

Extras 581

Chapter 581 Dance Of Blades [Pt 2]

'She's impressive...'

Rey's thoughts trailed as he looked at Trisha--or more specifically, at her Status Window.

[STATUS WINDOW]

- Name: Trisha Lihua.
- Race: Human (Otherworlder)
- Class: Elite Swordsman (B-Tier)
- Level: 147 (56.99% EXP)
- Life Force: 180 [100]
- Mana Level: 210 (+100) [150]
- Combat Ability: 290 (+145) [300]
- Stat Points: 0
- Skills (Exclusive): [Greater Lightning Magic]. [Greater Combat Application]. [Greater Danger Sense]
- Skills (Non-Exclusive): [Greater Sword Dance]. [Agility Boost]. [Fortitude]. [Aura Sword].
- Alignment: Lawful Good

[Additional Information]

A warrior at heart who believes in honor and strength above all. She is not one to do evil, and she punishes those who enact it. A kind soul with a burning heart, constantly seeking ways to better herself.

She still has feelings for Rey Skylar...

[End Of Information]

'It's clear she has spent her time training to improve her base stats and advance the Skills she already has.' Rey found himself analyzing his opponent.

He surmised that the reason Trisha went to the Adventurers City was due the variety of Monsters she could kill, and the kind of experience--other than EXP--she could gain from their subjugation.

'She even has newer Skills. Her Level isn't bad either. That's good.'

He was glad to see that she had been working incredibly hard, and that her alignment was in no way problematic. In all sense of the word, she was a reliable ally.

Still, one thing bothered him more than anything.

'She still has feelings for me, huh?'

Rey never saw this part of her Status Window before, but with it now displayed he had to mull on what it meant.

He was no fool. Despite his previous efforts to give her the benefit of the doubt back when he listened in to the girls and their unanimous declaration of their interest in him, he could no longer avoid the truth now.

'Trisha likes me. That explains a lot...' He could see the frustration in her eyes, and her unexplainable desire to prove something to him.

Perhaps her interest in him had been platonic at the start, but somewhere down the line, things began to get a lot more complicated.

'And I tried to pretend like nothing was happening... damnit.'

Rey could feel all of the guilt that accompanied this discovery, though they were all muffled underneath his intense emotional control.

As much as he wanted to drown in the bittersweet moment, he couldn't afford to.

'I can't do anything about it, sadly. Just the same way I can't do anything about these feelings of hers.' Rey took a serious stance and steadied his blade.

'The only thing I can do for you right now... is fight.'

~ZZZTZZZ!~

In a buzz of whitish-blue electricity, Trisha closed the distance between herself and Rey, easily appearing right in front of him faster than the blink of an eye.

She chose to strike first, a quick lunge aimed at Rey's side, rather than the more obvious front area.

It was no use, though.

'Even without any Skills to assist me, she's still too slow.' Rey deftly sidestepped, bringing his own sword up in a smooth arc to parry the attack.

~CLANG!~

The two blades met with a sharp clash, a spray of sparks lighting up the atmosphere as they locked in combat.

'Her movements are impressive. The strength she puts behind every attack is amazing. I'm not strictly a Martial Artist, but due to my [Perfect Divine Martial Supremacy] Skill, I can pretty much observe attacks from an expert's standpoint.'

And his verdict on Trisha's moves was that of high praise.

'It's clear she has honed those Skills to the limit. She even took my advice and perfectly complemented her Martial Arts with her Skills, creating a very deadly move set.'

All she lacked was the power.

'But, I think it's only a matter of time before she becomes the strongest swordsman in the kingdom.'

She was still behind Brutus in Stats, and even though she had more Skills than him, his level of mastery was higher.

'Based on her growth rate, I'd give her another six months, and she should have surpassed him.' Rey felt a bit strange giving an assessment on such issues, but he could see everything from the lens of a Martial Artist and he knew he wasn't wrong.

'I'm sure Billy would have already reached Brutus' level by now, but it's a shame he died so early.'

Rey felt nothing when he thought about Billy's death. It could have been because he suppressed his feelings, or maybe because he had already dissociated his emotions from the boy.

Either way, he only thought it was a waste that he had to die so early.

'Billy would have been a valuable asset to humanity.'

~WHUUM!~

Right as he was having these thoughts, Trisha pivoted, her movements a blur of speed and precision as she aimed a flurry of strikes at Rey, testing his defenses with a series of aggressive jabs and slashes.

Once again, he saw all of this with clear precision.

'It seems she already has most of her Skills activated by now. [Greater Lightning Magic]. [Greater Combat Application]. [Greater Danger Sense]. [Greater Sword Dance]. [Agility Boost]. [Fortitude].'

Rey could see all their effects.

'But no [Aura Sword], huh? Why? Does she want to surprise me with it as some sort of hidden attack?' He wondered.

'Well, let's see...'

Rey met each of her attacks with calm confidence, his blade weaving a web of silver as he parried and blocked.

He countered with a swift riposte, forcing Trisha to retreat a step as she narrowly avoided the thrust aimed at her shoulder.

'Nice. Of course, I'm just matching her pace, but still... Trisha's reflexes are off the charts.'

He could even feel himself beginning to enjoy the sparring session.

'There's one problem, though.' Rey stared at his charred sword and sighed. 'This weapon won't last for long. I didn't want to use any Skill to reinforce it, but now I'm considering that route.'

The undeterred Trisha regained her footing and launched another offensive, this time with a sweeping horizontal slash.

Rey ducked under the strike, his own movements smooth and controlled. He spun on his heel, his sword slicing through the air as she aimed a diagonal cut at Trisha's midsection.

'What will you do now? The force is a bit too much for you to handle norma—'

~CLANG!~

Trisha blocked the attack just in time, pushing her own body forward while planting her foot in the ground to create some kind of stoppage.

Rey saw her gritting her teeth as she did so, their blades grinding against each other as he pressed forward.

'Not bad... no bad.'

Trisha impressed him every time, and he was beginning to think of multiple ways to test her.

'Still, this sword...' He nearly sighed. 'She's been chipping at it for a while now. Hers isn't in the best of shape either, but I think mine will break first.'

The two of them disengaged momentarily, eyeing each other with respect.

"Huu..." For a second, she exhaled deeply, releasing a cloud of misty breath.

The sweat on her body began to evaporate as she swiftly took her stance, though this time it seemed different from before.

Rey braced himself for what would come next.

~VWUUUM!~

Trisha switched tactics, launching a series of rapid, precise stabs aimed at his vulnerable points. If he was slower—no, even of the same speed as her—he would have been in serious trouble.

Unfortunately for her, he was just much faster.

Rey dodged and parried with ease, his agility unmatched. He stepped in close, aiming a series of tight, controlled strikes at her head and torso.

Trisha countered, her sword flashing as she met Rey's attacks with a flurry of blocks and evasive maneuvers. Rey's relentless assault forced Trisha to retreat once more, her footing unsure on the slick cobblestones. Rey seized the opportunity, pressing forward with a rapid series of lunges and slashes.

Then—

~CRACK!~

—His blade finally shattered.

'Ahh... the opening she's been looking for.'

Trisha's sword burst out with brilliant light, revealing the [Aura Sword] she had been hiding for her final move.

With a downward slash that contained all of her power, she sent the blade crashing down.

"HAAAAAAAAA!!!"

Her scream was filled with so much passion, and the weapon was filled with so much energy that it seemed like she had poured all of her energy into it.

The brilliant sparks of lightning were mixed in with the reddish aura that flowed through the weapon, creating purple dances of power that coalesced at the point of impact.

This, truly, was her ultimate move.

If the target had been any Monster or human opponent, they were sure to take severe damage—if not die on the spot.

Unfortunately for her, and her impeccable attack, she was up against Rey Skylar.

~CLANG!~

Her blade met a hard stop as he blocked it with a black blade, easily disrupting all of her powerful energy and movement.

The sword materialized from Rey's body on command—the product of Emil's properties that easily produced a more durable weapon faster than Trisha could hit.

