

LOA Nobody 91

Chapter 91 Welcome To Haven

Magic Tower Head Mysfil led the group, consisting of Artemis, Rio, Amelia, Myra and Esme, through the bustling corridors of the branch towards the VIP teleportation gate. Rio listened attentively as Mysfil shared the history and workings of the tower branch, emphasizing its importance in magical research and development. He elaborated on the various research departments, laboratories, and libraries within the branch.

"Our branch is dedicated to pushing the boundaries of magical knowledge and discovering new applications for mana manipulation. Many people from different races and world's have joined us, and it is through the collective efforts of our researchers and scholars that we continue to make groundbreaking discoveries.

As they walked, Mysfil couldn't help but notice Rio's keen interest in his surroundings, as he kept looking around taking in everything. "Young Master Rio, it seems you're curious about the tower. Perhaps one day you will grace the halls of our tower, we are always prepared to teach the young minds who'll shape the future." Mysfil said, his voice dripping with honey, trying to be as honorable and reliable as he could. If a person of that noble standing joined the tower, the influence they have would grow to a whole nother level, Plus they'll get the support of Blake family.

Rio looked at Mysfil for a moment, confusing the guy if he said something wrong, but then his expression changed back to his usual and he said in his excited child's voice - "I will remember your words then, tower head. It would be incredible to join this branch."

Hearing his words, Mysfil felt something weird but he shrugged it off, instead now he felt happy that just his boasting a little was enough to hook a Duke's son. 'Indeed coaxing the kids is the best way to get connections in the nobility.' He thought.

While he was getting happy Artemis took a meaningful look at Rio, probably trying to understand why he said that. Even if he was interested in the magic tower, with the standing of their family, even the main branch of their tower would welcome them with open arms, but he emphasized about joining this branch. Rio, who noticed her gaze, smiled a little but then ignored it.

It was then that Mysfil got out of his thoughts and happily informed him "Of course, if you want I can arrange someone to help you take a look around our branch. We have everything that anyone could possibly need, our researchers and professors here are one of the best available in the field of study."

Amelia tugged at Rio's sleeve, her impatience evident. "But, brother, we need to go to Rebecca's house. She's been waiting for us all day!"

Rio smiled at her and turned to Mysfil - "Well it seems clear what we must prioritize today. However, I'll come to explore the Magic Tower in greater detail another time."

Mysfil nodded understandingly, "of course young master. We'll await your arrival then."

The group continued their journey, eventually arriving at a big hall. Guards stationed themselves nearby, ready to ensure a smooth transition.

Rio's eyes were fixed on the door as Mysfil activated the mana identification process, pressing his hand forward and operating The codes. Soon with a loud thud, the door opened. The guards stepped aside, revealing the grand entrance to the room which held the teleportation gate.

This teleportation gate was created by some spatial artifact. The artifact stored the coordinates of 3 different locations, and after activating it with a key, it can open a portal to those predetermined locations. Only the branch head of the tower had the key to operate this artifact. The mana needed to supply the artifact was given from the outside.

Mysfil inserted the key into a designated slot, and with a gentle twist, the gate sprung to life. It emitted a soft hum. A vibrant blue portal emerged in its place, emanating a mesmerizing energy that enveloped the room. Rio's eyes widened as he gazed at the portal, feeling a mixture of excitement and hesitation.

Rio's thoughts raced as he contemplated the upcoming teleportation. It was his first time traveling through a gate, and the unknown nature of the process stirred a slight sense of worry within him. What if something went wrong? What if the artifact malfunctioned? His mind played out various scenarios, he remembered the results of what would happen if it failed, his body would be reduced to atoms, blasted or crushed into smithereens.

In contrast to Rio's swirling thoughts, Amelia seemed unfazed by everything. Maybe cause it wasn't her first time, or maybe her innocent and carefree nature shielded her from any concerns. What would she need to be worried about when her mother was here with her. She bounced with impatience, eager to cross the portal and reach their destination.

Artemis, sensing her children's emotions, took the lead and extended her hands towards them. Rio and Amelia grasped her hands tightly, seeking solace and security. With a reassuring smile, Artemis stepped forward and crossed the threshold of the portal. Myra and Esme followed suit, their presence providing further reassurance. As everyone went inside the portal closed behind them.

As Rio passed through the portal, a rush of energy coursed through his body. It was an indescribable sensation, as if he was being pulled and stretched simultaneously. The world around him blurred and shifted, colors blending together in a mesmerizing dance. The brief moment of disorientation left him feeling dizzy and lightheaded.

When they finally emerged from the other side, Rio's stomach churned with unease. The abrupt change in environment and the disorienting effects of teleportation overwhelmed his senses. He stumbled forward, barely able to regain his balance, and a wave of nausea washed over him.

Amelia, too, seemed affected by the journey. As Rio struggled to steady himself, thinking it would be over in a second, he noticed his younger sister's face turning pale, her brows furrowed in discomfort. Suddenly, Amelia doubled over and began retching, her tiny frame convulsing with each heave. Surprisingly, Rio found himself succumbing to the same fate, his stomach rebelling against the disorienting teleportation experience.

"Ukhhhh blargh"

The duo continued to vomit, their bodies attempting to purge the discomfort they felt. Rio's head spun, and his throat burned with each retch. Despite his age and maturity, he found himself succumbing to the overwhelming physical reaction.

Amelia recovered faster than Rio. She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, her small frame trembling slightly. Her innocent eyes looked up at Rio, reflecting both concern and a hint of amusement. But as she watched him still retching holding his stomach, she couldn't help but smile and said -"Are you okay, brother? You look really funny when you puke!"

Rio managed to look at her with a weak smile, a mix of embarrassment and exhaustion washing over him. But before he could say anything -ulhhehh.

'Fuck shouldn't have eaten this much during lunch. Why the hell did they even served me food'

ulkh blagr

Watching him still struggle, Artemis rushed to his side, her concern evident in her eyes. She held back his hair as he continued to expel the contents of his stomach, offering comfort in the midst of the distressing situation. Esme brought out water bottles from her ring and passed it to Artemis.

After what felt like an eternity, the waves of nausea subsided, leaving Rio feeling weak and drained. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, his face pale and sweaty. He washed his mouth, but couldn't bring himself to drink anything.

The disorientation gradually faded, replaced by a sense of relief that the worst was over.

"Hehehe brother, you're funny." Amelia said, as she looked at his face.

Rio took a deep breath, attempting to compose himself after the ordeal of vomiting. His face flushed with embarrassment as Amelia's innocent comment echoed in his ears. Myra's silent laughter only intensified his feelings of self-consciousness.

Trying to shake off the embarrassment, Rio turned his attention to their new surroundings. The room was bustling with people, their presence creating a lively and energetic atmosphere.

Despite his lingering discomfort, Rio couldn't help but feel a glimmer of anticipation as he listened to the voice of a young girl filled with joy and excitement.

Rio followed the source of the voice and his gaze landed upon a girl, radiating youthful enthusiasm and innocence. Her eyes sparkled with excitement and curiosity, and her cheerful demeanor was infectious. She approached the group, her smile widening as she greeted them.

"Welcome to Haven"

Rio's initial embarrassment now seemed like a distant memory as he felt a surge of different emotions rising within him.

And this is how our villain met his destined fiancée, for the first time. No fancy parties, no emotional music, no disney drama or shit from the story - it started with the guy puking his guts out, and ended with the girl completely ignoring him and hugging her sister.

Chapter 92 Welcome To Haven LI

Rebecca's restlessness had reached its peak as she eagerly awaited Amelia's arrival. Even though they spoke and played together daily through phone calls, it had been nearly a year since their last in-person meeting. The anticipation had been building within her since yesterday, ever since she heard that Amelia and aunt would be coming early. Today's morning had only intensified her excitement.

-As the hours ticked by, Rebecca's impatience grew. She heard that they'll come by noon via the teleportation gate of the magic tower. Unable to contain herself any longer and tired of waiting in the confines of her castle, she had persistently pestered her mother, the queen of Schilla. And to her delight, her mother agreed. Now they were both waiting in the grand hall of the main branch of magic tower, waiting for their arrival.

-The minutes felt like an eternity as Rebecca anxiously asked her mother repeatedly how much longer it would take. Her anticipation was palpable, her eyes darting around, hoping to catch a glimpse of Amelia's familiar figure.

-Rebecca's restlessness filled the grand hall. She couldn't contain her excitement, continuously pacing and scanning the empty space. Her golden locks cascaded down her shoulders, swaying with every impatient step she took. "Mother, when are they coming? It's been so long?"

Athena, composed and poised, looked upon her daughter with a mixture of affection and amusement. "For the fourth time, daughter, they will be here. Just come and sit here" She said again in her calm and mature voice, informing her daughter to be patient, apparently in the past 10 minutes, she had asked this same question 4 times already.

