

## **New Eden 271**

### Chapter 271 Making Calculations

Astaroth briskly walked back out of the tree palace. He looked to the sky and estimated the time.

'Hmm. It'll be around six hours before the sun sets. I'll need to come back then.'

Phoenix looked at him mumbling, Morticia still following her around. Having her tag along everywhere was grating on her.

"Morticia. You don't need to follow me everywhere, you know?"

"Oh, I know, darling. I'm not following you. I'm following him, same as you."

Seeing her point at Astaroth made Phoenix's anger come back to the fore.

"I already told you to back off. Don't make me burn you to cinders."

"Oh, honey. You and I both know you would sleep faster than that could happen. But that is not why I'm following him. Something about the way he acts is intriguing to me. Like he is always looking at the bigger picture."

"Stop trying to psychoanalyze everything. Sometimes people act in a manner for no reason. Not everything is a psychological mystery."

"Quite the contrary. My job entails finding out what makes a person act the way they do. And the way he acts makes me curious about his real motives."

"Don't you have something better to do?"

Morticia chuckled at how Phoenix wanted her away from her man. Jealousy could be an ugly trait in anyone.

But Phoenix was right to be jealous here. Given a chance, Morticia knew she would jump on that train and ride it until it ran out of steam.

Not wanting to make her angrier at her without reason, Morticia took her leave.

"Fine. I'll go see if I have trustworthy contact to bolster our roster."

"Anyone needs to be approved by me first."

"Yes, of course. If I find anyone who wants such a stringent vice-guild leader, I'll let you know."

After saying her piece, Morticia walked away, the corner of her mouth still stretched in a smile.

Phoenix watched her leave, her hair almost combusting, as the surrounding mana reacted to her anger.

'God, I can't stand her! It's like she does it on purpose to anger me.'

Astaroth was still murmuring to himself, while the women talked together. He was calculating something and kept pulling up different internet tabs.

After a few minutes, he finally snapped back to the present. He spun around, noticing Phoenix was standing aside, watching him with a smile.

"Ahh. Were you waiting for me?"

"I have nothing better to do for now. What was it you were mumbling about?"

"I was calculating the stars and their location."

Phoenix looked at him with slight confusion.

"Why did you need to calculate the stars?"

"Because I need to contact the deity that rules them for my plan to work."

"Wait... You have a way of contacting a deity?!"

"I do. She's a minor deity, and her name is Alantha Anulo. She is the mother of the stars, and the kingdom spirit of the Ash Elves. We've talked a few times, so I think she will answer the call."

"You talked with a deity a few times already?!"

"Yes. Why do you seem so surprised?"

"Astaroth, my dear. Not a single player has been able to even confirm the existence of the deities yet. Only the priestly and devoted classes have an inkling of knowledge about them."

"Hmm. I see. Well, I guess I'm lucky then."

Phoenix conked him over the head lightly.

"Ow! What was that for?"

"Lucky my butt! That is beyond luck! You talked to a deity, and more than once, at that!"

"Can I count the times I talked to you in there?"

Astaroth tried soothing her by using flattery. And it seemed to work, mostly.

"You! Nevermind. Hmph!"

"Hehehe."

"So? What did your calculations tell you?"

"Ah, yes! The constellation I want will be to the east tonight, when the moon is at its zenith. So I need to come back in about eight hours. I don't know what to do in the meantime."

"Hmm." Phoenix hummed.

She looked at the system clock. Since their time was the same as out-of-game, but inverted twelve hours, it was close to four in the morning.

"We could log out for a bit. Get some rest. What do you say?"

Astaroth looked at her before nodding.

"You know what, catching some Zs sounds good to me. We could also go to a nice breakfast place nearby. I hear they have the best poached eggs in town."

"Alright. Then I'll see you back in bed."

Phoenix said that with a wink, before promptly disconnecting.

Astaroth had a feeling she wouldn't want to just sleep. His heart was already pounding in his chest, his body thinking about the skin-to-skin contact.

A small cough brought his attention back forward. Violette was standing in front of him.

"Astaroth. I'm sorry about how Alfred treated you. I wish it wouldn't have happened, but my father was extremely mad that I was put in danger while under your supervision."

"Don't worry about it, Violette. I understand his reaction. I just hope he won't lock you back inside your house again."

"I hope so too..."

"I was about to log out. Did you need anything before I leave?"

"Um... Yes. My mother wanted me to tell you she would like it if you come by sooner than later. She wants to talk to you."

Astaroth smiled.

"Of course. Tell your mother that I will find some time this week. If we're lucky, she might even allow you to come by for a sleepover again. Kary is home with me."

Her face lit up at the mention of Kary being there and having a sleepover.

"I would love that! Alright, I'll tell her when she wakes up!"

Astaroth chuckled.

"In that case, I'll be going to sleep for a bit. I have something I need to do in-game later tonight, so I need to rest now. Catch you later, Violette."

"Okay! Rest well!" Violette chimed.

After waving her goodbye, Astaroth logged out.

## Chapter 272 Control Excercises

After logging out, Alexander opened his eyes to the familiar pod interior. As he opened it up to exit, he heard the shower in his adjoining bathroom running.

He figured he could use a shower too, so he undressed, throwing his clothes in the laundry basket. As he walked into the bathroom, buck naked, he noticed Kary had her eyes closed as she enjoyed the hot water running down her face.

Alex grinned, trying to make as little noise as possible.

His shower had no actual door and only a guard glass that extended a few feet wide. He slipped into the shower, standing behind Kary, who was still oblivious to his presence.

He took the last step that was separating his body from hers, throwing his arms around her curvy form. He embraced every inch of her body his hand could reach, kissing her on the nape as he did.

Kary's soft moans of pleasure told him he was doing it right, and he indulged her. But as his hands were slipping lower, she caught them.

"Wait."

This was very uncharacteristic of her, and Alex was slightly taken aback. Kary was usually the one that wanted to go the full distance.

She turned around, facing him and looking into his eyes.

"I was thinking about something."

"Hmm?"

"Remember the other day, when you transformed?"

"Yes?"

"Well, it looked like you were slowly losing control. You assured me you wouldn't kill someone of your own volition without a good reason. But you seemed about to rip that man's face off."

"I had it under control. Mostly." Alexander replied.

He was trying to sound reassuring, but he knew he shouldn't lie, either. Controlling a meld in this body felt a lot more difficult than in New Eden.