"I'll end this now." He mumbled under his lips as he stepped forward, faster than the shocked Trisha could even react.

'You did well, Trisha. You are strong.'

Chapter 582 End Of The Dance

Trisha already knew...

She had realized it a long time ago. It didn't matter how hard she swung her blade, or improved her form, or desired victory... she was never going to get it.

Not against someone like Rey.

As the boy closed in on her after parrying her final move, she felt herself descend into a haze.

'I thought... if I hit him one time, I could prove something to myself... and to him. If I managed to do it, then he wouldn't have been such a liar.'

All this time, Rey portrayed himself as weak but skilled. It lit a flame within her that even she could become stronger if she kept at her training and adhered to his advice.

She indeed became stronger, but the backlash of betrayal that came from her new perception of Rey wasn't something she could ignore. She tried to, but was unsuccessful at every turn.

It seemed like Rey lied to her all along.

'This is the difference between those who have good Skills and those who worked hard to hone their skill.' Trisha closed her eyes as she watched Rey's blade near her.

'In the end, Skills are all that matters.'

~WHOOOM!~

A powerful gust of wind blew past her, and she suddenly felt something warm wrap itself around her—like a coat that covered her from the front.

It was Rey, and he was currently embracing her.

"Trisha, I'm sorry..." As he whispered those words in her ears, his calm voice caused her body to grow stiff.

She wasn't miraculously relieved of the anger within her, but her heart raced regardless.

"...."

For the longest moment, she said nothing. Perhaps she derived some sort of comfort from being hugged by Rey, who now had a height taller than her.

~CLANG!~

Her weapon fell to the ground, causing a loud echo to fill the room.

Trisha remained silent, though. A conflicted expression played on her face. It was clear that she still despised Rey for his several threads of deceit, and for how he gave her a hope—an expectation—that she could never live up to.

After all, back then... when Rey fought and defeated Billy, he became an inspiration to her.

She monitored his growth from that point on with utmost diligence and arrived at a conclusion.

'If Rey could do it, I can too...'

But that was all a lie. And Trisha hated him for that.

"I... I had feelings for you for the longest time. I liked you so much, Rey."

"...."

"You knew, didn't you?"

"... Yeah."

Silence pervaded the atmosphere as the two of them remained still. Rey's arms were still wrapped around her, but there was no sign that any of that was going to end.

"You don't have feelings for me, I already know. Your eyes... are for Alicia, am I right?"

Once again, Rey was forced to give the only truthful response to her inquiry.

"... Yeah."

"I'm not sad about that. In the past, I wouldn't have let that deter me, and I'd compete for your love and attention until I won." Trisha pulled back, and Rey weakly let her go.

She took a few steps away, looking at him with moist eyes.

"But I no longer think you're worth it."

Rey's face remained calm through it all. It almost seemed he was a brick wall, unaffected by the words she uttered.

'I was worried that I went too far, but it seems I was wrong.' Her unshed tears slowly began to dry up, and her trembling heart hardened.

"I don't think I can disagree with you on that." Rey's voice pierced the air, causing her heart to jump a little.

For what seemed like a tiny moment, emotions flickered in his eye before turning cold once again.

"I know what I did. I'd do things very differently if I could, but... I never meant to—"

"It's fine, Rey, honestly." Trisha sighed, bending a little to pick up her blade. Her sweaty ebony body gleamed as her muscles went on full display.

She grabbed the weapon by the hilt and shrugged once she stood upright.

"It's too late to change anything, anyway. Plus, it would be too petty of me to get upset with you over these minor things."

Not only was Rey responsible for a large chunk of her growth, but he also protected her and the city more than once.

She owed him her life and so much more.

"Even then... I can't bring myself to forgive you. I don't know why it's so hard to just put it all behind me and only focus on the positives, but... I really dislike you, Rey."

Trisha had come up with all kinds of excuses for him, but in the end... none of those could heal a damsel's broken heart.

"I hope you find happiness, Rey. I just don't want a part in it." She spoke pretty bluntly, glancing to her side—the very entrance of the room.

Throughout all of this, Rey was still silent—the cold, brooding kind.

Her distracted gaze spotted something there, and as she narrowed her eyes at the place, her lips parted.

"Trisha, I—"

"Anything we can help you with, Guildmaster?" The sudden words she uttered caused Rey to sigh and also glance to the entrance, where someone was inconspicuously hiding.

It seemed even Rey had noticed his presence. That was no surprise, all things considered. The one known as the Guildmaster was merely hiding behind the partly shut doors of the vast hall, and he must have been eavesdropping on the entire conversation.

"Haha! Please don't get the wrong idea..." A few seconds after Trisha spoke up, and both parties focused their attention on the door, the culprit stepped out with a slightly nervous laugh.

He had a short frame that suited him perfectly. He looked like a fine blend between a child and a teenager; cute, yet having an air of maturity about him.

His dark brown coat fluttered as he scratched his similarly colored hair. One look at him, and one would never guess he was the Guildmaster of the Adventurers City.

"... I wasn't eavesdropping or anything."

Those words were met with doubtful gazes from both Rey and Trisha as they looked at him with narrowed, suspecting eyes.

"For real, for real!" He yelled out, raising both hands in surrender.

In the presence of these two, it seemed he was nothing more than an ordinary teenager. That wasn't so surprising, considering the fact that they were all classmates.

"It's nice to see you again, Noah."

"Don't pretend like we didn't see each other just a few months ago! You think I didn't piece everything together and realize you're Jet?"

"Hold on... you were Jet as well?!" Trisha's eyes widened as she looked at Rey with eyes of disbelief.

"Well, that was actually—"

"Unbelievable! Just how many lies..." Trisha's frown deepened, and Rey could only do one thing in response to this.

He turned to glare at Noah.

"I-I thought she knew! I mean... sorry about that. My bad?"

Rey sighed and shook his head. Clearly, this entire thing had become a mess too quickly, and he honestly didn't know what to make of things.

'I'm still recoiling from this whole Trisha situation, and Noah had to rear his ugly head.'

Just moments earlier, he had been dealing with a lot of emotional turmoil from Trisha's words. He did his best to digest everything in small doses so they wouldn't be completely lost, but the information was so overwhelming that he had to calm himself to the extreme.

It hurt to see Trisha look and sound so betrayed, so he had to eliminate—or at least mitigate—it. If he didn't, the System would do so for him.

This was the main reason why, despite noticing Noah from a distance, he didn't pay the boy much mind. He gave Trisha, or rather, his complication with Trisha, all the attention he could.

'Not that it was any good. She probably hates me now...' Was what he thought until he checked her [Additional Information] on her Status Window and realized nothing about it had changed in the slightest.

Trisha still had feelings for him.

'I really hurt her, and yet... haa, Rey, you idiot.'

~Master, please don't call yourself an idiot. I don't think you are one. You're the most wonderful person in the world!~

Somehow, hearing that from Emil made him feel slightly better.

It almost reminded him of the times that his grandmother would call him handsome, giving him hope that one day—in the future—many girls would begin to flock around him and see him for the great guy he was.

'Thank you...' He smiled slightly.

~You're welcome, Master! Now, about the dare that—!~

"Why are you here, Guildmaster? If not for eavesdropping, then what?"

"Actually... I called him." Rey said with a sigh. "I just didn't think he'd be here so soon."

"Or you didn't think you'd spend so much time with me."

Trisha's response to Rey's words weren't particularly wrong. After all, he never expected them to fight, and he didn't think he would drag things out the way he did.

"I guess I just enjoyed the fight a lot more than I realized." He said to Trisha, flashing a genuine smile at her.

She looked, and was, shocked to find him displaying such emotion as he focused the full scope of his attention on her.

"I know my opinion doesn't really matter, and this might seem pretentious coming from me, but... you've grown very strong."

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Chapter 583 Catching Up

Awkward silence.

As the three-way deadlock remained at a standstill, the atmosphere grew more tense with every passing second.

Guildmaster Noah, looking more like a child than an actual leader, kept fidgeting as he alternated glances between Rey and Trisha. As for the two, they stared at each other without saying a word.

