

Extras 171

Chapter 171 The Chase

"Hmm..."

As Rey looked at the unconscious body of the Half-Elf before him, he thought of the most secure place he could imagine for her.

No matter how hard he thought, only one place came to mind.

'Haaa... why do I keep going back to them?'

He opened up a portal that led to the meeting room where he usually met with Aldred.

According to what he was told, the room was reserved exclusively for him and the deals he brought.

'That means she'll be safe there. Aldred has seen her fact too, so he probably already knows not to harm her if he suddenly finds her there.'

Once he carried the girl into the portal using Absolute Wind Magic, Rey felt a rumbling sound beneath him.

A hole was created several hundred meters from where he stood, and like a blur, the body of the dragon flew into it.

In essence, Rey had even gotten to a top floor before it could.

The boy chuckled, already feeling his body shiver with excitement.

There was always something surreal about pursuing something—like playing tag—that made the human heart race in anticipation.

That was what Rey was currently feeling.

'Well then... let's begin the chase!'

"Haa... haaaaaa... haaa!!!"

Jer'ard was wheezing heavily as he made his way out of the Royal Dungeon.

Floor by Floor, he ascended by shooting Dragon Breaths into the ceiling and creating massive holes in them.

In the situation where he neared a ceiling and his breath wasn't fast enough, he would crash into it and create holes with his own body.

It hurt him, sure, but nothing currently mattered to Jer'ard than getting away.

... Away from the monster he just encountered.

'Even Monsters are weaker than Dragons! That man... that entity... he is not a Monster!'

He was far worse.

Jer'ard knew it was pointless to try to understand such a being,

He regretted even trying to fight him.

He should have just escaped from the start! He should have just teleported and run away.

Why did he try to fight? Why did he try to reject his place?

Why did he try to be strong?!

'I just... I just want to run! I don't want anything else!'

He would leave the humans and return to the Empire.

He would report the current state of affairs here and leave things to the Dragon Generals—no, perhaps even the Dragon Lords.

Such matters weren't meant for him—a mere miner.

'Did I lose him?' He looked below. 'I lost him, right?'

The moment Jer'ard couldn't see the man known as Ralyks, he was happy.

Overjoyed, even!

He was safe. He wasn't going to die, after all.

Then—

~WHUSH!~

He suddenly felt a disturbance in the space around him. He turned to his side for a glimpse, but he was moving too fast to clearly see.

'W-was that—?!'

Jer'ard felt like he saw a blur that resembled Ralyks, but he quickly dismissed it from his mind.

There was no way Ralyks had already caught up to him.

There was absolutely no wa—!

~SQUELCH!~

A powerful blade suddenly pierced Jer'ard in the back, causing him to screech as he noticed a figure floating right below him.

IT WAS RALYKS!

"ARGHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!"

Jer'ard was screaming more about the sudden appearance of his predator than the wound he had just suffered.

'H-how..?! Already?! No way!'

He already knew that Ralyks was much faster than him.

How else would he have been able to slice off his hand back then without him even realizing it?

But, he had not sensed his approach until now!

There was no way he just vanished from the 99th Floor and appeared right behind him... right?!

... RIGHT?!

~WHUUSSH!~

Several more blades appeared from all around Ralyks and they fired towards him.

The pressure behind them was devastating—as if they were being pushed by an unstoppable wind.

Each blade, seemingly appearing out of nowhere, was sharp and powerful.

They also had Mana oozing out of them as the winds surrounding them gave them an additional impact.

Like arrows, they flew and pierced even more parts of his body.

Jer'ard tried his best to evade the next volley, but despite his best efforts at aerodynamics, it was all useless.

The blades followed and pierced him.

'I-is he controlling them remotely? Why won't they come off?!

best efforts at aerodynamics, it was all useless.

The blades followed and pierced him.

The blades sank deeper into his flesh, preventing him from properly healing.

It was torture!

'Why is he still behind me? He should have caught up by now!'

Of course, Jer'ard didn't want his enemy to catch up to him, but it only made sense that it would happen.

Ralyks was the faster one, after all.

'U-unless...!'

Could it be that in the air, thanks to his [Draconic Flight], he was currently faster in the air?

Since his air travel speed was superior, could he actually outfly the enemy?

'I-if that's the case, then maybe I have a chance to escape!'

The truth was that Jer'ard had been worried for the longest time that even if he escaped the Royal Dungeon, he wouldn't be able to escape Ralyks due to the man's sheer speed.

He thought he would try to just run and evade until he recovered enough Mana to use his [Absolute Spatial Magic] and utilize long-distance teleportation.

But even he questioned the viability of such.

He was desperate, not stupid.

Even if he could make it out of the Royal Dungeon, there was no guarantee that he would live long enough for his Mana to be sufficient enough for long-distance teleportation.

He was currently at rock bottom, and the little Mana that was being restored, thanks to his Skill, was poured into his 'Breath' attack so he could escape faster and without much damage.

There was no way he would be able to evade the enemy without relying on Mana to do it.

But now that he knew he was faster in the air, there was a chance for him to get out of this alive.

He would just keep his distance from the enemy and escape.

'I won't be dying here!' Jer'ard decided within himself.

'I have to live!'

Chapter 172 Humanity's First Victory

~BOOOOOOOMMMM!!!~

The final ceiling shattered apart as the mighty Dragon Commander came forth.

Its glorious form emerged as the sun rose in the darkened sky.

It was breaking dawn, and quite a few people were already outside their houses—either preparing to leave for work, or just taking strolls.

Of course, patrol officers were also present throughout the city, so it was still quite lovely despite being so early in the morning.

So imagine the shock on the faces of the people who had woken up thinking this was just another morning.

Another safe day in the Capital.

... Only to see the personification of death and destruction emerge from the depths of the Dungeon, into the sky above.

All eyes widened in shock... and then horror.

"IT'S A DRAGOOOOOOONNNN!!!"

Terror filled those cries as people scampered for safety.

No one waited to check what kind of Dragon it was, or if it was so deadly that they had to cease all activities to flee.

To the common man, the distinction between a one-horned Dragon and a three-horned Dragon was nonexistent.

To them, all Dragons meant the same thing.

DEATH!

The glorious dragon flapped its wings and looked around, its body shaking as if it was in a hurry.

Those who could see the beast from where they hid thought that the creature was in a hurry to burn everything to the ground.

Nothing could stop it.

No one could stand against it.

This was the very personification of inevitability.

They could only watch and wait for the time of chaos to arrive.

However, before they could even wait for just a second...

~BOOOOOLMM!!~

... They noticed that the Dragon was being attacked.

A brightness illuminated the sky, causing all to see the glory of a certain entity—human in form—standing against the colossal Dragon in the sky.

The world held its breath as they watched in tension.

"N-no way..."

"I-is that...?!"

"W-who... who could that be?!"

No one knew! They could only tremble as they watched in awe and trepidation.

If the Dragon won, then their lives were all forfeit.

If the man won, then there remained only uncertainty—whether he too was an agent of chaos or prosperity was yet to be confirmed.

They could only pray to the God that had long abandoned them.

... Pray for salvation.

'Oh wow! How is it dawn already?'

Rey knew he spent quite some time in the Dungeon, but he never expected time to have passed so quickly.

