

Extras 71

Chapter 71 The Trial [Pt 2]

'What should I say?'

Rey racked his brain to think of a way to circumvent the issue and avoid lying, without also saying the truth.

"How do you suppose I did that? My Skill is to temporarily transform my body and—!" He tried to do just that.

However, before he could get very far, Lady Vida silenced him with her next words.

"Just answer the question. Did you leave the Royal Estate or not? If you indeed left the Estate, where did you go?"

These were extremely precise questions that required direct answers for him.

'She's trapped me!' Rey greeted his teeth as he watched her chuckle slightly.

It seemed she truly took pleasure in seeing him like this.

'I really don't like how she's looking down on me. That condescending gaze... it irks me!'

The more he hesitated, the more suspicious he looked. Rey knew that much already.

'I've already denied an ample number of allegations, and successfully at that.'

If he made a blunder now, it would reduce the reliability of his words, practically ruining all his efforts until now.

Left with nowhere else to go, Rey finally gave up and used his last ditch option.

"I... I refuse to answer that."

Gasps escaped from the lips of the audience as they heard his response.

"Oho?" Lady Vida seemed to be even more excited once she heard that. "Are you sure that's how you want to respond?"

"Yes. I'm sure."

As the entire room heard this, the Lady was greeted by Rey's defiant stare. Anyone with such high standing would feel understandably dissatisfied with that.

But not Lady Vida.

Rey's defiance only caused her smile to widen even more.

If one looked closer, they would be able to see the pink shades that subtly appeared on her cheeks.

"What about this next question? What do you spend your spare time doing?"

"Preparing to save the world." Rey answered with a stubborn smile.

"Ohh? That's so brave of you. Mind telling us the details?"

"No."

More back and forth occurred between Rey and the Lady, and it soon became just them engaged in what couldn't be classified as a Trial anymore.

The two were smiling, and their words contained an odd mix of hostility and pleasure.

Anyone could see that they had both departed from the confines of the trial.

"A-ahem! That's enough of that..." Conrad Listrio cleared his throat and made sure his voice was extraordinarily loud.

This was enough to snap Rey and Lady Vida back to the reality that everyone lived in.

"Aha! Oh my... it seems I got a little carried away. My apologies."

Despite Lady Vida saying this with a smile, she seemed to be a tad bit dissatisfied that she was interrupted by Conrad.

The remaining members of the Council had nervous looks and took their gaze away from Vida Origa, while Conrad coughed awkwardly.

He could clearly sense the hostile gaze she was directing towards him.

"In any case, it seems you are not properly cooperating with the trial, Rey Skylar. If you do not properly answer our questions, we can't fully determine the truth and prove your innocence." Conrad successfully brought the topic of the Trial back on track.

"But you can't prove my guilt as well."

The moment Rey said this, Conrad narrowed his gaze.

"I beg the contrary. We have a testimony from your Classmate. Since the Truthseeker confirmed he was telling the truth from him, that means you're still guilty of some things."

In essence, Rey wasn't out of the woods yet.

One would expect such a person to be panicking, but Rey was currently smiling.

Almost as if he had expected this outcome.

"Oh really? Then maybe you should ask him for details as to how I was able to leave the Royal Estate. You all know my Skill and its abilities, and you know I was telling the truth about that."

Once Rey said this, he averted his gaze to Adam Sanchez, who was already showing signs of nervousness.

"How would someone like me be able to get past so many guards? Why not ask the man himself what he saw?"

Everyone looked at Adam, who was now buried under an overwhelming amount of attention that he never planned for.

'Thankfully they still don't doubt the nature of my Skill. That Truthseeker stuff must be really reliable.'

If he had been questioned on the specifics of his Skill, Rey knew his entire case would fall apart.

Fortunately for him, his gamble paid off.

"Adam Sanchez, please rise on your feet."

The boy obeyed.

"Tell all of us the details of how Rey escaped the Royal Estate and... evaded the detection of the guards."

It seemed like Conrad was already recognizing how ridiculous the entire thing sounded while confronting Adam.

His conflicted expression was enough to give it away.

"I... erm... well..."

Adam could see the Truthseeker, so he had to be very careful about his words.

'You can't lie, can you? You don't have the Enchanted Item with you, so it's impossible to fabricate another story against me.'

Rey was enjoying the moment with utmost satisfaction.

'Since this is the Royal Court, they search everyone who is about to enter, and there are Magic Detectors that would spot an Enchanted Item on someone.'

This was done in order to guarantee the safety of the members of the Royal Council and ensure a fair trial.

'And that works in my favor!'

"I-I'd rather not say anything!" Adam yelled out before plopping back to his seat.

That act was the final nail on the coffin.

"I have answered your questions regarding the Sack of Monster Cores, as well as my confusion about this whole thing. I don't claim to know all the answers here, but I know this one thing..."

Everyone looked at Rey as he declared his position with utmost confidence.

"I am innocent!"

As his voice echoed in the Royal Court, Rey's thoughts also reverberated within him.

'With this, even if they can't completely verify everything and reach a definite conclusion, it's clear that I'm not guilty.'

That was all that mattered to Rey.

'Hehehe... hehehe... hehehehe!'

This... all of this... had been his goal from the start!

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Chapter 72 The Verdict

Rey already knew he couldn't win—at least, not absolutely.

He had a pile of evidence against him, and the truth was even a lot more implicating than what he was being tried for.

As a result, he settled for a stalemate.

'The only thing I didn't expect was the entire thing with Lady Vida. She really came at me strongly...'

Fortunately, it didn't completely derail his plans.

'In the end, no one can prove I did anything, and there's no proof I'm guilty.'

That was good enough for Rey.

"After reviewing all of the evidence presented here, and considering the testimonies given, as well as the defenses of the accused... we have arrived at our judgment."

The Royal Council, after leaving the Royal Court for about twenty minutes, finally returned with their verdict.

'They were gone for quite a while...' Rey thought to himself as he looked at all their faces.

Per the judicial system practiced here, there had to be a majority vote among the five Royal Council members for a judgment to be valid. .c(o)m

'I guess it takes time for them to reach a reasonable arrangement, even if it's not a consensus...'

Out of the five, Rey only needed three people to take his side. He could already rule out the Lady Vida, so he was left with the only four other options

Taking his time to study their faces, he considered his chances.

'Lord Conrad seems like a reasonable person. He should be able to see sense in this...'

He didn't know too well about the other members of the council other than the fact that they were boomers.

As a result, Rey could only cross his fingers and wait for his judgment.

"Rey Skylar will be placed under house arrest and constant surveillance while an active investigation is conducted on the matter."

The moment Rey heard this, his heart sank.

"This is to determine the truth of what happened, and also to ensure no injustice is meted out."

The good news was that Rey could return to his old room, and could also enjoy all the benefits of being an Otherworlder.

The bad news was... he couldn't do much else.

"Per his responsibilities, he will attend Training every morning, but after that is over, he will return to his room and spend the rest of his time there."

Rey felt a little sting in his heart as he heard that.

'My responsibilities? These guys...!'

He began to grit his teeth, but did his best not to let his inner frustrations out.

