

New Eden 931

Chapter 931 The Time-jump Theory

There was a pause in the conversation. David had seldom ever talked about how he had come back to this time.

Alex was only aware that he had woken up here, confused, as the memories of things to pass flooded his mind. They never talked about the how.

Even David was unsure at first. After the memories had been fully integrated, it took him a while to understand why he had found a chain on himself that he had never bought.

It had taken even longer for him to understand how this was even possible. In his memories, he died too early in the apocalypse for anyone to be strong enough to pull whatever they had to send him back.

Especially since he was dead.

It made no sense to him for a long time.

That was, until he saw Chronos again, and saw what he was able to do now.

Xavier was using time magic on such an advanced level already, something he had barely started to master in his old timeline. But it had made him realize something.

If the man had survived long enough in the apocalypse, there was a possibility he had reached the power level to send someone back. But why him?

It didn't make sense to send someone back that had already died and didn't know the whole outcome.

But through trial and error, David had eventually stumbled upon his answer.

He'd tried so many different rituals to strengthen the veil between their worlds, to buy themselves time, and so many times had he failed that it was almost ridiculous, really.

But that very morning, he had found out something he didn't think was possible.

After another failed attempt at strengthening the veil, in another fruitless attempt to slow down the end of their world, he had instead torn a small hole in the veil.

But instead of connecting him to the world of New Eden, as the previous holes had, this one seemed to lead to a place where mana was so condensed and pure that it was hurting him just standing near the hole.

Through his failed ritual attempt, he had changed the outcome and made it work in a way that allowed him to draw upon that power.

Siphoning that pure mana away, he was able to reach enough of a condensation in his mind, to form his own mana lobe, something he had been wanting to ask Alex to help with.

And his mind had illuminated to a possibility.

What if he was never meant to be sent back?

What if the ritual wasn't meant for him, but, with unforeseen circumstances, it had failed, and Xavier had done what he could to make it succeed anyway? What if sending David was his only option as the ritual fizzled out?

Their friendship in his previous life and their shared memories would have been enough to replace any catalyst in a fizzling ritual—or at least, that's what David surmised here.

This was why he had come to this conclusion.

"I think the reason I was sent back through time was thanks to Xavier. I'm not sure at one hundred percent, but it's the most likely theory. I'm almost certain it's not the gods, giving me a second chance. They are not so nice as to do something like that, anyway."

Alex looked at him, unsure how to respond.

"How?" was his answer.

He practically heard David's shoulder shrug through the phone.

"I don't know. My best guess is a ritual that was interrupted. But I could be wrong. We'll never know. But I don't think putting him at risk is a good idea. If things go south, he might be our only answer to ensure everything returns to normal..."

Alex was confused about what he meant.

"Back to normal? Even if we did send someone back further this time, knowing what is to come, how would anything ever be normal? It's not like we can stop anything from happening. We aren't even sure we can change the result for this timeline..."

Alex heard a long sigh in his head.

"You're right. I'm reaching... But I still think we shouldn't let Xavier close to any danger for the time being. Even if he has awakened, he doesn't have a combat class. At best, he can slow our enemies down. It's still not enough."

Alex frowned at the words.

"Then why did you even suggest... You know what? I don't care. If he's not a good choice, we can go with just eleven of us. I'm sure we'll be fine, anyway. I doubt a group of harpies will be the end of us, right?" he replied, chuckling.

"I wouldn't underestimate them just yet, but I agree. I don't think they can wipe us out. Maybe a few injuries and close shaves, but hardly anything worse. Not with a tank and a healer in the group. We should be fine," David agreed, sighing in relief.

He didn't know what to do about Xavier yet. He wasn't even sure he wanted to meet him in this life.

What if their meeting caused a ripple through time? What if it forced Xavier to remember memories of that timeline?

Or worse. What if meeting him erased his memories of it?

Alex couldn't hear David anymore, and he assumed he had lost himself in thought. So he coughed to catch his attention again.

Ahem!

"Huh?" David jumped in surprise.

"Listen, I wasn't calling to hear the sound of silence. If that is all the people you called, then we can hang up, and you can go daydream all you want," Alex replied, sounding slightly annoyed.

"Hey, don't act like I'm the one wasting your time. I was actually busy. That's why I made this into a call instead of texting. I still have shit to do," David rebuked.

