

Extras 81

Chapter 81 Adonis' Hidden Truth

'This will be too easy!'

Adam's eyes bulged as he raised his blade above his head.

He had never stabbed someone, but he had seen enough violent movies to know how it was done.

He just had to thrust the dagger into Adonis' chest, and apparently, the blade would do the rest of the work.

Adam could feel saliva form in his mouth.

Whether this was due to him salivating, or merely a sign of nervousness, it was impossible to tell.

One thing was certain, though...

'I have to do this!'

Adam had already made up his mind.

His eyes gave off a murderous glare to represent this, and he strengthened his muscles as he prepared for the thrust.

'It's nothing personal, Adonis...' He mouthed, though his wide grin told a different story.

'... I just gotta do it!'

~WHOOOOSH!~

The blade sliced through the dark space around it as it descended to complete its task.

As it fell, Adam's eyes widened even further, as if waiting for the first sight of blood and guts gushing out of his target.

Much to his inescapable shock... that was not meant to happen.

~CLANG!~

The dagger was met with a golden field that surrounded Adonis' sleeping body, instantly causing the blade to shatter apart upon impact.

"W-what?!" Adam immediately forgot the need to remain silent as he witnessed the impossible.

The dagger's pieces instantly disintegrated into golden light, completely overwhelmed by the power of the field that was struck.

Before Adam could completely recover from the shock, however, he suddenly felt something grab on his throat.

The blurry movement of Adonis' hand had been too fast for his distracted eyes to register, so he didn't notice it until it was too late.

... Until Adonis' grip was completely pressed around his throat.

"So you finally showed yourself... class traitor."

As the odd, but familiar voice echoed in Adam's ears, he saw Adonis open his eyes.

Golden light radiated from them as he sat upright, almost as if he was being pulled by an invisible force that was too much to comprehend.

'H-he's awake?! What?!'

Not only that, but it sounded as though Adonis was expecting him.

"You arrived a bit earlier than I expected. But, after the entire trial with Rey, I figured you would act pretty soon..."

Adam could not understand what Adonis was talking about.

"I suppose the future has slightly deviated off course."

Future? Deviated? What in the world was Adonis talking about?!

"A-gurgh...!" As Adam tried to speak, his throat was further crushed by Adonis' single-handed choke.

"Things weren't meant to happen like this, but I can't complain at this point. The whole goal was to change the future... so I should expect slight changes to the original timeline."

Upon hearing these words, Adam felt like he could figure out what Adonis was trying to imply.

Unfortunately, his brain wasn't getting enough oxygen for him to properly think straight.

Adam felt his heart race uncontrollably.

'I... I don't want to die! I don't want to die!' His thoughts screamed out.

The Adonis he knew would never hurt him, but something about the new vibe that came off of this new Adonis told Adam that he wouldn't hesitate to take his life.

The very thought frightened him.

"I know you probably want me to spare you right now, despite you just attempting to kill me. If it was me back then, I would have surely done so."

Adam felt his heart increase its pace as he heard this.

"I was so naive back then..." He whispered.

Adam saw some measure of hesitation in Adonis' eyes, and for a moment, he thought he actually had a chance.

His brain was so busy trying to survive that it didn't fully process Adonis' words.

It just desperately clung to any sign of his survival.

"But I can't allow you to live. If I do, you'll exploit another opportunity and betray everyone."

Adam had certainly thought of that many times.

"Just like last time, you'll join 'their' side. That would only result in more suffering and needless sacrifices."

Adonis closed his eyes for a second before opening them once again.

This time, the golden radiance in his eyes glowed much brighter than ever.

"I can't allow that—not after coming back to save everyone." He whispered.

"To make sure this world survives... I have to eliminate you right here and now."

Once Adam saw the resolute expression on Adonis' face, he instantly knew his fate was sealed.

'W-wait! Don't kill me!' He tried to yell out, but only muffled screams escaped his lips.

'It's not my fault! I was put up to this! My partner—that son of a bitch was the one who wanted this! Not me! I never wanted this! You should kill him instead!'

Adam desperately wanted to live, but he could not.

So long as Adonis willed it, it was so.

"[Divine Sword Summon]."

A golden ray of light filled the room, and a blade of magnificent beauty and power manifested in Adonis' previously unoccupied hand.

Its presence was unrivaled—its purity unmatched.

This was the Divine Sword; a weapon fit only for a Hero like Adonis.

"Forgive me, Adam. For the little time that we spent together..."

~WHOOOSH!~

"... You were my precious classmate."

Blood splattered all around the room as Adam's body completely disintegrated, leaving his head floating in the air.

Adonis still tightly gripped it, not letting it go for a second despite how coldly he stared at it.

"And so it ends..." He whispered.

All along, Adonis knew there was a mastermind in their class who was pulling the strings.

Why?

Because this was exactly what happened the last time.

'There are slight alterations, but for the most part things are proceeding as they should.'

Adonis knew all that would happen after this—or at least, most of it.

That was how he was able to tell that Rey was innocent.

How he knew everything he knew—including how to address Seraph, and their importance to the denizens of this world.

... How he knew he had to be Hero.

'Everyone should still be asleep...' Adonis' thoughts trailed as he traced his gaze away from Adam's pathetic head.

The fluid motion of the Divine Sword had barely made any sound, so Adonis was convinced his attack hadn't caused any ruckus outside.

"I can't have that." He whispered.

It was better to cause a big ruckus and explain what had happened in a more exaggerated way so as to show everyone the intensity of the situation.

That way, he wouldn't be labeled as a cold-blooded killer.

'I really didn't mean for this to happen...'

Adonis had tried his best to keep his classmates together—to put them in check.

He tried his best to check up on all of them, making sure they all felt safe and protected.

More than anything, he had hoped none of the tragedies of the past would reveal itself again.

Unfortunately, it wasn't enough.

"It can't be helped. More is coming, so I must prepare."

As he said this, the Divine Sword glowed.

Adonis was about to release a mighty blast that would gather enough attention.

He didn't mean to lie, or deceive his classmates.

However—!

'For the sake of the world...'

~BOOOOOOOOMMMMMMM!!!~

As his door was blown away by the blast, and several blocks of debris scattered around, Adonis maintained his expression of resolve.

'... This must be done!'

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Chapter 82 After The Incident

Silence.

That was what came first.

Uncomfortable, overwhelming silence that sank into the depths of the minds of everyone who was witnessing what the fallen ones saw.

Then, once silence was all worn out... the next thing that came was horror.

Within the darkness of the Royal Dungeon, the fallen heroes could only helplessly watch as an overwhelming shadow stood before them.

The silhouette of a massive monstrosity that radiated nothing but sheer malevolence.

This would be the first time they were encountering such a thing.

And from the looks of it... it was fated to be their last.

[Several Days Earlier]

A few days had passed since the entire incident with Adonis.

Everyone was initially horrified and perplexed by what they saw, but after Adonis collapsed before them—barely breathing as he explained the situation—they could all understand better.

It seemed one of their own—Adam Sanchez—had plotted to kill Adonis.