-Rebecca's eyes remained fixed on the empty hall, her anticipation growing with each passing moment. Her sea blue eyes kept searching, looking around the empty hall, hoping for any sign of anyone's arrival.

-And then, as if a magical spell had been cast, a luminous blue portal materialized before them, drawing Rebecca's attention like a magnet. A smile spread across her face, brimming with excitement and delight as she saw people running around in a hurry, who were standing on the side until now. The air was filled with an electric energy, tinged with anticipation and warmth as the scene unfolded before them.

-The portal parted, revealing a group of individuals stepping out into the grand hall. Rebecca's eyes widened in joy as she recognized familiar faces and new acquaintances. "They're finally here! I've been waiting so long!" She smiled when she finally spotted Amelia's familiar figure among the crowd.

-Rebecca's heart leaped with excitement as she prepared to run towards Amelia, but her mother gently held her back, a knowing smile on her face. Rebecca looked at her mother in confusion, but her mother simply pointed towards Amelia and Rio, who were experiencing the unpleasant aftermath of teleportation.

-Rebecca's eyes widened with surprise and concern as she watched them retching and puking. It was not the grand entrance or the joyous reunion she had envisioned.

-She hesitated for a moment, contemplating the situation, and then made a decision. She couldn't contain herself any longer and swiftly made her way towards them, a radiant smile adorning her face. Carefully navigating her steps, mindful of the mess around them, she approached Amelia, who had now stopped puking.

"Welcome to Haven." Athena said as she saw her sister, Artemis standing there.

-With caution and love in her eyes, Rebecca ran towards Amelia, ensuring that she didn't step on any unpleasant remnants. In an instant, she enveloped Amelia in a warm embrace, her laughter filling the air. "Amelia! Oh, how I've missed you."

-Amelia, caught off guard by the unexpected embrace, couldn't help but laugh and return the hug wholeheartedly. "I missed you too. I can't believe you're here. It's been so long since I saw you."

- "Of course, last time mother went alone and didn't even bring me to your house. But don't worry, since you're here, we'll play all day now. I'll show you all around the castle. Do you know we have a garden now. I even planted some of your favorite flowers there." Rebecca couldn't stop and kept going on and on about anything that came to her mind, she wanted to inform her of everything and drag her out to show her around.

- In that moment, as both girls started chatting, the world around them faded away. The joy of their reunion overshadowed any embarrassment or inconvenience caused by the chaotic entrance.

- As their talks subsided a little, Rebecca turned her attention to Rio, who stood nearby, watching the heartfelt reunion. With a friendly smile, she extended her hand toward him, a gesture of welcome. "Welcome to Haven Rio. It's been a while since I saw you too. You better teach me about how you beat me in chess every time."

_ Rio, still recovering from the earlier wave of nausea and feeling a sense of relief, extended his hand to shake Rebecca's. "Thanks princess."

Hearing his usual way of response, Amelia smiled a little while Rebecca shook his head, "Well, now that you both are here, I'll show you all around the city. Father even agreed to let us go on a tour around the capital." She happily informed them about her plans. She was thinking about what she'll do when they come, but then her father gave the idea that she should help them take a look around the capital. Since they'll be new here, she could act as a guide. Of course Rebecca herself didn't know anything about the capital, but at least she knows more than these two right.

Amelia's face brightened as she heard Rebecca's words, she loved roaming around. So she happily exclaimed - "Yeah, we'll go to all the parks and restaurants. I've heard some of them sell really good snacks. I need to try everything."

'Her habit of eating sweets never left her alone huh' everyone who heard her words thought and looked at her doubtfully. While Amelia ignoring it all kept asking Rebecca about what else she planned.

Rio's gaze remained fixed on Rebecca as he watched her chat happily with Amelia, completely unaware of the tumultuous thoughts that swirled in his mind. The memories of the novel, the events that will unfold later, and how Rebecca played a part in his family's destruction—all of it played like a vivid movie reel in his head. The feeling of betrayal and the sense of being used gnawed at his heart, leaving him with a mix of anger, confusion, and a lingering sense of vulnerability.

There were very few things that Shiva hated back on earth, and being used by someone, being a pawn for someone was definitely somewhere on the top among them. The memories associated with that feeling came to his head further fueling an indescribable feeling of anger in his heart.

However, amidst the swirl of conflicting emotions, Rio couldn't deny the genuine happiness that radiated from Amelia and Rebecca.

Rio took a deep breath, deciding to set aside his personal problems and focus on the bigger picture. He reminded himself that this encounter was just the beginning—a single snapshot in the larger story of their lives. There would be many more moments, conversations, and opportunities where people would betray him according to the plot - he just has to be prepared for all of them.

'There's no way I can kill all of them, and neither should I.'

Lost in his thoughts, Rio failed to notice the piercing gaze that bore into him. It was only when he felt a strong presence and turned his head that he found himself locked in the intense gaze of Queen Athena, Rebecca's mother and his aunt. Her eyes, a mesmerizing deep blue, shimmered with a subtle golden light, lending an ethereal quality to her presence. Rio couldn't help but feel a slight tremor of unease as he met her gaze.

Athena's gaze seemed to penetrate through his very soul, and Rio was acutely aware of her extraordinary abilities as a Soul Seer. The mere thought of her powers made him apprehensive, for he wondered if she could see through him, if she could discern his true identity as a transmigrator or unravel the secrets he held within. The notion sent a shiver down his spine.

'Shit'

Rio's heart raced as he observed Athena's mesmerizing eyes shimmer with a touch of golden light. The realization of her powers as a Soul Seer intensified his unease, and he couldn't shake off the nagging doubt that she might be able to see through the depths of his soul. Just as he grappled with his apprehensions, system notifications abruptly appeared before him, warning of an external force attempting to discern his soul.

[△Warming△]

[Outside interference]

[Use of a skill to see the soul of host detected]

Chapter 93 Soul Vision & Soul Eyes

While Rebecca and Amelia were happily talking with each other about their plans for the next few days, Athena just stood on a side watching her daughter's happiness from a side. Every Time she saw both these girls together, it reminded her of her own childhood, how she and her sister used to just play around in the family.

Her nostalgic thoughts were broken when she heard a voice in her head -"So it is true."

Athena felt surprised as she heard Psyche's voice resonating in her mind, feeling curious she asked back "What do you mean by "so it is true"? What is?"

Psyche's voice echoed in Athena's consciousness, carrying a sense of intrigue and fascination. "Nothing much, just your nephew. He's quite the special case."

"Is something wrong? Tell me clearly." Athena thought worriedly as she glanced at her sister, Artemis.

"I have observed him closely since Artemis sought your assistance. He's got quite the attention from all the gods."

Athena's eyebrows furrowed slightly as she processed Psyche's words. Just like everybody else she had heard rumors about Rio's awakening and his blessing. Artemis had told her about Nyx but to hear that Rio had the attention of every God only deepened her intrigue, and Psyche's previous words didn't make any sense to her yet.

'Seriously these gods and their way of roundabout speaking. Can't they just be straightforward.'

"So you now believe the claims of him receiving Nyx's blessings? It is rare, but it's not like this hasn't happened before." Athena asked, hoping Psyche would get the hint and clarify. After all, as she said, getting a blessing while awakening was indeed rare, but it has happened many times before in the past too. Even her own father had gotten a blessing during his awakening, so what made Rio special enough to attract the attention of other gods, she couldn't understand.

Psyche, fully aware of her chosen one's thoughts replied, her voice held a note of skepticism as she said "I must admit, I was skeptical at first when I heard your words. Mortals often lie and embellish their tales of fake blessings. They either get easily tricked or they just don't understand how Gods work. But in his case, it might very well be true."

Psyche remembered how doubtful she was when she heard that the primordial goddess Nyx came herself to give him the blessing. But looking at him closely now, she could say it might as well be the truth. She could feel the aura of greeks on him.

That's why she felt curious, cause unlike the mortals of this world, she knew exactly how the Greek gods worked, after all she herself was a mortal at the beginning. She had seen how indifferent and selfish the gods can be firsthand. She had suffered countless times, her life a mere plaything for those gods to play around, and that was all the doings of the ones who were nowhere near the level of some primordials.

That's why she has been paying attention to him. And he had indeed brought her some surprises. The blessing of Nyx and later the blessing of Skuld. Psyche wondered what else he was hiding? She wanted to take a look at his soul herself, but she didn't want to take the chance knowing it might irritate Nyx. Nyx can kill her with a snap of her fingers, no way she was taking that risk.

But it's not like there's no way, she had been waiting for this moment only. Thinking this far, Psyche continued "He's quite an interesting fellow. I can't be sure but the kid has more than one blessing on him. And they aren't weak or small ones." Psyche's voice resonated with a gentle curiosity.

