# The Academy's Prodigy Wants to Defeat the Genius - 50

The exchange match consists of three events:

Captain’s Match, Team Match, and Exploration Match.

While the Exploration Match is largely left up to students to form their own teams and thus can be considered an exception, and the Captain’s Match is more about individual skill and thus another exception, the Team Match places the most weight on how well five classmates can coordinate with each other.

It was obvious that the East Class had the upper hand when they had both Carla and Ivan—but now, Carla was essentially out of commission, and Ivan stood alone. That’s why the West Class believed they had a real chance of winning—if they could focus their efforts on containing Ivan and take down the rest of the East Class, they might just pull it off.

If Liam stood as the East Class’s strongest, then the West Class had Wilhelm.

Wilhelm von Mittenburg, who placed 3rd in the entrance exam.

A wielder of Earth Magic, he stood on the opposite end of the spectrum from someone like Liam.

Then came 4th place, Lucas von Scheiskehl.

5th place, Sophia von der Zauber.

7th place, Kiara di Servitore.

And 9th place, Michele Briccone.

Unlike the East Class, whose top members were mostly in the lower ranks aside from 1st place Ivan and former 2nd place Carla, the West Class was relatively well-rounded. So, as long as they could keep Ivan in check, their odds looked better on paper.

And now, here was Lucas von Scheiskehl, ranked 4th.

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“So you’re planning to use your family’s hereditary magic. That’s… a very interesting notion.”

By now, these strange domains appearing inside Lucas’s room were nothing new—but the atmosphere remained as eerie as ever. And in the center of it, Lucas sat back with a smug grin, staring at Venere.

“Well, you know. Scheiskehl’s hereditary magic isn’t exactly easy to use openly. That’s why we often pair it with auxiliary spells. But with the exchange match as our stage, there’s no need to hold back.”

“True.”

Venere, holding her teacup with elegant grace, smiled pleasantly—but internally, her thoughts were racing.

‘The Scheiskehl family’s hereditary magic… was poison.’

There’s no better battlefield for poison to shine than actual war. And Scheiskehl had historically racked up impressive records in battle, largely thanks to that fact. Still, using it openly left a distasteful impression, which is why it was usually kept under wraps.

“Truthfully, I didn’t really need your help. Someone like Carla? I could take care of her on my own. The fact that I accepted your offer just shows how generous I am.”

“Indeed, young master.”

Venere sighed quietly.

‘How did this guy end up as the heir to one of the Empire’s Four Great Houses?’

Well, bloodline was everything—so she supposed it didn’t really matter what he was like. Still, it was baffling.

“Anyway, young master, the wench Carla isn’t the one you should be worrying about.”

“She isn’t?”

Lucas scowled, tilting his head in confusion.

Venere flinched at his reaction. He waved his finger gently, as if correcting a child.

“Only I can call her a wench. As her future husband, that’s my exclusive right. You, on the other hand, should refer to her more respectfully.”

“Ah… understood. Then, Lady Carla.”

“Good.”

“Continuing from before—Lady Carla isn’t your concern. It’s that boy Ivan who’s the real problem.”

“That commoner? I should be worried about him…”

Lucas stopped mid-sentence, lost in thought.

Looking back on recent events, Venere’s words did have some merit.

He hadn’t paid Ivan much attention at first.

But the strange pressure he’d felt the last time they’d met—and the fact that Ivan had beaten Carla in the entrance exam to take first place—meant there had to be something more to that boy.

“…I suppose I should. That commoner must be hiding some kind of skill.”

“Plus, he and Lady Carla grew up together, didn’t they? If you defeat her, Ivan’s bound to snap.”

In truth, this was exactly what Venere—and Mercurio—had wanted.

If Ivan were to witness Carla being brought down right before his eyes by Lucas, it would be an unprecedented psychological blow.

Just as Lord Cascata had said, it would undoubtedly become a powerful trigger to rapidly raise Ivan’s resonance level.

“If I put in a bit of effort, even that commoner brat wouldn’t be able to beat me. Poison works that way.”

“Well, yes, but what you need, Young Master, is an overwhelming victory, isn’t it?”

“That’s true, too.”

Venere’s words, if one really listened, were just a string of arbitrary nonsense. But Lucas, failing to notice anything odd and simply nodding along because it sounded good, made Venere click her tongue inwardly once more.

“In any case, Young Master, I’ve prepared a method to make Carla completely—and far more effectively—yours.”