He attributed it to his weaker human body, flushing with much more power than it should.

"Well, I think what you should work on right now is learning to control it perfectly. Think about it. What if you ever transform unwittingly and lose control? Wouldn't you feel terrible if you started killing innocent people?"

Alex looked at her knowingly. She wasn't scared about him killing people at all.

She was scared he might take a liking to it. But he still wondered why she brought that up now.

"I agree with you. But why bring it up now? It's not like I'm currently transformed."

"I was thinking about how to help you with controlling it. You once told me it was mainly about controlling your emotions, right?"

"Yeah, in part. But what does it have to—wait. Why are you smiling like that?"

"Well. What better to teach you control than have you keep your emotions in check while transformed?"

Kary said those words with a lascivious smile, one of the most enticing one's Alex had ever seen. His midsection was already reacting to her words.

Kary grinned, feeling something poking against her thigh. She lowered her hand, sliding across his erect instrument.

"Why don't you go ahead and transform? That way, we can start your 'Training' right away."

Of course, Kary had many things in mind, and not just teaching him self-control. She wondered how much different it would feel if he could overpower her at any second.

Alex's mind was all over the place, making it difficult for him to focus on mana. He was having trouble reaching out to the little soul fragment floating beside's his.

Kary wasn't making things easier on him either, caressing him up and down, as well as licking his chest with the tip of her tongue.

Kary was having fun teasing him, until she felt five pointed fingertips grab her rear, and she suddenly lifted off her feet. She looked up at Alexander's eyes and noticed the colour had changed.

From their usual deep blue colour, they were now closer to silver-coloured, with only slight blue undertones. His hair was also now white.

Alexander's breath was ragged as he looked at her with an almost hungry-like lust. He kissed her roughly until she pushed him back firmly.

Of course, she only pushed back his upper body, since Alex was holding her aloft with his left arm, almost effortlessly.

"Now, now. Take a deep breath, puppy."

Alex grunted at the nickname. But he did as she told him to.

After breathing in and out a few times, his breathing stabilized. Seeing calm down a bit, Kary smiled.

"Good. Now let's start nice and slow."

Guiding him with her hand, Alex slid inside her slowly, leaning his head against her shoulder, his eyes closed in pleasure.

Kary moaned in pleasure. She wasn't used to exerting control this much, and it aroused her greatly.

But what also turned her on was the knowledge that Alex was currently in a position where he could force her down at any moment.

Alex focused on his breathing, keeping his eyes closed and simply listening to Kary's heartbeat and his own. He obeyed her every command, even though his body was howling to go berserk.

After over an hour in the shower, taking in every ounce of pleasure their bodies could, the pair was exhausted. They both finished washing up before heading to bed and falling asleep in each other's arms.

After sleeping for a few hours, Alex woke up first. His body recovered faster, since his fatigue was more mental than physical.

Holding his wild impulses in check, while being careful not to hurt Kary, as well as maintaining his wolf form at the same time, was no joke. He turned his head to look at the woman next to him.

Kary was snuggled up to him, her face a soft and calm smile. He smiled as well, tucking in closer.

His movement woke Kary up, and she slowly opened her eyes.

"Mm. Morning."

Instead of responding, Alex leaned in to kiss her.

After a bit of frolicking in bed, Alex got up to get dressed. Kary followed behind him.

"I still have about three hours before I need to be back inside New Eden. Let's go to this breakfast restaurant I talked about."

Kary nodded in response. They left the penthouse shortly after.

## Chapter 273 Visiting The Base

\*\*\*Meanwhile, inside New Eden\*\*\*

Khalor had finished his dungeon, and grabbed most of what he wanted in it. His only regret was that he wasn't able to get the corpse of the last boss.

After clearing up the place, and grabbing all the loot he could, he headed back outside. He went around the dungeon zone, killing more monsters, and adding as much as he could to his army.

When the world announcements appeared in the sky, he almost laughed himself to tears. He had joined the guild as a means to an end, and nothing more.

He hadn't intended on joining any guilds at all in the beginning, since he wanted the world to know the name Khalor, not the name of the guild he was in. But, Astaroth, creating a guild, was already a swerve from his past actions.

When he saw they had conquered the Bastion for the guild, he was amazed. In the past, players had only found the Bastion after the next update, and by then, it was unconquerable.

Something had happened to the monsters inside it, and they had been demonized, along with the zone boss guarding it. It had eventually become an entry point for demons into the Elven kingdom.

'The changes are becoming more and more drastic. This will either turn out well, or terribly bad.'

He was curious about what the Bastion's interior looked like. Khalor had been too weak to help raid it when it was discovered last time, and when it turned into a base for demons, raiding it became an obsolete idea.

All he knew was that the walls guarding it were practically impregnable. The gates that entered the fortress were weaker, but they funnelled people in such a manner that it became a death trap.

Flying over the walls had also become problematic once the demons took over the place. The only upside to this was that Khalor had some good ideas about how to set up defences for the place.

And now that Paragons conquered and owned it, Khalor could see its location in the guild tab of the system. He ran to the nearest Undead city, heading to the teleporter.

Once he paid his fee, and walked through, he reappeared inside the Elven city nearest the coordinates. There would still be a long way to go from there, but that wasn't an issue for him.

He now had three flying Undead he could mount to fly to his destination. Reappearing inside the Elven city, was accompanied by stares of disgust and horrified shrieks.

Even if the Undead were recognized as a civilized race, they were still shunned and treated as evil in most places. Though the treaties in place prevented on sight executions, mostly, the fear and hatred were still clear as day.

But Khalor didn't care in the least. He hurriedly headed outside the city before taking off on the back of one of his new monsters.

When he opened his undeath portal, and a small drake popped out from it, the city guards almost pissed themselves. The alarm was sounded immediately, even though Khalor and his drake left almost instantly.

"Tch! What a bunch of pussies. No wonder they were the first nation to fall."

Flying upward for a while, to get a good altitude, Khalor looked at the passing trees below. Even if he felt bad for the Elves dying and losing this magnificent piece of land, he felt like they deserved it.

egglesnovel 'If they had listened to the other nations, they would have at least survived long enough to get help. What a waste.'

The Elven forests were great for stopping an invasion of any kind. Any decent ranger could fight in guerilla tactics for days and weeks on end in this vast forest.

