

Extras 181

Chapter 181 The Mastermind

'N-no way...!'

Rey's eyes were bloodshot as he looked at the back of a certain boy among the bunch of students who walked towards the gate.

His Status Window was bare for him to see, and it made Rey shiver to his core.

What he saw... defied all his expectations.

[STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: Adrien Chase.
- Race: Human (Otherworlder)
- Class: Necromancer (A-Tier)
- Level: 12 (78.54% EXP)
- Life Force: 10 (+50)
- Mana Level: 20 (+30)
- Combat Ability: 5 [+45]
- Stat Points: 55
- Skills (Exclusive): [Skill Creation]
- Skills (Non-Exclusive): [Inventory]. [Necromancy]. [Darkness]. [Grand Defense]. [Greater Spatial Magic]. [Greater Weapon Summon]. [Healing]. [Armament]. [Full Resistance]. [Full Boost]

[See More]

- Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

[Additional Information]

A true mastermind. One who lurks in the shadows and causes others to do his bidding while laughing underneath his mask.

His goals remain a mystery too...

[End Of Information]

Rey felt a bitter feeling rise up within his stomach as he looked at even more of the Skills that the boy had.

He counted nineteen!

'T-this... this kind of guy existed in our class?!'

He always knew the malefactor behind the incidents in class was formidable and smart, but not to this extent.

'His Stats and Levels are low, but his potential and his Skills...'

Even his Class was worrying.

But there was one thing that truly shocked him the most—down to his innermost cote.

'[Skill Creation]... I saw that Skill back then...'

Sweat covered Rey's face as he remembered the Skill-selection period.

There was no way he could forget something like that.

After all...

'... That Skill costs 100 Karma Points!'

In essence, it was an SSS-Tier Skill; on the same level as his own.

Rey remembered thinking it was impossible for anyone to get such a Skill, since that would mean they would have to be perfect.

He wasn't even sure Adonis could get something like that; and the boy was as perfect as they came.

However, his eyes weren't deceiving him here.

'I can see it clearly! He has an SSS-Tier Skill!'

How was that even possible?!

As Rey was having this thought, he saw that the boy he was intensely staring at stopped dead in his tracks.

'W-wha—?!'

Adrien Chase—as his name was called—slowly turned back.

His gaze felt distracted, but he looked behind him and Rey felt like his gaze was piercing him directly.

'H-he noticed my Appraisal?' Rey's thoughts were a jumbled mess as he felt saliva forming within his throat.

Right as he was having this near mental breakdown, he was met with a smile.

Adrien, the true mastermind, was smiling.

'Is he smiling... at me?'

Before Rey could even say or think anything more, his mind went blank.

He didn't know what to do or how to react.

The smartest thing to do now would be to chase him down and capture him, but Rey wasn't even sure he could win.

Not unless he knew the Tiers of each Skill he possessed, and more information on his capabilities.

Just as Rey could mimic Skills, this one could create them.

They were at a stalemate in that department.

'I have superior Stats, but something about him feels dangerous.'

Rey felt like if he made a single move now, it would be over for him.

'I'll expose myself, no doubt. All my plans and actions up until now would be useless.'

There was no way he wouldn't be recognized as Ralyks.

'Speaking of Ralyks... does he know I'm him?!'

Rey didn't know how much this guy knew, but he knew how far he was willing to go.

There was no doubt in his mind that this malefactor was the one who caused Adam's death; and now he was just going to walk away.

He was leaving the Estate's gates scot free—no recompense for his actions whatsoever.

To what end? Why did he sow so much conflict in the first place?

'How was he even able to hide such a Skill?!'

Rey realised how foolish that last line of thought was. After all, he too had been able to hide his own Skill.

'I believe his previous Class was Mage, and his two Skills were [Inventory] and [Water Magic].'

Other than that, Rey didn't know anything about him.

He wouldn't have even remembered his name if he didn't see his Status Window.

'I also don't remember anyone bearing that name in class. Now that I think of it... I don't know him at all.'

Adrien Chase wasn't someone he ever noticed.

He had never had a single conversation with him, and he never spotted him during training.

It was almost as if he didn't exist at all.

'And someone like him is finally free from the Royal Council. Is this what he wanted all along? Freedom?!'

But that didn't make any sense!

If Adrien wanted to leave, he could have just done so without resorting to all of this.

He could have left and defied the rules long ago.

'Maybe he didn't want to draw attention to himself while doing it. He wanted others to go with him in a seemingly natural way.'

He might have orchestrated—or at least sped up—the instability among the students, causing the inevitable to arrive much faster than normal

The result? He was able to leave with the crowd while remaining hidden from sight.

No one would suspect a thing!

'T-this is... it's too unfair!'

Rey clenched his fist and bit his lip as he looked at the back of the very boy he had been searching for all this time,

Now that he finally saw him... there was nothing he could do.

'He's so close...'

Practically a couple meters away from Rey's reach.

'... But he feels so far away.'

Rey thought of a bunch of Skills in his arsenal that he could use, but they would either be too flashy or ineffective.

And so, Rey—the highly revered Underworld Dealer, Dragon Slayer, and Anomaly—could only watch, suspended in a single position.

... Completely rendered powerless by a weaker foe.

Chapter 182 A Silver Lining

"Now that they have left, it's time to begin the main announcement."

Conrad's voice boomed in the ears of the remaining nine students who remained in the open field.

Rey and his eight other classmates looked attentively at the man before them; waiting for what he desired to say.

Even though it seemed like he was paying rapt attention, Rey's thoughts had still not left the boy called Adrien Chase.

Flashes of the same scene—where he turned back and smiled at him—kept appearing in his head.

Frustration dug deep into his chest, but he could do nothing but remain in his position.

He could do nothing at all.

"... Having an Expedition into the Royal Dungeon very soon."

The words from Conrad woke him from his reverie.

'A-ah...!'

"I know most of you are anxious and worried. I don't blame you, considering what happened the last time." As Conrad said this, he appeared a little uncomfortable.

Valuable Knights and Mages had died, so it wasn't an easy thing for the United Human Alliance to suggest returning to the Dungeon.

However, it had to be done.

"The Ecosystem has been changed, and the Monsters inside are running rampant. If we don't take care of it soon, it could lead to a catastrophe."

Rey knew exactly what he was talking about, as he had read about it in more than one or two books since he began learning of this new world.

'Monster Evolution!'

When Monsters of a certain kind consumed other Monsters in other kinds—specifically their Monster Cores—they grew unnaturally stronger and developed special characteristics.

The level of change, and it's overall quality, depended on compatibility.

'I was considering checking out how far the Hobgoblins could go, but my plans were cut short by that Dragon...'

"It is possible for Monsters to go through Evolution if they consume Cores from other kinds of Monsters, which is why we are constantly grateful that the Dungeon Floors are designed in such a way that prevents Monsters from various Floors from mixing with one another."

But now, thanks to the Dragon, all of that had changed.

'Lower Floor Monsters will rise to the surface, and the stronger Monsters will consume the weaker ones, leading to more Evolution.'

If the situation wasn't curbed quickly, there was a chance that an Invincible Monster could be born.

