

Extras 311

Chapter 311 Foreboding To The Calamity

'Is that... Esme?'

Standing behind him was an entity covered entirely in dark armor.

They wore a hooded cape, but beneath all of that was a thin-layered full-plated armor.

It even had a helmet and everything.

"You are...?" Rey asked, tilting his head to the side a little.

"It's Es... I mean, you know who I am already!"

Of course, he did! Rey could easily recognize her voice. Plus, he had also confirmed by using [Absolute Appraisal].

It really was Esme, locked in a fully armored attire.

'I mean, I told them to focus more on defense and concealing her identity when it came to her appearance, but to think they'd go this far...'

The entire armor was made from Orichalcum, though certain areas were lined with Mythril in order to ensure that her Mana Flow wasn't too disturbed.

"The inner regions that directly touch her body were designed to be very comfortable. I can assure you that your partner is not in any discomfort." Rebal finally spoke up, adding more context to the black armor that Esme donned.

"Really? Did she confirm that?" Rey shifted his gaze to Rebal.

"N-no. Actually... this is the first time we've heard her speak."

'A-ah...!' Rey's thoughts snapped as he remembered how Esme was usually silent around these people.

He wondered why she decided to speak.

'Is it because I'm here with them? Or because it could be unavoidable to communicate due to the nature of the mission?'

Either way, Rey could see from the stunned expressions of the three seated ones that they were also blown away by Esme's amazing voice.

'So it isn't just me. Whew!' He gave an internal sigh of relief.

"What are you standing there for? You should come sit and join us." Rey said to Esme before turning to the three who sat before him.

He knew his tone was a little demanding, but he had a reputation to keep among these people.

Rey could only hope Esme could pick up on that and act accordingly.

Thankfully, she didn't disappoint.

Esme sat on the chair closest to Rey, one which had been left intentionally empty since the start of the meeting.

It was as if everyone in the room already knew that it belonged to Esme—just as they thought to reserve the best seat for Rey.

'Oh well. This much is natural, I suppose.'

Rey continued on with the plan's discussions, allowing everyone else to say a few things regarding how the entire thing would play out—especially reactions to certain antics that Scylla could pull.

At the end of it all, Rey deemed it fit to first of all transport Asher to the KariBlanc Store in the Capital's Black Market, then transport Kara, Rebal, and another replica of himself to the respectable in that they would be staying in pending the time of the Dark Gathering.

Once all of this was done, the only two who remained in the Safehouse were himself and Esme.

A few seconds of silence passed as they both just stared at each other.

Then—

"You know I can't take you seriously with that helmet on, right?"

—Rey broke the silence with a snicker.

"Well, you have your mask... and I have mine." Esme smugly responded.

They both giggled after that, collapsing on the chair and laughing like little kids.

With the Ralyks persona now completely gone, and Esme able to talk a lot more freely with Rey, they soon got comfortable being alone together.

"Do you really feel comfortable inside that thing?" Rey asked Esme.

He couldn't help but suspect that she couldn't complain to them even if she felt some kind of discomfort.

"Yes, it's fine. The insides are soft, so there isn't much friction.

"I see. I see."

"I thought it would be hot, so I decided to strip before putting it on, but it had some kind of temperature regulation, so it's perfect."

The moment Rey heard some words that Esme spouted, he grew rigid instantly.

"W-wait, so you're—!"

"Naked under the armor? Yes." She responded pretty naturally.

"Why?" Rey nearly screamed. "Why did you have to tell me that? TMI!"

"TMI? What does that mean?" Esme tilted her head a little bit.

Her action looked a little clunky since she still had her helmet on.

"It means 'too much information'."

"Ohhh..." Her voice trailed and went low, almost as if she was thinking of a comeback.

Then, not long after, it came.

"I mean, you're also naked underneath your outfit, right? How is my situation so special that you'd freak out like that?"

Rey fell dead silent once Esme said that.

Esme wasn't wrong, after all. Underneath his attire he had... hold on, he had something else.

"At least I have my underwear."

"Well, under that is what? In the end, take off enough clothing, and you get a naked person."

"T-that's not the same as—!"

"I'm literally wearing a dense layer of metal. I think that's enough clothing, don't you think?"

Rey sighed and shook his head. Arguing with someone like this was impossible.

He simply had to give up and focus on the important things, else he would waste more time on the irrelevant stuff.

"Anyway, we're going to be investigating the Warehouses in the Merchant City pending the time the Dark Gathering begins. I hope you're already."

As Rey sighed, he saw Esme nodding enthusiastically.

'I'm sure she's excited. We haven't found a single slave or clue in any of the Warehouses on the map.'

Since the Merchant City was the heart of the corruption that threatened to devour the United Human Alliance, chances of finding what they sought was high.

"When do we start?" Esme asked in excitement, which prompted Rey to rise to his feet.

"Nothing's stopping us from starting now, right?"

Sure, Conrad's plan was already underway, but Rey could easily cloak himself and Esme, so they could freely search for whatever they desired without once clashing with the Alliance's forces.

'It seems everyone is busy now.' Rey grinned with delight.

The Otherworlders were busy with the Royal Dungeon Raid.

The Alliance was running a campaign against the Criminal Underworld.

The enemies were preparing for their final showdown, and Rebal's side was anticipating it.

As for him... he was currently going to do his best to help Esme and complete the System's Quest for him.

'I'm only at about 33 percent thanks to [Replicate], but this much should be fine.' Rey thought to himself as he opened a portal right in front of the excited Half Elf.

"He waited in front of the portal and made a mock bow as Esme approached it.

"Ladies first."

"You—!" Esme gave him a quick jab on his stomach before rushing inside.

"Pfft! This girl..." Rey shook his head and chuckled to himself.

Of course, he felt no pain and suffered no damage thanks to his [Damage Nullification] Skill.

It was nothing short of amusing for him.

[Meanwhile]

"Darkness is about to creep upon the land."

A man sat right in front of the standing Asher, his blood red hair dancing as his crimson eyes brimmed with maleficence.

His ebony skin seemed to glimmer in the dark, and his broad grin showed nothing short of amusement for the events to come.

"In the grand scheme of things, all of this remains inconsequential, but..." He cast his gaze upon Asher, causing the latter to tremble.

"... I assure you that I shall fulfill my duties to the letter. For it is my Master that commands it."

The ebony man rose to his feet and inhaled deeply.

"I can promise you this. No harm will come to anything of the Blanc House, nor will any denizen of the Capital suffer any harm on this day. But..."

Despite saying all of this, his wide grin only grew in intensity—
forming a warped smile that could not be said to belong to a human.

It could only be from a Devil!

"... All of Master's enemies will be thoroughly destroyed."

He walked past the trembling Asher, not paying the lad any heed at all.

"I, Ater, swear on this."

*

Chapter 312 The Dungeon Squabble

The Royal Dungeon Raid, contrary to the initial fear of the Otherworlders, went smoothly despite the absence of Ralyks.

From the Eleventh Floor, they descended to the Twelfth Floor, and even went through it with minimal help from the Grand Elementals that Ralyks placed as their chaperones.

At first they were surprised by how relatively easy the whole venture was.

After all, they had been primed to believe that the Dungeon was an incredibly dangerous and unpredictable place.

However, with their current level of strength, nothing of the sort applied to them.