Athena's heart skipped a beat as she heard Psyche's voice echoing in her mind. The goddess's interest in Rio piqued her curiosity further, and she couldn't help but wonder what Psyche meant by "he's quite an interesting fellow." With a slight frown, she turned her attention away from Rebecca and directed her gaze towards Rio, who remained locked in contemplation, his eyes fixated on Rebecca. Though his face had no clear expressions, the conflicting emotions within him were palpable, even from a distance in her eyes.

Athena's gaze lingered on Rio, her curiosity piqued by his intense focus on Rebecca. She couldn't help but wonder what thoughts were running through his mind.

Just like Psyche, Athena was curious too. Her sister had asked her to take a look at Rio before, but when she agreed to do it, Artemis refused saying Rio had already explained what she wanted to know and there was no need.

Athena kept looking at him, her eyes seemingly searching for something within him. She had always possessed a deep insight into the emotions of others. It was like a gift or an innate ability that had guided her throughout her life ever since her childhood. And this gift only increased in power after she became Psyche's avatar. Now she could literally see a person's soul and see their true nature.

With a focused thought, she activated her skill Soul Vision*¹, allowing her deep blue eyes to take on a subtle golden glow. Soon her powers came into effect as her gaze pierced through the veil of mortal existence and looked past what anybody else could possibly see.

However, before Athena could delve deeper into her observations, an unexpected interruption occurred. Rio suddenly turned around and looked at her.

Athena couldn't help but wonder if he had somehow sensed her probing gaze or perhaps understood the nature of her power. Her mind questioned whether his reaction was merely coincidental or was it something else.

When Rio met her eyes, his face paled visibly, a tinge of unease clouding his features, sweat started forming on his forehead. It was then that Rio's system started giving out red flags and warning signs on his status screen-

[⚠warning⚠]

[Outside interference detected]

[Use of a skill to see host's soul detected]

He had doubts that Athena might use her skill on him when he came to the capital, but what the fuck was this shit, they have just met. She hasn't even talked to him. Is this how she greets anybody now?

Caught off guard by Rio's unexpected reaction, Athena found herself locked in a silent exchange of gazes with him. In that moment, a mixture of confusion and curiosity enveloped them both. Athena trying to read his soul, while Rio trying to read her thoughts.

Rio kept looking at her hoping to see any hint, any sign if she saw something or noticed something, but her face only had that same blank expression from beginning to end. Her every thought masked behind her beautiful face and that ever present serene smile. It was like she could see it all & read everything on others and yet she herself remained distant and unreadable to everyone.

'Damn her poker face is good. Guess watching others expressions and real nature had taught her how to hide her own thoughts.' He thought.

Rio had a bad premonition growing in his heart as he watched Athena tilting her head with a confused look. His heart raced within his chest as he met Athena's gaze. He could now see her confusion, her lingering curiosity, and wondered if she suspected anything about his identity.

Rio's heart nearly stopped beating as he saw her eyes shining even brighter, her deep blue eyes changing into a full golden color, making him further scared that she might've saw something, cause now she was even using the updated version of her previous skill soul vision, her signature skill called Soul Eyes*².

'Shit'

'Damn it Psyche. It's definitely her.'

'System do something about it. Or we both dying pretty soon.'

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_____ *¹ Soul Vision

Skill Type: Active (blessing)

Description: Soul Vision allows the user to take a glimpse into the essence of another individual's soul. With a focused thought, the user can peer through the physical form and look past what's hidden. This skill grants a limited understanding of the target's soul, akin to a fleeting peek or a quick glance. Soul Vision is a valuable tool for gathering preliminary information or discerning someone's general disposition.

Limitation- Less effective on someone who's stronger than the user. The effects of this spell can be easily negated with high mental power.

Soul Eyes -

Skill Type: Active (blessing)

Description: Soul Eyes is an enhanced version of the Soul Vision skill, offering a deeper and more comprehensive read on an individual's soul. Soul Eyes functions as an open book, allowing the user to access a wealth of information contained within the target's soul. This skill provides a comprehensive understanding of the target's thoughts, emotions, past experiences, and even hidden motivations. Soul Eyes is an invaluable skill for uncovering secrets, deciphering intentions, and obtaining a profound understanding of others true nature.

Chapter 94 Privacy Mode Enabled

As soon as Athena activated her skill soul vision, the surroundings around her started to change, she looked at Rio and all she could see were some glimpses of emotions running across his mind. Frustration, anger, betrayal and loss - every emotion looked as evident as different colors in her eyes. Athena tried to probe further but that was all she could see. It made her confused as according to her mastery of skill and Rio's lack of power, it should allow her a pretty good knowledge about everything, and yet all she could witness were normal stuff she could notice from anyone's expressions normally.

When she looked at Rio's eyes, having the panicked look, her curiosity got the better of her, she wanted to understand the reason why her powers didn't work naturally or what was different about him.

Psyche's voice in her head telling him "she thought so too" further made her determined. So she closed her eyes and used her main skill, soul eyes on him.

When she opened them again as if a whole world of thoughts and emotions passed in front of her eyes in that single moment. The world around her seemed to fade away, replaced by a blank canvas devoid of any color and form. Her vision narrowed down to Rio, and she directed her gaze towards his soul, a flicker of flame floating within him. (Souls are basically balls of energy near our heart, at least that's what I think.)

'System do something about it, or we're both gonna die pretty soon.' Rio said in his mind in a hurry, he knew meeting Athena was a risk, but it wasn't something he could ignore. He had gotten something which could hinder her basic probing skills but he never thought she'd use her main skill so early on him without any reason. He just hoped the system would have some kind of function to help him this time, otherwise if Athena figured out he wasn't Rio, he didn't know how he would end up.

[Does the host wish to access the security mode.]

[According to the rules to protect system and host's secrets...]

'Do whatever you want, just stop her damn skill.' Rio said in a hurry he had no time to waste reading some notifications while she was staring dead into his eyes.

[It would cost you.] System informed him of the final warning and continued its work

[Permission granted.]

[Soul secrecy allowed. Opting to use the privacy function.]

[Security mode enabled.]

[Resisting the skill directed at the host.]

Athena, who was now looking at the layers of what his soul looked like, At first, she observed the surface of his soul, like ripples on a tranquil pond. She saw hints of his character and the emotions that colored his existence. It all manifested like ethereal wisps, swirling and intertwining in front of her eyes but her curiosity pushed her further, delving beyond the initial impressions. It was then that she sensed a familiar resistance, causing a slight ache in her head. This wasn't entirely unexpected, as it always happened when she looked at those who possessed unique blessings or were chosen by higher gods, but what happened next made her more confused.

She watched as a misty fog started to surround his soul and she found her gaze getting pushed back. No matter how she tried or focused she couldn't look past that fog. This realization struck her with a mixture of surprise and confusion, for her abilities had rarely failed her in the past.

Athena's brow furrowed in frustration, her powers thwarted again by this unforeseen hindrance. She pondered the meaning of this resistance. Was it a natural defense mechanism of his soul, or was it a consequence of some blessing he received.

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As the system engaged the protection function or whatever, though uncertain of its efficiency, Rio clung to the hope that this defense would be sufficient to hide his secret from Athena's probing gaze.

[Resistance successful]

Rio read the notification and breathed a sigh of relief. He could finally stop worrying a little now. Even though everything only lasted for a few seconds, they were the most intense moments for him ever since he came to Arcadia. He wasn't even this tense when he lied to Artemis's face.

Athena's eyes studied him carefully, her intuition guiding her as she tried to unravel the veil of mystery before her. Even though her powers as a Soul Seer seemed momentarily thwarted, leaving her perplexed and intrigued, her expression was filled with a mixture of curiosity and concern, cause even though it was only for a moment she had sensed a depth within his soul, a complexity that shouldn't be possible for someone so young.

She observed the sudden change in Rio's expression as he swiftly averted his eyes and calmed down. His face carried clear signs of relief now, a clear indication that he noticed something.

'Did she see something.' Rio asked in his mind as he closed his eyes, trying to relax his speed running heart.

[Safety of host's secrets determined.]

[You have nothing to worry about.]

System's reply finally made him drop his guard as he truly calmed down now. He breathed a sigh of relief, grateful that his secret remained hidden.

He turned his attention back to Athena, their gazes locking once again. The system had said that he was safe, but the underlying fear of exposure still gnawed at him. There was no way he could trust the words of a system who always used the excuse of being level 0 at every turn.

As their gazes remained locked, both Rio and Athena felt a sense of mutual confusion. Rio, nervous about the protection of his secrets and doubtful of the system's capabilities. Athena, on the other hand, was wondering what was wrong with her powers, or what the actual fuck was going on with her nephew.

'Kids, you don't see them for a year and they've already changed so much.' She thought as she withdrew her skill, and the world around her returned to the vibrant colors of its reality once again.

