

New Eden 201

Chapter 201 Worlds Merging

Once they arrived at the guild building, a slightly angry wolf that was low growling at him greeted Astaroth.

"Genie! I completely forgot to fetch you before going on our quest!" Astaroth admitted, slapping his forehead.

He felt so stupid right now. How could he forget his companion animal?

The events that led to him taking the quest had shaken his mind far enough for him to forget one of his only staunch allies. There was no end to his shame.

"I'm so sorry, girl. I brought back all the meat from the monsters. I hope that will be enough for you to forgive me."

Astaroth hurriedly went to a counter to complete the quest, while Violette bought peace from the Dire Wolf with head pats and chin scratches.

As soon as he was done submitting the quest, Astaroth hurriedly walked back to the girls. Two feral stares greeted him.

"Why are you even mad at me?" he asked Violette dejectedly.

"You forgot her. You would make a terrible parent, if you even forget a hundred-and-fifty-pound giant white wolf."

"In my defence, the situation leading to our departure was kind of hectic. Also, she never once sent me a signal, or anything..." Astaroth tried defending himself.

"Hmph!"

Violette walked to the side of Genie and climbed on her back. What little she weighed was barely enough to bother the dire wolf, and Genie walked away, carrying her rider.

'Urgh... This little girl likes to see me suffer, I think.'

Astaroth followed behind them, his head drooped a bit. Violette, on the other hand, was thoroughly enjoying her ride.

Genie walked with her head high, like she was proud of something, and the little girl on her back was all smiles. What was making them feel so prideful was the stares they were garnering.

The townspeople of Sunpeak were watching the girl ride past them, on a powerful beast from the wilds, and awe was their only response. Genie was relishing in this, and Violette enjoyed it too.

'If only they knew who that beast was contracted to...' Astaroth thought from behind, silently chuckling to himself.

Once they had reached their inn, the pair walked in and climbed up to their room. Genie elected to sleep with Violette, trying to make Astaroth feel guilty, so the man had to transfer his part of the bull meat to the girl.

After doing that and getting in his room, Astaroth threw himself on the bed and sighed.

"Well, I guess I'll make it up to her tomorrow."

After saying that, he logged out.

Opening his eyes, he pushed open his pod, getting up from it. He turned his head, and Kary was still lying in bed, the indicators on the side of the helmet slowly flashing.

'She's still inside. I guess I'll take a shower and sleep in the guest room for a bit.'

After cleaning up, Astaroth walked over to the second guest bedroom and dropped into the bed for a few hours of sleep. He fell asleep almost instantly.

A few minutes after he fell asleep, Kary started moving on Alex's bed. She slowly brought her hands up to remove the helmet.

After taking it off and laying it at her side, she rubbed her eyes a bit. She noticed Alexander's pod was open, and he didn't seem to be inside it.

She looked around the room before climbing off the bed. Kary walked out of the room and saw the second guest bedroom door was shut.

'What a gentleman.'

She smiled softly and went to take a quick shower. After which, she walked to the closed door.

'Too bad for you, I want to sleep snuggled,' she thought, with a mischievous grin.

Violette opened her door at the moment Kary was opening the other room. She looked at Kary with wide eyes, snapping her head in the other direction, noticing Alex's bed was empty, to which the woman responded with a hush motion.

The two girls giggled softly before they closed their doors again. Kary tiptoed her way to the bed before sliding in as slowly as she could.

The high-quality mattress barely shuddered as she slipped under the covers. Alex was currently sleeping on his back, with one arm under his head and the other along his side.

Kary snuggled up to the side that an arm was up, laying her head on his chest. She could hear Alex's calm heart beating inside his chest, and it lulled her to sleep.

A few hours went by peacefully in the house, with all its occupants asleep. A small transparent ripple traversed inside the home, emanating from just outside Alex's pod.

Had he been awake, he might have sensed it, but as everyone was asleep, it went unnoticed.

A minuscule amount of unseen particles started seeping through an invisible hole. This same phenomenon was happening in a few spots across the world.

Somewhere far away, deep in space, a small enclosed domain floated around the galaxy. Inside it, a woman was meditating with her eyes closed.

This woman was Alantha Anulo, the kingdom spirit of the Ash Elves. Since her domain was the night sky and the stars, it was normal she would make a part of it her home.

But the woman opened her eyes with a frown.

"This feeling... Has a new world been born?"

Lady Anulo stood, walking to a mirror made of a liquid substance. When she peered into it, the surface started shifting, showing her an expanse of space.

In the reflection, she could see a sector of space appearing slowly, spots of it forming steadily.

"This... This isn't a world being born. This is one reconnecting with the rest of it... Where has this been hiding and for how long?"

She looked at her mirror for a while, trying to push her senses into detecting things through the small spots, but it was still too early.

After staring at it a bit more, she walked back to her earlier place, and went back to meditating. In time, she would be able to peer into this part of space and figure things out, but now was not that time yet.

'How intriguing,' the minor deity thought, smiling at the prospect of novelty.

Chapter 202 A Normal Morning

A few hours after that incident, Alex started rousing from his sleep. He stretched a bit and hugged the plump form next to him.

Then his brain froze.

'Wait. The pillow is under my head... What am I hugging?'

He opened his eyes and saw the top of a red-haired head. His throat went dry as realization set in.

His body was already reacting instinctually to the female presence by his side, and he silently cursed himself. He tried sliding to the other side of the bed, trying hard not to wake her up.

"Mm... Five more minutes..." the woman next to him moaned, wrapping her arms around his waist.

Alexander cursed under his breath. He didn't want to wake the woman, but the situation was getting increasingly awkward for him.

A certain body part was getting more awake by the second, and he wanted nothing more than to leave her embrace, before something unbecoming happened.

He tried slipping away again, but Kary's grip around his waist was tighter than a wrestler doing a suplex.

'Please wake up, please wake up, please wake up,' Alex thought, his mind racing for a solution.

Alex slept with only a pair of pyjama pants on, and his bare chest was being assaulted by a stimulus that wasn't helping his situation.

With every movement he made to dislodge himself, he could feel Kary's breast through her shirt, rubbing on his ribcage. To make things worse, either she was cold, or slightly aroused, but he could feel two hard nipples poking his side.