"Me? Strong? Please don't joke."

"I'm not joking. I enjoyed my fight with you." Rey raised his hand towards Trisha. "It was enjoyable."

Perhaps it was because he had the Martial Arts Supremacy Skill, but despite being able to see and easily react to Trisha's moves, he could still admire her skills.

No, maybe it was because he could see everything that he had a better appreciation for her prowess.

"You really impressed me."

"Whatever." Trisha scoffed, slowly walking away from Rey as she moved towards the entrance—which also served as the exit.

"The world needs the Otherworlders, so I have no choice but to grow stronger. As powerful as you are, I don't think it's wise to leave the safety of humanity in your hands alone." She walked past Noah and nodded slightly, muttering "Guildmaster," before walking out of the room.

"Also... I enjoyed my fight with you too."

Those were her last words before she left the room for Rey and Noah, taking most of the tension away with her as she departed.

"Haaa...!"

Moments passed after Trisha left the room before both Rey and Noah finally released the breaths they had been holding for some time.

While it was true that Rey was stronger, and Noah had more influence, both of them still felt tense around the fierce tomboy that was Trisha. Maybe it was just the way she spoke or reacted, but they waited a few seconds before saying anything—even after she left.

Then, after what felt like an eternity, Noah finally broke the silence.

"Damn man... you really pissed her off. I wonder why..." The smaller boy made a sly grin, looking at Rey with knowing eyes.

"Shut up, Noah. You know why."

"Of course! Haha! I guess with the cat out of the bag, things are also quite tense back in the Royal Estate."

Rey shrugged as he heard this. He shook his head and even sighed. "Not really. In fact, most of them were pretty cool with it." "Yeah... I guess. But most of them weren't your friends, so I guess that makes sense."

Noah's response made Rey's face tense up a little, but he quickly dissolved it all and returned his expression to the stoic kind.

"Hm?" Noah tilted his head a little, obviously noticing the change, but he said nothing more on the issue.

In fact, he said nothing more about Trisha as well.

"Tell me you organized this meeting because you finally found a way back to Earth." He laughed, having his seat on the bare floor.

His friendly tone perfectly matched the unimposing look on his face. He didn't look angry, neither was he hurt. He truly seemed happy to see Rey.

"I... haven't found a way back. But if I did, would you really want to return?"

"Ehh... I'm not quite sure anymore." Noah said with a broader smile.

"What does that even mean?"

"I mean, there are days when I feel like returning, but others where I feel like this world is too good to pass up." Upon hearing this, Rey couldn't help but nod and smile. He wholeheartedly agreed with the sentiment.

'I wouldn't want to return, but... I can understand why some would.'

Life in H'Trae held the most promise for him. He had his challenges sure, but he wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

"So why did you call for me? I mean, I am the Guildmaster of this place, but... I guess, in a sense, I'm still your lackey."

Despite the way Noah phrased those words, it didn't seem like he took offense by it, or the thought of that position made him uncomfortable.

Instead, he seemed somewhat proud of it.

The only one who seemed to have an issue with the status quo was Rey.

"Why would you still call yourself my lackey? You've made a big name for yourself already."

"What? Being Guildmaster? If not for what you did, giving me that sword and making that big speech, I don't think I would have been able to achieve such status so quickly."

Rey chuckled and shook his head. "You underestimate yourself, Noah."

Sure, if there were more qualified people, perhaps Noah wouldn't have been considered for the role. However, not only did he prove to be the strongest Adventurer in the city, but he also had a spirit of

camaraderie that was evident during the Teleportation Incident of the Dungeon, and also how he stood up for Jet and Lux when they needed him most.

He showed that he had everything it took to be a good leader—and a strong one too.

"I don't consider you my lackey, Noah." Rey smiled as he softly planted his fist on his shoulder. The two of them had gone a long way since they first knew each other. Noah was the first person he intentionally showed his true identity to, and while the start of their relationship wasn't the best, they had come so far.

That was more than enough reason for Rey to utter his next set of words.

"You're my friend."

A slight hint of pink appeared all over Noah's face as he looked at Rey and his genuine smile towards him. His jaws loosened slightly as the two boys stared at each other in sacred silence for a moment. Then—

"W-whatever... it's fine." He murmured, looking away from the smooth talker. "I mean... I already consider you my friend as well."

Rey chuckled and nodded. "Yeah, thanks."

"A-also... as a friend, I have to ask... since you disguised yourself as Jet, did you also do the same as Lux? Did you shapeshift as her, or...?"

"No. She's real."

"Whew!" Noah held his chest and sighed.

Since he had fallen head over heels for Lux, he would have felt completely weird if that had been Rey all along. How would he be able to live with himself if he had indirectly been ogling him?!

"Ugh..." The boy shivered.

"I'm actually surprised you are taking all of this well. I remember you crying over Jet's death, and also falling for Lux." Rey murmured. "Aren't you a bit livid that I deceived you like that?"

"..." Noah's face slowly became serious—almost stern—as he took in Rey's question.

"Well, it's been nearly three months since all of that. I suppose that's enough time to get over some things." He began with a slightly low tone.

"Besides, I don't know if everyone informed you of this, but I visited the Capital as soon as I heard the news."

Indeed, Rey heard the news from his classmates when they were discussing all that Rey missed in his near-three months coma.

"I did my best to convince that servant of yours... the red-haired one... but he didn't let me see you. I had to settle for meeting everyone else and having a talk with them."

It was then that they revealed themselves to have disguised as Adventurers to participate in the Grand Calamity Class Dungeon Conquest.

"Of course, I already figured most of this out. Not only because the higher-ups who supported the Guildmaster told me, but also due to my observations."

In fact, it was after these observations that his suspicion of Jet, Lux, and the other Adventurers—who were secretly his classmates—began to surface. The Vice Guildmasters spilling the beans was only due to him pressuring them on the topic.

"I still can't believe you did all that... listening to me talk about you in that bar, and pretending to be another person for so long... it's crazy."

Still, Noah returned to the topic and sighed.

"I couldn't get mad at you even if I wanted to. I know you too well for that." The two of them had gone to the Black Market together, and they had been through thick and thin. Also, thanks to the revelation of Rey as Jet, Noah didn't need to bring him up to speed regarding his new perspective on the world and how much he had grown.

The two knew too much about each other.

"Whatever you do has a reason. You disguised yourself as Jet, instead of Ralyks, for a purpose. You didn't reveal your identity to me for a reason, and you went through all of those theatrics for a reason."

Yes, Noah was curious about those reasons, but he wasn't going to condemn Rey for anything.

"Don't worry about all of that, Rey. We're cool."

All of that meant a lot to Rey, and while his expression didn't do his current emotional state justice, he knew Noah would understand regardless.

"Thanks. So, how's the sword treating you?"

"I figured it wasn't any special cursed sword or anything, but it's still pretty good. Just introduce me to Lux and we'll call it even."

"That's... actually the main reason I contacted you, Noah." Rey sighed and shook his head.

His expression turned grim and a hint of desperation flashed in his eyes.

"I'm looking for her."

Chapter 584 Going Through The Archives

"I see. So that's what happened..."

Noah's voice echoed in the vast hall as Rey nodded his head. The latter had just finished telling the former all about his relationship with Esme—well, the important bits anyway—and how he was currently searching for her,

At first, Noah was relieved to find out Esme was in no way related to Rey, though that should have already been clear.

However, the more Rey spoke about her, the more Noah began to see some problematic signs.

Signs from both Rey and the Esme of his stories.

'Do these two like each other?' He thought to himself, still contemplating if he should ask the question or keep it to himself.

From the way Rey spoke, it seemed as though everything he talked about was normal. The guy probably didn't think anything of their relationship.

'If that's the case, then I better not give him any ideas by bringing it up.'

Plus, the topic at hand was a lot heavier than romance. Esme had vanished from the Grand Calamity Class Dungeon and he had no way to track her down.

"But why do you think she'd be here?"