As their gazes finally broke, Rio felt a sense of relief wash over him. Watching her now he could guess that the system saved him this time, but he didn't want to depend on it for the next time if something happened. It was his mistake overlooking Psyche's involvement or thinking that Athena wouldn't use her main skill on him without any reason, and he nearly got found out because of that.

He promised himself to be more careful next time. Otherwise if someday system couldn't function or went offline for some reasons, like in those novels he read back on earth, then he would be fucked.

And for that he would need to remain vigilant at every turn, it would begin with starting from finding a way to save himself from Athena's soul-piercing abilities without the system's help.

'Remind me to get something to get past Athena's ability.' Rio made a note in his mind, telling system about the next thing on his mind.

Athena who just blinked and turned off her skill, found someone tapping her shoulder, despite turning back she could guess who it was and it made her scared to even look back. In a hurry and curiosity she had used her skill, forgetting about her surroundings, and now there was a problem tapping her shoulder.

Unable to come up with any suitable solutions, she did what every other wise woman does, ignore the problem.

She took a step further, walking towards Rebecca and Amelia who were still engrossed in talking with each other, but sadly her problems caught up to her faster, as she felt a hand wrapped around her neck, as whisper of a voice rang out in her ears -"I thought I told you not to use your skill on my son."

Athena felt her heart sink in the shadows as she heard that. The voice belonged to none other than Artemis, her sister and Rio's mother, who had caught her red-handed.

Athena smiled nervously as she waved her hands, "ohh sister, didn't see you there. Wel_ welcome to Haven." Her voice stammered as she felt the hand tighten a little.

"Don't try to change the topic." Artemis said as she looked into her eyes. Athena, knowing there was no way to get out of it, tried to come up with another solution. Even though her sister asked her help before, but later she called her and told her not to do anything and leave the kids be, but Athena couldn't control herself when she heard Psyche's words in her head and took a peek, which later turned into her main skill.

"I-I can explain." Athena said, as she tried to scan her surroundings hoping to find a support lifeline or a distraction. Her eyes landed on Rio who was standing beside them. As she looked at him, she noticed the well hidden smirk plastered on his face, his eyes clearly trying to hold back his amusement.

Thinking this little guy won't help her, she looked around but sadly the hall they were in was empty now. All the people present had left them alone some time ago, her daughter was busy catching up with her friend so she didn't even look at her mother.

Knowing there was no other option, she looked back at Rio and signaled him with her eyes, hoping he'd distract his mother.

To her surprise, Rio's expression softened, and he reached out to hold her hand. "Aunt Athena," he began, his voice laced with an innocence of a kid, "why don't we go now? We've been standing here for quite some time."

Though surprised, Athena seized the opportunity and nodded eagerly, "Ye- yes, you're right. We should hurry. The cars are waiting outside," she replied, as she got away from Artemis's grasp and pulled Rio with her as she started walking out in a hurry.

Artemis, witnessing the interaction between her son and Athena, and watching their departing backs sighed as she followed them behind along with Rebecca and Amelia, as they made their way towards the exit.

Walking forward, as Rio entered the car, he calmly said -"You owe me a favor now aunt, remember that."

Athena smiled softly, hearing his words, as she thought -'What an interesting kid indeed.'

Chapter 95 City Of Haven

After everyone came out and settled into the vehicles waiting outside for them, They started their journey towards the Royal Palace. As it was the entourage of Queen of Schilla the security details were followed on every turn, the routes drivers took were secured and every vehicle was constantly in contact.

Following closely behind the main car, where Athena, Artemis, Rebecca, Amelia and Rio were sitting, was a convoy of magically powered cars moved in unison. While one of them drove forward to clear the route.

These cars were a marvel of engineering and magic, simply proving how unique Arcadia was in terms of all The different worlds. The initial designs for cars and other vehicles were first provided by some

people who were pulled into Arcadia from a modern world, but despite the details making them here in a fantasy world was found impossible.

The dwarves, famous for their innate affinity for crafting were simply hellbent on making these vehicles, but even they failed several thousand times. They tried whatever mineral and material they could find to make and power cars but failed. Coating mana and writing formations was useless as the environmental magic would give out disturbance and it simply failed again.

It was then that they stumbled upon a rare singular book which once translated gave them the knowledge of utilizing mana cores and some formations to power these vehicles. It played a crucial role in bringing all kinds of technology to Arcadia. This discovery sparked a revolution in transportation, allowing the construction of cars that were previously deemed impossible in the fantasy realm.

Mana cores were used as fuel to power these vehicles, which provides constant mana supply and formations which turns that mana into an energy that propel the vehicles forward. The intricate formations inscribed onto the car's chassis served as catalysts, channeling and amplifying the magical energy to enhance the vehicle's performance. Over the years the use of some protection arrays was added to provide better security.

The cars were a testament to the fusion of magical craftsmanship and technological innovation. Their designs showcased the aesthetics of both worlds, with ornate embellishments and enchantments woven seamlessly into the sleek and streamlined structures. Runes and sigils were etched onto the vehicles, enhancing their performance, providing stability, and offering protection against external magical influences.

The use of cars and mana powered carriages had revolutionized transportation in Arcadia. It offered a faster and more efficient means of travel, connecting distant cities and regions. While bikes were prohibited in Haven, due to safety concerns and potential misuse of magical formations, cars and carriages became the preferred mode of ground transportation for both commoners and nobility alike.

In contrast, air travel in Arcadia primarily relied on magically enhanced ships. These grand vessels sailed through the skies, propelled by powerful formations inscribed upon their hulls. The stability and reliability of these ships, combined with the ease of inscribing complex formations on their surfaces, made them the preferred choice for long-distance travel. The creation of airplanes was deemed unnecessary, as the capabilities and safety of the magical ships were unmatched.

[A/N - obviously it goes without saying that all these innovations and luxuries are only for the ones who could afford them. Cars were a sign of riches, while the low version of cars was mana powered carriages which was for commoners and normal residents.]

The convoy moved in precise formation, guided by skilled drivers who had mastered the art of maneuvering these magical vehicles. The leader of the caravan, captain of the royal guard, ensured that the procession maintained its cohesion and moved smoothly through the bustling streets of Haven City.

As the caravan made its way through the city, the enchantments on the cars allowed them to navigate effortlessly throughout the roads. The magical cores hummed with energy, propelling the vehicles forward with a quiet grace.

Rio leaned against the car window, taking in the vibrant sights and sounds of the bustling city of Haven. It was a stark contrast to his own hometown of Damascus. The grandeur and liveliness of the capital left him in awe, as he watched the streets come alive with preparations for the upcoming birthday celebration of Princess Rebecca.

The city was adorned with colorful decorations, from fluttering banners and ribbons to ornate archways and flower arrangements. Though there was not a single image of Rebecca on any posters, as no one from the commoners saw her and selling her photos was probably prohibited, but still it left Rio shocked to see how many times he saw "Happy Birthday Princess" floating on the roads.

He looked towards Rebecca, who after noticing his gaze felt even prouder. It was a surprise for her too, when she came out in the morning with her mother, but she can't tell him that right. She even pointed towards one of the bigger banners on a big intersection, highlighting how pretty it looked. Amelia who watched all this was now looking towards her mother, silently conveying she better prepare something even more grand than this or they're gonna have a serious talk. Rio and Artemis could only sigh at her looks, while Athena just smiled at how childish she was.

As the caravan continued its journey, Rio noticed the presence of many guards patrolling the streets. Their uniforms gleamed under the sunlight, and their vigilant demeanor spoke of the importance placed on maintaining order and security within the city. Or maybe it was due to someone who spread news that the Queen was visiting the city today. Whatever it was, it left a nice impression of Haven on Rio's mind.

Haven's strategic location as the last line of defense against external threats meant that it was surrounded by other cities. The city's layout reflected this too, with different zones serving different

purposes. In the outer areas of the city, the regular folk who had lived here for generations resided. These were the hardworking individuals and their families who formed the backbone of the city from the very beginning, going about their daily lives and contributing to its vibrancy.

Moving towards the center of the city, Rio noticed a bustling hub of activity. This was where the famous merchants, guilds, and various organizations had established their headquarters. The streets were lined with shops and stalls, each offering a unique range of goods and services. It was a place of commerce and exchange, the highest of crowds were gathered in this area.

Beyond the central district, Rio's gaze fell upon the inner area of the city. This was a region reserved for the nobility, royal family relatives, and others with a high standing like some famous guild masters or heads of clans. It was here that the influential figures of Haven's society resided, each with their own grand mansions and estates. Renowned scholars, alchemists and other important personalities could be found in this exclusive area, contributing to the city's intellectual and cultural pursuits.

Finally, at the heart of it all stood the magnificent Royal Palace, the residence of the main Royal Family. It was a sprawling structure, its towering walls and exquisite architecture a testament to the grandeur of the kingdom. The Royal Palace served as the seat of power, where important decisions were made, and royal ceremonies and events took place. It was a symbol of authority and tradition, radiating an aura of majesty and regality.

