

Extras 301

Chapter 301 Mask Off [Pt 1]

[Day 3: Seventh Floor]

~WHOOSH!~

One kick shot through the air like an overwhelming spear, instantly reaching the target within the blink of an eye.

"Kwii!"

~BOOOOOOM!~

One hit was enough to pulverize the monster of flesh and blood, instantly killing the massive thing in a flash.

Blood, coupled with pretty much all of the Monster's intestines, splashed out, drenching everything in the area with its guts .

—The kind that would drive one to vomit.

Snow, the blur of pure white, caused electricity to cackle around her as she pounced on her prey once step at a time.

They stood no chance against her speed and power as she easily evaded their attacks and returned the favor with her one-shot attacks.

The result...?

~BOOOOOOM!~

Ogre-like cyclops were the creatures who occupied the Seventh Floor. They bred like Goblins, but they were incredibly strong.

After evolving, their skin was as strong as metal, and yet Snow easily crushed them—one kick at a time.

They shot energy beams from their eyes, but the Grand Beast was much faster than their shots.

Her ricocheting attacks were especially deadly... especially when she used [Replicate] alongside it.

In the end, the one-eyed Ogres were fighting a losing battle.

They stood no chance at all.

The Otherworlders watched from within a manifestation of Ralyks' defensive Skill.

As long as they were inside the dome, they wouldn't be harmed in any way.

This Seventh Floor wasn't for them to grow or train. It was simply to let them experience firsthand what a Grand Beast could do.

They saw, with their very eyes, how Monsters fought among themselves.

No... there was no way what they were looking at could be defined as a fight.

It was a massacre!

After Snow was done with the Seventh Floor, Ralyks informed everyone that they would be taking a break.

Of course, most of the Otherworlders weren't even tired since they didn't get to do anything, so they were allowed to take walks around.

They could even help in harvesting the Monster Cores if they wanted to do something productive.

Some of the Otherworlders gathered the new celebrity of the Class—Snow.

She had managed to Level Up two times, putting her at Level 3.

All her Stats rose by 30 with every Level, which meant she gained a total of 90 Stats per Level Up. That also meant she had obtained a total of 180 Stat Points thanks to the two Level-Ups.

It was too absurd to even believe.

Unfortunately, it would take quite a long while before Snow would be able to Level Up again.

Apparently, her EXP was already pretty close to Leveling Up the first time, so she was able to quickly reach Level 2 once they started their Seventh Floor expedition.

For the rest of the Seventh Floor, however, despite taking on every single Monster—who were much stronger and even greater in number—compared to the ones on the upper Floors, she could only advance one more Level.

When considering how long it'll take Snow to reach Level 4—probably an estimate of three Floors—Ralyks decided it was time for her to take the back seat once again.

And so, with Snow being a celebrity, and many of the Otherworlders engaged in one thing or the other, Ralyks sat in a corner and watched all their actions in solitude.

His enigmatic self seemed to be seated on the bare ground, but if one looked closely, they could see that he wasn't touching the ground at all.

He was subtly floating.

"Hmm...?" Ralyks raised his head as he noticed a presence approaching him.

The Otherworlders usually avoided him during their breaks—or rather, they were too occupied with other things, so it was strange for anyone to be near him.

Yet...

"... What is the matter, Belle?"

Belle felt her heart race as she stood in front of the Dark Adventurer.

It had taken a lot of resolve to come this far, and she still couldn't believe she was really doing it.

'Come on! Just do it!' She told herself, puffing her big chest up as she inhaled deeply.

"I... erm, would like to ask for advice from you."

Belle held her breath, looking cute while doing so, as she waited for Ralyks' response. Her heart pounded faster and she gulped while staring into his crimson eyes.

She didn't know who was truly behind the mask, but he intimidated her.

"Fine. You can ask me anything."

Thankfully, his response wasn't harsh in any way.

Belle nearly leaked out a tear of relief as she held her plump chest and finally exhaled.

"Could we talk somewhere private? It's actually something private."

"Don't worry. No one will be able to hear us."

Belle's nervousness slowly began to dissipate as she nodded and proceeded to sit opposite him.

She had a bright smile on her face, completely different from the shy and meek expression that she previously donned.

Confidence was now oozing from her.

"I want to become stronger. Stronger than everyone else. What do you think I should do to achieve that?" She asked.

"Is that your question?"

Confidence was now oozing from her.

"I want to become stronger. Stronger than everyone else. What "Not really. It's just part of it..."

For a moment, silence echoed among them. It seemed like Ralyks was mulling over the question, but he really wasn't.

Instead, he stared deeply into her eyes and his crimson eyes glowed brighter.

"Tell me what's really on your mind. What is bothering you...?"

A spark of crimson flashed in Belle's eyes, and before she realized it, her lips moved on their own.

"I hate Alicia. I know I shouldn't still hate her, especially after what she told me and Trisha yesterday. I should feel for her and forgive her for stealing my spotlight back then, but... I just can't stop hating her."

Belle's eyes widened in shock. She didn't realize it until she ended up blurting out exactly what was on her mind.

'H-how...?!' Her mind echoed out.

"Why do you hate her? Or why do you suspect you hate her?"

"I think... I am jealous. Jealous of how genuine she is. I used to think she was fake and simply putting on some front as Miss Perfect, but after yesterday, I can't deny her kind nature."

Belle's inner self was puzzled by her sudden openness to the man in front of her, but she didn't stop.

She couldn't stop!

"I hate that she's so free and genuine about herself. I know I can never have that, and it pisses me off so much."

The Belle that sat in front of Ralyks was no longer the sweet and cute girl that everyone knew. She had a cruel frown on her face, and her eyes glowed with true envy. Hate consumed her tone, and all the darkness that she held within began to manifest before Ralyks.

'I-I didn't plan on going this far. I didn't want to say all of this...'

Yet, she naturally poured them out of her lips.

"I see..." Ralyks' tone was smooth and undisturbed.

It felt too calm for someone who had just seen her true identity was a truly vile person.

"I understand now. It all makes sense."

A slight chuckle echoed from within the mask as Ralyks pointed at Belle with two fingers.

"You're a sociopath."

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Chapter 302 Mask Off [Pt 2]

"W-what...?"

Belle's mask of bravado broke as Ralyks made his statement. Her eyes were wide open as she looked at the darkness before her.

"There's no need to hide it. I see through you, you know?"

More chuckles of amusement echoed from behind the mask as Ralyks drew closer to her by shifting his body forward.

Belle felt like she wanted to retreat, but there was nowhere to run to.

She could only watch him approach.

"S-so what if I am?" She found herself asking.

This would be the time where she was meant to deny what he was saying, but here she was digging a deeper hole for herself.

'I've never been this honest with anyone before.'

Belle didn't want to stop, but she also understood how dangerous her current disposition was—especially if she was found out.

'I can't let everything come crashing down! I can't be found out!' She panicked as she tried to look away from Ralyks.

"There's no need to worry."