But they had instead hidden inside their cities, believing them to be impregnable, and had watched the forest burn around them. Their lands had burned until nothing but their cities were left.

That allowed the demons to raze them to the ground with their numbers and war machines.

He erased these thoughts from his head, focusing on the present and how to fix this future.

As he looked ahead, he finally saw the humongous tree that was the centrepiece of the Bastion. His eyes narrowed.

'This tree... It looks familiar somehow.'

He tried searching his memories, but some memories of his past life were still a blur. He put the thought aside for now.

Reaching the gigantic treetop, he sent his drake on a descent, making it slalom through the branches, before landing on the ground under it. Elves immediately surrounded him.

"Lower your weapons. I'm part of Paragons."

The wild Elves looked at him with wariness, one of them scanning him. Once he confirmed the abnormal before them was indeed part of the guild called Paragons, weapons were lowered.

Something suddenly impacted the back of his shoulder, taking a chunk of his health. Khalor's head snapped to the direction he got him from.

Athena was standing on the top of a ruined building, grinning madly.

"I could finally land an attack on you! Heh!"

Khalor looked at her incredulously before snorting.

"That was a cheap shot, at best. Had I known you were there, it wouldn't have hit me."

"Yeah, excuses excuses. Anyway, what brings you here?"

Khalor laughed.

"I'm part of the guild too, you know. Am I now allowed on our own base?"

"That's not what I'm asking. You seem like the type that does nothing without reason. So what's your reason for being here?"

"Woman—"

Athena pulled her bowstring back.

"I have a name."

"Ahem. Sorry. Athena, I'm just here to see the place. I might have some ideas on how to make it a worthy fortress. Where is Astaroth?"

"Offline. You just missed him."

"Unfortunate. What about our vice-guild leader, Phoenix?"

"Same place, same thing."

\*Sigh\*

"Do you know if they will be back soon, or should I just call them outside?"

"Astaroth said something about coming back later tonight. Why? Is it urgent?"

"Not especially, no. I'm just very busy. I have little time to idle around."

Athena had access to his basic info from the guild page, and she could see his level there, without having to scan him. Khalor's level was already over Astaroth's again, sitting at forty-nine.

"Well, I guess you could call him outside if you have his number. If not, well, you are welcome to wait for him here. I'll be leaving you now. I'm also busy."

Khalor waved her off, noticing the surrounding Elves dispersing too.

'I guess I'll wait here. I doubt calling him now would mean he picks up, anyway.'

Khalor went off to inspect the inside of the base, taking in every detail. He was already making mental notes and plans.

## Chapter 274 The Robber And The Wolf

Outside the game, Alex and Kary had just left the penthouse, and were now walking to the breakfast restaurant Alex raved on about. They had a few blocks to walk, but it was a nice day and the weather was quite nice, too.

Downtown Montreal was relatively busy this early in the day, as most office jobs were about to start. It was a lovely morning, around eight-thirty in the morning, and Alex and Kary were enjoying a pleasant talk.

That was, until Alex's spine tingled, and his mind slowed down immensely on its own. Seeing everything slow down around him, Alex became puzzled.

'Did I activate Thousand Thoughts unintentionally?'

His eyes caught his reflection in the bank window next to him, but his gaze was already looking through the glass. Something big and gray was flying right at him and Kary.

It took him only a moment to realize what it was. The huge vault door was flying at them fast!



Alex didn't have to think much, as his mind worked at super speed, his body transforming in a heartbeat. Even though his mind was working much faster than his body, he was still able to grab Kary and jump out of the way of the incoming multi-ton object.

With his skill still active, and his senses picking up on every little detail, he heard the screaming inside the bank the vault had just flown out of. Peeking his head through the window, he saw the cause.

Standing in front of the now-open vault, a scrawny teenager was grinning like a maniac. At his feet to the left, a guard was sprawled on the ground, his head split in two, dead.

A large blood splatter along with some pinkish-gray matter slid down the corner of the marble wall. Astaroth could guess what that was.

But he was wondering how a small teen could crack a skull like that, and how that vault door ripped off its hinges. Then it clicked.

'Another player. He's found out he can use his strength outside the game. I need to get Kary away.'

While he was still watching him, Alex felt his body emit a pulse of mana, and as it did, his mind suddenly knew the name of the teen's in-game character, as well as his level.

\*Skull Crusher\*

Race: Demonoid

Level: 41

'I just scanned him!'

As Alex thought this, the teen turned around, his gaze locking on him.

'Shit! He knows!'

To make matters worse, Alex's Thousand Thoughts skill ended. Now that everything came back to normal speed, he could hear the teen laugh.

"AHAHAHA! You! You are like me!"

Alex wanted nothing more than to get away from this place. He didn't want more unwanted attention.

But as he was about to turn around and leave, another guard inside the bank turned his gun towards him.

"Stop! If you are with him, drop to your knees with your hands up!"

Hearing the other guard shout, the teen snapped his head towards him.

He put his hand on the counter next to him, and the next second, he was ripping it out of the floor.

The noise alerted the guard, who turned his head, only to see the massive mahogany desk fly at him.

Alexander could no longer stand by or leave. He couldn't stomach letting an innocent man die.

Dashing into the bank, at a speed far greater than the flying desk, he put himself in front of the stunned guard. His clawed hand slashed forward, exploding the desk into shards, saving him and the guard behind him.

Alex turned his head to the man, who was slack-jawed at what he was seeing.

"M... m... m... Monster!"

"If you are okay, just leave already.!"

The guard was too stunned to move, and only ended up falling to his ass.

Kary was standing outside the window, her eyes wide. It did not surprise her to see Alex transform, but the fact that someone else was insanely stronger than a normal human should be very much so.

The kid, seeing his attack wielded no result, growled in fury.

"Why are you interfering?! If you are like me, then you should do the same! The world belongs to the powerful!"

Alexander looked at him with anger.

"You think that because you are suddenly stronger than most, you get to decide who lives and who dies?!"

"If they get in my way, yes! Are you getting in my way, too?!"

"Tch! I don't care what you do, but you put innocent people at risk with your stupidity!"

Police sirens were already resounding nearby. The teen heard them and decided to take care of his obstacle before he could finish his robbery."

He dashed toward Alex, rage in his eyes. But his opponent was not a normal human this time.