"Because I think, even if she left the Dungeon, it's only rational that she'd move somewhere we both have a connection to—at least, pending the time I found her."

The most rational thing Rey would have done would be to wait for Esme in the Royal Estate, since she already said she was coming for him, but that would only work if she wasn't a couple months late.

"She should have reached the Capital at this point, so that leaves two major possibilities." He began, raising his fingers.

"One, she arrived at the Royal Estate, but for some reason decided not to enter or make her presence known. If that happened, then she'd have gotten the gist of what happened to me."

From that point on, she could either choose to remain in the Capital or leave.

Rey suspected she left.

"Esme's desire to grow strong was still evident the last time I saw her. If she wanted to keep growing strong, and also ensure she was accessible when I woke up, then..."

"The Adventurers City is her best bet." Noah completed Rey's sentence for him, and the lad nodded with a silent sigh.

"That's why I'm here. She should have given me some clues about her presence here. Maybe the name she used to register as an Adventurer... or something like that."

"So you want me to look into the archives for you, starting from the suspected date that she would have registered?"

"Us. I want us to do it. There's no way I'm leaving all that work to you."

Even though Rey said these considerate, friendly words, Noah couldn't help but sense some measure of protectiveness oozing from his lips.

Still, he avoided saying anything on the matter.

"Well, let's get to work, shall we?"

"Yeah, the sooner the better." Rey said with a sigh, jumping to his feet very quickly.

The dreary atmosphere was no place for a conversation, but the two had managed anyway. As Noah also stood to his feet, he observed Rey's stoic demeanor once again.

It felt almost doll-like, and the eyepatch complemented it even further.

"You sound like you're in a hurry, but you don't look like it." He commented with a broad grin.

"Well..." With a shrug, Rey opened his lips to explain. "... There'll be a city parade today, and all the recognized Otherworlders have to be present. I'll have to pick up Trisha for the event too."

Noah heard this and heaved a sigh, raising both hands as he shook his head.

"It's a good thing I'm not officially recognized as one. I dislike events like that."

"Likewise, but it's necessary." Rey muttered. His eye narrowed as he remembered the dreary fact that the parade was only one part of his busy day.

"There's also going to be a Gala later at night. I'm sure it'll be tedious, but it's better we get it over with now."

"True. Welp, good luck clinking glasses together and having small talk with snobbish rich folks."

"It's not like in the movies, man."

"Really?"

"Well... maybe a little."

"Pfft!"

"Anyway..." Rey created a portal in an instant, it's spatial distortion generating a purple glow that pulsed with power,

"... Let's get going, shall we?"

"Alright. Ah, by the way... you mentioned two possibilities back then. What's the second one?"

"...."

Rey narrowed his eye as soon as heard the question. It seemed he didn't want to explore it at all, but current circumstances had forced his hand.

Still, it wasn't like he was going to hide it from Noah at this point.

"She could be with the Elves..."

Noah stared at Rey for a while, and while it was difficult to tell his actual emotional state from the look on his face, the boy tried.

"You don't want that, do you?"

"No. But... if she does, then I would respect her choice."

Noah raised his brow even further as he looked at Rey.

"But didn't she say she was coming for you? Why would she go to the Elves? Especially when, according to what you told me, they dislike her guts."

Rey sighed and shrugged in defeat.

"Look, I don't know. It's just a possibility anyway, so—"

"Well, it's a dumb possibility."

"Tch. Whatever..."

Noah could see a small smile tugging on Rey's lips as that thought process was discredited by him. Even though he didn't show it very much, Rey was most likely glad that the possibility for Esme's departure was slim.

'Dumb indeed...' Noah ventured into the portal, followed by Rey.

As soon as they entered inside, the purple wormhole sucked them in and then vanished into oblivion.

[Hours Later]

A look of defeat took over Noah's face as he plopped to the ground. Rey still remained standing, going over the records one more time with his superhuman speed.

This was his ninth time going through the archives now, yet it didn't seem like he had given up.

"We've searched all of them, Rey..." Noah mumbled, not sure how to approach the issue exactly.

Still, it had to be said plainly.

"Esme didn't register as an Adventurer here."

Chapter 585 Exploring Varying Possibilities

Rey's breathing felt heavy.

He had thought, for sure, that his theory would be correct—or at least show some bearing in reality.

'None of these faces and names resemble her at all. If she wanted me to find her, she would have left something behind. Anything...!'

Initially, Rey was chill about it. When he checked for the first time and didn't find her, he was sure he just missed something.

But, after twelve times now, going over the documents of every single Adventurer that had registered from the day of his coma till present, he found nothing.

'In checked all the details—even the information of all the Quests they've taken. Yet... nothing!'

Rey felt stuck.

More frustrating than his growing anxiety was the fact that he had to suppress it every time so he was forcibly calm about everything.

The cycle continued for far too long that it began to grow infuriating.

Unfortunately, when he stopped actively controlling that portion of his emotion, the System did it for him—forcefully granting him full clarity

"Okay, so what if she didn't register as an Adventurer? She could still be in the city, right? There are people who challenge the Dungeons without being Adventurers, right?"

"Yeah, but that's illegal." Noah said while shaking his head. "Esme doesn't strike me as someone who would go down that route."

Not only would that be morally wrong—something a 'Good' person like her wouldn't resort to unnecessarily—but it only made it harder to find her.

"If she wanted you to find her here, wouldn't she have registered?"

If there was no record of her, it most likely meant she didn't choose to stay in the Adventurers City.

"Does that mean... the second option is what she—?"

"I already told you that it's a dumb proposition. I'm sure there are other ways to explain her disappearance." Noah folded his arms and raised a brow, staring at Rey with curious eyes.

"You know her best. What could she have been up to?"

"Well, there are many explanations, in all honesty." Rey responded as he leaked out a misty sigh.

He had no idea where to begin.

Still, a dark thought kept creeping in his mind—one that he had been avoiding since he thought about Esme after waking up.

"She could be in danger. Maybe even dead. There are many explanations as to why she isn't—"

"Stop being so negative. She could also be exploring the world at the moment, or maybe looking for a cure for your coma. Just saying..."

Rey's eyes widened as he stared at Noah.

"That's true! Esme doesn't know I'm awake yet!"

What if, the same way he desperately wanted to lift Alicia's curse, Esme was also trying her best somewhere to seek out a remedy for him?

"If that's the case, she could be anywhere!"

Perhaps he had to actively begin searching for her, starting from wherever the Dungeon's exit led to at the point of her departure from it.

"I remember Esme mentioning glitched Skills. Does that mean she knows more about Curses too? No... that's a bit of a far-fetched assumption."

If she knew about curses, she would have done something to help her friends and the other kids back in Scylla's lair.

"Or could it be because she knows about curses that she knew there wasn't hope for those ones? Well, the only way to really know is to find and ask her." Rey settled in his thoughts as he looked blankly into the air.

"Unfortunately, that can't be done now. I have to fetch Trisha, and we have to make it to the parade that's starting soon."

"I see. I'll do my best to ask around for more information—not just from this city, but the surrounding ones as well."

Rey gave Noah a tired smile and nodded. "Thanks, I'd really appreciate it if you did that."

"It's no problem. I also look forward to meeting her."

"Why, though?"

"Let's just say... I'm interested."

Rey's face was still as stoic as ever, so Noah couldn't tell what he was thinking inside his head.

The only reason he decided to push this far was to see if his friend truly didn't have anything with Esme before he developed more of an interest in her and made his move.

Depending on Rey's response, he would act appropriately.

'You already have Alicia, so leave some ladies for the rest of us.' He wanted to shout out loud, but he maintained his composure.

'So what will it be, Re—?'

"Well, I guess that's fine." His response was curt and detached, almost as if he didn't care at all.

"For real?"

"Yeah. I mean, if you want to shoot your shot... that's fine."

Noah didn't know if Rey was truly cool with it, but he didn't dare prod any further.

'He's already made his position clear! Looks like I'll have to work hard to find her before he does.' His eyes gleamed as he rubbed his hands together.

