

## **New Eden 821**

Chapter 821 Invited To Lunch

Kary's mother looked at Alex with an appreciative smile.

She had met rich young men before. This wasn't her first rodeo.

But, usually, they were pretentious little pricks, and she would do anything to push her daughter away from them. Money wasn't all in life, after all.

And she wanted what was best for her daughter.

But this young man was grounded, funny, and hadn't a tinge of the arrogance of someone born into money.

Which begged the question: How did he get this rich so fast?

But she wouldn't ask him this. No.

She would wait to have a moment with her daughter and ask her instead. It was in a Deveille's nature to be nosy.

A trait she was surprised her daughter hadn't inherited.

'Her father was always more of a mind-your-business person,' she thought, looking at Kary.

But she didn't say a peep.

Alex stopped laughing, looking at the woman with a sheepish look.

"Where are my manners? Do you want something to drink, Ms. Deveille—sorry, Guylaine?"

She smiled at him, glad he did a double take, and nodded.

"Yes. Water is fine. Sparkling, if you have some."

Alex nodded at her, getting up and walking into the kitchen.

He took a glass from the cabinet and poured tap water into it. But he wasn't done.

Lowering the glass under the countertop, he slipped his hand over the opening, sealing it almost completely, and used mana to carbonate the water.

If you knew its underlying science, the carbonation process wasn't complicated, and he wanted to impress the woman. What better than a sweet little lie to do so?

With a bit of wind magic and mana manipulation to emulate carbon dioxide, the trick was done.

As he walked back toward Kary and her mother, she noticed the water in the glass was now bubbly.

"Didn't you serve me tap water?" the woman asked with a curious gaze.

"Ahh, yes. But I have a carbonation adapter under the counter and carbonated it for you. It's no trouble, really."

Guylaine looked at him with a critical gaze.

She was an expert when it came to sparkly water, as she had been drinking it for years and tried all kinds of it, as well as many carbonating machines at home.

This was the first she heard about a built-in carbonation machine with an adapter for glasses. She thought he was full of it for a moment.

But, as she brought the glass to her lips, taking a small sip, her eyes widened.

"Mmm! This sparkly water is amazing! It has all the tang of normal sparkly water but none of the carbon taste! Where did you get this machine? I need one!"

Sitting back next to Kary, Alex chuckled and replied with a smile, "I honestly don't know. It came with the penthouse. I would have to ask the contractor. I can if you want me to."

Guylaine's face dropped immediately.

She knew the contractor type well. Once the job was done, reaching them again for anything was next to impossible.

If the young man had come from rich blood, they might have given him the time of day. But as a nouveau-rich?

There wasn't a chance.

"Oh, don't bother yourself with it. I'll try finding it online," she replied, looking disappointed.

In the meantime, Kary leaned on him and whispered, "We don't have such a machine. What did you do?"

Alex turned his head to her and winked, but kept silent.

Kary silently clicked her tongue, her curiosity egging her to keep asking. But she would only do so after her mother was gone.

Which, knowing her, wouldn't be for hours.

"Mom. I know you came for a good reason, but Alex and I had things to do today. Errands to run. I don't want to throw you out, but—"

Alex interrupted her, frowning.

"Nonsense! We can order all those things online. It's no trouble at all if she stays for the day. She drove all the way here, after all. I would be a terrible host if I threw her out already."

Kary looked at him with daggers in her eyes.

It wasn't that she didn't want her mother to be here. On the contrary, her presence was calming to her.

But she wanted to spend at least one day with Alex without someone barging in on them. He had just returned from a month of being AWOL, and already, everyone was pulling at him, trying to get his time.

This was annoying her. She wasn't sure if she was being a bit too possessive or if it was a normal reaction.

But she didn't care.

'Let me have one day alone with him. ONE DAY!' she cursed in her mind.

But Alex hadn't been raised like this. His mother and father would be turning in their graves if they found out he threw out a guest without inviting them to lunch, at the very least.

"We were about to make something for lunch. But how about we treat you to lunch instead, Guylaine? I know a delightful spot not too far from here. We can walk there or take transport. What do you say?"

The woman looked at the young man with a smile.

'He was raised right, I see,' she thought.

"Oh, my. That would be so generous of you. I'm starving, too. But walking isn't my cup of tea. The old knees, you see?"

Alex looked at her, feeling the lie in her words.

'She wants to know how rich I am. How funny,' he mused.

"Then I'll call in a car. Don't worry. It'll be no trouble at all," he said, getting up.

He walked to the pillar with the intercom and used the phone option on it. He still hadn't replaced his phone, so he had no other choice.

He picked up the card that he had jammed over it with the limousine driver's name and dialled the number on it.

After two rings, the line picked up.

"Gilbert Private Limo services, Gilbert himself on the line. How may I help you today?"

"Hello, Gilbert. It's Alexander Leduc. You left me your card before, and I need a ride for three. Are you busy?"

"Mr. Leduc! Of course, I remember you! It would be my pleasure to drive you again. I can be at your place in less than five minutes; I'm right around the corner. Is that good?"

Alex smiled to himself. The call was on speaker, and he knew his in-law could hear him.

"That would be perfect. See you in a bit, Gilbert."

"See you in a moment, sir!" Gilbert replied, a pep in his words, before hanging up.

Alex turned around, and he could see the smirk on Guylaine's face.

"The car is on its way. If you'll excuse me, I will dress in something more appropriate."

After changing clothes from the fight earlier, Alex had been in jeans and a shirt, but he might as well put on something more flashy. If the woman wanted to see money, he would show her.

He could already hear Kary's gnashing teeth as she mumbled under her breath something about beating his ass.

"I'll go change as well, Mom. Be right back!"

"Of course, honey," her mother replied, looking at them go up the stairs.

"Get back here!" Kary whisper shouted at Alex, who giggled and ran up the stairs.

## Chapter 822 Bashful Kary

Reaching the room first, Alex ran into the walk-in wardrobe and hid in a row of dresses that Kary had brought.

She wasn't fast enough to see where he hid and entered the wardrobe in fury, still whisper-screaming.

"Why did you invite her to lunch?! I'm trying to get her to leave. I barely had time alone with you, and people keep barging in on us."

Alex stifled his laughter before using a trick to send his voice away from him.

With a bit of wind magic, he made the air vibrate away from him, mimicking his voice.

"I know. But it would be rude to push her out now. After lunch, I'll ask her to leave. I promise."