"Alright, then. Have fun with whatever it was you were playing with. Remember, more than two shakes, and you're playing with it, hehe. Oh, and congrats on your mana lobe, dick head. I don't know how you managed it without help, and I don't care. Good night."

The last comment surprised David a bit.

'How does he know?' he wondered.

He was about to ask him, but the line abruptly cut off, leaving David clicking his tongue in annoyance as he stared at his computer screen, alone in his dark office in the bunker.

The screen showed more reports from around the world, where other abnormal situations had started arising. Some of them had already been dealt with, always in a mysterious fashion, and David snickered.

"Already, the other factions are starting to act in the shadows. Who'd have thought so many people knew the world was ending as early as this stage..." he mumbled, realizing he hadn't known a whole lot before dying.

And he wasn't the only one keeping tabs on the world.

Not too far from him, on the southern shore of Montreal, Amara was also looking at international news, filtering out the useless information, as she tracked news of the supernatural.

Her focus was mainly on Europe and Eurasia, closer to her home, where reports of monsters appearing and disappearing in the wilderness were a dime a dozen. She smiled at her screen, knowing she had a part to play in this.

"At least the people I left at home are still doing what I asked of them. Loyalty is such a hard trait to find in people, nowadays..." she mumbled, looking away from her screen for a second.

Lifting her gaze over the screen, she looked in bed, where the half-naked Maria was sipping on a glass of red wine, looking at her with a soft smile.

"Whatever do you mean, Amara? You have me. I'll forever be loyal to you," the woman said with a feverish smile, swirling her wine in her hand.

"Yes, my love. Of course you will. Why wouldn't you be? I've been giving you nothing but reasons to be loyal. Starting with my body and heart," Amara responded, standing from her desk.

With the slight pull of lace, her nightgown slipped off her shoulders, and with the snap of her fingers, the lights in the room closed, leaving only the moonlight's soft glow to illuminate Amara's silhouette before the window.

"You should put that glass on the nightstand, before we make a mess," Amara added, sauntering toward the bed.

The glow of the moon behind her left Maria only able to see the silhouette, and made her smile.

Even though she had seen Amara naked so many times by now, the lack of sensory response from her eyes still let her imagination run wild, as she imagined her breasts jiggling softly with every step she took.

The curves of her voluptuous body made her wet just thinking about them, and she hurriedly put the glass far from the bed, almost tossing it.

When Amara slipped onto the silk covers, Maria practically jumped on her like a wild animal, both giving in to their lust.

But the computer's screen never shut off, and more news of monsters kept scrolling on it from everywhere around the world.

That was until a single message appeared on the screen, covering the images and articles behind it.

Amara Rossi. Your meddling has not gone unnoticed; we know you have met with the demon boy. The master wants to meet you. Come to these coordinates. Alone.

And under the message, a single sigil, acting as a signature.

The face of a white fox with golden eyes.

Chapter 932 World Summit

All across the globe, from the deepest reaches of the Amazonian forests to the highest habitable peaks of the Himalayas, casts of leaders were meeting to discuss the rapidly changing world.

The new spawning monsters, often accompanied by changes in the ecosystems where they appeared, were wreaking havoc on the world, starting in the deepest reaches of hidden Earth.

They were desperately trying to hide as much of it as possible, but censoring every news outlet and kid with a phone was becoming a Herculean task.

They weren't even capable of dealing with the incidents, and mysterious organizations were springing from the shadows everywhere, killing the monsters and disappearing, adding to the chaos and confusion.

The fact that the governments were unable to discover who these organizations were was the cherry on top of this confusing sundae.

As if monsters appearing out of the blue weren't enough, people with abilities that could destroy the balance in power they had established over centuries of money control were now stalking the shadows.

This was enough to put every government in the world on high alert.

After many internal meetings, a summit was finally called, and the world leaders of the globe assembled in a virtual call, all wearing grave expressions, mixed in with a variety of emotions, ranging from anger to fear.

Once everyone was settled in, they stared at each other for a while, waiting to see who would talk first.

This stare-off would determine how things proceeded, as no one wanted to show weakness in front of the others, especially the larger countries, like Russia, Canada, the USA, and China.

With the largest land masses amongst everyone around, their countries also contained most of the natural resources shared among the world's inhabitants. This has shifted political power in recent years, as the economy boomed worldwide.

