility. She would definitely try to run if she found an opening. "Okay, I won't run. I -"

"And how are you going to prove that?" Javier interrupted.

Iseult faltered. She had no idea how to prove it...because she could not prove anything.

Javier somehow let the topic slide. He did not do much against her naked body apart from nibbling on her earlobes before stopping altogether. He then signaled to Iseult, pointing at the dinner he had bought for her.

The food was surprisingly a perfect fit for her culinary preferences, but all that was pushed to the back of her mind, as her thoughts were still focused on escaping from her captor. Between bites, she exhaled. "What must I do to get free?"

Javier laughed. "Oh, you know."

Iseult did know, but it did not mean she wanted to do it. Letting these secrets out was against her convictions and everything her adopted father had taught her.

Hearing only silence, Javier decided to drop the conversation.

A few moments later, he spoke again. "I won't be at home tonight. You might be bored out of your skull, so I'll leave you a laptop."

Iseult froze a little. What was the point of that? She was going to be bound! Not much would change!

Well, she was soon proven wrong. After she was bound and tied up, Javier drew the curtains and opened the laptop. He began playing movies on it. "The movies will play according to the queue, so they won't stop. Just go to sleep when you're tired." Iseult resented it all. If he was trying to act like a good guy, then releasing her would be the

best thing he could do for her right now, not this performative sh*t.

Javier left, and the movies began. Iseult realized that this was less of an act of kindness to a captive and more like an act of passive-aggressiveness. It turned out the movies were all classic horror stuff, and the female lead was constantly levitating and shrieking about getting her severed head back with a ghastly timber. That was enough to make her break out in a sweat.

Iseult was terrified. She did not want to watch it at all, but the ghost's voice kept entering her mind. This smattering of horror movies made sleeping impossible for her, so she could only

cuddle under her comforter, shaking. Every time the wind pulled the curtain apart a little, Iseult wondered if a headless neck would poke out of the window and ask her where its head was.

Javier returned at around nine in the morning the next day. Seeing him made Iseult break into tears. "I'm begging you, Javier, stop playing movies like that for me! I'm sorry!" But he did not want to hear "sorry"! He wanted information on the Raiders, and that was the whole point of her captivity!

He asked her about it again, and yet the girl stubbornly refused to talk once more. Javier was speechless. To be more accurate, he was mortified by how hard faith and conviction clung onto a person's mind.

The only way to make her talk, he realized, was by destroying her faith.

He removed the binds around Iseult and beckoned for her to go to the bathroom to wash. She gladly obliged, as she had peed herself a few times over the course of the night, and even her adult diaper could no longer handle it.

After having a bath, she emerged from the bathroom to see a new set of clothes.

Finally! Normal clothes! Gone was that stupid kinky lingerie she'd had to put on against her will. These were normal clothes anyone could feel dignified in, especially when they were combined with a pair of good shoes. She got a white t-shirt and casual cropped pants-just the kind of outfit Iseult loved.

But why? Why this getup all of a sudden?

"Put this on. You're gonna live with me for a few days."

"What!?" she blurted out in shock. What was Javier after this time?

He seemed to have elected not to tell her anything. All he did was wait for her to put on her clothes before leading her into his car and driving up the freeway. He had also, surprisingly, done away with her binds while they were in the car, even allowing her the freedom to visit the bathroom on her own.

It seemed like as good a chance to escape as any, so she tried. Just as she was about to cross a wide swath of field by the roadside, she heard a loud bang. A new, deep crater formed a few inches away from her on the soil.

Sniper guns! Or a weaker version of them!

Iseult had to give up. She raised her hand in surrender and returned. She could not tell where the sniper was, which added a new layer of dread. She could not evade them even if she wanted to.

The car sped on and on and only stopped at around 9 at night. They had dinner and checked into a hotel. Once again, he did not try to bind her or force her into nakedness like before. He simply wrapped her in his arms while they lay down on the bed.

At first, Iseult was not sure what his game was. Two hours or so later, she heard rhythmic snores coming from his direction.

Mustering her courage, she slipped out of his arms and decided to leave. She spied her reflection in the mirror and noticed a red dot on her forehead.

She jumped, the fear instigated by her unwitting horror montage last night kicking in. Then, she realized what it was and why Javier had his clothes on while sleeping and

had not bothered letting the curtains down. Someone was watching her from the window. If she made any moves they did not like, they would shoot her.