Given their familial ties and relationships, Athena had requested that the Blake family stay at the Royal Palace during their visit to Haven. This was not an opportunity extended to many, as forget about gaining residency in the royal palace, even living within the capital city was an arduous process. The strict regulations and lengthy procedures aimed to ensure that only those with significant connections or contributions to the city were granted the privilege of calling it their home and being a local here.

Finding a house in the capital city was no easy task, and many aspiring residents had to navigate a lengthy bureaucracy. Several requirements and rigorous background checks acted as a filter, ensuring that only the most deserving and reputable individuals were given the chance to settle within the city's walls. The process involved thorough scrutiny of one's background, financial status, and potential contributions to the city's growth and prosperity.

The Blake family had a mansion in Haven but due to their close ties with Athena and her position as a member of the royal family, they were allowed to stay there. It was probably an honor very few in Arcadia could experience, but to Artemis it was just tiresome. She was sure that instead of her acting as a guest here, this sister of hers only called her so she can throw all her work on her too.

As the caravan made its way towards the Royal Palace, Rio couldn't help but feel a mix of excitement and trepidation. This was a new experience in his life, an opportunity to immerse himself in a world so different from his own. Because despite being in this world for nearly two months, he hadn't been free to enjoy even his own Damascus city fully. The grandeur of the capital city, the diversity of its inhabitants, and the labyrinth of social structure all added to the allure and mystery of a fantasy world.

As Rio's eyes explored Haven City, he couldn't help but draw comparisons to the vibrant and diverse cities he had seen in famous tv shows or movies back on earth. While Haven had elements reminiscent of King's Landing from Game of Thrones series, with its bustling streets and majestic architecture, it also shared similarities with the grand city from Lord of the Rings movies, with its harmonious coexistence of different races.

As Rio observed the diverse inhabitants of Haven, he couldn't help but notice the presence of halflings and some beast races among the humans. The city was a melting pot of different races and cultures. Halflings, with their obviously different stature and nature, could be seen scurrying through the streets, while the beast races, with their distinctive features and animalistic qualities, added an intriguing element to the city's landscape.

In Haven City, the presence of peaceful beast races added a unique charm to the already diverse population. Rio observed some feline races of cats and foxes and rabbits known for their agility and grace. With their sleek fur, sharp claws, and keen senses, they roamed the city's alleys, contributing to its lively atmosphere. Felines were known for their artistic talents, often showcasing their skills in music, dance, and visual arts. Plus all the halfling girls of these races look pretty and cute, which would satisfy many times the requirements of perverts and cultured men.

Within Haven City, demihumans, a term used to describe individuals with mixed human and non-human heritage, found their place among the various races. Rio noticed some Half-Elves, possessing a blend of elven pointy ears and human resemblance. They were often found engaging in scholarly pursuits or taking on roles as diplomats and mediators, thanks to their inherent ability to bridge the gap between different races and cultures. Or how elves were known to be a peaceful race, who didn't like to mingle in any territorial disputes.

Alongside the Half-Elves, the Dwarves were a prominent race in Haven City. Known for their exceptional craftsmanship and drinking habits, they established thriving underground communities, crafting intricate works of art, weapons, and armor. The Dwarves' contributions to the city's economy and infrastructure were highly valued, as they excelled in engineering and mining.

Rio also noticed some big burly Orcs, who had integrated into Haven City's society. Despite their intimidating appearance, the Orcs present in Haven had proven their loyalty and thinking abilities, serving as skilled warriors and defenders of the city. Their inborn sense of honor and unity made them an integral part of the city's security forces.

As Rio's gaze wandered through the streets, he marveled at the harmonious coexistence of these diverse races and demihumans within Haven City. The streets were adorned with vibrant marketplaces, where merchants from different races sold their wares, showcasing the richness of their respective cultures. The scents of exotic foods, the melodies of various musical instruments, and the colorful architecture created a symphony of diversity that filled the air.

Obviously since Haven was a city made and ruled by humans, they were in the majority and in power, but still looking at the peaceful coexistence of beast races, demihumans, and humans had shaped the city's identity, making it a truly remarkable place to be.

Lost in his thoughts, Rio closed the car window and settled back into his seat. Despite knowing it all from his knowledge of the novel, looking at it from his own two eyes was a different experience. The journey to the Royal Palace continued and he couldn't wait for what more surprises it would bring him.

Little did he know that his presence in Haven would not only shape his own destiny but change the future of Heaven itself.

But that's a tale for future me to tell.

Chapter 96 The Royal Palace

The group of cars approached the grand entrance of the Royal Palace, and Rio watched as the guards, donned in gleaming armor and holding spears, respectfully stepped aside, with a deep bow, they acknowledged the presence of Queen Athena and her entourage, granting them passage into the palace. The imposing main doors swung open, revealing a breathtaking view of the palace's interior.

As the cars navigated through the expansive gardens and quarters, Rio's fascination grew. The clear greenery and vibrant gardens that adorned the surroundings added a touch of natural beauty to the majestic setting. The carefully manicured lawns and meticulously pruned shrubs showed the attention and care given to everything around the palace.

Finally, the group arrived at the main palace, a colossal structure that was built so magnificently. The palace was a testament to the wealth and power of the royal family, a symbol of their authority and importance in the realm of Arcadia. It was a sign of legacy that the Royal Schott Family had built in the history of Arcadia.

Since Rio was the one sitting near the window, when the car door got opened by some random guard, he walked out first. Feeling a little stiff from the hour-long journey, he lazily stretched his arms, and with that his gaze fell on the entirety of his surroundings, which left his mouth open from what he saw.

The palace stood as a testament to grandeur of the royal family, its architecture a stunning blend of different styles and influences. Towers soared into the sky, adorned with intricate carvings and elaborate balconies that offered breathtaking views of the surrounding environment and probably the whole of Haven.

As the group stepped out of the cars, they were greeted by a contingent of guards dressed in gleaming armor. These formidable warriors stood at attention, their spears held with precision and respect. Soon they all bowed to everyone showing their standing and respect for the group of nobility.

Artemis and Athena were too used to all the praises and bowing, so it was nothing new for them. But it did surprise Rio a bit.

Amelia and Rebecca were too busy chatting to notice their surroundings. How could they talk constantly for nearly 2 hours now, Rio had no idea. He could just push it aside as another superpower of being a girl.

Rebecca was going to pull Amelia towards the garden that she spoke of, where she herself planted and cared for the plants, but before they could take 2 steps away from that place, both their mothers stopped them. Knowing how restless and energetic their daughters had been since morning, it wasn't good to let them play around anymore. The disappointed expressions on the girls' faces were quickly replaced with understanding, as they realized instead of playing outside they can just go in and talk more for hours.

'Aaaand there they go.' Rio thought as he saw Amelia just running away, while Rebecca guided her in the empty hallways.

Artemis and Athena too started walking inside, talking amongst themselves about God knows what, cause Rio who was just behind them couldn't hear anything.

They're probably using some kind of barrier magic, seriously what a waste of magic, what big secrets will they discuss at the palace gates anyway, when they can just go in and do it without wasting their mana.
- Rio thought.

'Is it something like how rich people back on earth didn't care where they spent their money? I remember one guy even sent his car into space just because he could. What a waste. Could've given it to me instead.' Rio's thoughts wandered again as he remembered some little stuff from back on earth. It had become a hobby of his now, or maybe it was just natural for him to compare both his lives since he did spend 30 years on earth.

His thoughts were broken as Esme tapped his shoulder, he looked around and sighed for being left behind. He started walking faster to catch up to his aunt and mother, who were already far away, but even then his eyes kept darting around, scanning every intricate detail of the surroundings. The architecture of the palace boasted a fusion of styles, blending the elegance of elven construction with the sturdiness of dwarven craftsmanship. It was a harmonious blend of beauty and practicality, reflecting the diverse influences of the various races that inhabited Arcadia.

Rio stepped onto the cobblestone pathway leading to the main entrance, he couldn't help but be captivated by the sheer beauty and magnificence of the palace. The craftsmanship was impeccable, and every detail seemed to have been carefully considered. The walls, made of exquisite stone, were adorned with ornate patterns and delicate filigree work, showcasing the skill and artistry of the craftsmen who had brought the palace to life.

The beauty of the palace extended beyond its architectural wonders. Cause it was not just a residence for the royal family; it was a hub of knowledge, culture, and history. Elaborate frescoes graced the ceilings, depicting scenes of epic battles, mythical creatures, and the triumphs of the royal lineage. Even the walls of the surroundings showed the artistry of a level unlike anything he had seen before, famous sayings of past kings and their achievements in Arcadia were all carved out on them alongside their images and names. Stained glass windows cast colorful hues of light onto the marble floors, creating a scene of vibrant colors that danced across the surface.