'It is trite that Monsters have weaknesses. But, if a Monster evolves by consuming several other creatures that compensate for that weakness, it becomes an ultimate being.'

In essence... unstoppable!

Rey could feel his heart race as he heard Conrad explain more about the situation.

The issue of the Mastermind still bothered him to no end, but he decided to place that at the back of his mind and focus on the information he was currently receiving.

"Sir Ralyks—the Dark Adventurer who saved our city from destruction—has assured me that he will guard all of you in your Expedition, and he assured me that no harm would come to you.'

Rey could see the tense expressions of most of the students now softening.

There was no one around who didn't know the name 'Ralyks.'

He was practically a celebrity.

'Dragons are considered the apex beings of this world, so since Ralyks was able to defeat one, everyone is assured of their safety. At least, to an extent...'

Rey felt weird referring to himself—or, at least, his alter-ego—in such a way, but he had no other way of addressing it.

'Ralyks' was separate from 'Rey' as far as he was concerned.

"By clearing the Dungeon with his aid, you'll be able to get much stronger than before. Perhaps once that is settled, you can finally leave the Capital and begin your true adventures."

Rey had a wry smile as soon as he heard this.

'By Adventures, don't you mean war?'

Rey knew how dire the current situation was. More than ever, the threat of the Dragons weighed heavily on them.

'With the loss of the skilled Mages and Knights of the Alliance, I'm sure Lucielle and Brutus will be permanently stationed on the battlefield.'

That meant the students were largely on their own—with the exception of Ralyks.

'But, since I am Ralyks, it's essentially just us Otherworlders that will be in the Royal Dungeon.'

Rey wasn't sure how comfortable he would be when exploring Dungeon Floors with people around him.

He knew a lot of restrictions would have to be placed on his usual mode of operation.

'I can't run wild as I normally would.'

"Let's have some good news now. I can see you all have dreary faces, but it's not all thunderclouds and rain, I promise." Conrad's face slowly broke into an understanding smile.

"I just had to get the heavy stuff out of the way first."

The journey wasn't for the faint of heart, so it was better for those who only desired benefits to understand the dangers and horrors that currently waited them.

If they could see that, then the benefits would naturally come rolling in.

"First of all, there have been a lot of resources found on the 99th Floor of the Dungeon; enough to find the Alliance for a very long time."

Rey didn't know how that was good news for the students, but he decided to be patient and listen before jumping to conclusions.

"We plan on rewarding those who decided to rescue our Head Warrior here despite knowing the risks. Ten percent of the total rewards will be shared amongst you six."

Rey's jaws nearly dropped as soon as he heard those words.

'E-eh...?!'

"I know it is a mere token, but please accept our gifts.'

Rey looked at the bunch and expected them—or, at least, Adonis—to gracefully decline.

"Thank you for the reward. We will gratefully accept it."

As the Hero bowed slightly, he flashed his signature smile of sheer purity.

'Adonis, you bastard!' Rey nearly cried, and he didn't even really know the reason why.

'Aren't you supposed to be heroic and reject those benefits?'

Rey knew he was being unfair in his thoughts, but he didn't stop. Adonis probably already knew that the Alliance could afford to give such gifts as incentives to their saviors.

Plus, as a Hero representing the Otherworlders, he knew better than to simply be a doormat and get used.

Since the very first day, he shrewdly ensured that his classmates enjoyed the best luxuries while paying their dues to the Alliance.

In essence, Adonis had a balanced stance.

'Still... if I knew it was going to be like this, I would have just taken my share!'

How was it fair that he did talk the heavy lifting and his classmates reaped the rewards?

Was he being greedy? Yes!

Did he care? No!

As Rey was having these thoughts, Adonis' calm and gentle voice suddenly echoed out and stopped him in his tracks.

"I would like to suggest a little adjustment to the allocation; if you do not mind."

Conrad shook his head and gave Adonis the stage to continue.

"I would like all nine of us who remained to take nine percent of the rewards, while the remaining one percent should go to the families of those who died in battle."

As Adonis said this, Rey's heart instantly melted and all his selfish thoughts turned to dust.

'That's fair... I guess.'

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Chapter 183 Resolve To Grow Stronger

According to Adonis, he didn't feel comfortable with the current allocation of rewards, considering the circumstances surrounding the entire incident.

"Billy and Alicia were missing, and Rey went out to search for them. If it wasn't for his decision to seek the aid of Sir Ralyks, we would never have found them and even gotten rescued from the Dragon."

In essence, everyone had their own circumstances.

"I would have liked to give Rey my own share if it was possible, but... unfortunately I require resources for a particular endeavor of mine." Adonis slowly turned to Rey and bowed his head slightly.

"I hope you can forgive my selfishness, Rey."

The instant he did this, Rey swiftly raised both hands and waved them in an awkward attempt to dismiss the entire thing.

"S-stop it! There's no issue at all! I wasn't thinking of taking your reward, even if you offered. Haha... haa...!"

The awkwardness in the air lasted for a few more seconds as Rey and Adonis stared at each other, before both of them looked away with somewhat complicated smiles on their faces.

Rey had a flushed shade of pink on his face, as he was absolutely mortified by Adonis' suggestion.

As for Adonis, he had a relieved, but somewhat sad expression on his face.

"Thank you, Rey."

"S-sure..."

Once more, awkward silence took charge.

"Mhm... ahem...!"

Thankfully, it didn't last for too long. As soon as Grandmaster Conrsd cleared his throat, all attention returned to him.

"I understand your suggestion, Hero. If that is fine by everyone, we will split the rewards like that."

As attention was cast on the remaining five, they had a choice to make.

Accept or refuse.

"Of course, I have no problems with that!"

"It's cool."

"No big deal. It's not like we need that much money anyway."

"As long as I get my cut, I'm fine."

"I don't agree. Pfft! I'm just messing with you! Look at your faces. Of course, I totally support it!"

Belle, Trisha, Clark, Eric, and Justin respectively had what they had to say.

The latter's reaction was particularly troublesome, eliciting varying reactions from the parties involved.

A few people poked Justin while others chuckled a little.

However, none of them found his little attempts at comic relief to be annoying.

On the contrary; it was endearing.

A lot of the tension that wafted through the air had been reduced, and smiles covered the faces of those who were present.

"I'm glad you all agree. We already had compensation we wanted to give to the families of the deceased, so we will add the one percent to the initial sum." Conrad raised a brow and smiled softly.

"Is that fine?"

Without wasting much time, everyone responded in the affirmative.

"Understood."

Conrad went on to talk about a few more things; most of them having to do with allocation of the other percentage of resources.

Unsurprisingly, Lucielle and Brutus were also recovering their own shares despite simply performing their sworn duties.

No one had any complaints, though. The reward was an inconsequential amount anyway, so it was pretty reasonable.

'This arrangement isn't too bad. It's pretty amazing what can happen when money starts flowing into your pockets.' Rey thought to himself.

The same Alliance that seemed on the verge of collapse not too long ago now seemed to have a bright future ahead of it,

It put a smile on his face.

'Now I can see why they had to send the deadweights away first. If they had stayed, most of them would just try to suck this Alliance dry of resources before ditching at the last minute.'

At least, with this arrangement, only the truly helpful ones would get rewarded.