The calm words that came from Ralyks seemed to embrace her and draw her body closer to him.

Belle suddenly felt at ease.

"I won't tell on you. In fact, I find your personality refreshing..."

"W-what are you...?"

"I mean that I quite like you, Belle. You're very much my type." freew ebno v el

"I-I don't understand..."

Belle was so confused, yet something within her felt happy to hear those words.

She felt her cheeks grow hot, and she felt herself sinking deeper into the gaze of a man whose face she didn't even know.

"There's no need for you to understand. I understand it all—your thoughts, your emotions, and your current dilemma."

Ralyks said it before, but it was only now that Belle believed it wholeheartedly.

'He can see through me!'

Her heart raced even faster as her body trembled in his presence.

She didn't know what to say next.

"Am I... evil?" She asked the man before her.

"Pardon?"

"I placed all my classmates under my mind control, and let them do my bidding. If it wasn't that Conrad went to make his announcement so suddenly and in public, I would have controlled everyone and forced them to remain in the Royal Estate for my sake. But..."

"Is that all?" Ralyks' tone seemed to hint at boredom.

It puzzled Belle.

Surely, her actions would be considered despicable by most, yet this man wasn't even moved by it at all.

"I-I also... in my homeland, I caused a lot of people to suffer for defying me or trying to compete with me."

"And? What else?" Ralyks asked once more.

"I plan on making Alicia and Adonis suffer for outshining me. Even after knowing that they're good people, I can't help but desire to see them suffer."

A few seconds of silence elapsed, and Belle began to breathe heavily.

'Surely this will be enough...' She thought to herself as she maintained eye contact with the man before her.

His eyes did not flicker for a moment, though.

"Are you done?" As Ralyks asked her this question, Belle felt a sting within her.

She couldn't believe the look of disappointment that oozed from the eyes of the man who stared at her.

His crimson stare was cold.

Too cold.

"You're going to remember this conversation a lot differently, so I suppose there's no harm telling you..." Ralyks' tone was dangerously low.

It felt like she wasn't even hearing him with her ears, but he was speaking directly into her mind.

"I have laid entire civilizations to ruin. I have consumed several worlds and caused the end of countless innocents."

Belle's thoughts became blank as images of horror played through her mind.

What she saw was unspeakable.

She couldn't even understand most of it. The end of it all, however, was darkness.

"Do you really have the right to call yourself evil? No... you're not."

"I am... not evil?" Belle asked, her eyes widening the more she uttered the words that were imprinted in her mind.

"You are not evil."

"I am not evil." She repeated with a smile on her face.

"Indeed. You did all those things simply because you thought they were right. We all make mistakes when we're young and we learn to grow out of them when mature." Ralyk's voice filled her mind.

"Let's just say you have grown more mature now. You understand things better... don't you?"

"Yes. I understand things better."

Ralyks nodded his head and patted Belle on her head, his fingers coursing through the beautiful yellow strands of her hair.

"What matters most aren't our intentions, but our actions. Despite your sociopathic tendencies, you chose to stay behind and save this world. Right?"

"Yes. But that is simply due to my selfish desire."

"But you'll be recognized as a hero. As someone who selflessly charges into the battlefield."

"Is that who I really am, though?"

"Does it matter? Are you good because you help people, or do you help people because you are good? It's a paradox."

Slowly, Belle began to understand.

She wasn't evil in the slightest—at least, not ever since she matured.

"I just have to do good deeds to compensate for the darkness within."

"Indeed. That darkness... that innate selfishness... you can't let it die. It is your greatest ally."

Belle nodded like an obedient child. She understood the wise words that Ralyks fed her mind.

"Is that why you are helping us? Why you do so much good to us?" She asked, her blank eyes staring at his deep crimson ones.

"Hmm?"

"You possess a much deeper darkness than I can see. Yet you assist us. Why do you do so...?"

Chuckles began to respond in Belle's head. They contained nothing short of dark amusement.

His laughter was so condescending, as if he mocked her question—no, her very existence.

"I only help you all because it is the will of my Master. If I was free, I would have consumed this world as well."

"Why... do you serve your Master?" Belle asked.

This time, there was no laughter.

No amusement whatsoever leaked from the lips of the blackened one.

Only clarity echoed from the depths of his mind.

"Because Master has a deeper darkness than mine—much deeper than he realizes."

Belle could not understand these words that she was hearing.

No one could.

"I await the day when that darkness awakens."

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Chapter 303 Rising To The Tenth Floor

"Thank you for the talk, Sir Ralyks."

Belle rose to her feet and bowed slightly to the Dark Adventurer.

Her gentle smile and pleasant face gave off an air of cuteness and downright innocence. Her boobs jiggled as she raised her head from its bowed position, but it seemed she didn't notice.

"You're welcome. Go and rest for the remaining time. We'll be resuming the Raid very soon."

"Understood!" She gave a salute and jogged off.

As she happily hopped off, Ralyks—or rather, Ater—smiled underneath his mask.

'That went well...' He thought to himself in amusement.

The mind of humans never ceased to intrigue him. Even the most vile among them were like mere blank canvases that could be contorted to his whims.

'[Compulsion] works like a charm, as expected.'

Of course, he made sure to edit some of her memories of the events that transpired between them. That way, no risk would come to his Master's persona.

'But with this, I suppose one seed has been planted.' He took one final look at the girl, watching as she sat among her male friends.

Darkness coiled within the red of his eyes.

'I look forward to your future, Belle.'

Once they were done resting, the Otherworlders began their journey downward.

Of course, this meant encountering even more powerful Monsters.

"Full power! Attack the left flank!"

Echoes of desperation, as well as roars of powerful strikes, filled the entire Eight Floor.

The reason was simple.

'Since we didn't face the Monsters of the Seventh Floor, we haven't properly acclimated to the Monsters here...' Rey thought to himself as he maintained his position on the formation.

Their current enemies looked like massive lizards.

They had scales like crocodiles, though, and their bodies seemed to be as elastic as rubber.

They had camouflage abilities, venomous breaths, acid spray, and a bunch of other nasty abilities that made them very problematic.

Their scales were tough, and their senses were razor sharp.

The only advantage that the Otherworlders had going for them was speed and intelligence.

The Monsters, despite their multifarious abilities, were predictable and lacked anything beyond basic intelligence.

After facing them for a while, it was clear that these were the kind of creatures who acted based on their impulses and nothing more.

As a result, the Otherworlders were able to give a brilliant counterattack and gain momentum from there.

Since utilizing physical attacks was very disadvantageous when fighting the Monsters, Magic-based Skills were preferred.

Keeping their distance from the Monsters while sending bombardments of Spells in their direction seemed to do the trick.

The moment the Monsters caught wind of this, the Otherworlders would switch tactics to distracting them with a feint in their flanks, and then giving them the real deal when they least expected it.

Since everyone's Levels had gone up quite a bit, and they had Items aiding them in their venture, fighting these Evolved Monsters suddenly began to get a lot easier.