Russia's president was the first one to lose patience, and he slammed the table before him, making his hologram waver to the others.

"Will someone start talking already?! We did not convene to throw loving gazes at each other!" he shouted, spittle flying out of his mouth.

"Then why don't you start, you vodka-loving communist? Or are you afraid of admitting your frozen hell of a country is losing the fight against these monsters?" the Australian prime minister mocked.

"Careful how you talk to me, Kangaroo fucker," the Russian spat out, glaring at him.

"Come now, Agapov. No one has considered your threats seriously since the Cold War. Your predecessor made sure of that," an older man with a monocle said, smiling slyly.

"You stay out of this, Tea break. I don't need you intervening in my fights," the Australian groaned.

"All right, gentlemen. Can we just get to business?" A woman with pitch-black hair interjected.

"I agree with the Canadian prime minister on this," another man said, locking his fingers together.

"Where is your president, American?" the Chinese president asked in a rude tone.

The man smirked at the Chinese president, like his question wasn't worth answering.

"The president doesn't have time to deal with these matters. It's why he's appointed me as head of the Paranormal Front Initiative. I'll be the one talking for America in these discussions about what is happening across the globe.

"I'm actually surprised you had time to be here yourself, President Zhou. I had already assumed you would have assigned someone to deal with this. My intel tells me your country is the least plagued by these monstrosities appearing everywhere. Care to share your secret?" the man asked in a snide tone.

The American who was standing in for the President was one that many knew of in the USA, as he was currently appearing often in the media, as the new candidate for vice president, if the current president was re-elected.

It was Senator Andrew Grimm.

"Senator Grimm, although your presence here is justifiable, I'm also curious why the president isn't here himself. We called for a meeting of leaders," the Canadian prime minister said, her eyes narrowing.

"Amalia, sorry, Mrs. Calloway. I think my title as senator already is enough to make me a leader, don't you think? As I've said, I am the new head of the PFI, which makes me a leader."

Amalia Calloway looked at him and grimaced.

In the meantime, Russia and Australia had kept throwing insults at each other, relishing in the verbal joust, before the president of Brazil coughed to catch everyone's attention.

As everyone stopped bickering and turned to look at the man, whose scarred face clearly reminded them of how he'd gained popularity in his country, silence fell on the virtual room.

"All of you keep acting like this isn't an emergency meeting. Our countrymen are dying in droves, and you take time to bicker like housewives at a country club meeting. Is this what the world's leaders have come to? Bickering old men and conniving middle-aged politicians?" he asked, his voice like a sword cutting through the silence.

Everyone looked at him with a disapproving gaze, and he scoffed.

"If my words hurt you, then it means I am right. Now. Could we stop the nonsense and get back on track? Every second I waste here is a second I could have been spending moving my army around the country to save my people."

The senator scoffed back at him.

"If sending troops at the problem would fix it, don't you think we'd already have it all under control in America? Our army is ten times that of your country, with equipment that would make yours look like stone spears and knives."

The Brazilian looked at the American with fire in his eyes, but kept silent.

"Gentlemen. We are not here to have a pissing contest. We are here to discuss our success stories, and share what little intel we have on those newly appearing abominations," Amalia said, scanning the room.

It made many people in the room uncomfortable, the ease at which the Canadian prime minister talked about success stories.

"The Chinese and you might have some of those, but not everyone suddenly has a secret society to take care of supernatural occurrences," the Australian prime minister grimaced.

And the Russian president, who also had yet to see any traces of powered people appear in his country to eradicate the monsters, soon followed him.

"The Canadians barely have theirs under control, from what I hear," the senator mocked.

"We are still trying to lock them under our yoke. At least they aren't unreasonable," the woman replied, ignoring his mocking tone.

In return, she asked, "What about your PFI? How did you get powered people to deal with the monsters?"

"I can't share such information with you; you know this. I can only tell you how we've been dealing with the monsters, as per authorized by the president."

The British prime minister huffed a laugh.

"Please, senator. We know how you dealt with it. With brute force and the discovery of mana. If you had the level of refinement required to deal with the problem adequately, everyone knows you would already be butting into our backyards, claiming you are there to help."

The senator clenched his jaw at being called out like this.

"And I suppose you think you have the better method?" he asked, his teeth clenched together.