'I know I didn't take too long to reach the 99th Floor thanks to that portal. Plus, I didn't spend too long in the Floor itself.'

That meant something was odd somewhere.

'Does time flow differently in the Dungeon? Maybe it's more pronounced in the Lower Floors?'

Rey didn't know the answer to that, so he simply decided to shove it at the back of his mind and focused on the huffing Dragon before him.

Jer'ard was currently at his limits; Rey could already tell from the way he looked.

He could have finished him off in the Dungeon, but there was a reason he let the beast rise to the sky—open for the world to see.

There were two, actually.

One was simple—fame.

'If I achieve a lot as Ralyks, and I remain the weak guy Rey, there's a chance that my Class will advance.'

It was a selfish reason, sure, but he wanted to put Ralyks at the forefront of the world—a spectacle of strength that would sharply contrast with his own Extra image.

If he pulled it off well, he could get two very polar lives.

Then, the second reason was a bit more selfless.

'I want the world—or, at least, the humans of this world—to see a human defeating a Dragon.'

He wanted to display the impossible as possible before their very eyes.

To burn it deep into their heads that they were not the Hobgoblins being bred for their inevitable destruction.

Humans were the ones who would triumph.

'And this is the first step.'

Rey brandished his blade as he stared at the Dragon before him.

There was nowhere he could run to.

If he tried to escape, Rey would use Wind Magic to ensure his flight was compromised.

"We have to give the people a good show, don't you think?" He smirked, preparing to attack.

"A-are you messing with me, right now?"

As he heard Jer'ard say this, Rey smiled even more and nodded.

"Something like that."

~WHOOSH!~

He closed the distance in a flash, using a combination of [Quick Teleport] and his sheer speed.

Within moments, he was already in front of Jer'ard.

"U-uwaahh!!"

Jer'ard moved both hands in reflex, protecting his face from Rey's attacks, giving the latter the perfect chance for him to cut them off.

~SWISH!~

In one swift motion, both hands were severed from the Dragon's body.

Before the huge things could descend and cause some damage to the populace below, Rey used his [Grand Fire Magic] to burn them both.

Within moments, the intense flames shriveled the meat and bones, leaving barely anything left by the time the thing crashed.

"K-Keuk!" Purple blood spurted out of the Dragon's body as he glared at Rey with fear.

Jer'ard already knew he wasn't going to be spared, not after all he and his people had done.

The only thing left for him to do was run.

~VWUUM!~

He tried to forcefully squeeze out the last bits of Mana within to teleport the furthest distance he could from Rey, surprising the latter.

Rey swiftly made to stop him, but they both teleported to the same location at that point.

It was none other than the Royal Estate itself.

~BOOOM!~

The two crashed into a building—or more like the Dragon crashed into the building, with Rey on top of him.

Debris fell all around, especially on the ground, as the colossal thing struggled to rise and get away from Rey.

Before it could, though, both of his legs were sliced off, and so were his wings.

"GUARRRGHHHH!!!"

His arms were barely even regenerating at this point, and now all viable mediums of movement had been removed as well.

Jer'ard was at his most vulnerable.

He squeezed out the little Mana he had recovered for a [Claw Attack]—a C-Tier Skill—as his final act of desperation—but [Absolute Defense] easily blocked all of it. freeweb novel.co m

"U-URGHH...!" Nothing Jer'ard was capable of was going to work here.

He already knew that, yet he couldn't help struggling.

He's just desperately wanted to live.

"Now do you understand what it means to be weak? Ah... my apologies, I imagine you already knew something like that to a measure back in your country."

Jer'ard's eyes widened in shock.

'H-how...?!' How did this human know of all this?!

"It's typical bully behavior. If you feel inadequate, then pick on someone else and make them feel worse."

Rey pierced the monster with his blade, causing more groans of pain to echo out.

"Maybe I also engage in the same thing. Just as you did to others, I'm also doing to you."

As Rey's unfeeling tone echoed in the ears of the Dragon Commander, the latter uttered words he never thought he would say.

Not to a human.

"M-mercy..."

Rey could only smile under his mask as he looked at the already-dead creature in front of him.

"Sorry, buddy. I need that EXP."

~SQUELCH!~

Chapter 173 The Royal Conspiracy

[Moments Earlier]

Within the Royal Estate, in one of its many beautiful buildings, there existed a particularly lustrous one.

It had very amazing architecture, and the colors shimmered with pure white and gold, even if it was being shrouded by the darkness right before breaking dawn.

It was very large—like a mansion—and its immediate surroundings were made to be gardens.

This was home to one of the members of the Royal Council.

Lord Knox.

As his garden brimmed with life, despite the darkness, he was currently at the topmost floor of his home, along with three other people.

These were his accomplices—the two other members of the Royal Council that ran the underworld with him.

They were all seated in a round chair within the meeting room, eating and discussing the future of their business.

The only one who stood and paced around was Knox himself.

After all, he knew the kind of dire situation they were in.

"Right now, we're running out of time."

As Knox said this, his long beards twitched as his aged faces began to have more wrinkles.

His gaze swept through the room, looking at how well-furnished his surroundings were, and how much more he wanted to decorate even further.

But the Alliance was meant to be broke, so he couldn't just go around splurging cash.

Those things would have to wait.

His small eyes rested on the other two men in the room. They also shared worried expressions, but it didn't seem like they were taking things as seriously as he was.

'They've captured Evals Redarts. If he talks, we'll be disrupted by those two...'

By 'those two', Knox meant Conrad and Vida.

They were both eyesores that stood against what he stood for.

'Recently, they've amassed too much power and recognition. It makes me, and the rest of us, seemingly irrelevant.'

From the summoning of Otherworlders, to the relationship made with them, and other issues of varying scale—Conrad and Vida always took the initiative.

It infuriated Knox without end.

That was why he had to nip things in the bud as quickly as possible. He recognized that.

The problem was that it wasn't yet time.

They had to be very meticulous about their planning, else a lot of things would fall apart even if they succeeded in their task.

Unfortunately for them, Evald Redart just had to get caught.

'If he spills our secrets, things will get quite problematic...'

Knox sighed and looked at the very luxurious and spacious ceiling above him.

Beyond it was the sky, and the ceiling itself took on a color of purity—with its chandeliers glimmering brightly.

If he and his comrades were caught, he would have to kiss this place goodbye, and they would also be the same.

He couldn't allow that.

"We've come this far already "

'After relinquishing my position as king, just so I could be a part of a council... I've lost a lot of my power, authority, and wealth.'

Most of it went to the lands that were now part of the Alliance's combined territories.

He always spent a lot of time deliberating policies, thanks to four other individuals who shared his position and rank.

In the end, the position of the Royal Council was nothing more than a useless badge.

He couldn't really do anything on his own.

Knox missed it—the old times when he was a King and he was treated as one.

'The only reason I agreed to this whole thing was due to the desperation of the time...'

Dragons had just recently wiped out the entire North Continent, and even took down a Kingdom in the West.

Everyone was scared,

That was when Conrad approached everyone and decided to make humanity a converged unit under the same banner.

'Now that I think of, Conrad and Vida were the first two to join the Alliance...'

It all made sense why they seemed to be the true rulers of the Royal Court.

'I only joined because I knew his father, and Conrad's plan seemed like a fair one.'