“Let’s hear it.”

He acted like an elder listening to the silly advice of children.

Lucas was so naturally steeped in arrogance that it made Venere feel physically sick, but now wasn’t the time to let her disgust show. If she ruined things here, Lord Cascata would not spare her.

“This.”

Venere presented a small box.

It was so flat and tiny that even calling it a box felt like an exaggeration.

Lucas took it and opened it immediately. Inside was a long needle.

“A needle, is it?”

Lucas pulled it out, examining it from all angles.

It could almost be called a bodkin—quite long, and the tip shimmered faintly with a brownish tint, as if something were applied to it.

“It’s an aphrodisiac.”

“Aphrodisiac?”

“Yes, an aphrodisiac so potent even a Gigantus would lose its mind to it.”

“And you want me to use this on Carla?”

“Exactly.”

As Lucas slid the needle back into the box and closed the lid, Venere continued her explanation.

“Even if we call it a tournament, the exploration battle has the highest point value. Even if you lose both the captain’s duel and the team match, winning the exploration battle could still bring victory. It seems ridiculous, but that's just the academy's tradition.”

“You talk too much.”

“…In the exploration battle, students form groups of two or three. You know that, right? Ivan and Carla will likely be grouped together. You, Young Master, should partner with Kiara. We’ll prepare the map for you, and if you follow our instructions, you’ll find Ivan and Carla in no time.”

“…And then?”

He was intrigued now.

Clearly lacking in competence, Lucas seemed all the more eager when others offered to assist from behind the scenes.

“We’ll provide the means to eliminate Ivan. Once he’s out of the picture, just jab this needle into Carla—her neck, or anywhere else. That’s it. Then you can enjoy a comfortable, pleasurable, lust-filled exploration battle. And, well, take Carla’s virginity while you’re at it.”

“Hm.”

Lucas stroked his chin and let out a low hum.

He didn’t show any change in expression, and for a moment Venere wondered if he was actually disinterested in such a dirty scheme.

‘That couldn’t be.

So why the hesitation?’

As Venere puzzled over it, Lucas licked his lips and said, “That part’s fine, but doesn’t this mean I won’t have control over the battle’s outcome? Is this really to my advantage?”

He frowned while turning the needle over in his hand.

His voice remained calm, but his eyes shimmered with filthy desire.

“Young Master.”

Venere let out a theatrical sigh, curving her lips as if she’d just grasped his true nature.

“The outcome of the exploration battle… honestly, isn’t that secondary? Isn’t Carla more important to you, Young Master?”

Lucas’s eyebrow twitched.

He kept his lips tightly shut for a moment, then slowly formed a sinister smile.

“Victory does matter. However—”

“In the end, they’re all going to submit to you anyway. Does the outcome of some petty competition really matter?”

Venere cut him off, her tone matter-of-fact.

Lucas stared at her.

Then, once more, he looked down at the needle in his hand.

“Carla belongs to me. If she’s paired with Ivan, how could I tolerate them being together? No, it’s not jealousy. It’s just… the sheer disgust at the thought of a woman who is mine being with another man.”

He returned the needle to the box and curled his lip.

“You’re right, Venere. The outcome doesn’t matter. If I can make Carla mine, then I’ve gained everything.”

Venere silently shook her head.

‘This idiot. He can’t see the bigger picture—only what’s dangling in front of him.’

But outwardly, she only smiled sweetly and nodded.

“As expected of you, Young Master. You know how to use the aphrodisiac I’ve prepared, right?”

“But… this needle might not even be necessary. Maybe it’s better that way.”

‘What’s he saying now?’

Venere involuntarily widened her eyes.

Just moments ago, he’d acted like some brainless lecher, and now he was suggesting he might seduce Carla on his own? Ridiculous.

“Carla’s already broken. I only need to nudge her a little, and she’ll collapse.”

Lucas’s vile laugh echoed through the room.

His eyes were filled with burning lust and flimsy pride.

“Just as you said, the outcome of the exploration battle doesn’t matter. I don’t care about that crap. All those others will be under me anyway, so it’s only natural that they bring me victory while I enjoy myself. Good. I like this. Now, how long does the aphrodisiac last?”

‘Of course. There it is.’

Venere forced a smile.

“Long enough for you to enjoy yourself to the fullest.”