'Even now, I can't get her out of my head.'

"In any case, I have to leave now." Rey opened a portal almost as soon as he said that.

"Once again, thanks for everything. I wasn't surprised you became the Guildmaster. As long as you have Britta and the others by your side, I'm sure you'll be fine."

"Pfft! Well, yeah. They do most of the work for me anyway."

"I figured."

The two boys laughed, almost reminiscent of old times.

It was obvious that there were a lot of questions they had to ask each other, but now wasn't the time. As such, they made the unspoken decision to postpone their talk to another time.

"How do you plan to locate Trisha? Should I ask someone to fetch her for you?"

"No need for that." Rey grinned, his eye glowing crimson. "I already know where she is."

He already placed Tracking Magic on her, so not only was he aware of her position in real-time, but he could also teleport there in an instant.

"Later."

~VWUSH!~

In a gust of spatial energy, Rey vanished completely.

Chapter 586 The Parade

"Presenting to you all... the Otherworlders: Humanity's Champions!"

The parade around the city was met with a loud uproar from the denizens of the city as all the available heroes of mankind—the Otherworlders—and the representatives of the Nobles, as well as the Royal Council, walked the streets of the Capital.

The streets of the newly rebuilt capital exuded a sense of grandeur and rejuvenation. Cobblestone paths winded gracefully through the city, meticulously maintained and polished to a brilliant sheen.

As the group paraded through, they noticed intricate mosaics inlaid within the streets, depicting the city's rich history and triumphant rise from the ashes.

There were new facilities around, but most of the Capital maintained its old architecture.

The buildings lining the streets were a fine blend of traditional and contemporary architecture.

Towering spires and elegant domes punctuated the skyline, while stout, stone walls and arched windows created an imposing yet welcoming atmosphere.

Overall, the atmosphere in the city was one of celebration.

The banner of the United Human Alliance, an Amalgamation of the crests of all the Nations who banded together against the Dragons, was raised high to represent humanity's pride.

As the flag fluttered in the breeze, the parade passed by.

Musicians played lively tunes, their melodies permeating the air and setting a joyous tone. Crowds of townspeople gathered along the streets, their faces filled with pride and excitement as they cheered and waved to the procession.

Markets and shops are bustling with activity, their stalls brimming with goods from near and far.

Everything felt the same—almost even better.

The main highlight of this parade, however, were the five Otherworlders who led the charge.

Or rather, the one who stood at the forefront.

There were Trisha, Justin, Clark, and Belle—each getting waves and recognition for their accomplishments and strength.

However, the attention they received was dwarfed by the one that was showered on the true savior of the Capital.

The man who defeated the creature of calamity—one whom many had witnessed firsthand,

His name was Rey Skylar; recognized leader of the Otherworlders.

'This attention is a little overwhelming.'

Rey felt almost nothing despite thinking this thanks to his increased mastery over controlling his feelings.

That didn't make it any less uncomfortable.

He glanced to his left and right, ensuring to wave around at the people who cheered for him and his friends.

'I can see everyone and everything around me, so there really isn't any need to move my head, but...' Rey was sure he would look like a weirdo if he simply waved and kept his gaze forward.

It could also be interpreted as a little rude—something he wasn't being in the slightest.

'In any case, the parade is a lot more crowded than I thought.'

Rey was informed that it would just a brief thing that was meant to raise the spirits of everyone in the City and also re-establish the influence and presence of the Otherworlders in the eyes of humanity.

And, it would also be his proper debut.

Thus far, everything seemed to have been blown out of proportion.

'Did Ater overdo things again because it's my debut?' Rey couldn't help but think this was the case.

Also, as if the external cheers and noise wasn't enough, he kept getting squeals from inside him.

~KYAAAA! Master, you're so awesome! You're so popular and great! Everyone recognizes your greatness! I'm so pleased!~

Yes, Emil wouldn't shut up.

She had been yelling and squealing like an incorrigible fan girl since the parade began, and Rey didn't think it would end anytime soon.

Still, he allowed her to indulge herself.

'Ater is nowhere to be seen, per usual. I guess he's setting things up for the Gala, so I can't blame him.'

Besides, with Rey having a proper look at the city that was previously in flames, he couldn't help but feel incredibly impressed with Ater.

He had already seen everything when he flew above the city, but there was something about walking through the streets that granted him a new perspective on things.

'How did Ater manage all of this within three months?' Rey couldn't help but wonder.

Other than a few areas in the Capital's outskirts and fringe areas, evergrhing was pretty much set.

~Master, I could also accomplish it in three months! No, two! No... give me only one!~

'You? Pfft... sure.' Rey couldn't help but leak out a grin as Emil's voice echoed in his mind.

~It's true! Let me destroy everything and I'll show you what I can do!~

'The hell? Destroy? What are you talking about?'

His smile instantly vanished.

~Tehee... just teasing you, Master~

At that moment, Rey wanted to slap his hand on his face for falling for Emil's childish provocation. Still, he controlled himself.

At the moment, he was a distinguished fellow, and all eyes were on him.

He couldn't afford to mess up.

'Still, despite all my complaints and reservations... this is beautiful.'

The city was colorful and cheerful.

It warmed his heart a little, especially seeing all the smiles and optimism that the people displayed.

'I wish you were here to see this, Alicia... Adonis...'

The Parade reached a sacred climax when the group arrived at their destination—the City Square.

Everyone gathered solemnly there to honor the three heroes who had fallen in battle: Eric the Mage, Billy the Warrior, and Snow, the White Rabbit.

A sense of reverence hung over the crowd as the statues were unveiled, each one meticulously crafted to capture the essence of the heroes' bravery and sacrifice.

Eric the Mage stood tall and proud, his piercing gaze immortalized in stone as he held a wand aloft, a symbol of his mastery over magic and his unyielding spirit.

His robes flowed gracefully around him, carved with intricate patterns that hinted at his deep knowledge and power.

Honestly, he looked a lot more valiant in the statue than he ever looked in real life. Unfortunately, the lifeless eyes of the statue could never capture the gleam of adventure that he often displayed.

The glasses did a good job at hiding that fact, though, so the sculpted work resembled him to a fault,

Beside him, Billy the Warrior was depicted in a moment of triumph, his sword raised high and his armor shining. The sculptor had captured the fierce determination in his expression, reflecting his unwavering commitment to protect the city and its people at any cost.

Those who deeply knew Billy knew how somewhat flawed this depiction was, but they still decided to respect the new perception of him.

He died being a protector, after all.

The statue of Snow, the White Rabbit, was a departure from the traditional hero, but no less significant.

Snow's delicate form was seated with a serene expression, embodying both grace and resilience. Her fur was meticulously detailed, and she stood within her forelimbs folded as she made a strangely serious pose.

It was strange to see an animal propped up in such a way, but the Otherworlders couldn't help but nod in respect.

In fact, the statue hardly did her Justice.

As the crowd looked upon the statues, they felt a deep sense of gratitude and loss.

Flowers and tokens of remembrance were laid at the feet of the statues, and prayers were whispered in honor of the fallen heroes.

The people vowed to keep their memories alive, ensuring that their sacrifice would never be forgotten.

With the statues now standing as a permanent tribute in the heart of the city, the people found solace in knowing that Eric, Billy, and Snow would forever be celebrated as symbols of courage and selflessness.

And as for the rest of the Otherworlders, the statues served as a reminder of the friends they lost—as well as the reason they lost them.

The enemies... the Dragons.

Chapter 587 The Gala Incident [Pt 1]

[Later That Night]

"How boring..."

Rey found himself holding a glass of wine as he glanced around him, soaking in the rich and loud atmosphere that surrounded him.

The grand hall of the royal palace gleamed under the soft glow of countless crystal chandeliers. The vast space was adorned with silk banners and the large windows had pristine curtains.

A majestic red carpet stretched across the polished marble floor, leading to the center of the room.

Nobles and powerful men from across the Alliance mingled with grace and sophistication. Their attire was a lavish display of wealth and status—rich velvet gowns adorned with precious gemstones and elaborate embroidery, and sharp tailored suits with brocade waistcoats and capes lined with exotic furs.