His Skill responded in automatic self-defense and killed Adam before even the Hero could tell what was happening.

As Adonis described what had happened, it felt like he was sleep-walking.

The sensation felt unreal.

Of course, none of these explanations that were given took away the weight of a classmate's death.

It was still a tragedy.

However, learning that Adam was going to kill Adonis, and that Adonis wasn't in control of his actions, was enough to change the reactions of everyone.

The look of horror they gave Adonis soon faded, and the uncomfortably image of their beheaded classmate eventually took on a different flavor.

"He deserved it, didn't he?"

"What was he after? Why would he attack Adonis?"

"Maybe he was working for the enemy..."

These were the words that now went around the lips and ears of the classmates.

Before long, Adam was seen as no more than a scapegoat, and Adonis was praised as the martyr.

And now... three days later... so much had changed.

"So, what now, Rey?"

Noah and Rey sat in the latter's room. There was only one reason why these two would meet like this.

It was to discuss business.

"We've not been able to sell Monster Cores for three days now. Ever since A... that incident."

Among the students, there were still a few who found it difficult to properly articulate what happened that night.

Noah Sherlock was one of them.

"Since Adam was killed by Adonis? Say it as it is, Noah."

This sharp response came from none other than Rey.

He had a calm expression on his face, almost as if none of this fazed him in the slightest.

His dull black eyes seemed to be staring at something invisible far away as he casually addressed the very incident that shook their entire group.

"D-don't say it like that, Rey! Someone died, you know?" Noah snapped, a bead of sweat trickling down his cheek as he uttered those words without realizing it.

His eyes widened the moment he realized what he had done. Rey's sharp gaze now rested on him, instantly prompting him to take a few steps back.

"S-sorry... for raising my voice..." He whispered.

"It's fine. I understand what you're saying, Noah, but we can't allow ourselves to be bogged down by something like this..."

From Rey's perspective, Adam had been nothing more than a stranger to him.

He was also a stranger to Noah.

There was no need to let his demise affect the relevant areas of their lives.

"It's unfortunate that his death has affected business in some ways..."

The entire Royal Estate was in lockdown, and they had even activated the Grand Barrier—a protective dome of energy that encased the entire Estate in hard light.

It was a more powerful and sophisticated version of what was used for the Royal Dungeon Site.

The students were monitored 24/7, and they were meant to be accounted for at all times.

Thanks to that, Rey and Noah could not continue business as usual.

A few students protested that this was ridiculous, but Grandmaster Conrad and the rest of the Council personally pleaded for everyone's understanding.

"It's just for a few days..." They had promised.

The reason for their sudden and extreme reactions to the event wasn't too difficult to see.

An Otherworlder was dead.

Otherworlders were the Nation's only chance at facing the Dragons, and they had just lost one valuable asset.

That realization was enough to make them waste valuable resources to keep their barrier up and running while breaching the liberty of the very champions they had previously sucked up to.

Desperation was a dangerous thing—especially when met with a sense of danger.

The United Human Alliance didn't want to lose any more of the remaining twenty-eight, so they were trying their best to do damage control.

They were also going to be extremely thorough to make sure nothing like this ever repeated itself.

"It's a mess, isn't it? All of this is just... haaa... but I can't complain too much." Rey's monotone broke the tense silence that existed between him and Noah.

"After all, thanks to this incident, I'm finally free from my charges."

With Adam dead and confirmed to be a malefactor, it only went to prove that Rey had been falsely accused all along.

Once Adonis provided testimony about the presence of an enchanted dagger with Adam, and also the proof of the Stealth Necklace that he wore, it was clear that Adam had broken the rules.

The possibility of him obtaining an enchanted item to bypass the Truthseeker was also brought to light.

After searching Adam's room, they found the very device that he had used to get away with lying.

They even found money hidden there.

All of these elements went to show that Adam had been pulling the strings and lying about a lot of things, all so he could reach Adonis.

Rey had only been one of his victims.

"Now that I'm no longer under house arrest, I can move more freely. Unfortunately, that freedom is useless for now."

As long as the barrier was still in place, Rey and his classmates were stuck in the Royal Estate.

However, Rey didn't appear upset about this in the slightest.

"They can only maintain all this for so long..." He told Noah, his expression that showed how confident he was in his grand scheme.

"Sooner or later... they'll let us out."

Rey's smile began to creep wider as he closed his lips.

'And that's when I'll have my chance!'

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Chapter 83 Torn Between Choices

[The Next Day]

"Good morning, Esteemed Otherworlders. It's really good to see you all in good health."

Right now, Rey and his classmates were standing in the open fields of their training ground.

All twenty-eight of them were facing Grandmaster Conrad, who had Brutus and Lucielle to his right and left respectively.

Conrad had a calm smile on his face as his long hair danced with the wind.

As usual, he was adorned in expensive jewelry and pristine clothing. There was no one who would doubt that this man was royalty.

"I am grateful for you being accommodating and understanding. You've been subjected to a lot of restrictions, and I am deeply honored that you chose to be patient with us."

Truthfully, if it hadn't been for Adonis calming the students down, there would have been a lot more resistance to the actions of the Royal Council.

After Adam's demise, it was clear that something had changed in the power balance.

The desperation of the United Human Alliance began to show, while the students grew a lot more uneasy about their place in the Estate.

This ultimately led to a shift in the status quo.

Right now, it was clear that the United Human Alliance had more to lose from letting the students go, and they had to be a lot more active in their management of their champions.

That was why Conrad—Grandmaster that he was—was standing out in the open to address the Otherworlders.

"All of that changes today. We will cease the barriers, and we will even allow you to explore outside the Royal Estate as you please."

As Conrad said all this, the annoyed countenance of a lot of students began to change.

Smiles and little chuckles began to reveal themselves among the dreary ones.

It felt like a miracle.

As the students murmured among one another in excitement, one of them was also grinning like an idiot, though his thoughts were far from what he showed.

'What a farce...'

Rey was the one who had this thought, and for good reason.

'He's making it sound like he's doing us a favor when, in fact, he has no other option.'

Rey's classmates—that is, the Esteemed Otherworlders—were nearing the limits of what they could take from the Royal Council.

With their power weakening, it was clear that they had to make some compromises.

'Speaking of compromises, I'm sure they've run out of Mana Crystals to power the Grand Barrier, or they're pretty low on their supply. That's why they're stopping the barrier.'

Yet, the way Conrad made it sound, one would think it was a voluntary decision.

'I can see through you guys. It's almost sad how desperate these people are once you peel a single layer off...' fr eeweb novel

Underneath all that finesse was a Nation that desperately needed saving.

'And I'm sure Adonis recognizes that too. That's why he's still on their side despite how crafty they think they're being.'

In the end, these people required help.

'It's not just Conrad and the people here that will suffer if the Dragons aren't stopped. Millions of people, if not more, will perish.'

For that reason alone, Rey felt his conscience was geared towards helping out more than it was directed towards his selfish interests.

'I've pretty much gotten all I can get from these people right now...'