But it was hell for Knox—and for the remaining seared with him.

"We need to completely eradicate that slave trader!"

"I think we can all agree on that. The problem right now is how to go about it."

"Conrad has that man completely under his watch. There's no way to sneak in and go about this."

As Knox heard his allies talk, he nodded in acknowledgment.

They weren't wrong.

'To get to the prisoner, we have to get Conrad first.' As Knox thought this, his eyes flashed with a murderous gleam.

'Is it finally time...?'

"My Lords!" A man bathed in on their meeting, his face and entire body drenched in sweat.

He wore light armor, but the scar on his forehead, his hardened eyes, and overall muscular physique told anyone who saw him that he was capable.

Still, no matter how capable he was, he couldn't just barge into this building.

"Who gave you permission to—!"

"There's been a sighting of a Dragon here in the Royal Capital!"

The moment this man said this, all the angry faces froze.

For a moment, they didn't know how to make sense of all they had just heard.

"D-do not be so preposterous!"

"Dragons aren't anywhere close to the Capital."

"Quit messing around!"

Despite lashing out like this, the terrified look on the announcer's face convinced them even more that he was telling the truth.

A man like that would gain nothing from lying.

"W-where is it...?" Knox asked, his voice nearly inaudible.

He could feel his heart racing and his body shivering thanks to the news.

'Maybe... this is the right time. If we operate now, when attention will shift from the Evals to the Dragon, it would be the golden opportunity.'

Knox smiled for the first time since the meeting, quickly telling the guard to stay on standby.

"My comrades. This is it!"

As Knox said this, he approached the table where the other two sat.

This was the moment he—no, all of them—had been waiting for.

"My comrades, it's finally time to strategize."

The orchestration of their loose end's demise, Conrad's dethronement, and what to do about Vida.

There was a lot to do in such little time.

"Right now, we have been presented with an opportunity. We need to hurry."

He was met with some very hesitant and conflicted faces.

"R-right now...?"

"B-but the Dragon...!"

Knox gritted his teeth the moment he heard all these excuses given by his supposed comrades.

"You think I don't know all that?!"

Sure, a Dragon was attacking, but that didn't mean appropriate measures wouldn't be taken soon.

If they didn't have the resolve to do what they needed to, they would be screwed even if they survived the Dragon attack.

"Do not forget why we decided to invest in the underworld and amass our wealth through illegal channels."

It was because they were all hungry for power, and they would do anything possible to attain it.

"Dragon or no Dragon, we must continue our task with—!"

~BOOOOOOOOMMMM!!!~

Before Knox could complete his thoughts, a crashing sound loudly echoed in the room, and the entire place shook violently before the next shocking thing occurred.

A massive scaly form broke through the ceiling above all of the four—the Councilors and the guard—crushing all of them before they could even take a single step.

They had artifacts, but even before those could be activated, they were already dead men.

It all happened in a flash, and their demise was at the hands of the very enemy that Knox had dismissed.

'A-ahhh...' In his last few seconds, the old man had a fleeting thought.

'... What the hell just happened?'

He didn't know, right until he breathed his last and his mangled form grew cold.

Death claimed him and his allies.

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Chapter 174 Aftermath [Pt 1]

'Ahhh...'

Rey felt a sudden power rush through him.

It felt like a vast amount of energy was seeping into his body at the same time, and he took his time to breathe everything in.

He wanted to experience everything without interruptions.

Even though he was currently being watched by the denizens of the Royal Estate.

Rey could already notice the shocked faces of a few students who were in the compound when he slew the beast.

They were all staring at him with disbelief.

He ignored them, though, focusing only on the System Window that flashed before him.

[Congratulations! Your Class 'Elite Enigma' has been advanced to 'Anomaly' due to the impossible feat you have accomplished, and its incompatibility with the other image this world has of you]

'Ahh! Looks like I was right!' Rey beamed with a bright smile.

All that energy that he felt earlier were most likely the EXP entering his body.

Now, more than ever, he desired to know his current Status Information.

'Status Win—'

"S-Sir! Sir Ralyks!"

A loud voice interrupted Rey, causing him to look down to see the tired and equally relieved face of the Grandmaster of the Royal Council.

"Ahh... Grandmaster. You're here already."

Rey brushed his Status Window aside, saving the whole surprise for later.

He returned his blade to [Inventory], utilizing [Flight] to descend from his heights.

In no time at all, he was right on the Estate's grassy fields, a few meters from Conrad and the few guards who accompanied him.

He was wheezing, practically out of breath, but he still approached Rey.

"S-sir Ralyks... is that really a—?"

"A Dragon? Yes. A Dragon Commander." As Rey said those words, he stumbled backwards a little.

A wave of dizziness suddenly assailed him, and he could feel pain springing all over his body.

He didn't need anyone to tell him what was going on.

'Recoil, huh? Looks like I've reached my limits.'

Rey had been wondering when the whole thing would come, but it was finally affecting him.

All his Buff Skills were vanishing, and he probably wouldn't be able to use them again for a whole day.

After all, the longer the duration time, the longer the cooldown period—at least, that was the case when it came to these Skills.

"A-are you alright, Sir Ralyks?" Conrad asked, practically wheezing.

'You should be more concerned about yourself, dude. Why are you in such bad shape?'

Rey didn't know why all the members of the Royal Council weren't very strong.

This clearly seemed like the kind of world where the strong ruled and crushed the weak.

Yet, people like Conrad employed the assistance of more powerful men so that he could survive and rule everyone.

It seemed antithetical, but Rey simply accepted things the way they were.

'It'll take some time, but I'm sure people will soon think through all this and do away with their monarchy.'

Though, right now, none of those were Rey's concerns.

He looked around him and saw scattered debris all around him, but thankfully the damage was kept to a minimum.

No one had been affected by the accidental teleportation.

'A-ah, except...!' Rey turned to the devastated mansion that must have once stood majestic.

"Who occupied that house?"

As he looked at the conflicted expression of Conrad, Rey could already guess it was someone very important.

"It's Councilor Knox' home. You know... the man that I came to visit you with."

"Ahh... that man."

Rey remembered the wiry old man. He had a very uncomfortable air around him, but he hadn't bothered back then due to other important issues.

"I-In any case, this is truly amazing! The fact that you took down a Dragon Commander... it's simply amazing!"

Rey shrugged, trying to look for an excuse to ditch the place as soon as possible.

"It was nothing. Did you see the people I sent here earlier, by the way?"

As Rey asked this, Conrad's body twitched as his face brightened even more.

"YES! We saw them! They're currently undergoing treatment and recovering splendidly."

"I see. That's a relief."

Rey smiled a little, remembering the faces of his brave classmates that had chosen to venture so deep into the Dungeon.

The fact that they were fine brought relief to him. Though...

'... I wonder how many will remain once all of this comes crashing down.'

The implications of the Royal Dungeon Incident had many facets, and merely looking at Conrad's disturbed face, it was clear that the man must have thought of some of them.

'For one, we now understand just how terrifying the Dragons can be. Those who will break will do so now.'

Even Rey couldn't estimate how many people would leave, but this was definitely bound to cause a great imbalance in the order of things.

"By the way, I ended up sealing the entrance of the Labyrinth due to the holes the Dragon made when it was trying to escape. It's possible many monsters would be creeping out of their Floors, creating a whole mess."