Kary walked toward the voice and pulled the clothes apart. But Alex wasn't there.

She had gotten good at detecting magic on this side, but still couldn't pinpoint Alex's location.

"Stop hiding; face me like a man!" she growled.

Alex slipped out of his hiding spot, tiptoeing behind her, and grabbed her waist in one fell swoop.

"Eep!" she yelped before throwing her elbow backward.

Alex tucked in his own elbow, blocking the blow, and started nibbling at her neck.

Kary started laughing as she was ticklish, pleading with him to stop.

"Ok, ok! Stop! You asshat, I'll get you back for this!" she giggled.

Alex chuckled, not doubting about her statement one bit.

He spun her around, grabbed her under the ass, and lifted her into his arms.

"I'm sure you will. But right now, let me enjoy the moment. It's just lunch. After that, I'll nicely ask her to leave since I'm still fragile from my coma, and she'll leave without a fuss. I'm sure."

"Fine," Kary dropped, pulling a fake pout.

Alex laughed before kissing her on her pouty lips.

"You're such a drama queen. Now get dressed, or your mother will know you chased me to complain," he said, dropping her to her feet.

Kary nodded with a smile before undressing before him and shaking in a taunting manner.

Alex had to bite his lips, remembering someone was waiting for them on the first floor, or he would have consumed her right then and there.

He spun around, controlling his urges, and picked out a nice outfit: nothing too flashy, but all top brands.

Stuff he'd bought in case he needed to meet someone important in a more casual environment.

Once he and Kary dressed, looking like a wealthy power couple going on a stroll, they returned to the living room.

"Alright, we're ready. And I'm sure the car is waiting for us, too. Are you ready to leave?" Alex asked Guylaine.

She eyed him up and down, finding his outfit underwhelming, until she noticed the branded buttons on his shirt and the embroidered logo on his pant pocket.

His outfit was worth at least four grand. She had to suck in some air, forgetting to breathe momentarily.

And when she looked at her daughter in a lovely autumn dress, she could smell the luxury of the dress as well. This made her smile.

"Yes. I am ready. Although I feel a little under-dressed compared to you two," she nagged.

"Mom..." Kary groaned.

"Oh, come on, darling. You can't fault me for trying," Guylaine giggled, walking past her daughter.

"Urgh..." Kary groaned.

"Don't worry. I can see through her antics," Alex whispered in her ear.

Kary felt a shiver go down her spine as Alex's breath brushed past her neck. She'd been taunting him upstairs, but the truth was, she was also horny after seeing him undress before her.

His muscles were more defined than when she last saw him, and she could see them rippling with every movement he made. This had aroused her, and if her mother hadn't been downstairs waiting for them, she would have jumped on him on the spot.

But she pushed her rising lust down inside her mind and vowed to herself to catch up their month apart that evening before going inside New Eden.

'Maybe I'll shag him there, too. We'll see how busy we get,' she thought, biting her lip.

At that moment, her mother spun around in the elevator and caught her daughter's lustful look.

"Dear lord, daughter. Have a bit of control. You'll drool all over that nice dress," she mocked, raising her daughter a knowing eyebrow.

"Shut up!" Kary replied, her face turning red.

She wasn't shy about talking about bed stuff with her mother, but not in front of her boyfriend, and her face went scarlet instantly.

Alex chuckled as he walked into the elevator, pushing the floor-

level button and holding the doors open.

He looked at Kary with a cocky smile, knowing what she was thinking, as he shared similar thoughts and waited for her to get on the elevator.

She rushed past him, looking at the floor with her face and ears bright red, her heart thumping in her chest.

"So bashful," Alex mocked as he let go of the doors, letting them close.

Kary growled low at him as her mother laughed heartily, joined by Alex soon after she started.

"Not fair... You're ganging up on me..." she muttered.

Alex made a little heart with his fingers toward her before looking back at the doors. He could see everything in the reflection of the metal, anyway, so he didn't need to stare at her to know she was scarlet red.

The ride was quiet as mother and daughter watched the strong stature of Alex, both asking different questions in their minds, and Alex could feel their gazes bore into his back. He smiled snarkily but said nothing.

Once the doors opened, he lifted his elbow, waiting for Kary to grab onto it, and she did soon after, her face still flushed.

"Ahem," Guylaine said, walking next to him.

Alex looked at her and chuckled.

"Of course," he said, lifting his other elbow.

She grabbed onto it with a grin before saying, "What a gentleman. Truly deserving of my daughter."

Alex smiled, but shook his head mentally.

'How very controlling. I can see how Kary became so good at controlling battlefields with her around,' he mentally chuckled.

Chapter 823 Catching Attention

The people in the lobby watched the three of them walk out the door, arms intertwined, and whispers abounded.

"Hey, isn't that the young man on the news?"

"Yeah. Wasn't he in the hospital in a critical condition?"

"What? I heard he was dead from a friend of mine who works at the CHUM."

"What nonsense did your friend tell you? I heard he was in a coma from a nurse in the Boudreau hospital on the north shore."

"How would she know that? Only super VIPs can get a room there."

"Wake up, dumbass. Can't you see his clothes? His demeanour? The woman in his arms? How can you think he's not a super VIP?"

"Shh! He's walking by!"

Alex could hear all of them the moment they started chatting, his hearing much more acute than most people now, but he kept silent.

'They can imagine what they want. They are all wrong anyway.'

"There you are," he heard a whispering voice say. But it was much fainter, and it sent a shiver down his spine.

His head turned slightly toward the direction it had come from, but he couldn't see anyone there.

But there was no way he had imagined that. There was too much bloodlust in that voice to be in his mind.

Expanding his awareness, he tried pinpointing where it had come from, but couldn't get a read on anyone who wasn't normal.

Kary felt his mana pulse outward and glanced at him.

Even Guylaine felt the wave wash through her, although it felt like a chill and nothing more to her.

"Something the matter?" Kary whispered to him on his right.

Alex couldn't get a read on whoever had said this, and his face turned serious. But he didn't want to worry her, so he returned to smiling.

"Hmm? Oh, nothing. I thought I had felt something. But it was a false alert," he whispered back.

"What are you two whispering about there?" Guylaine asked, a fake pout on her lips.

"Nothing, Mom," Kary replied, brushing the matter aside.

She gave Alex a concerned look, knowing he never did anything without reason but kept mum. If he said it was nothing, then she wouldn't pry.