"These monsters are from across the veil. Of course we know better. Where do you think the concepts and legends about magic come from? Who else than Britain would be prepared against a threat from across the veil?" the British mocked.

China laughed loudly, looking at the Brit like he was a joke.

"You call it magic; we call it Qi. But do you think your culture has a monopoly on it? My country has a longer history than all your countries combined. Don't dare presume you have invented the mystic arts, Laowai."

The British's face became stone cold.

"Then, by all means. Share with us your great techniques," he mocked.

The Chinese president immediately sunk back into his chair.

He could not share this secret with the world; it was not his to share.

And even if he could convince the people whose secret it was to share, he doubted they would share it outside of the country itself.

"That's what I thought," the Brit scoffed, seeing him clam up.

"On the contrary, the Men of Letters have willingly shared the secret with us, and are willing to share it with the world, at not but a small cost," he added, grinning.

Everyone became silent, anticipating the cost.

"With just the chance of establishing a branch in each of your countries, the Men of Letters have agreed to share the secret with everyone."

There it was.

This empty promise fooled no one in this room.

In time, they were all sure they would find a solution on their own that didn't involve letting a foreign country take hold in their backyard. The only issue here was time.

No one knew how bad the problem was, or how bad it would become. Was this the peak of it, or just the beginning?

How many would die before they found a cure for this plague of monsters?

"So? What will it be?"

Chapter 933 Sharing Solutions

Many smaller countries considered this offer seriously, even if it meant falling under the Englishmen's thumb, whether for the first time or a repeat of their history.

It was better to be alive, a vassal, than a dead, free country.

The Asian countries, big and small, displayed remarkable resilience, systematically refusing the offer almost immediately.

China, who was primarily responsible for colonizing almost all those countries at some point in time, was snickering under his breath.

Australia's prime minister, who the senator had half-thought would buckle immediately to the English prime minister, scoffed at his offer.

"As if we'd say yes to having you back in charge!" he spat.

"Almost every animal, insect, and plant on our continent tries to kill us already. We have been dealing with them alone up to now, and we will deal with this new threat as well," he growled.

"Well said," the senator complimented him.

"Shut up, Yankee. No one asked for your opinion," the prime minister snapped back at him, making the senator chuckle.

Going around the virtual table, Britain got the signed agreement to approximately thirty percent of the smaller countries, with the larger ones all refusing their help. Nevertheless, this was still a victory for them.

"Well, with this out of the way, Great Britain wishes all of you godspeed, and we hope to meet again in the near future. I will take my leave from this meeting to make arrangements for the countries that agreed to our help. Farewell, fellow leaders of the free world."

The Brit logged off almost immediately after his declaration, not waiting for anyone to add anything to it, which frustrated a few members of the leading caste, but they kept mum.

"Well!" the senator clapped his hands, bringing attention to him.

"With the biggest busybody in history out of this meeting, how about we get back to business? Who is willing to share their success stories free of strings attached? I think the world stands to benefit if we maintain our transparency, no?"

The Russian president huffed in response to the American's comment.

"Typical American. You think the tea drinkers are the biggest busybodies in history? How about all the wars you joined in the last two centuries that weren't yours? Hah! What a joke," he mocked.

The senator smiled at the Russian, clasping his hands together.

"Are you still sour that we helped Ukraine win that last war? Aren't you the sourest little loser of the bunch? It was a joke war, launched by a joke president, over a joke reason. How about you get over it already, huh?"

The Russian man immediately clenched his jaw and fists, anger bubbling inside him.

"I've had enough of your cockiness. I hope the monsters overrun your country, and Canada and Russia can fight for supremacy over what's left, your overconfident prick!" the man spat, before his image vanished from the virtual meeting.

The Canadian prime minister sighed loudly, brushing her hand into her hair.

"You have to stop trying to piss off everyone, senator. How does that reflect on your president? Do you think he would agree with your crudeness in this meeting, if he found out?" she asked, sounding annoyed.

"I doubt he would care that I set a few of these clowns in their place, Mrs. Calloway. We are here to talk about our strategies to save the world, and every one of those fools can only think about their own countries. Don't you think that is hypocritical?"

She had no answer to give, as she kind of agreed with the sentiment. She only resented his methods, not his reasoning.