Not knowing if an upper Floor had a Lower Floor Monster made the Royal Dungeons too dangerous to even draw closer to.

But, like always, I could see a benefit in this entire situation for myself.

"There are a lot of treasures that could greatly benefit the Alliance within the Dungeon, so I'd advise you to take only the most elite of your forces and subjugate the Monsters as soon as you can."

By saying that, Rey meant one thing—the Otherworlders.

At least, the ones who would remain behind after the thinning out.

'Right now they need to grind for Levels more than anything.'

If they didn't, the next Dragon that they encountered could be their last.

'Mine too.'

"U-understood! Can I count on you when that time comes, then? Maybe hire you to protect them while they Level Up?"

"As long as I can also do the same, then I don't mind."

The moment Rey—or rather, Ralyks—said this, Conrad shot him a slightly puzzled look.

"Y-you've not... reached your Level Cap?"

His eyes trailed to the dead Dragon that hung on the devastated mansion, and he looked back at the Dark Adventurer.

It was impossible for a normal person to defeat a Dragon Commander—especially alone—so Conrad had assumed he had a special Class and was at his max Level.

However, Rey could only shrug and tell the truth.

"No. Not even close."

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Chapter 175 Aftermath [Pt 2]

'This man... he's strong!'

As Conrad looked at the Adventurer known as Ralyks, he couldn't help but wonder why he had never heard of this man before.

His strength was too overwhelming.

'I can't believe he actually defeated a Dragon Commander all by himself. There doesn't even seem to be a scratch on him!'

Conrad already began to suspect that this man wasn't human.

As someone who was a leader of the humans, he knew fully well what their limits were.

Ralyks had long exceeded it.

But... did that really matter at all to Conrad?

NO!

'I don't care if he's an Elf or a Demon or whatever. What matters is if he's on our side.'

And that was what he intended to ensure.

"Sir Ralyks, perhaps we could meet at a much grander place and discuss the details of this Royal Dungeon Raid that you are suggesting."

Conrad needed more time to sort through his thoughts, and he also knew better than to disturb a man after he just slayed a Dragon.

The best thing to do was allow breathing space between each other, while ensuring they could maintain contact.

'The Otherworlders are still in their budding stages, so while they will inevitably reach—or maybe even surpass Sir Ralyks' strength—they're still not there yet.'

That meant, pending the time of their growth, humanity had to find a champion to rely on.

Conrad really hoped it would be this Dark Adventurer.

"We shall see about that. Perhaps we should meet in a week's time. You should have sorted through all of the issues at that point."

Conrad controlled his expression, but he was slightly taken aback that Ralyks had figured out the rationale behind him postponing their discourse on the Royal Dungeon.

'I already suspected this from our first encounter, but this man isn't just strong. He's smart too.'

He was an invaluable asset that humanity could not afford to lose!

"Y-yes! One week is perfect!"

"Great. Then, I shall take my leave."

~VWUSH~

A portal suddenly appeared right in front of Ralyks, causing Conrad and his few guards to take a few steps back in shock.

The few Otherworlders, who were watching from their distance, also looked at the masked entity with sheer wonder and intense intimidation.

"W-what about the Dragon you slayed? The carcass could sell for a lot. We are willing to buy it off of your—!"

"I already told you I didn't require compensation for this request." Ralyks interrupted the Grandmaster, his body already dipping into the portal.

"The Dragon carcass is yours. Do with it as you please."

Conrad could not believe what he was hearing.

'W-what in the world...?!'

A Dragon's corpse was the most expensive thing that existed in this world.

The Core within one had so much purity and concentrated Mana.

It also naturally recovered large amounts of Mana in a very short period of time.

'A Dragon's Core serves as both a high-quality Monster Core and a Mana Crystal of the same quality.'

Depending on the Dragon, the quality also exponentially increased.

If Conrad had to guess, this Dragon's Mana Core belonged to Grade 3, and that was extremely rare.

'He just gave that away like it was nothing. H-how...?'

As Conrad took one last look at the corpse, he could also see a lot of parts of the Dragon that had been kept intact.

'He sliced off the Dragon's arms and legs, so we can still use those. Then there's the main body...'

All the body parts of a Dragon were useful.

Conrad could only imagine all the possibilities that could ensue from the Alliance utilizing it.

"Thank you, Sir Ralyks..."

He knew the Adventurer most likely thought about the dire state of the entire Nation, but it was hard to believe that a single man could be so compassionate.

He freed the slaves, rescued Billy and Alicia, saved everyone from the Dungeon, protected the Capital from a Dragon, and now even gave them the corpse.

This man was beyond legendary.

He was ethereally magnificent—like the second coming of a god.

"... Please don't abandon us now."

'F-fuck...!'

Ray collapsed on the ground within a very spacious area—the 99th Floor to be exact.

He felt too dizzy to even move a muscle.

'I... I'm losing a grip.'

He forcefully began to close as he lay on the cold floor, powerless to stop what was about to happen.

'I... damnit...'

The reason he had left in such a hurry, and the reason he was in a hurry to dismiss the Dragon Corpse, was simply because he was about to collapse.

He couldn't afford to do so in the presence of Conrad and the other onlookers in the Royal Estate.

As Ralyks, he had a reputation to uphold.

He couldn't afford to show weakness.

'... I didn't expect... this much of a toll...'

Since this was the first time he had used so many Skills at once, this was a new experience for him.

In exchange for explosive power, his body felt like shit afterwards.

'D-did I ensure to... sell for the right price. The Dragon...?'

Rey didn't realize this yet, but he never sold anything to the Royal Estate.

Since everything was such a blur, he wasn't in his right mind when he ended up blurting out words that he thought were cool and within character.

Unfortunately, they contrasted with his true nature.

Rey knew just how valuable Dragon Corpses were. He wasn't just going to give the Royal Council without a proper price tag attached.

Unfortunately for him, he did exactly that.

His mind was too far gone to process all of that, so all the self reflection would have to wait until he woke up.

'I just hope... no one attacks... while I'm like this...'

As his mind finally plunged into the darkness of unconsciousness, one last thought echoed in his head.

'The Half-Elf...'

Rey remembered how he never got her back despite meaning to.

He could only hope she was safe.

"...."

And then, everything went blank.

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Chapter 176 Aftermath [Pt 3]

"H-hold on... WHAT DID I JUST DOOOOO?!"

It took an entire day, and a couple more hours, but Rey finally woke up.

His entire body felt lighter than ever, and his mind was clear.

It was while he was enjoying this newfound sensation that he realized his last conversation with Conrad, including the blunder he made.

"FOR FREEEEEEEE?! WAS I INSANE?!"

His loud voice echoed in the vast 99th Floor, which appeared as devoid of life as one could imagine.

Rey reckoned there had to have been creatures here before the Dragon showed up, but they were nowhere to be found.

No surprise there.

He was also able to notice the stink being generated by the leftover corpses of humans that Jer'ard killed, so he used Fire Magic to burn them all to cinders.

Rey was still fuming mad, but it didn't take him very long to figure out its futility.

'They'll probably invest the important bits to Adonis and the Alpha Class people—the ones who will choose to remain, that is.'

It was very unlikely that he would get a decent cut out of everything.