He would tell if the situation changed, that much she was sure of.

They kept walking, exiting the building, and Alex quickly found the limo with his eyes.

Gilbert was parked a bit diagonally from the building entrance and was waiting outside the car, smiling profusely.

When he saw Alexander, he waved at him, making sure they made eye contact and walked over to him.

"Mr. Leduc, what an honour for you to call on my services again. Did you need me to grab anything? A bag, a suitcase? Or maybe one of the gorgeous women in your arms?" he said, looking at Guylaine with a seductive smile.

"No, thank you, I think the door will suffice," Alex replied, giving him a look of, 'You're doing too much.'

The driver understood the unspoken words and toned down his tirade.

"Of course, sir. Right away, sir," Gilbert said, getting a more serious look on his face.

Alex nodded lightly, glad he understood, as he waited for the door to be opened.

Once the door opened, he let both women sit before him and smiled at Gilbert.

"We are going to Roland's Bistro on Clark Street. You know the one?"

Gilbert grinned at him.

"Of course, sir! I know this city better than my own kids. An excellent choice for a light lunch!" Gilbert said, his smile only getting larger.

'Not sure you should brag about that...!' Alex thought, chuckling lightly.

As soon as he sat in the limo, Gilbert closed the door and speed-walked to the driver's side.

He sat in his seat and closed the window between him and the passengers, giving them privacy.

The trio felt the limo get into motion, and Guylaine finally opened her mouth.

"Isn't this a bit much to impress me?" she said, faking an accusative tone.

Alex took an offended look.

"My, Guylaine. I would never. I don't own a car, as the city is a mess to drive in, and I would subject you to sharing a cab with the three of us. This was the only acceptable option."

Guylaine snorted at his facade.

"Alright, you can drop the act. I was just messing with you. Although I must say, this is really extravagant. Maybe you should be more careful with your money. That thing doesn't grow on trees."

Alex smiled at her.

'If only you knew.'

At the moment, he hadn't looked at his trade portfolio in a while, but according to David's previous estimations, even with the amount he took out for the penthouse, he should have well over a hundred million in stock.

And that was aside from his gold in New Eden, which he could trade anytime.

He was practically swimming in gold.

And he hadn't looked at the guild treasury in a month, either. There was no telling the amount of funds at his disposal.

"I assure you, Guylaine, this is the least of my worries. Life has been very fortunate in the last year, and I am not short on funds. Well, as fortunate as falling in a month-long coma can be, heh heh," Alex said.

The woman gave him a judging look before her eyes turned sad.

"Yeah, I heard about it at length. What I didn't hear was how it happened. Could you tell me? Of course, you don't have to if it's a traumatic event."

Alex glanced at Kary, who looked away.

She was ashamed she hadn't thought of something on this, but her mind had been in a dark place, and finding excuses was her last thought.

"I don't mind. But it is a pretty boring story. Are you sure you want me to bore you out with it?" Alex asked.

"Oh, please; I am almost fifty years old. I doubt I haven't heard more boring stories in my life. Factory work is far from exciting. Hit me with it," Guylaine said, waving dismissively.

Alex nodded with a chuckle.

"Alright then."

Chapter 824 All Aboard The Bicker-Limo



Alex spun together a tale about a new product being tested by Evo Gaming, which he had been on the alpha testing team, put there by his new business partner, Jack Boudreau, and how it had caused him light brain damage, sending him in a coma.

He explained how vital these testing phases were, precisely for the reason he experienced and how he was now OK. He even said he was glad it had happened to him and not someone else.

At the end of the spun tale, Guylaine looked impressed that he was selfless enough to feel this way, but was still slightly concerned about his risk-taking.

Ultimately, it wasn't her place to argue with his choices and decisions. So she only said this, "Just make sure you don't bring my daughter into these kinds of things. And by the love of god, don't make her feel like this again."

Alex smiled at her and nodded.

"I will try my best. But life is a succession of uncertainties. We don't always get to choose what happens," Alex said, a look of seriousness flashing in his eyes.

Kary noticed it and thought about the near future. She knew this wasn't one of their making, and the choice had long since been taken from them.

Which reminded her.

"Mom. Have you started playing New Eden like I asked you? You should have already received a helmet since you didn't want a pod."

Her mother huffed.

"Lying down in a closed bubble all night? With my claustrophobia? No, thank you. And even then, I don't really like having that helmet on my head for long periods... I don't know what it does to my brain. No one does..." she complained.

Kary sighed, annoyed.

"Did you start playing or not?"

"Oh, bugger off. Yes, I did. But why did you insist so hard about this? It's not like I enjoy video games. You know I was never much of a gamer..."

"Mom. This is an easy way to make side money. Just do it. You don't even need to learn how to fight. Pick a crafter job, for all I care. They make more money anyway. Just play."

Alex looked at her from the corner of his eye, knowingly.

"Fine. But I don't have as much fun as you. It's like a chore getting into that darned game world. Everything is so dangerous," Guylaine complained.

"If you want, we have a guild and a city, which is by far one of the safest cities in the game. We can get you there, and you'd be safe," Alex offered.

"Yeah, I've heard of it. Kary always asks me to go there. What's the point? I would go from being stuck in one place to another. I would just be changing prisons if you want my opinion."

Alex chuckled at her words.

"There is a simple difference, Mom," Kary said, sighing in annoyance again.

"At least, from Bastion City, we could get you escorts if you want to leave. And you wouldn't have to pay exorbitant sums of silver and gold just to go from one place to another."

"And then I would be dependent on you? No thanks! I can do fine on my own."

"Urgh! You're so stubborn, Mom!" Kary groaned.

"Like mother, like daughter," Alex whispered.

"Did you say something?" Kary growled at him.

Guylaine was also glaring at him.

"Hmm? Not at all. Just talking to myself," Alex replied, giving an innocent smile.

"That's what I thought," Kary spat.

'Sheesh! Almost stepped on a land mine...!' Alex thought, looking out the window.

'I'll let them argue on their own. We're almost there, anyway.'

He listened to them bicker with a distracted ear as he watched the cars and roads fly by to his right. They were already close to the restaurant, so the women wouldn't have time to devolve into a full-blown argument.

Alex got lost in thought, thinking about the things to come and who he would warn about them. But no one came to mind.

Everyone he knew already knew of the crap to come, aside from maybe his old colleagues. But he didn't particularly care about them enough to try to force them to play New Eden.