"In any case, you need to restrain yourself, Mr. Grimm. You may think yourself our equal, but you are not. At least show humility, and act like your rank," she admonished him.

The man glared at her momentarily before sighing loudly.

"Fine. I apologize to the leaders of the world. My arrogance is unwarranted. I shall strive to be better. But we need to get on with this meeting. The night isn't getting any younger, and I would like to assume even our friends from across the world have better things to do than to idle around in a meeting all day. Shall we?"

Everyone nodded their heads, and the meeting resumed its intended purpose. The leaders each reluctantly shared stories of incidents and how they were resolved, whether by a shadow organization or a legitimate one, and plans were devised.

It was a time of crisis, and the more the world worked together, the better the outcome. At least, that was what everyone thought.

After hours of this, and many plans set into motion, as well as alliances made between most countries, swearing to help if they could, the meeting was finally pulled to an end by the leading economical forces of the world.

"Remember. It is not a shame to ask for help from your neighbours or from a larger country with more resources. The end goal here is to survive as a race. Not stand on top of each other," Amalia said, using this as her closing statement, before logging off.

As her camera shut off, and the room she was in lit back up, the woman rubbed her eyes tiredly.

"Nightly meetings are the worst..." she grumbled, as she pressed a button on a small remote on her desk, opening the blinds that hid the windows of her office.

Outside, the sun was already rising to the east, as morning slowly crept its way upon the horizon.

Outside her office, her assistant saw the light shining under the door, and he took it as his cue to enter the room.

"Ma'am," he saluted, closing the door behind him.

"You're still here, Jerry... I thought you would have gone home by now. Do you ever rest?" she asked, chuckling lightly.

"I can rest when you do, Ma'am," her assistant, Jerry, replied with a soft smile.

"Ah, what would I do without you?" she asked, returning his smile.

"You would find a lesser assistant, and your husband would go through the ten stages of jealousy again, blaming him for your absence. At least, Mr. Calloway has eventually acknowledged my loyalty enough to stop harassing me, he he," the man joked.

"He had no reason to be jealous in the first place, the fool. If anything, I should have worried about you spending time with him, not the other way around," Amalia joked, untying her hair and letting it flow.

"Ma'am. Although your taste in men is impeccable, I would never go for your husband. He reeks of machismo—I much rather my own husband. At least, I don't have to worry about ever having to deal with a jealous outbreak from him," the man mockingly replied, massaging the woman's shoulders.

"Mmm..." the woman moaned, feeling herself relax.

"You're right. I could never find an assistant like you. Sometimes, I'm jealous of your husband. Landing a man like you is a woman's dream, Jerry."

The man laughed lightly, as he kept releasing the tension in her shoulders.

"How was the meeting? Is there anything that we should worry about?" the man asked, using his elbows to massage her trapezius muscles more deeply.

"Mmm. Nothing worth worrying about, for now. The Russians are stubborn, as always, and want to prove they can deal with everything on their own. The Americans are being arrogant, as per their nature, and the Chinese are keeping to themselves.

"The only outliers are the Brits, who decided to extend a hand of help, maybe a bit too eagerly. But we don't need them, so I turned down their offer," she explained, her eyes closed.

The massage stopped for a moment.

"Is that a good idea? Turning down help like this, at a moment like now, could be a double-edged sword," Jerry said, his face turning into a frown.

"Don't worry, Jerry. The man I had you reach for me the other day, well, he finally called back. And the news he brought to the conversation puts me at a semblance of ease, at least for now."

Jerry was now curious about what a contractor and business magnate could offer to the prime minister that would set her at ease in a situation like the one they were facing.

"What does Jack Boudreau have that could possibly set you at ease?" he asked, his curiosity too strong to keep to himself.

The woman opened her eyes, looking at Jerry's reflection on her screen.

"I know you are good with secrets, Jerry, so I am willing to share the subject of our conversation with you. But you have to promise not to tell anyone, not even your husband this time," she said, turning her chair to face him.

The man looked at her with a solemn look.

"I promise that this conversation will never leave this office, Mrs. Calloway."

She nodded at him, satisfied with his words, and smiled at him.

"What Jack Boudreau brings to the table, aside from a mountain of money, is the prospect of something every country wants right now."

The man hung to her lips, feeling the tension rise in him.

"He brought to my attention something worth more than any resource our country has to offer. He told me how to deal with the monsters as effectively as possible, and that he has a way to make more people who can fix our problem."