Iseult had no idea how many people were taking turns surveilling her, but she knew this meant escaping from him in the most direct, obvious manner would not fly.

It was a fitful night. She tossed and turned on her bed, trying desperately to come up with a plan to escape. Her thoughts even drifted to Javier. Maybe she could hold him hostage while he was sleeping. Then, with him as a human shield, she could protect herself from the sniper and escape

After mulling it over, she turned on her side to look at Javier.

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Chapter 780 Who's the Cruel One It was now or never. She had to do this right now. It was her only chance.

She reached out toward him under a casual pretense, when Javier suddenly opened his eyes. He met hers directly.

Iseult felt fear surging into her bloodstream. She had not expected him to open his eyes at that moment, which was why the suddenness of it all chilled her. It felt as though the thoughts in her head were clear to him—a possibility that made her shudder.

What he said surprised her, though.

“Hey, now. You need to sleep under the covers. The night’s windy and cold. Goodnight.”

He turned his back to her before falling back into a slumber as though he trusted her not to stab him in the back.

Iseult was so baffled that she suddenly did not know what to do next. What he’d said had been very unremarkable and quotidian, and yet for some reason, it made her feel warm and fuzzy inside. She had not been subjected to that sort of care for at least...well, 20-odd years. Since the day she had been abandoned by her biological family.

Her adopted father had taken her in and raised her, but he was a harsh disciplinarian, which was evident in her martial prowess, which was a result of a grueling regimen. He was not soft, but rather demanding. A father figure like that could not possibly provide any care or warmth. Soon, even Iseult had gotten used to being self-reliant and had never felt a need for care and whatnot.

Suddenly hearing something like that from the guy holding her hostage was weird and confusing. She was unaccustomed to it. She considered his back from her point of view, so vulnerable and exposed, until finally, she decided to abandon her previous plan.

Iseult told herself that it was the best choice to make based on how crafty the b*stard she was up against was. He must have something else up his sleeve, so it was best that she did not act to avoid any traps.

It was the best explanation she had to avoid considering the alternative-that maybe she had decided against holding Javier hostage because he had said some stupid thing that had somehow warmed her heart.

As time passed, she fell asleep, sinking into dreamland too. The night was, as he had warned, cold, but she did not use the covers. Instead, she inched a little closer to Javier's body and let his body warmth do its work.

The next morning, after washing up and having breakfast with her, Javier sped through the freeway until late afternoon, when he took a turn and drove into a town. He looked at Iseult, who was in the passenger seat, and asked, "Need any essentials? Sanitary pads, tampons, and the likes?"

She glared at him. He was the last person she wanted to talk to about periods.

Still, she did tell him she needed to do some grocery shopping in the town's supermarket. The two of them did some light shopping, including, well, the very things Javier had suggested.

While they had dinner, the young woman could no longer contain her curiosity and asked, "

What's the point? If you're just gonna execute me, then why drive thousands of kilometers to some place in the middle of nowhere? It's so unnecessary."

Javier grinned. "You think I'm the one who wants to kill you?"

Iseult fell quiet, though it was not because she was satisfied with this non-answer. She was as puzzled as before. Why had he brought her all the way out here anyway?

"You've been telling me about the utopia you and your friends wanna build over the past two days," he added. "So I'm gonna show you what my ideal utopia looks like and how people are making it happen right now."

It was true that Iseult had mulled over this topic during their very long trip, but his apparent interest baffled her. The country she envisioned was one of true equality, where even the founder-her adoptive father-would enjoy no privileges. An egalitarian society like that was the ideal they were all striving for.

Could he be interested in their cause? It was an exciting thought for her. If Javier were to join them, well...it would be great!

However, after she asked him, he merely sneered. "The only reason your adoptive father is safe is because I haven't met him in person yet. Once I do, I'll destroy him for all the bullsh*t he keeps spewing!"

A storm made Iseult's eyes darken. Her adoptive father meant the world to her! He was very much a sacred entity beyond Javier's sacrilege.

Javier, however, ignored her and her visibly seething glare. He went back to his meal, as he had 100% faith in his ability to disabuse Iseult of her utopian belief and show her what a true utopian country was like!

Of course, one would be dead-wrong to think he was doing this because he had too much time on his hands. He just wanted to destroy Iseult's faith and convictions so that she would spill every secret she knew about the Raiders.

After dinner, Javier drove her through the border. He used his privileged connections and got through customs, and they soon found themselves in a foreign village.