And he miscalculated his foe's strength. Reaching Alex, the teen punched forward, thinking he was much stronger than him.

His face paled when Alex caught his fist in a single hand, not moving even an inch backward. The teen's hand was locked inside Alex's clawed hand, and he panicked.

He started trying to punch Alexander with his other fist, only ending up looking like a flailing kid. Alexander punched him once in the face, and a second time in the stomach, knocking him out instantly.

By the sound of the police sirens, Alex knew they were close by. He also knew he couldn't leave this kid to them.

They could never hold him, and would either end up losing him or shooting him. So he made a snap decision.

Alex lugged the kid on his shoulder before dashing out of the bank. He grabbed Kary's waist, who yelped slightly, before launching himself into the alleys nearby.

He ran out of downtown as fast as he could, startling the people he ran past, since he was moving extremely fast. When he could hear sirens no more, he stopped on a side road.

Kary was looking at him furiously.

She wasn't furious at them taking off, since she knew it would have been too much trouble for them to be caught there. But she couldn't understand one thing.

"Why in the hell did you bring him along?!"

Chapter 275 Asking A Favour

Alex stood there, words escaping him.

"I... I couldn't just leave him there, could I?"

"Yes! That is exactly what you should have done! Let the police handle the super-strengthened criminal!"

"They wouldn't be able to detain him. Did you not see the vault door he hurled at us?"

"That isn't your problem, Alex! What are you going to do with him now?!"

Alex had the inkling of an idea, but he wasn't sure it would be a good idea. He would have to ask for help from a man he already owed a favour to.

Alex reached into his pocket, pulling out two things.

The first one was his cellphone. The second was a black business card.

On this card, only a phone number, written in a bold red colour. This was Alfred's card.

He didn't know if the man would respond to his call at all, but it was his only shot at reaching the person he really wanted to contact.

Dialling in the number, Alexander put the phone to his ear.

After ringing once, the line picked up from the other side.

"Good morning, Mr. Leduc. What can I do for you? Perhaps you are calling for a rematch?"

"Good morning Alfred. That is not the reason for my call, no. I was wondering if you might put me in touch with Mr. Jack Boudreau."

Silence echoed for a few seconds before Alfred responded.

"What makes you think I know how to contact General Boudreau?"

Alex immediately knew he was onto something.

"Let's call it a hunch, Alfred. I believe Mr. Boudreau has done business with the Bellemars before, and your boss should have his number."

Alfred coughed on the other side of the line.

"Ahem. Yes. Mr. Boudreau is indeed a business partner to the Bellemars. I will see if I can get you his number."

"Oh, and Alfred."

"Yes, Mr. Leduc?"

"I never said Mr. Boudreau was a General. How did you know?"

Before he could get an answer, Alfred hung up the call. Alexander laughed a bit, knowing there was something more to it.

Putting his phone away, he turned back to Kary. She still looked mad, but at least she could tell Alex was trying to fix the situation.

Alexander was expecting it to take a while before Alfred called him back with a number, but his phone started ringing.

When he pulled it out and looked at the screen, it only showed 'Private'.

Alex pressed the answer call button.

"Hello?"

At the other end, a gruff voice he recognized replied.

"Hello, Mr. Leduc. I was told you wanted to contact me?"

"Ah, Mr. Boudreau. Yes, I was trying to reach you."

"What is the reason for that? Do you need to come to the hospital again? Having control issues, maybe?"

"Nothing of the sort, Mr. Boudreau. I actually have a favour to ask you."

"Hmm? Pray tell."

The old man sounded curious suddenly. People rarely called him for favours, since he was vehement about reclaiming them.

"I have... a package on my arms that I would need you to take care of. It's a bit of a sensitive package, you see?"

"Hmm. Do you need transport for your package?"

"I would indeed need transport."

Alex heard a clicking noise in his ear. He assumed it was a pen.

"Tell me where, and I'll send a transport right away."

Alexander peeked around the alley's corner, trying to find a street name. He soon found what he was looking for and gave the name plus some details to the old man.

Jack jotted down the info before handing it down to his assistant.

"A transport vehicle will be there for you in approximately fifteen minutes. If you move from there, I want you to call them and give them your new location. I will text you their number."

Alex thanked him before hanging up.

Kary was now looking at him curiously. She wondered when Alex suddenly got in contact with someone like Jack Boudreau.

She knew the name from the news. The man was a very well-known business tycoon, with a big part in many land sales and purchases.

Alexander's phone beeped, and he received a text from a private number with a phone number in it. Alexander texted back, thanking Mr. Boudreau, but also specifying he wasn't alone.

Sending the text, Alex was hearing sirens in the distance.

'They're getting closer. I hope they won't reach here before the transport does.'

Kary pulled on his arm.

"Alex. How do you know Mr. Boudreau?"

"Hmm? Didn't I tell you he was the owner of the hospital I went to?"

"No. You only told me you were in a private hospital."

"Ah... I must have forgotten. I'm sorry."

"Okay. But why did you call him about this? Do you think he can help with... him?"

Kary pointed at the sprawled teen. The teenager was still out cold, with drool coming out the side of his mouth.

Alexander looked at the teen before looking back at Kary.

"Yes. I believe so. I believe he is the only one who can help right now."

Kary nodded, still unsure what she was getting herself into.

Then her stomach grumbled. Her cheeks flushed red as she grabbed her midsection.

Alex looked at her and laughed.

"Yeah. I guess we didn't get to eat breakfast yet, did we?"

Kary laughed awkwardly. Now was hardly the time to think about food.

The stress of getting caught by the police, with a man that had killed innocent people, was eating at her. And they would also question Alexander about what happened.

There simply was no way the cameras did not catch him going into the bank before knocking out the teen and escaping with him. This could be considered aiding a criminal.

The wait for the transport vehicle felt like an eternity for both Alex and Kary. The vehicle was a black, windowless van.

Kary was almost scared to get inside it, but Alex didn't have the same reservation. He flung the teen's body inside, before climbing in himself.

Kary followed in after a moment of hesitation. The closing in police sirens was her motivation.

Minutes after the van left, a police patrol car slowed down in front of the alley they had been in. But they were gone.

#### Chapter 276 Delivering The Package

The windowless back of the van made Kary very uncomfortable for the ride to wherever they were going. She clung to Alexander's arm like a scared kitten.