He was so focused on resisting his urges and trying to free himself that he didn't notice the woman's eyes had opened. She was looking at him with a sly smile.

She slipped up one of her hands, caressing his abdominals, until she reached his chest and gripped her hand slightly, making her nails claw his skin ever so softly.

The biggest shiver he had ever experienced instantly took Alex, as his whole skin got covered in goosebumps. That's when he noticed her open eyes.

"Um... Can you let go, please? I'm getting kind of uncomfortable."

Kary made a small pout at his request.

"Am I not attractive enough for you?" she asked, trying to look pitiful.

"No! No, that's not what I meant! Quite the contrary! I don't want to do anything unbecoming, that's why I want to leave the bed."

Kary's pout quickly turned to a mischievous grin again as she started sliding her hand back down slowly.

"Is that so?"

But before she could reach any place too sensitive, Alex grabbed her hand. He looked into her eyes, pleading.

"Please. I'm not ready for this much just yet."

Kary pouted slightly, for real this time, before she released her hold on his waist.

"Okay. But remember, I'm not a very patient woman. I might not ask you to reciprocate my feelings entirely just yet, but I expect more than just hugs and occasional kisses."

Alexander gulped, nodding his head two quick times.

"Understood."

After responding, he got out of bed, hiding his bulging pants, and practically ran away. Kary giggled as he ran away.

'His innocence is quite cute.'

Alex ran to his room, almost sprinting into his bathroom, before putting his head into the sink and opening the cold water. The crisp water leaking on his nape cooled down his mind and body.

"This woman, I swear. She's a vixen." Alexander mumbled, water still running down his neck.

He was certain of one thing. Had he let her hand run down on his, all the way to where he was sure she was going, he would have lost any sense of restraint.

He wasn't against the idea of sleeping with her, but he wasn't mentally ready to bed her just yet. He hadn't had a relationship in a while, and he wanted it to feel special.

Alex closed the cold water, letting his hair drip in the sink for a few moments, before grabbing his towel and drying his hair down. Then he put on some clothes and went downstairs.

Kary and Violette were already sitting at the kitchen island, talking in hushed tones, and they giggled when he arrived.

"What are you laughing about?"

"Nothing!" Violette responded, her eyes filled with playful malice.

"Mhm... Well, whatever. What would you two beautiful ladies want for breakfast? I make a mean bacon omelet."

"Anything is okay with me," Kary answered, smiling.

"Can we make pancakes? I would loooove pancakes!" Violette chirped.

Alexander laughed.

"Leave it to a kid to want something so sweet for breakfast. Okay, we can make pancakes, but only on one condition."

The two girls tilted their heads in unison.

"I'm not doing them alone. You have to help, both of you."

He knew this would make a terrible mess of his kitchen, but he still wanted to do it. His own parents and he had always done pancakes as a family, and he wouldn't do it any other way.

Kary and Violette both looked at each other, smiling, before nodding in agreement.

Alexander pulled out the ingredients they needed, and a few cooking utensils, before they got to it. It took much longer than normal to make the pancake batter, but the trio had fun while doing it.

They would sometimes jab battered fingers in each other's faces, sparking some minor scuffles and laughs, as the kitchen started looking like a war zone of eggs and flour.

After breakfast, they all teamed up to wash the kitchen, laughing and screaming as they resumed their earlier ingredient war. Some people would cry at the amount of wasted food they produced.

But the three of them didn't care. All that mattered at that moment was having fun.

Violette was able to forget momentarily why she was staying here in the first place. She could be a normal girl for those few hours.

Alexander was able to bring his mind off the incoming disaster. His mind was taken to the warm memories of his young childhood with his caring parents.

It took away Kary from the stress of always performing at her best. She could enjoy a more relaxed moment for the first time in a long time.

Once they were done with all this, they sat down to plan their day.

Chapter 203 Planning The Day

"Well, I have an appointment at the gym today. I don't know if I can bring both of you."

"What were you planning on doing originally?"

"I was going to bring Violette with me, and have her do some cardio or some light callisthenics, to get her in shape."

"You were going to ask me to train?! But I'm only nine!"

"It wasn't going to be anything intensive!" Astaroth defended himself, while scratching the back of his head.

"And what training were you going to do?"

"I have some sparring lessons with my trainer today. He's teaching me how to box."

"I can box. Do you think he would let me join in?"

Alex frowned at her question. Clark could hardly teach both of them simultaneously, especially if their levels of knowledge were different.

He couldn't take this decision for the man, so he wrung him up.

"Hello, Clark speaking."

"Hey, Clark. It's Alexander. I have a favour to ask you."

"Oh, hi champ. Sure thing, what is it?"

"I have friends over for a while, and I don't want to leave them alone at home. I was wondering if I could have them join me for training today?"

"Sure! It'll cost you a bit more for today, but I'm fine with it. Just remember that I won't be able to give you as much guidance if you aren't alone."

"I'm ok with it."

"Then it's settled. You better haul ass to get here, though. Our session is in thirty minutes."

"Dammit, I forgot we put it earlier today! I'll be on my way. Bye!"

'This kid has a terrible memory and attention span,' Clark thought, as he put his phone away.

Alexander hurried the two women as he got himself ready as well. In his haste, he forgot to close his bedroom door.

Kary was passing before the door as he was changing into gym clothes, and she got a glimpse of his naked behind. She bit her lip, hoping he would turn around before slipping into his briefs, but it didn't come to happen.

After slipping on his boxers, Alexander turned around to look for his sports shorts, and noticed the starring Kary. He froze in his movement, realizing his door was open.

They both heard footsteps on the stairs, and Kary hurriedly closed the door to Alex's room. Violette heard the door slam, and when she turned the corner, Kary was standing with her back to the door, smiling suspiciously.

"What are you doing in front of his door? Were you trying to sneak a peek?"

"What?! No. I closed his door because he forgot."

"Hm. Did you get to see something, at least?"

"Violette!" Kary shouted incredulously.

'How can she have such a twisted mind at her age?'

Violette giggled before heading into her room and changing. Kary did the same.

Alexander finished changing first, but as he was about to leave the room, something caught his attention. A small white particle floated in front of his eyes.