Rey had used [Doppel] on the strongest people here and obtained their useful Skills, and he now had access to the abilities of all his Classmates as well.

He had learned enough about this world that he was fairly confident he could survive in this world with the current knowledge at his disposal.

Logically speaking, they had nothing else to offer.

'Maybe if I take account for future events, then maybe I can benefit a thing or two...'

However, compared to the abstract future benefits he still wasn't certain about, there were concrete prospects he could pursue now.

'I could get my own place and operate on my schedule...'

That meant he could live his life without the prying eyes and sniveling noses of his comrades weighing down on him.

More importantly, though, he would finally have more time on his hands.

'Training has become pretty useless to me at this point... and honestly, I could better spend my time grinding in the Dungeon.' Rey found himself thinking.

If he spent more time fighting Monsters, he was guaranteed to get more results.

And this wasn't even a necessarily selfish decision.

'The stronger I am, the more useful I can be to this world.'

In essence, it was for their own good.

'But... not yet.'

There were two major reasons why Rey was yet to cut off ties with the Royal Estate and his classmates.

The first and most obvious reason to him was his desire to identify the true malefactor of the recent incidents that had ensued.

'My trial, Adam's death, and now this...?'

It all felt too unnatural and coordinated that Rey couldn't shake off the feeling that someone was behind all of this.

'The one that framed me isn't Adam. It couldn't have been him. There's a good chance that they manipulated Adam and made him take the fall so they could cover their tracks.'

How convenient was it that they were able to nab Adam for everything and solve the mystery of the malefactor so easily?

Something was fishy, and Rey couldn't get it out of his head.

'I can't just leave everyone with the malefactor among them.'

Rey didn't really care much for his classmates, but that didn't mean he was comfortable with them being played by an unknown enemy.

Besides, he had managed to form some sort of relationship with a few people during the time he spent in this world.

Noah, Adonis, Trisha... and then... Alicia.

Which brought him to the second, more sentimental reason, why he was hesitant to leave.

'I don't... feel comfortable leaving her behind.'

Even though Rey knew that Alicia was unaware of his true abilities, and that she wanted to return home if she could, he couldn't help but feel an irrational attachment to her.

'I just...' He found himself glancing in her direction, and much to his dismay, she was also looking at him.

She gave him a smile, and he found himself breaking into one as well.

'I'm happy she's feeling much better after witnessing that gory... hold on, what am I thinking?'

He found himself giving his biggest internal sigh.

Rey knew he was being stupid.

'You're not her type of guy, Rey. It's best to focus on improving yourself and maybe... maybe you can come back once you're good enough!'

Even though he had told himself this many times, Rey couldn't still bring himself to numb his feelings.

That's right!

Rey was in love.

... Or at least, he felt like was.

'Our connection is real! I can feel it! If we weren't interrupted that night, then maybe...'

Those immensely emotional thoughts were stopped by Rey's more negative line of reasoning.

'You would have embarrassed yourself by admitting your feelings, Rey. The best thing you can do now is focus on the grind!'

Right now, he was at war with himself.

Perhaps that was why he didn't pay attention to any other thing Conrad said until three words reverberated in his ears.

"... Royal Dungeon Expedition!"

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Chapter 84 A Bit Of Motivation

The Royal Dungeon Expedition!

It was supposed to happen four days ago, but after Adam's sudden death, the entire thing was canceled.

Everything went on lockdown, and no one in the Royal Council, or the entire Alliance as a whole, mentioned it after that.

... Until now.

"After giving it much thought, we have decided to proceed with the Royal Dungeon Expedition plan." Grandmaster Conrad's voice echoed in the air.

His words caused Rey to jerk back to reality, the latter's eyes blinking numerous times.

"Truthfully speaking, we need you all to advance in both power and experience, and training won't be enough."

Conrad took a short moment to exhale before continuing.

"That is why the Royal Dungeon Expedition is our best bet. There's no better place to gain experience than in a Dungeon."

Dungeons were crawling with Monsters who had a diverse set of abilities.

A lot of Floors—especially the topmost ones—had one set of Monsters per Floor, but the deeper one went, the more there tended to be a variety of Monsters occupying a single Floor.

Of course, it went without saying that the deeper Floors were far more challenging.

"I can see the look of apprehension on your faces, but you don't need to fret too much. Lucielle and Brutus will be accompanying, so you'll all be safe."

Those words were enough to assuage the concerns of many students, but they weren't completely bought over.

After all, after seeing one of the die, everyone was reminded of their own mortality.

... As well as the words Adam had said when he was still alive.

"I don't want to do this anymore." Someone finally snapped, and a voice echoed out to prove it.

Conrad paused as he glanced in the direction of this random student.

It must have taken a lot of bravery to utter those words.

However, the moment he did so... the brewing storm exploded.

"M-me too!"

"I think I'll just call it quits and fend off on my own."

"I don't care if you kick me out. I think it beats dying in some dangerous place."

"C-can't we just go back home...?"

Voices like this began to escape the lips of the audience, and before anyone knew what, the entire group had descended into chaos.

More than half of the students wanted to call it quits, and it didn't seem like the numbers were going to reduce anytime soon.

In fact, more students trickled in to join their ranks.

'This is bad...' Rey thought to himself as he observed the divide.

'Thanks to the words of that single guy, everyone has started spiraling out of control.'

It had escalated to the point where it wasn't even easy to pinpoint who started all of the drama, to begin with.

At this rate... nearly all the students were going to leave the Royal Estate before the day ran out.

"May I have your attention, please?" A voice suddenly radiated out.

It had so much presence that the loud commotion instantly came to a halt.

Everyone who was raising their voice, or arguing, or merely shouting ceased their outcry—all because of one young man.

"I can understand your plight. I know your fears, and I can feel your worries..."

The boy who spoke wasn't a stranger to them.

He had been with them through thick and thin, and ever since they arrived in this world he had represented all of them fairly.

He fought for their rights, he encouraged them when they were down... he was there with them through it all.

Every single student felt the boy's words ring true within them—as if he was speaking to only them as individuals and not the group.

His name was Adonis Levi—Hero and leader of the Otherworlders.

"This world needs help. I won't force you to care about the countless families and numerous children that require protection in this city alone, talkless of the many others that exist beyond."

Adonis' tone was not pretentious or hypocritical.

He spoke from his heart, and people listened.

"We all have our desires and goals. It's rather unfortunate that those desires were cut short during that accident back home..."

Adonis returned the memories of everyone to the incident that started it all.

"We were meant to die back then. All of us."

The faces of the students began to fall. Their pompous and entitled facade cracked under the weight of his words.

"We were saved by the summoning of these desperate people. Our desires and dreams were preserved by the denizens of this reality... people who also have their own dreams and ambitions."

Adonis' golden eyes glimmered as he formed a slight frown.

"The Dragons don't care about those dreams—not ours, and certainly not theirs. They will trample everything underfoot and destroy everything in their path."

The reality of the enemy that they inevitably had to face began to manifest.

Adonis painted it too vividly.