It was funny to Alex, since she always portrayed herself as a strong, brave woman. But she was much stronger in the game than out here.

At least, for now. Alex did not know how strong she would become out here once she could use mana properly.

The ride to the private hospital was a little longer this time than Alex remembered. He couldn't look out any window to confirm they were still going to the right place, but he felt no danger yet.

Of course, that could change at any moment.

But before his worry turned into reality, the van jerked to a stop. Alex heard the slam of a door in front, and soon after, the van door slid open.

Standing in front of it, was a man he recognized. It was one mercenary that had been at his penthouse.

The one he had almost ripped his face off, to be precise. And he was armed with a small machine gun.

Alex stretched his arm in front of Kary protectively, but the man reacted swiftly.

"Hey, man! I have no beef with you!"

"Then why are you armed?" Alexander growled.

"This? I was told you might have a dangerous package. Simply a precaution."

"So you're telling me I almost killed you, and you're fine with it?"

"Eh, it's part of the job. I'm a mercenary. Listen, I was hired to rough you up by Colonel Lancaster that time, and now by General Boudreau to transport you. Nothing more."

Alexander stayed wary of the man, but when the mercenary strapped his gun behind his back, he dropped his arm. As long as he wasn't immediately threatening them, Alex would have to trust his goodwill.

He also doubted a mercenary would go against his employer's orders, as long as they paid him well. And he doubted Mr. Boudreau skimped on his pay.

The mercenary grabbed the still unconscious teenager, lumping him on his shoulder before leading them into an elevator. Alex looked around them before entering the elevator and saw they were in an underground parking.

The cars he saw around him all seemed to be in the upper range of costs. Mercedes, BMWs, Range Rover and whatnot.

He couldn't see cars of more common brands, and guessed this was a level of the underground parking that wasn't accessible to the public. Mr. Boudreau had mentioned that the hospital had some legal dealings.

That made him wonder why every time they brought him here, they didn't allow him to see where they were. Then again, wouldn't a private hospital for rich tycoons and such be better off staying hidden?

Getting inside the elevator, Alex noticed the mercenary pressing a button with no numbers on it. The duration of which he pressed it also caught his attention.

'Finger scanner. So we're going to the labs.'

Alexander made no fuss about it since he guessed that the labs would have what they needed to hold a dangerous person with inhuman strength. But he wondered what that would be.

Would it be anti-magic cuffs, like in New Eden? Or would it be a piece of unknown technology?

He couldn't wait to know. But he wasn't even sure he would be told at all.

Once the elevator finished its descent and the doors opened, Alex recognized the white sanitized walls. Mr. Boudreau was right there, waiting for them.

"Ah, Mr. Boudreau, sir. You didn't need to come and greet us yourself," the mercenary said, flashing a rigid salute.

"At ease, Lieutenant. I was coming to fetch Mr. Leduc, and his accompaniment. You can go deposit the boy in the holding cells for now."

"Yes, sir!"

Clicking his heels together in another salute, the mercenary left to the right, before disappearing around a corridor bend. Alex looked back at their host.

"Mr. Boudreau," Alex greeted him.

"Please, young man. Call me Jack. You don't work for me, and neither are you a stranger. No need to be so formal."

"Alright then, Jack. I'm sorry I sprung this on you so suddenly. The situation escaped me, and I didn't know who else to contact."

"Nonsense, young man. This is the exact reason I offered you my help in the first place."

"Beg your pardon?"

Alexander looked confused, but not as much as Kary, who was eyeing her surroundings with wariness.

"Miss Deveille, it is a pleasure to meet you. I have heard good things about you."

Kary snapped her head to Jack, her eyes widening. She then looked at Alexander, who shook his head no.

"How do you know who I am?"

"Let's just call me an information-savvy man, Miss Deveille. I have files on a lot of influential people in many spheres of the world."

"But I'm not an important person..."

"You are a very well-known Esports player. That alone requires me to know a bit about you, given I have investments in the business myself."

Alexander interrupted them.

"I don't want to sound rude or anything, but I'm on a clock. Do you have some game helmets Kary and I can use, Jack? I need to be back in the game before noon."

Although Jack looked a bit displeased, Alexander interrupted his introduction, he understood Alexander wouldn't be this abrupt if he didn't have a reason.

"We have many available. Please follow me."

Mr. Boudreau personally escorted them to a room called the LAN room. Inside it, beds upon beds were lined up to the walls, with gaming helmets hooked directly into the wall on tables next to them.

People in hospital gowns, ranging from young to old occupied some of the beds. Alexander surmised they were experimenting with the effects the game had on different body types.

It made sense, since Jack seemed to know something was different with New Eden. Which brought another question to mind.

How much did he know, and how long had he known? But now was not the time to ask these questions.

Alexander had to head inside the game soon, if he wanted to keep his plan in motion. He picked the closest unoccupied bed, Kary taking the one next to it, and grabbed the helmet.

"Thank you, Jack. I hate to say this, but I owe you one," Alex said, slipping the helmet on his head.

Jack only smiled in response, as both young adults logged into the game simultaneously.

## Chapter 277 Making The Call

\*Launching New Eden\*

\*Logging in\*

\*Welcome back player Astaroth\*

Astaroth opened his eyes, taking in his surroundings. He was still standing in the middle of the base, but some things were already different.

The first of them was that it wasn't as empty as before.

The wild Elves that had been staying outside had partly moved inside. He could see some of them restoring houses near the entrance that led to their village and farms.

He surmised this was the deal Athena had taken with them. It made absolute sense they would want some place inside, so they could shelter from danger if it arose.

Astaroth didn't mind, since he planned to make this a city. It wouldn't hurt to have some citizens already.

The next thing he noticed was that some players were wandering around the base. They weren't faces he recognized, so he opened up the guild roster.

His eyes widened when he saw the number of members. It had ballooned up from the previous eleven to an impressive fifty. Of course, it wasn't impressive compared to most established guilds.



But theirs was a new one, and still not widely known. Their only achievement was to conquer this place.

From the races the players had, he could already guess who had invited them. There weren't many who could invite, anyway.

Phoenix had locked the rights to invite new players to the core of their party, ergo, Silent Light, Gulnur, Athena, Violette, I'die, and themselves.

Gale, Morticia, Khalor, and Death had to pass through one of those to invite a friend. None of them complained, not even Khalor, about these conditions.