"It took us nearly two days, but we have successfully stored the Dragon Corpse and have started processing it." Conrad added, bringing Rey back into the conversation taking place.

Apparently, the Dragon Corpse was being processed to make special items for all nine of them.

'Hehe... Sweet!' Rey found himself grinning even wider.

Monsters had special anatomies and qualities that made their parts extremely useful for things like armor and other kinds of equipment

'I'm sure the Dragon Commander's carcass will be even more useful than a regular Monster hide.'

It wasn't that Rey was lacking in Magic Items. In fact, he had a lot of them to spare; and he could probably get more if he wanted.

'The problem is that there's only so many Items you can stack at the same time.'

There was something known as 'Equip Limit'.

It wasn't a quantifiable thing, and everyone had their limits depending on Levels and other unknown factors—maybe talent of physiology.

However, this 'Equip Limit' made it impossible for a person to stack up more than a certain number of Items.

'My current limit is 30 Items.'

It was a reasonably high number, considering the fact that most people couldn't equip more than five.

Twelve was the current best record, and yet he had managed to exceed twice that amount.

Still, it felt a bit frustrating that he had the means to obtain more items, but even if he equipped them, their effects wouldn't stack after he successfully equipped thirty,

'I don't know when or how the limit will increase, so the best thing I can do is replace the weaker Items with stronger ones.'

Thus, he was looking forward to the Item he would get from the Dragon's corpse.

If it was something grand, he would use it in the stead of a less impressive tool.

'Besides, I'm pretty excited to see everyone else get stronger.'

He wasn't sure he could single-handedly topple down a Dragon Empire by himself.

'I need Adonis and everyone to get stronger. Of course, I won't get complacent too.'

During the incoming raid, he couldn't afford to be left behind and outdone by Adonis... or any other classmate for that matter.

'We should all grow strong. And I should grow stronger.'

They had to be ready for the war to come.

All of them.

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Chapter 184 Dark Clouds

"That is all for now. You can return to your rooms now and relax until further notice."

Once Conrad said this, he bowed his head slightly—same as Vida, Lucielle, and Brutus.

"We really appreciate you sticking with us despite all that has happened. Humanity thanks you."

As always, Adonis tried to be humble, and a few students reacted awkwardly. Rey acted stupefied, and before anyone realized it, they were already on their way.

As Conrad watched the Otherworlders leave, his smile grew broader, but a distant worry echoed in the depths of his eyes.

"It seems like we haven't suffered too much of a loss. We have more prospects than ever before, and we aren't fighting on our own."

The presence of the Otherworlders comforted him, and the comrades that stood by his side.

"Sir Ralyks will be here within five days, so we should make all the necessary arrangements for the Dungeon Raid."

The mysterious man that they had only gotten to know about barely three days ago seemed to be their best bet and central figure in the success of the planned Raid.

If he didn't show up, everything would crumble into pieces,

But Conrad had hope. It was the same kind of irrational hope he had when he first heard Ralyks' intentions of saving everyone by himself.

Against all odds, the man succeeded.

As such, Grandmaster Conrad chose to place his faith once again in the one whom the entire United Human Alliance relied on.

The Dark Adventurer, Ralyks!

"We still don't know anything about him, though. All my connections tell me the same thing—that there is no top-ranked Adventurer with such a name." Lady Vida's voice oozed with skepticism.

Conrad couldn't blame her. She hadn't met the man personally, so she couldn't understand.

"It's possible that he is using an alter-ego. What matters is his strength and willingness to help." Conrad responded.

"Besides... it's not like we have other options, right?"

Vida sighed and reluctantly agreed.

In the end, the current Otherworlders weren't as strong as they needed them to be.

Under the protection of this Adventurer, all of that was going to change very soon.

If that was the only issue on ground, then smiles were meant to be planted on the faces of the four individuals present.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the case.

"Did your connections tell you anything about the movements of the criminal underworld?"

As Conrad asked this question, a few seconds of silence echoed in their midst.

No one uttered a single word.

Until finally...

"No. No one is saying anything. This goes deeper than the surface, and not even my connections know what is coming next."

What the two were referring to was the recent power vacuum left behind as a result of the deaths of the previous rulers of the Criminal Underworld.

With the demise of the three Royal Council Members that governed and regulated activities in the Black Market, it was inevitable that those hidden in the darkness would begin to surface.

If the Underworld—which had grown considerably larger than they could even fathom—was left unchecked, it could swallow the entire Alliance whole.

"How about on your end? Have you been able to collect more information from Evals Redart?"

"A-about that. He ended up committing suicide during one of the investigations."

The moment Conrad heard this from Brutus, his eyes widened in surprise.

"W-what?!"

"My apologies. We weren't able to get any more than the location of a single central hub of criminal activities."

It was difficult enough to extract information from someone as stubborn as Evals Redart, but he thought with Lucielle finally recovered, they could give it a try with Magic.

Unfortunately, he died before they could even explore that option.

"Haaa... I guess it can't be helped. It's best we don't focus on the unchangable."

Tons of Magic and Skills existed, but there was none that could raise the dead.

At least, not one the humans had.

"What happens in this central hub? Where is this central hub located?" Vida spoke up, her gaze directed at the flustered and mortified Head Warrior.

He wasn't the one who led the investigation, but he was most likely taking responsibility for what happened.

"We don't know much about the specifics, but we know of the city where it happens."

Every eye was on Brutus as he announced the name.

"The Allied Merchant City."

Everyone's eyes widened at the sound of the place of interest.

The Allied Merchant City was the central hub of commerce in the entire United Human Alliance.

It generated over twenty percent of the total revenue that the Alliance used to operate.

It was a hotspot of all kinds of trade and commercial activity, so while it was not surprising to see that shady business was being done there, the four were incredibly anxious about how to make their move.

"What should we do?"

Any wrong step, and they could collapse a monolith that was keeping the current economy afloat.

A small mistake could compromise everything.

"The situation is too delicate now, but if we don't act quickly, things we'll get even more unstable."

This wasn't a problem that concerned the Otherworlders, which was why they didn't say anything to them about it,

Even if they had done so, it wasn't like any of them could help them out with it.

In the end, it had to fall into the hands of them—the Royal Council.

While the Otherworlders tried their hardest in the Royal Dungeon, they had to find a way to resolve the issue they lay before them.

... Before it became a cancer that they could not control.

"This 'Obsidian Council', the 'Slave Trade Association', and the 'Mercenary Gang'... they have to be stopped somehow."

The combined body was called 'The Grand Triumvirate' by the now deceased Slave Trader, and for good reason.

They ruled everything in the underworld.

"It appears we were never as united as I had hoped." Conrad said bitterly as he looked at the three before him.

Vida, Lucielle, and Brutus.

They all knew the ugly truth at this point.

"The Dragons aren't our only enemies."

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Chapter 185 The Black Palace

There stood a dark castle at the very precipice of a massive mountain.

The mountain was shrouded in darkness, and obsidian clouds floated above everything.

Black grains of sand danced in the air as this single ominously gigantic castle elegantly sat at the heights of majesty.

There was a valley beneath the mountain that served as an Estate.

Several massive houses and colossal structures declared the landmark at the center. However, no matter how big or glamorous everything was, they were all submerged in inky black.