"And once they are done desecrating all that can be desecrated, and they snuff out the last dream and hopes of the people of this world... who do you think they will turn to next?"

His gaze was serious—calm, undeterred, but serious.

"You are not safe. I am not safe. None of us are safe... not until those monsters are gone."

Then, the only question that was left to ask was how.

How could they stop these horrid creatures? How could they preserve their dreams and be safe?

Well, the answers lay before them.

"We need the Dungeon. We will be able to Level Up and gain actual experience from it." Adonis stretched out both of his hands, as if expecting a hug.

The despairing expressions of the students were already beginning to fade away.

Even the selfish ones who only cared about their safety could not deny the allure of gaining more strength to protect themselves.

"That is why I implore all of you, my friends... let us not abandon this opportunity."

As Adonis gave a brilliant smile, filled with confidence and a shaking resolve, the last of the resistance was quelled.

The dissatisfied sound of a clicked tongue silently echoed, but it was drowned by the overwhelming voice of Adonis.

" So PLEASE! Please, don't give up now! Don't give in after you've endured all this time!"

Memories of the training they underwent to get stronger flashed in the minds of the students.

How could they throw all of that away now?

"Stand with me! With us! We can't do this without you... and honestly...."

Adonis slowly dropped his two hands and slowly shook his head.

"... You can't do this without us."

The rest was history after that.

Cheers and roars of excitement arose from the students.

It was as if everyone found their source of motivation and forgot the fear that coursed through their hearts.

They could only think about Adonis and his words.

"WILL YOU STAND WITH ME?!"

The answer was obvious.

"WE WILL STAND WITH YOU!" Everyone cheered.

Rey was among the majority and went along with their excitement as if he was swept up in the moment.

He smiled and roared with so much energy that you would think he meant every ounce of it.

But, that wasn't really the case.

'Good job, Adonis. You've managed to keep everyone together again.'

He truly was impressed by Adonis. It almost felt like they weren't even the same age at all.

However, despite all of this, a dark thought crept within Rey's mind.

'This solution is only temporary, though...'

Unease among the students was bound to keep growing until it became unstoppable.

'At that stage, not even the best of pep talks—even from someone like Adonis—would be able to do the trick.' Rey thought in worry.

And, just as he feared, that moment was coming soon.

... It was only a matter of time.

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Chapter 85 Plan For The Excursion

Grandmaster Conrad was stunned.

Never before had he been outdone in negotiations of any kind.

When the Dragons struck all those years ago, he was the one who banded the nations together through sheer negotiations by exploiting their overarching common interests.

He always knew what people wanted, and how to give it to them without being at a disadvantage himself.

However, most of this was only possible due to a somewhat even playing field—or him possessing the advantage.

In the case of the Otherworlders, the script was mostly flipped.

They had the control.

'... And it seems they're realizing it now.'

It somehow pissed Conrad off that they had spent so many resources on these Otherworlders, yet they were so quick to abandon him and his people.

So much money, so many resources...

Even their two strongest were assigned to training them, rather than going to the war front and assisting the nation.

Then, there were expenses they were yet to incur that would go into benefiting the Otherworlders and their growth.

After they had done so much, and were willing to do even more, it felt very heartbreaking that most of these individuals would abandon them in a heartbeat.

It just... it wasn't fair.

'But who would have thought the Hero would turn the situation around?'

Conrad was relieved they had Adonis on their side. He was the strongest of the bunch, and as someone with the Hero Class, he was the perfect fit to take down their ultimate enemy.

'We just need to strengthen him enough to defeat the Dragon Emperor...'

Right now, however, Conrad had to give out another olive branch so the Otherworlders had another incentive to trust the United Human Alliance.

"We plan on letting you all explore the town freely today. No guards or entourage. Just all of you having unrestricted fun."

Conrad could hear surprised gasps from his audience, and he smiled softly.

'They've been feeling the weight of our security measures a lot. This way, they'll see that we trust them.'

Besides, with Adonis in the group, they wouldn't be able to run away or cause any kind of commotion.

'And if any of them were to do that, then that would mean they were never going to fight the Dragons for us.'

It was better to know who to spend their resources on, and who would abandon them at the first sight of the Dragons.

"Lucielle and Brutus here will go and scout the Royal Dungeon and prepare it for your training tomorrow. In that effect, you should all gather among yourselves and decide how your excursion should go."

Once Conrad made this statement, he knew his job was done.

The students looked satisfied, and while the problem of cooperation wasn't completely solved, he knew a first step had been taken.

"I shall now be taking my leave..."

The students waved him off and Conrad smiled while leaving with his two executives

'The Dungeon can be a very difficult place to explore. By having Lucielle and Brutus check the place out, we can ensure the overall safety of our biggest assets.'

Right now, only the first five floors of the Royal Dungeon were being explored and exploited.

In the far past, long before Conrad's time, he had heard the lower parts were also explored by Knights and Adventurers.

But that time had long passed.

'Now that we have the Otherworlders, we can make up for our lack of manpower and finally focus our efforts on conquering more Floors.'

The Otherworlders would grow stronger in the process, and more resources would finally be available for the Alliance to use.

'Our stockpiles are running out, and the materials being refined now are both of lesser quality and quantity than before...'

If they wanted a fighting chance, they had to focus their efforts on the Royal Dungeon.

It wasn't like there weren't other Dungeons, but... the situation behind those were complicated.

The ones in the Adventurer City were where a lot of their higher-grade materials came from, but since the Adventurers were usually more interested in growing stronger and hunting more Monsters, they poured a lot of valuable resources into their equipment and fortifications.

If not for the tax that the Royal Council had imposed on them, they wouldn't be getting as much benefits from the city as they were.

Some Adventurers were even circumventing the Tax policy, but Conrad's hands were too full to deal with that at the moment.

'Right now, we just need to focus our efforts on these ones...'

Conrad stole one final glance at the Otherworlders as he further distanced himself from them.

'They're the only ones who can do it!'

Once Conrad and the two Strongest of the Alliance, Adonis got the attention of everyone and addressed the students in his usual way.

He was confident, articulate, and he managed to relate with everyone on a seemingly personal level.

A lot of people were engaged in what he was saying concerning the excursion they would be having in the city.

There were a bunch of things they all needed to get ready for the journey—like bags, and some money in case they had to get something.

Since the Otherworlders had no money, Adonis told them they would have to get some from the Treasury.

Normally, that would be absurd, but once they explained things to the Royal Treasurer, and told them of what the Grandmaster instructed, he would have no choice but to hear them out.

"We even have a Royal permit. That way, even if we're lost or stuck somewhere in town, we can always use it to find our way back to the Estate." Adonis had also added.

Needless to say, it would take another hour or so before the students could leave the Royal Estate.

This didn't seem like a big deal for a lot of students, but one in particular seemed fidgety.

People might have looked at him and thought he was simply excited to explore the town, but they would be dead wrong.

The reason for this student's anxiety lay elsewhere.

'Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!' Rey's thoughts echoed as he tried to control his widening eyes.

'The Dungeon! My Monster Cores!'