As they conversed, laughter and the delicate clinking of glasses filled the air.

At the side of the hall, a grand banquet table overflowed with an array of sumptuous dishes: roasted meats, exotic fruits, and intricate pastries crafted by only the finest chefs that humanity had to offer.

Servants moved with precision, attending to the guests' every need, offering goblets of rare wines and platters of delicacies.

A soft melody from a string quartet provided a harmonious backdrop, as some people even took to the dance floor in graceful, flowing movements.

Their dance was a reflection of courtly tradition and elegance; still maintaining their dignity with every rhythm made.

Essentially, it was a party for the rich.

'So this is how a Gala is. How do people enjoy these things...?' Rey mumbled while downing some of the wine that sloshed around his cup.

He was currently wearing a black suit—the swallowtail tuxedo kind. He initially thought it would blend perfectly well with this kind of scenery, but now that he was here, he realized that he was way out of his league.

The people present were adorned in several accessories—most of them Enchanted—and it suddenly seemed like he was underdressed for the party.

But Rey didn't care.

'I can't wait for this to end. That way, I can focus more on finding Esme and curing Alicia.'

He hoped to be able to do those two before being dispatched to the front lines to finally confront the Dragons once and for all.

'There's also the fact that I need to get stronger. Much stronger!'

Until he could fight and defeat something like Dagon without much of an effort, he wouldn't be satisfied.

'Divine Beasts still pose a danger to me. I can't have that.' He felt his grip grow stronger on the glass cup, so he decided to loosen up the tension a little.

To do that, he looked around for his classmates, spotting them almost instantly.

Justin and Clark were busy flirting with some ladies—or rather, it was Justin doing most of the flirting while Clark was his tag along.

Belle was being approached by many noblemen—many of whom were ogling her with lustful eyes.

Of course, they kept up a facade of deference, but Rey could tell that if she wasn't an Otherworlder, they would have definitely acted on their urges.

'Looks like Trisha is getting along well with the security details and the more fit men of the group.' Rey smiled as he cast a sideways glance at her.

He would have to return her to the Adventurers City after all of this was over, but for now, she could enjoy the party.

As one would expect from an event where several rich and powerful people were in attendance, the number of guards that surrounded the palace was incredible.

Security constantly patrolled the hallways, and some even stood in the hall itself.

All of it was to guarantee as much safety as possible.

'But isn't this a waste of resources? I doubt these guards will be able to handle any threat that we won't be able to face.' Rey glanced at them and observed their Status Windows.

The average guard was around Level 10, and while they had some Items that helped boost their abilities, their Stats and Skills were too pathetic to be of any real use when it came to dangerous enemies.

'Wouldn't they be better used patrolling the city, or any of the outskirts regions, where security is currently thinner?'

That wasn't his call to make, though.

Rey already knew of the hierarchy of this world, and even though the Royal Palace was the safest place any of these nobles could be—thanks to the presence of the Otherworlders—they still wanted to have the highest security detail made available to them.

'Let's not dwell on that. Trisha and everyone else seems to be having some degree of fun, so that's good.' He sighed, taking in another gulp.

Everyone seemed to be enjoying this celebration to an extent... except him.

"Aren't you a sight for sore eyes?" A voice echoed in his ears and he glanced to his side almost as soon as he heard it.

The lady beside him wore a shimmering white gown that matched her hair, and a necklace with crimson gems that complemented her eyes.

She had bangles and earrings of gold, and her shoes seemed impeccably carved, with her pale feet resting atop it.

All in all, her outfit only enhanced her beauty.

"Lucielle..."

The moment she heard her name, Lucielle smiled at Rey, drawing closer as she reached for his neck.

"I have no idea what you're doing, hiding in an inconspicuous corner like this..." She began to adjust the tie around his neck.

Apparently, he got it all wrong.

"No one is going to notice you if you stay here."

"That's kind of the idea."

She giggled as soon as she heard that, almost as if the very statement was funny.

"I can relate. But, well..."

"Duty, huh?"

"Bingo! You don't have to do it if you don't want to, though since you already acted chummy with Conrad and Vida, you might as well see this through to the end."

Rey sighed as Lucielle finished her speech. Coincidentally, his tie was also perfectly readjusted at that moment.

He didn't even know where to begin when it came to the Grand Mage, who was now broadly smiling at him.

'I made sure to erase my presence, yet she still found me here. Was she actively searching for me, or...?'

Looking at her bright face, he couldn't help but admire it regardless.

'She really is pretty.'

"So... what do you say, Rey Skylar? Want to dance with me?"

If anyone had told Rey that he would be asked to dance by the prettiest lady in the room, he would have said they were crazy.

But, here it was—something he would never have had in his life on Earth.

Here, he was a superstar whom everyone had to respect and fear. He was a champion of his people, and someone who could stand at the highest point of influence.

Yet...

'... I don't feel particularly moved by it.'

Rey thought he would feel a lot happier—more satisfied, more confident, and perhaps a lot prouder—after getting to this point.

But it all felt the same.

'Maybe my perspective is getting a little skewed.' He hid his sigh as he reached out his hand and held Lucielle's.

'Just enjoy the moment, Rey. You deserve it...'

After putting himself in that mental space, he finally smiled at the young lady before him and drew closer to her.

"Sure, why not?"

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Chapter 588 The Gala Incident [Pt 2]

Lucielle was a great dancer.

Rey could feel it with every rhythm of her body as he held her and she held him.

They easily took the center stage and everyone immediately made way for them. All of a sudden, within the snap of a finger, they became the center of attention.

The tempo of the music suddenly began to rise as the two began to move faster, and everyone seemed to slow down.

In fact, they stopped dancing altogether.

"Everyone is looking at us, Rey." Lucielle said with a smile, her red eyes glowing as she stared straight into his eyes.

"I know."

As he said this, he raised her into the air, firmly holding her waist as he turned. Afterward, he pulled her back to the ground and drew her closer to his chest.

This was something he had seen in movies and he just wanted to try it out. Thankfully, he was athletic enough, and his body was perfectly in sync with his mind.

He pulled the move off splendidly, and the gasps of claps from people seemed to indicate that he did a good job.

"I didn't think you were this energetic, Rey." Lucielle also gasped as she held onto his shoulders and they continued dancing.

"Have you always been this way?"

Rey shook his head and served for the side, making sure Lucielle's body nearly fell before he grabbed her from behind and paused for a moment.

They both looked into each other's eyes and he smiled.

"Not always."

He picked her back up and they continued the dance. At this point, everyone's full focus was on the two of them.

Even the groups who were talking—whether about business or leisure—instantly ceased their actions and worked the captivating dance of the two.

... The dance of the strongest.

"So, Rey... about that talk I asked you about..."

"Hm?"

Swerving and turning, they continued their movements with perfect fluidity.

They were both in sync with each other.

"I apologize if it came off as rude or overbearing, but I'm serious, you know?"

"Why do you want to have the talk so badly?"

"To learn, obviously! You have knowledge and power I don't know of. I want to study it and see if I can apply it to my existing knowledge."

"Why? To grow stronger?"

"W-well..."

"Do you want to get stronger so you can defeat the Dragons? Protect your people? Or is there something else?"

"..."

For a moment, silence echoed between the two of them. Then, right as Lucielle twisted her body, with Rey holding her hand upward, then drawing her closer into his arms, he whispered into her ears.

"Come on. If you don't tell me your motivations, how am I supposed to be convinced?"

She smiled at him, her face close to his.

"I can't lie, can I?"

"Nope."

They resumed dancing at a normal pace, and then she heaved a sigh before continuing.

"Let's just say it's an obsession of mine."

"Oh? What is?"

"It drives me crazy when I know there's something I don't know, but someone else knows it."

"Huh?"

Rey was rightfully confused. It was only normal that others would have more knowledge about certain things than any single individual—no matter who they were.

Lucielle, even as the Grand Mage, would be severely lacking in terms of some information.