“Great. Then I’ll use it well. And I’ll make sure to repay this favor… when I have both Cascata and Scheiskehl in the palm of my hand.”

Clearly delighted, Lucas didn’t even bother to hide his glee.

Watching him, Venere once again considered whether she should just kill him now and be done with it.

At the very least, for the sake of the Empire’s future, trash like him should never be allowed to grow into a high noble.

But if she acted rashly, she would lose something even more important—so she swallowed her fury and endured.

# The Academy's Prodigy Wants to Defeat the Genius - 51

Human adaptability is a frightening thing. Even in situations you think you'll never get used to, there's always a moment when it suddenly stops bothering you. And sometimes, that moment comes sooner than expected.

Ivan felt the same way.

Like now, with Carla sleeping right beside him.

He didn’t think he could ever get used to a situation like this—but somehow, he had.

'Hmm.'

Ivan shifted his eyes and stole a glance at Carla.

The faint moonlight filtered through the curtains but didn’t quite pierce them, casting an eerie glow. Her silhouette, illuminated by that muted light, felt strangely ethereal.

Looking at those graceful curves, one could immediately tell just how beautiful Carla was when she was simply still.

Ivan realized this again and yet couldn't tear his gaze away.

Their connection from childhood, once thought severed, had brought them together again at this academy after all those years. He had assumed Carla was just another boy his age—never once imagined she would grow into such a striking woman.

Now she was lying right beside him.

Even though it had been several days since this started, falling asleep next to her still took some effort.

He had asked if it was really necessary to share a bed, but Carla had turned the question back on him—“Is there any reason not to?” So he had been the one left speechless.

Ivan's gaze subtly traced the soft curves of Carla's body.

Where things were meant to rise, they rose with certainty; where they should recede, they did so with perfect grace—creating the mystique of a woman's form.

His eyes unconsciously traveled up to her neckline.

Of all things about her, her neck drew him the most.

That white, slender neck that looked like it could be encircled entirely by one of his hands.

If he gripped that neck—and then applied pressure...

Carla would cough and sputter.

Air should pass in and out through that neck, but it wouldn’t.

She’d wake, eyes locked on him, filled with questions and fear.

As her lungs ran out of breath, she’d struggle to pry his hands off.

Her vision would blur, strength would leave her body, and her gaze would fill with resentment...

'Gah.'

Ivan sucked in a sharp breath, steadying himself.

Every now and then, he fell into fantasies like that.

They were friends—Carla was a friend. So why? Why did thoughts like these keep creeping in?

Ivan carefully got out of bed.

Another night where sleep wouldn’t come easily, it seemed. He figured he might as well get some water.

"Where are you going?"

Carla’s voice, groggy and half-asleep.

Ivan turned only his head to glance at her.

"Getting some water."

"Bring me some too..."

Even as she spoke, Carla made no move to get up.

Ivan smirked faintly, poured himself a cup from the pitcher on the table, then poured another and brought it over.

"Here, your water."

"Help me up..."

Her eyes were still shut. Ivan set the cup on the table and slid his arm beneath her back, gently lifting her.

"You’re such a princess."

"Of course. You're just a commoner."

"Right, right. I am a commoner."

Ivan helped her sit upright and picked up the cup again.

As he offered it to her, he noticed her shifting her left shoulder slightly. Remembering, he raised the cup to her lips himself.

"Right... you don’t have your left arm."

Carla paused and looked down at her shoulder.

It still felt like the missing arm should be there.

‘How much longer would it take to get used to the emptiness?

Could she ever really get used to it?’

That thought pained Ivan more than he expected.

With his own wind-based magic, even if he lost an arm, it wouldn’t hinder him much. He could substitute limbs with wind, and his fighting style didn’t depend heavily on his body.

But Carla was different. Losing a limb was a critical blow for her.

"Don’t look at me like that."

After drinking the water, Carla seemed to come back to herself.

She glared at him with irritation, snapping Ivan back to reality.

Carla hated pity with a vengeance—and Ivan was no exception.

"About the match order… I should be going first, right?"

Ivan didn’t respond.

Instead, he simply nodded, heavy with meaning.

"It makes sense. The weakest goes first."

Carla muttered as she sat with her knees drawn up.

Today was the day.

The first match of the exchange tournament—the captain’s duel—would begin.

Lorenzo had said it plainly: it made sense for the weakest to go first. After all, the strongest—Ivan, arguably the strongest even among both classes—should be saved for last to preserve stamina.