It wouldn't be advantageous to show hostility at this rate.

'It's not a terrible judgment by any means. It only makes sense that I'll still be suspected no matter what...'

The problem was the constant surveillance and his restricted movements.

How was he going to deal with his current prospects?

'This isn't good...'

As Rey sighed, Conrad Listrio concluded the verdict in his calm but authoritative tone.

"Rey Skylar... do you have any objections?" He asked.

Rey felt like rolling his eyes.

'I don't know how long this investigation will take. It could take forever, and I'll be trapped without recourse in that period.'

Not only would he be unable to Level Up, but everything he had built up thus far could crumble in his absence.

'Damn it... damn it...'

Still, he maintained a calm facade and smiled gently.

"None."

'I just have to bide my time. If this becomes unbearable, I'll just leave.'

"I have an objection!" Adonis jumped to his feet as his voice echoed within the vast Royal Court.

Rey's eyes nearly popped wide open as he shifted his attention to the rising Hero.

Everyone in the room had no choice but to do so.

"What is the matter, Hero?" Conrad asked with a calm facade, though his tone depicted a slight hint of worry.

"I do not approve of this constant surveillance business! Why are you treating Rey like a prisoner... or some sort of dangerous entity?"

As Adonis' declaration pierced the air, murmurs began to spread within the court.

"It is a matter of necessity, Hero. You have to under—"

"No, I do not understand. Rey is one of us. He was summoned, just like us, to save your world. You can't treat him like this when you don't have a single shred of conclusive evidence against him."
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Every supposed proof had either been debunked by Rey's truthful words, or were rendered useless by Adam's hesitance.

Before inflicting punishment on Rey, they had to have sufficient reason to do so.

And right now... they just didn't.

The members of the Royal Council all looked at one another, exchanging nods.

Once it seemed they had made an unanimous decision, Conrad spoke once again.

"Fine, Hero. We will not place him under sufficient surveillance. The House Arrest judgment still stands, though."

For a moment, no one spoke.

"Do understand that this is for the safety of the entire Nation, and also for you all."

Unless Rey had been proven completely innocent, he couldn't be allowed unsupervised freedom.

"I understand. Is that fine with you, Rey?"

As Adonis asked this, turning towards the absolutely stunned Rey, the latter was speechless for a few seconds.

Finally, he snapped out of his shock and spoke.

"N-no... I mean, Yes! Yes, that's fine!"

Rey could never have expected Adonis standing up for him in such a way, but he did so.

'I thought Alicia would say something... and she was about to.'

He had spotted Alicia trying to stand up from the corner of his eyes, but Billy had stopped her from doing so.

He placed his hand on her shoulder and tried to calm her agitation.

Somehow, seeing all of that play out irked Rey.

'Thankfully, Adonis came through.'

It wasn't much, but this arrangement was still much better than what the Council initially decided.

'I can still continue my arrangement with Noah, so we can continue to make money. I can probably just train my Stats—

especially my Mana—and see if I can naturally increase it.

Of course, he would have to make sure he wasn't being watched. He would also use his Skill to ensure no one could spot him doing anything funny if they barged in.

'It's not like the Royal Dungeon, but I should be able to get some things done.'

He didn't know when he would be fully released, but knowing Adonis and how he had proved himself so many times already, Rey knew he was in the right hands.

'Hopefully it's before the whole Dungeon Exploration that's happening soon...'

Rey thought about his treasures, as well as the Hobgoblins he had been harvesting for a while now.

'I've been taking care of them all this time. No one is having them except me!'

It sounded selfish, but Rey didn't care. He had done whatever it took to be stronger, and he wasn't about to let others reap the fruits of his labor.

In due time, he would swipe his prize.

'I just have to be productive in the meantime.'

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Chapter 73 Meeting In The Dark [Pt 1]

After the Trial, everyone went their way and Rey had to return to his room.

He was allowed to roam the central Living Room, but since he preferred not to, he decided to simply remain inside.

No one could blame him.

Night soon fell, and as everyone was sleeping, a certain student couldn't sleep.

"Damn it..."

His eyes were wide open as he stared at the ceiling. Before long, he sat upright and clapped his hand over his face.

"I screwed up big time..." He murmured in the dark.

It was difficult to tell what kind of face this student was making, but it appeared to be a grimace.

'I never expected to be asked to make another testimony. It wasn't part of the plan...'

Yes, this was Adam Sanchez, and he was still going over the earlier events of the day.

... How he had been humiliated in front of everyone.

"I really fucked up!"

"Ahh... don't blame yourself too much." A voice suddenly echoed at the far corner of the room.

"Eep!"

Like a little child, Adam shrieked while jumping from his position.

The figure that greeted his eyes was in the form of a silhouette. They appeared to be in a hooded robe, covered from top to bottom.

No feature of theirs could be seen, but they were undoubtedly a person.

"You have to stop doing that! You startled me..."

Adam soon forgot his initial fear—or shock, as he called it in his mind—and gave a glare to the intruder who had seemingly come out of nowhere.

"Haha! I apologize. That wasn't very nice..."

The shadowy person stepped forward, and based on their slightly deep tone, they were clearly a guy.

"You don't need to beat yourself too hard, though. Who would have foreseen this outcome?"

Adam chuckled once he heard this from the silhouette before him.

"Who said I was blaming myself? You're the one who came up with the plan, so isn't it your fault for not planning this far ahead?"

As Adam stared hard at the shadow, he had a wide grin on his face. His grimace was gone, and his sense of superiority returned.

"I suppose you're right. That's a fair conclusion..." The shadow raised his hands in defeat.

"But let's focus less on the past, and more on the future, shall we?"

The person they had framed, Rey Skylar, had gotten less punishment than they would have liked, but the goal was still achieved.

"There's enough unrest now to move on to the next stage..."

Adam's grin was growing wider since he already knew what that meant.

"It'll soon be time for me to take over the class."

Once order broke down, and he consistently offered the perfect solution, his influence would grow. He only had to play both sides—the Nation, and his fellow students.

It was a fine plan.

"Thank you for the Sack of Monster Cores, by the way. I wouldn't have gone along with your plan if I didn't know you were so capable." Adam retorted with a snort.

He had been given a down payment of over 200 Monster Cores, which had a very high commercial value.

Once he sold it, he would have tons of money. Compared to his broke classmates, he had some insurance and financial freedom.

'Hehehe... hehe...!' Adam chuckled within himself as he drowned in his own ecstatic wealth.

"It was nothing." The Shadow responded, sounding almost as amused as Adam.

"Where did you get so many Monster Cores, though? You're a fellow student, so you couldn't have gone out to get it."

Adam Sanchez didn't think any student would be foolish or skilled enough to escape the walls.

He had thought about it, but after seeing the security around, he decided against it. Instead, he was biding his time well for his chance.

'Sorry for accusing you for something you didn't do, Rey. But... a guy's gotta do what a guy's gotta do!'

Of course, Adam didn't feel the slightest bit sorry.

"I stole it." The silhouette interrupted his thoughts with a simple answer.

"Oh wow. You've got some gall stealing from the very people who are feeding us. But I can't say I dislike that. Hehehe..."