The Otherworlders could safely and easily dispatch the mobs of the Dungeon Floors, and the Bosses of the Eleventh and Twelfth Floors were relatively easy to beat.

Not only were they a lot more powerful than before, but their ability to make decisions on the fly—such as choosing which strategy and formation to utilize—had greatly increased.

Everything was going very smoothly.

... Too smoothly.

"Looks like this is it. The final Boss Room for the day."

Adonis smiled as he touched the stone surface of one of the two massive double doors.

The door looked to be about thirty meters tall, and the stone surface of the doors felt eerily rough and dense. One look at the entrance would be enough to ward off any intruders who thought to enter.

However, this brave band of Raiders were different.

They were Otherworlders, each now above the Level of fifty.

All of them were also well-equipped, and while there were signs of exhaustion among most of the members of the team, they had immense confidence in their abilities.

They were able to clear the Eleventh and Twelfth Floors within half the time than they initially anticipated.

Most of the exhaustion they accrued was due to their non-stop journey as well as the the utilization of Mana and exertion of their physical abilities.

It was a natural reaction from exploring three Floors of a Dungeon for hours.

"I suppose it's time for a break." Adonis smiled at his fellow teammates.

He had done the most out of everyone present, and he could feel the strain on his body. If he took a break for thirty minutes or so, he was confident in his ability to fight at full power.

'It's pretty obvious that we're going to win this due to the streak we've had thus far. But, we can't take any chances.' He thought to himself.

It was better to be safe than sorry.

"Why can't we just go in now, though?" Justin whined, his voice containing more frustration than exhaustion.

"The sooner we finish, the faster we can leave this place and spend our time doing other things."

"You mean, things like messing around?" Trisha snapped at Justin, causing everyone in the vast hallway to burst out in laughter.

Most of them were already seated on the ground, intending to camp outside the Boss Room until it was Break Time was over.

However, a few people like Justin and Adonis were still on their feet.

"I'm serious this time, though. We already faced the mobs, so we already know the kind of difficulty to expect going in."

Everyone stared at one another and contemplated Justin's words.

He wasn't wrong in his line of reasoning. After all, one could always estimate the overall strength of a Boss Monster by taking a good look at the goons that occupied the same Floor.

Of course, the Boss Monster was going to be phenomenally stronger than the mobs, but not by some unreasonable extent,

If the Otherworlders were able to defeat the mobs with restive ease, it was pretty much guaranteed that they could take on the Boss.

Even Adonis thought the same.

'It's our last Raid for today. If we just go in now and use our full strength, I'm sure we could take the Boss down pretty quickly.'

However, Adonis wasn't one to disregard procedure.

It was time to rest, and as long as they weren't at full strength, it wasn't something he could endorse.

"Come on! What do we have to fear? We even have Sir Ralyks' Grand Elementals with us!"

The four beings were silently standing in the background, their looming presences a reminder of the assured protection that they offered.

There really wasn't much to fear.

Despite all of these reasons, no one stood up from the ground. They mostly gave expressions of uncertainty and hesitation.

Perhaps they were waiting for the first to support Justin.

"I agree with Justin." Eric finally rose to his feet, flexing his glasses as he did so.

"However, rather than act rashly... why don't we just vote?"

He turned to Justin, who was now beaming and giving him a thumbs up.

"Justin and I agree to go in now. That's two votes out of nine. Who else supports this?"

Many people would assume that Eric was taking the side of his friend and also desired to conclude the raid as quickly as possible, but that wasn't the case at all.

In fact, the whole reason he desired to take this route was for a completely different reason.

'Eric doesn't want Justin to embarrass himself by pressing the matter too much.' Adonis thought to himself as he watched the whole thing.

'No one likes it when someone is being too overbearing. At least, when it comes to voting, everyone is given an easy chance to establish their opinions.'

If this was the case, why did Eric decide to vote in support of Justin? Well, the reason was pretty simple.

They were friends.

Of course, Eric would support his friend.

"I don't agree with this decision." Alicia raised her hand, a slight frown playing on her face.

"It's just for thirty minutes, so why don't we just take a solid break before going in?"

Her eyes slowly trailed to the massive entrance, and she shivered a little.

"I have a bad feeling about all this—including the Boss that's waiting for us there."

"So, you want us to give up on it or what?" Justin interrupted Alicia, causing her to snap back as soon as he spoke.

"That's not what I meant! It's just a bad feeling is all..."

Glancing at her Familiar, Alicia could see her also trembling slightly.

In fact, the source of her unease was Snow.

'Don't worry. We'll be fine...' Her expression seemed to say as she stroked the rabbit with her gentle hands.

"I agree with Alicia. There's no need to rush. We're already way ahead of schedule. Let's just wait a little while longer."

Once Adonis spoke up, the choice was pretty much made. Not only was his tone calm and reasonable, his words carried a lot of sense with them.

It also helped that he was the Hero, as well as the leader of the Raid Team.

His words pretty much settled the entire argument.

"Tch. Fine... whatever." Justin sighed in defeat as he plopped to the ground.

He was eager, sure, but he wasn't stupid enough to rebel against Adonis' authority.

Besides, it wasn't like he had any bad intentions to begin with.

'I'm sure he just believes we can take the thing behind this door head on.' Adonis stared at the massive entrance once again and furrowed his brow.

'Let's hope he's right.'

*

Chapter 313 An Absolute Monstrosity

The Otherworlders sat.

They discussed amongst one another, enjoying the moment of peace that served as their solace.

Even the initially grumpy Justin joined in on the fun, and a cheery atmosphere pervaded the contrasting representation of the Dungeon.

All was well.

Until...

"EVERYONE DOWN!"

The roar from Adonis caused all the Otherworlders to freeze in panic, rather than listen to the words of their leaders.

This could have been due to the suddenness of his scream, or the fact that they weren't in the proper mental space to take orders.

However, the more likely reason was a third option.

... The fact that they all felt a pressure so heavy that none of them could move a single inch.

~BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMM!!!~

The double door that led to the Boss Room was eviscerated in an instant, and a deep blue surge of energy burst out of the entrance.

It devastated everything that surrounded it and rushed towards the Otherworlders.

~FWOOSH!~

The Grand Elementals instantly rushed to the forefront of the seated nine, their massive forms blocking them from inevitable death.

The result of this action was fatal.

... All four of them disintegrated the moment the blast reached them.

None was able to withstand its power.

They could not resist.

The protectors all perished with that single blast, yet the misfortune was yet to be satisfied.

The roaring blast still charged at the Otherworlders with just as great an intensity as when it first manifested.

Surely, the end had come.

"[Absolute Defense]!"

A barrier of golden light suddenly covered the Otherworlders, shielding them from the immense radiation of ultimate destruction.

The result was as one would expect.

~BOOOOOOOOM!~

The ground shook, and the ceiling trembled. Everything around them vibrated as the golden field protected the nine from the deep blue blast.

However—

~CRACK~

—Even [Absolute Defense] began to show cracks in its sturdy walls.

"N-no way!" Adonis gasped, his eyes widening in disbelief.

No matter how strong a Monster in the Royal Dungeon was, none of them had ever managed to crack his ultimate means of defense.

Yet... YET...!

~FSHIIIIII...~

Fortunately, the bursting noise of destruction soon became nothing but fading echoes of dissipating heat.