He was considered pretty weak and useless, after all.

'Well, let's take our minds off of that. I probably wouldn't have made much money from them, even if I sold it anyway.'

The Black Market had to be the most profitable enterprise when it came to business.

He could probably sell for double—if not triple—of what the Royal Council would be willing to pay.

'I would have eventually sold it to the Royal Council, though.'

A treasure as important as that belonged in the hands of those who would use it to help humanity, not just their selfish interests.

'I'm all for being selfish, but there are limits.'

Right now, he could do nothing but consider the whole thing as an investment to a good cause.

Looking around him, Rey could also see tons of Mana Crystals, and even piles of the Monster Cores that the Hobgoblins had stacked up.

However, Rey knew he couldn't touch those anymore.

'Adonis and pretty much everyone already noticed it. I could probably take a couple of them without anyone noticing, but...'

At this point, Rey just felt like it wasn't worth it.

He glanced around and once again admired the beauty of the 99th Floor.

'Hmm...?'

Something kept bugging him.

It felt like he was forgetting something very important, and he struggled very hard to think.

Then... it finally came to him.

"My Status Window!"

The instant he shouted this out loud, a System Panel appeared right in front of him.

[STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: Rey Skylar.
- Race: Human (Otherworlder)
- Class: Anomaly (A-Tier)
- Level: 99 (78.54% EXP)
- Life Force: 22 (+158) [+300]
- Mana Level: 149 (+158) [+500]

- Combat Ability: 130 (+158) [+500]
- Stat Points: 90
- Skills (Exclusive): [Doppel]
- Skills (Non-Exclusive): [Fusion/Fission]. [Merger]
- Alignment: Neutral Good

[Additional Information]

You are an irregularity to the world. Achieving the unbelievable, shaking the balance of reality... you seek to overturn what is and isn't.

Will you succeed? Or will your failure be miserable?

[End Of Information]

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[Skill Categories]

~ Attack Category: 30

~ Defense Category: 13

~ Buff Category: 12

~ Miscellaneous: 12

[New Skills: Please Select Their Categories]

~ B-Tier: Gateway Portal

~ S-Tier: Absolute Spatial Magic

~ B-Tier: Greater Mana Recovery

~ B-Tier: Greater Regeneration

~C-Tier: Claw Attack

~A-Tier: Dragon Breath:Dark

~A-Tier: Draconic Flight

~A-Tier: Draconic Resistance

~A-Tier: Draconic Power

[Total Skills: 76]

"Wow. This is quite a lot..."

Rey could see that his Level had shot up to Level 99, which was pretty amazing—all things considered.

He didn't know what Level the strongest in the Alliance were, but he now knew that he had to find out.

'I need to properly compare my Stats with theirs—especially with Adonis.'

Rey felt like if he used his full power, he was stronger than Adonis, but he wasn't very sure about his Base Form.

'I guess we just have to wait and see...'

His Level wasn't the only thing that caught his eye, though.

"My Class has changed to A-Tier. Anomaly, huh? Interesting..."

He noticed his Bonus Stats had taken a spike up, and Rey found that interesting.

'I keep track of my growth, so even if I'm Level 90, my Bonus Stats shouldn't be that high. Unless...!'

Rey's smile widened as soon as he figured it out.

His new Class came with more special perks.

'Nice! I'll check that later, but for now...'

Rey had to focus on another thing that caught his attention.

The two Non-Exclusive Skills he now had.

He didn't ignore the fact that his Alignment had changed from Neutral to Neutral Good, but he didn't find that relevant at the moment.

What mattered most was his power-set, and the two new Skills were a part of that.

"Skill information." He mumbled.

[Skill Details]

[Fusion/Fission]

Tier: S

Ability: Allows the user to perfectly blend Skills with each other, creating a synergy that covers for weaknesses and complements the strength of selected Skills.

In essence, the ability to fully utilize multiple Skills as one or more, with more efficiency and intensity.

Type: Passive

[.]

[Merger]

Tier: S

Ability: Allows the user to merge two or more Skills, permanently fusing them together to create one new Skill.

Note that the new Skill will take on more qualities from the superior Skill out of the ones being merged.

Type: Active

[End Of Information]

Rey rubbed his chin as he looked at the information before him.

'I see. I probably awakened the first Skill when fighting Jer'ard. That's why I was able to do the Black Hole thing so well.'

However, this second Skill was news to him.

The [Fusion/Fission] Skill was going to be very useful to him for sure, but Rey couldn't see a more useful ability than the [Merger] one.

'I'm limited by the amount of Skills I can have, but with this one... I don't have to simply delete or waste away Skills I collect.'

He could just merge them with another Skill to produce a much stronger ability.

'It's perfect!'

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Chapter 177 Aftermath [Pt 4]

"Sha! Looks like I got them all."

Rey could see that he got pretty much all the Dragon Commander's Skills, and that definitely brought a smile to his face.

His dark hair was crumpled on the shiny floor as he looked at the System Window in front of him, swiping up and down like a child who had just found a new toy.

He couldn't hide his excitement no matter how hard he tried to.

"Seems I've gotten much stronger than I expected." He grinned within himself.

Of course, he knew he couldn't get too complacent, but Rey was honestly very proud of himself.

'I've come so far already...'

With that thought in mind, Rey decided to look at the one thing about his Stats that had changed so much.

"Class details."

[Class Information]

- Name: Anomaly

- Tier: A-Tier

- Cause: You have defied the norm of this world and have successfully tilted the balance. What will come out of this new change?

Hope... or Horror?

[Class Privileges]

~ 10+ Base Stats addition for all your major Stat Areas

~ 3+ Subsequent Stat Point for every Level Up

~ Natural Enemy Effect can be activated (When facing someone much stronger than you, your Bonus Stat Points will double)

~ Naturally suppresses the effects of any 'Appraisal' cast on you. (If the Appraisal is weaker than this Effect, you can influence its results)

~ Near-Death Effect can be activated (As long as you don't die immediately, you can recover from a fatal attack—can only be used once a day)

[End Of Information]

"A-ahh!"

Rey found what he was looking at to be insanely awesome.

The first one hadn't changed from his last Class, and the second was an upgrade that he already suspected after looking at his Stats.

'The fourth also hasn't changed...'

However, the third and fifth were real game changers for him.

'So I won't die by a fatal blow as long as it's not instant, huh? And I'll recover? That's great.'

This was literally going to be his life saver.

'Then, there's the fact that I can increase my Stats if I'm facing a stronger opponent.'

Rey smiled to himself with satisfaction.

'This Class really suits me!'

He knew Classes like Grand Knight and Grand Tamer were also in the A-Tier, but he doubted that they would provide stuff like this to him.

'That said, I'm definitely missing out on some of their own cool perks.'

Rey had no complaints here, though.

'I'll miss the Natural Mask effect, but since I usually use an actual mask as Ralyks, there's really no need to have it.'

'There's a lot to explore with my Stats and Skills, and I should try to avoid procrastination, so let's do it now.'

As such, Rey sat upright and decided to explore his Status Window, Skills, and all his current abilities, a little more.

By the time he was done, his System Window looked quite different from before.

"I should probably take a look around."

Once Rey was done setting things up for himself, his attention returned to his surroundings.