And the darkest of all... remained the castle.

Within the great structure, past its imposing gates, and inside the throne-room of absolute splendor, a being currently lay on his pile of treasures that formed a throne.

Multiple precious tones were mixed together with only the purest kinds of Magical Objects and Rare Ores.

Mana Crystals grew all around the absurd, yet immensely beautiful throne that the great being was casually laying on.

The throne was vertically huge, but more so horizontally long, so it could contain the huge form of the one atop it.

It had a soft cushion, so there was no way they would get uncomfortable.

No one was in the throne-room except them, and due to their eyes being closed, it was clear that they were currently asleep.

However, the two eyes of the slumbering beast slowly fluttered open.

"Strange..." As they opened their jaws, a deep voice echoed throughout the throne-room.

The glowing purple eyes of this entity shone through the area, piercing the darkness.

"One of my children is dead...?"

This being was what could be described as a Dragon; and not just any kind of Dragon.

He was a Dragon Lord.

—The Dark Dragon of the Black Mountain.

His current situation was a perplexing one, as one of his offsprings had met an untimely death.

The reason he could detect it wasn't due to a strong paternal bond between himself and his children, but the 'Bloodline Connection' that all Monarchs had with their progeny.

He couldn't help but be connected to them, and once one life was snuffed out, he would instantly know.

"Which one was it? All my kids are Generals, unless... ahh..."

It didn't take long for the Dragon Lord to know the one that was dead.

"Jar'rarid... right? That was the name... I think."

He squinted his eyes and frowned his face, almost as if saying the name of the deceased Dragon brought nothing but a bitter taste to his mouth.

That was how much he detested him.

'The weakest of my offspring. Shame upon my lineage...'

He had been so ashamed of his idiotic and talentless son that he couldn't have him in the Dragon Empire, so he gave him a job as a miner in the human place.

'He was a miner, if I'm not wrong. Aah, yes... that's about right.'

The minerals he got from the Human Cities were quite subpar, all things considered.

Since Mana didn't flow as densely over there as it did in the Dragon Empire, it was a given that their materials would have less quality.

However, since they were at least useful for something, the job that his useless son had made him contribute at least a little bit towards the Empire.

'His death isn't really consequential. It's not like we won't live or function well without those minerals. But...'

The Dark Dragon narrowed his eyes, staring emptily into space as he growled silently.

Everything around him began to tremble in the presence of his almighty power.

'... How exactly did he die in a Human City?'

Rage, mixed with disgust and disappointment began to swirl within him,

He was embarrassed that he had a son like that. Even in death, the useless bastard kept bringing shame to the legacy of Darkness.

'He got himself killed among the humans? Is this some sort of joke?'

Sure, Jer'ard wasn't the strongest Dragon around, but he was still a Dragon Commander—far above the Dragon Newts and Dragon Soldiers.

'Are there any other races in the Western Continent? I don't think so.'

Humans were the only ones who populated that entire parcel of land, which made it their usual playground.

The truth was... humans were hilariously weak.

They were perhaps the weakest of all the races in H'Trae.

They barely had any natural abilities or talents, and none of their features gave them any major advantage in battle.

They were nothing more than cannon fodder to be used when training Dragon Newts and Dragon Soldiers.

A single competent Dragon Commander could probably alter the entire scope of battle if they were sent.

He could have even sent his useless child, and the fool would have been able to annihilate most of the humans there.

The only reason he didn't was because there was no need to.

The struggle of humans didn't have to end so quickly, so the tides of their battle was something they actively ensured wouldn't fall too far out of balance.

If the Dragons were winning too much, they would lessen their forces, and if the humans were winning too much, they'd send some reinforcements.

It was nothing more than that.

'And yet... that idiot lost to them?'

The Dragon Lord shifted on his throne, feeling the cushion rub on his scaly body.

'What a curious development. Which group defeated him? Did they gang up on him? Was it an ambush? We're there special circumstances behind it?'

The Dark Dragon had to admit that he was curious.

As his eyes shone brighter, the six horns on his head became more pronounced.

'Is it possible that humans have gotten stronger? Maybe smarter?'

Somehow, he doubted it.

'Either way, I think this is worth investigating.' He slowly closed his eyes and returned his posture to the way it was before.

As he got comfortable, he had one trailing thought.

'... I'll get to it as soon as I wake up.'

Thus, the Dragon Lord returned to his slumber.

This single act saved humanity from extinction at the hands of overwhelming power.

They just didn't know it yet.

[End Of Arc 2: The Royal Dungeon Incident Arc]

~We will now be beginning Arc 3!~

[Prepare for the Dark Undertaking Arc!]

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Chapter 186 The Creeping Darkness

"You may come in."

The moment this deep voice echoed within the very dark room, and beyond, a door slowly creaked open.

The intruder was a man with slick brown hair, with bright green eyes, and a very classy outfit—a black waistcoat on top of a formal shirt, black trousers, and a neat tie.

All in all, this man in his early thirties was very handsome in every sense of the word.

He was Aldred Winsley—Broker for the KariBlanc Group.

At least, that was what his identity demanded.

"Greetings, father." He bowed his head the moment he came in and closed the door within the dark office.

"Sit."

Aldred obeyed instantly, moving past the comfortable couches that stood at the center of the room, but moved towards the chair in front of the man's desk.

The man he called father—Lord Blanc of the Obsidian Council—sat calmly behind his desk

His bright green gaze could pierce the eyes of anyone, and even though the office was dark, they glowed intensely.

Aldred was used to this gaze, but even he still felt like prey being constantly watched by a predator.

He sat in front of his father, separated only by the desk that stood between them.

For a few seconds, no one spoke.

Then—

"They're acting much faster than I expected. Things are getting really unstable right now..."

—Lord Blanc spoke.

He didn't have his usual confident and imposing tone.

Instead, a sort of worrying vibe took over his voice, as well as his countenance.

It was easy to see that he was shaken by the current situation.

"How bad is it, Father?"

"Very bad. We can't contact our prime buyer due to some kind of interference through our main channel. We've also lost contact with the merchandise we kept in the warehouse in the East."

Their prime buyer resided far from the Capital, so the KariBlanc had gotten a vast patch of land where they constructed a massive warehouse to store the goods they would sell prior to the final sales.

It was also a major part of their 'Expansion' plan.

And now... it was in shambles.

"We are in a precarious state right now. If we do not complete that sale, then we'll encounter a devastating loss. Plus, the fact that we've lost contact with the warehouse and the merchandise... it worries me."

Lord Blanc didn't want to admit it directly, but Aldred understood what all of this meant.

The KariBlanc Group was desperate.

They needed help.

"Have you tried seeking assistance from the rest of your colleagues? You know... the ones that aren't on 'their' side?"

As Aldred asked this question, Lord Blanc grunted and shrugged slightly.

"They're also like me—too busy protecting their interests to spare time for another."

As Aldred heard this, he understood.

No wise drowning man would try to save another drowning man if he didn't have some kind of life raft first.

Lord Blanc had powerful connections, but since they were experiencing the same challenges as he was, they could not render their aid.

"Is this what 'they' wanted all along, or...?" As Aldred whispered this, sensing his Father's increasing frustration, he racked his brain to think of a solution.