Adam didn't care much for the Royal Council or the entire United Human Alliance.

He simply wanted the power and influence he once had—and then, to enjoy this world and all it had to offer.

'I don't see any Dragons around here. And I'm sure these people have a shelter or something...'

All he had to do was gather enough people and food and he could probably establish a new nation somewhere.

'I wouldn't even mind signing a peace treaty with the Dragons...'

If he could gain control of his classmates—powerful Otherworlders that they were—he was sure he would have enough to bargain with.

'I don't want to think about it, but it's even possible I switch sides to the Dragon Race if they have a convincing deal...'

For now, though, Adam decided not to think too far ahead.

There was still the present to worry about.

"There is still one more issue we need to resolve before moving on to the second phase."

"Oh? What's that?"

"Eliminating the one true threat to our plan. Who do you think that is?"

Adam narrowed his eyes a little, thinking as hard as he could on the question. Only one face came to mind after his few seconds of thought.

"Adonis... right?"

"Correct! You really are brilliant, aren't you?"

"Hehe! There's no need to state the obvious."

Adam always knew he was smart. He just got low grades in school because he simply didn't want to put in the effort.

School... Training... all of those things were a drag to him, so he didn't really bother.

If he did, Adam was sure he would end up excelling more than the rest of his peers.

'I'm a genius, after all.'

It felt good that his partner could recognize that.

"In any case, we should move quickly." The voice from the darkness echoed in Adam's ears, causing his grin to stretch even further.

"It's time to eliminate Adonis once and for all."

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Chapter 74 Meeting In The Dark [Pt 2]

Adonis was strong.

He was extremely intelligent, handsome, charismatic, and most of all... he was kind.

He had the qualities of a good leader, and he was easily the perfect leader of the Otherworlders.

"Not for long, though. Hehehe..." Adam chuckled as he imagined punching out Adonis' perfect white teeth.

The silhouette before him nodded.

"Killing him won't be easy, but I have just the thing for it."

"H-hold on... killing? We're killing him?"

Adam was shocked to hear all of this. When he heard the word "eliminate", he simply thought they would remove him from the position of leader.

... Sort of like a social sabotage or something of that nature.

"Oh? Are you scared?" As soon as he heard the voice, Adam stiffened.

He could sense some measure of condescension, and he didn't like it one bit.

"No! Of course not. I just thought you meant it the same way 'destroying someone' could mean ruining their reputation."

He wasn't a softie or anything!

'I'll do anything for my goals. As long as it is necessary...'

"Is killing Adonis really necessary, though" Adam asked with a raised brow.

"Yes, it is. And killing him now, while he still has a low Level, is the best time."

Adam already knew it would be difficult to compete with Adonis with the way things currently stood.

Adonis was perfection itself, while he had fallen from Grace in a lot of ways.

'I guess I have no other choice, huh?'

"Once you kill him, you'll be able to get his EXP, but I have a special Item that can allow you to convert the EXP into specific forms of power."

As Adam heard this, his ears perked up.

"S-specific forms of power...?"

"Yes. Like Class or Skills."

"You mean..."

"Yes. You can obtain Adonis' Hero Class, or even get his Skills."

Adam's eyes widened as soon as he heard this. He didn't realize it when his teeth were already being displayed as a sign of excitement.

"Now do you see why he has to die?"

"I do indeed! He'll be a stepping stone for my rise to power!"

Adam started to chuckle, and then began to laugh so hard that his throat hurt and he coughed.

"Sorry. Take it easy..." The silhouette kindly retorted, to which Adam smiled.

"Thanks, man."

The relationship between the two of them was purely driven by self-interest, but the more Adam conversed with this anonymous stranger, the more he felt like they truly understood each other.

"Why are you doing all of this, though? Helping me and all..." He muttered.

"I already told you. I wish to go outside. If you become the leader, you'll be able to guarantee my freedom. That's the deal, right?"

Adam nodded slowly, but he was still a bit puzzled by the stranger's goals.

'Just for that? I guess he isn't really ambitious...'

They had been in contact for about a week now, and everything seemed to flow exactly as the shadow said.

He was clearly smart.

'But I guess I'm still the one with the most cards. He needs me...'

Adam felt good just from that conclusion.

"Here. Take this."

A blackish mist appeared in mid-air, as if it was made from thick smoke—the very same material that shrouded the hooded figure.

From within this mist, a dagger appeared.

"Ah... this is the Item?"

"Yep. Use it to kill Adonis and focus on the aspect of what you want from him."

Adam was already licking his lips as he heard this.

"You can only pick between his Class and one of his Skills..."

Adam felt a little disappointed by that. If he could get at least one Skill along with Adam's Class, that would have been much better.

However, this still wasn't a bad deal.

"Which do you think I should go for? Class or Skill?"

"Hmm... it's up to you, really."

Adonis had an SS-Tier Skill, but he had an S-Tier Class.

In terms of rank, the Skill was much better. However, a solid Class would mean Adam's overall build would take a huge jump.

Besides, he didn't really have enough Mana to handle an SS-Tier Skill.

"I think I'll go for the Class. 'Hero' doesn't sound too bad, does it?"

"Right? That's a good choice..."

Adam chuckled some more. He really was brilliant if he put his mind to it.

"So, with this Item... hold on..."

The moment he thought about the silhouette's goals, and cross-referenced it with the plan at hand, something seemed off.

"Where did you get this item?"

None of the students were allowed to hold Enchanted Items outside class. The only way he could have gotten an item as potent as this was either by going outside, or...

"I stole it."

"Ahh... I figured." Adam smiled.

That was his guess as well.

"Seems like you recognize the plan. You'll strike the night before our expedition to the Royal Dungeon."

"Any particular reason why that time is the best?" Adam responded with a question.

"Adonis has been training hard all week, so he's been pretty stressed out. I'm sure he'll want to have a good rest before the hectic next day."

When Adam heard this, he nodded in agreement.

"Alright then. You can leave the rest to me." He grinned while speaking.

"I'll use my Skills to get close and finish the job."

"I'm counting on you."

Both men exchanged understanding glances, and the silhouette began to make his exit.

Black clouds of mysterious energy swirled around him as he began to vanish.

"Wait. One last question..."

The vanishing paused, almost as if it was stuck in frame.

"What is it?"

The voice of the silhouette sounded the same, though something about how he was suspended made it clear that Adam was bothering him.

But what did the future leader care about such trivialities?

"Why Rey? He's a nobody, right? Wouldn't using someone with a higher profile benefit the plan more?"

"..."

For a moment, the shadow said nothing.

However, this silence only lasted for a while as a brief giggle escaped the lips under the mask of darkness.

"Well, he ignored me."

"I-Ignored you...?" Adam felt surprised to hear that as a reason. "What do you mean?"

"Upon our arrival here, at the Skill Exhibition... he displayed his Skill and I told him it was impressive. I tried to talk more to him, but he brushed me aside and ignored me..."

Adam couldn't quite understand what he was hearing.

"T-that's all...?"

"Do I need some other reason?"

'Well... yeah.' Adam wanted to say, but he decided against it.

"I guess he must have hurt your feelings, huh? Didn't peg you to be a softie..."