This vast space, filled with nothing but Mana Crystals, shattered earth, and piles of Monster Cores, couldn't be all there was to the 99th Floor.

At least, that was what Rey thought.

'I'm sure Adonis and the others didn't get a chance to explore. If I find something special, then I'm keeping it!'

Rey felt like he had contributed enough to society to warrant a little selfishness on his part.

Besides, finders keepers.

'With all of these resources, chances are that the Alliance won't need much else for a while.'

Besides, investing in himself was indirectly tied to the entire United Human Alliance.

No... even the whole world!

With these thoughts wrapped around Rey's head, convincing him that he was doing all these things for a righteous cause, he decided to begin his search.

"Please let there be treasure! Pretty please!"

Rey searched high and wide for stuff, but all he could see were empty rooms.

They looked like storage areas, so it must have belonged to the Dragon.

'From what I saw in his Stats, he mines and delivers mineral resources. He must have been using this place as his storage area.' Rey thought to himself.

Now that he thought of it, with the Spatial Magic of Jer'ard, doing such things would be remarkably easy.

'I wonder why he chose to come to a Top Floor, though. From what I can see, he has yet to exhaust the proceeds of the lower ones.'

And everyone knew which one had better materials.

'Could it be because of me? Did my entire ruckus pique his interest?'

If that was the case, then Rey found himself grateful for the entire Trial scenario.

Thanks to the House Arrest that he suffered, he was prevented from heading into the Royal Dungeon.

'I would have lost for sure if we met back then...'

Thanks to the House Arrest that he suffered, he was prevented from heading into the Royal Dungeon.

He found it a bit silly now that he thought about it—all the paranoid thoughts he had concerning the mastermind.

'I even thought they were the ones who stole the Monster Cores, but I guess this makes a lot more sense.'

The market wasn't saturated with Monster Cores because there were none to begin with.

'It was the work of a third party this whole time.'

Still, Rey didn't know whether to be relieved or not.

On the positive side, the mastermind he was searching for was not as formidable as he gave him credit for.

He probably didn't even know all of Rey's capabilities; though the latter knew he couldn't be too sure about all that,

However, the negative side still plagued Rey's mind.

'If this guy is a miner, and he mines to his Lord, then...'

If there was no inflow of resources, it was only a matter of time before the Dragons struck.

'I'll have to be on my guard for that moment.'

In any case, with the mystery of the Royal Dungeon being solved, and Rey's expectation of the threat of the Dragons on his mind, there was only one final thing he had to solve.

'The issue of the mastermind.'

As Rey had this thought, he stopped in front of a huge door made out of Dungeon stone.

'This is the last place.' His thoughts trailed.

He could already sense something powerful within, so he didn't waste any time before shifting the door open and seeing what lay beyond.

The moment he did, Rey found himself grinning gleefully.

Within the white room, encased in pure Mana Crystals, was a massive pile of Monster Cores.

Of course, this pile was not as bountiful as the ones the Hobgoblins kept in store, but they were plentiful regardless.

The Monster Cores looked much larger than the red ones Rey was used to, and these ones had a frosty white appearance.

Rey could also perceive the energy they emitted, and it was incomparable to the Grade 6 Cores that the Hobgoblins had.

'Could they be Grade 5? No... maybe even Grade 4?'

Rey could see a particularly gleaming one that stood at the precipice of the pile.

It looked much bigger than the rest.

'That's the Boss' Core, huh? It's just a guess, but these are probably the Monster Cores of the beasts in the 99th Floor.'

And if that was indeed the case, then Rey knew he had hit a jackpot.

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Chapter 178 Aftermath [Pt 5]

"Hup! And that's the last one!"

Rey grinned at the many sacks that lay in front of him, his cheerful expression unable to change.

'I can pack them all up in a total of forty-seven sacks. Not bad...'

Since the pile wasn't preposterously massive, as seen with the Hobgoblins, Rey could fit everything into [Inventory].

He still had his Spatial Rings, so he stored the other Items that occupied his slots in [Inventory], thus giving him enough space to store everything.

Once the process was complete, Rey stood all alone within the grand 99th Floor hall.

'Now that this is all done, I don't think there's anything left for me to do here.'

The rest of what greeted his sight would go to the Royal Council.

'They have the Dragon Corpse and now these too? If they take my advice and we launch a full-on raid, they'll be able to rake in even more profit.'

The more Rey thought about it, the more he realized just how rich the Alliance was going to become because of him.

'Well, it's fine. I probably shouldn't get too greedy...'. He smiled, remembering a few faces of the beggars he saw on the street during the Excursion.

If some of these resources could be used for their sake—to better their lives—then he had no complaints

In the end, wasn't he also a human being?

"Alright! Time to head... b-ba...ck..."

Right there and then, Rey realized something that had completely skipped his mind since he woke up in this place a couple hours ago.

'The Half-Elf!'

Other than that, he also remembered something of equal pertinence.

'They'll be looking for me!'

How could he have forgotten that he was one of the Otherworlders who had come to this world for the sake of saving it?

He was a valuable asset to the entire United Human Alliance!

He had a few classmates who cared about him too.

'And I just bailed on them for this long? I don't even know how long I was out, or how long I spent here!'

He could only estimate, but he also had a theory that time operated much faster here than outside.

What if he had already spent days down here?!

'Ahhh! They'll all be worried. Especially after that Dragon attack too!'

Rey knew he had to hurry.

'I should probably go to the Royal Estate first. The Half-Elf can wait.'

He didn't even remember her name anymore.

'I'm sure they'll take care of her well for me. If not, well... let's not think of that for now!'

With those thoughts flowing in his mind, Rey put away his Enchanted Items and did away with his disguise.

Fortunately, he still had empty Spatial Rings to help him contain all his Items.

Once he returned to his normal state, he opened a portal and ventured inside.

'Let's hope I don't get into too much trouble!'

When Rey arrived at the Royal Estate's front gate, he was welcomed pretty cordially by the guards.

He returned his Pass to them, and they didn't even ask him any questions.

'The sun is high up in the sky, so it should be around noon.'

Rey realized he needed to get another watch, not even remembering what happened to his previous one.

The weather was considerably warm, and while it was midday, everywhere was ominously quiet.

He passed by the guards and ventured through the gate.

Not too long after he did so, he could already see a cluster of students.

All twenty-seven of them.

'A-ah! Looks like everyone is up, huh?'

Billy and Alicia were among the group, though there was a clouded expression on the former's face, and a somewhat anxious one on the latter.

He smiled a little as he noticed Alicia's gaze darting around, almost as if she was looking for him.

She was also wearing the ring he gave her.

'Hehe!' He moved even closer.

Conrad and Vida stood before the students, alongside Brutus and Lucielle—both looking good as new.

Rey wasn't sure whether it was thanks to Alicia's [Absolute Healing Magic] Skill, or some other means, but he was happy to see everyone well.

He could also see Trisha, Belle, Justin, and the other Rescue Team members.

A few looked shaken up, but most of them seemed to have pulled themselves together.

Then, there was Adonis.

He had the most complicated expression of all. Something about his gaze seemed distracted, and he seemed to be intensely brooding on a lot of things.

'I guess he still hasn't gotten over what happened down there.' Rey sighed and decided to look away.