Khalor cared little about it, since he played alone and had no friends to invite. As for the others, they were still new to the group, so they accepted it without a fuss.

As Astaroth scanned briefly through the guild member list, he noticed they had recruited mostly combat classes, but someone had also found a few crafters.

This brought a smile to his lips. He mentally noted the crafters' names, wanting to meet them soon. But he had matters to attend to first.

He closed the guild tab, looking at Phoenix, who had been silently standing next to him. She seemed uneasy.

"Are you okay?" he asked, gently brushing his hand on her arm.

"I'm fine... I just don't feel comfortable knowing my body is unguarded and surrounded by strangers."

Astaroth knew what she meant. He would also feel that way if he didn't have absolute faith that Jack would keep them safe, in virtue of him owing the man a favour.

Astaroth hugged her, talking gently into her ear.

"Don't worry. Jack won't let anything happen to us. He considers me an investment, after all. And he doesn't seem like the type to forgo his investments, otherwise, he would be a terrible businessman."

The last comment made Phoenix chuckle, and she calmed down a bit.

"Thank you."

"Don't worry, I'll always make sure you feel at ease."

Phoenix gave him a gentle kiss, smiling softly.

She wasn't a weak damsel in distress, by any means. But knowing Astaroth would try his utmost to protect her, still reassured her.

Looking at the dark skies, Astaroth remembered why he was in a hurry.

"It's almost time. Do you want to follow me? You might be able to meet my divine correspondent."

The slight mocking tone he used to say the last bit amused Phoenix.

She nodded her head, and Astaroth smiled.

Wings suddenly sprouted in the man's back, surprising Phoenix. When he walked over to her and grabbed her body in his arms, she yelped.

"Eep! What are you doing?"

"We need to be higher for what I want. So I will fly us up. Hang on tight."

Finishing his phrase, Phoenix clutched his neck as he launched off the ground like a rocket. His wings beat powerfully as they rose into the gigantic tree's canopy.

Astaroth flew eastward, looking for a high branch that gave him a clear view of the night sky. As he pierced through the canopy, gaining altitude to see better, Phoenix got a view of the stars.

Her heart fluttered at the beauty of the scene. The feeling of flight mixed with the proximity of the sky made her feel like she could just stretch her arm up and grab the stars in her hands.

Astaroth smiled when he saw her amazed eyes glittering in the moonlight and flickering with the starlight. He kept looking for an adequate place to perform his night call and found one.

Further to the east, a large branch stretched out of the canopy, its leaves almost all on the underside. It was the perfect spot, almost like it was made for this.

He slowly manoeuvred his way there, landing softly on the branch. It slightly wavered to his weight, but seemed to hold strong.

Putting the still amazed Phoenix to her feet, Astaroth pulled out the Evolution Fruit. He scanned it again, making sure it hadn't suddenly degraded, but it was the same as earlier.

Astaroth dropped to his butt, taking an Indian position on the branch. Phoenix saw him and did the same.

"What now?" she asked.

"Now I will try contacting her. I don't know if I will reach her, this far from the Ash Elf kingdom, but I might have something to help."

Phoenix nodded, remaining silent.

Astaroth pulled out Ad Astra, sitting it on his lap in its shortsword form. That was how he got it, and he assumed it was its original form.

He silently prayed to Alantha Anulo, asking her to answer his call and grave him of her presence. After five minutes of silent prayer, something had yet to happen.

Astaroth frowned.

'Maybe the connection isn't strong enough?'

He tried again, this time injecting mana into the weapon's core. He continuously supplied it with mana while praying, but the results stayed the same.

'Guess I'll have to go with something stronger.'

Phoenix, who was still sitting next to him, could feel the fluctuating energy Astaroth was dealing with. She wondered what he was trying to accomplish.

But then she felt him pulling in something stronger. She still didn't know the name of the energy, since no one had taught her.

She assumed what she did when drawing that energy was just purifying the mana. But Astaroth seemed to draw it in raw, and it made her curious.

'I'll have to ask him later, when he's not so focused.'

Then something happened. Phoenix's head spun toward the sky, where she felt a massive surge of energy.

'What the!'

## Chapter 278 Divine Favour

Looking into the sky, Phoenix noticed the stars warping and funnelling toward them. Some stars followed the funnel, forming the shape of a person.

Soon enough, a tall, slender woman was standing in front of both Phoenix and Astaroth. A grin appeared on the latter's face, as his eyes were still closed.

Opening his eyes, Astaroth saw Lady Anulo's smiling face.

"You have called, child. I cannot stay long, so speak your mind."

Astaroth nodded. He would also prefer not to take too long.

He had some things to do outside New Eden after this. In the meantime, Phoenix was still slack-jawed at Lady Anulo's appearance.

Alantha watched the human girl next to him from the corner of her eye and could see the strings of fate tying them together. Her smile softened.

"I had a favour to ask of you, Lady Anulo."

The deity tilted her head. It wasn't rare for a mortal to ask a favour from a god, but rarely did they call them to the mortal realm to do so.

"Speak."

Pointing at the fruit at Lady Anulo's feet, Astaroth explained what he wanted.

"I have a being that works for me, stuck at the semi-legendary stage. Eating this fruit would break him through to legendary."

"Indeed, it would. But you don't need me for this."

"I do not, no. But I thought of something else. You are familiar with the constellation Leo, am I right?"

"I am the minor goddess of the stars. Of course I am."

"The being I am trying to evolve is a lion beast-man. I was wondering if infusing the fruit with the constellation's power would make him go one step further. Could it make it evolve further?"

Lady Anulo looked at him wide-eyed for a second. What he was asking was to infuse a mortal being with power far beyond its shell's capacity.

But then she looked at it from another angle. If they infused the fruit, and the beast-man consumed it, he might be able to digest the energy more passively.

It was an insane idea, but the potential stayed undeniable. She resolved herself to help.

It wasn't a loss for her, either. If they infused the mortal in question with star aether, that would tie it to her domain, adding a powerful being to her following.

While she thought of those things, Phoenix elbowed Astaroth in the side, whispering to him.

"Is she the reason you are strong? Her power seems similar to Luna's, are they related?"

Astaroth whispered back.

"No. I derive my power from spirits and souls. She is the one that made my weapon though, albeit a long time ago. As for Luna, someday I'll present you her genitor."