Most of them had been jerks to him and deserved to be left out.

'No. That's not a good way of thinking. I shouldn't leave anyone behind. If I start doing it, where does it end?' he thought.

But Alex felt no sympathy for those people.

They laughed, made fun of his dreams, made fun of him. All because their views and his differed.

Would people like them even listen to him, anyway? Or would they laugh him off, as they always had?

'Screw them. They can start playing in panic when the world finally finds out what is happening. I don't care.'

Feeling the care come to a halt, Alex snapped out of his thoughts.

The window separating Gilbert from the passengers slid open.

"We have arrived, sir. Would you like me to stay nearby and wait for you? Or would you rather call for me when you are done?"

Alex thought about it for a second and felt like waiting for him after eating would be a hassle.

"You can stay nearby. I'll have the bistro call you when we are done," Alex said before opening the door and stepping out.

"As you wish, sir. I'll be right around the corner!" Gilbert shouted as Alex walked out of the limo.

Kary and Guylaine stepped out behind him as he held the door for them, and as soon as they were out and the door had closed, Gilbert drove off.

"Did you have a reservation?" Guylaine asked, wondering if they would be allowed in.

The outside of the restaurant was quite fancy, and the people in line looked like snobby rich kids and important businessmen and women. Yet, Alexander hadn't called to reserve, nor had Kary.

"No need. They'll give us a table," Alex said confidently.

'Does he know the owner?' Guylaine wondered.

As the trio stepped up to the floor manager, Alex smiled at him.

"Hi. We'd like a table for three, please."

Chapter 825 Meeting The Owner

The floor manager looked at him for a moment, stunned out of his words.

'Does this young man really think this is how a restaurant works?' he thought.

"Uhm... Sir. Do you have a reservation?" the man asked, regaining his composure.

"No. But I do think you'll have room for us. I know you have four empty tables, two of which aren't reserved. So I'd like one of those, please."

The floor manager glanced at his table planning and noticed the young man was spot on.

"Unfortunately, sir, this is not how we work. We have a line behind you that is all waiting to be seated. The two empty tables are the chef's preferred table and the owner's personal table. I cannot sit you in either of those without their explicit consent.

"Now, could you please get at the back of the line? Other customers are waiting."

Alex smiled at him still.

This caused Guylaine to smirk in disdain.

'Trying to pull the rich card? I didn't think you were that kind of person. What does my daughter see in you?' she wondered.

The young man had just dropped in her esteem.

"Would you mind fetching the owner for me, then? I believe he will let me sit at his table."

Even Kary was wondering why he was being so persistent. There were plenty of good lunch restaurants nearby.

Why was he so hellbent on coming here?

People started complaining behind him, stating he had no right to cut in front of them, some even asking who he thought he was.

But Alex ignored them.

"Sir. I cannot just walk into the owner's office and ask him to come up front whenever a client asks this. Please. Stop holding the line, or I will have to call the cops."

Already, the commotion was garnering attention from inside, and an office door opened. Out of it came walking a man, maybe thirty-five years old, with a scar across his cheek.

One would easily mistake him for a gangster if he didn't have the warmest smile when talking to his customers as he walked toward the front of the bistro.

"What seems to be the issue here, Emerest?" he asked the floor manager.

"Sir. You didn't need to come up front. I was about to call the cops to remove this man. He is causing trouble," the manager said, looking nervously at his boss.

The man turned to face the young man in question, and his face turned curious.

"I would like to know why you are causing trouble, sir. Also, do I know you?"

His face looked familiar, like he'd seen him before, and more than once.

"I just want a table for me, my girlfriend, and her mother. I'm not looking to cause trouble. I asked nicely if he could fetch you so we could talk."

The man looked at him, his eyes squinting.

"I'm sure I know your face. Why do I know your face? Are you a celebrity?"

The floor manager frowned at the question his boss asked.

'If he was a celebrity, wouldn't he have declared his name on arrival? This guy is a nobody with money, for sure.'

Alex smiled at him toothily.

"We have never met. But I do believe your thoughts are not unfounded."

Guylaine liked him less and less, with all the attention he was drawing to them, and couldn't wait to talk to her daughter privately. She would give her an earful about how she shouldn't be with a man like this.

When she saw him raise his hand before his chest and the restaurant owner's eyes grow wide, for a moment, the woman thought he had performed some gang sign or something of the kind, making the man nervous.

But instead of showing fear, the owner looked ecstatic. The floor manager, on the other hand, was white as a sheet.

Kary had felt the slight wave of mana around Alex and knew he had done something with his hand at that moment that only another player would recognize. And when she extended her mana toward the owner, she understood why, as his head snapped toward her.

'An awakened. This man is like us.'

The man was looking at the couple with a wide grin.

"Of course, we have room. Please come right in. Emerest, seat them at my table; I will attend to them myself!"

"Sir?" the man asked, stumped by the request.

"You heard me. Lead them to the table while I go put something adequate on and wash my hands," the owner said, looking at his manager with a stern gaze.

"As for you, sir and madam, I will be right with you."

"Thank you," Alex said, walking forward.

The manager stood there momentarily, wondering what was happening, until Alex turned his head toward him.

"Are you going to seat me or not?"

"R... Right! Right this way, sir!" the manager exclaimed, stuttering.

Kary walked behind Alex, pulling her mother along, who was just as confused as everyone behind them. They hadn't seen what Alex did and couldn't sense mana, so they had no way of knowing.

In seconds, they were seated at a large table with nicer covers than the others, with a view of the entire restaurant. The table was placed on a slight step and overlooked all the others.

Only one other table was on this step: the chef's table.

This was the VIP section.

Guylaine couldn't take the suspense any longer and leaned forward, whispering, "What did you do to convince him?"

Alex also leaned forward, whispering back, "That's a secret."

Then he winked and sat back straight.

Guylaine sat there, stumped and in disbelief.

'Who is this young man? Is he some kind of crime syndicate leader? Or maybe the secret son of a mafioso...'

Her mind started getting all these convoluted ideas, all sillier than the last, as she sat there silently.

She only returned to reality when the owner returned, dressed as a server and carrying a bottle of wine.

"This one is one of our finest bottles on the house, of course, to start your meal."

When he poured the wine, a lovely fragrance wafted into their nostrils, and Guylaine fell into thought again.

"Now. What can I get you?" the owner asked after pouring four glasses.