Noah was also there, though an expression akin to guilt seemed to be on his face. Rey wondered what the issue was with him now, so he decided he would ask him later.

'I hope it's all good, though.'

Rey was ready for a mouthful, so he just decided to take everything in stride and not worry about too much.

He finally closed the distance and thought it was the perfect time to announce his presence.

"H-hello, everyone! Sorry I'm late. You won't believe what happe—"

"REY!" The first voice that greeted him was, of course, Alicia's.

She rushed towards him, leaving the rest of the cluster of students behind her.

Her brown hair swayed and her amber eyes shone, reflecting the golden rays of the sun as she swiftly closed the distance.

"Where were you? We were worried sick!"

As she hugged him, Rey felt a sweet scent wash over him.

Before coming, he had used his [Water Magic] Skill to freshen up. It was a mere C-Tier Skill, but it had its uses.

"Haha... I can explain. But maybe later..." He rubbed his head awkwardly.

"A-ah! Yeah, sorry!"

As Alicia chuckled sheepishly, quickly separating herself from him, Rey simply responded with a stupid grin.

Everyone was now staring at him, including the two members of the Royal Council.

Rey thought he saw Lady Vida grin a certain wicked smile, but that was probably his imagination.

"This is so awkward!"

Fortunately, Conrad's voice saved the day right when Rey felt the burden weigh heavily on him.

"It's good to have you back, Rey. And just in time too."

'Just in time...? Time for what?' Were the first things that popped up in his head.

'Also, isn't he being too calm about all this?'

He didn't have time to process these thoughts, though, as the Grandmaster spoke yet again.

"Why don't you join everyone while we make the announcements?"

Rey was puzzled.

'What announcements? Why are they being made outside?'

Rey had a few thoughts in mind, but he dismissed them until they could be proven to be concrete.

"O-okay..."

He and Alicia walked towards the line, side by side, and while he focused on her charming smile, he could not completely ignore some of the stares he received.

For one, Billy's.

He wasn't looking at him with a jealous or rage-filled face. His expression connoted nothing short of defeat.

A kind of sorrow a guilty man had.

Noah, Trisha, Belle, and Adonis also had peculiar expressions to give him.

Most were positive—things like relief mixed with brief hints of hesitation.

'Looks like I'm not in trouble this time.' Rey sighed in relief.

If it wasn't him though, the question remained...

... Who was?

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Chapter 179 The Grandmaster's Announcement

"There is a lot to discuss with you all. I can hardly find where to start from..."

As Conrad started his speech, his eyes appeared sullen. It seemed like he was both sad and determined to see everything through to the end.

He just had difficulty articulating his unfiltered thoughts.

"Let's start with the Royal Dungeon. It's been two days since the incident, so all of you must already know what went down from your friends and classmates."

Adonis had already given everyone a brief summary, but it was inevitable that the ones who participated would share the news.

Most of the students involved didn't want to talk about it, but as long as students like Justin existed, the news would eventually circulate.

"A good number of you were nearly killed by the Dragon within it. While it was a completely unprecedented and unforeseeable situation, we will take full responsibility."

By "We", Conrad meant the Royal Council—or the United Human Alliance as a whole.

Conrad went on to talk about how Dungeons operated and how Dragons had never been so close to the Capital before, hence making it more dangerous than ever.

Stuff like that

By the time he was done with the Dungeon Incident, uncomfortable faces could already be seen.

"Then, there was the issue of Alicia and Billy going missing. The two parties involved have decided that the details remain confidential, and I'd like to respect that."

In essence, no details about what happened would be told to the students.

Those in the Royal Council, extending to Lucielle and Brutus, already knew everything.

They also planned on punishing Billy for his actions.

However, since Alicia specifically told them not to broadcast what happened to everyone else, they had to listen to her request.

"We interrogated the parties involved too, and we found shocking news. Apparently, three of us five in the Royal Council were involved in criminal activities which have been tied to the incident with your two classmates."

Lord Knox and the two others were involved in dealings within the Black Market, Slave Trade, and other illegal activities.

The Otherworlders were shocked to find out all these things, and they didn't even bother hiding it.

The ones they trusted with their welfare had actually done so many atrocities under their noses. How could they even trust them anymore?

'I considered hiding all of these, but frankly... it doesn't matter anymore.'

Conrad already knew the ugly truth.

He couldn't appeal to most of the Otherworlders here. They all wanted to leave—especially after seeing a Dragon up close.

He couldn't change the minds of the people whose minds were already made up.

Especially when only more danger lay ahead.

'The Hero was right. This world needs true warriors.'

Conrad was done pandering to these people before him. He had seen how a true Hero acted, and frankly... not too many of them could be found among these ones.

"The three are already dead, though. The Dragon that landed on the mansion of Lord Knox killed them, probably when they were in the act of conniving against our dear Nation."

Knox had told him he was going to be in his sleeping quarters, since he was tired, and everyone else had also said the same.

That was why he wasn't too worried about where the Dragon landed since the sleeping quarters of his dear friend wasn't near the crash point.

So it came as a surprise to see their carcasses—squashed and muddled up—in the conference area of his manor.

After thoroughly investigating Evals Redart, the truth was finally revealed.

Right now, only he and Vida remained the only members of the Royal Council.

At least, until they could fully verify and thoroughly investigate new candidates for the position.

"That being said... let us move on to the next topic."

'W-what the...?!'

Rey could not believe his ears.

The more he heard, the more surprised he became about the developments of things in this world.

'I can understand why Alicia wouldn't want things publicized since she wants the group to still function collectively.'

If Billy was made a public scapegoat, accused by Alicia, it could cause some conflict and major division in the class.

That wasn't something they could afford right now.

'I can also understand the whole Royal Dungeon stuff. It's a bit unfair that they have to take the blame, but I understand how that works.'

However, what Rey couldn't understand was the whole 'Corrupt Royal Council Members' thing.

'They were evil all along? I had no idea!'

Once or twice, Rey had always wondered how the Black Market was able to thrive so well despite being so close to the center of power, but now he knew why.

It was precisely because they were close to the center of power that they were so successful.

All those slaves he freed... all the justice he enacted... the root of the problems were—ironically enough—the ones he trusted to clean up the mess.

'I also can't believe I accidentally caused their deaths.'

Rey realized it was somehow a blessing in disguise, but he still couldn't get over the fact that his carelessness had caused people to die.

'I'll just have to be very careful next time. Damn...'

However, even though Rey was stupefied by most of these revelations, there was one that made absolutely no sense to him.

'Why are you telling us, Conrad? Don't you know anything about politics?'

Rey could see that Conrad was tired, and he perhaps simply wanted to completely do away with diplomacy, but he didn't think this was how to do it.

'Be more like Adonis. Say the harsh truth, but do so in a more compelling way.'

Right now, Conrad just made himself a punching bag instead of taking the high road.

'Maybe that's what he wants, though. Either way, it's too late now.' Rey nearly sighed.

He already knew what was coming.

'Most of us are going to leave today. Maybe even right now.'

Rey was convinced of it already. Why else would they be having such a meeting outside?

He glanced at Noah, who also looked at him with a slightly guilty expression.

'Ah! I see. He wants to leave, huh?'

Noah was always a softie, so Rey already knew that something like this was inevitable.

Perhaps he just didn't expect it to happen this soon.