Rio couldn't help but be overwhelmed by the sheer size and splendor of the palace. Every hall, every corner seemed to tell a story, whispering tales of a bygone era. Its walls bearing witness to centuries of history and the legacy of the royal family. Rio's footsteps echoed softly as he made his way through the corridors, each step unveiling a new masterpiece of art and design. A thought that he'll learn everything

that he read in books for months, better just by looking at all these images, came to his mind but he shook it off.

As Rio took in the breathtaking surroundings, a single word escaped his lips: "Beautiful."

It was a moment of realization, a profound appreciation for the rich heritage and cultural significance embodied within the walls of the Royal Palace.

'How funny it is that this same palace will be blasted to smithereens by Blake family according to the novel. I should change that event too. It'd be a loss to toss away such a grand work of art.'

Chapter 97 The Stepping Stone

"Beautiful" A word escaped his lips as he took upon the sights of the palace walls and the history carved upon them.

"It is, isn't it." Rio heard a boy's voice. He turned his head sideways and saw someone standing there. The boy was around 15 years of age, he was dressed in fancy white clothes, which enhanced his charm, and clearly showed his noble standing. He had long golden yellow hair that were swinging past his shoulders, and accessories that shouted I'm the rich guy vibe.

"I haven't introduced myself. I'm Bernhardt von schott." He declared with a calm voice carrying a hint of pride. -"And you must be the heir of house Blake, Rio was it."

Rio looked at the man from head to toe, noticing the regal bearing and the aura of authority that surrounded him. Rio looked at the guards standing behind him, and unknowingly a little smile came to the corners of his lips remembering the lines depicting what happens to this guy in the novel. This guy had the funniest ending in the novel, it could be called cruel if you look at it from the other way but who cares.

Prince Bernhardt von Schott, son of king Maximus von Schott and his second wife Baliena Crescent. A guy who will compete with Rebecca and her younger brother Alfred for the throne of the Schilla empire in future.

This guy is one of those characters who are just written to get face slapped by others, to make them stand out. Remember the guy who starts a conflict with the protagonist and then drags everyone around him in conflict, well this is him. But why was Rio laughing at him, well that was cause he was too idiot to even be called a villain or a challenge for the protagonist. He's a total tool used by everyone around him and a stepping stone set for our dear protagonist.

If Rio had to count how many times this guy got slapped, insulted, beaten and ignored in the novel despite being a prince - it'll probably take him more time than the system takes to count his points nowadays.

Controlling his emotions Rio introduced himself in a proper manner too. "It is an honor to meet you, prince Bernhardt," Rio replied respectfully, inclining his head slightly. "I am Rio Blake, the son of Agnus Blake and Artemis Raven."

Bernhardt's face lit up with a proud smile, clearly pleased by Rio's recognition and admiration. He reached out and tapped Rio's shoulder, a gesture that held a sense of pride and thought of everyone as lesser in his mind.

"So why're you standing here alone? Come we'll walk together." Bernhardt said as he pointed towards the way where Athena and Artemis left and turned around the corridors.

"Ahh it'll be a pleasure to have the prince accompany me. Of course, if it doesn't trouble you." Rio replied as he noticed the guards stand-in beside him, they were probably going out somewhere but stopped for him.

"Wait here, we'll show our guest to his rooms."

Bernhardt looked around and dismissed his guards. He started walking and Rio followed him.

"Is she your guard, shadow I mean?" Bernhardt asked as he turned and looked at Esme who was silently following Rio, having no expression on her face.

"Yes, ignore her, she doesn't speak much." Rio said clearly, cutting off Esme who was about to introduce herself. "Prince Bernhardt, I was curious about the palace. Why don't we talk about that, I'm sure it would be much more interesting to learn."

"I thought you've been here before. Last year on Alfred's awakening celebrations if I remember." Bernhardt asked as he doubtfully looked at him.

"I was, but we were late and the palace was already filled with other guests, so no one was free to look around last time with me, plus the palace is so big that I didn't dare wander around alone." Rio said smilingly as he shook his head, acting as clueless as a kid should.

Hearing his words Bernhardt smiled too, "So that's why. Well the palace is the sign of royalty, so it had to be grand. I used to feel like I would get lost when I first came here. I never went out alone without guards cause I didn't know my way back to the room, but it grows on you. Now I know every corner of this place." His voice carried a hint of sadness and nostalgia as he said that.

"Come I'll show you around as a tour, before taking you directly to your rooms." Bernhardt said and changed his direction walking further.

"It was a good thing I met you prince, otherwise I really would have to walk alone again." Rio said as he started listening to Bernhardt explaining history about the palace. Rio could see the pride look he had, while pointing his fingers on the murals that depicted pictures of the king fighting against some monsters, or when he talked about the generations of kings that had come before his father. He took pride in his lineage, and wasn't shy to show it.

To some it might look like he was boasting or acting like some young master who flaunted his family's name, but Rio begged to differ. At this point of time, Bernhardt too was just like some other innocent kid. Yes he was a little naive maybe, but his heart wasn't that of a person he becomes when the plot starts.

It was his luck to be born in a family of rulers, and he feels proud of his lineage because his ancestors worked hard to make and keep this legacy going for future generations. The Schott family had tons of enemies and faced many calamities, but it was still standing as rulers of Schilla and one of the strongest in all of Arcadia, because every king upon the throne paid the price for it with blood, sweat and tears. If some kid of their bloodline now doesn't feel proud about all their hard work and sacrifices, then there really is something wrong with that. Legacies are meant to teach a lesson and pride was something of a requirement to be a ruler.

Rio remembered about the events written in the novel, and thought - 'He's not dumb yet. Maybe he'll turn into a mindless npc once protagonist halo comes into play, or maybe once he learns about the big news that his dear father is supposedly planning to announce on Rebecca's birthday.'

Since everything happening now had already happened before the plot started, so there weren't many details, but with the little flashbacks or glimpses of the characters past written here and there, Rio could piece together an approximate idea of how everything might have played out. And one thing was for sure, this guy is in for a surprise if stuff went according to destiny's plans soon.

'But oh well guess you're safe this time buddy. No need to thank me for it.' Rio thought and a smile came to his face.

Soon after roaming around the empty hallways for a while, giving him about the general outline of what is made where and why, Bernhardt said his goodbyes and left. He was going out to meet with his friends when he stumbled upon me and decided to talk, and now he was running late. He did promise he'll show him around fully tomorrow if he's free before leaving.

[*** - obviously the prince didn't go to every room and hallways to show him every corner of the palace, which is probably prohibited knowledge for outsiders. They just roamed the outer areas for half an hour and he just pointed his fingers and talked about normal stuff which weren't big secrets and was known to everybody.]

Chapter 98 Stripping A Stepping Stone

After Rio reached his room, and saying goodbye to Bernhardt, Esme did a quick scan of the room he was staying in and after finding everything alright, she informed him about it.

Rio walked in and looked around. The rooms at the palace weren't anything unique, it was pretty much the same as his own room. Rio also didn't have much stuff placed around his room like momentos or something, there was one painting of his family and some drawings or doodles which Amelia pasted around just for fun. So the empty room of the royals didn't feel odd to him.

"You can take your rest for a while. Or I can get you something to eat if you're feeling hungry." Esme asked to which he just replied "No I'm fine. I can't eat anything for a while after what happened at the gate. My stomach's still a little rattled up."

"I warned you before. You should've been more careful." Esme said, remembering how clearly she had told him about the effects of teleportation gate before. Since he was newly awakened his body still needs time to properly fully adjust to the feeling of mana, traveling through long distance teleportation gates where you get swamped with lots of magic at once, and travel through space, of course your body won't be able to handle it well.

Rio remembered it too, but he ignored the lesson thinking it'll be similar to what he went through during his awakening, when he blinked and he was on the opposite end, but sadly it wasn't the case. "Yeah, well I thought it would feel the same as teleportation circles."

"They're different." Esme said and shook her head.

"Yeah, learned it the hard way." Rio said as he stroked his stomach, though the feeling of nausea was gone now, he still felt a little uneasy remembering that experience of puking his guts out.

"Okay, then take some rest. I'll be near, call me if you need anything."

"Bye Esme, take some rest too." Rio said as Esme walked out and closed the doors behind her. She's probably staying next door or in instant range knowing her.

Rio walked towards the window and looked outside, he took a deep breath as the serene environment carried a tinge of flowery smell everywhere.

[Host]

Hearing system speaking, he got back from the window and sat on his bed. "Yes system."

[What are you doing?]

"About what?"

[Bernhardt, you were being too respectful and friendly with him. That is not supposed to happen.]

"What does it matter what was supposed to happen? Since I already planned to change my engagement event, then Bernhardt and I wouldn't be enemies. He'd have no reason to hate me."

