

## The Beginning After The End, Chapter 15: The Other Side

REYNOLD LEYWIN'S POV:

I couldn't believe it.

My son. My son was gone.

"NOOOO!" "NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO."

Durden had to hold me back before I jumped off the cliff myself to save my son.

I knew it was too late. I knew what could've happened had already happened but I couldn't just stand still, not doing anything.

"Let me go! My son! He could still be alive. Let me save my son! Please."

Durden wasn't budging and Adam came to help hold me back too.

"Please Rey. You have to hold it together. There's no easy way to tell you this but it wasn't possible for him to have survived that fall." The always playful and lax Adam had a solemn expression on his face and couldn't even meet my eyes.

"Adam is right. Pull yourself together. Your wife needs you, Rey," Durden also muttered.

They're right. They're absolutely right. Yet. Why is my body not listening to me? Why can't I go comfort my wife.

"AAAAHHHHHHH!!!" I broke down before everything went black.

Waking up, I noticed Helen holding a wet towel over my head.

"You're finally awake," She said, a sympathetic smile on her face that lacked confidence.

I ignored her and sat up, burying my face into my hands.

"This isn't a dream is it? Please tell me I'm going to wake up to see my boy playing with Jasmine and Adam."

"..."

"I'm sorry..." were the only words she managed to say before she started sniffing as well.

The flap of the tent opens as Durden made his way inside.

“Reynolds. I can’t begin to imagine how much it must hurt for you, but right now, your wife needs you. She’s blaming herself, Rey. She thinks you hate her for losing your child,” he said, his red eyes evident that he was having a hard time as well.

“...” Unable to muster up any words in response, I turned away from Durden.

All of a sudden I felt a sharp jerk as I was pulled back. Just as my eyes caught a glimpse of Durden’s large hand, my vision blurs and a stinging pain was throbbing on my cheek where he had smacked me.

“Reynolds! We had to stop Alice from killing herself! This isn’t the time to be moping! Get off your sorry a\*s and take care of the one that’s actually alive!” he growled.

This was the first time I had seen the usually composed Durden this infuriated.

I managed a stiff nod, my brain still throbbing from the hit, as I made my way to my wife’s tent.

I spotted my wife curled up under a blanket with Angela by her side, patting her gently.

I gave a meaningful look to Angela. Understanding what I wanted, she simply nodded before excusing herself out of the tent.

“...Alice”

“...”

“Honey. Can I see my wife’s beautiful face?”

“...child” I faintly heard her mumble.

“What was that honey?” I responded, patting her back.

“I killed our child!” She bolted up and turned to face me.

“I killed our son, Reynolds. It was my fault! I-if I wasn’t there, he could’ve dodged that. He could’ve lived. He sacrificed himself to save me \*sniff\* it was my fault.”

I pulled my wife toward me and held her tight, softly kissing the top of her head over and over.

I kept my eyes shut tightly, keeping myself from crying as she continued sobbing into my chest.

We just sat like this for a while until her s\*\*s turned into dry whimpers.

\*Hic\*

“You don’t hate me?” I was barely able to hear her whisper.

“How could I ever hate you? Alice. I love you and I always will.”

\*Hic\* \*Hic\*

“...I miss him so much, Rey.” She began sobbing again.

I clench my jaws, willing myself to stay strong in front of my wife.

“I-I know honey. I miss him too.”

The rest of the journey was a slow and arduous one. Not physically. No. I felt like even the wild animals knew of our emotional torment as they steered clear away from us. Our group advanced in quiet. Any of Adam’s attempts at trying to lighten up the mood met with a crushing silence. Even the cheerful Angela bore a solemn face throughout the rest of the journey.

Alice and I fell asleep together last night together in each other’s arms. I managed to console her and it helped me as well. I needed an excuse. I was the one that had sent Arthur to protect Alice. I kept trying to find people to blame but the ones that were actually at fault were already killed. Revenge had already been taken. Now, all I was left with was this dark hole of emptiness and regret. The only thing that was keeping Alice and me sane was our unborn child. For that child, my child, I had to endure. I wasn’t going to make the same mistake I had made with Arthur. He was only a child but I sent him off to protect my wife against fighters and even a mage. I had no one to blame but myself.