It was a picture of desolation and extreme poverty. The people there seemed destined to struggle for survival. Some of them began using weapons at the age of 8 or 9 to join bands of mercenaries. They risked the possibility of being killed by soldiers and planted opium, and

some of them ended up working for drug cartels. Iseult even watched a ten-year-old girl being taken away by a pimp. The money she made by selling her body was going to fill her family's bellies for the night.

Iseult was infuriated. She stormed toward the man, determined to take him down, but Javier pulled her back. Incensed, she shouted, "What the f*ck?! She's just a child! Why are you stopping me?!"

Javier lit a cigarette. "And how many can you save?"

"As many as I can. That's better than none. Because I do what I can do, and that's better than you standing idly by like a cold-hearted bystander!"

He laughed. "Me, cold-hearted? Maybe you should try to investigate why this village is the way it is. See, this place used to be unified by the military until a mysterious force fermented

and supported an armed revolution. Conflict broke out between the rebels and the military. The law and order broke down. It's always been chaotic here. That girl was supposed to go to school at least three years ago, but now, she's an underage

prostitute. “You’re a member of that mysterious force! Don’t you feel a stab in your conscience when you look at that girl?! You called me cold-hearted, but do you realize how heartless your precious Raiders are?”

Javier’s retort stupefied Iseult.

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Chapter 781 Clash of Ideals

Iseult could not believe it. Javier had to be making sh*t up. The Raiders could never have done something like this.

But Javier produced his phone and showed her evidence. All the evidence showed that it was the Raiders. The reason why this village was going through such a terrible time was because of the Raiders.

Iseult was filled with disbelief as she looked at the evidence. She could not believe this was real. But the evidence was so real and completely undebatable in its veracity that she mulled it over for a few minutes and said, “Either my adoptive father knew nothing about this and this is all the work of his underlings, or he knew and authorized it because it will serve a greater cause and far greater people. A country as beautiful as the one we envision will inevitably require some pain and sacrifices. That’s what it is!”

Javier cracked a smile filled with both amusement and contempt. On what grounds did she think her adoptive father could spill blood and still be a noble saint with valid reasons for doing this? On what grounds was it right for others to be sacrificed for his goal?

“You know, your adoptive father just keeps sounding more and more interesting. I wanna see him and understand him better.”

Iseult waved negatively. “Give up. I’ll never tell you where he is.”

Javier had thought he was being clever, but it turned out she had seen through his trick. Luckily, Javier was not in a hurry either. She would change her mind sooner or later, he was sure. Just the visceral reaction she’d had—flying into a fit of rage and anxiety, for example—when she had seen the little girl in the clutch of her client was proof that she was a kind—hearted young woman deep down.

Javier and Iseult stayed in the village for a few days. The kids showed off their guns to each other in the day, as though that would make them bigger bad*sses than they really were. The girls went out to meet clients at night.

There was no chief in the village—a fact that Javier wielded as evidence of Iseult's utopia." See? Equality as you guys want it."

She detested his statement. "You're obviously twisting what we mean. We don't mean a lack of a governor or overseer, you know. Someone will look after everyone—someone wise and fit for the job. Not everyone knows what's best for the whole or the future, after all. Someone has to provide that direction." She protested. "If we give everyone pure, identical equality, then it'll be irresponsible on our part. It will be a genocide in disguise and an absolute disaster, just like the way these villagers are suffering."

"Then what's the difference between your world and the one we already have now? You'll still have a ruler," Javier argued.

"No, the administrator won't be a ruler. They won't have any privileges. They'll just lead, oversee, and care for others," she rebutted.

"What happens to evil people then? Criminals who kill and sh*t, like me?"

"The administrator will punish you, of course. They won't allow you to harm others!"

Javier sneered. "Then, the only thing changed will be the name of the head of society! Everything will still be the same. You really think everyone is as stupid as you? We all know a

o matter what he calls himself. The only real change your utopia will bring is who gets to be the leader. Every nation will be dissolved into one, and then your adoptive pa will assume the role of the leader. There, he's now the king of the world! What utopia? It's just a farce to fool a stupid, sheeple-brained chick into working for him!"

"Shut the f*ck up!" Iseult bristled. This had to be the biggest slander against her adoptive father she had ever heard.

What she did not know was that the truth always hurt. And when someone got hurt, their mood soured. Her mood was quite irreparably soured by Javier's flippant comment.