Chapter 826 Late Introductions

"I'll have your gazpacho and a pen and paper, if you don't mind," Alex replied, keeping his smile up.

Guylaine and Kary had no idea what was on the menu and wondered how Alex knew. It didn't look like he'd ever been here, either.

"Of course, I'll bring that right up. What about the ladies?" the owner asked, smiling at them.

"Umm. I'll have a menu, please?" Guylaine asked, a bit embarrassed.

"Oh, my. Where are my manager's manners? He didn't leave you one? I'll have that fixed immediately," he answered, looking appalled.

The owner rose and left with a quick gait, rushing to get a menu, and from their perch, they also saw him look sternly at his manager as he grabbed the menu.

The man looked shocked he had forgotten such a basic thing, and his face turned sour.

"How did you know the menu?" Kary asked Alex in a whisper.

"I didn't. I just said the first thing I imagined this place would have. Lucky guess," he replied.

Kary had to hold back the chuckle rising in her as she imagined he had panicked momentarily at the question as they did, but hid it better.

When the owner returned, he handed the women a menu and sat across from them, looking Alex in the eye.

He slid the pen and paper over the table, keeping his mouth shut.

Guylaine saw this and wondered if this was some code, and her theory of Alex being a criminal grew more staunch in her mind.

Alex grabbed the pen and rapidly scribbled something on the paper before sliding it back.

When the owner glanced at the note, his eyes widened for a second, and he crumpled the note before returning to his wide smile.

"So. Have you ladies decided what you want to start with?"

"Ah, yes. I'll have a gazpacho as well," Kary answered.

She barely had enough time to glance at the menu, but most entrees were cold things. And the Gazpacho was the least weird thing, in her opinion.

"Another Gazpacho, very well. And you, milady?" the owner asked, looking at Guylaine.

She became flustered and slammed the menu shut.

"I—I'll have the Salmon Tartare, please."

Kary looked at her mother with a grin.

She knew her mom detested raw fish just as much as her. This was the most expensive item in the Entrée section.

She assumed she only took it because of its price tag, not even knowing what a tartare was.

Smiling, the owner took a sip of wine and got up again.

"I'll have the kitchen start those up and be right back. Thank you for picking my restaurant," he said, giving a slight bow.

Once he had left, Kary whispered in Alex's ear again, trying to make sure her mother didn't hear.

"How did you know he was awakened? I haven't seen reports of him from Jack yet."

"When I flew back from the north, I sensed all the people in this city. Geminae's detection abilities are incredible, precise, and way longer range than I expected. So, I was able to pinpoint all the Awakened in the city in one flight. I sensed him."

Kary looked at him with a raised eyebrow.

'Every awakened? How many are there?' she wondered.

Jack knew of at least half a dozen who weren't already on their list. But Alex made it sound like there may be much more than that.

"What are you two mumbling about in secret again? You aren't pulling my daughter into some shady business, Mr. Leduc?" Guylaine asked, squinting at Alex.

"The thought never crossed my mind, Ms. Deveille. I am merely asking her if it was too pompous for me to bring you here."

Guylaine didn't believe his words and only huffed in response.

"The note I slipped him said that your mother is not awakened and not to talk about it in front of her," Alex whispered into Kary's ear.

Kary nodded lightly before going back to a smile.

"Don't worry, Mom. Alex isn't like that at all. I'm sure he would readily jump in front of danger before letting me come into contact with it. Not that I need protection," Kary giggled, putting her hand on her mom's.

"I know you're a capable woman. But you stay my daughter, and it is my job to ensure nothing happens to you. Call it a mother's duty," Guylaine replied, smiling lovingly at her daughter.

"As for you," she added, glaring at Alex.

"If anything ever befalls her while she's with you, you'll have hell to pay."

"Mom!" Kary whisper-shouted.

"What?! He needs to know I mean business," Guylaine rebuked.

Alex laughed it off.

"Don't worry, Ma'am. I would never let anything harm even a hair on her head. Rest assured that she is safe with me."

Alex wasn't sure of his own statement, but he couldn't let the woman believe he was a danger to her daughter. He also couldn't let Kary think he doubted himself.

'For now, let's play the confidence card. It's better if everyone thinks I'm in control one hundred percent.'

The owner soon returned, holding the bowls and a small plate in his hands. He set them down on the table before pushing them in front of each of their owners.

"Here we are. A Salmon Tartare for the lady and two gazpachos for the lovely couple," he said, smiling at them.

"Thank you, uhm..." Alex started saying, but froze.

"Dear lord, how rude of me; I forgot to introduce myself. I'm so used to people coming here, begging to meet me, that I forgot you didn't know my name. Gabriel Duffour. It's a pleasure meeting you," he introduced himself with a curtsy.

"Pleasure to meet you, Gabriel. I'm Alexander Leduc."

"And I'm Kary Deveille. This is my mother—"

"Guylaine Deveille! The pleasure is all mine," Guylaine interrupted her, batting her eyelashes.

Gabriel leaned in, grabbed her hand, and kissed the top of it.

"Nonsense, Ms. Guylaine. The pleasure is all mine," Gabriel said, winking at her.

"Ahem!" Kary cleared her throat loudly.

Her mother sat there, red as a tomato, her heart pounding, while Gabriel laughed it off like it was nothing.

"When you are ready to eat your main course, please give me your order directly. In the meantime, let's talk. I love meeting new people, especially ones with similar interests," Gabriel said, sitting back down and grabbing his cup of wine.

Chapter 827 The Mind Reader

Since Alex had told him about Guylaine, Gabriel kept the subject of mana away from the conversation, but that didn't stop him from talking about the game. And lord, did he like the sound of his voice.

They talked about anything and everything while eating their entrees and eventually went for the main course.

Gabriel recommended something to each of them based on what he thought they would prefer, and they decided to go with his recommendation instead of wracking their brains out.

He quickly left to tell the kitchen, and Alex used this time to lean in on Kary's ear again.

"Have you noticed?" he whispered.

Kary frowned lightly, unsure of what he was asking.

"Noticed what?" she whispered back.

"His powers. I figured out what class he is."

Even though they had talked about New Eden, the subject of classes had yet to come up. It was often considered rude to ask a person's class in a game where special classes existed.

So few were the people who asked the question.

Kary looked at him with a strange look.

'How would he know that? It's not like we saw him use his abilities.'

