

Chapter 36

Epilogue — Observers

Night had settled fully over the city.

The rain had stopped, leaving the streets gleaming like polished obsidian under the lamps. Long reflections of neon and streetlights stretched across wet asphalt in liquid streaks of violet, amber, and silver. Far below, life continued with its usual quiet rhythm — late cafés pulling down shutters with soft metallic clangs, taxis sliding through intersections with gentle tire hiss, the river carrying shimmering reflections of the skyline downstream in slow, hypnotic currents. The air felt clean and cool, carrying the faint scent of damp stone and distant chimney smoke.

High above it all, two figures watched from a vantage point that existed somewhere between rooftops and sky — an in-between space where the wind moved like silk and the city lights blurred into constellations.

Mephisto stood with his hands clasped behind his back, coat collar turned up against the night breeze, dark eyes gleaming with clear satisfaction. His posture was relaxed, almost theatrical, but there was an ancient sharpness to the tilt of his head as he observed the safehouse windows glowing softly in the distance.

Konrad remained beside him, calm as ever — hands loosely in his pockets, shoulders set with quiet composure, the faint glow of the city catching the sharp line of his jaw and the steady focus in his eyes.

For a while neither of them spoke.

They simply watched the safehouse windows glowing softly in the distance, three small points of warmth in the sprawling dark.

Mephisto eventually broke the silence, voice low and richly amused.

“Well.”

Konrad waited, gaze never leaving the distant lights.

“That was entertaining.”

Konrad nodded once, the motion small and deliberate.

“Yes.”

Mephisto tilted his head slightly, a slow smile curving his mouth as he studied the safehouse.

“I underestimated the quiet one.”

Konrad allowed the faintest hint of amusement to touch his expression.

“Yes.”

Mephisto gestured lightly toward the city below, coat shifting like liquid shadow.

“Ace burns like a meteor.”

Konrad said nothing.

“Mai dissects like a surgeon.”

Konrad nodded slightly.

“Yes.”

Mephisto’s grin widened, eyes sparkling with genuine delight.

“But Shammy...”

He looked back toward the river where the evening’s experiment had unfolded, voice dropping with quiet reverence.

“...builds the entire board first.”

Konrad folded his arms loosely, gaze steady on the safehouse.

“Yes.”

Mephisto chuckled quietly, the sound warm and satisfied against the night air.

“And then closes the game when she chooses.”

Konrad’s voice remained calm, but there was quiet respect in it.

“Correct.”

Mephisto leaned against the invisible edge of their vantage point, coat collar catching the wind.

“You know what fascinates me about them.”

Konrad glanced sideways.

“What.”

Mephisto gestured downward with an elegant sweep of one hand.

“They never realize how predictable they are.”

Konrad shook his head slightly, the smallest smile tugging at his mouth.

“Incorrect.”

Mephisto raised an eyebrow, intrigued.

“Oh?”

Konrad looked toward the safehouse windows again, voice steady and certain.

“They know.”

Mephisto laughed softly, delighted by the correction.

“Well.”

He pushed away from the edge with graceful ease.

“That explains the theatrics.”

Konrad allowed the faintest smile to remain.

“Yes.”

Mephisto clasped his hands behind his back again, eyes still on the glowing windows.

“So.”

Konrad waited.

“Three experiments.”

Konrad nodded.

“Yes.”

Mephisto smiled wider, the expression sharp and anticipatory.

“Three successful conclusions.”

Konrad remained silent.

Mephisto’s eyes gleamed with fresh mischief as he looked at his companion.

“You know what that means.”

Konrad looked at him calmly.

“What.”

Mephisto spread his hands slightly, the gesture grand and playful.

“The next wager.”

Konrad said nothing.

Below them, inside the safehouse, the Triad’s lights were slowly turning off one by one — warm glows fading gently into comfortable darkness.

The city continued breathing around them — steady, alive, unaware.

Mephisto glanced down once more, voice carrying quiet amusement.

“Well then.”

His words hung in the cool night air like smoke.

“Until the next move.”

Konrad's faint smile remained, steady and knowing.

“Until then.”—

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