He added nothing to the debate. Instead, before they went to sleep, he teased her. "We'll return to China tomorrow, and I'll show you what the utopia you want looks like."

She snorted instead of answering him.

At least, by this point, she had stopped thinking about wanting to escape. If it meant she could see this oh-so-utopian society he somehow thought would be impressive to her, then sure, she would stay.

Javier was ready to drive both of them through the border the next day at noon, but before they could leave the village, they were stopped by what looked like a gang led by

a man named Jak. In addition to his position as the head of the armed rebels, he also controlled drug production in the area. After the army had destroyed his nest, he had been effectively rendered homeless and powerless, and now, the only way he could survive was through robbery and looting

With about a dozen gunmen under his control, he blocked Javier's way in hopes of robbing them clean. They thought they had gotten lucky today, but little did they know, they had just stepped into the path of someone who wanted them dead.

"I'm not in the mood to argue with you," Javier said. "I want all of you to disappear in ten seconds"

Because he was living by the Chinese border, Jak could speak the language of his neighbors. His face broke into a sinister smile "You think you're some hot sh*t, man. You don't think I'll lop off your ugly mug with my big, shiny blade?"

He pulled out his sword and walked toward Javier. He was just a step closer when he suddenly turned to Iseult. "What a beautiful sweetheart! I'll break your legs apart tonight and taste you with my tongue so good Then, you'll scream the entire night, and when morning comes, you'll be desperately humping me like a horny b*tch, hoping I'll give it to you."

A snowstorm shadowed her pretty mien. Suddenly, it almost looked as though she was made of ice Had they not been surrounded by so many guns, she would have grabbed Jak's head and broken it off his neck

Jak dragged the tip of his gleaming blade against the ground as he ambled toward Iseult. He was about to raise it against her neck when Javier suddenly said, "Ten seconds. You're dead."

He raised his hand and made a gun like gesture, pointing his index finger at Jak before crying, "Bang!

Jak played along He pretended to be hit before laughing "Aww, that was so cute! I should

have known! You weren't trying to act like a bigshot. You're just an adorable dumb*ss. You hardly see people like you around these parts these days, you know. I actually feel bad that I might have to kill you –

Bang!

Jak did not finish his sentence. Enveloped by a sudden spray of bloody mist, to the shock of his followers, Jak's headless body fell to the ground. They could not understand how their boss's head had just exploded. It seemed as if there had been a grenade inside Jak's head, and someone had detonated it.

Meanwhile, Javier had turned back to his car. He did not care about Jak's death at all.

One of Jak's loyal underlings raised his gun and aimed it at Javier, but before he could pull the trigger, his brain erupted into a bloody mist too. That was when the gang realized a sniper or two were lying nearby, armed with heavy sniper rifles. It was why one shot had spelled fatality.

The gang threw their guns and crouched with their arms around their heads. They had suddenly lost the will to revolt.

Javier got into his car and drove Iseult away. As she left, though, a pair of eyes was watching them from afar.

Then came a voice on a satellite call. "Sir? We spotted her with Javier of the Kersey Family."

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Chapter 782 Maybe I Was Wrong

After leaving the border, Javier and Iseult returned to China and arrived at yet another remote village. Iseult was starting to grow suspicious of his choice of destination, so she asked on the way, "Are you just going to take me to rundown, destitute sh*tholes?"

"Aren't rundown, destitute sh*tholes the best kind of place to prove a utopia's existence?" Javier retorted.

She said nothing. She had to admit, once again, that Javier was completely right. They got out of the car and saw an old man pulling a car chassis up the hill. After locking his car, Javier and Iseult helped the old man with his task. With two young people giving him a hand, the task became a lot easier.

The old man sat on a roadside boulder after they got it up the hill. He passed a self-made cigar to Javier as a token of gratitude. Javier puffed it while Iseult tried not to gag from the smell.

"Where are your kids? Why are you taking on such heavy labor?" she asked.

The old man informed her that his children had gone to the city to work, leaving the grandchildren with him, where they attended the local school. "Despite how I look, I'm not all skin and bones yet! I'm still pretty fit. Selling junk will earn me enough money to buy ice cream for my two balls of sunshine," he added. "Seeing them smile fills my heart with joy!"

Iseult shot a glance at Javier. "This is your utopia?" she asked. "A world where kids grow up without their parents? A world where parents work their damndest without any guarantee of wages? They might even have their pay delayed by unscrupulous bosses. Seriously, who are you to act all high and mighty while criticizing our ideals?"