In the end, he could only imagine one.

"Sir Ralyks... we could enlist the help of Sir Ralyks."

The Dark Adventurer who was shrouded in mystery and power; the same one who had reached the realm of 'Absolute', and possessed a wealth of resources that would make the KariBlanc Group richer than ever before.

He was immensely resourceful, intelligent, and most of all... overwhelmingly strong.

There was none within the four walls of KariBlanc that didn't know who this esteemed man was.

"Sir Ralyks? Hmm..."

Despite all of these qualities, Lord Blanc didn't seem to jump at the idea.

He maintained a critical air around him as he narrowed his eyes in hesitation.

"He had all the qualities we need, right? Besides, to turn the tables, we need as many powerful allies as we can."

Aldred continued speaking, a slight passion in his voice.

"I have seen Sir Ralyks' capabilities. He is a far better fighter than Yuri and a much better Mage than I am. The fact that he was able to deliver so many Monster Cores also means he is still hiding much of his strength."

It was difficult—if not downright impossible—to find even a single flaw in the man.

"I already know these things. I never doubted his capabilities in the slightest." Lord Blanc sighed.

Once Aldred heard this, his face became twisted in confusion. If his father didn't doubt Sir Ralyks' capabilities, why did he show such hesitation?

"Then—!"

"I'm just unsure of whether he'd choose to ally with us. Someone as powerful and intelligent as him will not be fooled by tricks. I find it doubtful that we have enough to thoroughly convince him to take our side, given the current precarious situation we are in."

Once Lord Blanc said this, Aldred finally understood his father's concerns.

Sir Ralyks was too powerful to concern himself with a losing party's issues.

The only reason they had maintained a somewhat mutual understanding was because the KariBlanc Group could pull their own weight.

Even then, they knew he couldn't be stopped even if he chose to break their promise.

However, now that they were sinking... why would he choose to help?

"I... I believe he may come to our assistance." Aldred swallowed his saliva as he spoke.

"We just have to be convincing enough."

As Lord Blanc heard this, he narrowed his gaze on his son and told him to proceed.

"He left his lover in our care, and we've taken proper care of her in his absence. I believe it takes some measure of trust in us for him to have done such a thing."

"H-he did that...?" Lord Blanc's eyes were wide open in surprise.

Aldred was meant to inform him of every update about the man named Ralyks, but he could understand why this was never mentioned.

It must have occurred during the period when the Dragon Incident occurred, and the capital began to tremble.

In that case, there wouldn't be enough time or a stable opportunity to tell him.

After all, after that entire incident, their enemies sporadically began to make their move.

"Lord Ralyks trusts us to an extent, Father. Besides, he is not an unreasonable man. He has listened to my selfish requests a lot of times, and if we can make it worth his while, I'm sure he would hear us out at the very least."

Upon hearing this, Lord Blanc sighed a little and maintained a few seconds of silence.

Aldred held his breath as he watched his father for the decision he would make concerning the issue.

"I understand. Please arrange a meeting between me and Ralyks as soon as you can." He said, his bright eyes glinting with resolve.

It is rumored that once Lord Blanc makes a decision, he sticks to it until the very end. The very expression that his father was making gave credence to those rumors.

"I shall inform you when next he comes to our establishment."

"Yes, Father." Aldred bowed his head and smiled.

The truth is, he wasn't very certain if Ralyks' would actually help them—though he desperately hoped that was the case..

There were some within the KariBlanc Group who suspected that he was the one who defeated the Dragon that appeared in the Capital.

Aldred was one of them.

He truly believed that if anyone in the capital could achieve such a feat, it would be him.

He just didn't know how and why—pretty much the circumstances surrounding the strange and mysterious event.

"You may leave now."

Aldred obeyed his Father's words and rose to his feet the instant he was told to depart.

He took his bow once he reached the door, and finally... he Lord Blanc all alone in the room.

"Haaa..." The Obsidian Councilor heaved a heavy sigh and closed his eyes in the dark.

"I hope this all ends well."

It would seem that the fate of the entire KariBlanc Group, as well as that of the entire Criminal Underworld, rested on the choice of a single man.

'Sir Ralyks... please favor us.'

*

Chapter 187 Silent Observations

"Pfft—!"

A boy and a girl walked side by side as they entered a very luxurious sitting room, with doors plastered on multiple areas of the walls.

The chandeliers that hung from the ceiling gave the room an air of prestige, and the freshly painted walls made it reminiscent of paradise.

The ground was squally clean, covered in both squeaky clean tiles and carpets that were fluffy to the feet.

Everything was pristine—an epitome of perfection.

However, neither the boy nor the girl paid any of these fine details any attention.

They were used to it, after all.

"Haha! For real?"

"Yes! You really need to check it out!"

"Well, since you asked so nicely."

"Haha! Of course!"

They both chuckled as they ventured further into the room, until they couldn't advance any further.

After all, they had separate rooms to enter.

"I guess this is where we part ways, huh?" The boy with black hair and an average height looked at the slightly taller girl beside him.

He had a plain, ordinary face that you could find just about anywhere.

His brown eyes appeared ordinary as well, and he looked unassuming enough to be seen as a harmless person.

Just an ordinary guy, really.

"Yup! It's getting pretty late, so I'm gonna turn in now."

The girl who responded was someone who could be said to be the exact opposite of the boy.

She was absolutely stunning from head to toe.

Her long brown hair was enchanting, and her amber eyes were captivating. Her slender physique, with perfect proportions, made her the kind of girl who would qualify as any guy's dream girl.

It was surprising enough that she was talking to the boy in front of her so casually, but she actually seemed so immersed in the conversation that you'd think they were best friends.

These two were Alicia and Rey, and after spending all day in the library, they were finally in their residence.

Not only did they go there almost immediately after Grandmaster Conrad's announcements, but they didn't leave until now.

It was already past 11 PM, and the two teenagers seemed to have enough energy to keep going. If not for the tiny strand of self control left in them... they could have continued into the next day.

"Alright, Alicia. Guess I'll see you tomorrow."

"Yup! Goodnight, Rey."

Alicia went into her room, and Rey did the same—almost doing so at exactly the same time.

They both noticed this and giggled as they shut the door to their rooms.

The moment Rey entered his room, a clicking sound echoed, which signified it being locked.

The room brightened up thanks to the Luminous Stones that were automatically turned on using Magic anytime they detected his presence.

He could always turn them off manually, though.

"Haaa..."

Rey looked at his room, realizing this was the first time in a few days since he actually spent time in it.

'I was gone for two days and none of them were even worried...'

Apparently, the reason they weren't too concerned was because Ralyks assured them that he would be safe, and that he could always detect his location.

Ignoring how creepy that sounded, Rey didn't even remember he said something like that.

'Must be a bullshit excuse I came up with to explain away my absence back then...'

He shrugged off the thought and collapsed on his bed, feeling its soft embrace while closing his eyes.

Taking deep breaths, he made a comfortable smile.

"Alicia..."

Unfortunately, the smile did not last for too long. The moment he uttered that name, a slight darkness clouded his face.

'We talked about a lot today: mostly books and all the drama I missed while I was away.'