Rio said as he remembered the plotline of that guy, in the story ever since he was little, Bernhardt always wanted two things: Rebecca and the crown. He didn't have anyone else that he knew in the royal palace except his mother, so whenever he saw Alfred playing around with Rebecca, Bernhardt felt jealous, so he wanted her for himself. It was just a petty attention seeking thing in childhood, which turns into some twisted love and then into lust once the plot starts & this guy loses all his brain cells. Second thing he wanted was to rule this kingdom, he wanted to be the heir, to be the crown prince, but sadly for him, to keep the support of the Raven family and Blake family, the king made Alfred the crown prince. Igniting a little bit of hatred into this guy's heart.

This birthday celebration is probably the first time when his ambitions will take a hit, because then not only will the king announce Rebecca's engagement with Rio, which breaks his first wish. He also learns that he will never even have a chance to compete against Alfred for the position of crown prince, due to all the support Alfred has and he doesn't.

His mother Beliana, didn't belong to any major power, and what happened between the king and her was just a fling in their youthful days, which hit the mark and she got pregnant. Beliana knew she had no right to ever say the truth or ask anything from the king, so she left the Schilla empire and ran away, but due to some strings destiny pulled, the king learned about this bastard son of his and brought him into the royal palace.

Obviously king Maximus wasn't generous and held any love for this son or the woman he fucked once, what he was interested in -was the power this son awakened. Bernhardt had the element of lightning just like him, and this looked like a good investment plan to Maximus.

Beliana, ever protective of her son, teaches him everything and tells him to leave his greed for the crown's position as both mother and son had no sway within the palace. They had no backing, no support, and no power to speak of -if even after knowing that, they kept fighting for crown prince's position, the only thing they would get was death.

Even if queen Athena gets generous and lets them compete, the Raven family behind her or that sister of hers in Blake family would never allow for Athena to lose -and everybody knew that. That's why no one ever even thought of supporting Bernhardt.

But how can these canon fodder go against the plans of destiny, Bernhardt never learned this lesson. After this event his jealousy towards Alfred turns into hatred, as Alfred got everything he wanted without doing anything. He had the power, support of family, Rebecca everything- whatever Bernhardt lacked Alfred got for free.

So grew the classic tale of hatred between brothers vying for the throne.

Since Rio was engaged to this siscons dream girl, over time this guy started hating Rio too. Obviously with Rio's spreading infamy due to a certain kid's prophecy, hid Bernhardt's real hatred when he kept picking fights with Rio in the academy. Since Blake family already had its hands full dealing with the aftermath of other stuff, Rio let this idiot be, so as not to give Maximus an excuse to turn against Blake family.

This walking complex of inferiority, also picked fights with the protagonist, which ended up pushing Rebecca into his camp. And spelled his doom.

– But now stuff was different, since Rio already planned to change the events of engagement, there was no need for him to pick a fight with some Royal or to antagonize the king.

This was another experiment for Rio -he already learned that he can turn enemies into allies due to Esme. He learned that he can steal stuff cause of Asher. Now it was an experiment to see -Can he alter the entire setting of a character before the plot starts. Can he turn this stepping stone into something useful?

[What're you thinking?]

"Nothing, Isn't it nice that I actually got a friend my age. I'm trying to be friendly with my enemies instead of killing them, that's character development right there."

[First of all he is not your age. And second, your character development is just you messing around the plot. Changing his destiny could lead to some pretty big changes in the future. His role is to be a stepping stone and your actions might alter that route completely.]

"No it won't. Maximus never announced his successor in the novel until the end, remember. This guy loves his throne too much, just like his chosen God. He'll never leave it until he lives.

This race of competition between kids to see who's worthy, it's just his backup plan of necessity. Hell if it wasn't a requirement, I bet Maximus will kill his kids himself, fearing they'll take his throne from him after growing up, he's that insecure about being a king."

[So Bernhardt and Alfred, they're both tools for Maximus. What's wrong with picking Alfred as your friend then. He's strong, smart and he'll be protected by destiny too. In the novel he wins, so why not choose him instead of some washed up villain.]

"What's the rush? Don't you want to know what happens when we give this guy what he always wanted? In the novel he always complained about the unfairness he suffered, so I will give him a fair chance to compete against Alfred, let's see which brother wins. It'll be much more fun."

[My money's on Alfred.]

[No ignore that. It still isn't enough about why you picked Bernhardt instead of Alfred, is it?]

"No it's not. By picking Bernhardt, I can see the changes my actions bring in the plot. It can help me understand the cause and effects of my actions better until the plot starts. As you said they don't have much protection of fate now since the plot hasn't begun, so this guy will teach me the limits I can play around without getting repercussions from the heavens. But if I pick Alfred now, it won't change anything, and even if it did I'll have to wait until the plot starts to see how much effect it has on the plot."

[Let me get this straight, in simple terms if you push Alfred forward you'll have to wait until plot starts to know how much further he went from his supposed role, but by changing the destiny of Bernhardt you'll be able to see the results of your actions much clearer and sooner. Giving you enough time to prepare other routes.]

"Now you get it."

[It is a bold move. But you're right, it's better to learn as much as you can about the causality before the plot begins.]

"Yupp. Now ignore this and show me my status. Been a while since I checked it."

Chapter 99 How Much Have I Grown?

"Yupp. Now ignore this and show me my status. Been a while since I checked it."

Status

Name - Rio Blake / Shiva Kumar

Age - 10 / 30

World - Arcadia/???

Title - ???

Rank - Mortal F- rank

Element - Darkness (Amateur)

Stats▼-

-Quests -

~~Shop~~ - ▼ 3 > 2

~~Inventory~~ - 1

"System, show everything in a way so that I can see the difference about how much I've grown." Rio requested as he watched the stats, but since he already forgot what they were 3 weeks ago, he couldn't be sure what changed and what he should focus more on.

Rio said and ignored the useless details and focused more on stuff which actually changed over time.

[Loading... .

---- Stats▼

Strength: 5 > 8

Agility: 4 > 7

Endurance: 5 > 9

Intelligence: 16 > 16

Mana: 9 > 11

Perception: 3 > 6

Resilience: 8 > 11

---- Spells▼-

Fog of darkness

Shadow blade

---- Techniques▼-

Foundation art ***** (Beginner)

---- Blessing▼ 1 > 2

Dark manipulation (Level 1 - 13%)

Strings of mana (Level 1 - 6%)

Looking at his stats which have increased a little due to all the training that he had to do, a smile came to his face.

'Now I know why those MC's written in novels suddenly become training maniacs once they reincarnate. It really does feel nice to see how much I've grown stronger on a screen.'

'Is this why those gym junkies take photos standing in front of a mirror.' Rio thought but ignored the useless stuff the next second.

His intelligence didn't increase which was expected, as he didn't really come across something which was hard for him to learn yet or something that he already didn't know. Rest everything was increasing at its own pace. According to this pace every stat attribute would soon cross the limit of 10 and he could rank up to proper F rank.

One rank up in a month or two, that doesn't sound so bad. Well it is to be expected, and my speed will only increase once my body is fully accustomed to everything.

Ranking up from F rank to E rank was much harder than ranking up from E to D. This was cause F ranker's had just awakened and they need to spent much time so they can build a good foundation and their bodies properly adapt to the new changes mana brought. But E rankers don't need to waste time on this useless bullshit as their bodies are already used to this process, and they can directly focus on ranking up.

*** (Author explained the ranking up of anyone in his novel is somewhat similar to building a house. Where making a base was hard(awakening and low ranks), then continuing the work was easy(mid ranks), but as you reach higher it becomes hard again(high ranks) and ceilings were the toughest part(limiters).

**Obviously it only works on newbies cause as the rank goes higher and higher, the time and effort needed to gain even a single point is hard.

Rio had started learning some basic spells of his darkness element and shadow element with Myra, and practicing foundation sword art with Esme, both were slowly progressing. Due to his training with Artemis and constant use of mana and his element, the mastery of both his blessings have been increasing a little too. With Nyx's blessing he could now control his element a little better. While Skuld's strings of mana had given him better control over mana as a whole. But damn mastering it was hard. After trying for 3 weeks daily, all he could learn was 6% . And this was only the first level. Thinking thus far he looked at the details of this blessing again

-----Strings of mana

Type - Active(blessing)

Description - Strings of Mana is a fundamental skill that grants the user the ability to perceive mana as intricate threads or strings. With this skill, the user gains a basic understanding of mana and its flow. Over time one can convert their own mana into ethereal strings. Mana consumption depends on the proficiency, and proficiency depends on the hard work and effort you put in.

At Level 1, this blessing provides a basic spell that allows the user to create mana strings and manipulate them to a limited extent, granting them a form of telekinetic control over the strings.

- The control and strength of strings depends on the mana invested in it. Once fully mastered others will not be able to perceive or interact with the strings unless they possess similar mana perception abilities.
- This skill is the basic version of Skuld's skill threads of destiny. Depending on the proficiency of the user one can unlock other abilities over time.
- Can be merged and progressed further with a similar blessing of fate.