Before he got to see what it was, it disappeared.

'Must have been dust.'

He left the room without turning around. Many more of these particles were floating around in his room, but his eyes had failed to see them.

Had he been inside New Eden, his eyes would have picked up on them instantly, as these were particles of mana. They were still leaking from a spot in front of his gaming pod, for now only a trickle.

The trio left the penthouse, oblivious to what was happening around them.

They had twenty minutes left to reach the gym, and it was a fifteen-minute walk away, under normal circumstances. But Alexander could hardly walk at his normal pace, since he had Violette with him.

Her small legs wouldn't allow her to follow him without breaking into a jog. So he improvised.

He dropped to his knees.

"Get on my shoulders, Violette."

"What?"

"Hurry, get on my shoulders."

The girl hesitated at first, but then she did as asked. Once she was correctly seated, Alexander rose back to his feet.

The extra weight was not even a hassle, and he could now walk at a faster speed.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" Kary asked him.

"Because if we are late, Clark will chew us up. He likes punctuality above all else."

After saying that, he started walking towards the gym. He turned around a few steps in, telling Kary to hurry.

She snapped out of her thoughts and followed behind him. Although she was shorter than him, Kary was able to match his pace without too much issue.

Everywhere they went, the people on the streets watched them pass with smiles. Alexander barely noticed, but Kary didn't miss a single one.

She knew what those smiles were for, and couldn't help smiling herself. The trio of them painted a lovely picture, even if it was a misunderstood one.

With Alexander carrying Violette on his shoulders, and Kary holding his hand as they walked on the sidewalk, they looked like one happy little family.

She didn't mind the thoughts of strangers and wouldn't step forward to correct them. Seeing the man she was attracted to holding Violette like this also got some lovely thoughts in her head.

She shoved those away with a blush, knowing it was much too early to be thinking this way. But they lingered in the back of her mind, anyway.

Once they arrived at the gym, Alex signed in, putting in the names of Violette and Kary in the guest section, and they went to drop off their things in the changing rooms.

Alex waited for the two girls before they walked together to where Clark was waiting for them. When the trainer saw them, he frowned slightly.

"I didn't know you had a family. Well, congratulations, you look lovely together."

"Huh? What?"

Then the words reached Alex's brain.

"What? No, you misunderstand. These are my friends. We aren't a family," he defended himself.

"Eh, whatever. You're just on time. Let's get you all to work."

Clark set up a little light regimen for Violette, since she was still too young and underdeveloped for anything too strenuous.

Then he brought the two young adults to a sparring ring.

Chapter 204 Beat By A Girl

Clark first started by checking what Kary's skill levels were before deciding he didn't have to guide her much. She wasn't a professional boxer, but her technique was quite good for an amateur.

He could tell she had prior training. So he acted more as coach for the day and set up the two young adults to spar against each other.

"Uh... Clark? I would prefer not to fight her."

"Huh? Why, because she's a girl?"

"Well... Yes?"

"Man, I'm pretty sure she knows how to fight better than you."

It slightly peeved Kary that Alex was reacting this way. She knew deep down that he was trying to be a gentleman, but she still felt underestimated.

"Are you scared that you will get your ass kicked by a girl?"

Her fighting words took aback Alex. Did she want to fight him that badly?

"That's not what—"

"Alright! You got spunk, lady! I like you! As for you, you better show some respect and get in that ring!" Clark barked, clapping his hands.

He looked at Alexander with a derisive grin. Their tag team almost offended Alexander.

His father had always told him never to hit a woman. Games were different, since no one was getting hurt for real, but this wasn't a game.

But the look on Kary's face, combined with the grin on Clark's, drove away his indecisiveness.

"Fine," he grumbled, as he hopped inside the ring.

Kary had a small grin of victory on her lips. Clark laughed and hopped in too, getting to the center.

Both fighters wore helmets and training gloves to limit injury, and walked to the center of the ring. Clark looked at them both, stating the rules for their little spar.

"No dirty hits, no grappling, and dirty tactics. I want to see a clean fight. You are both only here to train, so try to limit how hard you punch each other."

The two of them nodded before backing away a bit from the center. Clark walked out of the center before shouting, "Fight!"

Kary walked forward slowly, circling Alex as they reached the center. Alexander could tell she was more used to this than her, but still thought he would win.

His confidence was shattered when Kary finally charged in for their first exchange. He was expecting her to hit softly, as a woman should, or at least he thought.

When her right fist came at his face, he lifted his guard, just as Clark had taught him, but he lifted his arms too high, exposing his ribs. Kary saw the opening and took it, slamming her left fist into them.

The air left his lungs, as the impact on his ribs was much harder than on his guarded face. When he bent from the hit in his ribs, one of his arms lowered to his side, and Kary's left fist came in again, this time smacking him in the jaw.

The helmet absorbed most of the hit, but that didn't stop it from knocking him to his ass.

"Bahahaha!"

Clark was laughing from the side as he watched his student get knocked off his feet by the woman.

Kary just stood in front of Alex, a wide grin on her face.

"Nice combo—"

"Kary."

"Nice combo, Kary! Alex, you better get your game on. This woman means business!"

Alexander felt his pride be bruised by the comment. He got up, his face a bit more rigid.

Clark called the next bout, and this went on for a few rounds, with the duration getting longer with every exchange, but the result stayed the same. Kary was victorious in every exchange.

In their last bout before taking a break, Alexander grappled the woman as she was getting deep inside his guard and locked her arms in place.

As he was laughing and she was trying to wiggle out of his grasp, Alex received a smack on the back of his head.

"I said no grappling, dumbass! Now you two lovebirds go drink water and come back in ten minutes. I'll check up on the girl in the meantime."

Alexander let Kary go, and she turned around before punching him in the stomach. She was still grinning as she took off her helmet.

"That's for cheating."

Alexander laughed it off. They stepped out of the ring, walking to their bags to get some water.

Clark had already reached Violette and was correcting her form and rhythm. He didn't need to do much, since the girl was already getting help from all the other gym bros around her.

They couldn't help but want to help her, since she was so small and young. There was a healthy gym etiquette in this gym, and that was why Alexander liked it there.

As Alex was watching Violette from afar, Kary leaned in on him. He passed his arm around her waist, letting his body go on autopilot.