Since Rey had to play the fool, she had to tell him all about the Royal Dungeon Incident—at least, what she heard from what everyone was saying.

It was thanks to her account that he was able to gain a lot more perspective on the situation of Adonis' team before he rescued them.

According to the gist, they were only there for a couple of hours, yet it seemed they had spent all day in the Dungeon.

'I knew it! Time moves faster in the 99th Floor!' He had beamed at himself at the time.

The most important thing to note was their struggle against the Dragon; especially Adonis' fight.

He had to admit... the Hero was strong.

However, now that Rey understood the entire gist, he now knew for sure—

—Adonis wasn't stronger than him.

'It seems I've finally surpassed Adonis. But, it's not like I feel satisfied or anything...'

All things considered, Rey was able to get the complete gist of the situation.

He was glad he came at the time that he did.

If that wasn't the case, everyone else could have died.

'I have a Skill that can heal practically anything and cure all ailments. But I can't cure death.'

Once a person died, that was the end of it.

Still, despite all of these heavy thoughts, none of them were the cause of Rey's disturbed expression.

No... this stemmed from something else.

"She didn't mention anything about the kidnapping."

Not even a single detail.

He and Alicia had talked about a multitude of topics, but anytime he tried to bring her to the issue of her kidnapping, she constantly deflected.

After trying it two to three times, she straight up told him she didn't want to talk about it.

Once Rey heard that, he completely backed off.

'I mean, I was there. I know everything that happened, and I know the story that led to it. But...'

Rey sighed as he blinked rapidly.

He couldn't keep his sight steady with so many worrying thoughts swirling in his mind.

'I'm no good in situations like this. I just hope she's fine.'

Rey couldn't force her to talk about it.

He only hoped that once she was ready, she would tell him and they could sort things out together.

He didn't know when and how it all happened, but at this point, Rey already considered Alicia an important part of his life.

He also hoped that was how she saw him too.

'I don't want to make her uneasy, so I'll back off. We can still have fun like usual.'

Once he resolved that in his thoughts, his mind moved on to other things.

'Now that we're only nine, I thought we would have some sort of meeting together. Adonis would have organized everything too...'

From what Rey could see, though, Adonis appeared very distracted.

It seemed like he was constantly thinking about a lot.

'I would like to ask him, but... nah!'

He and Adonis weren't particularly close, and he didn't want to cross the boundaries they had already established around each other.

'The whole situation must just have him rattled, that's all.'

Despite how powerful and idealistic Adonis was, he was still only a teenager.

It was natural to feel these things.

'Right now, I should perhaps be more concerned about keeping an eye on Billy to make sure he doesn't do anything stupid again.'

From the little Rey observed, Billy didn't seem like he would do anything, but he couldn't be too sure.

'I can't get complacent about him. Not again.'

*

Chapter 188 Practical Objectives

Once Rey settled all the floating thoughts in his mind, he pulled out a crumpled envelope from his pocket.

It was the letter that Noah gave him since the start of the day.

'I still haven't read it.'

Rey tore through the envelope and brought out the white sheet that was trapped inside.

He was still on his bed when he turned to lie on his belly, placing the paper in front of him so he could read its contents.

~Dear Rey

Ah... what am I saying? How do I even put this?

I just wanted to let you know that I've made up my mind about all of this. After seeing that Dragon yesterday, I realize that I just can't cope with this.

I want to live a normal life, no matter what.

Sorry, my thoughts and words are all jumbled up. My hand still trembles whenever I remember the entire thing that went down.

As much as I want to tell myself that I can get stronger to face the Dragons, I know myself. I'm not cut out for this stuff.

So... I think I'll leave and go to a quiet city where I can live a stable life. There doesn't yet seem to be a way to return home, so there's no use sticking around.

If you do find a way to return to Earth, please don't gatekeep it.

COME AND FIND ME, PLEASEEEEE!!!

I wish you well. You seem to fit in so well in this world that I find it almost absurd.

Hopefully, you survive till the very end.

I'll be rooting for you in my warm mansion.

Your loyal subordinate... Noah!~

"Pfft! This guy... he remained an idiot until the very end."

Rey found himself chuckling as he read the letter.

Despite smiling at the silly thing in front of him, he felt a deep pain in his chest.

It didn't come from any kind of external damage, and Rey didn't think he was physically hurt.

He just felt strangely pained by the whole thing.

To Rey, it felt just like losing his close friend all over again.

"I'll miss you, buddy."

He wasn't too worried about Noah, considering the fact that he was relatively on the stronger side compared to the people of this world.

'He also has hundreds of Platinum Coins, so he should be able to live a fairly comfortable life.'

Rey also knew how Noah had matured in both business and general perspective as a whole.

He was sure the boy wouldn't get so easily swindled.

'Or maybe he will. How can I know?'

Rey crumpled the note along with the envelope and threw it towards the bin that sat at an inconspicuous corner in the room.

The crumpled paper perfectly landed inside the bin, causing the boy to leak out a stifled smile.

"Hehe..."

Despite his own maturity, he couldn't escape the thrill any teenager would feel when they got their aim perfectly right.

He sat up from his bed and sighed, feeling the pleasant emotion evaporating in no time.

'I just can't forget it—that face.'

The grinning face of the mastermind, as he turned and smiled in Rey's direction...

'It—no, HE—troubles me.'

Adrien Chase was the mastermind, but Rey knew absolutely nothing about him.

The boy stood out even less than he did.

'There's no way to track him down now, so I can only hope he doesn't cause any more havoc.'

At the very least, Rey hoped he wouldn't have anything more to do with Adrien now that the boy was gone.

However, something told him their eventual confrontation was inevitable.

'At least he's not evil. I should probably stop thinking about him and focus on the matters that are within my control.'

With that thought, Rey exhaled deeply and considered the two most important things he had to do at the current moment.

'First is to go and see the Half-Elf.'

He had abandoned her at the KariBlanc Group's building, but since he didn't think she was in any danger, he hadn't been in a rush to get her back.

After all, where exactly would he put her?

'I'll just trust that Aldred and everyone over there have been taking good care of her.'

Rey initially wanted to go see her during the day, or maybe in the night, but he and Alicia spent so much time together that he lost track of time.

'I'll have to see her tomorrow, then.'

The second thing that he had to do—which he planned on starting now—involved himself.

"Status Window."

[STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: Rey Skylar.
- Race: Human (Otherworlder)
- Class: Anomaly (A-Tier)
- Level: 99 (78.54% EXP)
- Life Force: 72 (+158)
- Mana Level: 189 (+158)
- Combat Ability: 130 (+158)
- Stat Points: 0
- 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]

'I've grown relatively stronger, but without relying on Items, my Base and Bonus Stats are still quite low.'

After facing the Dragon Commander Jer'ard, Rey realized just how low his Stats were.

If it wasn't for the combination of all his Skills, he would have lost terribly.

'Speaking of Skills...'

That was precisely why he had opened his Status Window.

"Doppel: Display all Skills."

Responding to his command, a system panel popped up, revealing his Skills.

All 76 of them.

'My goal is to use [Merger] and combine my Skills—especially the lower tier Skills together so they can be more effective.'