Not as easy as the Second Floor... but somehow close.

In less time than expected, they reached the Boss Room and dispatched the Boss and its goons.

... All thanks to an unceasing volley of Magic Attacks.

[Several Hours Later]

"Haaa... haaa..."

Adonis' leaked exhausted sighs as he tightly held his Divine Blade.

The sword was lodged deep into the Boss Monster's Skull, and he used his weapon to support himself as he stood on the corpse's head.

They were finally done with the Tenth Floor, their final challenge for the third day.

It was an optional venture, but since the Otherworlders felt confident about their abilities—especially since the last two Floors weren't too difficult—they let their guard down in the Tenth Floor.

The Monsters there were on a completely different level—especially the Boss.

Thankfully, they somehow managed to pull through.

With everyone on the brink of exhaustion, Adonis personally requested to handle the Boss Monster by himself.

Ralyks gave him the permission to do so, and all his teammates were behind his decision as well.

One would have expected him to need assistance at some point in the battle. But...

"Huff... huff..."

... Adonis was able to defeat the Boss Monster on his own.

'Finally...' He smiled to himself as he looked at his Status Window.

[STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: Adonis Levi.

- Race: Human (Otherworlder) (Regressor)

- Class: The Hero (S-Tier)

- Level: 90 (56.99% EXP)

- Life Force: 420 (+210) [100]

- Mana Level: 750 (+375) [150]

- Combat Ability: 1,000 (+500) [200]

- Stat Points: 0

- Skills (Exclusive): [Divine Sword Summon]. [Absolute Defense]. [Grand Light Magic]. [\$\$\$@?3\$ \$!0n]

- Skills (Non-Exclusive): [Combat Application]. [Magic Application]. [Mana Recovery]. [Full Sense]. [Life Force Recovery]. [Indomitable Power].

- Alignment: Lawful Good

[Additional Information]

Your desire to save this world has transcended the very bounds of time itself, and now you are once again on the journey to protect those you love.

Good luck!

[End Of Information]

'... My Stats have reached a satisfactory level.'

Adonis grinned even more when he looked at his Skills. He had gotten new ones.

'I guess I made the right call after all.'

He had abandoned his Life Force Stat and focused on his Combat Ability and Mana Level.

This was simply because he had a Skill for defense, and throughout the Raid, he could always be healed by Alicia if he sustained damage.

What mattered most to him was how many enemies he could defeat in order to grow stronger.

As a result of this choice, he was able to get a bunch of new Skills—one of which gave him the ability to slowly recover his Life Force.

In essence, Healing.

'It's a Passive Skill, and its effects are slow. But since it doesn't consume any Mana, it's plenty useful.'

He also got [Indomitable Power], which temporarily doubled his Base Combat Ability Stat.

All of these Skills contributed to how elated Adonis was at the moment.

Yes, he felt so exhausted that he wanted to vomit and collapse on the ground.

However, more than that... he felt ecstatic.

'Just as you said, Rey...!' Adonis cast his gaze on the nobody in the background and widened his smile.

'I... I've gotten stronger!'

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Chapter 304 The Night Before [Pt 1]

Passing through a swirling distortion in space, the Otherworlders once again made it to the surface.

Their shabby appearances greeted the evening sky overhead, and as they all appears in the open field, they collapsed on the ground and allowed their bodies to embrace the grass.

"Haaa!"

"Fresh air at last!"

"I'm gonna take a very nice shower!"

Words like these echoed from the lips of the sweaty and dirty students.

Despite groaning and grumbling, the smile on their faces was undeniable. They were all happy, and it wasn't difficult to tell why.

"We did it!"

"We reached the Tenth Floor!"

"I swear, I thought I was going to die!"

It wasn't easy, but they managed to achieve a milestone—and it was only in three days.

This celebration of theirs, however, was instantly cut short by Ralyks' cold voice.

"I have important news for you all."

As he said this, all the Otherworlders looked in his direction with puzzlement.

Normally, this was the moment when he would say his farewells and depart. Yet, something about his tone and the contents of his words made the imminent issue seem a little grave.

"I won't be with you for your Raid tomorrow."

The moment Ralyks said this, eyes popped wide open. The Otherworlders had stunned expressions on their faces.

However, before they could utter a single word, he continued.

"I need to take care of some business for the Royal Council, so tomorrow will be completely booked."

The Otherworlders didn't know what was happening in the background—except for Adonis, of course.

As someone who associated with the Royal Council on a deeper level, Adonis was the only one who didn't depict any ounce of shock or surprise.

After all, he already knew something of the sort was coming.

'This is about the Triumvirate, and their Dark Gathering that will occur in the Merchant City tomorrow.' Adonis' thoughts flowed as he stared at Ralyks.

They recently received a tip from their informant that this would be some kind of secret meeting between the major players of the underworld.

The Royal Council has been planning a full sweep for some time, but now they had even more reasons to go all-out on the offensive.

'I wish I could go, but I'm needed here...'

Adonis sighed a little and looked around him. He had to grow stronger in order to be of help to people, but at moments like this, he felt his impulses begging him to dive into the action.

However, thanks to his self control... he knew very well what his choice would be.

'I'll leave this to Sir Ralyks and everyone else.' Adonis smiled.

According to what he knew, the Royal Council already had their forces gathered in the Allied Merchant City, while the rest were somewhere within the Royal Estate.

Ralyks would be transporting those who were still in the Royal Estate to the Allied Merchant City the next day.

'Then, they'll initiate the Full Sweep Operation.'

"So does that mean we'll have to go to the Eleventh Floor by ourselves?" Justin asked with a chuckle, though there was a hint of seriousness in his tone.

Concerned reactions instantly filled the faces of the Otherworlders. They probably didn't want to imagine a scenario where their guardian Angel wasn't in the depths of danger with them.

They looked at the masked figure in panic, praying for a favorable response.

"I'll be sending a bunch of Elementals to keep you company tomorrow. With their help, you shouldn't have any problem with the Floors."

Ralyks had already told them that they would be exploring three Floors on the fourth day, so everyone knew they would be reaching the 13th Floor.

No one really panicked since Ralyks was with them, but now,, now they weren't so sure.

"Each Elemental is of the Grand Class, and I plan on sending four with you. You should be fine."

Once the Otherworlders considered how much of a team effort it took them to take down one Elemental of Ralyks during training, they began to recognize how strong they were.

Granted, they were stronger now, so they definitely wouldn't have as much trouble with an Elemental.

However with four of them—all in the Grand Class—things would get pretty trippy.

"As long as they're with you, you'll be fine. I've surveyed the Dungeon Floors too, and I have determined that there's nothing in there that is beyond your abilities."

Ralyks then turned away from the teenagers and began to conclude his address.

"Whether or not you choose to participate in tomorrow's Raid is up to you."

Slowly walking away, his voice echoed in the air.

"You can choose to sit this one out and wait for me, like spoon-

fed children, or you can show me just how much you've grown without me."