After looking at his status and blessings, Rio's focus came on the last thing this system had

System points - 14550 > 41750

[Deducting points for using protection methods

41750 - 10000 = 31750 remaining]

Rio had high hopes for these, as he pretty much did many things, but due to all the trainings and other stuff, he would be too tired to look at these numbers clearly and argue with the system. But looking at the numbers now it was too much for him to be calm.

"System, come out right now. What happened to my points? Why're they so low and why are you even deducting points for doing your job?"

[Host, need I remind you, that plot hasn't started yet. Every service I give is my choice and not a requirement. Without that protection function you'd be a chick on a chopping board, I even warned you it will cost you. And you agreed to it, so don't back out on your words now and blame me.]

[As for your points, it's quite simple. I'll give you the summary for your actions in the past weeks so you can see for yourself -

1000 points for stealing the chances made for other people

10000 points for altering the fate of Artemis Raven

5000 points for altering the fate of Kevin Blake

5000 points for getting Skuld's blessing

2500 points for altering the fate of ???

2700 points for getting the attention of several Gods.

500 points for altering the fate of Aina Narcisus

500 points for changing the fate of goddess Psyche

There, this is all you did and what you got, now you understand.]

"Well these points are still less than what I expected. But I guess I can milk out much more in this event. Rebecca and Bernhardt, these 2 will practically be enough for me to get a lot of points."

Rio said as he skimmed through the notifications, he noticed that he had nearly gotten 25000 points just for the lies that he told to Artemis.

'Those lies had changed the plot a lot I guess.'

Rio thought, but stopped as he read the final notification, it was confusing. He didn't do anything that could get him so many points of Psyche. Unless.

"System, Psyche didn't see anything right. You said that. Then why am I getting points for her?"

[I don't know? As I said, no one can look past the veil of secrecy I created, so maybe it's just cause she found something interesting in you. Might be your luck helping you out, cause in the novel she didn't even look at you.]

"Well that's good then. As long as she doesn't bring trouble it's fine. Her plotline is nothing special to notice anyways."

"Hey system, we haven't received any notification of Cassandra right? When was the last we heard from her?" Rio said as he remembered about the pitiful goddess who was supposed to give her blessing to Noah and rise in fame, but now her chances were ruined too.

[She was watching when you were lying about Fate's blessing, after that she hasn't been looking.]

"Do you think she can guess that I killed her chosen Noah because I saw something in my fate."

[Hard to say. But even if she does notice it, she can't do anything now or prove anything. She's still cursed, so maybe she's blaming that for her failed visions.] Rio nodded his head hearing that, as the system continued [Despite even if she knows why you killed Noah, she didn't care about him enough at this point in time, to go against Skuld or Nyx or your family. So ignore her for now.]

Rio thought and let her be. There were nearly 8 years till plot starts, and 3 years more until the Gods get serious, so a total of 11 years of time. "You're right. I'll get her once the plot starts anyway. After all, just like Skuld, there is something she wants too. I just have to promise to give her that and she'll be in the villain camp too."

'Wonder what tricks the heavens will pull once that happens. Will it give protagonist another seer or will a new goddess with those powers pop up.'

[There you go again]

Chapter 100 Start Of The Engagement Talks

During their first day of living in the palace, Rio and everyone else just stayed inside, chatting and roaming around. Rio hadn't seen Artemis ever since he came here, according to Myra who was now following Amelia, Artemis and Athena were just talking to each other.

Rio had also met Alfred, Rebecca's brother, the supposed future king of Schilla and a subordinate of the protagonist according to the plans of destiny. But that was all for the future and who knows what will happen now with his continuous interference in the plot.

Alfred was 12 years old, according to Rio's memories the last time he saw him was last year during his awakening celebrations. Alfred had awakened the element of wind, same as in the novel.

The 4 of them played around, until it was late evening and they had to stop.

Overall Rio's first day at Royal Palace was peaceful and good, but as they say all good things come to an end. And looking at the man sitting at the grand chair of the dinner table, Rio could guess this dinner was going to be an awkward one.

King Maximus, dressed in red and black robe, adorned with intricate designs and jewels that showed his commanding position. The white cape that draped over his shoulders touched the ground when he sat down, and some sparks of lightning charred that place, the aura of a king, a superior being was practically oozing out of his body, while everyone around him could not help but feel the pressure of his presence.

It was the first time Rio had seen the king after he came to Arcadia and looking at him, he was starstruck. It didn't matter what his character was supposed to be in the novel, Or how him being here meant that the conversation would take a turn that he wanted to avoid for now, but just looking at the majestic presence of the king thwarted all his thoughts.

'Gotta say dude looks hella cool in that getup. That spark thingy everytime he waves his cape is just badass. Man got style.' Rio thought admiring the effort this guy must've put in his appearance.

Unlike Rio, everyone else at the table either expected King's arrival or didn't care enough to stare at it so much. Amelia and Rebecca were sitting side by side talking in whispers to each other. Becca didn't dare

shout at the table, while her father was near. Alfred and Rio were sitting on one side, while Athena and Artemis were sitting beside them.

After everyone settled down the maids came and one by one started prepping up the plates and serving the food. Rio's eyes still kept looking at the king, thinking about what style he'd copy and keep when he grew up. After all, according to his thoughts, one day in the future the throne of Schilla will belong to the Blake family. Why not prepare for it from now?

But he was startled as he met the gaze of Maximus's deep blue eyes looking at him from the opposite side, 'Did this guy sensed I was after his throne?'

[Not until now, but he will if you keep looking at him like that.]

Hearing system's response to a rhetorical question that no one needed an answer for, Rio stopped his thoughts and decided to not look at him for now.

During the ongoing dinner, soon small talks started between everyone, after some greetings and normal chats, the environment had become peaceful again.

"Artemis, I must say, I'm glad you could join us here." King said as he gazed around at the dinner table. It had become a habit of his to see many chairs empty around them, but looking at it now, it was refreshing.

"Of course, I can't keep coming late every time right?" Artemis smiled and replied referring to how during Alfred's celebrations last year, Blake family appeared almost when all the guests had appeared.

"That wasn't your fault sister." Athena said, as she heard Artemis still mentioning that. She had no problem using that excuse to call Artemis here early this time, but in front of her husband she should speak the truth.

"That's not what you said when you called me yesterday, Athena." Artemis asked, looking at her with a smiling gaze, while Athena could just silently cough, her playful nature was just a thing of a past, in front of her husband she's the smart wise woman. But this sister of hers never learns. Athena even wanted to

ask -she's the queen here where's her fucking respect? But knowing if she did that, she'll receive an earful of taunts so she kept silent, hoping Maximus won't focus on it.

Sadly or gladly, King Maximus however had no interest in their useless talks. He had something else in mind. He took a sip of wine and cleared his throat, signaling his intent to steer the conversation in a particular direction.

"Our two families have been long acquainted Artemis. We've always supported each other throughout the years and I plan to strengthen our ties further. That's the only way to secure the future of our children and the prosperity of our people."

Hearing his words, Athena glanced at her sister, hoping to listen to what she'll say. Artemis, who had been anticipating this topic, skillfully deflected it with a smile. "Your majesty, you're forgetting that we are already connected through family ties. Athena is my sister, we share the same blood. Our unity and support for each other are evident."

King Maximus, undeterred, pressed on. He had talked about this topic with Agnus before but that guy always spoke the same line - "The decision of my son's future is in my wife's hand friend." Maximus respected Agnus and had known the guy for years but this irritated him. He, the king of this kingdom, the most powerful person of this place, was asking his son's hand for a marriage, and instead of being glad, these idiots keep changing the topics.

If not for the news regarding Rio's blessing and the constant reminders from his chosen God, forcing him to act now, he wouldn't even mention this topic ever again due to his self respect. He could find hundreds of better people for her daughter, but everytime he thought that, there was this feeling in his gut screaming at him, that something was wrong, he was wrong. The same was the case for his God, who's been oddly interested in watching this kid nowadays.

All these things only made him think that this marriage was something necessary not only for him, but for everyone. The profits of having Raven and Blake family tied to his own - who in the world could stand against him then. That's why he was impatient.

"True, but a marriage between our children would solidify our bond further and ensure the prosperity of our kingdoms for generations to come. Rio and Rebecca are both young and talented, and would make a remarkable match." He announced, finally stopping himself from roundabout talking and saying it clean and clear.

Athena and Artemis were caught off guard by his direct statement, especially now since the kids were still present with them. Rio, taken aback by the sudden turn of events, found himself choking on his food. He started coughing, and drank a glass of water in a hurry, hoping to calm down. His eyes darted around the table, and landing on Rebecca, who had her head hung down, her expression hidden from the view, Amelia sitting near her, had her mouth wide open in shock, her best friend and her brother were getting married, why didn't anybody inform her about it.