The intense blue energy thinned out, leaving particles of light dancing in the air, and smoke wafting all around.

The charred earth and collapsed ceiling filled the sight of the Otherworlders and Familiar, causing all of them to tremble in awe.

... And FEAR!

Whatever had caused this level of destruction was no mere creature.

~DUM!~

~DUM!~

~DUM!~

Tremors rose from the ground as something began to appear from within the forbidden palace.

Its silhouette was majestic, having a figure of about twenty five meters. Five blue eyes glowed from the creature's head, and almost as soon as it made itself known, the thick smoke began to clear.

An intense storm of winds replaced any hindrance to the sight.

As a result, the creature's true form was bare for all to witness.

"N-no way...!"

"Why does it look like... that?"

"T-this is the Boss...?!"

It had a glorious build that resembled a massive lizard—or more like an argentinosaurs, the biggest land dinosaur to be discovered on Earth.

If only it bore resemblance to such a creature and nothing else, then perhaps it wouldn't have been such a frightening thing to see.

Unfortunately, there was more to the Monster than just that.

It had massive crystal-like substances, akin to heavy spikes, protruding out of its scaly body. It had gleaming black skin, though vein-like cracks decorated its humongous body like a tattoo.

It seemed to be bursting with so much power, to the point where the very ground it trod began to grow smaller versions of the stones on its body.

"A-are those... Mana Crystals?!"

"Mana Crystals are growing all over its body!"

"Even on the ground! T-that means...!"

No one needed to say the obvious, but perhaps they all began to blurt out words like these because they didn't want it to be true.

They wanted someone to correct them.

But no one did.

All their observations this far were spot on.

This beast was one unlike any other, but it was a Monster.

Only Monsters would have so much power, yet lack the intelligence to control their Mana to prevent it from leaking out so much.

None could have expected to find such an existence here, but they were now confronted with it.

"Huuu..." Smoke leaked from its mouth as its long neck coiled backwards.

Its five eyes stared at the little ones who had yet to die from its blast of destruction. Only one thing came to the creature's mind once he saw this.

~BWUUUUUSSSHHH!~

It began to gather a phenomenal amount of Mana from its belly, evident by how its stomach glowed intensely, followed by the radiation that flowed through its incredibly long neck.

The Otherworlders already knew what was coming.

They were neither fast nor capable enough to evade it, and the only hope they had to protect themselves was already cracked.

Their safety hung by a thread.

~BOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!~

The second ray of destruction poured out, this time a lot less powerful than before.

However, its incredible pressure was enough to tell Adonis, who now poured more Mana into his barrier, that his protection could only do so much.

After all... this thing had long transcended the limits of any Dungeon Monster, or any Monster to be discovered, period!

Due to its evolution, it broke through the Grand barrier of A-Tier and reached the Absolute Realm.

As impossible as it was to admit, Adonis could no longer deny the truth that stared him in the face.

"I-It's an S-Tier Monster!"

[STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: (Currently Nameless)
- Race: Evolved Grand Onitnegra (Monster)
- Class: Absolute Evolved (S-Tier)
- Level: 300 (97.89% EXP)
- Life Force: 5,000/9,900
- Mana Level: 7,000/9,000
- Combat Ability: 7,500

- Stat Points: 0
- Skills (Exclusive): [Absolute Ray]
- Skills (Non-Exclusive): [Pure Density]. [Defense Break]. [Perfect Sense]. [Double Power].
- Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

[Additional Information]

A Monster who was previously the apex predator of the 98th Floor as a Grand Monster, but has now evolved to become an Absolute Monster. Its Life Force continually deteriorates as a result of its incredible power, and it is a force to be reckoned with.

Status Condition: [Health Reduction]. [Mind Control].

[End Of Information]

Chapter 314 Otherworlders Going All Out [Pt 1]

[STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: (Currently Nameless)
- Race: Evolved Grand Onitnegra (Monster)
- Class: Absolute Evolved (S-Tier)
- Level: 300 (97.89% EXP)
- Life Force: 5,000/9,900
- Mana Level: 7,000/9,000
- Combat Ability: 7,500
- Stat Points: 0
- Skills (Exclusive): [Absolute Ray]
- Skills (Non-Exclusive): [Pure Density]. [Defense Break]. [Perfect Sense]. [Double Power].
- Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

[Additional Information]

A Monster who was previously the apex predator of the 98th Floor as a Grand Monster, but has now evolved to become an Absolute Monster. Its Life Force continually deteriorates as a result of its incredible power, and it is a force to be reckoned with.

Status Condition: [Health Reduction]. [Mind Control].

[End Of Information]

The Otherworlders were paralyzed in fear as they watched the absolute being tower above them.

The blast that rushed from its jaws descended on Adonis' barrier, causing even more cracks to reverberate all over it.

Adonis could feel his bones rattle as his defense was being penetrated.

"E-everyone! Prepare to retrea—!"

Before the Otherworlders could say any more, they began to hear strange sounds around them—especially behind.

Many feared to turn back, but those brave enough to look were rewarded with even more despair.

"More Mobs! And they look completely different from the ones we just defeated!"

Each of them looked eerily similar to the Boss Monster before them, except a lot smaller and less menacing.

Their threatening existence still neared, however.

And so, before the Otherworlders could get a grip on what was happening, they were surrounded!

"What should we do now, Adonis?"

"Adonis, what's the plan?"

"Is there a way out, Adonis?"

Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis!
Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis!
Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis!
Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis!
Adonis! Adonis! Adonis! Adonis!

The Hero's name kept echoing in his head as he struggled to keep his wits about him, while also trying his hardest to maintain his barrier in order to prepare for the next round of attack that was incoming.

"Prepare for combat! We're going to fight our way through this!"

"E-EH...??"

Shocked expressions radiated from the Otherworlders.

After seeing the Monster and what it could do, they had expected Adonis to speak along the lines of retreating. Yet, he was talking about something too unrealistic.

—Defeating such an unbeatable foe.

"It's the only way to survive! If you want to live, then get ready to fight!" Adonis yelled as he gritted his teeth and frowned deeply.

Now wasn't the time for hesitation or second guessing. Doing that could risk actual death.

They didn't have Ralyks with them this time, so it was possible that any mistake here could lead to their deaths.

"Get in formation, everyone! Heavy hitters like Belle, Alicia, and Billy, I'll need you to come with me to deal damage to the Boss and distract it from everyone else. Everyone else, focus on the mobs."

It was a very risky venture, dividing their forces in such a way. Not only would their full combat power be halved, but it was very likely that both sides would lose without the other backing them up.

However, at the moment, it was the only viable option. fr(e)webnovel

'Right now, I'm in Level 105. My base Combat Ability and Mana Level are above 1,000, but my Life Force is still lacking...'

According to the kind of power the Monster was exuding, Adonis guessed the thing's Stats had to have reached 5,000—

perhaps even surpassed it.

'If I add my Bonus Stats and the effects of my Enchanted Items, along with my Skills, it's possible I can somewhat keep up.'

The biggest advantage that Adonis and everyone present had was their intelligence.

'It's a mass of power, but it's merely following instincts. With a proper strategy, it's possible to win.'

~VWUUUSH!~

Summoning his Divine Sword, Adonis felt a rush of power surge through him as his teammates neared him.