Kary smiled and leaned in for a kiss, which he returned.

"If only you were as aggressive outside the ring," she teased, giving him a wink.

"Ahaha."

He smiled wryly at her comment. Not that he didn't want to be more assertive.

He just felt like it was still too early to be that way with her. Even if all of her was calling out to him.

They idly chatted away until Clark called them back into the ring. At the end of the three-hour session, Alex still could not take down Kary, and he was mainly just fixing his own mistakes at this point.

They finished their last bout still standing, and that was as good as it could get for him. After getting all the equipment off, Alex and Kary got Violette from the four gym bros currently having a flex competition with her in a mirror.

The girl was having fun, as she tried to outshine the four men, who were fixing her posture on the fly, giggling along with her.

"Thanks for entertaining her, guys. I'll take her off your arms," Alex said, smiling at them.

They nodded at him, bidding farewell to the girl, and going back to their own business. Violette was all smiles.

Even though she was tired from all the cardio she had been doing, she still had a lot of fun. The three of them walked back to the penthouse to get some well-deserved rest.

Chapter 205 Passion Consumed

The rest of their day was pretty relaxed. Alexander pulled out a dusty box from his storage, which contained all the old board games he used to play with his parents.

Kary was happy to play board games, as she came from a family that liked to play them too. Violette was completely new to the concept, though.

They picked a simple game for her to learn, an old classic, Monopoly. They played three games and gave up.

Even if the young girl insisted she had never played, she completely and thoroughly annihilated them. In all three games, she came out on top, bankrupting the two adults.

They both looked at her with mild horror.

'The business genes are strong with this one,' they both thought.

After putting away the games, they played a few old video games on a console that was stored in the same box until it was time to make dinner.

On the menu, this time, was a good old lasagna. Kary insisted she wanted to help this time, and Alex gave up resisting her when she threatened to knock him out if he didn't say yes.

He let her chop up the vegetables that would go in the sauce, while he started boiling the tomatoes. He could have gone for a market-bought sauce, but since he was trying to learn new things, he made a homemade one.

Bonus points to the fact he was also trying to impress his new girlfriend. Even if making a tomato sauce wasn't that big an achievement, making a good lasagna sauce was still quite impressive.

Everything went according to plan for his dinner, and the results impressed him even more than Kary. They ate their fill and even ordered some dessert from a nearby Gelato place.

While they were eating dessert, Kary got a text message from her mother. She looked at it and her face showed traces of disappointment.

"Something wrong?" Alex asked her.

Violette also perked her ears to listen.

"Nothing wrong, per se. But my mother needs me for something tomorrow, so I'm going to have to return home. Tonight will be my last night sleeping here with the both of you."

"Already?" Violette asked with a pout.

"Sadly, yes. But don't worry, darling. I will come back soon if you are still here. I promise."

Violette nodded, but was still downtrodden.

"That's quite unfortunate," Alex said, looking disappointed too.

"You told me the door was always open for me, did you not? I'll take you up on this offer."

Kary smiled at him, putting her hand on his and squeezing it gently. He returned her smile.

They cleaned up the kitchen, with Kary and Alex exchanging soft words, trying to make the seconds count. The three decided to not go play New Eden that night, and enjoy a good movie together, since Kary would be leaving early in the morning.

Violette was the one to pick the movie, and she wanted to watch an old princess movie. So they ended up watching a movie called 'The Swan Princess'.

Kary was familiar with this title, since she had watched this many times as a little girl herself. Alexander didn't go against her wishes, and bought the movie online.

When they started the movie, Kary immediately cuddled up to Alex, and Violette looked at them with a tinge of sadness. Alex was the one to notice.

"Are you alright, Violette?"

"I'm okay... It's just... I used to watch this movie with my mom, and she would snuggle me tight..."

Alexander looked at her, his heart almost breaking. How long had it been since her mother smothered her with love?

He lightly pushed Kary away, who understood his intentions, and walked to Violette. He grabbed her in his arms while she yelped in surprise and brought her back to the other end of the sofa.

He sat back down, squeezing Violette between himself and Kary, before throwing a blanket over her. Violette looked at him with surprise, but she said nothing, tucking her head into Kary's chest.

Alex threw his arm over both of them, as he started the movie.

Kary gently stroked the girl's hair with her fingers as they watched the movie. The girl had a single tear rolling off her cheek, but she was smiling.

Around the middle point of the movie, Violette had already dozed away from the heat of the two adults and her hair being stroked. Alex noticed, but let the movie run its course.

Once it was done, he gently picked up the little girl and brought her up to her room. He slowly lowered her into her bed before turning to Kary.

"Can you change her into some pyjamas? It would be highly inappropriate if I did it," he whispered.

Kary nodded, and Alex left the room. Shortly after, Kary was done changing Violette, and she tucked her into bed.

Kary stroked her hair gently a last time before getting up. Violette then squirmed a bit and muttered something, half asleep.

"Goodnight, mom. I love you."

Kary smiled and responded, "I love you too, sweetheart."

She then left the room, closing the door behind her.

'Poor girl...'

After walking over to her room's door, she noticed Alex's door was slightly open. She smiled and went inside her room to change.

Then she walked over to the slightly open door and walked inside the room, closing the door behind her. Kary slipped into bed, quickly sliding next to Alexander.

Alex turned to face her when he felt her come into bed. He kissed her on the lips passionately.

"I know I said I wasn't ready, but I don't want to send you away without at least proving to you that I am serious."

He then kissed her again, and again, slowly getting more passionate and changing spots, kissing her on the neck, nibbling her earlobe, going down lower, and kissing her stomach.

That night, Alex and Kary made love tenderly and fell asleep in each other's arms, whispering soft promises to each other, as they imbibed in each other's scent.

Chapter 206 Giving Her A Key

The next morning, in David's hidden location

Gasp!

David woke up from another night of nightmares. It had been months since his rebirth, and he had yet to get rid of those horrible images in his head.

Even if this body hadn't lived through these events, his soul refused to let go of it. He got up from his bed, sweating all over and panting.

He walked to a sink and drew himself a glass of water. After dunking the thing down his throat, he was finally able to steady his breathing.