Adam felt secretly happy, though. If this person was emotional, then that meant he could be manipulated.

"I suppose you could say so. I'm a huge softie..."

"Hey! I'm not judging." Adam shrugged, a big smirk on his roguish face.

"..."

No one said anything for a while, and the mood began to grow heavy.

Before it could devolve even more, though, the silhouette's voice emerged.

"So can I leave now?"

"O-oh! Sure!" Adam felt joy within himself that his partner needed his permission before leaving.

It reinforced his feeling of importance, and he couldn't help but imagine how everyone else would treat him once he got the power he craved.

"Alright then. Bye..."

~WHUUSH!~

The shadow vanished into oblivion, leaving Adam all alone in his room.

"What a guy... or maybe he's actually a girl...?"

Adam could only picture a girl being so petty, so he decided to just label the mysterious stranger with the stereotype.

'Once I kill Adonis, I'll make her reveal her face to me. Hopefully, she's a cutie...'

If she was, they could eventually deepen their relationship.

At that point, no girl would be able to resist him.

He could have Alicia, Belle, even Trisha

Whoever and whatever he desired!

'After all, who doesn't want to get with the Hero?'

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Chapter 75 Business As Usual

[6 Days Later]

"So, how did today's transaction go?"

As Rey sat on his bed, he gazed at Noah—his trusty agent—and the Spatial Ring that sat on his outstretched hand.

They were currently in Rey's room, and business was the topic of discourse.

"It went the same as usual. They sold at the usual rate. It doesn't seem like the value has gone down at all..."

As Noah elaborated on the details of the day's trade, Rey took the Spatial Ring and poured out its content.

'Looks like all the cash is here...' His thoughts trailed as he opened the sack of coins and counted the platinum pieces.

Every day, for the past six days, Noah had been selling Monster Cores to the Black Market and bringing Rey the revenue.

He didn't take anything out of the pieces and waited for Rey to give him his share per the agreement.

'350 Monster Cores equal 2,450 Gold Coins, which is 24.5 Platinum Coins. It's all here...'

24 Platinum Coins and 50 Gold Coins sat at Rey's feet, and he was practically unbothered about it.

Perhaps this was because he had other things on his mind.

"As agreed upon, you'll be taking 10 percent from it."

That was practically 2.45 Platinum Coins.

Rey took out 22 Platinum Coins and placed it in another pouch that he got from his Subspace.

He threw the pouch of 2 Platinum and 50 Coins to Noah, who caught it with relative ease.

"Thanks, boss!"

Rey smiled and gave a light shrug.

'So far, it doesn't seem like Noah has any intention to betray me. Since he can earn a stable source of income like this just by being my errand boy, it's not a bad deal...'

Rey realized that he didn't know everything, and that it was possible for Noah to be lying about the actual price of the Monster Cores.

For all he knew, they could have increased in value and Noah wouldn't say anything.

'But that's also fine. I won't press on a matter that I'm not certain about.'

He doubted that was the case, though.

'I should find a way to get myself a Truthseeker, though. Or maybe some kind of Skill that lets me read minds and discern the truth.'

They felt like some of his skepticism and overthinking might vanish if he had such an ability.

"Tomorrow is the day, huh? When we finally head for the Royal Dungeon..." Noah broke through Rey's thoughts with his comments.

"Yup!"

"Tell me... how is it? Is it really as dangerous as we've been told?"

Rey had told Noah that he had gotten the Monster Cores from the Royal Dungeon, but he never specified anything or gave details.

It was to reduce Noah's increasing curiosity, but Rey was careful not to overdo it.

But now...

"It's not going to be very dangerous. We have Brutus and Lucielle as chaperones. We'll be fine..."

Even though Rey said this, he had a darkened expression on his face.

It was a look of worry.

Rey knew the strongest in the kingdom wouldn't have a problem with any of the creatures he had fought so far.

That wasn't the reason behind his anxiety.

It was something else...

'The investigation is yet to be concluded, and while I'll be heading for the Dungeon alongside everyone else, I'm sure tons of eyes will be on me.'

How was he going to kill all his Hobs and gather as many Monster Cores as he could?

'I know it's impossible to have everything, and the Nation could probably benefit from harvesting that amount of Cores, but... I want my share!'

Rather than relieved by the thought of a struggling nation finally abundant resources for itself, the opposite was the case.

Rey was more worried about the United Human Alliance getting their hands on the heaps of Monster Cores in the Hobgoblin Den.

'If they harvest them in such large amounts, it'll cause an influx of Grade 6 Monster Cores in the market...'

That would render his business obsolete.

'Scarcity gives value to any commodity. I won't be surprised if the value drops to 1 Gold Coin per piece.

That would be a big loss for him.

'Argh! This is so frustrating! I should have gotten out of this hellhole by now! What is Adonis doing?'

Rey knew it was unfair to blame Adonis for all this.

The guy was currently under a lot of pressure from both his classmates and the Nation to perform flawlessly in the expedition tomorrow.

Rey heard he had been training non-stop for weeks now.

'I should cut him some slack...'

Right now, Rey had no plan. He could only wait until tomorrow and play things by ear.

"Well, you should probably be on your way." Rey sighed, making a slight wave that was reminiscent of a 'shoo, shoo' sign.

Noah didn't take any offense, though. In fact, he had the exact opposite reaction.

A knowing grin spread across his face as he stared at Rey.

"I guess you don't want Alicia to catch me hanging around here again..."

"Shut up, Noah!" Rey snapped, but not in an angry fashion.

He too was smiling.

For the six days that Rey was on house arrest, he couldn't go to the Library, so Alicia often came over with tons of books for the both of them to read.

... In his room!

Yes, Alicia White had turned Rey's room into their new reading spot. They would spend hours every day silently turning pages and feeding their brains with information while enjoying each other's company.

They rarely spoke, though it was unavoidable at times.

'She's probably doing this to make me feel better...' Rey smiled to himself as he remembered the first time she showed up in front of his room door with a pile of books.

Rey didn't even know they could borrow books from the Library, so he was shocked to see her with so many of them.

After he helped her with the books, and she entered his room for the first time, she explained herself.

Apparently, she indeed felt bad for him.

"I-I just thought you might miss the books, so I decided to bring some over for you!"

She was actually going to leave after dropping them off. However, Rey changed all of that when he thoughtlessly spouted a suggestion.

"Would you like to stay and read with me?"

Till date, he didn't know what came over him at that moment.

What could have prompted him to ask such an absurd question? It was so evident that she would refuse—any girl would!

But, strangely enough, Alicia didn't.

"Fine. I guess it beats staying alone in the library..."

And that was how their time together began.

It was a weird—no, incredibly strange—arrangement, but it worked perfectly well.

Rey enjoyed himself, and he was able to read a lot more than he normally would.

Perhaps that was because Alicia was with him.

"Do you guys really finish all those books in one day?" Noah's voice interrupted Rey's thoughts.

The latter smiled as he crashed on his bed.

"That's how it works, buddy."

A person was only allowed to borrow ten books per day. As a result, Alicia brought ten books every day to Rey's room for them to consume.