"Belle, use your strongest wind abilities to attack it in multiple areas. Billy, take the left flank, Alicia, take the right flank. I'll attack from behind, hopefully dealing enough damage." Adonis instructed, and they all nodded their heads instantly.

Every other person had to deal with the mobs, which meant they would be unprotected from the Monster's Blast.

Adonis had a plan for that, though.

"Huu..." Misty breath escaped his lips as he stared resolutely at the creature before them.

"... Let us begin!"

~WHOOOOSH!~

Adonis deactivated his [Absolute Defense] and rushed towards the Boss, his helpers moving right behind him.

The Boss Monster easily noticed this and prepared a blast to halt them in their tracks, or at least eviscerate them.

However, Adonis had already expected this predictable pattern of attack.

"Rahhhhhhhh!" He slashed hard, pouring his Light Magic into the blast of energy that his Divine Sword generated.

The result was immediate.

~BOOOOOOOM!~

The Boss Momster's face tilted slightly, causing the blast to fly somewhere else.

As a result, they were all safe.

"NOW!" Adonis yelled, noticing the monster had gone on recoil.

Billy, Alicia, and Belle took their respective positions, and as they prepared their Skills, Adonis leaped high to the very face of the Monster and used his Light Magic.

"Grand Luminous Flare!" Pointing both of his palms towards the Boss, a powerful burst of blinding light rushed towards the beast's face.

While it was concentrated solely on the Boss Monster, the purpose of the Spell was not at all to deal some kind of damage.

No... it was to deal a debuff.

"I've blinded it. Maintain some distance from the Boss, as well as the effects of your attacks, so it can't detect where you are!"

Adonis twisted in the air and bounced off the ceiling so he could finally land behind the Boss.

Tightly gripping his blade, he prepared a definitive attack on the Boss.

'I can't pull my punches!' Gritting his teeth, he began to activate all Skills that would be useful for the current battle.

Skills like [Indomitable Power] would help him in his offensive maneuvers, and since the Boss Monster was most likely a lot faster, his [Full Sense] Skill would come in very useful if the creature tried to make any sudden moves.

'All preparations have been made...' Adonis took his stance, ready to strike.

'Please let this work!'

Chapter 315 Otherworlders Going All Out [Pt 2]

~BOOOOOOOM!~

Adonis' first attack roared as he put all his power into his swing.

Layers of brightly bursting energy and golden light were sent flying towards the hide of the Boss Monster in a single rush of destruction.

However...

'N-nothing, huh?!' Adonis felt a bead of sweat fall down his face as he gulped.

Not only was the creature perfectly fine after tanking that attack, but it used its very long tail to whip through the area, speeding towards where Adonis stood.

'W-what?!'

Thanks to [Full Sense], Adonis was able to detect the tail swing in time, but he wasn't fast enough to completely evade it.

Sure, he dodged the tail itself, but there was no escaping the shockwaves that flowed with it.

"Guh!" The pressure alone was enough to send Adonis flying into the Boss Room itself, a desolate place filled only with glowing crystal-like energy sources.

'Damnit! I miscalculated!'

Adonis' thoughts began to race as he looked ahead, barely seeing the Monster as a result of his disoriented vision.

'I blinded it, yet it could sense my exact position.'

Was that a coincidence?

No... Adonis couldn't possibly assume that.

There was only one conclusion he could reach, and based on his experience, Adonis knew he was right on the mark with this.

'It has a Sensory Skill!'

If that was the case, then he had to hurry and warn the rest of his teammates.

They weren't as safe as they thought!

"True Frosty Spikes!"

Alicia sent multiple spiky projectiles towards the Boss Monster, while also trying her best to slow it down by covering it with ice.

Unfortunately, the creature's body mass was too big for her to possibly cover. Also, its body's incredible density and vitality made all her efforts worthless.

Even the Ice Spikes easily bounced off its body as if it was nothing.

'I've been expending Mana at an astronomical rate and yet...!'

Not a single sign of damage seemed to be evident.

She looked as her Familiar, Snow, was busy fighting the Mobs, an order Alicia gave her despite the rabbit desperately wanting to stay by her side.

'Snow wants to protect me, but this is what is best for the formation.'

With the rabbit's speed, the rest of the Otherworlders could more quickly dispatch the Mobs and come over to assist them in facing the Boss.

That was what she thought, at the very least.

While Alicia was having these thoughts, she didn't notice the long neck of the Boss Monster turning towards her.

... Not until it was too late.

~VWUUSH!~

A smaller, more concentrated blast began to manifest in the Monster's mouth, and it set its blond eyes on the annoying woman on its flank.

~VWOOOM!~

The air trembled as the blast was launched, which was just when Alicia noticed it coming towards her.

Her body was too stiff to move, and her widened eyes took in the intense radiation that was charging towards her.

"Aliciaaaaaa!!!" Billy's roaring voice echoed in her ears as she felt her body being pushed to the side.

Surprised, her sight caught Billy now taking her previous position.

'H-he... what is he doing...?!' Alicia thought to herself as she looked at Billy's determined gaze.

'N-no...!'

The light descended, practically swallowing him whole.

'Not this!'

And then, the resounding echo of destruction raged forth, sending shockwaves flying in multiple directions.

Everyone was blown away, and Alicia was no exception.

In the end, once the dust began to settle, she was still on the ground, weakly looking at the distance where Billy had stood.

She expected to see nothing standing there, but instead she found two people at the exact spot.

One was floating in the air, both hands raised, with smoke rushing all around him. The other was kneeling on the ground.

"C-Clark...?" Alicia's gaze of surprise greeted the floating boy who had left his own formation and successfully blocked the blast.

Everyone in the team already knew that one of the Privileges of his Class was the ability to withstand any single attack, no matter how powerful.

This Privilege only applied once a day, so it wasn't invincible. It also protected the user from one attack, so a second blow would be fatal.

Clark hadn't yet used this Privilege on the Raid thus far because everything was so easy—at least, until now.

If it hadn't been for that, Alicia already knew they would be toast.

~WHOOSH!~

Like a comet, a golden blast rushed from within the Boss Room, and Adonis charged towards the face of the Boss Monster with far more tenacity than normal.

~BOOOOM!~

Tremors filled the room as the impact of Adonis hitting the face of the Boss Monster spread all over the massive expanse.

This caused the thing to stumble, and with Belle's persistent Wind Attacks, the creature's imbalance took a very critical turn.

Alicia instantly realized it was her turn for action, so she froze the ground, forcing the Monster to collapse on the ground.

"Haaa... haaa..." As she heaved in near exhaustion, she turned her gaze to Billy and Clark.

They were already having a heated conversation, and Alicia could already tell what it was about.

'He nearly died... just to save me!'

"Are you stupid?! Why would you throw your life away like that?"

Clark's face was flushed with annoyance as he glared at Billy.

Not only did he have to use his once-a-day Privilege to save Billy, but he also broke his own team formation in the process.

"Y-you didn't have to save me. I'm fine..."

"Fine my ass! If I didn't save you, you would have died, and that would have compromised the entire formation." Clark growled as he dragged the kneeling Billy by the collar.

"We need you to survive this, asshole. If you just throw your life away like that, it would reduce our chances of making it out of here alive."

As Clark said all this, he felt something shift in his heart, but he didn't know quite what it was.