How could she obsess over such a thing?

"It has to be something I'm interested in, of course, so I'm not bothered about stuff like Martial Arts or Politics."

"Ohhh..." Rey let out softly. 'Now it makes sense.'

Lucielle, just like anyone, had her interests. It just happened to be something that Rey was incredibly adept at.

'I can understand the reason for her interest in me, but I'm really not interested in Magic Talk right now.'

Ater had already confirmed that Magic wasn't going to help him cure Alicia, so it was of little Utility to him at the moment.

The only one it really benefited was Lucielle.

'If I had more time, I would have considered it more. But right now, I have other important things to worry about.'

If he sorted those things on schedule, and he had some time to spare, then he wouldn't mind having an extensive talk with her.

"Look, Lucielle..."

"I'm not asking for an answer now. I already know I have less to offer you than you have to offer me." Her tone seemed especially desperate, but she kept her composure nonetheless.

'So she noticed my indifference, huh?'

"Just keep it in mind. Keep me in mind. I'll come up with something that'll interest you. Once I manage to do that... you won't be able to hesitate this much."

Rey felt a smile forming on his face as he watched Lucielle's determined expression.

"You're really confident, huh?"

"Yup!" The moment she flashed her signature smile, Rey felt his heart jump a little.

"Just you wait, Rey Skylar. I'm going to pick your brains to my satisfaction... very soon."

It felt a bit strange, watching Lucielle narrow her eyes on him.

The music was slowly fading, meaning the end of the dance was arriving.

Bit by bit, they began to detach from each other, yet their gaze remained unmoving.

"Well, I look forward to it."

They finally concluded their dance, and Rey bowed while Lucielle curtsied.

This was followed by cheers and applause from the crowd.

"I'll be leaving now." Lucielle reached out to Rey and planted a light kiss on his cheek.

The moment she did so, he got another whiff of her scent.

It was enchanting.

"You should interact with more people, Kay?"

"Sure..."

She left soon after that, leaving Rey standing all alone on the stage.

He stood there for a moment, looking at her as she walked ahead. It felt like time slowed down as he felt more thumpings in his heart.

'I wonder why she's still single...' He lightly touched his cheek and smiled.

Before he could fully enjoy the moment, however, a crowd of Nobles and Guests closed in on him and began bombarding him with words.

"Sir Rey, a moment?"

"I've heard all about your exploits!"

"Would you like to join me later for a cup of tea?"

"My daughter tells me so much about you! You should meet her sometime!"

"Could you help train my child?"

"I'm your biggest fan!"

"I love you, Sir Rey!"

"Sir Rey, my name is—!"

It went on and on, as the number of people kept increasing.

Until eventually, Lucielle's departing frame was completely overshadowed.

'Haa... these people are annoying.'

As Rey smiled and spoke to the people that surrounded him, slowly easing himself out of the crowd—only to meet more people who wanted to talk to him—he began to get miffed.

He understood that they weren't particularly acting maliciously towards him, but he also didn't want to have anything to do with them.

Their wide grins, and overly reverent attitude dripped with insincerity.

It was all clearly fake.

'I can tell what's on their minds...' He coldly thought as he examined the people he spoke to.

It was obvious that they were only being respectful to him because of his role to mankind. They so desperately hoped he continued to protect them—so the Dragons would never reach their territory.

'They live in the South, so danger will have to get past me first before reaching them.'

In essence, he and his allies would have to continue taking the brunt of danger while they led relatively peaceful and comfortable lives.

None of that really annoyed Rey, since he wasn't particularly fighting for their sakes.

It was the fact that they wouldn't stop bothering him that began to get him riled up. Thankfully, his emotions were kept at an all-time low.

If that wasn't the case...

"Sir Rey... am I correct? It's a pleasure to finally meet you."

As Rey heard this familiar voice, he swiftly turned to his right.

There, he was met with three familiar faces.

"Rebal!" He smiled broadly at the older man, looking at both his sides to see Asher and Kara standing right next to him.

They were all wearing exquisite outfits, though the highlight of their attire were the Enchanted Items that they donned.

In fact, pretty much everything the trio had on was Enchanted, though there were standouts.

Rebal's walking cane, Kara's Glasses, and Asher's single earring.

Whether this was solely for advertisement or for security, it seemed they achieved both.

The Enchanted Items were top-tier, and they were noticed by those who had an eye for such items.

It was one of the reasons why Rebal wasn't interrupted when he spoke.

"I'm glad you still recognize me." Rebal grinned, and the other two bowed and curtsied in greeting.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to have a discussion with you."

Rey's eyes lit up the moment he heard those words.

'Perfect timing!'

Using Rebal as a good excuse, he could finally ditch everyone.

"I don't mind at all."

Chapter 589 The Gala Incident [Pt 3]

"I see. So you attended as the Reaper Group?"

Rey and his three business partners—or rather, underlings—were speaking outside the hall—in the garden downstairs.

They had exchanged a few words on their way there, so some of his questions were answered very quickly.

'Ater did tell me about how he took temporary charge of the Reaper Group and used their resources to help rebuild the Capital.' Rey thought to himself as he analyzed their presence and its significance in the grand scheme of things.

Thanks to the Reaper Group's aid, the Royal Council officially recognized them as their supplier for Enchanted Items.

Rebal was to be granted a Noble Title once the Capital was fully constructed, and the Reaper Group's name was going to become inconceivably big in no time at all.

"Indeed. We've also had talks with some Nobles around, and it looks like we're going to be expanding very soon."

The areas in the South were a profitable area for business, but Enchanted Items weren't particularly needed there since the people there were relatively safer than other regions.

But... all of those things were slowly changing.

"With our Group being officially recognized by the Royal Council, the Nobles will not want to be left behind, so they'll do their best to arm themselves with the best we can offer. Since our products are the trend at the moment, they'll patronize us for the heck of it."

"With our Group being officially recognized by the Royal Council, the Nobles will not want to be left behind, so they'll do their best to arm themselves with the best we can offer. Since our products are the trend at the moment, they'll patronize us for the heck of it."

Rebal was right! The behavior of the rich wasn't particularly complex when it came to purchasing luxury items.

'But, that isn't all...' Rey narrowed his eye as he analyzed all Rebal was saying.

'Since they've been gathering Otherworlders, it's possible that they also have plans for the Enchanted Items that they want to purchase from the Reaper Group.'

Perhaps the Nobles were planning some sort of scheme to overthrow the Royal Council or something of the sort.

'No. That's not possible thanks to the curse.'

The Council could not betray the Nobles, but the latter also couldn't betray the former.

'I might be overthinking this. Let's focus on other things first...'

"I still can't believe Sir Ralyks was actually an Otherworlder who was summoned to save this world." Asher, still disguised as his Aldred alias, beamed as he spoke to Rey.

"It truly is a pleasure."

"Haha! It's all good." Rey then turned to Kara, who had been silent throughout the exchange.

"And how are you, Kara? Ater tells me you're the one keeping the Group afloat."

"Haha... Sir Ater overestimates my abilities..." She shyly responded, shifting her glasses as she nervously looked away.

Rey didn't remember her being this bashful, but he reckoned it was due to his change in status and perspective.

"So this is what you look like under the mask. Not what I expected."

'Ahh... I almost forgot about that!' Rey's eyes slightly widened once he had this thought.

With his emotions suppressed, his anxiety and complex had been so drastically reduced that it was very difficult for him to be so self conscious of his appearance.

It actually took effort to think along those lines.

"That's rude, Asher!" Rebal reprimanded, glaring deeply at the boy beside him.

"A-ah, I apologize. I just meant... you look a lot younger than I... sorry..."

'Now that I think about it, isn't his real age close to mine?' Rey smiled to himself as he shrugged the whole thing off.

He even chuckled slightly.

"It's fine, really."

Asher heaved a sigh of relief, Rebal maintained an apologetic smile, while Kara fidgeted as she stood. The three had a lot to discuss, but thanks to Asher's supposed blunder, everything took a slight halt.