The expedition was tomorrow, so he had initially thought there was time to gather his stuff and capitalize on his wealth before it was too late..

However, he never expected one thing.

'Brutus and Lucielle are going down there? They'll ruin everything!' His thoughts echoed in despair.

If they found his treasure, he would be toast.

'I can't allow that. If the Royal Council finds out so many Monster Cores exist, my business plans will be ruined.'

It seemed a tad selfish, but Rey couldn't allow his only current flow of benefits to be disrupted.

'Once we get to town, I'll have to split from everyone.'

That was the only move he could think of right now.

'Split and rush to the Dungeon.'

Brutus and Lucielle were going to be there, but if he could play his cards right and avoid them, he could evade them and get what he wanted.

'It's a bit early, but I'll have to finish those Hobgoblins too...'

He was sure that they would have recovered the Monster Cores in the Eighth floor by now.

'I just have to do it fast.'

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Chapter 86 The Excurison

"Alright, guys! Seems we're all set!"

Excitement could be seen on Adonis' face as he prepared to lead the students out of the Castle gates.

It felt like an odd thing, seeing Adonis so giddy. It was clearly his first time leaving, but it seemed to some perceptive eyes that he already knew what to look forward to in town.

"Since we're all dressed casually, they won't recognize us as special. The Council hasn't also made the Otherworlder Summon public yet."

The Mages, and everyone else, who were involved in it took an Oath of silence, so no one spoke of it outside the Royal Estate.

Even the guards situated within the Estate couldn't open their lips to anyone about it.

"If you ever get into trouble, just flash the Royal Badge. You all have them with you, right? So it should be fine..."

Once Adonis was done making these clarifications, and all seemed to be in order, everyone was pretty restless to leave.

"Alright then. Let's go!"

The students ventured out, the Hero at the forefront, with Billy and the Alpha students closer to the front than the back, and a certain student trailing almost behind the entire group.

That student was Rey.

'Okay. I've already told Noah the gist of matters. He's to conclude business for the day in the Black Market while I go to the Royal Dungeon.'

Rey wanted to make as many sales as possible. Since they could leave for town freely now, he knew more opportunities would come.

He just didn't like to leave a day unproductive.

'I have over a thousand Platinum Coins at my disposal right now...'

That was more than enough money for anyone.

But for Rey, it still wasn't enough.

He wanted more!

... Way more.

His gaze was met with Noah's, and they both nodded subtly at each other.

'I just need to find the perfect opening.'

Rey knew it wouldn't be easy. He might have to get into more trouble, and he could even be under suspicion for his actions, but right now he was desperate.

'I have no choice! As long as there's no conclusive evidence, I can always squirm out of it.'

Plus, the entire United Human Alliance was in quite a delicate position with the Otherworlders already.

Since Rey knew they were in desperate need for all the help they could get, Rey doubted they would make a big fuss about his whereabouts if he was able to rendezvous with the rest of the group as soon as possible.

'We're supposed to spend a total of three hours exploring the outside. That's more than enough time to go and come back.'

He just had to be extra careful about when to leave and when to return.

'That's the most complicated part right now...'

Rey bit his lip as he prayed he would be able to escape without notice.

'Adonis will be the biggest obstacle...' His thoughts trailed in frustration.

'I just hope he won't make things too hard for me.'

"Let me make it easy for you guys! We'll split up here, so you are all free to explore the town as long as we all meet up at this exact location two hours from now."

Rey felt like his jaws would collapse the moment he heard Adonis say this.

'W-what?!'

It was most unexpected.

'I-I mean, this whole arrangement works well for me, but...'

It was the perfect, ideal situation for Rey's plan to ditch, but he couldn't help but think the decision was strange.

'Why in the world would he do this?!

Rey knew the reason Conrad didn't bother with the guards was because Adonis would be present to keep an eye on everyone.

If he just allowed everyone to go off on their own, it betrayed his purpose of being there in the first place.

... Right?!

'This is definitely strange. There's no way Adonis doesn't know all of this. Maybe there's more to it than meets the eye...'

A bunch of thoughts swirled around in Rey's head as he struggled to decide the best explanation for the current situation.

'Maybe he plans on watching all of us from a distance. Or maybe... could he have somewhere he wants to go privately?'

Rey dismissed the second thought because he knew this was the first time Adonis would be in town.

This wasn't due to blind trust or anything, but the guy had an alibi.

He was always seen training, and when he wasn't doing that, he was hanging out with everyone.

Adonis didn't really have much time to himself, except when he slept.

'Maybe he snuck out at night one time or something...?'

However, Rey found that equally difficult to believe.

'A high-profile guy like Adonis sneaking out? Eh... seems unlikely.'

Not only did Adonis not have an stealth-based Skills, but his status as Hero—and the stickler for the rules—made it very doubtful that he would resort to such in the dead of night.

'Plus, it doesn't fit his personality. I'm sure if he asks the higher-ups, he'll be convincing enough that they'll let him go out.'

Rey didn't think Adonis would need to sneak out to leave town, and since this was the first official time he was here, there really wasn't a place that Adonis would particularly want to go to alone.

As such, Rey dismissed his second line of reasoning.

'That means it's maybe the first? But even that seems dubious.'

Why would Adonis want to watch everyone from the shadows, like a creep, when he could just watch them normally?

Was it even a good plan to do so, considering the fact that Adonis had no stealth-based Skills.

'It just seems like some unnecessary trouble...'

At this point, Rey had to consider the simpler third option that he had initially ignored due to his intense skepticism.

'Maybe he just wants everyone to have unrestricted fun, and he trusts everyone will stick to the rules?'

It seemed a bit too naive, but Adonis seemed like the guy who would hold such ideals.

'Besides, he just gave that badass speech. I'm sure most of the students wouldn't want to disappoint him or something...'

It made sense that his classmates, even with their respective agendas, would simply follow Adonis' instructions.

'A few might be late, but I doubt anyone would actively ignore the time-limit.'

'I'm sure the Royal Badge has some sort of tracking function, so as long as we have it on us, they can track us.'

Tracking Magic consumed a lot of Mana, though, especially if it was used consistently, so Rey was sure they would only utilize this Magic in dire situations.

'Maybe after the two hours and some students are still absent...'

For now, though, Adonis seemed to have already thought things through.

'It just so happens to be convenient for me! Nice one, Adonis!' Rey tried to hide his wide grin under the mask of his palm.

'You really are my Hero!'

'Looks like everyone has left...'

As Adonis looked around him, smiling to see his classmates were having fun in town, he nodded slowly to himself.

'Now that I'm here, and all alone, I can finally get that Special Item...'

It had been a while, but Adonis knew exactly where he had to go to obtain what he desired.

.... The Black Market!

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Chapter 87 A Little Incident In Town

"W-where is he...?"

Alicia mumbled to herself as she looked around the town square, having the image of one person in mind.

—Rey!

'I thought he would want to hang out together...'

This would be the first time they were going to explore the town together, so she thought he would want to do it with her.

They would check out the marketplace and even have tons of fun in this world... like on a date.