And for the first match, Lorenzo had named Carla.

Which meant that, in his eyes, Carla was the weakest of the East class. Maybe even weaker than anyone in the West class, too.

"Can’t really argue with that, can I..."

Carla let out a soft chuckle as she spoke.

Ivan, on the other hand, couldn’t laugh—because even if he couldn’t understand exactly how Carla felt when she said it, he could at least sense it.

"We have to be realistic. It's better to look at the situation for what it is. Who’s ever heard of a one-armed martial mage? If I could at least use a weapon, that’d be something, but even that’s out of reach…"

Her muttering continued.

Ivan simply watched her in silence.

"...Carla."

"What."

Carla had been mumbling about who might come out first from West Class—saying she hoped it would be Lucas, so she could land a punch right in his smug face—but stopped when she noticed Ivan looking at her.

"If it’s okay with you."

"Hm?"

Ivan climbed onto the bed.

Carla looked at him quietly.

She just kept watching him as he slowly moved closer.

"...I'll bring you victory. I’ll win, and I’ll bring that victory back to you."

Carla fell silent.

She just stared at him.

With an unreadable expression, she studied his face.

"’Therfore magic will make it so,’ right? That was the Cascata family motto."

Carla didn’t respond.

Ivan didn’t wait for her reply.

"I wanted to be like you. Seeing you never give up and always push forward—I wanted to be someone like that, too. So… you can trust me again this time. I’ll protect everything you achieved."

"What?"

Startled by his sudden declaration, Carla stared at him wide-eyed.

Ivan held her gaze and repeated himself.

"...I’m strong, Carla. Maybe even stronger than you think. So I can do it. Even if everyone before me loses, even if I have to fight all five opponents alone—I’ll still win. I have that strength. And when I do win, I’ll say it was because of you."

Carla blinked.

‘...Why me?

He said he’d bring victory to me?

Why?’

"...Why?"

Caught off guard by her completely unexpected response, Ivan blinked too.

She opened her mouth as if she hadn’t even thought about why he would say something like that.

And then—

"Because it’s obvious, isn’t it? I’m who I am now because of you, Carla."

"What? Why? What did I even do?"

"Well, you might not think so, but I..."

Faced with her genuine question, Ivan trailed off awkwardly.

He had spoken boldly at first, but actually saying it aloud, directly to her face, was embarrassingly difficult.

"It’s just, you were a rival. Because you were there, I worked harder. I didn’t want to lose to you. That stubbornness made me push myself. So I think that’s how I got stronger."

So that’s what it was.

Carla had worked tirelessly, relentlessly, to surpass Ivan.

She couldn’t deny that truth.

She hated losing to him, wanted to beat him at any cost, and had gone to extremes—even to the point of changing her very gender, whether she had wanted to or not.

Maybe it had been the same for Ivan.

Maybe he pushed himself because he didn’t want to lose to her.

His bashful confession made Carla feel... strange.

"So, you worked hard because you didn’t want to lose to me?"

"Of course. Back then, I thought you were a guy… and you know how boys are. We do stupid stuff just because we don’t want to lose to our friends. So yeah, I worked like crazy. You probably never noticed."

"Did you really?"

"Yeah, I didn’t want to lose to you. You have no idea how hard I worked."

"Don’t really care to find out."

"Th—that’s not the point. Anyway, Carla. Even if you lose, don’t get too upset or bitter. I’ll get your revenge for you. I’ll crush the West Class and bring the win to you. I’ll shout to the world that I could only win because you were there."

Carla felt strange.

Ivan’s words—that he’d win because of her—filled her with unfamiliar feelings.

She quickly rolled over, pulling the blanket up with her good arm.

"...Do what you want."

"I will. I’ll say I won thanks to Carla. Because of you, I—"

"Shut up, you idiot!"

A pillow flew at Ivan’s face.

Tossed with no real force, it didn’t hurt at all.

"...And for the record, our family motto is Let the magic be thus. Not therefore shall it be."

"Ah… is that so?"

Sometimes, Ivan really was a bit slow.

But even so, it wasn’t all that unpleasant.

Not like before.

"...Not that it matters."

Carla buried herself deeper under the covers.

A strange warmth spread quietly in her chest.

‘That idiot… It’s impossible to hate him like this.’

She squeezed her eyes shut and muttered softly.

"Yeah, do what you want. But make sure you win—and bring that victory to me."