They always finished ten of them in a single day.

Once Rey was done with a book that Alicia hadn't read, they would swap. It was a crazy process that was filled with more immersion in books than actual conversation.

It was only after both were done reading that she would leave.

... And return the next day.

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Chapter 76 Alone With Alicia [Pt 1]

After Noah left, Rey made sure his room looked as presentable as it possibly could for his guest.

The first time Alicia came with those books, Rey had been caught off guard.

His room hadn't been in any major mess, but it wasn't in the best shape either.

Rey remembered he had a pair of his underwear on his bed, and till this day he prayed Alicia didn't notice what it was.

'I managed to cover it with my bedsheets, but I think she already saw it...'

Rey knew he would die of embarrassment if he dwelled on it, so he convinced himself that Alicia didn't know what a guy's underwear was supposed to look like.

It wasn't very believable, but telling it to himself repeatedly seemed to do the trick.

"Alright... I think we're all set!" Rey beamed in satisfaction.

His bed was well-laid, and everything was in perfect order.

You would think he was about to get laid or something.

'No dirty thought, Rey! This is, as always, a reading session!'

Rey didn't particularly mind that Alicia and him never really spoke in the time that they spent together, but recently he was getting increasingly curious.

'I want to know more about her...'

But he also didn't want to ruin the vibe that they already had.

'I don't want her to think I'm trying to hit on her or anything...'

Rey already knew he couldn't compare himself to the caliber of guys that Alicia had dated in the past.

Sure, he had toned up a bit more, and he was in much better shape than before.

But still...

'Even though I can better understand why Billy is so into her... I already gave up on that a long time ago.'

Right now, Rey was content with just being Alicia's friend.

But friends knew a lot about each other, didn't they?

'Maybe I'll ask her some stuff about herself today...'

Just regular stuff, to break the ice.

Rey knew he wasn't the best at conversations, but he had recently gotten a lot of chances to practice his communication skills.

He often spoke to the Monsters, though not many cared to listen to him—not that they could even if they wanted to.

He also actively discussed with Noah, though that was mostly about business.

'In any case, I think I should be able to hold a worthwhile conversation...'

He just had to give it a try.

"J-just in case, I should prepare a list of—!"

Right as Rey decided this out loud, he heard a knock on his door.

"Gahh!"

There was no longer any time to think or prepare questions for Alicia.

'She's here!' novel

Over an hour had passed since Alicia arrived, yet neither had spoken since their first greeting.

The pile of books were scattered on Rey's bed as both of them had what they were reading in hand.

Like the nerds that they were, neither interrupted the other with meaningless things like words or unwarranted stares.

They only focused on the literature in front of them.

'Fuck! Why aren't you saying anything, Rey?!'

Rey was suffering in silence as he couldn't concentrate on what he was reading.

He was trying his best, but he just wasn't able to get into the zone.

It had been minutes since he turned a page of his book, showing precisely his current condition.

'This is about four in the evening. I already had lunch before this, and she probably has already... so what's the issue?'

Why couldn't he concentrate?

After training ended by 2:00 PM, Rey always went back to his room while Alicia probably went to get lunch.

Noah went straight for the Black Market and he made sure to be back within an hour.

They would talk for a little bit before Noah left, and not long after that... Alicia would arrive.

It only happened once, Alicia arriving when Noah was still around, and it was awkward for everyone.

After that day, Noah made sure to arrive earlier, and Alicia came a few minutes later than usual.

It was like an unspoken arrangement.

'I-In any case, I better say something!' Rey could no longer ignore the reason he wasn't feeling like reading.

What he wanted to do right now was talk to Alicia.

Nothing more... nothing less.

'But I can't! She's probably focusing on her book as well!'

Rey's mind automatically forgot the fact that he hadn't heard her flip a single page in minutes as well.

He probably thought she was doing it silently.

'She might hate me... it might ruin the moment... if I interrupt...'

These thoughts shackled Rey for thirty more minutes, but after that he couldn't take it anymore.

If he didn't say anything, Rey felt like he might die.

"H-hey..." For the first time in nearly two hours, Rey turned to look at his study partner.

To his surprise, she was staring at him too!

'H-holy...!'

It was so startling that Rey nearly jumped out of his skin and ascended into the realm above.

Her gaze was subtle, but it was undeniably there.

Before he realized it, they were both staring at each other, with his words wafting through the air.

"Hey..." She finally answered back.

Rey felt his heart racing tremendously.

He felt like it would burst at any moment, and it caused his brain to enter overdrive.

'What should I say next?! What should I do?!'

Killing monsters and fighting opponents seemed far easier than what he was confronted with.

After taking a few seconds, which felt like hours, to think about his response, Rey finally swallowed his saliva and spoke.

"I... noticed you weren't turning your pages anymore. You okay?"

'ARE YOU STUPID, REY?!' He asked himself as he felt the impact of his cringe.

'Why are you asking her that?! You were also not turning any pages, idiot!'

Besides, why would he begin a conversation like that? It felt like he was accusing her for being unserious or something.

'Please don't hate me! I don't know why I asked that!' Rey cried internally as he nearly clutched his chest to rip out his pounding heart.

"Yeah? Well, I also noticed you weren't turning your pages anymore."

Upon hearing those words. Rey swallowed another round of saliva.

"Why is that?"

As Rey stared at her, he noticed she was smiling calmly.

'She isn't nervous? She also doesn't look upset. Maybe... maybe she also wants to talk?'

That thought was enough to calm Rey down a little, enough for him to form coherent words as an answer.

"Well... I was just deep in thought..."

"What were you thinking about?" Alicia didn't even let him breathe before asking a follow-up question.

Rey felt like he was being assailed at this point.

'I asked the first question, you know? Why am I the one being interrogated?'

He couldn't say that, though.

Alicia's bright gem-like eyes were staring at him, and he had to give an answer quickly.

A lot of things filled his mind, but only one thing kept surfacing despite the torrents of images overlapping within him.

In the end, Rey could only blurt it out.

"You."

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hapter 77 Alone With Alicia [Pt 2]

"You."

The moment Alicia heard this, her eyes widened in shock.

'W-what is he saying?!'

Alicia was expecting a lot of things, but not this!

Not yet!

'He was thinking about me? That's why he hasn't been focusing on reading?!'

Even though Alicia didn't say anything, she had been glancing at Rey at intervals to see if he was indeed focused on reading.

Or if, like her, he couldn't concentrate.

At first, he was turning the pages, so she assumed he was paying attention.

She didn't want to disturb him with a conversation, or something that would disrupt his focus.

The sole reason she was here, with him, was so they could enjoy the unspoken camaraderie they shared in books.

If she sullied that with pointless conversations just to selfishly while away time, it would be unfair. Just because she wasn't into the books today, that didn't mean Rey wouldn't be. However, her thought processes soon changed when Rey stopped flipping his book pages. 'Hm? What's going on?!' She had thought. Within herself, she had a faint hope that he too wasn't very invested in what he was reading. She knew it was a terrible thing to wish for, but she had had no choice in the matters of her emotions. As time passed, she hoped he wouldn't flip the page and regain his momentum. She hoped he would talk to her instead. She hoped...