When he saw Billy in danger, the first thing he thought of wasn't merely to prevent him from dying.

Rather, it was how his death would affect the whole team.

Once he recognized the overarching detriment, his body moved on its own, and he ended up saving Billy.

... Not like the boy seemed very thankful for it.

"Are you suicidal or what? If you pushed Alicia out of the way, you could have moved too!"

Clark knew this wasn't the place to say all of these things. He knew Billy had done a very righteous thing, by saving one of their own.

But... somehow he couldn't help but feel frustrated.

"Choosing to die, just like that, do you have any idea how selfish that is of you!"

That wasn't what being a Hero was about.

"I..."

"Do you even realize how your death would affect the person you saved? Think of the guilt and heavy burden she'll have to bear her whole life—that is, if we manage to escape this place!"

Once Billy heard this, he chuckled slightly and leaked out a small smile.

"No... I don't think she'll feel guilty at all." Billy cast his gaze on Clark, and his gaze was pretty much dull.

—As if he was a dead man standing.

Billy was tired.

He was tired of feeling like a shitty individual.

Sure, it was all his fault that he and Alicia experienced the horrors that they did and were nearly sold into slavery.

He recognized all of his errors, though he knew everything he had done was with Alicia's best interests at heart.

He just... made too many mistakes and went about things the wrong way. Billy realized that now.

Unfortunately, it seemed like this realization had come a bit too late. Even though he accepted his faults and was willing to change, it didn't seem like there was anyone who was willing to see him for who he was.

There was Adonis, but it was obvious that he couldn't regain the previous trust the Hero had in him.

Everyone else who didn't know of the incident treated him normally, but he couldn't help but fear what would happen if they ever found out about his actions.

As a result, he sort of isolated himself from the rest of his classmates.

He was no longer friends with Rey, who would have probably understood his actions if they were still as close as they were before.

In a tragic twist of fate, Rey now occupied the position he always wanted.

He had the respect of Adonis, the affection of Alicia, and the acknowledgment of the rest of his classmates—all while being so weak.

Rey probably didn't know this, but the Otherworlders had grown to respect him.

They knew where he started from, and now that they saw how much he had improved, none of them could doubt the hard work he put into his growth.

Even Billy... couldn't deny it.

'I regret everything.'

Billy wished, more than anything, to be able to go back and restart everything.

He would make so many new choices and stop his stupid self from making so many wrong choices.

Unfortunately... no one could change the past.

'If that's the case, then... isn't it better if I'm not here at all?' That was the thought Billy now had.

The thought that prompted him to nearly end his life for the sake of a noble cause.

Unfortunately, Clark saved him and instantly saw through his bullshit. Once again, he felt shitty, as if he now had something new to regret in his massive pile.

How much more could he endure before finally breaking?

Billy had no idea.

'I'm just so tired already...'

"Alicia wouldn't care if I died..."

Billy chuckled as he shrugged slightly. The two boys could clearly hear the explosions and echoes of destruction, but at that moment, they could only look at each other.

Clark was stunned by the version of Billy that he was seeing, and for the first time in a while, the latter was peeling off his mask.

In the end, no matter how much he tried to take responsibility, he couldn't regain what he lost.

Wasn't he better off dead then—especially if he could do something heroic before his death?

"If you can say that about me, then you really don't know me at all."

The feminine voice that echoed in the air caused Billy's body to grow stiff, and his heart nearly skipped a beat—maybe more.

Approaching the two boys, who looked to their left, was the current topic of their discussion.

"A-Alicia...?"

"I don't like you, Billy. I don't think I could ever look at you favorably or even forget what you did. But... that's not to say I wouldn't care if you died."

Billy could feel his heart ache, as well as moistness spreading through his eyes.

This was the first proper sentence that Alicia had said to him ever since the incident.

She wouldn't even look at him before now.

"I recognize your strength, as well as the efforts you put into growing stronger. Everyone in this room requires that strength."

Billy felt a mix of both melancholy and joy.

—Indescribable joy.

"This world needs you. Your classmates need you. I need you." Alicia drew closer and stretched her hand towards him.

"So, please... let's fight together and win this battle."

Tears fell from Billy's eyes as he gazed upon Alicia, who seemed like the very personification of light, here to save him from the darkness that was consuming him.

All he had to do was take her hand.

"I..." His croaking voice echoed as he raised his hand towards her.

"... I understand!"

Grappling her by the hand, she pulled him up quite easily.

Any normal person seeing this would think it was shocking, but considering how Alicia was almost in Level 60, with immense Points spread across various facets of her Stats, doing something like that was relatively easy.

Billy smiled, swallowing whatever saliva and mucus that had clogged his throat. He also cleaned the tears in his eyes and had a determined gaze on his face.

Alicia nodded at him, and he did the same.

They were finally on the same page, and seeing all of this play out before his eyes, Clark couldn't help but also smile in satisfaction.

"Thank you, Clark." He turned to the brown-haired boy beside him.

"No problem. Glad to see you back. Billy."

"Glad to be back!"

Billy took in a deep breath, feeling a surge of motivation unlike anything he had felt in a very long time.

It was at this exact moment that the rest of the Otherworlders gathered with them, already done with the rest of the Mobs.

"What's with this gathering?"

"We needed some backup, and you all were just talking?"

"We're finally done, no thanks to you three."

Chuckles and sighs of relief echoed forth, but there was no ill spread among any of the classmates.

Belle also approached the cluster of eight students, and not long after, Adonis landed in their midst as well.

With all nine of them gathered together, having nothing else to face but the Boss Monster, they all gazed upon the fallen creature who struggled to rise.

"Now is our best chance to fight it!" Adonis spoke up, addressing all who were waiting for their orders from him.

"I'll do my best to stop the blasts, so all of you should take on respective parts of its body and chip at its health."

"UNDERSTOOD!"

"Belle and Alicia, both of you are responsible for ensuring it never rises back up." Adonis turned to the two strongest girls in the group.

"Belle, use your Windfall Spell to create a pressure that makes it difficult for the Monster to rise. It's naturally heavy, so your Spell should make it more difficult for it."

"Got it!" The blonde nodded.

"As for you, Alicia, make sure the ground remains frozen, and ensure the part of its body that is on the ground is also frozen so it remains stuck."

With that, the mobility of the Boss Monster was essentially compromised.

Even though it would take them forever to chip at its health, this was the safest option they had.

"Understood!" Alicia responded with resolve.

"Alright! We all have our roles, so let's do our best."

Adonis' eyes glowed golden and cackles of power rushed through him.

"We're not going to let Sir Ralyks down. We're going to defeat this thing and get out of here in one piece."

Everyone nodded and strengthened their resolve for the last act of their battle.

"All of us, no exceptions!"

Chapter 317 Otherworlders Going All Out [Pt 4]

"Haaa... Haaa..."

Alicia felt her heart racing as her classmates and her prepared to charge.

She turned to her right and she saw her Familiar, Snow, clinging close to her.

Once again, she didn't want to let her go by herself. However, Alicia knew Snow was going to be very helpful to the mission, so...

'Please help out!' She pleaded.

Inevitably, the Familiar had to follow her Master's commands.

Alicia turned to her left, and among the few students who stood there, a particular boy caught her sight.

'Rey...'

He had a determined expression, one that showed how determined he was to play his role in the brewing conflict.