He stopped moving and slightly turned his neck so his face tilted to the side and he saw them with his crimson eyes.

"The choice is yours."

Those words reverberated underneath the late evening sky, with everyone's eyes glistening as they watched him give them their options.

It was already clear which path they would take.

"We'll do it!"

"Count me in!"

"I'll try my best!"

"M-me too!"

"There's no way I'm missing out on this."

"As long as it's safe... I'll play ball."

"Alright! Let's roll!"

"I'm getting pretty excited..."

"Let's all do our best!"

With those words rushing from the lips of the nine, it was already clear what choice they had made.

Ralyks looked at them, almost as if he smiled underneath his dark mask.

"Good. I wish you the best of luck." He waved at them as he stepped into the distortion that had formed in front of him.

"Farewell."

Night fell, and as the small stars twinkled in the sky, the lights of a particular room also glowed despite the darkness that fueled its exterior.

Within the Royal Estate, there was a room utilized by only the most important members of the United Human Alliance.

It didn't appear luxurious in any way, and the designs were pretty simple.

It was sparsely finished with chairs, and a round table that stood before all the seats present.

Maps and several other important documents were either hung on the walls, or carefully placed in the massive bookshelf that stood at the corner of the room.

Needless to say, the items hidden in the deep recesses of this exclusive library were confidential.

This was the Strategy Room, and right now it was occupied by three parties:

Conrad Listrio

Vida Origa

And... Kara Verte, Informant of the Royal Council.

A sudden warp in space caused all the seated members to rise to their feet and look in the direction of the distortion.

A man in black emerged from its depths, his crimson eyes glowing as he saw all three of them.

"Sir Ralyks..." They all slightly bowed their heads.

The Dark Adventurer nodded slowly and sat on his seat, an act that was followed by everyone else in the room.

"Enough with the formalities." His words were curt, and he folded his arms as though he meant business.

"Let us begin the meeting."

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Chapter 305 The Night Before [Pt 2]

'Looks like we're ready to begin.'

Rey took a deep breath as he looked at everyone within the tense room. His eyes darted towards Kara, who gave him an inconspicuous nod.

'Seems like she has primed them before my arrival. That's good...'

"So, have you concluded your strategy against the Triumvirate?" Rey asked the Royal Council, donning his usual Ralyks tone.

"Indeed we have." Conrad smiled and nodded.

"I see. And you're sure you want to discuss the details before her? She belongs to the very underworld you desire to tear down, don't you?"

As Rey asked this question, he clasped his hands and rested them on the table.

"What is your rationale?"

This time, it was Vida who spoke up.

"The Verte family has always mentioned some kind of balance despite being a criminal family. They often cooperated with our efforts."

"That can't be all, surely." Rey said, narrowing his eyes in Vida.

She expressed intimidation, something he personally enjoyed, but she quickly pulled herself together.

"O-of course not. The truth is that her entire family was killed off by the new head of the Slave Union and her New Order. She's no longer affiliated with them, and they're as much of an enemy to her as they are to us."

Surely, Vida's explanation made sense.

Rey also knew this was the truth because he had firsthand knowledge of the whole thing. He only chose to act ignorant of the entire events because it was more in line with his character.

... As well as the plan.

"I see. I'm still skeptical, but I trust your judgment."

"What will it take for you to trust me?" Kara suddenly blurted out a question, her gaze resting on none other than Ralyks—or rather, Rey.

"Hmm. If I was to say, I'd say I'll have to closely monitor your actions. You don't mind, do you?"

"I have nothing to hide." Kara responded with a wry smile.

To those words, Rey chuckled.

His deep, dark laughter echoed throughout the room, and everyone kept quiet until his voice grew solemn.

"Without exception... everyone has something to hide."

No response was given to his words, but Kara did appear unnerved as he said this.

"I'll choose to trust you, at least for now." Rey said, before turning his focus back to the Royal Council.

"Now where were we? Ah, yes... the plan."

"So far, we know the Dark Gathering will be taking place in the dead of night, so we plan to enact the plan and encircle the entire city before that period."

Since this event was happening the next day, they also had to make their move then.

If they acted too early, it could tip off the enemy, but if they acted too late, they risked their plan taking a plummet into nothingness.

There was a fine line that determined when to act, and Conrad was confident that he and his team had cracked it.

"If we encircle the city, they can't escape through conventional means. Of course, it's very possible that they escape through secret exits, so we'll be on a lookout for that during the Full Sweep."

The Full Sweep meant just what the name implied: a thorough investigation of the Merchant City.

The Merchant City was a lot larger than the Capital, so something of such a scale would take a lot of time and manpower.

They had prepared enough manpower for the occasion, and with Conrad's roster, it was very possible to investigate the entire city barely into nightfall.

"We still do not know where the Dark Hall that will be used for the Dark Gathering is situated, so the best we can do is narrow down the location while cracking down on all the other illegal activities that are going on in the Merchant City."

"I'll carry out my personal investigation to seek out the place." Ralyks suddenly spoke up, causing Conrad to cease his words instantly.

"Really, Sir Ralyks?"

The Dark Adventurer nodded, though his eyes darted to the only girl with glasses in the room.

"I'd like Kara Verte to accompany me on this investigation... if she isn't otherwise occupied."

Conrad shot a pained look at Kara and strained a smile.

He already knew Kara was not on the enemy's side. Not only because of her unfortunate circumstances, but also due to her completely passing the tests they gave her using the Truthseeker.

She was genuinely on the side of the Royal Council on this matter.

Still, Conrad could understand Ralyks's suspicions.

Too much was at risk.

"I understand. I'll cooperate with you." Kara's response eased both Conrad and Vida's hearts, causing them to shoot relieved glances at each other.

'I didn't have to coerce her... thankfully.'

With that going on in his mind, Conrad smiled and nodded in agreement to the arrangement between Ralyks and Kara.

"While I personally investigate the city for the Dark Hall, focus your efforts on the other establishments that are associated with the underworld."

Stalls, shops, warehouses, abandoned places... the criminal underworld had stuck its grimy tendrils into every aspect of the Merchant City.

It was also open as Noir's Territory.

"Lord Noir is said to be the most ruthless and most thorough of all the members of the Obsidian Council. Please be careful in your search." Kara added, her tone indicating genuine concern and worry.

"Noted." Conrad responded, while Vida simply nodded.

All of them then returned their attention to the massive map of the Merchant City that was placed on the table.

Everyone could see just how much ground they had to cover within the very limited period of time.

"It's going to be very tasking, but we're willing to do whatever it takes." Conrad said with resolve.

Ralyks nodded at him and they shook hands, each man tightening his grip on the other's hands. As they did this, the women went for a simple hug, and in no time they were done.

Even then, Ralyks and Conrad still had their hands stuck with each other.

Not until Ralyks repeated the words.

"Wherever it takes."