Rey figured he had to keep the conversation going, so he started off with something casual.

"By the way, where's Yuri?"

"Ah, she's currently patrolling the area. I believe she should be in the hall at this moment—perhaps searching for us, or looking around."

As a Group officially recognized by the Council, the Reaper Group's security detail was allowed that freedom.

'Of course, I already knew where she was. I even know her exact location at the moment.' Rey smiled.

The moment he saw Rebal, Asher, and Kara, he began to scan around for trances of Yuri.

'That girl still makes me uneasy.' It was one of the reasons he made them walk to the garden to talk.

He knew she was heading for the hall through another entrance and he wanted to avoid her at all costs.

Thankfully, his plan worked!

'She's inside the hall talking to Trisha right now. I always pictured those two getting along—as warriors, of course.'

In this world, female warriors were extremely rare.

Since Martial Arts were presumed to be suited for men, and Magic geared towards women, this was the status quo for most of the people in the Alliance.

The only female warriors he knew to be decently strong were Trisha, Britta, Yuri, and Lucy.

No other female came close.

'In any case, now that we've broken the ice, let's continue talking about business.' He thought to himself as Rebal took the cue and shifted to the recent activities of the Reaper Group and their future plans.

Rey smiled as he listened to their discussion.

'Keep going! This is a good chance to catch up on all I've missed.'

Ater had only given Rey a brief summary of the whole thing, since there were a lot of things going on at the time.

Even now, Rey was yet to fully unpack all the business he had with Ater.

All of that could wait, after all.

'Speaking of Ater, though, where is he?' Rey had previously thought he was busy directing the Gala's preparation, so he didn't think too much about his absence.

However, Ater wasn't present at the Gala either.

~Master, what if I told you I know where he is?~

Rey rolled his eyes as he heard the voice of the Symbiote Slime in his head.

'Are you just saying that to get me to speak to you?'

~Yayyyy! You finally responded! I mean... No~

Rey had been ignoring Emil all night due to her constant talk inside his head. She was especially loud during his dance with Lucielle, though he silenced her out of his mind.

It seemed she was looking for every opportunity to make him talk to her, so she tried to gain his interest by telling him about her knowledge of Ater's whereabouts.

Unfortunately for her, he was bound to her—so he could tell that she was lying.

'Nice try.'

~W-wait Master! Okay, I'm sorry! Sor—!~

Once again, Rey zoned Emil from his thoughts and continued to focus on his business talk with Rebal and the rest.

There were a few things that were initially difficult for him to understand, after all this was all about business, but he figured them out once he thought about them deeply.

'Good news is that the Reaper Group is about to get very rich. Bad news is that resources are running low, and there isn't enough supply for the demand that is to come.'

Money was no longer the issue.

The problem was getting very lucrative resources that could serve as raw materials—enough to deliver items of the best quality at a mass rate.

"If only we had that Elf deal again..." Rebal said in passing, which made Rey remember something.

Something he previously thought could wait.

'I guess I'll have to talk to Ater about it later...'

Chapter 590 The Gala Incident [Pt 4]

The business discourse lasted quite a while.

Rey didn't particularly mind, since he enjoyed the change of pace. Besides, the Reaper Group was technically his own.

So... this was all his business.

'The war won't last forever. At some point, I'll get strong enough and we'll beat the Dragons. I need to consider what happens after that.'

Gathering enough money to last him a lifetime, while also running a business that would be considered a multibillion dollar company on Earth; wasn't that the dream?

'I refuse to be a broke hero!' Was one of his mottos, which was what drove him to her so invested in business even though he still had a lot of things on his mind.

'It seems Rebal is managing the situation well. Strategic planning is his forte, after all. Asher deals with the internal running of the business, while Kara handles marketing, finances, and also aids greatly in terms of production.'

However, there was only so far they could go without Rey's assistance.

'Looks like I'll have to add this to the list of things I'll have to do.' He thought to himself as they concluded the discourse.

"So what will you do now?" Rey stared at Rebal after he was done analyzing everything he just heard.

"We need to speak to more investors and potential clients."

"Ah, I see. You're not done networking."

"Not even close. We only approached you because it would be wrong of us not to. Plus..." The older man gave a smirk, his eyes twinkling slightly.

"... Something told me you wanted to get out of that situation."

Rey chuckled as soon as he heard that. "Well, that something was correct."

They went ahead to shake hands, and after offering a few more pleasantries, Rebal and company returned upstairs while he remained in the garden.

"Huu..." Heaving out visible breaths, he enjoyed the solemn melancholy that surrounded him.

~VWUSH~

A glass cup, filled with wine appeared on his hand as soon as he stretched it.

'Spatial Magic sure is useful...' He mused, taking in another gulp.

'I can't get drunk thanks to the System, and my previous disgust for alcohol has been altered thanks to my body manipulation.'

"Haa..." Smacking his lips after a heavy sigh, he glanced at the remaining liquid in the glass.

Rey remained like that for a few more seconds before smiling a little and then speaking.

"Are you going to keep watching me from the shadows, or will you say something already?"

His voice echoed into the lonesome garden, and for a while no response was given.

It seemed he was just talking to himself—perhaps making a worded jab into thin air.

But no.

There was someone present. And she smiled the moment he called out for her, finally approaching him after maintaining proper composure.

"As expected of the strongest Otherworlder..." The sultry voice of the girl dripped with flattery as she took a few more steps forward.

She was right behind Rey, yet he kept his gaze forward, taking a good sip from his glass.

"Hm. Who are you and what do you want?"

It was a useless question.

Rey already knew who this woman was. He had been observing her for some time now.

The reason he brought the conversation he had with Rebal to a close despite still having a few more questions was because she was approaching and he didn't want her listening in.

It was rather unfortunate that she met them at all, but by then it was already too late.

They were already finished with all the important bits.

'She's been watching me ever since, which means I'm the one she's after.' Rey grinned internally.

There didn't seem to be any killing intent oozing from her, which meant she was sensible enough not to start a fight she couldn't possibly win.

Still, that didn't mean he could be careless.

The only reason why Rey didn't bother turning back to look at her was because he already had a complete vision of everything around him.

And the reason why he even decided to acknowledge her presence was due to already using his [Perfect Divine Appraisal] on her.

'I know who you are....'

"Don't tell me you don't recognize my voice." Slowly, the invisibility of the girl began to unravel, revealing her true identity.

Rey's smile grew wider.

'At least you didn't try to hide it.' Slowly turning, he looked at her—one hand in his pocket and the other holding the glass

"Felicia."

The girl's black hair swayed to the side, thanks to the garden's wind, revealing her cute features. She wore a nice black gown, with red and purple linen decorating the sides,

A choker was wrapped around her neck, and she had gleaming dark earrings that matched her gloves and shoes.

Enchanted Items were wrapped around her fingers, wrists, neck, waist, and many other regions; proving how much money and power she actually possessed compared to most.

However, to Rey, none of this held as much significance to him as how he remembered her from the past.

Felicia was Adam's girlfriend, and one of his closest confidants back when he was still alive.

They were awful people back on Earth, meaning they both had pretty bad Karma Points. She, as well as the other four, became a part of Adam's small caucus—turning into his "Yes" men.

'After his death, they became very silent. And when given the opportunity to leave, they were among the first to ditch the group.'

Rey didn't really feel anything upon seeing her. He already had a feeling he would run into her after recognizing the four stooges that she was always with.

'So they're all part of the Noble faction, huh? I wonder why Adrien left out this tiny detail when he told me about what everyone has been up to...'

Perhaps this development was very recent. Or maybe Adrien simply wanted to throw Rey off their scent.

Either way, he intended to find out.

"Bingo! You recognized me."

"Why wouldn't I? We were classmates, and you weren't particularly nice." He said, his gaze confidently meeting hers.

She parted her lips, almost saying something, but Rey's voice cut her off.

"... Not that I care about any of that now."

He wasn't lying either. His old classmates were the least of his worries at the moment.

There was only really one question he had for her.

"What do you want?"