'There's no guarantee we'll make it out of here alive. And it's even more risky for someone like him.'

Despite that, Rey showed so much courage.

It made Alicia's anxiety slowly dissipate. She bit her lip and steadied herself while still breathing heavily.

"CHARGE!!!!!!"

Adonis' loud voice reverberated among the Otherworlders, and everyone took their respective positions.

Alicia poured all her strength into ensuring the icy ground was strong enough to support the weight of the creature that was slowly rising.

Once it tried standing for a few seconds, Belle's winds destabilized it, and Alicia's ice took it from there.

The behemoth of a creature fell back down, sending tremors flowing through the ground.

Shockwaves rocked the entire Floor, but the Otherworlders would not be deterred by that—not in the slightest.

This was a fight for their life.

"ATTACK! GIVE IT EVERYTHING!"

Adonis went straight for the head and began to chop up the Monster.

Each Otherworlder took a certain position and bombarded the creature with their most powerful offensive moves.

It had a very dense body, so they kept chipping at a particular location until the Monster would inevitably fall.

"URAAHHHHH!"

"DIEEEEEEEEE!!!"

"EAT THISSSSSS!"

Screams and shouts kept ringing aloud, almost as if the Otherworlders had lost their minds.

They kept up the same monotonous movements—some hammering their Enchanted Weapons on the body of the creature while pouring all their Elemental Magic into their blade itself.

Others kept chanting their most powerful Spells and spamming it on the Monster.

The creature initially didn't make any troubling sounds. If only tried to counterattack, but every time it tried to do so, Adonis was always ready for a counterattack.

After going at this for nearly an hour... they finally began to see progress,

"UROAAHHHHHHH!!!"

The Boss Monster began to howl in pain, flailing its body around as if it was experiencing pure agony.

"Don't let up! We're getting there! Continue attacking!"

Adonis and his allies kept up their assaults. Their sweat sprayed all over, and their muscles convulsed as a result of the relentless effort they kept putting forward.

Then, after another hour passed...

~SPLOOOSH!~

... Blood began to spray out of the Monster's body.

Most of the Otherworlders were already beyond exhausted at this point, but the moment they saw the bluish purple liquid spurt of the creature, they regained their zeal.

Squeezing out the last drop of Mana that they had, they began to bombard the inner recesses of the Monster with their attacks.

"[Greater Explosion]!"

"[Greater Lightning]"

"[Grand Fire Magic]!"

Words like this kept echoing among the respective Otherworlders.

More noise and seemingly unintelligible words flowed out, only to be drowned by the explosions caused by their assault

Then, after a total of three hours—no, most likely more—since they started the attack, the Boss Monster finally gave its final shriek.

~SQUISH!~

The last strike to its belly was the attack that finished it off, and the one who did it in... was apparently the weakest of the group.

—Rey Skylar!

"Good job, everyone."

Adonis, and every other person in the group, was on the floor, lying flat as he breathed heavily.

He had a wide grin on his face despite the fact that he and his friends nearly died. Something about the challenge he just experienced made his heart race at an abnormal pace.

The fact that they won despite the odds tugged at his lips and made him grin even wider.

Everyone was breathing heavily, but their mixed expressions made it clear that not all of them were as happy as Adonis.

"I can't believe we went through all of that and didn't even Level Up one time."

"Yeah... my entire body aches."

"I just want to sleep for ten thousand years."

"I'm so hungryyyy!"

Adonis merely smiled at the tantrums and looked in the direction of the luckiest one in their group —Rey.

The boy was lying down right beside Alicia, which caused Adonis to smile even more.

'To think he got all the EXP from that Boss. I wonder what Level he'll be in now...'

There was no way his Class would remain a Commoner after all of this, so the Level Cap of 30 had to change as well.

'If I had to guess, he'll have an Adventurer Class. That'll be a C-

Tier Class. As for Levels, I'm thinking somewhere around the range of 35-40.'

Adventurers had increased EXP when fighting and defeating Monsters—especially if those Monsters were more powerful than the Adventurer, so Adonis was certain Rey would have gotten a lot stronger than before.

'If he plays his cards right, he might eventually close the gap between himself and everyone.'

Adonis knew it was wishful thinking, but he couldn't help but wish to see that happen.

Maybe it was because Adonis was a good person and simply wanted to see everyone grow in their own way. Perhaps it was just that he was being a pragmatic leader and desired for all his teammates to be as equally competent as possible.

Or... it could be because of something else.

Something called guilt.

'You were a lot stronger in the past, Rey. Your Class and Skills were different, so...'

Adonis felt a sense of responsibility every time he looked at Rey.

'My return to the past must have caused that change.'

Which was why, no matter how little he could contribute or help, he had to atone for some of those deeds.

'I was warned this might happen, but I don't care. No matter the other changes that have occurred and that might occur, I don't regret my choice.'

With a deep glare, Adonis looked at the ceiling and soon closed his eyes.

'I will save everyone... no matter the cost!'

*

Chapter 318 The Tense Aftermath

"I was watching you... Rey."

Alicia's breaths were heavy, her chest rising up and down every second as she looked at the boy she was talking to.

He was also equally tired—no, perhaps even more so.

"You just kept hacking and hacking. You didn't even show a hint of fear at all."

Of course, this was a quality she admired in Rey—the assertive nature he had underneath the seemingly plain appearance and personality he usually showed.

It was thanks to watching him constantly attack, despite the exhaustion he must have been feeling, that she was able to keep going despite feeling extremely drained.

She couldn't let up—not after seeing what Rey was doing.

And so, despite feeling lightheaded, tired, or downright sick, she kept her attacks. As a result, they were eventually able to defeat the Monster.

"T-thank you, Alicia. I just... had to do it!"

"Weren't you scared at all? I mean... you were so close to the thing."

"I... I wasn't scared." Rey said as he smiled at her.

"I knew we would win."

Alicia's face instantly morphed into that of surprise. She didn't think anyone could say such words given the situation.

All their options seemed to have vanished, and even their guardians were eviscerated. If it hadn't been for certain conditions, and the aid of Adonis' leadership, they would have all perished.

"You do realize that we could have easily been killed if we made the slightest mistake, right?"

"But we didn't." Rey responded, his smile growing even broader.

"I believe Sir Ralyks must have been very confident in our capabilities... enough to believe we could take down that thing."

Alicia's eyes widened even more upon hearing that name.

"So he... he actually...!"

Thanks to the intensity of the situation, she never really had the time or opportunity to process the bigger picture of things. But now... she was beginning to unravel everything.

"Are you saying he knew such a Monster was waiting for us here?" She blurted out, her voice so loud that it attracted the attention of everyone in the room.

The moment she asked this, everyone began to stare at each other in realization.

"H-hold on... Sir Ralyks knew?"

"He intentionally sent us down here despite knowing all that? That's so messed up, man!"

"We nearly died, you know?"

Before any more could be said about the matter, Rey spoke up with the loudest possible voice he could make.

"Let's not blame Sir Ralyks. I'm sure he trusted in our abilities and knew we would come out victorious."

Many people shot Rey mixed reactions, but someone in particular quickly gave a response as soon as the former defended the actions of their supposed guardian.

"Of course, you'd support him. You got all the benefits of the Level Up."

"Hey!" Alicia's voice instantly rose as she stared at the one who said the words.