We arrived at the floating city of Xyrus through the teleportation gate with no further complications; as though God was mocking us by saying we’ve been through enough. The Twin Horns were supposed to separate from my wife and I from here.

“You guys sure you’ll be okay?” Adam gave us a rare concerned look.

Durden added, “We don’t mind staying with you guys for a couple more days. I know you originally came to this city for Arthur but...” He never finished the sentence.

“It’s okay. You guys have your agenda. Alice and I have all of our basic necessities and money to live off of for a couple of weeks. Keep your guys’ positions updated in Guild Hall.” I waved them off, trying to force a smile.

“Will do. Take care guys. We’ll see each other soon.” Durden replied, hugging the both of us.

The girls also gave Alice a warm hug after saying their goodbyes to her. After they had left, I turned to my wife, giving her a serious look.

“Alice, what do you say about living here from now on?”

Giving me a confused look, she replied, “What about our home in Ashber? We just got it all fixed up. A lot of our stuff is still there.”

I shook my head at this. “I think it’ll be better for us to have a fresh new surrounding. Our home in Ashber has too many memories of Art. I don’t think we’ll be able to get over it if we stay there. We’ll hire some merchants to deliver some of our stuff from Ashber here to us.”

She looked down as she decided before giving me a small nod. “What about a job? How will we afford to live here? This is a very expensive city to live in, Rey,” she added, a worried look on her face.

For once, I was able to muster up a real smile, a sincere smile that seemed so rare these days. “I know an old friend that lives here. He’s asked me to be his guard numerous times years back and we still keep in touch from time to time. He’s a fairly renown merchant in this area and has a large manor. I’m sure he’ll have a place for us to stay. They’re good people, Alice.”

She looked a little doubtful at first but after arriving at the manor and seeing me hugging my old friend, her worries lessened.

“Rey! My friend! The hero who saved my life! What brings you to this little city?” A thin bespectacled man in a suit exclaimed as he let go of me, patting my arms.

Vincent Helstea, around 1.7 meters in height with a thin frame for a body. He was a man of brains, not brawn. Vincent was a normal human but a very successful one at that. The Helstea House had been in the trading business for generation. While their family had been on the decline for a few generations, Vincent single-handedly brought his family’s asset to an all new high after building the first Helstea Auction House in Xyrus and later building several auction houses within neighboring cities.

We had met when he was on one of his trips to a more remote city to build an Auction House when he ran into trouble with bandits. I was there with him at that time, fulfilling the escort mission that the Guild had assigned me. After saving him, we hit it off pretty well.

The maid that answered the door left after she saw Vincent hugging me. Soon after, his wife and daughter came out as well, curious as to what all the commotion was about.

“Tabitha! Meet my dear friend Reynolds and his wife Alice! Alice, Reynolds, this is my wife Tabitha and this here lovely lady is my daughter, Lilia,” Vincent exclaimed, picking up his daughter. She looked to be the around the same age as Art was, with lovely hazel eyes that remind me of a kitten and long brown hair, braided. My heart ached as I thought about how beautiful a young lady she’ll grow up to be in the future. A future she still had...

Forcing myself away from my dark thoughts, I greeted myself, “Tabitha! It’s great to finally meet you. Vince had told me so many great things about you during our trip together to Eksire City. What a cute daughter you guys have.”

After my wife introduced herself and exchanged pleasantries with Tabitha, Vincent urged us into the living room to get comfortable.

“So what brings you here, Rey. Last time you sent me a letter, you said you got yourself settled all the way up in Ashber.” He said, handing Alice and me a glass of wine.

I took a deep breath and told them the story through gritted teeth.

“I had no idea. I’m so sorry for your loss,” Vincent managed to mutter. His wife had her mouth covered with her hands. “I wouldn’t know what to do if I lost Lilia. Is there anything I can do for you?”