Phoenix nodded, before noticing the deity was looking at them. She snapped back upright, lowering her head.

Lady Anulo locked her gaze on Astaroth's.

"I will grant your favour. As for the return, I will redeem it in due time. I have a feeling it will be necessary soon."

Astaroth nodded.

Lady Anulo turned around, facing herself to the stars. She smiled, seeing that Astaroth had already made sure they were looking at the right constellation.

Alantha extended her hand toward the constellation in question, making a grabbing motion. The Regulus star, which was the principal star of the constellation, lit up brightly.

Astaroth could see a bright string of energy suddenly extend from the sky to the deity's hand. The next moment, Lady Anulo levitated the fruit into her other hand.

As soon as she did, the fruit started siphoning the aether like a dried-up desert flower finally receiving rain. To Astaroth's sense, the fruit was filling up rapidly before condensing and repeating the process.

He could see a nucleus of Aether forming inside the fruit, and that alone was a sign his plan was working. At least for this part.

The next step was more of a gamble

After about a minute of infusing the power of the star Regulus inside the small fruit, it finally looked gorged. To Astaroth, this fruit looked like a miniature sun, shining brighter than anything he had ever seen.

Even Phoenix could feel the intense energy radiating from the previously listless fruit.

Lady Anulo looked tired but satisfied with her handiwork. She handed the fruit to Astaroth, who took it with the care you would give a newborn.

"I have granted your favour. I must now leave, as I have drained my power. But I will observe from my domain, hoping for your success. Goodbye, child."

Astaroth bowed his upper body, still sitting on the branch, and bade farewell to the minor goddess. Phoenix followed his motion.

After a flash of purple and pink, Lady Anulo disappeared from their realm once more.

Astaroth had the grin of a fool plastered on his face. It almost made Phoenix laugh.

The whole situation lasted around half an hour, and the moon was still high in the sky. Astaroth could meld back with Morpheus at any moment, to go back down.

But he instead enjoyed the starlit night a bit. It was a gorgeous sight, after all.

Phoenix, seeing him lie down, joined in and cuddled next to him, looking at the stars. She turned her head towards him.

"Do you think she is still looking this way?"

"I doubt she will look back down for a little while. This must have taken an enormous amount of her energy. Why?"

"I was wondering what she would think of me if I violated her precious child in front of her gaze."

Astaroth laughed.

"I doubt matters of the living get her attention like that. She has been alive for a long time, and I think she's seen her fair share. I wouldn't be surprised if she did some frolicking of her own at some point."

"Good. Cause I'm about to frolic you up."

Phoenix rolled over Astaroth, pinning down his shoulders. She started kissing him vigorously, but before she could go any further, the sound of wings flapping interrupted her.

"There you are. I've been looking for you, butterfly. You can have sex after I talk to you."

Phoenix looked at the disruptor with anger.

"Khalor. I wasn't expecting to see you here... like... ever," Astaroth blurted in disappointment.

"Well, we need to talk."

#### Chapter 279 A Shrewd Solution

Dismounting his drake and landing on the same branch as the couple, Khalor walked closer and sat about five feet away. He waited for the pair to separate from each other before speaking.

"First, congratulations on conquering this place. This was an unforeseen event, and it could prove to play in our favour."

"Thank you. But I'm sure that's not the reason you are here."

"Not even remotely. I came here to warn you about Azamus and his stupid PVP war. If it continues, it will knock many important pieces off the board. Someone needs to stop him."

"And I'm guessing you want me to do that?"

"No. I have something better in mind. But for that, you will need to grow the guild extremely quickly. Sadly, that will also require you to take part in the war."

"I already intended to do so. He attacked my people, and he needs to pay."

"That is how Azamus operates. He attacks everyone, expecting them to fight back. His sponsors guarantee him to have a steady advantage."

"I doubt money can solve all the problems I'm about to dump on his head."

"Not all, but most. His guild headquarters will already be vastly more developed than this fortress. Even if it isn't as well defensible, they will be prepared for a fight."

"Good. I hope they fight back as much as possible. If not, I won't enjoy tearing them down."

"Shut up, Astaroth. You aren't seeing the point I'm trying to make."

"Then stop spinning around the pot!"

"I don't want you to take the fight to him. I want you to force all the guilds to come and fight you here."

Phoenix reacted this time.

"Why the heck would we do that?! The guild base is barely ours. We have no way of defending from a player attack. That would be a guild suicide!"

Khalor smiled widely.

"Not if I'm here."

Astaroth looked at him with a serious frown.

"I understand you are strong, Khalor. But don't you think you are exaggerating? Even I don't think I could take on hundreds of players at the same time, especially guild-backed players."

"We won't need to. This place still only has one entrance. As long as that stays that way, we have the advantage. I can unleash my full army outside the walls while you hold any player trying to enter the gate."

Phoenix started thinking about the strategy he was offering. She had to admit it had some viability to it, but there were many loopholes.

Khalor could already see the wheels spinning in the woman's head. She had been renowned as a brilliant strategist in his past life, and he knew that bringing just the sketch of a plan to her would be enough.

But Astaroth was still not convinced.

"What about coming over the walls? Surely you don't think you are the only player that can fly?"

"I'm not that stupid. But if we position the right people over the top of the wall, we can snipe them down before they make it up and over."

"What about their snipers taking down the people on the walls? Azamus is a great shot, and his damage is almost on a par with mine."

Khalor's face became gloomy.

"I will take care of Azamus myself. It is his fault I even have to think about this dumb plan at all. My previous plan was well thought of, and it would have bought us time."

Phoenix interrupted her thoughts to snicker.

"And whose fault is that? The post you did online was most likely the trigger for Azamus' plan for a PVP war. He saw your demand as a challenge, I'm certain."

"Khalor, I know what you wanted to convey with that message, but Phoenix is right. For all your careful thinking, you miscalculated human greed."

Khalor growled low. He hated getting admonished for his mistakes, but he was at least mature enough to recognize he had dropped the ball.

"I know! I know that already, but I was hoping to strike at the player's rationale. If I announced an event after the update that required level fifty, wouldn't more players try to reach that level faster?"

"I understand what you were aiming for, but you shot and you missed. Now, how does shifting the war on us solve the problem?"

Before Khalor could even respond, Phoenix's eyes widened in realization.

"Wait, you don't care about the number of players over level fifty! You're hoping certain players can reach that level. You know what the event is, and who should be there."