He took his phone from the nearby table and looked at the date.

'Already almost time. It's time to go have my little chat with the little butterfly.'

David elected to go see Alexander directly, instead of texting him like he had said last time. This way, he could also talk to him about his little stunt on the level leaderboards.

'I'll go tomorrow. Today I have to check in on the shelter's construction.'

Back in Alexander's penthouse

Alexander woke up with a shiver running down his spine. Like his body was warning him that something bad would happen soon.

He brushed it aside when he noticed Kary's naked form next to him. A smile crept his way on his lips as he cuddled up to her again, kissing her neck and shoulder.

Kary moaned in pleasure, waking up with a wide smile.

"Good morning, my red-haired goddess."

"Oh, stop it. Flattery will lead everywhere, and we don't have time for another session."

Alex smiled at her words, knowing full well what she meant. Unfortunately, they indeed didn't have time to enjoy each other another time.

Violette would probably be up soon, and they didn't want her to hear them, or worse, catch them in the act. This wasn't the kind of thing a nine-year-old should ever see.

Kary smuggled herself out of his room, heading into her own, to get dressed, while Alex did so in his. Just as he exited his room, Violette opened her door, still in her pyjamas, rubbing her eyes.

"G'mornin," she muttered, still half-asleep.

"Good morning to you too, Violette. I'm going down to make breakfast. Do you want some?"

"Mm."

She nodded her head, eyes not even fully open, until she realized she was still in her jammies. Her eyes went wide as she looked at Alexander, her mouth dropping open.

"Before you ask, no. It wasn't me who changed you. I asked Kary to do it. I only brought you to your room."

Violette sighed in relief. She still headed into her room again, slamming the door behind her.

She hurriedly changed before heading back out to go have breakfast. Kary had already dressed up and was downstairs too, watching Alex cook from the kitchen island with a smile.

Violette noticed the smile and felt something was different from yesterday. She eyed the woman as she sat next to her, her brows knitting over her eyes.

Kary noticed the stare and looked at her with a questioning gaze.

"What? Is there something on my face?"

"Your smile. It's different. Did something happen while I was asleep?"

Alexander, who was taking a sip of coffee, almost choked and started coughing violently.

Violette looked at him suspiciously too, and then back to Kary, who was smiling even wider.

"Nothing *cough* Nothing happened!"

Violette doubted his answer, but since neither talked, she opted to think about something else.

"What's for breakfast?" she asked, going back to her normal nature.

"Bacon and eggs, with some hash brown," Alex responded, finally managing to stop choking.

"Yummy!" Violette exclaimed.

After breakfast, Kary already had to leave, so she went to pack her bag upstairs. When she brought it down, Alex took her to the elevator doors.

"Before you leave, there is one last thing you need to do."

"And what is that?"

"I said the door was always unlocked for you, and I want to honour that."

The elevator doors opened as he finished saying that. Alex brought her inside, pressing the button to keep the doors open.

Then he entered a code inside the security system, and an interface appeared. He tapped a few different icons until he was on a menu titled 'New User Biometrics'.

Kary looked at him with surprise.

"I didn't think you meant literally..." she said in joyous surprise.

"Yes, well, I didn't, originally. But things being what they are now, I think you should have your own key, metaphorically speaking."

She kissed and hugged him, happy that he was willing to go to such lengths for her. He had yet to say the magic words to her, but this was still as good as it got.

Alexander helped her through the process, as they logged her handprint, retina, and voice into the system.

"I'll have a keycard made for you, too, the next time you are here. This way you can come and go as you wish."

"Thank you for doing this. I know how much this means to you. I'm very pleased you trust me enough for this."

Alexander scratched the back of his head wryly. How could he not trust her?

They had been so intimate together, and they were a couple. Many people would think that wasn't enough, but he thought differently.

After doing this, he bade her a last farewell, as did Violette, and they let her leave. Kary still had a few hours of driving to do to get back home.

The pair stared at the elevator doors for a while after they closed, feeling like a small part of the house had become empty. Violette already missed her new friend, and Alex, his new girlfriend.

Clap

"Alright! Enough moping. What do you want to do today?" Alexander asked as he turned to Violette.

"What is there to do?"

"So many things! Do you want to go to the park to take a relaxing walk? Or maybe we can go to an amusement park and have a blast. Or we could go to the arcades and have some fun, like normal kids."

"Do arcades still exist?" Violette asked, confused.

She had never visited one, but she saw them in the movies. It was almost a foreign concept to her.

"Of course, they still exist, silly. Man, your parents should have let you out more often. It's like you're from space."

Violette gave him an angry stare.

"Go get dressed. I know the perfect place to go."

He didn't need to ask her twice.

Chapter 207 Aces High

Meanwhile, inside New Eden

A group of six players were currently standing before a building inside of the principal cities of New Eden. These six players were all dwarves and gnomes, and if Astaroth or Phoenix were present, they would recognize them.

These were six of the twelve players who had attempted the dungeon at the same time as Astaroth and his party, but failed. The same people that had been brutally PK'd three times by Astaroth.

The building they were standing before was the guild building of 'Aces High', Azamus' new guild. They had heard he was recruiting powerful players and that players with a grudge against Astaroth were all welcomed.

"Boss. Maybe the others were right. Maybe we shouldn't put ourselves in the middle of a feud we can't handle."

"Shut up! The others are pussies that can't handle a bit of hard work. Tying our wagon to this man will guarantee we become some of the most powerful players in this game."

"Whatever you say, boss," the gnome said, giving up.

There was no way to change their leader's mind at this point. So either they stuck to him, or left as the other half of their party had.

The dwarven leader didn't give them time to think about it, and walked towards the entrance to the guild building. His mind was set.

They entered the building unimpeded, and walked right up to the front desk, which was manned by an NPC. The NPW greeted them with an enormous smile.

"Welcome to the Aces High guild headquarters. What can I do for you gentlemen today?"

"We want to talk to the guild leader."

"I'm afraid that won't be possible. Our guild leader is a very busy man, and he is not too keen to meet just every Tom, Dick, and Harry that comes through these doors."

The tone the NPC used to say that, was sharp like a knife ready to cut. It was easy to understand who had recruited him.