However, nothing happened. 'Should I just talk to him and start the conversation?' Alicia finally thought to herself. It wouldn't be a big deal to do so. But, she didn't want Rey to misunderstand her intentions. 'A guy and a girl in a room together... if I start a conversation now, he might think I'm interested in him or something.'

It wasn't like she wasn't interested in him, but Alicia didn't want him thinking she was. It was a weird state to be in, but as a girl, she knew this was perfectly normal. 'I don't want him to get the wrong idea, though...'

Due to her experience with guys, Alicia had been in a lot of her conversations that took a drastic turn at moments like this. Things usually went south when a guy thought she was interested in them and to make all the wrong moves. 'I don't want him leaning forward and puckering his lips or anything...'

That just felt... wrong. Alicia was by no means a prude, and she had lots of experiences kissing and being kissed. That wasn't the issue at all. 'The issue is when a guy considers a girl's feelings towards them as a license to just go for the kill and score!'

Perhaps some girls were into that sort of thing, but Alicia knew how much it turned her off. A lot of guys had tried to do stuff like that, and it ended up ruining the chemistry they had going on. It was also why she didn't like guys like Billy who seemed so fixated on her. Frankly speaking, it was a little scary.

'I don't want to see you in another light, Rey...'

That was why she was trying her best not to show that she liked him.

But then he had to say he was thinking about her...

'What if he tries to kiss me or something?'

They were the only ones in the room, and the mood was a little awkward, but it wasn't particularly bad.

'I don't think I'm ready for that.'

Other than Alicia's fear that the kiss wouldn't be good, it could end up completely shattering the atmosphere they had built.

She wanted something more intimate in words.

Less action, perhaps?

"I-I mean, I was thinking about you... and how you seem to have changed a lot since we arrived here."

Alicia felt relief settle in her heart, but curiosity also arose.

"I've changed? How...?"

"I-I mean, you used to be so assertive and outspoken. That's why you became our Class Rep..."

Alicia remembered those normal days.

They seemed so far away now.

"Even with Seraph, and when we came here... you were actively involved in stuff..."

Rey went on to explain the 'change' he noticed.

"Now you don't really involve yourself in class politics and other issues. You're just alone and you hardly talk..."

She didn't have friends that she hung around with, and her presence in the group had faded away—almost to the point of obscurity.

The only thing Alicia had going for her right now was her power.

Even her beauty didn't seem to be everyone's main priority—not with Lucielle being the new center of attention for everyone.

"Ahh... I see..." Alicia couldn't help but smile.

This was the first time anyone was talking to her about this. Strangely enough, she didn't mind.

"I guess I just got tired of trying to fit in. Trying to help everyone and sticking my neck out for them..."

It sounded bitchy and selfish, but Alicia didn't feel like Rey was going to judge her for it.

She felt like she could just speak her mind to him.

"I just want to study for my benefit. I want to learn more about this world, and about my abilities. I want to focus on my capabilities, and one day... hopefully find a way to go back home."

Rey's eyes popped open almost as soon as she said this.

"You want to go back?!"

Alicia nodded slowly.

"Yeah. I mean... I have my family, and a bunch of stuff to do back on Earth. I miss my cat, and there are a lot of books I want to catch up on..."

As she said these things, she could see flickers of hesitation in Rey's eyes.

"I also... sort of miss having my smartphone. Don't you...?"

"Not really..."

Rey's response surprised her, and she didn't even try to hide it.

Alicia thought that, of all people, Rey would also want to return home.

Sure, he was an average person back on Earth, but that was much better than this place.

He was surrounded by classmates who had ridiculous abilities, and he was stuck with very weak ones.

It made her slightly curious about his Karma Points and how he ended up with such a terrible skill-set.

'Now that I think about it, a lot of people must hate him back on Earth since his Karma Point must have been extremely low. I can't blame him for not wanting to return...'

"Most of the best things that have happened to me happened here..." Rey finally spoke up.

For some reason, most of the nervousness on his face had vanished.

"Getting a special ability, exploring a different world... meeting you..."

Alicia felt her heart skip a little once she heard that, but she maintained her smile.

"... I don't think I want to go back."

As Rey said this, he closed his eyes and gave a genuinely wide smile.

"I want to remain here!"

'No way...' Alicia's thoughts trailed.

Even with the entire Trial and ostracization that Rey was experiencing, he still preferred this world?

'I can't believe it!'

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Chapter 78 Getting Closer

'Why would I ever want to go back to Earth?!'

Rey had this thought as he stared at Alicia's surprised expression.

'I'm rich here, I have a broken Skill, and I actually have things I want to achieve!'

He had tons of good prospects in H'Trae than he ever had on Earth, where he was a mere nobody.

Of course, Rey didn't expect Alicia to understand his perspective. After all, he was still a weak Extra to her.

However, this world had changed Rey more than anyone—including him—could have imagined.

For the first time in his life he had a goal, and he was motivated enough to chase after it.

He wanted to fight Dragons, save the Nation, and explore this new world he was in.

The mysteries and intrigue in this world far exceeded the mundane and stale stuff that waited for him back on Earth.

'I was average. I was broke. I was just the same as a regular student drifting through school...'

He rejected that past.

'It's understandable that she wants to return, though.'

Rey smiled at Alicia and shrugged slightly.

"Different strokes for different folks, I guess."

In response to his words, Alicia slowly lost her dazed reaction and returned his smile.

"I guess."

They both stared at each other for a few seconds before Rey quickly sprung a topic.

"Tell me more about your life back on Earth! I'm actually curious."

Rey didn't know if he was overstepping his bounds or not, but he somehow felt like he wasn't.

After Alicia shared her motivation and desire to return home, he sort of felt like a gap between them had been bridged.

He felt less awkward asking questions and things didn't feel as intimidating as before.

"You sure you want to know?"

"Of course!"

"Alright! What part?"

"W-what?"

"You have to be specific!" Alicia began to giggle. "What part do you want to know?"

Rey found yet another dosage of saliva slowly forming in his throat.

He was being offered a blank check here. Alicia was telling him to ask her anything, and from her expression, it didn't seem like she had any reservations answering his question.

"Y-your p-pussycat. Can you tell me more about it...?"

Rey felt like an idiot for going for such a question, but it felt like he was about to say something else when those exact words came out.

He could only hope Alicia didn't label him as weird for it.

Thankfully, she didn't.

"Ahh! That's a great start. But first, I have to ask, Rey... do you like cats?"

"Of course! I love cats!"

This was a lie.

Rey didn't particularly hate cats, but he didn't like them either. He was in the gray area when it came to them.

But, after looking Alicia in the eyes when she asked the question, he couldn't give such a lackluster answer.

'I have seen some kitten videos online, and since I pressed the love button on the posts, that technically means I love them.'

He wasn't lying at all! In fact, this was one of the truest things that had come out of his lips since he came out of his mother's womb.

Once Rey was able to brainwash himself with this delusion, all so he wouldn't feel guilty about lying to Alicia, he found his heart simmering down.

It was all cope, but Rey indulged in it.

"Really, Rey? That's great! Which kind of cats do you like best?"