Instead of answering her, Javier asked, "What's with the wound on your neck?"

"I was once in the army. That one was left by the enemy when he tried to down me—oh god, I almost died then! But now that I think about it, all those battles kept those sons of b*tches out of my country for years. And now, my children and grandchildren live in peace."

"You sacrificed so much for your country when you were young, but even now, at this age, you're still working hard. Do you regret sacrificing that much?" Javier asked.

The old man glared at him. "What's there to regret? Just thinking about all my comrades who died in battle makes me feel like the luckiest man alive. I got married and created a family, and now I can spend time with my grandchildren. I have food on the table and I have beer when I need it. I'm so happy!"

"But don't you think it's unfair of people like us? We don't seem to contribute. We're a bunch of rich people driving posh rides and living in luxurious houses. Aren't you jealous or angry? Don't you think this is unfair to you?"

The old man laughed. "Ha, there's nothing to be angry about. There's no reason to think it's unfair. You should change your perspective! We all create different values. The value I can provide is so little that it's barely enough for my grandchildren. In fact, it's often not enough! Besides, the country compensated me for my involvement in the war with an allowance. The government has never forgotten us! They provide us with a monthly allowance. I'm already a very happy man!

"I'm living a good life. I get rewarded whenever I contribute. What more could I want? Handouts without contribution?"

Iseult fell silent. She did not know how to answer that. Still, she was upset enough that she tried again. "Why don't you see it this way: You've sacrificed a lot for the country. They should therefore reward your service better than this. How about enjoying some things for free? How about an actual pension? How about preferential treatment when enjoying some services?"

"Why should I think that way? Because I fought for my country? In that case, shouldn't the children of those who died in the war get free housing and cars?" the old man rebutted. "Are you willing to pay for that? Having a portion of the money you earn be used for my pension... Are you willing to give me that?"

“We don’t ask for rewards over the things we do most of the time. The two of you helped me get that junk up the hill without thinking about getting paid, right? You could have asked, but you didn’t. Why?”

Despite the old man’s slurring, rural accent, Iseult found his words sharp enough to choke on her words.

The old man smiled. “Come on, girl. Life nowadays is already very good. I think it’s what you called a you-toe-pia. Isn’t it nice to watch the country become richer and richer while the people’s lives become richer too? What else could we want?”

“All I want for my life is to be peaceful and smooth. Why dream of more wealth? I sleep at 8 at night, have a good night’s sleep, and then wake up at 5 or 6. If I don’t feel like it, I wake up a little later! There, I feel better now! I might not be rich, but at least I’m not as tired as a CEO, right?”

“Those people are super-rich because they work hard for it. I know my worth, so I know the peaceful life I have right now is good for me. Getting to see my grandchildren happy makes me feel like the happiest man on Earth. Isn’t my life happy?”

The old man wheeled the car away, leaving a stupefied Iseult trying-and failing-to come up with an argument. It was palpable to her that the old man had chosen China over her version of a utopia.

The old man had shown her what it felt like to live as someone who appreciated what he had and thus never asked for more. How happy and content he was!

Javier shot a glance at Iseult and caressed her smooth cheek. “Come on.”

They traveled across the country for the rest of the month. From the poorest village to the richest metropolis, they experienced everything. This journey provided Iseult with fresh, new perspectives of the nation.

As a family claiming no citizenship on the basis that they were above such a concept, the Whites harbored no patriotic ideals or love for China. Iseult, too, had grown up without ever thinking she was one of them. Her adoptive father, the leader of the Raiders, was a stateless madman who even dreamed of founding his own country.

Iseult had never felt any sense of belonging in China. She had always felt like a traveler in a stranger’s land. The nation and her society were familiar, but not familial.

As the month went on, she mentally evolved. Everyone seemed to treat her like one of their own. It was the kind of familial bond imprinted in her bones, something as natural as a fish’s

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Chapter 783 Why Are You Looking at Me Like That

At the sound of that, Javier turned to face Iseult. Before he could say anything, she shook her head hard and recanted, “No, that’s impossible. I cannot have been wrong, and my adoptive father even less possibly so. I mean, just look at you and your people! You’ve worked for nothing, and yet you possess as much wealth as the GDP of an actual nation. If your wealth could be shared with the masses, just how many people would live decent or even great lives? Instead, all that wealth is concentrated in your hands alone!