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Chapter 306 The Night Before [Pt3]

Once the meeting was concluded, Kara was left alone with Ralyks—considering how they would be working together from that moment on.

The Dark Adventurer transported both of them away to a location unknown to anyone else, most likely to kickstart their investigation.

The two had somewhat exchanged brief pleasantries during the entire meeting, but now that it was over, it was all business.

... Or so the Royal Council members thought.

"You did a good job playing along, Kara. You have nice acting skills."

Rey was currently opposite Kara, standing right outside the Safehouse where she and the other key players were occupying before the promised day.

She smiled, probably blushing a little, as she curtsied and bowed her head slightly.

"I appreciate your compliments, Sir Ralyks."

Rey felt very weird having a really pretty girl like Kara address him in such a way, but he had come too far to break character now.

He simply nodded nonchalantly and shrugged without any sort of energy attached to it.

"I guess you can go in now. Rebal and Asher should be waiting inside."

"Would you like to come in? We could prepare something for you and show some hospitality." Kara swiftly added, showing even more emotion and energy than Rey remembered.

It almost felt like she was over enthusiastic to please him.

'Did Rebal and Asher fill her head with stories about me? That's probably what happened.' Rey sighed internally.

"There's no need. I have other matters to take care of."

This was a lie.

Rey had already taken care of everything he needed to. He already had the coordinates to the Merchant City, and he was able to get there the previous night. He had also sorted through what he considered to be his own plans.

Everything was pretty much set on his end.

"Have all preparations been made on your end?"

"Yes, Sir Ralyks. The venue of the event has been identified, and we have also made all travel preparations."

"Good. Then, I look forward to tomorrow." Rey smiled underneath his mask as he walked past Kara and created a portal out of the area.

"I look forward to it too, Sir Raly—"

Kara's voice was cut short as Rey's portal closed right behind him the moment he entered his room.

The spacious expanse greeted him as he collapsed on his bed and returned his body to its regular form. A heavy sigh escaped his face as his face looked high upon the ceiling.

"Looks like I can at least have a proper night's rest to—"

Right as he was about to conclude this sentence, Rey felt a presence in front of his room's door.

'What the...?!'

He then heard a knock on the door.

'A visitor? At this hour?'

It was nearly midnight already, yet there was someone who was waiting to see him.

And Rey knew exactly who it was.

"Hup!" He jumped to his feet, sluggishly walking to the door afterwards.

He wasn't particularly exhausted, but he really thought he would be able to sleep in for the night.

Knowing Rey's schedule, 'sleeping in' probably meant sleeping for the standard eight hours.

For him, that was plenty.

"Who is it...?" He muttered as he opened the door, already knowing the face he would see.

Unsurprisingly, as soon as the door swung open, he was met with the cute face of Belle.

His tired eyes looked at her in silence, hoping she would say anything or do something that could possibly justify her coming to his room at such an absurd hour.

"Let me in." She whispered, her glowing pink eyes staring straight into his eyes.

Rey felt like sighing heavily the moment he realized what was going on.

'Not this again. Do I really have to play along?'

He knew he didn't have to put up with her tricks, but Rey decided to step aside and grant Belle access to his room for two primary reasons.

One was the mere fact that he was curious.

He wanted to know why Belle would come to his place so late in the night, and he felt like she would tell him if he just played along with the whole charade.

The second reason he decided to play pretend was that he hadn't yet thought of a way to properly deal with Belle.

'I haven't really had much time to think about her, and she hasn't approached me since then... so I never put her as a priority.'

To think she would just pop up like this...

It was against Rey's policy to control his classmates, but he began to consider using his [Absolute Mental Control] on her to get things over with.

'Let's hear her out first.' He hid his grumbled and dragged his feet inside, closing the door slowly.

"Come. Sit beside me."

Belle's face had a somewhat mysterious smile. Rey couldn't properly get a read on her intentions, so he decided not to think too much about it and simply play ball.

He plopped his butt on the bed, a few inches from where she sat.

'I have to get into character. Ahh... I really miss my Elite Enigma Class right now.'

He missed the Special Privilege that allowed him to perfectly act in the way he wanted.

At least, when he was Ralyks, he was constantly hiding behind a mask. Even when he broke character, no one would know.

As Rey, though, things were different.

'I don't know if I'm getting this whole thing right...'

"I've had a lot on my mind, and I guess I just need someone to offload it all to."

'E-eh...?' Rey's thoughts echoed. 'Why me?'

"I guess you're the only one I can feel most comfortable with. You're so weak and fragile..." She began to squish his cheeks, the same way the elderly did to little kids.

Rey didn't feel any pain as she pinched his cheeks, but it felt so uncomfortable and weird.

It wasn't long before he became distracted by Belle's chest, which was displayed right before his dead eyes.

Her oversized shirt covered up the goods, but he could see two pointy things on her chest. It told him all he needed to know.

'She's not wearing anything underneath?!' His mind screamed, but he kept his reaction completely neutral.

'Her shorts are also too... short. This girl is a walking thirst trap.'

Rey didn't want to call her careless at this point. It was pretty late, so she properly didn't need to bother.

Besides, he was supposed to be under her influence, so he wouldn't have cared.

'I'm not a creep. This isn't my fault. I didn't do anything wrong!' Rey swallowed his saliva and pleaded his case to literally no one as he remembered Alicia's words to her fellow girls.

He could imagine the kind of stare she would be giving him if she peered into his mind.

... His impure, completely soiled mind.

'Come to think of it, this is the second girl to enter my room.' Rey found his mind changing topics.

All of this, while Belle was rambling on about things he wasn't really paying attention to.

Until, he felt something draw closer to him.

'W-what?!'

Before he could even figure out what and why was happening, he found Belle's lips pressed upon his.

She had just kissed him!

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Chapter 307 The Night Before [Pt 4]

"Mmmphhh!"

Rey found himself assaulted by the kiss of a pretty girl.

He didn't know how he found himself in such a precarious situation, or what kind of conversation could have led to such a thing.

All he knew was that Belle was currently kissing him, and her chest was pressed against his.

'S-so soft...' The dark side of his mind trailed.

He meant this for both the two melons that landed on him and the succulent lips that graced his own

'What the hell is this crazy girl doing?!' Rey felt violated.

He had reached the very limits of his tolerance for this sort of craziness.

Not only did she come to his room unannounced, depriving him of sleep, but she also decided to steal one of the most precious things he had.

—His first kiss!

Sure, it felt good... but it was still wrong.

'I should stop her now! This has gone too fa—!'

"Press my boobs. Do it softly."

Rey found his hands slowly rising to Belle's chest. He initially wondered if it was actually the effect of [Grand Charm], but he soon realized that he still wasn't being affected.

This wasn't the cause of some mind control ability.

No...

Rey was being controlled by instinct.

He found both hands sinking deep into Belle's chest, though the barrier of clothing still remained.

He felt his fingers stroking the pointy things he saw earlier, and a moan escaped from Belle's lips the moment they did so.

"T-that's enough! Stop it!"