"U-um..."

He should have known that this would be the next question that would come out of a cat-lover's mouth.

It wasn't even like Alicia was trying to figure out if he was lying or not.

She was just genuinely excited about the topic.

'Should I just fess up?'

The illusion of Rey's cope had now been shattered, and he was ready to give up.

Fortunately, he was rescued by Alicia herself.

"You can't decide, right? Well, it's the same for me. That's why I have a ton of them at home!"

Rey could already see the excitement in Alicia's eyes get more and more intense.

He started wondering if it was indeed the right choice to begin this journey with her.

Would he really be able to keep up?

'Her Class is Grand Tamer, right? I can see why...'

"H-how many cats do you have?" Rey was scared to ask this, but he gulped down all of his nervousness and took the bold step.

He had to keep this conversation going, no matter what!

"A-ahh... well, if I only count the ones in my parents' house, they're only ten."

"E-eh...?"

"But I have more than thirty-seven with my grandparents."

"What the hell...?"

Rey felt like he was entering waters that were too deep for him.

He had to pull out before it was too late!

Little did he know... he had passed the point of no return.

"Cats really reproduce a lot, you know?"

It would never end.

"And kittens are so cute too. Want me to tell you all their names?"

Never...

"I actually have all their pictures in my wallet. I carry it with me all the time, so I can just show you."

... Ever.

"I'm so happy I finally have someone to talk to about this!"

"Yup! Me too..."

And so, Rey had to sit and listen to Alicia White—the prettiest girl in his class—gush over cats for three hours straight.

At least he was able to learn a thing or two.

It was already very late in the night, and Alicia was still heavily invested in her conversation with Rey.

They had long left the topic of cats and went on to talk about other interesting aspects of their life.

"Ohh? You only dated Adonis for a month? Howw? Why?!"

Rey's face displayed shock, which told Alicia that he probably respected Adonis a great deal.

Alicia also used to feel the same.

But...

"It always felt like he was hiding something. Some big dark secret he couldn't tell anyone..."

Even though they were dating, it didn't really feel like it.

At least, to her.

"He also has this savior complex. Always feels like he has to help everyone and shower everyone with attention..."

"Is that a bad thing, though?" Rey asked, cocking his head to the side.

"W-well, it's just that I felt weird that he was showering girls so much attention despite having me as his girlfriend."

However, it wasn't a mere case of jealousy.

"It felt like I was just one of the many girls he showered attention. Do you understand? Adonis makes you feel special, but the truth is... he does that to everyone."

Rey couldn't deny that since he had also experienced the same thing.

That was what made Adonis so likable.

He was literally perfect.

"I also heard you dated a lot more seniors after hi—"

"Urgh, please! Not that rumor again."

Rey's eyes widened in shock the moment he heard that.

Alicia was also surprised that Rey had such an impression of her all along.

"I barely had time for myself with school, socializing, and my cats..."

The cats came into the picture again.

Rey braced himself for impact. If he wasn't careful, Alicia would go on another three-hour tangent about cats.

Fortunately, she didn't.

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Chapter 79 Unexpected Revelation

"I was only ever interested in one, but after finding out he was a jerk, I cut all ties with him."

Alicia went on to theorize that it was perhaps due to the senior's bruised ego that he went on to spread rumors about her.

Thankfully, Alicia's reputation was strong enough for people to simply interpret it as her simply dating a lot of seniors.

Nothing more, nothing less.

"Oh, wow. I never expected it to be like that..." Rey's voice trailed as he looked at Alicia, who was simply shrugging casually.

"A lot of things aren't as they appear. If we listen to everyone's opinions and don't take time to form our own, we'll just end up drowning in misinformation."

Rey felt like those were wise words that Alicia just said, but he didn't know how to phrase it without sounding cringe.

"That sounds like a smart thing to say." He finally settled on the most neutral way to put it.

"I know, right?"

Alicia went on to flail her long hair as she used her hand to push it backward.

She did this as she chuckled jokingly, trying to act like a wise diva.

"Pfft!"

"Hahahaha!"

Before the two of them realized it, they were both laughing.

"Nice one... haha!"

"Thank you, good sir." Alicia made a mock bow, and that only served to crack Rey up even more.

This girl was seriously funny.

'Damn! I never would have thought Alicia would have this side to her!'

Rey thanked his lucky stars that he actually decided to start the conversation.

'So this is what I've been missing out on!'

As they both laughed even more, Alicia suddenly raised a topic that he wasn't expecting.

"Have you ever dated anyone, Rey? Or do you have someone you like?"

The moment Rey heard this, his heart nearly stopped.

A simple "No" would have sufficed, but for some reason, he couldn't mouth the words.

It felt like his lips were stuck in place.

"I... well I..."

Alicia's inviting smile told him it was okay to say his mind, but Rey didn't know if it was a good idea.

'I can't back out now, though. Alicia answered all my questions and she was free with me.'

It would be very uncool if he wasn't the same.

'B-but how am I supposed to say it?!'

How was he supposed to tell the girl right next to him that he was developing feelings for her?

'You just have to! She's not some monster or anything, Rey! She's an actual person, like you!'

As Rey told himself this, he remembered how comfortable he felt when talking to actual Monsters.

That thought alone gave him courage.

Enough to open his lips and finally utter the words he had kept buried in his heart all night.

"W-well, the thing is... I like y—"

~BOOOOOOOOMMMM!!!~

A sudden explosion caused Rey's room, and everything within it, to tremble.

Rey and Alicia felt themselves jump slightly as the bed rocked upward for a split second.

"W-what was that?!" Alicia was the first to speak, while Rey struggled to understand what had just happened.

'An explosion of this scale... it must have come from inside the living quarters.'

Was it a fight? Some accidental use of a Skill? As Rey ran through many simulations in his head, he cast his gaze on Alicia's worried face to make sure she was fine.

Thankfully, she was.

'What the hell is going on, though?'

Before Rey could mentally answer this question, a sharp knock interrupted his thought process.

"W-who's that?"

The loud banging startled Rey, but he didn't let most of his apprehension show.

His [Danger Sense] was somewhat on the fritz as it went on and off.

"It's Billy. Something's happened in Adonis' room, and I was told to make sure everyone was safe."

'Adonis' room? Safe? What happened?!'

Rey knew the explosion had just sounded, yet Billy was already rushing to his door.

There was no way it was merely to make sure Rey was safe—

especially given the enmity they had.

'He's here for Alicia. That means he already knew she was here. How long has he been standing in front of my room?'

Rey didn't even have the chance to consider such creepy behavior as he and Alicia jumped from the bed and rushed to the door.

'I'm more curious about what happened in Adonis' room.'

He glanced at Alicia and the look on her face confirmed that she also felt the same.

'Maybe... she still has feelings for him...'

Rey shrugged off the thought as he opened the door, meeting Billy's imposing frame waiting for them at the entrance.

"Out of my way." Rey shoved him aside, and just like a ragdoll, Billy found himself tossed to the ground.

His shocked face and his collapsing form was visible to no one, as even the rest of the students were all gathered around Adonis' room, or were on their way there.