'The Royal Dungeon Incident sped things up a bit, but in a way... that's a good thing.'

It would have been more of a waste if they had spent so much effort and resources training everyone, only for a few to be useful.

Even food and other important facilities were being wasted on most of these students.

'Getting rid of them is the best option.'

As if reading Rey's mind, Conrad's deep tone took over as he calmly broke the murmurs and whispers.

"On to the final topic of utmost pertinence... the future of you all as Otherworlders."

Silence took over instantly.

"We summoned you all here with the intent that you would save us from the Dragons, since we can not do it on our own."

Conrad went on and on to remind them of the reason for their presence in H'Trae—why they didn't die in that Truck Accident.

"However, after spending all this time together, I believe it would be foolish of me to keep clinging to the hope that some of you might change your minds on whether or not you will sacrifice yourselves for the sake of humanity."

Most of the students here would definitely not.

"Therefore, today—this very hour—you will be presented with a choice. To stay here and fight alongside us, or leave and carve your own path." Conrad's round altered a bit, but he maintained his resolute stance.

It was finally time for the inevitable separation among the students.

"The choice is yours."

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Chapter 180 Desertion From Comrades

There was deafening silence all around.

The students all looked at one another, each glance depicting multifaceted emotions.

Some students already had resolute expressions on their faces, while others seemed unsure about what choice to make.

Either way, it seemed that most people were waiting for who to step forward and leave first, hence the hesitation,

"The doors are open for those of you who wish to leave. Naturally, we wish you good fortune, but that is where our support ends."

Right now, the United Human Alliance had a bunch of its own problems to deal with. They couldn't afford to exert more energy on soldiers who did not wish to fight for them.

"Also, in case some of you are yet to make up your mind, there will be an Expedition for those who choose to remain behind. It will be compulsory, and it will also be dangerous."

The moment Conrad said this, the students who had been so hesitant to make their move soon began to blurt out their true intentions.

"T-then... I'll be leaving!" A random guy said, stepping forward from the bunch.

Before he had room to breathe, many other students blurred out the same thing.

Boys and girls stood out from the rest of their classmates—their numbers being an absurd chunk of the entire class.

Out of the twenty-eight, nineteen students were leaving.

Only Rey, Adonis, Belle, Billy, Trisha, Clark, Justin, Eric, and Alicia remained in place.

Everyone else seemed to have already made up their minds about what they would do.

They all wanted to leave.

'Even you too, huh, Noah...?' Rey smiled a little sadly as he looked at a crumpled white envelope in his hand.

It most likely contained a letter, and Noah had quickly given him while stepping forward.

'I wonder what kind of message he wrote there for me.'

Rey already knew he wouldn't be able to work with Noah forever. In fact, their separation was inevitable.

'Right now, I don't really need him in my Black Market dealings. Plus, I already decided not to have anything more to do with them.'

In essence, there really wasn't anything holding them together.

Still... Rey couldn't help but feel a stinging sensation in his chest; one that he couldn't properly explain.

'Why...?'

Why did he feel so sad, and slightly frustrated, to see that Noah was leaving just like that?

Perhaps it was due to the sole reason that Noah had slowly become his friend over the course of their time together.

Sure, the relationship was a bit unbalanced, but Noah was privy to the aspects of Rey's life that he would never show anyone else.

He knew his secrets, and they both shared a bond that couldn't be replicated anywhere else—even though it was mostly tied with money.

'Haa... I hope he's fine, though.' Rey found himself leaking a sad smile,

He could only hope the boy had toughened up from all his experiences and would make better choices in the future.

'He should have a considerable amount. I'm sure he could retire and live a good life somewhere remote.'

With his Class and Skills, there was no doubt that he would be a formidable force for any native of this world that tried to disturb him.

Of course, if Noah encountered a Dragon then that would be 'Game Over!'

'I'm sure he thought of all these, though...' Rey shrugged and decided simply to let the matter in his head go.

He placed the envelope in his pocket and sighed deeply.

Once all the nineteen students were gathered, they were asked whether or not they had any personal properties they would like to take along with them.

Of course, items given to them by the Royal Estate were excluded from this, so they didn't have much of a choice.

The Council was even benevolent enough that it didn't tell the students to strip and return the current attires they donned.

Considering the way the nineteen abandoned the very people that saved them from death, fed and trained them for about two months... who would blame the Council for making such a move?

After waiting for a few minutes, specifically for those who had one or two items they left in their rooms to fetch them and return, all the deserters were ready to leave.

Sad faces greeted them as they were told to leave the gates without any ceremony attached.

In the past, the students would have acted like entitled brats and asked for at least some measure of compensation.

However, they were no longer the one with the power.

They no longer had any cards to play.

'I'm surprised, though...' As Rey watched the nineteen students leave, he looked to his side and spotted the eight that chose to remain, like him.

'... I expected more people to have left.'

It was ironic how none of the Alpha Class students bailed on the United Human Alliance; especially considering the fact that they were the ones that experienced the most danger in the most recent events.

'Alicia and Billy were nearly sold as slaves, and Adonis' squad almost died at the hands of a Dragon.'

Yet, all of them remained standing.

'I guess they're the kind of saviors this place needs...' Rey's thoughts trailed.

Though he had this general line of reasoning, he couldn't help but look at a few people with suspicion.

'I'll have to keep my eye on Billy. Now that he's been exposed, there's no telling how unstable he'll become.'

The only reason Billy hadn't been abandoned by the Royal Council or Rey was due to his strength.

It was just logical to keep him on board if he chose to stay.

'Besides, he could be a loose cannon—a danger to the denizens of this world—if we just let him roam free without consequence.'

Then, there was one other person Rey was concerned about.

'I'm more surprised you stayed, Belle. Aren't most of your puppets leaving the Estate? Wouldn't it be safer to follow them?'

He looked at the glassy facade that Belle displayed, feeling a lump in his throat.

'Is her desire to destroy Adonis and Alicia strong enough that she would just choose to remain here despite the dangers?'

Or did she simply have other intentions? It was difficult to tell.

'The important thing is that the strongest cards chose to stay. Sure, we've lost quite some capable people and their unique Skills, but we managed to retain the best ones.'

It was a given that people like Trisha and Clark would remain, given their personalities.

He didn't know Eric very well, but he was very close with Justin, who was very adventurous and playful.

Even after barely surviving the Dungeon, he recovered the earliest out of everyone.

He was just that kind of guy.

Then, of course Billy wouldn't leave Alicia, and Alicia's goals aligned with helping the people of H'Trae.

As for Adonis, Rey still didn't know what really drove him to help the people here, but he knew the boy truly wanted to help.

There was no way he'd abandon them now.

'As for the others...'

Rey's eyes glowed brightly as he looked at the nineteen who were leaving.

His [Absolute Appraisal] was activated as he glossed through their Status Windows.

'They're all pretty weak, so this is the best move.'

To properly raise the best crop, one had to whittle down the weeds.

The deserters wouldn't have done much in the long run anyway, aside from costing the Council more resources to maintain.

As Rey was having these thoughts, he suddenly saw something among the cluster of students.

'W-what—?!'

His eyes widened—nearly bulging out of their sockets—as he noticed the details on the panel that was exposed before him.

'T-that's him?! The mastermind!'

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