Rey stopped, his face blank, but his mind racing with a lot of different questions.

'What in the world am I doing? What is she doing? I'm so confused!'

Rey and Belle were teenagers, so it was clear that they had wild hormones that ran wild at certain intervals. It was inevitable to desire some kind of release at some point.

But... not like this.

Rey found Belle blushing, her cheeks having a hot red hue.

Her entire face was pink.

It made Rey feel like he was the assaulter, and she was somehow the prey. But that was far from the case.

'Is she trying to set me up or something? No... that can't be.'

Rey didn't sense anything that could point to that. She didn't have any Enchanted Item on her, and there was also no one else around.

Everyone was sleeping in their rooms.

'I also got an Item to record the activities of this room in case someone entered without me realizing it. If she decides to scream and pin this on me, I can just use that and show everyone what really happened.'

Rey was prepared for a situation when things went south, but he didn't think that was Belle's intention at all.

"I think... I'll stop here." She muttered, making heavy breaths as she stared passionately at Rey.

"I want to devour you, Rey. I really do..."

Rey felt shivers down his spine as soon as he heard those words.

"I want to steal you from Alicia's clutches and make you mine. You're so fragile... I fear you might break by the time I'm done with you."

Despite Belle saying that, Rey felt like it was all a load of BS.

'She seemed overwhelmed with just me fondling her boobs. I don't think she has a lot of experience to begin with.'

Of course, his face was blank, so nothing he thought of left the confines of his mind.

"But... I don't think I should go any further with you."

'Sure. If you say so.' Rey nearly snickered.

He felt a bit let down, especially between his legs, but he considered the whole thing more violating than stimulating.

All he really wanted to do was rest.

Truly...

"I like you, Rey. You're cute and weak. So pathetic that it makes me very hungry..." After saying this, she licked her lips and drew her face closer.

Rey feared he was in for another kiss. He prepared his heart and slowly began to pucker his lips, but just a second before they made contact, Belle stopped.

She sighed, shaking her head.

"This isn't right, though. It doesn't feel fulfilling enough..."

Rey was thankful that he wasn't violated the second time, though disappointment crawled somewhere in the corner of his heart.

'Hold on, so does she really like me? For real?' Once his mind became a bit clearer, he processed what Belle said.

This was the first time he was hearing a girl tell him of her feelings.

Of course, with the girl being Belle, there were a lot of dangerous connotations attached to it. Still, Rey couldn't help but giggle internally.

More than giggling inside, however, he found himself in deep confusion.

'She likes me because I'm weak and pathetic? The hell?'

Not only was her perception of him completely wrong, but it was very twisted.

'She's crazy! Why did my first ever confession have to be from a crazy person?' He nearly cried inside.

"I'll just leave you for Alicia and chase after a much larger goal, Rey."

Upon hearing Alicia's name in Belle's words, Rey focused more on what the blonde had to say.

"I want to become strong. Strong enough so I don't lose to Alicia anymore. I want him to pay me more attention. I want to gain his approval... and respect..."

'Who?' Rey found himself wondering.

Then, a certain memory flashed in his mind.

Earlier that day, right when he and Alicia decided to help out with harvesting the Monster Cores, he saw Belle talking to Ralyks—or rather, Ater.

'That motherfu—!'

"I want to gain his love! I'll do anything to make him recognize me, and only me!"

Rey's mind nearly exploded as he looked at Belle's twisted smile.

Both her hands were on her cheeks as she looked ecstatic. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes glistened with passion.

Rey had never seen Belle—or any girl—make such a face before.

It seemed almost unnatural.

"This will be the last time we'll talk like this again, Rey. Consider us officially broken up."

'But we were never dating!' Rey protested internally.

They barely ever spoke.

"I'll be undoing my Charm on you, just as I've undone the Charm on everyone else. I don't need to control you anymore."

'For real? So this entire thing is over?'

"I'll make sure to get together with Sir Ralyks, and instead of Alicia and Adonis saving the world... I want to fight the Dragons by his side."

Her words made Rey shiver with every syllable. He truly didn't know how she was able to get to such a bizarre conclusion.

'What the hell did you say to her, Ater?!'

"That will be my revenge on them—saving the world with Sir Ralyks and being happier and more accomplished than them."

'Oh boy...'

As long as Belle wasn't planning on making Alicia and Adonis suffer any longer, this could have as well been considered a win.

However, Rey felt like there was something perverse about Belle's current stance.

It felt worse than before.

"Farewell, Rey. Once I leave, you'll forget all about this conversation and everything that happened this night."

Rey wished things were that simple.

Unfortunately, they weren't.

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Chapter 308 The Promised Day

Belle rose up from the bed and exited the room by herself.

Rey simply sat there and watched as she left in silence, completely speechless even after she shut the door.

A few seconds after, and only one word proceeded from his lips.

"Ater..."

He spoke through gritted teeth, a deep glare manifesting on his face.

The instant Rey uttered those words, blackness swirled about a meter from him, and a handsome young man appeared in his presence.

Ater, in all his glory, fell on his knees as he addressed his Master.

"What did you do to Belle?" He asked in a low, but threatening tone.

"I merely made a few suggestions to her mind. In order to stop her from being more troublesome in the future..."

Rey could understand the sincerity of Ater's words.

Thanks to whatever he did, Belle no longer desired to enact proper revenge on Alicia and Adonis. She also undid her [Grand Charm] on everyone.

In a way, Ater had solved the Belle problem for him.

"In essence... it was for the greater good?"

"Precisely, Mas—!"

~VWUUUUUM!~

Rey's aura instantly filled his room, enveloping everything in an inescapable pressure.

"—ter!"

Ater's body crumbled further to the ground, now prostrating in the most humiliating way possible. His face was planted straight on the floor, and his entire body could not move even if he wanted to.

Such was the greatness of the power that held him down.

"I will only say this once, so listen carefully." Rey's eyes glowed as he coldly stared at Ater.

The Familiar couldn't even look upon him due to his current situation, so he merely shivered under his Master's words.

"Don't ever mess with my classmates again."

A certain emotion—anger mixed with pure authority—coated Rey's statement.

It wasn't a mere suggestion, or an advice.

It was a warning?

"Do you understand?" Rey asked, his gaze still on Ater's pathetic form.

"Y-yes... yes, Master!"

Once Rey heard this, he caused his overwhelming pressure to instantly evaporate.

"Good."

Rey exhaled deeply and plopped to his bed, his head facing the ceiling.

'Maybe I was a bit too hard on him. He only did what he thought was best.'

There was no malevolent intention whatsoever in his actions.

Still...

'Why am I so upset? I don't know...' Rey slightly bit his lip and made another deep exhalation.

He covered his eyes with his hand and shut them, breathing silently until he finally fell asleep.

"W-whoa!"

"T-this is...!"

"Amazing! They're amazing!"

The Otherworlders were in awe as four Grand Elementals stood before them.