Chapter 934 Rushing Their Departure

As morning rose across the east coast of North America, Alex opened his eyes, his mind still tired as he had barely slept.

He had convinced Kary to head to bed around two in the morning, so they could try to reestablish a regular sleeping schedule. But, now that he was doing it, he regretted every second of that thought.

Cuddling up to Kary's back, he murmured into her ear.

"Rise and shine, my little flame of destruction. It's six in the morning. I know the night was short, but we have to get up. The plane should be ready for us this morning, and we need to get ready to leave."

Kary groaned at him, squirming in his grasp, as she tried to push him off so she could keep sleeping.

But shoving him away was no small feat, and Alex only chuckled as she squirmed herself awake in his arms.

"I love you, but fuck you..." she grumbled, as she spun around in his arms to face him.

After giving him a light punch in the stomach, she huddled up against his chest, sighing tiredly.

'Today is going to be a long day...' she mentally groaned.

Alex picked her up as he got up himself, and princess-carried her into the bathroom, where he started the shower, before putting Kary on her feet.

She staggered a bit, still not a hundred percent awake, and he chuckled as he undressed.

Seeing him remove his clothes woke her up as she looked at his toned physique.

When he turned his back to her, she looked at his rippling back muscles, under the marking of a lion that their royalty had both given them, and she slid her hand on it, making Alex shiver slightly.

As she did, she noticed two scars right above his shoulder blades that weren't there before.

"You shouldn't use your wings so often. You're starting to scar where they come out..." she lamented, as the scars were ruining his almost flawless skin.

Alex tried reaching the scars with his hands but couldn't quite reach them. Since he didn't see them and couldn't touch them, he shrugged.

"Eh. It's a small price to pay, considering the advantage they bring, no?" he asked, smiling at her.

Kary pouted at him, but didn't push the subject as she pushed him into the shower.

Alex laughed as she pushed him into the shower before taking off her pyjamas, exposing her wondrous body to him.

She gave him a lustful gaze before joining him into the shower.

"Your punishment for waking me this early is servitude to my every desire," she said, pushing him against the cold tile wall of the shower.

Alex felt his blood rush instantly as he kneeled.

"Of course, my queen," he said, smirking at her.

Kary made him do all sorts of things for the next hour under the hot and cold water, treating him like a sex slave, and Alex didn't complain once, even when his jaw started turning sore.

Of course, she wasn't cruel enough to take all the pleasure and not give some back.

After staying under the shower until their hands and feet had wrinkled like old people, they left the shower and brought this back to bed, where Kary continued using Alex to her heart's content for another hour before they finally let go of each other, panting and sweaty.

"Well, that shower was useless," Alex panted as he looked lovingly at Kary.

Kary laughed, turning her head toward him.

"Was it? I think it was the perfect tool for starting us off. Of course, we are going to need another one, since we just sweated the equivalent of a marathon. But it was all worth it," she said, biting her lip, as her body was still shaking from pleasure.

Alex was not going to argue that, even though he was exhausted again. But they still had many things to prepare before leaving, so they couldn't laze in bed too long.

Getting up from the bed, Alex picked Kary up and walked her to the bathroom.

"Head in the shower; I'll grab the sheets and wash them. I'll be right in there with you in a second."

Kary giggled as she started the water in the shower again.

"A man who cooks, cleans and fucks like a wild animal. What catch, hi hi."

Alex pulled his tongue out at her.

"Stop looking at me like I'm just some meat, you vixen," he replied with a chortle.

Kary giggled her way into the shower, closing the glass door behind her, while Alex took a moment to look at her blurry silhouette through the door before shaking his horny thoughts away.

He walked back to the room, where he undid the bed, carrying the dirty sheets that smelled of sweat and sex, before dropping them into the washing machine. He started the load with detergent and a bit of bleach, heading to the shower next.

Kary had already finished washing up, and was lazing around in the hot water, letting her body relax, as Alex came in.

She didn't want to stick around, as she knew her mind was not yet sated, so she hurriedly walked out of the shower, leaving alone to his thoughts and the hot water.

Alex chuckled as she practically ran out and washed himself up. As he did, he thought about what their day would entail next.