But Alex was a little more sensitive to mind intrusion than Kary was, given all the times he had someone shuffled around in his head. That's how he knew.



He had immediately felt the man entering his head and reading his thoughts. Of course, he could have blocked him out, but that would have made him suspicious.

So instead, he only locked away his deeper thoughts, letting him have free rein in his surface ones. This way, it would only look like he had a more challenging mind to penetrate.

Knowing his powers was half the task he'd given himself. The other half was figuring out whether this was an honest man.

Alexander had detected many more awakened people in the city than he would have liked to, and he knew that most of these were kids. And kids would often think getting powers was a way to become a superhero.

Sadly, the same couldn't be said about adults.

When one had lived decades in life, and luck hadn't been on their side often, it was easy for them to slip on a more nebulous path if they suddenly got powers. And he wanted to get all the threats out of the way as soon as possible.

David hadn't told him when the demons would start coming into their world yet. But he had told him when the monster attacks would intensify.

And that was just around the corner.

Half a year had passed since New Eden had come out, and there was only another half-year until the mana in their world was thick enough for Earth's monsters to start manifesting.

Until then, they had to ensure humanity was on the same page. This was why Alex had offered to come here.

'Since I know where some of them are, why not knock some threats down preemptively?' he thought.

Kary waited for him to tell her, but he shook his head silently.

But Kary wasn't one to give up so easily.

"Hey, Mom. I never asked you what class you had picked up in New Eden. Since we are already talking about the game, now is as good a time as any, right?"

Guylaine looked at her and shrugged.

"I picked the Cleric class to start with. But being a healer in a party, like you kids call it, was too much work. So I took your advice and went for a crafting class.

"And since I always liked sewing, be it to patch your clothes after you ripped them climbing trees or to make new pieces out of fancy cloth, I went with something that would bring me that joy again. I picked Seemstress. What about you?" Guylaine said, thinking nothing of it.

Kary smiled, thinking, 'How very much like her.'

"I'm a Mage, pyromancer tree, to be exact," she replied.

"Huh. I never thought you would like playing with fire... And to think your father was a firefighter. How ironic," Guylaine laughed, taking a sip of wine.

"Mom... I told you that I play pyromancer in almost all my games... Did you ever listen to me or watch my matches on ToB?"

"ToB? Oh, yeah, that game where you became a pro. No, honey. I never had the time to look at those. I am proud of you, but games are games, and I can't focus on those too much."

Kary sighed disappointingly.

"You know, Guylaine, your daughter was one of the top ten players in ToB and an inspiration for many of us who played the game. And she has carved an even better place for herself in New Eden. She is a pioneer for magic users in New Eden," Alex said, sliding his hand into Kary's.

"Yeah, I've seen the leaderboards. But I'm more curious about where you stand on those. After all, my daughter wouldn't date someone who can't perform, right?" Guylaine asked, giving a smirk to Alex.

Alex chuckled.

"Well, that is a complicated subject. I was first for a while. But the trip to the hospital has put me far behind, I'm sure..." Alex said with a sigh.

Guylaine dropped her smirk, feeling bad about her comment just now. She had already forgotten that Alexander had spent a month in a coma.

"I apologize for my snarky comment. That was uncalled for," she said, looking sincere.

Gabriel sat back down at that moment, wondering what they were discussing.

"What comment? Was there a disagreement in the brief moment I was gone?"

Guylaine raised her hands to refute it, but Alex cut her off.

"Nothing of the sort. We were discussing our standings and classes while you were gone, and my mother-in-law had forgotten that I had just spent a month in a coma. But it's nothing worthy of an argument. It happened, and nothing can be done about it."

Gabriel's brow raised.

"Oh? I would also like to know your classes. Of course, I would share mine as well. As far as standings go, well, let's say I'm not a top player. But I manage," he said, doing a cocky smile.

Alex smiled back at him.

"Sure. I don't mind talking about it."

'He walked right into it. I thought he'd be smarter, given he's reading our minds,' Alex thought, locking those thoughts behind a wall.

Chapter 828 Putting His Finger On It

"I can start this ball," Alex said, smiling warmly at Gabriel.

"I'm a sort of battle mage, the class name specifically, I won't say, but that is what I do. Blades and magic are my go-to."

Gabriel smiled at him.

"Ahh. Couldn't pick between the two either. I know a few people like that. I've heard that battle mages become weak over time, since they can't focus on one branch and bring it to the next level. Is that true?" he asked.

Alex shook his head.

"I disagree with that statement. It just requires more dedication and practice. Only people who give up fast would think like that," Alex said, smirking.

Kary repeated what she had told her mother, and Guylaine begrudgingly admitted she had a crafting class, eliciting a soft smile from Gabriel.

"There is nothing wrong with going crafter in a game like New Eden, Ms. Guylaine. If something, it's a better way to make money, and that is always a welcome addition."

Guylaine blushed as he picked up her hand, trying to look comforting.

Kary coughed with a glare, noticing the very open flirting the man was doing to his mother. He let go of the hand with a laugh, brushing her glare off like it was nothing.

Alex noticed the earpiece on Gabriel's left ear was flashing and wondered why. With the new neuro-phones, that flashing light could mean so many things.

He could be on a call, linked to his restaurant's order list, notifying him of what was ready or not. Or a panoply of other things.

But Alex had a feeling this wasn't an app. It felt like someone was listening in on their conversation.

You could activate that function on neuro-phones. They could either not register ambient sounds or could record all of them.

He didn't get a bad vibe from Gabriel, but something about his attitude screamed rehearsed. It was like it was all a facade, and his true colours were still hidden.

Of course, Alex wasn't an expert in this, and he could be wrong. But he liked to think he had a good read on people he met and talked to.

The conversation pussy footed around for a while until Alex realized Gabriel still hadn't told them his class.

"So. Tell me, Gabriel. Were you going to tell us your class? Or did you just want us to tell you ours? Because we are still waiting."

Gabriel faked a surprised look.

"I'm sorry. I got carried away in our conversation. Far from me the thought of slighting you. I'm a mage of sorts. I wanted to experience something novel and was drawn to the prospect of magic."

Alex squinted lightly at his answer.

"That's a lie. Reading minds is a Psychic class ability. I guess now I know what his intentions were," Alex thought.

Again, he kept those thoughts behind a wall, inaccessible to Gabriel's probing. He had to let a few stray thoughts through to ensure Gabriel didn't suspect him.