Fire

Water

Earth

Wind

These four Grand Elementals had their respective designs which differed slightly from the ones they recognized.

The Earth Elemental had four arms, with a buffer form than they previously recalled. It also had varying weapons in each hand.

Likewise, the other Elementals had notable differences that made them appear more formidable than ever.

Behind the Grand Elementals was Ralyks, and he had a calm demeanor as he looked at his creation.

"They will be your guards and supporters in the Dungeon."

Grand Elementals could obey orders—both general and specific

—and fill in the blanks from there.

They were by no means sentient. However, they could act on their own based on the instructions they were given by their Summoner.

"Good luck on your Raid." Ralyks told them, and the Otherworlders nodded in full resolve.

"I await news of your victory."

Before they could respond to those words, a portal was opened beneath them, and they all descended to the Eleventh Floor of the Dungeon.

Of course, they all made a perfect landing, and as they did so, the Grand Elementals descended into the Dungeon Floor as well.

In total, there were nine Otherworlders, one Familiar, and four Elementals.

A total of fourteen for the Raid.

"Alright, everyone!" Adonis smiled at his comrades.

He felt a surge of optimism and excitement for the mission for some reason.

"Let's do this!"

'With that settled, it's time for the next step.'

Rey stared into the distance as he sent his classmates and a replica of himself into the Dungeon.

'I'm basically at half power, but this should be more than enough for now.'

As he turned back and saw the soldiers that were already gathering behind him, a smile formed on his face.

There were a total of three thousand, five hundred soldiers who were gathered in the Royal Estate.

Added to the seven thousand or so soldiers that were in the Merchant City, they had over ten thousand soldiers to work with.

'Of course, these are just fodder. Most of them don't even have more than one Skill.'

The ones with more than one Skill had pretty useless ones in their arsenal. That was why they were mere soldiers who were responsible for guarding or patrolling the United Human Alliance, rather than helping out in the ensuing war.

None of them could be useful against a single Dragon.

'But, for the purposes of our investigation, they'll work perfectly well.'

Rey approached the group of soldiers, standing right beside Conrad, who was already opposite them.

'Vida will be staying in the Capital and monitoring things while we're away.' Rey thought to himself as he cast a glance at Conrad.

It was clear that the man was nervous.

'The Merchant City plays a very vital role in the economy of the entire Alliance. He's taking a big risk by suddenly raiding the place, guns blazing.'

If Conrad didn't end up with something tangible to show for his actions, the Royal Council could face serious backlash.

They were even facing backlash already; with some people accusing Conrad and Vida of executing the other Council Members so they could remain in power.

'All the deceased's family members and relatives have also been reported missing or dead, so Conrad and Vida can't choose successors.'

All of that merely served to compound the issue and made the two of them seem even more guilty.

'He's probably praying that this mission yields good results so that the people's faith can be restored in the Royal Council.'

Rey smiled to himself as he prepared himself for what was to come.

'Don't worry, Conrad. You'll have your results.'

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Chapter 309 Gathering The Troops

"Let us begin."

As Ralyks spoke for all to listen to, a massive portal opened right behind him, the likes of which no one present had ever seen before.

Space distorted all around him, and like a massive tear in reality, the spatial rift manifested right behind him.

Every single soldier who watched was in awe.

Some had heard stories of the Dark Adventurer, but no one had ever truly seen this side of him.

Perhaps a few guards were fortunate to see Ralyks executing the Dragon back when the Capital was attacked, but their numbers were too small compared to the few thousands that gathered in the open fields.

"What are you waiting for?" Conrad raised his voice at the soldiers who were spacing out.

Their blank and utterly stunned faces soon began to change as soon as they heard their Royal Councilor's—now turned Commander's—voice echo out.

"Match in!"

The grown men obeyed and rushed in, utilizing their formation in due diligence.

Before long, they were all able to venture into the massive portal that greeted them. Not a single one was left behind.

"Shall we?" Ralyks turned to the only man who was yet to enter.

Grandmaster Conrad himself.

"Yes, Sir Ralyks."

The two men then walked into the shrinking portal, feeling the ripple of space as they entered.

From the open field of Royal Estate, their vision instantly changed into the view of a massive military clearing in the outskirts of the Merchant City.

It was a large camp, with tall walls surrounding its vicinity—hence preventing the prying of outside forces.

The overhead was an open sky, but a certain Magical Barrier formed a barrier that prevented any sort of spying from above.

As a result, the three thousand soldiers—as well as the occupying seven thousand—were fully protected from the observation and interference of the outside world.

The total size was about fifteen hectares of land, most of it a barren field dedicated to training or the assembly of all the soldiers.

There was not a single grass to be seen on the ground, and several wooden buildings and temporary tent-like structures filled the residential areas for the soldiers.

It was clear that this place wasn't meant to be stayed at for too long. It was a station meant for transition: nothing more, nothing less.

"Every major city's outskirts has a post like this. It was designed this way because of the Dragons." Conrad murmured, slightly looking at Ralyks.

The Dark Adventurer responded with a subtle nod, before uttering a few lines.

"Are all of them as large as this?"

To that, Conrad made a sad smile and shook his head.

"The Merchant City is an exception due to its huge size and incredible relevance. Most posts are about as large as a hectare. Sometimes less."

"I see..."

Conrad and Ralyks once again looked at the surrounding area and noticed the seven thousand, five hundred soldiers already converging with the three thousand.

As their numbers slowly merged, someone rushed to Conrad.

It was a woman who seemed to be in her late twenties, pretty, but also having a certain fierceness about her.

Her dark brown hair was cut short, but it still had a feminine flair to it. She wore full plated armor, and one of her eyes was blocked with an eyepatch.

Her color theme seemed to be black, but the blade of choice that was hung on the strap around her hip had a silvery glow to it.

The moment she reached Conrad, she fell to her one knee, raising the other as she bowed her head in reverence.

"Greetings, Councilor Conrad. General Lucy pays her respect to you."

Her voice was stern and deep, almost masculine. Whether this was natural, or an accent that she had formed over time, was unknown.

At least, to one of the two who watched her greeting.

"Ah, Lucy! It's been a while."

Conrad smiled broadly at the younger lady, his face quickly moving towards the man beside him.

"Sir Ralyks, this is Lucy. She's a General, and she'll serve as the Vice Commander of this entire operation."

Upon hearing this, Ralyks took a few steps forward and stretched his hand towards the woman who still had her knee planted to the ground.

"I hear it's difficult for women to become soldiers, talkless of rising up the ranks to the position of General." He began, his voice containing a rare emotion for a man such as Ralyks.

—Respect!

"You have quite the achievement; becoming a General at such a young age. That in itself is deserving of respect."

Lucy kept her head bowed, but she accepted the outstretched hand offered by the Dark Adventurer—someone she had already been briefed about.

As soon as she shook his hand, she found herself standing upright.

An expression of surprise filled her face, but she did her best to drown all of it and simply respond to the kind words of the Alliance's benefactor.