The loud explosion had woken everyone up, and with the room door opened—with smoke emanating from it—it was hard not to get drawn to Adonis' haven.

Rey and Alicia also found themselves among the crowd of students who rushed to the room's entrance.

However, the moment they did so, they found the boy himself stepped out of the thick smoke and unfurling energy.

'A-Adonis...?' Rey found himself thinking as he observed the particularly hardened expression the Hero wore on his face.

Even as he held a blade that could only be described as indescribably gorgeous and powerful.

Golden lightning and energy shrouded his body, and he had the appearance of a deity.

However, despite this impressive display, none of the students were focused on any of Adonis' extremely captivating features.

Their eyes were locked onto the 'thing' that Adonis held in his left hand.

... The severed head of one of their classmates.

'Isn't that... Adam?' Rey found himself as stunned as he was confused.

Why was Adonis holding the head of Adam on his hand, yet he was looking as unfazed as anyone possibly could be.

"M-my god...!"

Alicia hid her face in Rey's chest, hiding herself from the grotesque sight of a corpse.

It was probably her first time seeing anything that gory, so Rey didn't withhold his hand from embracing her.

Even though he could feel the murderous gaze of his former best friend on him, Rey completely ignored it.

It was disgusting to see that Billy was more concerned with the fact that Alicia was hugging him than the fact that she was trembling in pure fear.

'I'm sorry, Alicia. That you have to see something like this...'

Rey shielded her from the horrid sight before him, but he could not stop his own expression of sheer surprise.

... Of pure horror.

'Why would he—why would Adonis do this?'

Well, the answer existed in the events that occurred not too long before the explosion sounded.

Not that anyone but the now deceased Adam could ever know the hidden truth.

Right now, along with the numerous questions that were being asked by everyone who watched Adonis, one seemed to echo the loudest.

... Why would their Hero kill a comrade?!

*

Chapter 80 Hero Assassination

[Moments Earlier]

"It's about time..."

Adam Sanchaz rose up from his bed with a resolute expression on his face.

As his eyes stared into the distance, his face directly confronting the door that stood meters away, he had a vacant facade.

His lips trembled slightly as he hid the special dagger in his pocket.

'It's pretty late now. It's the perfect moment to strike...'

To prepare for this moment, he had been granted another Enchanted Item by his partner—a Stealth Necklace.

Using that, along with his sole B-Tier Skill, Adam figured he could get the job done.

'No matter how strong he is... Adonis will be vulnerable in his sleep!'

The floor seemed to creak as Adam took steps forward. It could have been his imagination, but he felt like it took longer than usual to get to the door.

Once he did, however, he gently placed his hand on the knob.

"Haaa..." He took a deep breath and relaxed himself.

Right now, he didn't need to have any useless thoughts. His goal was simple, and the stage was set for him to perfectly execute it.

'Just think about tomorrow... and the day after that!'

The image of himself being the new leader, impressing everyone with his abilities in the Royal Dungeon, as well as being promoted to Alpha Class, filled his thoughts.

Soon, Adam was able to forget the final vestiges of fear that clawed at his heart.

"Let's begin."

He activated his Stealth Necklace and instantly became invisible.

Enchanted Items came in various grades, depending on their effects. This one was among the top of the highest grade Items, so its potency surpassed regular Stealth Necklaces.

Unless someone used a special Skill, it was practically impossible to tell where he was.

He twisted the doorknob and went outside.

It was dark.

The living room had no one occupying it at such an hour, so Adam could understand why there was no light to greet him.

To his relief, no one was in the living room—except one person.

'Billy?! What the hell is he doing there...?' Adam nearly had a heart attack once he noticed the boy's slightly slouching silhouette.

Billy was currently standing in front of Rey Skylar's room, his fists clenched tightly.

He had a scary expression on his face, one that caused Adam to shiver a little.

'He looks pretty upset. But he's also distracted, so I don't have to deal with him.'

Billy's intense gaze didn't even blink. He simply kept staring hard at Rey's front door, so Adam was convinced that he wasn't a threat.

'I wonder what business he had with Rey, though...'

He quickly shrugged aside the thought and approached the door of his target.

'Here we are!' Adam grinned with satisfaction, as if traveling from his own room to Adonis' front door was some sort of achievement.

Anyhow, since he had come this far, Adam proceeded with the second stage of his plan.

Infiltration!

Everyone's rooms were made exclusive for them, and they were also pretty sturdy, so they couldn't be broken down.

Even if they could, Adam wasn't stupid enough to alert Adonis—and potentially his other sleeping classmates—by making such a racket.

At times like this, he wished he had Justin's Skill or [Assassin] Class. He could execute tasks like this much better.

Unfortunately, Adam wasn't blessed with such luck.

His [Brawler] Skill was unsuited for covert operations, which was why he needed an Enchanted Item to even make it this far.

However, he wasn't particularly stranded.

He already planned an alternative to the solution, using the only Skill at his disposal.

'[Force]!'

As a B-Tier Skill, this ability had two special functions.

Push and Pull.

'Now then... Locke and Key, baby!'

The type of mineral used to construct doors like this made them resistant to Mana, but thankfully for Adam, he wasn't directly applying Mana to the door.

He was simply influencing the force around the door.

And so, he pulled it towards him.

~CREEAAAK~

The sound it made was much louder than he expected. It caused Adam to look behind him, hoping Billy did not hear anything.

Fortunately for him, the guy was still angrily staring at Rey's door.

'Whew!'

Adam kept applying his Skill, a bit gently this time. He had practiced [Force] for so long, to the point that he was extremely familiar with it.

Since it was his only Skill, this was a given.

'Well... once I get the Hero Class, I'm sure that won't be a problem any longer!'

Adam could feel his Mana drain very quickly, but thankfully he was able to open the door enough for him to squeeze himself through the small opening that had formed.

Adam swiftly took his chance and slipped through, gently undoing the effects of his Skill as he entered enemy territory.

"Huff... huff..."

It was a lot more difficult than he expected, but Adam just succeeded in the second phase of his plan.

His lips curled up to form a smile as he took in one more deep breath and approached his target's bed.

Adam took his time looking at Adonis' room while he advanced.

'It's a lot more normal than I expected. Pretty much the same as mine...'

He had heard that Adonis was offered a separate—more luxurious space—to live in, but the kind and humble Hero declined.

He wanted to be as close to his classmates as possible, so he chose to remain here.

'Whatever! Once I'm Hero and I'm offered the chance, I'll take it!'

For Adam, it was important to display hierarchy.

Leaders at the top, followers at the bottom—that was how order was established in any society.

'I shouldn't get careless now that I've come this far...'
Adam tiptoed as he neared Adonis' bed.

He knew it was unnecessary since the Stealth Skill already erased his presence, but Adam kept doing it anyway.

... Until finally, he stood right beside Adonis.

'There you are, Hero!'

The room was dark, so seeing was a little difficult, but it was clear that Adonis was fast asleep.

It was just as his partner said.

The perfect time to strike Adonis down was now! Adam knew he wouldn't ever get such an easy chance, so he readily pulled out his dagger from his pocket.

He couldn't help the snake-like grin on his distorted face.

'This will be too easy!'