But he was nowhere to be found now.

'I guess I was the only one who was looking forward to this...'

As Alicia tried her best to dismiss her heavy thoughts, she felt a shadow cast over her from behind

Someone was approaching her, and for a moment she suspected it would be Rey.

'Maybe he quickly went to get something and came back for me.'

It was sort of rude, and she would have to give him an earful for it, but Alicia was relieved.

That meant they could finally hang out.

However, the moment she turned back and looked at the person who approached her, she could see it wasn't the boy she was hoping for.

She recognized the face, but that didn't mean she was happy to see it.

'It's him!' Alicia tried to hide her disappointment that it wasn't Rey, but she wasn't a great actress.

"H-hey... Billy. I thought you already went off with your friends."

Alicia hoped he would take the hint that he could just go and hang out with the many friends he already had.

She just didn't feel comfortable under his gaze.

"Well... I... just thought maybe we could hang out together? You know, since it's our first time in town and all."

Alicia wanted to leak out a tear.

Why were the words that she wanted Rey to say being spoken to her by Billy?

It was a tragedy beyond compare.

"Erm, I was hoping to explore on my own. You know how I am... haha..."

Alicia didn't want to be rude to Billy, but she felt like she had given him enough hints to back off.

"I just want to be alone." She smiled, trying very hard to break the tension.

However...

"... Because Rey isn't here, right?" Billy's whisper suddenly greeted her ears.

"What was that?"

"Rey isn't even here! He went off on his own. He clearly doesn't care about you... not like I do!"

Alicia was stunned that Billy would make such an outright confession after he had been so subtle and indirect in the past.

Especially now that they were in the middle of the town square.

"Billy, lower your voice and—"

"You think I don't have eyes? I see you with him all the time. How can you be going to his room so frequently? Even spending so long there up till late at night?!"

Alicia knew what Billy was referring to, and it proved her point that he had been indeed stalking her.

In retrospect, Alicia realized she had spent way too much time in Rey's room that night.

They had both lost track of time due to the fun conversations they were having.

Would she change that if she could?

Alicia's answer was no! It was clearly because they were having fun that they had taken so much time without either of them realizing it.

'And it's not like we did anything...'

But those thoughts aside, Billy was really getting on her nerves.

"I told you to lower your—"

"Do you know what people are saying? Do you know how hard I try to fight the rumors and help you out, even in secret? Yet you spend time with that loser that abandons you the slightest chance he gets."

Right now, Billy was whining and shouting like a bratty child. Alicia couldn't help but crease her brows in disgust as she looked at him.

He kept blabbering on and on about what he had done for her, how hard he was working... and how unfair she was being to him.

It got to a point where Alicia couldn't take his pathetic display any longer.

'This idiot. There are eyes on us... and he won't stop talking.'

It was at this point that Alicia reached the limits of her patience and

It was for that very reason that she finally spewed out her undiluted thoughts.

"Would you shut up already? You're the most insensitive asshole I've ever spoken to. Why don't you just leave me alone?"

The moment she said this, Billy paused in downright shock.

It suddenly felt like she was the bad guy.

Alicia didn't care, though. She was done being polite to this guy.

'The reason I was subtle and indirect to him was because he was also subtle. I didn't want to be too forward, and I considered his feelings, which is why I didn't outrightly reject him...'

But now that Billy had revealed himself as the creep that he was, Alicia had no reason to keep the farce going.

"I don't like you, Billy. And if you keep pestering me, I'll have to personally defend myself. You wouldn't want a fight between the two of us, would you?" Alicia threatened, deepening her glare.

At that moment, Billy shuddered.

Everyone knew that Alicia was much stronger and skilled than Billy.

Her Skills were much better than his, though their Classes were in the same Tier. If they were ever to fight, it would be an embarrassingly easy win for Alicia.

"Exactly. So back off. If you keep pestering me, I might have to tell Adonis and the higher-ups too."

The look on Billy's face as she said this made it clear he was nervous.

Of course, someone like him wouldn't want to lose all the goodwill he had been getting thus far.

Alicia found it to be even more pathetic.

'Unlike you, Rey doesn't care about any of that...'

And yes, he did abandon her in this town to wander on her own, but at least he didn't embarrass her out in the open and bombard her with so many terrible words that Billy used.

Last but not least... Alicia actually liked Rey.

... Not this guy in front of her.

"Just leave me alone and don't bother me again, okay? Don't follow me."

Alicia walked away, leaving Billy standing like a lifeless statue.

She didn't feel particularly good about her actions, but it had to be said.

'Look what you've caused, Rey. Because you left, this guy went and reared his big head.' Alicia found herself smiling.

She wasn't particularly mad at Rey, just a tad disappointed.

'I wonder what he's up to...'

"I... I... I just..."

Billy was mumbling to himself as he stood at the town square.

He remembered how his friends had wanted him to come hang out with them but he chose to come for Alicia instead.

He recollected how happy he was that Rey wasn't present, and Alicia appeared lonely.

He thought... he actually thought she would be happy to have him as company.

Well... he was wrong.

Not only did Alicia thoroughly reject him, but she did so in the most humiliating way possible.

Billy was heartbroken to the core, and his hollow facade was enough evidence for it.

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Chapter 88 A Dark Proposal

"Oi..."

Billy thought he heard a sound behind him, but the sound of his heart shattering was loud enough to drown all external noise.

"Hey, big man!"

Billy jerked forward as a hand slapped his back and a friendly smile greeted him.

He found a stranger looking at him with a casual expression.

The stranger had a black eyepatch on one eye, with long black hair flowing down his shoulders.

He had strands of beards protruding from his chin, and he was outfitted in a high-quality black robe.

Billy had initially wanted to smack the man for hitting him so suddenly, but he chose not to after contemplating a little.

'I wouldn't want to accidentally kill him...' His thoughts trailed.

The man had a stupid grin on his face which made Billy angrier. He didn't realize when he was frowning at the total stranger.

"What do you want?" He asked in mild annoyance.

If this guy was here to comfort him, then Billy could already see himself clenching fist and getting ready for what would come next.

"Hey... hey man, relax! I saw everything that happened, and you know what...?"

Billy was ready to throw his punch the moment he heard anything unnecessary.

It was bad enough that Alicia had disgraced him in public, but now he was about to be pitied by an absolute stranger like this?

It was unacceptable.

"... I think that lady is just confused."

'H-huh?' Billy's brows shot up in surprise.

He had expected many words from the man, but nothing like what he just heard.

"Confused...?"

"Yes, my guy! Girls are like that when they're that age! My daughters were also the same way."

Billy found his brows raised even further. He was still confused, but more than that, he found himself resonating with the stranger.

"What she needs is something to prompt her certainty. If you're up for it, I have just the thing."

Billy felt his heart racing as he stared at the grinning eyepatch man.

Something about the whole thing felt sketchy, but he couldn't resist the allure.

Especially if it meant Alicia would be his.

"What do you have in mind?"

"Let's not discuss here. It's a very important matter to talk about, so why don't we come to my office?"