It was Justin Baker.

The moment Alicia gave him her disapproving look, he shrank back in hesitation. However, that didn't mean he was done.

"I'm not wrong. I'm sure we're all thinking the same!" He looked at every other Otherworlder in the room, probably hoping to find an ally among them.

"C'mon! Let's just be honest with ourselves."

"That's enough, Justin. We all know it was by chance, and I'm sure you wouldn't have complained if you were the one who got that EXP."

With Adonis speaking up, Justin began to deflate.

"I agree with Rey. Of course, Sir Ralyks would have known the Monster was here. He's very thorough, and he said he had already looked into the Floors we would be challenging before leaving them up to us." Adonis continued, his voice calm and collected.

Silence filled the room as everyone decided to hear him out, despite their initial aversion to Rey and what he had to say.

"He also told us that we would be able to handle everything we would encounter down here. He must have also been referring to the Monster we faced just now."

There were still doubtful expressions on the faces of the Otherworlders, but a few of them were able to see reason.

"I mean... I guess you're right." Clark murmured. "Even with all the powers it displayed, we still managed to come out on top."

"Yeah. And it was thanks to combining our powers." Eric added.

"If we made a single mistake, we would have lost. But... we didn't make those mistakes." Trisha also spoke out.

After speaking for a while, none of them could deny it any longer.

"Sir Ralyks already knew we could win!"

Sure, it was difficult and incredibly dangerous. They actually thought they were going to die. But...
... That was exactly what they needed!

It was that sense of danger that prompted them to act so desperately and try their best to survive.

Thanks to their swift response to the situation, as well as their powerful combinations and utilization of their most effective abilities, they managed to pull it off.

"This is what a real Raid is all about. I believe Sir Ralyks was trying to teach us that."

Nods of agreements went to Adonis' words.

Out of everyone who spoke, though, there was one person who didn't utter a single word—Belle.

Initially, they thought she was upset or experiencing some kind of discomfort, due to her trembling so much.

However, after checking her out, they found out she was sleeping.

'Mission successful!'

Rey smiled internally as he took in the ambiance of the entire plane that surrounded him.

'Looks like everything worked according to plan.'

He cast a slight glance at Belle's sleeping state, heaving a sigh of relief upon seeing her gentle face.

'She was leaking out so much bloodlust when Justin and the others were badmouthing Ralyks. What has Ater done to her...?'

Rey had to put her under [Sleep], or things would have been bad. Best case scenario, she would end up embarrassing or even exposing herself for who she was.

However...

'Worst case scenario, she would have injured or nearly killed someone.'

Rey didn't think these two were mutually exclusive. Thankfully, he was able to prevent either.

'I'm happy they can all see the benefits of this entire thing. They were able to fight an extremely powerful opponent that they had no chance of beating without working together.'

Rey didn't take pleasure in seeing people suffer—especially if they were his classmates.

However, it needed to be done.

'Our real enemies are the Dragons, not mere Monsters. This way, they can at least know what to expect from the real world.'

As Rey's thoughts flowed, they were interrupted by Alicia's voice.

"Sorry you were just silenced like that. It wasn't right."

Rey shrugged as soon as he heard Alicia say that. She was even making a sad face, which sort of pricked him a little.

'I don't even feel bad about it.' He couldn't tell her that, though.

"It's fine. I'm used to it."

"That doesn't make it fair. Look at how their expressions changed once Adonis said pretty much the same thing."

Rey offered a wry smile.

'She really is cute, caring about me like that...'

In a way, that made Rey feel even more guilty for lying and keeping so many secrets from her.

"This has gotten more complicated."

*

Chapter 319 The Invitation

"So... what now?"

The voice echoed from Justin, his eyes directly placed on Adonis.

"If Sir Ralyks planned all of this, then surely he would have thought of taking care of the aftermath."

The question was valid, and everyone began to stare at Adonis, though a few cast their gazes on Rey as well, since he too supported Ralyks.

"How exactly are we going to get back to the—?"

Before Justin could utter another word, a massive portal appeared underneath them, causing all nine—ten, if you included the Familiar—to descend into the swirling spatial rift.

~WHUSH!~

In no time at all, their bodies were laid flat within the living room of their quarters.

Astonished expressions filled the Otherworlders as they looked around the familiar setting, all of them pretty much unable to deny the facts any longer.

Sir Ralyks had been in control from the start!

Even in the possible scenario of them losing to the Boss Monster of the Thirteenth Floor, it was now clear that Ralyks would have sent them away from danger.

No one knew how he was able to utilize Spatial Magic in such a way, despite being absent from the scene.

However, they all knew one thing.

"Sir Ralyks really is amazing!"

With everyone now in their living quarters, they quickly found out that it was already evening.

Many of the Otherworlders were already sleepy, and others just wanted to rest on a soft, comfy surface—in essence, the beds in their rooms.

Who could blame them?

Even Adonis looked exhausted beyond measure.

"Well... I guess this is the point where we retire to our rooms. I'll see you all tomorrow morning."

Upon saying that, Adonis basically crawled to his room.

He wasn't the only one.

Literally all the Otherworlders had to crawl to their respective rooms—some acting like worms, while others behaving like turtles.

Their hands and legs were pretty much spent, but if they relied on potions to do the work for them, it would essentially render all their hard work useless.

Despite not leveling up, it was a given that they would gain a lot of Stats just from exerting themselves so much.

What they needed right now was rest.

"W-well... this is farewell, Alicia." Rey smiled at her as he began to squirm away like a worm.

He was no exception to the rule, after all.

"W-wait, Rey. There's something... I want to tell you."

Most of the students had already gone to their rooms, except Belle who was just sleeping in the living room.

Adonis had been kind enough to place her on the couch, but no one was going to carry her to her room—especially since no one could enter without her consent.

In any case, the living room was essentially deserted, but Alicia still wouldn't budge.

She looked at Rey intensely as he turned back to look at her face.

"Something you want to tell me?" He asked.

"Yes. It's about... that time... that I went missing."

Her face was clouded with something indescribable, but she still struggled to let those words out.

"I think I'm ready now." Slowly, her complexion turned into a brighter hue, and she smiled a little.

"O-okay..." Rey could only mutter as he looked at Alicia.

He knew she wasn't one to inconvenience anyone. She could have easily postponed it, yet she chose to have it at that exact moment.

The whole thing must have been eating at her inside for too long.

"O-or maybe we can talk about it late—"

"No. I'd like to hear it all now, please." Rey responded, reciprocating her brave smile.

"Thank you, Rey."

The boy simply nodded, and for a moment, the two of them stood still... watching their eyes sparkle as they stared at each other.

"My goodness, get a room already." Belle's voice suddenly woke the both of them from their reverie as she crawled away from her sofa into her room.

She had a frown her face, clicking her tongue as she shut the door in a menacing manner.

"Oof... grumpy much?"

The moment Rey said this, Alicia burst out laughing, and he did the same as well.

"Pffft! Hahaha!"

"Hahaahahaha!"

They were practically the only ones left in the living room, and seeing as their posture was just them laying on the floor, the entire thing felt weird.

"Come on, Rey. Lets go and talk in my room."

"E-eh...?" Rey's brain nearly shut down once he heard those words.

"What? Why do you look so surprised?"

"W-well... I mean..."