"I deeply appreciate your words, Sir Ralyks. However, I am still far from adequate."

A certain glint of ambition glowed in her eyes, and Ralyks seemed to like it.

"I see. Then, I look forward to seeing how far you go."

General Lucy nodded, her lips curling up to form a resolute smile.

"I will do my utmost not to fall short of your expectations."

"I like her enthusiasm."

Once Lucy finished giving Conrad her report and returned to attend to the soldiers, Ralyks said this to the Councilor.

Everyone in the United Human Alliance knew of the stereotype that pervaded its inner workings.

Women were seen to be more talented in Magic and males were considered to be more primed to be Warriors and Martial Artists.

As a result, positions of soldiers were occupied almost exclusively by men, and women were a very small minority—

usually taking up lesser or administrative roles.

They could also be medics or cooks.

In such a world, Lucy had managed to bypass the rank of Lieutenant, Colonel, Major, Captain, and Marshal, obtaining the position of General.

Only the Admiral and Supreme General positions were left for her.

In response to Ralyks' statement, Conrad nodded, staring at the woman's fierce address to the soldiers.

"Yes. I like it as well."

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Chapter 310 Meeting The Other Side

The opening address didn't take too long already, as all the soldiers had already been briefed prior to the day of the operation.

The entire operation could be summarized into two essential elements: the Day and Night.

The Day Operation was a more broad search, disguised as some kind of super patrol. As for the night search, it would be a lot more aggressive.

The goal was to utilize the day patrol as an excuse to execute a more thorough investigation in the night due to a reason they would cook up.

By patrolling and searching in the morning, soldiers would take up strategic positions around the city, and they would also properly cover all the grounds that made up important checkpoints.

Once that was established, a more intense approach could be carried out.

Above all else, the goal of such a roundabout strategy was to ensure that they didn't tip off the enemies during their search.

Or, at least, ensure that it was too late for the criminals to run and hide once they figured out what was happening.

This was the essence of the Full Sweep Operation.

"Looks like you can take things from here. I'll be on my way now."

Ralyks began to step away from Conrad, who was about to join the soldiers in starting the operation.

"As promised, I'll investigate things with Kara on my end."

"Ah, yes! I understand." Conrad replied with enthusiasm.

Ralyks had never failed them before, so he had no doubt in the man's abilities.

"How is she, by the way? Kara Verte, I mean. Does she still appear suspicious to you?"

In response to this, Ralyks shook his head.

"I don't trust her. However, she isn't suspicious, so there's no need to worry. Just carry out your operation, and I'll carry out mine."

With this agreement in place, Conrad and Ralyks shook hands once more before the Councilor jogged to meet up with the troops while Ralyks opened a portal and vanished from sight.

Not too long after, the Operation on the Merchant City began.

'Huu...'

Rey appeared in his next destination—the Safehouse that held his other allies.

He had to knock and say the passcode, of course, before being allowed to enter. It all felt like a silly spy movie, but Rey played along anyway.

Once he went through all due processes, though. The door opened, and the first face he saw behind the door was none other than Kara's.

"Welcome back, Sir Ralyks."

Rey shrugged and greeted back in a more casual tone before entering the premises.

The moment he did so, he could feel an intense Magical Flow circulating throughout the room.

'It's heavily enchanted.' He noted to himself, taking a good look at his surroundings.

The Safehouse looked more like a simple cottage, or a partially worn-down shack, on the outside... but the inside could not be more different.

The walls were painted an exquisite lacquer brown, with the furniture in the parlor so well designed and arranged that Rey felt like he was in a miniature version of the Blanc Mansion.

The place was indeed small, but with the grand designs that filled his sight—from the chandelier on the ceiling, to the perfectly tiled floors, and solemn ambiance—Rey could tell that this was a perfectly comfortable place for his allies.

'I guess they would still be comfortable even when they're in hiding.' He mused, taking his seat in the most exquisite-looking chair in the room.

He didn't particularly want to stir anything, but with the arrangement of the seats, Rey simply assumed that they placed it there for him to occupy.

Besides, the moment he sat there, Kara smiled in approval.

He wasn't wrong.

A few seconds after he entered the Safehouse, Asher and Rebal rushed out, their faces filled with expressions of relief.

"Sir Ralyks!"

"Sir Ralyks, welcome!"

As father and son approached Rey, he couldn't help but feel a little awkward watching two grown-ass men treat him with such high esteem.

'Why can't I just get used to it?' He wondered while addressing them and telling everyone to take their seats.

They instantly obeyed, allowing all the formalities to die down.

It was time for the important bits to come up.

"The attack on the capital will most likely be a two-pronged one." Rey began, both hands intertwined with each other.

It made him feel smart, so he decided to go with it.

"They'll attack the Capital itself—that is, the Blanc Mansion and the surrounding areas, and then they'll attack the Black Market underground."

This was to ensure the complete ruin of the Blanc House, and also a hostile takeover of the Capital.

'I don't think Scylla and her goons will want to govern the entire United Human Alliance, though. If I had to guess, it's more like they'll make a grand statement of their power.'

If that was the case, it meant that the Royal Council and every resource of the mainstream market and government would merely be puppeteered by Scylla's New Order.

In essence, she would have absolute control over everything while remaining in the shadows.

The surface would fight her wars, and they would protect her and her interests from the Dragons and any other enemy that surfaced.

'At least, that's what I think.'

If that was indeed the case, then Scylla was quite the nefarious schemer.

'A little too ambitious, though.' Rey decided to shrug off his thoughts and focus on clarifying their roles in the imminent conflict.

"As planned, Asher will be transported to the KariBlanc Shop in the Black Market, where he will remain for the duration of the entire incident."

Of course, he wasn't going to be without help.

"My subordinate will be with you, so there's no need to worry."

Then, there was the obvious issue of the Capital. The New Order was bound to raze a lot of things to the ground in order to send a message, while also completely destroying the Blanc Mansion and whatever other assets they had on the surface.

There was no need to be so concerned about that either.

"Another of my subordinates will handle that as well, so there's no need to fear." He told the people who were listening to him.

However in truth, Rey only had one subordinate to handle both affairs.

—His Familiar, Ater.

'He said he can properly handle everything without any innocent casualty, so I'll take him at his word.'

He also knew Ater was more than capable, so that was pretty much a closed chapter.

"As for the Dark Gathering, the roster remains the same. Rebal and Kara are the participants, while my partner and I will act as your guards..." As Rey said this, he realized something.

Or rather, he chose to address something he had realized a while back.

"Where is she, by the way?"

By "she", Rey meant Esme. She wasn't to be found among all the people who gathered before him.

As if waiting for him to ask, a sweet-sounding feminine voice echoed from behind Rey.

"Right here."

'I already knew you were standing there...' Rey's thoughts trailed, but he simply decided to play along with the current situation.

"Hm..." He slowly tilted his head and turned in the direction of the voice.

What he saw, however, defied his expectations.

'Is that... Esme?!