At least for now.

Soon after, Gabriel's earpiece stopped flashing, and he got up from the table.

"Your plates are ready. I will go and fetch them; in the meantime, would you like me to ask Emerest to refill your wine?" he asked.

"I'm good, thank you," Alex said.

"Same for me," Kary followed suit.

"I would love another cup, yes. And can you ask him to bring me another napkin, please?" Guylaine asked.

"Why, of course, Ms. Guylaine," Gabriel replied with a smile.

He left for the front desk, where he spoke briefly to the floor manager before heading to the kitchen.

Emerest looked at the table with a look of anger and walked over to them.

On the way there, he picked up a napkin from a service station and a bottle from the cellar.

"Your napkin, madam," Emerest said flatly before filling her cup of wine.

"Is the food up to your expectations?" he asked in the same tone.

"The food is great, and the service is even better. The owner here is really a friendly person, isn't he?" Alex said, looking the manager in the eye.

He saw a flash of disdain in the man's eyes, but it was gone faster than it appeared.

"Yes. Mr. Duffour loves speaking with anyone and everyone. It's how this place became so popular. We also cater to a large part of the business magnates of the region, which makes us a premium establishment," he said, that last part sounding accusatory.

Alex raised an eyebrow, but kept his mouth shut.

'Such a hostile person. Is it because we don't look like businessmen?' he wondered.

Glancing around the bistro, he could see that over ninety percent of the clientele wore suits, most likely on business lunches or important meetings. This made him and the few other clients in civilian clothes stand out.

But, from what he saw, the other civilian-clothed clients were sitting near the door, and service to them was done quickly and in silence.

Meanwhile, the businessmen were treated almost like family.

'How strange... Why would they keep those busy men and women waiting so long when they can serve the rest of the clients speedily?'

Then it clicked.

Because of the owner.

What better way to gather intel than to keep them seated here for so long when you could read minds? The owner only had to wander around the restaurant occasionally, and he had access to a treasure trove of info of all kinds.

Business deals, security details, big accounts, and bank contents. This was easy for a man who could access thoughts.

'This is a front. Now I'm certain of it.'

He could feel the occasional wave coming from Gabriel like he was sensing something, and at first, he thought he was looking for more people like them.

But now he knew. The truth was far from.

'He's looking for hits. This man is a criminal...'

Alex had read online, before his month AWOL, about a spree of thefts happening around the city.

Whether it be bank vaults getting emptied without tripping alarms or armoured trucks getting robbed midday, the guards left with no recollection of what happened. These were all things a psychic could do.

Alex grinned.

'Already one disappointment. I'll deal with it later when Kary logs back in. What's an hour later going to change to my situation, anyway?'

Chapter 829 Heading Back Home

The meal proceeded normally after this, with Gabriel serving them and the talks broaching different subjects. Gabriel kept reading the room every few minutes, focusing on some areas or others at various times as he kept an open read on the three people at his table.

Alex kept his more profound thoughts under lock, letting only surface thoughts about the food and ambience through. He knew Gabriel had caught on when he tried asking about something other than the food, and Alex replied perfunctorily.

His face had changed when he heard the same thoughts as before, Alex's mind not even wavering at the strange question he had asked.

Gabriel had asked him about what brought a nouveau-rich into his restaurant after the incident with his home invasion. He had played it off, saying it was all over the news, but Alex knew it was false.

Of course, he couldn't act fazed.

"If I let everything that happens to me change my style of life, I let the people who attacked me win. It's better to let the dust fall and keep on living, don't you think?"

Alex kept his thoughts as platonic about this as possible, so Gabriel wouldn't notice he was locking him out. But the face change told him he was onto him.

He tried pushing the subject further, but Alex interrupted him.

"I'm glad we stopped here for lunch today. It has been quite the experience. The food and service were great, and I'm glad we met. It was a pleasure, Gabriel. Sadly, Kary and I have other things to do today, and we can't take any more of your time."

The food on their plates was long gone, and they were ready to pay the bill and leave. Of course, Alex was only doing this to leave before Gabriel could glean more details about them from Kary's and Guylaine's exposed thoughts.

"Are you sure? You won't have any dessert? We make one of the best gelatos in town," Gabriel said, taking a sad face.

Guylaine was about to ask if they could have dessert, but Kary quickly caught on to Alex's intentions and insisted they had things to do.

"Very well, then. Don't worry about the bill today. Meeting you was all the payment I needed. I'll take care of it. You three have a wonderful day," Gabriel said, smiling at them.

"How generous of you," Guylaine said, looking at him with stars in her eyes.

"Of course, Ms. Guylaine. Meeting you was more than worth a few plates of food," he replied, taking her hand and kissing the back of it.

Guylaine blushed as Gabriel walked away, taking a round around his restaurant while Alex, Kary, and Guylaine left.

Once they were gone, he stopped next to Emerest.

"I think one of them is onto us. Tell the boys to be careful on tonight's operation. It's a big one, and I don't want anything to go awry," he whispered to his manager.

"Yes, sir," Emerest replied, his eyes going icy cold momentarily.

He walked into the kitchen, a busboy replacing him temporarily at the entrance, and came face to face with the cooks.

The kitchen staff seldom stepped into the dining area and with good reason.

Most of them looked like hardened criminals, with tattoos covering most of their visible skin and scars proudly displayed on them. The cooks looked at Emerest in silence.

He only came into the kitchen when the boss had orders for them that he couldn't tell them himself.

"All right, gentlemen. Tonight's reservation might have a plus one, and we heard it's a person with difficult tastes. We need to make the meal with extra caution and tone the flavours down to the most subtle we can. Understood?"

"Yes, manager!" the kitchen staff said in chorus.

Nodding slowly, Emerest left the kitchen to take back his usual post.

As he walked up front again, he noticed the trio step into a limousine, and the young turned to look at him.

Alex gave the manager a friendly smile, mouthing something he couldn't understand before sitting in the vehicle himself.

Emerest looked at him with a murderous glare, but reined himself in before he scared away other customers.

"Welcome to Roland's Bistro. Did you have a reservation?" he asked the next customer in line, returning to his day job.

Meanwhile, Alex felt the killing intent as he stepped into the limo and laughed to himself.

'I knew he wasn't just a floor manager. That guy has killed before, and not just once. I'm sure I'll see him soon enough,' he thought.