At that, I awkwardly scratched my cheek and asked, “You asked me several times to teach your Auction House’s guards a thing or two about magic. Is that offer still up in the air? If it is, you would be doing me a huge favor. I really just need enough to rent a small house around here and live a simple life. It’s just that I don’t my wife to go back to the old house in Ashber where Arthur was born and raised in.”

A big grin appeared on Vincent’s face. “Nonsense! No friend of mine is going to be sleeping in a small hut. As a matter of fact, I was actually looking for someone! We just renovated our Heltea Auction House so it could accommodate three times as many people. With that, we got a fresh new batch of augments recruits that really need some work around the edges. You would be perfect to shape them up a bit, Rey. Can you do me a huge favor and work for me?” He put on a desperate face.

I couldn’t help but chuckle in response; he had just turned around my initial desperate offer into me, doing him a favor. Nodding, I shake his outstretched hand and discussed the deal.

Even though I was restless to start working, Vincent wouldn’t allow for it, saying we needed time to get situated in order for me to be at the best state to work. Vincent also firmly insisted that we live with them in the manor. He told us how Tabitha and Lilia were always complaining about this place being too big and empty. Reluctant at first, Alice and I eventually got ourselves situated in the left wing of the manor. Vincent was more than lenient, saying we could have a couple of rooms, in case we want any more babies

in the future. Tabitha had to pull her husband away by his ear as he grinned, waving us goodbye.

Another unforeseen blessing was how well Alice and Tabitha hit it off. I was worried she'd be lonely when I had started working but Tabitha had a lot of free time as well and just took care of Lilia so having Alice around really brightened up her day; because of this, my wife had great company too and a source of distraction. Once work started, I was busy training the new recruits. These mages were not the most talented, but they were willing to work hard. After pounding the essentials into their heads, I felt like they'd make a pretty solid team of guards in the course of a few months. Of course, all of the elite mages, both conjurers and augmenters, were attending school at Xyrus Academy so the ones that don't want to be Adventurers ended up being hired by rich nobles, like Vincent, as guards, which was also much safer.

It had been a few months now since Alice and I had first arrived in Xyrus. During this time, we were able to slowly grow accustomed to the city life. Alice's belly seemed to be getting larger by the day and, while she still had reoccurring nightmares about losing Arthur, having Tabitha and Lilia around really helped her through that. Just getting back home, I was welcomed by the delicious smell of beef stew. Vincent and Tabitha had gone out on a date while Alice promised to watch over Lilia with the maids, so it was just the two of us having a late dinner tonight, Lilia already tucked in.

"This beef stew looks amazing Alice. What's the special occasion today?" I grinned at her.

She smiled softly. "It's been awhile since I've cooked for you. This used to be yours and Art's favorite dish."

Her face turned downcast, but before I had the chance to console her...

'Hi Mom, hi Dad. It's me, your son Arthur...'

My mind froze. This was Art's voice. No. I was just hearing things. I looked at Alice while the voice continued to talk in my head. Her face was in distraught as she began looking around. Was she hearing voices too?

'...Again, I'm alive and well, Mom and Dad. I managed to survive the fall off the cliff...'

What is going on? My son is alive? Kingdom of Elenoir? Illness?

'...It may take months or even years for me to be able to go back but just be sure that I WILL be going back home. I love you guys \*sniff\* so much and I miss you. Stay safe, and dad, make sure to keep mom and my baby sibling safe. Mom \*sniff\*, please make sure dad doesn't get into trouble. Your son, Art.'

I looked at my wife again.

“You just heard the voice now too, right Rey?” she blurted, her voice edged with desperation. “Please, tell me it wasn’t just me that heard his voice.”

“Y-yeah. I just heard Art’s voice.” I replied, unable to still make sense out of all of this.

“H-He’s alive! Honey! Our baby is alive! Oh my goodness...” Alice had fallen on her knees as her voice trailed off into weeping. She was crying while she had a smile that told me her tears were from joy.

Hell, even I was crying right now. My son was alive! “Our son is alive!!!” I laughed out madly.

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