"I do. I can't say yet, but I do. And I need some very specific players to be over level fifty. The problem is that those players won't listen to me."

"And you're hoping you can catch their attention by bringing the fight to us," Astaroth completed the thought.

"Yes. If I can get the fight here, and make enough people think we can win, I could make the players we need to join the guild. This way, we could ensure they reach level fifty before the event."

Phoenix let her brain calculate the odds of them fending off many guilds, and with the strategy Khalor offered, plus the more detailed solutions she thought of, it was workable.

Khalor knew he struck the right chord when Phoenix started mumbling to herself. Astaroth also noticed the mumbling, accompanied by Khalor's grin, and understood his true objective.

'You didn't really want to talk to me. You wanted your plan to reach Phoenix. What a sly man.'

Astaroth waited for Phoenix's rambling to end, before asking her what Khalor also wanted to know.

"So. Can you make it work?"

Phoenix looked at both men before a confident smile lifted the corner of her lips.

"I can bolster our chances a lot. I'd say... eighty percent chance of success. As long as Khalor can produce a large enough army to hold off an army of players."

Khalor grinned.

"In that case, let me show you."

He rose to his feet, looking at the empty plains below, next to the worked fields, before whispering to himself.

"Legacy Skill; Death's Door."

The next moment, both Phoenix and Astaroth looked on in horror at the ground below. Both thought the same thing.

'He's gotten more powerful again.'

Chapter 280 Sleeping Under The Stars

Seeing Astaroth's and Phoenix's wide eyes and dropped jaws, Khalor knew he had made his point. He cancelled his skill, turning back to face them.

"So. Do you think I can hold a good amount of players?"

Astaroth nodded, while Phoenix still held some reservations.

"Even if that was indeed impressive, there is still one question I have. How long can you have that open?"

"Long enough."

Phoenix didn't look satisfied with his response.

"Listen. It's not as long as we would need to kill every single player. But it is long enough to drive in them the fear of death. And that would be enough to drive most of them away."

"I don't understand. Why do you want to drive them away after dragging them here in the first place?"

"I want the smart ones to leave. The stupid, warmongering idiots will stay and keep trying until they've been decimated. Those are the ones that need to be taken down."

"I doubt it will go down like that."

"It doesn't matter if it varies a bit. Smarter players will leave when they see they have no chance of taking the fortress. The others can die and lose levels, as far as I'm concerned."

Phoenix could grasp what his overall idea was, but since she was missing so much information, she could not see the greater picture. But for now, she would have to make do with this.

"Alright. We can do it your way. But I will change the plan as much as I want, and you don't get to complain."

Khalor chuckled.



"Fine by me. As long as it works, the methods don't matter to me. I will be challenging all the guilds tomorrow morning. Make sure you are ready by then."

Astaroth sat by, listening to the conversation, and smiled.

'Phoenix really is putting him in his place.'

Phoenix nodded at Khalor's statement, and the man mounted back his drake.

"I'll be leaving now. I still have things to do. I'll be back by the end of the day tomorrow to prepare for the siege."

Saying his piece, he dove the drake down the side of the tree. He was gone in a few seconds, disappearing into the night.

Phoenix lay back down, setting her gaze upon the stars once more. Her mind was running scenario upon scenario, imagining as much detail about a siege as she could.

Astaroth turned his body to look at her focused face. Her determined eyes and scrunched-up brow, as well as her occasional mumbling, were slowly lulling him to sleep.

A full hour went by before Phoenix snapped out of her tactical thinking. She noticed Astaroth sleeping soundly next to her, and softly giggled.

Passing her hand on his cheek delicately, she slid closer to him. Astaroth instinctually wrapped his arm around her, still sound asleep, and the pair slept under the moonlight and stars, until sunup.

Peaceful hours went by, with nothing to disturb the sleeping couple. Only the chirps of birds and soft sun rays woke them from their slumber.

Astaroth felt refreshed, even though he had slept on a hard surface. It was like the sway of the tree in the wind had caressed his body all along the night, making sure he rested well.

Phoenix woke up a few seconds after Astaroth, smiling at him as she opened her eyes.

"Good morning, sleepyhead." Astaroth giggled.

Phoenix tapped him on the side.

"Sleepyhead? You're the one that fell asleep first. I just didn't know if I should wake you to get back out of the game or not."

"No, we are fine here. It's safe outside and I'm sure some nurses have already hooked us up to IVs, since we've been inside the game for so long."

Phoenix trusted Astaroth, and she didn't doubt his words held some truth. After all, the room they were laying in had a plethora of doctors and nurses.

She doubted Mr. Boudreau hadn't told them to watch the two of them. So she took her mind off that for now.

Astaroth was already browsing through the forums, quickly finding what he was looking for. The number one trending post on most forums was the same.

\*Challenge to all guilds!\*

I, Khalor, the strongest player in New Eden, and part of the strongest guild in the game, Paragons, invite all guilds to stop their meaningless fighting. I challenge all of you to steal our new fortress from us!

Any player who thinks he can overthrow us is welcome to come try their hand at it. As for any player that likes a wonderful challenge, you can join our guild and help us defend against the oncoming onslaught.

As for the moronic guild leader who started all this PVP nonsense, Azamus, I will wait for you and your guild specifically on the fields surrounding our base. Don't back out!

Astaroth laughed at how brazen and ballsy Khalor had made the statement. With these fighting words, no one would stay back on the sidelines.

Many guild representatives had already accepted the challenge publicly on his post and their own forums. As for Aces High and Azamus, he had announced everywhere that the fortress was as good as his and that he would crush Paragons into dust.

Astaroth could feel the adrenaline pumping through his veins. This wouldn't be a minor task, and preparing for it was primordial.

Khalor had set a timer in his post, with a few hours to spare before the coordinates came online. That way, he knew he would be back in the base before the big fight started.

That also gave Phoenix some time to prepare countermeasures. It also gave the challenging guilds some time to prepare, but the travel time would give more to Paragons.

Phoenix was already sending messages in the guild chat, ordering every member to come to the base this instant. To the ones already here, she started giving instructions to help mount a defence.

Finishing this, she turned to Astaroth.

"I think it's time we go see the guild treasury and find out how many resources we got from taking this place."

Astaroth nodded in agreement, his face stuck in a wide grin.