"I don't care what you think. Tell him we have information he will want to hear."

"You can tell me the information and I will verify this, before reaching out to leader Azamus. At which point, he might ask me to contact you."

"Why am I even wasting time with this stupid bot? Tell me where the guild leader is before I start thrashing you!"

After being threatened, the face of the NPC contorted into an evil grin. He disappeared from behind his counter and reappeared behind the dwarf.

In his hands were two daggers, and he was currently lifting the dwarf from his feet with them under his throat. The dwarven player could feel the daggers slowly sinking into his neck, and was about to fight back.

But a voice interrupted his action.

"Wait. Don't kill him inside. You'll dirty the floors. Take him outside before killing him."

"As you wish, sir," the NPC responded.

"Wait! Leader Azamus! I have some information you will want to hear!"

"You should have told my receptionist. I'm not interested in talking with weaklings. Take him out of my sight."

"Wait!" the dwarf yelled again.

"It concerns the dungeon Astaroth's party cleared!"

This phrase caused the gnome to pause. Any information on level fifty dungeons was worth hearing.

"What about it? Speak."

"We know where it is!"

Azamus was now thoroughly intrigued.

"Have them led into my office. Post guards on the outside of the doors. If they are lying, I want them killed until they stop respawning."

"Yes, sire," the NPC said, dropping the dwarf on the ground and bowing.

He turned to the party of six, his smile back to normal.

"This way, please."

The party leader looked at him with a hateful gaze, wiping away the blood trickling from his neck. They followed behind the NPC as he brought them to the second floor of the building and into a luxurious office.

Only the party leader sat down before the enormous desk, with his lackeys flanking him.

"You have my attention, but make it quick. I will need to verify your information after you give it to me, and you won't be free until I have confirmation it's true."

"I assure you, we are not lying."

"I will be the judge of that. Now speak."

The party leader explained the location of the dungeon, even giving him the pinned location of the entrance. He then explained how it was they knew where it was, before Azamus sent a scout to verify the info.

It took about thirty minutes for the scout to message back with confirmation. While they waited, the party leader had already explained what he would like for him and his party.

Azamus had not deigned to respond to them until the confirmation came back. Once he had his confirmation, he finally smiled at them.

"I will gladly welcome you to Aces High. But first, let's get your contracts in order."

"Huh? What contracts?" the dwarf asked.

This wasn't in the info he had received on the guild. There was no mention of contracts being signed.

This made his intentions a bit trickier to attain. He didn't want to stay tied to this train if it ever derailed, after all.

But seeing his reticence, Azamus snapped his fingers, and the guards outside all jammed themselves into the office. It was suddenly very crowded in the office.

"Gentlemen. I don't believe you have much of a choice. This is a no-logout zone, and we have a graveyard in the basement. Meaning I can have you killed infinitely until your account is banned."

"But we gave you the info!"

"Ahh, yes. And I am quite grateful for it. But if you don't sign the contracts, and become members of my guild, I have no proof you won't sell this info to someone else. Therefore, either you sign them, or you start back at level zero. Your choice."

Azamus had a devious grin on his face, as he relished being in this position of power. The party of six eventually resigned themselves to their fate.

The contracts they signed were extremely bonding, and it was basically selling their characters off to Aces High. But it was done, and they couldn't do anything about it anymore.

Azamus now had access to a high-level dungeon practically in exclusivity. He was in heaven.

Chapter 208 Passing Time

Back out of the game

Alexander took Violette out, bringing her to his favourite arcade nearby, and he decided they could enjoy the day to the fullest. They stayed in the city for the day, eating some junk food at food carts on corners.

Violette quickly forgot why she was sad, only wishing Kary could have been with them, but overall having a lot of fun. Alexander used this chance to cool his mind from his previous night.

The images were still playing in his head, and he was trying to focus on something else. The arcade games helped him, but having to watch over Violette so she didn't run off was even tougher.

When dinner time was around the corner, Alex brought the little girl to a fancy restaurant, taking a table for two at an Italian place. It looked like a date from afar, and the people around found this almost cute.

After their dinner, they walked back home under the city lights. Violette was already yawning, and Alexander had to pick her up eventually, before she fell asleep on the sidewalk.

Once they were back home, he brought her up to her room, only waking her up so she could change into pyjamas and brush her teeth, which she did with her eyes still mostly closed.

After she was done, she fell back into bed, falling asleep almost instantly. Alex closed the door to her room while smiling.

'I guess she won't be playing tonight.'

He walked to his room, getting ready to hop in his pod and log in, but something caught his attention again. He saw some shimmering spots again, like the day before.

But this time, he couldn't mistake them for dust, since the sun was down and there was no light to catch their form. The little particles were emanating light on their own!

There was a cluster dancing in front of his gaming pod, looking like some small fireflies.

As Alex walked over to inspect what it was, he thought it looked strangely familiar. He tried passing his hand through the cluster, and the little particles danced aside from his hand.

The way they danced reminded him of mana particles, but he couldn't believe it was that. Just as he was about to pass his hand through again, he blinked, and the particles were gone.

'Am I hallucinating?'

He looked around his room again, trying to find the lights again, but he couldn't find anything. After shrugging his shoulders, Alex lay down in his pod.

'No use thinking about it now,' he thought as he closed the top of his pod.

"Log in."

Launching 'New Eden'

Logging in

Welcome back player Astaroth

Astaroth opened his eyes to the inn room's ceiling. He could hear the hustle and bustle of Sunpeak through the windowpanes of his room.

'I guess I'll pick up a quest at the guild and do some solo adventuring today.'

He got up and walked out of the room and inn. But as he was about to leave, he received a feeling of indignation from Genie.

'I know you want to come, Genie. But I can't open up Violette's room from the outside. And I would rather you don't burst through the windows, either.'

Astaroth received a short, sad whine from his wolf companion. But before he could respond, White interrupted his thoughts.

'Master. I know I should have told you this before, but I thought you would find out.'

'What is it, White?'

'Since Genie is your blood-contracted companion, you can summon her anywhere.'

Astaroth's brain almost shut down.

'White.'

'Yes, master?'

'Why didn't you tell me this sooner?!'

White could feel the indignation come from his master's soul, and he remained silent. Astaroth lightly boiled in anger.