Billy felt a bit skeptical about following a stranger anywhere, but since he was all alone and he had to spend the next two hours with something, he decided that he might as well hear the man out.

'If it's a waste of time, I can just leave.'

And if the stranger ended up being some shady individual, he could just easily defeat him.

'I'm among the strongest in this world, after all...'

After training for this long, Billy was confident in his strength.

No random stranger could get the jump on him.

"I can see your skeptical look, young man. But don't worry! Once I'm done, you'll see it's an offer you can't resist!"

Billy squinted his eyes as his heart raced in further curiosity.

"Alright. Take me to your office."

Billy's eyes were wide open as he looked at the man opposite him.

He had just heard the unbelievable, and he was still recoiling in shock as he sat on a very comfortable sofa in the vast room.

First and foremost, this stranger's name was Evals Redart, and his office was quite a fanciful place.

It was well-decorated and very spacious. There was a chair and desk close to the very vast window, and a pair of couches opposite each other, with an exquisite table at the center.

The ambiance of the room was lovely, thanks to the lights that radiated within it, and the chandelier that hung in the ceiling was pretty fancy as well.

'It's nothing compared to the Royal Estate, but this place looks really nice.'

Billy had known he was a man of means when he saw his clothes, but he didn't think it was to this extent.

Despite the surprising display of wealth, however, what stunned Billy most was the man's proposal.

"T-that is a little..."

"Yeah. Unethical ... right?" The man's smile widened as Billy nodded.

"Well, it's up to you, big man. If you want some things in life, you have to get your hands dirty. You feel me?"

Billy clenched his fist as he contemplated all that the man had just said.

He had never tried something like that in his life.

"It won't work. You wouldn't even be able to restrain her."

"That's where you come in. Just give her this..." Evals Redart placed a potion on the table that separated the two of them.

As he pushed the bottle towards Billy, the pinkish-red liquid inside sloshed around

"... And she'll be susceptible to the plan. She won't resist in the slightest."

"Alicia would never trust me enough to drink that!" Billy protested.

"Then place it inside her food or drink or something."

"W-well... that is..."

Billy knew Alicia was confused about what she wanted, but he also knew that she currently didn't want to have anything to do with him.

There was no way he would have access to her now.

"Okay, okay. I see. How about this..."

The generous Evald brought out something else. It was a special ring, with numerous writings carved on its black-iron surface.

It had a gleaming red gem affixed at the top, and something about the ring radiated something... forbidden.

"Use this Enchanted Item."

"I told you she won't accept anything for—"

"No, you won't give her. You will wear it. It'll allow you to alter your appearance."

This was the 'Ring Of Deceit'. It allowed the user to take on the form of the one whom their target trusted most.

"All you need to do is place the ring's gem on... Alicia's skin, and you'll be able to turn into the person she trusts most around her."

Once that was done, Billy could then coax her into drinking the red potion.

It was the perfect plan!

"I... I see..."

Billy gulped down saliva as he considered the plan, as well as the choices that stood before him.

'If I do this... am I really guaranteed to win her love and affection?'

Sure, the plan was a cliché winner! If he pulled it off well, he would be able to get under Alicia's good graces.

Billy just wondered if there was something safer.

... Something easier.

"W-what about something... like a Love Potion. Don't you have that?"

Billy had a Gold Coin in his pocket. If something like that existed, he wouldn't hesitate to buy it.

'If it's more expensive, I'll find a way to gather the money somehow!'

He could even flash his Royal Badge to show he was trustworthy.

Right now, Billy was just desperate.

"Worthwhile things never come easy, my man. Love Potions are only temporary. If you want something with a more permanent effect, this is your best shot."

As he heard those words, Billy felt like he was confronted with a choice.

'I... I don't want to lose Alicia. I don't want to lose to Rey...'

He clenched his teeth as he looked at the red potion and gleaming ring.

They beckoned to him.

"So... what will it be, lover boy?"

"I... I..." Billy stuttered as he considered all his options.

Right here and now, he had to make his choice.

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Chapter 89 Rey's Shocking Discovery

It didn't take Rey very long to reach the doorstep of the Royal Dungeon's compound.

He could see the tall buildings of the refineries and processing centers.

He imagined that most of these buildings had been rendered useless due to an absence of enough raw materials to process, but he didn't allow that to distract him.

'The Nation's impoverished state will soon improve once we start exploring the Dungeon.'

Right now, he just had to make sure he got a slice of the wealth before it was taken from him.

'It's been about two hours since Brutus and Lucielle left the Royal Estate to come here. I better hurry...'

Rey already knew that it was impossible for them to clear such a large supply of Monster Core within such a limited time, so there was no need to panic too much.

However, he couldn't help the bad feeling he was getting.

It felt like if he didn't hurry, he would lose everything he had worked for.

'Alright, then...'

As he slowly descended from his elevated height, he decided to go with the classic [Projection] trick with the guards.

They were all stationary and observant, but compared to his current state, they could pretty much have been sitting ducks.

The only ones he had to be worried about were Lucielle and Brutus, and those two were probably still in the Dungeon at this point.

'I'll make this quick!' Rey licked his lips and concentrated his energy.

'[Projec—]'

Before he could complete the activation of his Skill, the doors began to open from within, and two figures abruptly came out.

'W-what?!'

The duo was none other than Lucielle and Brutus, and they had disturbed expressions on their faces.

'They're done already?!' He was genuinely surprised, and for good reason.

'Once they noticed the Sixth Level had been subjugated, they would have gone to the seventh and met the Hobgoblins.'

He doubted they wouldn't be surprised about the Hobgoblin civilization. They were sure to explore more, and it was inevitable that they would find the stash of Monster Cores.

That was how Rey had expected the whole thing to turn out.

'I can't believe they're done with all that already. I knew they'd be fast, but not this fast.'

Rey wondered if he had underestimated the capabilities of the Head Warrior and Grand Mage.

However, almost as soon as he thought that, a question flashed in his mind.

'Something is off, though. Why do they look so disturbed?!'

The looks on both their faces were awful—almost as if they were too distraught for words.

'I mean, shouldn't it be the opposite? They should be rejoicing that they found so much treasure.'

The Sixth Floor had been cleared by him, but the minerals there were still going to be incredibly useful to the Nation.

... Especially the Magic Crystals.

'Then there's the Orichalcum on the Sixth Floor, and the Monster Cores.'

Rey didn't know if they had made it to the Seventh Floor, but if they did, they would have seen even more goodies.

... All for free!

'I mean, sure, they'd be disappointed that we won't be able to train with the fodder of those Floors, but I'm sure they'd be more overjoyed about what they found.'

Besides, since Lucielle and Brutus were so capable, Rey didn't have any doubts that they could lead him and his classmates to the lower Floors without much trouble.

Yet... what was with this look?!

'Something is definitely wrong.'

As Brutus and Lucielle slowly departed from the gates, Rey decided to abandon his initial plan and instead follow the two.

That was when he heard it...

"This is serious. I can't believe all those Floors were conquered..."