"Any other place you would like to go, sir?" Gilbert asked the window between them lowered.

"No, thank you, Gilbert. Bring us home. Guylaine has a long drive home, and I wouldn't want to keep her for too long."

"Aye, aye, sir," Gilbert replied, closing the window once more and giving them their privacy.

Guylaine huffed.

"Are you that in a hurry to send me on my way?" she asked, giving Alex a stink eye.

"Far from me that intent, Guylaine. But I am tired. It seems I wasn't as ready to go out as I thought," Alex lied, taking an exhausted look.

Guylaine took back her leer as she thought of his previous state.

"I'm sorry. I just assumed you wanted to get rid of me. That was rude of me," she apologized.

Alex waved his hand dismissively.

"No offence taken. I know what you must be thinking. There will never be a good enough person for your daughter, in your eyes, I'm sure. But I don't want to be good enough in your eyes. Just in hers. So, even if you dislike me, I will love her back as long as she loves me."

Guylaine looked at him with a stern gaze before softening her face.

"It's nothing against you, young man. Just a mother's prerogative to keep her daughter safe."

Alex smiled at her before looking out the window and staying quiet on the way home.

Guylaine smiled a bit before turning to her daughter and discussing the coming holidays.

Alex listened with a distracted ear as his mind wandered to what he might find when he investigated later tonight.

'Second night back, and I'm already getting into someone else's business. Getting into trouble so soon after getting out of it has become a bad habit, I guess...'

Chapter 830 Reacquainting Each Other

After being brought home, Kary and Alex bid farewell to the former's mother before returning to the penthouse. They still had things to do, but most of these things could be done online.

Alex started by ordering a new phone, and much to his discontent, no more older-gen models were available. He was forced to buy a neuro-phone.

He paid for same-day delivery, and the small electronic device was delivered by drone directly to his balcony in an hour.

This wasn't the only thing he ordered, as he still had to replace every identity card he owned, as well as his bank cards and different membership cards.

Most of them were quickly delivered to him, but the bank and government-issued ID cards would take a few days. But, at least he still had access to all his accounts through the neuro-phone.

This allowed him to order replacements for the broken furniture, and this took a large part of the afternoon, as Kary wanted to help him pick them out.

He couldn't brush her off too much, as she now spent more time here, with him, than at her mother's place. They had never officially decided to live together, but it happened organically.

So, her input on the decor couldn't be ignored.

After spending hours, or wasting them, in Alex's opinion, they had picked a new coffee table, side tables, a new television, and many new decor items, which Alex had protested against but had been shot down.

"The house looks like a bachelor lives in it. You are not a bachelor, and I can no longer look the other way. There needs to be colour in here," Kary had scolded him.

"Why? It's not like we receive people over often. Who cares if the house is a bit bland?" Alex had argued.

"I do! A house should reflect its owners, and I refuse to live in a black and white decor. Now, enough arguing. We are getting those items."

Alex had given up, with how fervent she was. It was no use fighting back anymore.

He didn't particularly care about the colour, either. He just thought it was a waste of money.

But Kary didn't give him a choice, pressing the buy button on his computer before he could argue more. When the 'Payment Successful' message appeared, Alex sighed loudly.

"Don't be like that. Take it as a sign of me officially considering this my home," Kary consoled him, smiling lovingly.

Alex smiled back.

"I'm glad you think this. But I was more concerned about the price tags. I picked bland things before because I don't think wasting money is productive."

Kary scoffed.

"It's not like money will have use much longer if we believe everything David has been preaching. We might as well use some of it to live comfortably until then."

He agreed with her, but buying the penthouse was already that to him. Decorating was far down on his list of priorities.

"In any case, it's done. What should we do with the rest of the afternoon?" Kary asked, throwing herself on the bed face first.

The day had been exhausting, and she wouldn't mind napping for what was left of it. But she felt two hands wrap around her ankles and pull her back to the edge of the bed, flipping her over.

Alex let go of her feet, which fell to the ground, and grabbed her around the hips.

When he lifted her effortlessly, Kary yelped in surprise, followed by a brief moan when Alex started kissing her neck.



"I don't believe we've had time to reacquaint each other properly since I returned. How about a quick shower, and we see who gets tired first?" Alex said, giving her a lustful look.

Kary didn't bother answering with words, immediately pulling her shirt off, leaving her with just her bra covering her upper body.

Alex grinned as he carried her to the bathroom, kissing the exposed skin between her breasts with the tip of his lips.

He was forced to let her down if at least to undress and start the shower, but that didn't mean he stopped eyeing her like a horny teen seeing a naked woman for the first time.

They had sex under the hot water of the shower and didn't bother to dress back up, or even dry, as Alex carried her naked and soaked body right in bed, where they spent the rest of the daylight consuming each other.

Kary had missed human contact during the month, and her passion erupted over Alex's body. He was surprised when she lasted just as long as he did, as he never expected she would last all those hours without a break.

But he wouldn't complain.

When the room went dark and the automatic lights opened from their movements, they finally separated, both panting heavily.

"Wow," was the first word out of Alex's mouth, between two ragged breaths.

"And here I thought my new constitution would make me last much longer than you could..." he added.

Kary laughed cutely, turning her head toward him.

"I've been pent up for a month. Maybe you weren't conscious during that time, but I was. And I'm not into touching myself too much. And don't even think this puts us square. You have a lot of hours of being my sex toy before we are even," she said, sliding her hand against his chest.

Alex grinned at her, flipping over her and kissing her.

"I will gladly do so. But I think we are awaited inside New Eden. Especially me."

Kary looked at the time and sighed.

"Yeah. I'll take another shower since we sweat so much. Then we can log in."

"Good idea. I'll follow you right in," Alex said, rolling off the bed.

They quickly washed up, and Kary went up to her pod buck naked.

"No use in putting on clothes. It's not like we need them inside that thing anyway," she said when she caught Alex's curious gaze.

He shrugged and then paused.

His neuro-phone flashed.

Grabbing it, he put it on and frowned.

"I have to answer this. Head on in. I'll log in after," Alex said, tapping the earpiece.

Kary wondered who it was, calling at the time they usually logged in, but she knew he would tell her when he logged in.

"Alright, but don't take too long. A lot of people can't wait to see you on the other side," she said, laying down and closing the pod.

Alex watched her lid close, giving an apologetic look from the side where she couldn't see her.

'Sorry for lying...' he thought, as he went downstairs.