“This is inequality of wealth, pure and simple. And it’s the existence of people like you who are the biggest cause of it!”

Javier laughed. He turned on his side and looked at her. “Now, even if I spread all of the Kerseys’ wealth around the world and everyone got what they could, do you think it would

change their lives substantially? No. They would be happy for a few days, and then life would go on. But if I alone hold all of the Kersey’s wealth in my hands, I can do a lot of things with it. For example, I can use my gigantic stash of wealth to counteract a financial crisis and stop some people from going broke. When an IP is determined to be useful for the survival of humans, then I can support this IP with my humongous wealth. “Have you seen the disaster movie 2012? Had money not been concentrated in our hands, the ultra-rich, who would provide the funding to build those Noah’s Arks? Are we meant to wait for the rest of the world to donate it? And how do we decide who can board the arks? This sounds cruel, but that’s reality to you. There should always be one person holding absolute power and wealth. Even if you can’t tell for sure if he’s the right kind of guy or if he’ll end up being a witless tyrant, you still need that kind of guy to prevent any disasters from happening. “You said I possess wealth, but do you know what I had to go through to get that wealth? You don’t know. All you know is that you’ve been abandoned by your grandfather, but you don’t know how it feels to live in an elite family. If your sister wasn’t mentally challenged, she would have had a political marriage. And your little brother, Renly? Do you know how many assassination attempts he’s had to survive? How much terrible training he’s had to go through?

“You don’t know. And you don’t know how my uncles and cousins are fighting me. You don’t know that the family branch is waiting for the right moment to uproot me and become the nain branch...All they need to do is kill me! But oh, all I care about is preventing every bad thing that could have happened! That includes the existence of the Raiders!

“Do the common folks know? They don’t! All they know is that wow, look at this guy, he’s so rich that he can do anything he wants. Why does he deserve this? Because he won the birth lottery while you’re living in peace and lamenting the fact that you were abandoned and have been suffering from it, we’ve been living our lives under the fear of being assassinated. Compared to us, don’t you think your boring childhood was better and safer?”

Iseult was shocked into silence. She had never thought of this before! Now that she thought more deeply, she realized she could very likely be wrong! When one built a utopia, one might not get to see it exactly as they had idealized it. They would still have to go through a lot of suffering, and that suffering would turn into war. It might even be a disastrous war that could destroy the entire planet!

As Javier would call it, building a utopia was like having a bunch of fools playing along with a

madman. If the madman won, he’d become the sole ruler of the world. If he lost, the entire world would be gone. The only right thing to do against someone like that was remove them from existence entirely.

What Javier had told her before had sounded too caustic and extreme, but now that she thought about it, oh god! He might be right! It had been hard to change her stance because her adoptive father had raised her for over two decades. All those teachings had taken root in her.

Iseult’s mind was at war. She felt as though all 20-odd years of her fight had been for the wrong cause. Her head was about to explode when Javier pulled her into his arms and kissed her forehead. “Don’t think too hard. Just let it be.”

Cuddling in his arms, she felt his warmth—her favorite type of warmth. It made her feel like she was not alone in this world. After all these years, she finally had someone to lean on. After a month or so of being with him, Iseult had gotten comfortable with having Javier by her side.

She could not tell if this was love or something else altogether. But sometimes, her mind would wander. If she could somehow get stuck in a loop with him, living out their days traveling around with no conflict, how nice would that be?

She wondered and wondered until, finally, she fell asleep. Javier slept too.

Despite being free of Javier’s surveillance, Iseult had long lost the desire to run. She just wanted to be by Javier’s side. She did not need them to be anything more than this, and she did not want their relationship to be anything less either. This was the best state to be in. After all, if they got closer now, she would have to face the painful conflict of interest between Javier and her adoptive father...

The next morning, Iseult woke up to the sight of Javier lying on top of her body. He was studying her, and she asked, "Uh, why are you looking at me like that??" His answer was honest. "Look at how beautiful you are. You're so beautiful that I want you. I want you to be my woman."

He was so forthcoming that hearing what he said made Iseult feel bashful. She did not know how to answer that.

Luckily, Javier did not need her to say anything. He just lowered his head and pressed his lips against her cherry-red ones.

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Chapter 784 I'm the One They Want to Kill Throughout this period of slightly over a month, Javier had never laid a finger on Iseult – except for tonight. Iseult had also developed a strong sense of dependency on Javier within the same duration of time.