There were so many situations where he could have used Genie's help, but she wasn't nearby. And now White told him he could summon her?

After mentally berating the wolf, he finally calmed down and asked how to proceed.

'All you need is a drop of your blood infused with mana. Let it drip on the ground, thinking of Genie, and she will teleport to your side.'

Astaroth's mind went numb at the simplicity of the process. He kind of understood why White thought he would figure it out by himself.

Then again, no one had taught anything to Astaroth about his class, aside from the basics that Aberon drilled into him. And companions weren't even a part of his class.

He guessed that maybe someone taught this earlier on to hunter classes. He sighed in defeat at his lack of knowledge again.

He then did as White Death instructed, infusing his blood with mana, and pricked his thumb with a dagger, drawing a single drop.

He then pressed his thumb so the drop of blood fell to the ground. He thought about Genie as it fell, and as soon as the drop hit the ground, Genie appeared next to him.

Astaroth grumbled mentally, as he thought he should have known this sooner, but eventually let the topic go. He walked away with Genie in tow, heading to the adventurer's guild.

Once there, he grabbed a simple-looking quest, since he was alone and didn't want too much of a hassle, and accepted it. The woman at the counter gave him the official papers he needed for the quest.

The quest comprised fetching an item for a noble, so he had to enter the noble district to meet the man first.

'The noble district. I wonder what it looks like on the inside of those walls.'

He walked over to the guarded entrance to the district and stopped by the pompous-looking guards there. They did a verification of his papers, giving him the stink eye as they did.

He could easily guess they treated him like dirt because of his lack of a title. But they still had to let him through in the end.

Once he walked across the big iron gates, his jaw dropped.

All the homes on this side of the gate were humongous, and they all had their own gated yards with guards at the gates. It was like he was suddenly back at the entrance of the district.

'Talk about paranoid people. Well, not my problem. I'm just here for my quest.'

Chapter 209 The Incident

Astaroth did not know which mansion he needed to head to, and every time he stopped at a gate to ask a guard for help, they shooed him away like a beggar.

It was irritating him seriously.

'Which one is the right house?! And why is every guard here being so brutish and unhelpful?!

Astaroth kicked a loose cobblestone, and it flew off, hitting the side of a passing carriage. He gasped, realizing what had just happened.

'Fuck.'

The carriage was already stopping, as the two guards driving it were hopping off. Astaroth quickly walked to them, bowing and apologizing.

"I'm terribly sorry! I didn't intend to hit anything! I'll pay for any damage I caused!"

"Do you know whose carriage you hit, you insolent mut?!" One guard barked, while the other inspected the side of the carriage.

There seemed to be no damage, but the stone had dirtied a part of the crest on the side, and that seemed to anger the guard even more.

He pulled out a sword as he walked toward Astaroth. Astaroth almost panicked.

He wasn't sure if he could take them yet, and he hesitated to scan them, too. What if they took that as a declaration of hostilities?

He raised his hands in a sign of peace.

"Please, gentlemen, I swear it was an accident. I do not know whose carriage this is since I'm new in town. I'll pay for your time and inconvenience, but please, I don't want to fight you."

The guards seemed to take offence at his statement, as the second one pulled out his sword and they started moving towards Astaroth.

'Dammit! Guess I don't have a choice now. This pompous bastard is probably snickering in his carriage.'

Astaroth activated Thousand Thoughts, melding with White simultaneously. Everything seemed to slow down in Astaroth's perception, and the guards now seemed sluggish, almost unmoving.

He used his sped up thoughts to scan the two guards.

Army Guard:

Level: 30

Grade: Common

Class: Swordsman

HP: 2'400

Both guards were the same level, and would be easy for him to take down. His daggers materialized in his hands.

He didn't want to kill them, but maybe if he wounded them enough, they would leave him alone. Astaroth first dashed to the guard on his left.

But then something caught his eye. Why would the guards be so weak to guard a noble?

That made little sense. But then he thought of something that made him shiver.

What if the guards were only a formality? What if the person in the carriage didn't need guards to start with?

Astaroth turned his gaze to the carriage, just in time to see a massive mana signature go off. A wave of transparent energy left the carriage, way faster than he could move.

It washed over the guards, before washing over him too. He received no damage but was suddenly stuck in place.

'Fuck!'

The space before Astaroth shimmered as a young man materialized. The man was wearing a gray sleeveless robe, with golden patterned trims all over it.

The man's hair was blond, around shoulder length, and his eyes were grey, shining like diamonds. He guessed this was a high-level mage by how he still felt no mana signature off of him, even though he was maintaining a spell.

Astaroth's skill was about to end, and he could only curse his bad luck. But the mage was just looking at him.

It was only once the skill ended that the mage talked to him.

"Seems like we can talk normally now. Tell me your name, young man."

'What? He doesn't seem mad.'

"My name is Astaroth, sir. I swear it was an accident. I can pay for the damages and your lost time if that is what you want."

"Nonsense. I only intervened before any meaningless bloodshed. I'm more curious about your current form."

Astaroth felt a pulse of mana pass through him, and he guessed he was being scanned by the mage.

'Shit! Fuck! Will he see my class?!'

"Hmm. Interesting. Where are you heading, young Astaroth?"

"This is beneath you, sir. I'm simply an adventurer on a quest for the guild."

"I will judge what is beneath me, young man," the mage said in a stern tone.

Astaroth swallowed his dry saliva with an audible gulp.

"Um... Sir?" one guard said, still unable to move, too.

"Ahh yes. Pardon my forgetfulness. I will release you all now. But I want you to stand down. All three of you. Understood?"

He looked at each person, staying the longest on Astaroth. The three men agreed verbally, since they couldn't nod.

Once he had everyone's word, he waved his hand, and the magic holding them disappeared. The two guards immediately stowed their weapons, while Astaroth was a bit more cautious.

The noble mage gave him a stern look, and Astaroth gave up, stowing his weapons too. The mage smiled.

"Good. Now, back to my question. Where were you going?"

"Sir. Why did you intervene? We had him handled," the guard asked, wondering why he was taking time for this nameless adventurer.

"I don't recall answering to you, soldier. As for why, it is a very simple answer. He would have torn you to shreds in seconds. Both of you."