Rey somewhat regretted letting go of some of his older Skills, since they could have been used as growth fodder now, but it was too late for that.

He couldn't have foreseen this sort of development.

'If I combine the Lower-Tier Skills, and all the Skills that have very high compatibility, I can free up space in my arsenal.'

Having too many Skills to call on was also too bothersome for Rey, so he preferred keeping things compact if he could.

'I'll also need to restructure the categories I placed earlier.' He noted to himself as he looked at all the Skills displayed before him.

It was going to be quite the chore, but Rey was determined to see things through to the end.

'Alright... let's begin!'

[Some Time Later]

"Ahh... finally done!"

It took Rey over two hours to complete what he set out to do.

He hadn't expected it to take so long, and the tired expression on his face was enough proof of that.

Unfortunately for him, there was one major factor he never factored in when he considered the time he would dedicate towards merging his Skills.

[Merging Process]!

Depending on the quality of the Skills being merged, and the Skill that would be born, it could range between a minute to nearly twenty.

He also had to carefully pick what Skills to merge with what others skills, which ended up taking additional minutes.

As a result, a lot of time ended up passing by in the blink of an eye.

"At least, it ended up being productive." Rey smiled as he looked at the System Panel before him.

'Perfect!'

*

Chapter 189 Return To The KariBlanc Group

[Skill Categories]

~ SS-Tier: 3

~ S-Tier: 8

~ A-Tier: 8

~ B-Tier: 12

~ C-Tier: 3

[New Skills: Please Select Their Categories]

~Nil~

[Total Skills: 34]

Rey smiled as he looked at his new sets of categories.

'The whole Attack, Defense, Buff, and Auxiliary thing just doesn't cut it anymore.'

Some of his Skills had overlaps with these categories, so he felt it would be too confusing to place them in a single box when they checked multiple ones.

'Right now, I have 34 Skills; 27 of them are Active and 7 are Passive.'

He had also managed to increase the number of his higher Tier Skills while having a reduced amount of lower Tier Skills.

'It's better to have fewer Skills that are more effective than a bunch of trash Skills.'

To Rey, quality far outweighed quantity.

In the fight against the Dragon, he had seen this exact philosophy being the perfect position to have.

Back then, Rey had to either abandon or jointly use all his Low-Tier Skills to even think of damaging the thing.

It went to show how ineffective they would be against powerful foes.

'Now that I have [Merger], this arrangement is the best.'

Once he finally settled on the thought, Rey could feel his body nearing its limits.

"Fuaaah!" He yawned while stretching his arms.

'It's 3:00 AM, and I'm still awake. Damnit...'

Thankfully there wasn't training for the time being. He couldn't imagine the suffering he would have to endure if that was the case.

'I'll still have to wake up early, though.'

He had to go to the KariBlanc Group to figure out what to do with the Half-Elf, after all.

With that thought in mind, Rey collapsed on his bed and enjoyed a nice sleep.

[The Next Day]

A dark cloaked man stepped out of a swirling rupture in space, his form the very personification of mysterious strength.

The purplish blue portal behind the man collapsed the moment he appeared, causing space to return to normal.

He appeared at the doorstep of the KariBlanc Group's massive building, his presence oozing nothing short of intimidation.

The guards who saw him instantly bowed and parted ways for him to enter.

Once he got in, he was welcomed by the staff, and he was escorted by an especially beautiful lady who donned the KariBlanc Group's uniform.

She smiled sweetly at him, maintaining a few inches behind him, while making sure she walked as gracefully and respectfully as she could.

Everyone in this building knew just how important he was, and any single mistake made could result in severe consequences.

They ascended the stairs that led to the first floor, and after passing the grand hallway, they arrived at the exquisite Lounge prepared for his exclusive use.

For Sir Ralyks, he deserved at least this much.

"You can leave now." The man in black told his attendant, and she bowed her head and exited the room after opening the door for him.

As she left, he walked in—his mask hiding any vestige of emotion.

"Haaa..."

Rey entered the freshly scented place, feeling the cool and comfortable ambiance of the place.

He had forgotten all about the amazing reception he always got from the KariBlanc group.

Perhaps that was due to the fact that he watched as they mercilessly murdered their enemies.

He knew they were a savage bunch and didn't trust them in the slightest.

To be honest, the only reason he was here—apart from getting the Half-Elf—was that he wanted to sell his new set of Monster Cores.

'If I can make money from them, and get new Items, that would be nice...'

It wasn't like he needed money at the moment, but Rey had a feeling he would be relying on it in the future.

Besides, there wasn't really anything like having 'too much' money.

... Right?

'Well, it's not a compulsory arrangement. I'll just have to wait and see how this whole thing goes.'

The primary goal remained ensuring the Half-Elf's safety and also figuring out what to do about her.

'Ah... he's here!'

Rey maintained his sitting posture as he heard a slight knock on the door before it creaked open.

Appearing inside the room was the slick and absolutely stunning Broker—Aldred Winsley.

He was wearing his dark waistcoat, as usual, with his formal shirt and black trousers. His tie was expertly done, and while both his hand sleeves were folded up, it didn't subtract from his neat appearance.

Aldred appeared to be nothing short of a gentleman.

However, Rey couldn't be fooled by the man's gentle appearance and 'nice' facade.

He knew full well what kind of man Aldred really was.

—A Killer!

Rey fought back a gulp as Aldred smiled at him with a genuine look of relief and pleasant surprise.

"Sir Ralyks, it's so nice to see you. I apologize for coming late, I just had to arrange a couple of things first before arriving."

As soon as Aldred said this, he sat down and gave Rey the most innocent smile anyone can make.

"I'm so happy to see you are well."

Rey quickly glanced away due to how uncomfortable Aldred's smile made him.

That was when he noticed something.

'Hm? Someone is still behind the door?' He slowly tilted his neck with interest.

As soon as he thought that, Aldred's voice burst forth.

"A-ah! Sorry about that, Sir Ralyks. I assumed she would enter after I came in."

'He must have noticed that I detected someone behind the door. Also... she?' As Rey was having this go on in his head, Aldred spoke up.

"Please come in, Miss. Sir Ralyks is waiting for you."

After he said this, there was no response from behind the door.

And then, a few seconds later—

~CREAK~

—The door slowly opened.

Pale white hands held the knob as a girl entered the room.

The moment Rey saw her, his eyes widened—nearly bulged—beneath his mask.

'T-that is...?!'

He couldn't believe what he was seeing with his own two eyes.

'... It's her!'

*

Chapter 190 A Mortifying Misunderstanding

An Angel.

That was the best way to describe the person he was currently looking at.

She had long black hair that sharply contrasted her pale skin. Her blue eyes looked like the ocean—or maybe the most precious kind of sapphire.

She wore a black gown that was decorated with traces of blue embroidery.

A precious necklace hung around her neck, gleaming with colors that matched her gem-like eyes.

She looked absolutely majestic as she walked closer, though her aloof face made her seem more like a sculpted statue than a kind presence.

'It's her? There's... no way! S-she's gorgeous!'

Rey could barely recognize the girl as the Half-Elf he had saved the other day.

Sure, they shared certain features, but this girl was beautiful—too beautiful.

She was the prettiest person he had ever seen.