That was why what happened tonight seemed to only be a matter of course.

However, gunshots were fired at that moment-not from a rifle but a pistol. They were already in the suburbs, so the gunshots were deafening.

Javier sprang up and flipped under the bed with Iseult, protecting her with his own body. He put on his clothes swiftly and went out of the door after asking Iseult to stay under the bed.

The gunshots were ceaseless outside and kept approaching. The open fire of submachine guns could be heard as well.

Javier realized that the ambush was targeted at him, so he had to figure out who had sent these people outside. When he got out, Herschel was by his side in the blink of an eye, passing one of his own guns to him.

"They're probably from the Raiders. They're armed sufficiently, but I have put quite a number of men on guard for their ambush at any time, so it's not a problem."

Javier was not worried about Herschel, so he had the latter leave after reminding him to be safe and all.

Not too long after Herschel left, though, hurried footsteps came from behind him. Javier turned with a roll on the ground as gunshots were fired at the same time. All he felt was a gust of wind brushing past his face before he fired at the shadow.

Someone collapsed following the shot he fired. He lifted his gun again without any hesitation when he heard noise coming from the side. Just before he pulled the trigger, he saw that the person was Iseult, who had gotten dressed.

He put away the gun and moved them somewhere safe, wary of the surroundings while asking Iseult, who he kept behind him, "Didn't I ask you not to come out? Why are you out here?" "I'm not like your other women. I don't need anyone protecting me, nor do I need to hide," answered Iseult.

She was speaking the truth. She was adequately capable of fighting. That was not what Javier thought, though. "As long as you're my woman, I forbid you to take any risk."

That sounded domineering, almost unreasonable, but it was also heartwarming- especially to a woman.

Iseult bit her lower lip and felt warmth gushing in her heart, not knowing how to answer at the moment. Then, Javier suddenly pulled her aside and raised his gun.

He was a moment too late, as the enemy shot before Javier. In the end, Javier was shot in the lower abdomen, while the enemy got a bullet between his brows.

"Javier!" Iseult panicked at once, and tears filled her eyes. She was well aware that Javier would not even have gotten shot if he had not been trying to protect her. What was even more

infuriating was that she knew the person killed-it was her adoptive father's underling.

This meant that the Raiders were not just after Javier now. They wanted to kill her too.

At Iseult's distressed cry, Herschel came over swiftly. The moment he reached Javier, he pointed his gun at Iseult's head.

It was only at Javier's wave that Herschel dropped his gun and ordered their men to retreat and stop trying to catch their enemy as long as Javier was not hurt further.

About ten minutes of intense fighting later, the Raiders were forced into retreating and Herschel took Javier to the hospital. He kept his guard against Iseult all this while, not because he suspected she had attacked Javier but because he thought that Javier would never have

gotten injured if it had not been for her!

Javier understood Herschel's loyalty but did not resent Iseult for this. After all, she was his lover, and it was his responsibility to protect her.

Guilt plagued Iseult the whole way there as she sobbed. Javier would not even have been hurt if it was not for her. She blamed herself for it.

After about two hours of waiting in the hospital, Javier was wheeled out. The doctor said that it was not a big deal. A gunshot had gone through Javier's flesh, but not his organs, so he would be fine after having the procedure and resting for some time.

Herschel heaved a long sigh of relief at the update and looked at Iseult coldly. "You should be thankful. If anything had happened to the boss, I would have minced you and every Raider to a

pulp!"

Iseult's reply to Herschel's hostility was, "I don't need you to mince me. If anything had happened to him, I would have jumped into the mincing machine myself."

Well, that left Herschel, who had been resentful, speechless. He also understood why the girl blamed herself. He gripped his fists but said nothing, asking about the Raiders' base location instead.

Iseult had not wanted to talk about it, but Javier had been nearly killed and she had become a target too. Therefore, she told him the address.

Herschel left but came back after taking a few steps. He called his men to do the work.

"Take all the heavy arms. Don't even leave one behind. Bomb the place if you have to, but make sure it's wiped out!"

It was apparent from Herschel's words how furious he was at the Raiders right now.

Despite that, Iseult was well aware that Herschel had come back because he was still suspicious of her. It did not matter. She should bear this suspicion. It would be abnormal if she was not being suspected.

They spent almost half an hour in the hospital ward before Javier slowly woke up after the anesthesia wore off. Herschel gave himself a loud slap after Javier woke up, saying with a lowered head, "I'm sorry, boss."