"Don't tell me you've never entered a girl's room before." Alicia suddenly gave a slick smile as she narrowed her gaze on Rey.

At that moment, the inner man within Rey didn't want to lose.

He couldn't stand for such humiliation.

"Of course, I have... ahem!" He struggled hard not to say anything more.

"Ohhh? I wonder who the girl is."

Her smug smile, coupled with how she sounded, made Rey regret ever admitting to his actions.

"She's... not important. And it was a while back." He could only spit out.

"Hmmm..."

Rey gulped as her eyes pierced deeper into his own.

He could only hope she bought it.

"Haha! It's fine. I guess I just like pulling your legs so much."

Alicia's grin made Rey feel like a buffoon for getting so worked up like that, though her next statement nearly made him freak out twice as much.

"You know... yours was the first guys' room I ever entered."

"..."

"I know. Surprising, right?"

"..."

"In any case... let's go." Alicia quickly changed topics, doing her best to ward off the awkward tension that was thick in the air.

"... Okay."

Rey's face was beet red as he looked at her. He felt so embarrassed that he wanted to simply cover himself in a blanket and float away.

The situation wouldn't allow it, though.

'My first time in Alicia's room... let's just think about that.' He calmed his mind and soothed his thoughts.

And so, like a lamb led to the slaughter, Rey crawled to the second girl's room he would be visiting.

*

Chapter 320 Breaking Down

Alicia's room was cute.

It wasn't as pretty or as spacious as Esme's bedchambers, but it had a unique feel to it that Rey felt it would be ridiculous to compare the two.

Her room was painted in pure white, with hints of blue here and there.

Rey already knew this, but Alicia was a minimalist—barely having anything of note in her room.

It had a simple design, and her bed also appeared very simple, though incredibly spacious.

'I bet Snow sleeps right next to her.' Rey thought to himself.

Seeing as the rabbit instantly hopped to the bed once they arrived in the room, he knew his theory was spot on.

The most pleasant thing about the room for Rey, however, was the scent.

'Smells like Alicia... all around.'

Rey wondered if he was being a creep for thinking thoughts like this. He couldn't help it, though.

Every whiff he took reminded him of the girl who was right beside him, and it honestly felt like he was close to her at all times.

"Sorry if it doesn't meet your expectations. It's nothing special, really." Alicia broke Rey out of his thoughts, causing him to return to reality.

"O-oh, no! Not at all!"

Rey's expression had been blank since they entered, so Alicia must have taken it to mean that he was unimpressed with what he was experiencing.

However, it was the opposite that was true.

Because he was so captivated by what he was seeing, and so excited to be in her room, he refused to let his overflowing emotions burst out.

As such, he ended up looking blank.

"It looks so pretty and simple. So comfortable..." Rey leaked out a small smile, casting an intense gaze on Alicia.

"It smells like you, Alicia."

"W-what?!" Alicia's cheeks began to show signs of pink.

Rey was either blind, or he wasn't paying attention, because he didn't stop.

"I'm serious. Honestly, I just feel like closing my eyes and sleeping here."

"C-come on, don't exaggerate!"

At this point, Alicia had to look away, pretending as if she was staring at something on the wall that simply wasn't there.

"Y-you really aren't disappointed...?" It came out as a whisper, barely a murmur, but Alicia asked the question.

Rey answered almost immediately.

"I'm not disappointed in the slightest." As Rey said this, Alicia turned back to look at him.

"Your room is pretty. Just like you."

Both of their cheeks turned red, and they silently soaked in the intensity that kept on rising at an astronomical rate.

"T-thank you..."

"Y-you're welcome..."

No one knows how long this awkwardness lasted. However, by the time they both came to their senses, it was pretty dark out already.

"... And that's what happened."

Alicia told Rey everything—from start to finish.

She told him how she was tricked by Billy from the Library, and what transpired in the juice shop, up till when they were both kidnapped and nearly sold into slavery.

The worst part was being in that darkness, feeling the taste of despair as her body refused to listen to her.

The overwhelming fear was too traumatic for her.

"If I had stayed there a day or two longer... I think I might have gone mad."

Alicia had never experienced such despondency. She truly believed her life as she knew it would come to an end, and she could do absolutely nothing to stop it.

"I... I was scared, Rey! I'm still scared!"

She ended up collapsing on his chest as they both lay down on her bed.

Yes, they were both filthy as a result of the Dungeon—Rey more filthy than her—but none of them cared.

Alicia simply rested on his broader chest, and he wrapped his arm around her... something he never thought he could do.

She didn't complain. In fact, she drew even closer to him.

"Anytime I look at Billy, I feel such rage and fear. I can't ever forget and forgive him for what he put me through." Her voice was quaking, oozing out emotions in all their purity.

"I fear the darkness now. I just... I feel a lot of sensations from back then that are still real to me now."

The same Alicia who would often laugh and joke was also the one going through so much pain.

Rey stroked her hair, looking at her as she tightly shut her eyes and cried.

'I really don't know what to say to her...' His thoughts trailed as he felt a tiny pang within his heart.

'At the very least, I'm happy she was able to finally tell me all this.'

As for how to respond in an empathetic and totally relatable manner, that was completely lost to him. The only thing he could do was to remain quiet and listen to her.

It was painful, but Rey had no other choice.

'This is the only thing I can do for you.' He smiled sadly at the girl who cried her eyes out on his chest.

'I don't think Billy scarred you to this extent. I didn't know you were this badly affected by everything...'

Rey had thought he already knew everything about the incident, but he was dead wrong.

Just as Billy surprised him with his intentions to change and grow, Alicia also shocked him with the tellings from her perspective.

It was no surprise which one he resonated with the most.

"Thank you for telling me all this, Alicia." Rey finally spoke after the room was silent for too long.

Only sounds of the girl's sobs filled everywhere, which meant he had to say something.

"You've been through too much. You endured it all. I really don't know what to say to you right now, but..."

Rey narrowed his eyes and cursed himself for being so impotent when it came to properly expressing himself—

especially in moments like this.

Still, he gave it his hardest.

"... You did well, holding on for this long."

He didn't mean that in any superficial way. Rey genuinely respected Alicia for her challenges and how she chose to handle them.

It was this respect that prompted him to utter those words.

"I now understand." He could see her eyes slowly open as she looked at him.

"Whatever it takes, Alicia... let's find a way to get you back home."

More tears fell from her eyes.

"R-really... Rey?"

"Yes." One of the things that stung Rey's heart the most was the dangers that Alicia had to go through in this world.

They wouldn't have happened back on Earth.

Alicia had constantly told him of how she missed her life on Earth, but he always shoved it at the far corners of his mind due to his opposite viewpoint.

But now...

'I can no longer stand you getting hurt like this.'

This was the only way he could think of to save her from the constant threats and dangers that were waiting for her in this world.

—The only way to help her!

"Let's do it together. We'll find a way back home, Alicia. No matter what it takes."

She nodded at him and whispered the word "Thank you, Rey."

He could only smile and nod.

'Don't thank me yet, Alicia.' The thoughts in his mind responded to her show of gratitude.

"I'm sorry for burdening you with all of this."

'No. I should be the one apologizing...' Rey felt yet another pang in his heart as he sank into her teary eyes.

He couldn't help but feel guilty.

'Even though you've told me this secret... I don't think I can tell you mine.'