The guard looked at Astaroth weirdly, like he didn't believe him. But the next second, someone suddenly exerted powerful pressure on everyone around the mage.

The pressure surprised Astaroth, but he still resisted most of it. The guards weren't as lucky, as they both crashed to their feet, gasping for air.

The mage released his aura, letting the guards catch their breath back as he smiled at them in a patronizing way. Then he turned back to Astaroth.

"You still haven't answered my question. I won't be repeating it."

The smile he had on his face screamed fake, and Astaroth knew he was currently testing the man's patience.

So he pulled out his quest papers and handed them over. The mage unrolled the scroll, reading it in moments, and rolling it back up.

"Very well. I will bring you to where you need to go."

"I don't want to be a burden, sir. You can just point me in the right direction and I will be on my way."

"You are coming. I'm heading there myself, anyway."

"Okay..."

The man's forcefulness annoyed Astaroth. Most players would kill to ride with a noble, but he wasn't most players.

He had been trying his best to stay under the radar of the NPCs, but now, here he was, forced to accompany one of the high-ranking ones.

This was bad. Terrible, even.

Chapter 210 Modified Quest

Astaroth reluctantly climbed into the carriage behind the mage. He still didn't know his name, and was quite reluctant to scan him.

The ride was silent and quick. The mage didn't utter a word, and Astaroth did the same.

They were close to where he needed to be, but he probably wouldn't have found it, since no one would help him. Astaroth heard the guards call out their presence to the gatemen.

"Lord General Hakim Enzo, and one guest! Here to see Baron Duncan!"

The gates started opening after a few moments, and the carriage rode into the courtyard. Astaroth looked out the window as they did and noticed something.

There was a shimmer of magic that spanned the entire sky over the residence, originating from the walls around the estate. He found this weird, since this was the noble district.

Who would need this kind of measure if they were already in a fortified district?

"So you noticed," the mage sitting in front of him said.

"Is that a barrier? Why would a barrier be active inside the city?"

"It is indeed a barrier. As for why, I was here to find out. And I'm guessing your quest also pertains to this matter as well."

Astaroth started thinking about what could force a noble to erect a barrier around his residence in times of peace. It clouded the current circumstances in mystery, and that piqued his curiosity.

He was now glad he grabbed this quest.

'This might not be a boring quest after all!' he thought, his face morphing into a grin.

The mage looked at him and smiled. The carriage finally stopped before a gigantic mansion made of white stone and black roof tiles.

When Astaroth exited the carriage, he noticed a firm presence of guards patrolling the grounds. He could count at least twenty grounds that he could see.

He could easily deduce there were more in the shadows, too. This made him think the mansion was under attack or on lockdown.

Guards escorted the pair inside the mansion, after verifying Astaroth's identity. He simply showed them the quest scroll and his adventurer license and they cleared him.

Guards led them into a study, libraries lining each wall, from floor to ceiling. Astaroth was still silent as he took in the sights.

"Ah! General Enzo! I'm glad you could make it. I need your help," a man behind the desk exclaimed when he saw the mage walk in.

"Please, Amal. This is your home. No need to be so formal."

"And who is this young man? A new apprentice?" the baron asked, looking at Astaroth.

"Nothing of the sort. This is the adventurer you requested from the guild to fetch the medicine for your wife, I believe."

"My name is Astaroth. Pleased to meet you, sire," Astaroth said with a bow.

"Ahh, yes. That request. Unfortunately, young adventurer, I think you come too late. The medicine I requested would most likely be useless now," the baron responded, his face tensing.

"In that case, I would like to help in any way I can. I am already here, after all," Astaroth said.

Since he was already on the quest, and it didn't automatically cancel after the baron said he wasn't needed, he tried a different approach.

It also paid off, since as soon as he offered his help, it updated the quest in his journal.

Quest: Find A Cure (Updated).

Description: The Baron had requested special medicine for his ill wife. The situation has evolved and the medicine would be ineffective. You are now to find a cure for her illness.

Objectives:

Find out what is ailing the Baron's wife.

Find a cure or solution to her illness.

???

Rewards:

Reputation in Sunpeak +1000

Reputation with Baron Duncan +5000

Gold +1000

Honorary Title (depending on results)

???

Astaroth was sure what reputation did yet, but the thousand gold coin reward would have been enough reward already for him. The turn of events made him ecstatic.

"Fine. If you can make yourself useful, I don't see why I would refuse extra help. The General also seems to trust you, so I will try doing the same."

"You honour me, sire," Astaroth responded, giving another curt bow.

"Very well. Come with me, both of you."

The General and Astaroth followed behind the Baron as he led them through a door to the side. The door led into a corridor with no windows or doors other than the one they came in through, and one at the other end.

When they arrived at the door, the Baron pulled out an amulet, which Astaroth could see siphoning an insane amount of mana, before putting it to the door.

A magic seal appeared before unlocking. The door then opened on its own.

'A magic panic room. Neat.'

Inside the room, there were still no windows, and it was dimly lit by torchlight. There was a bed in the back, with veils all around it, obscuring its surface.

But they could still see a humanoid form on it. Astaroth guessed this was the Baron's wife.

But something was odd. Ever since he entered the room, he could feel a nefarious aura all around.

He wasn't the only one to notice, as the General frowned next to him.

"This... Amal, your wife... She isn't sick."

"What?" the Baron asked, visibly confused.

Astaroth was the one to respond before the general. He had already activated his perfect mana sense, and what he saw was quite deranging.

The woman lying on the bed had a clear stream of black mana pouring into her. The mana was black with tinges of red, reminding him of the demonic affinity orb in Aberon's abode.

"This looks like demonic mana. Is that a curse?"

The young man's words bewildered the Baron, meanwhile, impressing the General.

"I'm amazed you can see it so clearly. It is indeed a curse. Though it's impressive, you could determine its origins without a closer inspection," the General said, walking towards the bed.

He pulled aside the veils, revealing the sickly form of an elven woman. Her skin was pale and dull, almost like she was already dead.

But her heart was still beating, and that was all that mattered for now.

"Young man, come here. You will help me determine what is the source of the curse."

"I'll do anything in my power to help," Astaroth responded, walking to the General's side.