Javier smiled. "If you're sorry, light up a cigarette for me and serve me. You don't even know how to appease someone."

Herschel quickly pulled out his pack of cigarettes, but Iseult glared at Javier. "You're still smoking in this state?"

“What’s there to be scared of? Would a cigarette poison me to death when a bullet didn’t even kill me?” Javier replied. Herschel could care less. Anything his boss said was absolutely right. If someone was wrong, it would be him, for his boss was always right. Nudging the cigarette into Javier’s mouth, Herschel lit it up for him. Javier then glanced at the door. Herschel left the ward, understanding his signal. He remained standing at the door, though, wanting to ensure Javier’s safety, and was on guard around everyone, including Iseult. Iseult held Javier’s hand and placed it softly against her face.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t listen to you and I caused you to get shot.

“And I’m guessing that they weren’t there for you. The attack was targeted at me. “You’re the future heir of the Kerseys, and they don’t dare lay a finger on you yet, so the one they wanted to kill must have been me.” Javier had long realized this. Otherwise, he would not have asked Iseult to hide inside the house.

As the future heir of the Kerseys, he was like the crown prince. Anyone who dared lay a finger on him would invite not just the revenge of the Kerseys but the retribution of all the families. After all, all of them were scared of defiant people and worried about their own heirs being killed.

Regarding the attack on Iseult and him getting injured for her, though, Javier thought that it was great. He believed that these two things combined would suffice to make the girl expose the Raiders!

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Chapter 785 You’re the Worst

Then, Javier asked Iseult about the Raiders. He was not explicit about it, only vaguely directing the conversation toward the organization.

Just the start of this discussion, though, caused Iseult to answer awkwardly, “Sorry, my adoptive father raised me after all, and this is a favor I owe him. Even if he wants to kill me now, I can’t hate him or betray him.

“I told Herschel about the Raiders’ local base, so consider this my explanation to you.”

Javier was speechless, not at all expecting Iseult to resolve the issue like this. What was a small local base worth? What he wanted was the big fish, the Raiders.

Despite that, he could understand Iseult’s way of repaying her adoptive father, even though he did not want to accept it. It was normal. In her shoes, he would not have betrayed his adoptive father either.

That was why he was understanding and did not mention the Raiders to Iseult in the time that followed

Herschel came to report the outcome at around 11 p.m, when Javier's wound was hurting. The man reported it in front of Iseult without hiding anything. "All of them have been killed."

Javier understood. Herschel would be the first to receive any update, and Javier did not care if there were any survivors. The conversation that followed proved it. Herschel said that the mission had been an order from the higher-ups, and the target had been Iseult. There had also been a special order to absolutely not involve Javier in this

Iseult looked appalled after hearing what Herschel said.

She could guess the reason the Raiders had targeted her. It must be because she had spent a month with Javier and had not escaped when she had been given the chance to. They had assumed she had betrayed the organization and her adoptive father, so she had been the target of an assassination.

Reality obviously was nothing like that. She had not betrayed them in any way, and the base that had been just wiped out was only a result of Javier being injured and her needing to offer a form of compensation to him.

Iseult was sad and troubled too, not knowing what to do.

After Javier dismissed Herschel, he stroked Iseult's head softly.

"It's okay, don't think about it. I won't put you in a tough spot. If you want to leave right now, I won't stop you."

Iseult shook her head vehemently. How could she possibly leave? Javier was lying on a hospital bed with a pale face from pain because he had taken a bullet for her. How could she ignore her conscience and choose to leave at this time? It was simply impossible.

However, the misunderstanding with her adoptive father and the organization...

Iseult stopped thinking too much at Javier's coaxing. She had decided to prioritize Javier's recovery for now.

Hence, the following half a month saw Iseult staying by Javier's side all the time. She took

such good care of him that the doctors and nurses in the hospital complimented her in front of Javier, praising his girlfriend for being pretty, kind, and mild-tempered. She was a rare one nowadays.

Javier accepted the shower of compliments with a grin, embarrassing Iseult. She was not his girlfriend. It was all a misunderstanding.

However, Javier begged to differ, especially after he was discharged from the hospital, as once he was discharged and they went back to their place, Javier took it out on Iseult... Iseult was thoroughly ruined by Javier that night. The man kept going at it from night till morning. It was only when morning came that both of them cleaned up and lay on the bed.

The night had completely wrecked Iseult...