'I think only Seraph is prettier. What the hell?!'

As her beauty captivated him, Rey felt increasingly grateful for the mask he had on his face.

He was certain he was currently gawking at her like an idiot.

After taking a few steps away from the closed door, the pretty maiden stopped dead in her tracks and looked just like a statue.

She said nothing, made no gestures, and Rey didn't even see her blink.

She just... stood there.

"She hasn't uttered a single word since she woke up. I don't know why, but perhaps you do, Sir Ralyks."

As Aldred's words broke the silence, Rey found himself gently nodding his head.

He was too deep in thought to reply.

'Didn't she have short hair when I saw her? She's grown her hair out already? And what's with the quality of that skin?'

Even though he healed her back then, she was still dirty. He wasn't able to see past all the grime.

But now... she looked like a brand new person.

'Looks like it was the right call to bring her here. These people really took care of her.' Rey slowly removed his gaze from the beauty.

It was hard, but his willpower was enough to save him from her entrapping gaze.

"Sorry for abruptly placing her under your care without informing you. You did an excellent job taking care of her."

"Haha! What are you saying? This much is nothing, Sir Ralyks."

As expected, Aldred tried to be as generous to him as possible. While Rey appreciated the gesture, he knew he had to press on even further.

"I'm serious. How can I compensate you for your troubles?"

In response to Rey's question, it seemed Aldred wanted to say something.

However, he quickly decided against it and shook his head.

"There's no need for compensation, Sir Ralyks. Our relationship runs a lot deeper for you this small gesture to warrant compensation."

The moment Rey heard this, he sighed internally.

He knew there was something the man was hiding, but it wasn't like he could force Aldred to speak his mind.

"Very well then."

He gave one more glance at the statue-like girl a short distance from him, and suddenly doubts began to echo in his mind.

'She really looks so still. Is she even alive? Hold on...!'

In the end, he had to resort to [Absolute Appraisal].

[STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: Esme
- Race: Half-Elf (Human and Elf)
- Class: Commoner (F-Tier)
- Level: 1 (91.34% EXP)
- Life Force: 100/100
- Mana Level: 200/200
- Combat Ability: 3
- Stat Points: 0
- Skills (Exclusive): [Absolute Appraisal]
- Skills (Non-Exclusive): [Grand Magic Mastery]. [Grand Magic Application]. [Greater Mana Recovery]
- Alignment: Neutral Good

[Additional Information]

A genius due to her superior Elf bloodline, but has been limited by her human genes and her unfortunate circumstances.

She is profoundly grateful towards you, but still very troubled and requires your assistance.

... Help her.

[End Of Information]

'Ah! So her name is Esme!'

It seemed like she had made a perfect recovery. Still, the fact that the System was still insisting on him helping her made Rey slightly on edge.

'Well, as long as it's not detrimental to me, then I'll try. At the very least, I've confirmed that it's actually her.'

He still couldn't get over how crazy her Stats were.

Even though Otherworlders were meant to be much stronger than the denizens of this world, he doubted any of his classmates had the kind of Stats this girl had at just Level 1.

Her potential was too much.

"Sir Ralyks...?"

Rey's gaze shifted to Aldred, who was smiling at him.

'I must have missed what he said.'

Right now, his thoughts were a mess. However, he quickly pulled himself together by taking a couple of deep breaths.

'I wonder...' Rey narrowed his gaze on the Broker and activated [Absolute Appraisal].

[STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: Asher Blanc
- Race: Human
- Class: Heir (C-Tier)
- Level: 99 (99.99% EXP)
- Life Force: 30[90]
- Mana Level: 50/50 [150]
- Combat Ability: 21 [80]
- Stat Points: 0
- Skills (Exclusive): [Experience Gain]
- Skills (Non-Exclusive): [Magic Knowledge]. [Quick Casting]. [Basic Elemental Affinity].
- Alignment: Lawful Evil

[Additional Information]

Current Heir to the KariBlanc Group and the son of the Blanc Councilor of the Obsidian Council. He is currently undercover as a Broker as a part of his training.

The only two people he respects are his Father and Ralyks.

[End Of Information]

'E-eh...?'

Rey was surprised, to say the least, the moment he saw all that was displayed before him.

First of all, the guy he knew as Aldred didn't exist.

Not only was his name fake, but his entire identity was also not real.

'He's actually a big deal here!'

Rey knew he had no right to feel betrayed since he had also done the same—hiding his real identity.

'Besides, it's not like he did it specifically for me or anything. It's training, huh?'

Rey could already figure out that Aldred—or rather, Asher—was being trained to inherit the Criminal Empire that he was born into.

'I better be more careful around him.'

There was one more surprising detail, though. Well, it wasn't really surprising for Rey since he noticed it when fighting Evals Redart too.

'Looking at the Stat distribution, I think it's safe to conclude that they only get one Stat Point per Level Up.'

Even as a Commoner, he usually received 3 Stat Points per Level Up. Compared to that, Asher's Level and Stats showed his allocation was lesser.

It went to show that being an Otherworlder—even one with an F-Tier Class—made him a formidable force.

That was probably why no native in the Royal Estate really looked down on him. Given enough time, he was bound to surpass someone who was of an even higher Level than him.

'I'm guessing his Class isn't suited for combat, which is why there's no additional benefit in terms of Bonus Stats.'

Rey wondered what Asher's privileges were, but it only lasted a moment.

He had to be wary of the [Alignment] that he glossed over the first time he looked through the Stats.

'He's Lawful Evil, eh? I guess that means he had a code.'

Rey smiled in relief, especially since the System established that he was in Asher's good graces.

'I better respond to him now.' After realizing he had been too deep in thought, Rey finally made his decision.

"Could you repeat what you just said? I didn't hear any of it."

He decided to go down the honest path.

"A-ah! I'm sorry. I should have spoken clearer." Aldred/Asher appeared flustered as soon as Rey made his statement.

'He's blaming himself? And it looks like he's being for real too!'

What Rey meant was that he wasn't paying any attention to Asher's words, but the latter must have taken it a different way.

'Welp! As long as it's not detrimental to me, I should let him think whatever.'

Aldred then proceeded to repeat his words.

"I noticed your Lover—the Miss—wasn't wearing the White Amber, so I was just asking if something happened."

The moment Rey heard this, he felt a slight tingle down his spine.

It was probably just his imagination, but it felt like Esme's eyes twitched and she glanced at him.

"I told you already! She's not my lover. And yes, I needed the ring for something, so I borrowed it from her."

Rey felt his heart racing as his hidden cheeks displayed shades of pink.

Once again, he was grateful for his mask.

'Why'd you have to embarrass me like that, Aldred—ah, I mean, Asher!'

There was nothing more mortifying than being paired up with a beauty without consent.

What was he supposed to say?!

"Ahh... then I apologize for misunderstanding. Would you like us to make another White Amber for the Miss?"

Rey wanted to shout an outright "NO!"

The ring was meant for Alicia, and he never had any intentions of changing that.

'But... what if this causes more complications in the future? Besides, Esme could maybe use something to keep her safe.'

The look on Asher's face showed that he was willing to do it as a favor, so Rey had to fold.

"Fine..."

In the end, he just had to give in.