Rey realized they probably figured out someone did it. However, since evidence didn't point towards him, he knew he was safe.

"It looks like the makings of a powerful Monster. Nothing else explains it..."

Rey smiled to himself as Lucielle sang his praises.

Of course, not the monster part. He was by no means a monster of any kind.

Rey was simply happy that he was recognized as someone powerful by the Nation's Strongest.

"Hobgoblins and Darkwolves are certainly not the strongest, but the way they were brutally slaughtered can only be the work of a very merciless beast."

'... Eh?'

It was at this point that Rey realized that something was amiss in their discussion.

'What Hobgoblins? What NightWolves?'

Rey was currently a bird, and his senses were all heightened thanks to a Skill, so he was sure they hadn't detected him and he heard them clearly.

'What did they just say?'

"And even the strange ape-like creatures. Their mutilated corpses were just. The burn scars and claw marks..."

"Their Monster Cores and teeth were removed too. It's clearly an intelligent monster..."

Rey knew he was responsible for sending the Hobs to harvest the Monster Cores of the Monkey Monsters, but he didn't resort to burns or claws when defeating them, and he certainly knew the Hobgoblins wouldn't do that either.

'And the teeth? I didn't take those as well.'

Now that Rey thought about it, the teeth of those monsters had to be valuable due to how tough they were, but he hadn't recognized that when he subjugated them.

'The Hobgoblins won't do anything I didn't instruct them to...'

And even on the off chance that they were the ones responsible for that, who was the one that killed them then?

The more Rey thought about what he was hearing, the more absurd it sounded.

"... And to think the Floors were barren. We couldn't even find a single resource for use."

Rey's eyes bulged the moment he heard Lucielle say the unthinkable.

'No... no way...!'

Not only did they not find the Magic Crystals on the Sixth and Eighth Floor, but they also didn't see any Orichalcum in the Seventh Floor.

These were the resources that Rey intentionally didn't plunder so as to enrich the United Human Alliance... and now they were gone?!

That wasn't the worst part, though.

'If they were able to explore up to the Eighth Floor, that means they had to have seen the place where all those Monster Cores were kept...'

The fact that he had mentioned finding nothing meant only one thing to Rey.

'Everything... it's all gone...?!'

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Chapter 90 Back To The Black Market

'What the fuck?!'

Rey felt his heart thumping as he heard the muffled conversation between Lucielle and Brutus.

He didn't want to believe what they were saying, but Rey knew how foolish and irrational that would be.

'They're talking amongst themselves, so they're most likely telling the truth.'

Rey felt like he had to check for himself, but he felt a wave of hesitation hit him.

'There's a lot going on here that I don't understand. I... I don't know anymore...'

As he stared at the Royal Dungeon entrance, he felt a sigh escape his beaks.

'What the hell? All that effort... for nothing?'

He felt shitty, to say the least.

'It could be an intelligent monster that did this, but why do I find this hard to believe...?'

To Rey, this felt like the work of a person.

And there was no one else that crossed his kind but the mastermind that set him up a few days ago.

'Who else would be behind this? They clearly know of my escapades, so it wouldn't be surprising that they know of the Royal Dungeon...'

But if that was the case, it meant the malefactor knew Rey's full capabilities—or there was a high chance that they did.

That possibility was unsettling.

'They know who I am and what I can do, but I don't know who they are...'

It was frightening!

Rey had never felt this powerless since he arrived in this world, and it didn't matter the Skills he had at his disposal at this point.

He was still very vulnerable.

'I might have to leave the Royal Estate. I don't know if it's safe...'

But once he had this thought, Rey thought about everyone and everything he would be leaving behind.

They weren't much, but they mattered to him.

'No! I can't risk it!'

However, they didn't matter as much as his safety.

'I can't deal with this guy right now. I have to grow stronger and smarter.' Rey had been pushed to a corner, and he could feel his thoughts in shambles.

'If it's him that took all those Monster Cores and resources, then there's a chance he also knows about my deal with the KariBlanc Group.'

It was possible that this malefactor would one-up him by making a deal with the Company, rendering his own agreement with them obsolete.

'They have more to gain by following the mastermind, whoever they are...'

Rey would have bitten his lips if he had any. He could feel frustration within him rise to an unexpected degree.

'This... this is... unpleasant!'

However, despite all of these thoughts and worries, Rey considered the possibility that he could be wrong.

Perhaps it wasn't the mastermind. Maybe it was some other party.

Maybe it was even a monster!

'Either way, I don't think the Royal Dungeon is where I should be right now...'

Rey had to prepare for the worst-case scenario.

'With so many Monster Cores gone, there's a high chance that the market will be saturated by a lot of them!'

Rey still had a considerable amount with him, so he knew it would be wise to get rid of them as soon as possible.

.... Before they lost their value.

And so, as he watched Lucielle and Brutus prepare fly in the air—thanks to the former's Wind Magic—Rey flapped his wings and went his way.

'I better hurry!'

The Black Market was the same as usual—sketchy places, and legitimate areas that seemed as mainstream as a market could get.

Rey was currently donning his disguise, and he had taken the form of a more mature individual so as to hide his identity.

His Orichalcum Mask was going to distort the prying gazes of detection Magic, but he knew that high-level ones could probably get past its effects.

Thus, the need to have a different face under his mask.

Other than that, though, Rey had to look imposing, so he adored this persona to suit those purposes.

His skull mask, his dark cloak, and the aura of danger he exuded, made the lowlives avoid him, and the strong recognize him.

'Noah should be just about done with business. I might even bump into him...'

As Rey was having this thought, he noticed a masked individual walk past him.

'H-huh...?'

This masked person had golden hair, and the air he exuded was of dignity—not befitting a place like the black market.

Rey couldn't keep his eyes away from the young man who kept walking without paying him any kind.

Somehow... he felt familiar.

'Why does that guy remind me of Adonis? Na... it can't be him.'

Someone like Adonis wouldn't be caught dead in the Black Market.

The matter was on Rey's mind for a few seconds, but once his eyes spotted the building that was his destination, it was soon forgotten.

Instead, the thought of business quickly overwhelmed him.

'I have to get these Monster Cores sold no matter what! Even if they're at a discount.'

An overwhelming amount of Monster Cores were about to flood the market.

Rey knew that if he didn't make haste, his entire business plans would crumble before his very eyes.

'It's a bit early, but... I have no other choice.'

Rey was welcomed gracefully into the KariBlanc building.

He was shown the path upstairs and even escorted by an esteemed individual like the VIP that he was.

"Your subordinate is still discussing with Sir Aldred Winsley. Would you like to join them?" He had been asked.

Rey was surprised that Noah hadn't left the building yet, but with what was on his mind, he considered it to be a trivial issue.

"Yes, I would." He had responded.

He was then taken to the front of the room that Noah and Aldred occupied.

It seemed a more fanciful place than the one he remembered using.

'I guess they want to treat us better as Exclusive Sellers...'

Rey managed to crack a smile as he opened the knob and entered the room.

'Let's just hope I can maintain that status.'