'A trip to the airport, where a plane is already waiting for us, and then a long ass flight to England. I wonder if Silent is going to meet us at the airport, or if Jack got him a plane to the UK from his home.'

The kid had already cleared with his parents to take a sabbatical year to work abroad, but Alex wondered how he convinced them he had found a job. Had Jack helped him?

Finishing his shower, Alex dried up quickly, leaving his hair dripping wet as he stepped into the room naked to get dressed.

Kary was already downstairs, making breakfast by the smell of bacon lingering in the air, and Alex smiled as he put on a bland pair of jeans and a nice buttoned white shirt.

He looked at himself in the mirror and found that he looked pretty dapper, given he used to wear cheap jeans with either band shirts or gaming hoodies.

"Funny how money changes a person's looks," he muttered to himself before heading downstairs.

As he arrived in the kitchen, Kary was already plating eggs and bacon along with a serving of toast. She smiled at him and slid a coffee across the counter as a finishing touch.

"Look at you, looking all snazzy. Were you going on a date without telling me?" she asked with a bit of snark.

"I would never go on a date without my trusted girlfriend, now, would I? No, I felt like wearing something casual, but still classy. Is it too much?" he asked, looking down at his shirt.

"No, love. You look very handsome. I'm just afraid other women might see you and try to snatch you away. I would hate to have to carbonize a hoe for trying to steal my man," she mocked, grabbing onto his arm.

Alex chuckled, before grabbing his fork and stabbing the egg yolks, which started dripping onto the plate.

"Mmm. Sunny side up, just like I like em," he commented, grabbing a toast and dipping it into the runny yolk.

"I call that under-cooked. But hey, I won't deny you your eggs like you enjoy them just because you're weird," she replied with a pulled tongue.

"You eat grilled cheese sandwiches with chocolate milk. Don't call me weird, you little goblin," Alex replied, his mouth half-full.

Kary snickered to herself as she started eating her own plate.

They quickly chowed down on the food, as they both received a text simultaneously, telling them the plane was ready to depart at any time.

They still hadn't packed anything, and their affairs were barely in order, but now they were rushed for time.

Doing a flash cleaning of the house, Alex and Kary had to use their abilities to help them, before hurriedly packing clothes for a few days into a luggage bag.

Alex rushed to the bathroom, wanting to grab their essentials, but he heard Kary calling out to him from the room.

"What are you doing? We have to go!"

"We haven't packed our toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, dental floss, and toothpaste. We aren't ready!" he replied, grabbing things with both hands.

"Are you dumb? We can buy some disposable ones; we're rich, remember?" she replied from the other room as she finished closing the bag.

Alex looked at the things in his hands and realized she was right.

"How expensive can all this be in Korea, right?" he asked himself, dropping everything in the sink.

She saw him come back out of the bathroom, his hands empty, and shook her head while laughing.

"I take it you don't travel often? I rarely bring those things with me; buying them wherever I go is faster. Less of a hassle."

He looked at her and shrugged.

"I've never been rich before. Can you blame me?" he asked with a smile.

Kary laughed and threw the bag at him.

"You are carrying it. If I do, I'll burn it before we make it there."

Alex frowned.

"Aren't we calling a limo?"

Kary shook her head.

"No. We don't have time for traffic. Jack just texted me, and they're ready to go now. They are on their way to the airport to drop off Jonathan."

"Fuck! Alright, flying it is," he said, removing his shirt.

"What are you doing?" Kary asked him, confused.

"Hey, I love this shirt. I'm not tearing it apart with my wings. No way."

She paused before laughing as she stepped out to the second-floor balcony.

Alex hurriedly shoved the shirt into the bag before rushing after Kary, who had already jumped over the railing and ignited on her way down.

"And then she calls me crazy," he muttered, jumping off the balcony after her, wings ripping out his back with a small splash of blood.

Chapter 935 Meeting The Captain

Soaring into the air, Alex looked down below him, where he saw a red streak of flames blaze upward, coming in his direction, before stopping next to him.

"I thought I was crazy for jumping off balconies?" he asked, his voice dripping with sarcasm, a mischievous glint in his eyes.

"You're right. But I didn't jump; I purposefully fell off. Not the same," Kary replied, smirking at him with her eyes.

Alex rolled his eyes at her, pulling his tongue out in a grimace as they directed their flight toward the airport.

The airplane wasn't parked at the main airport, though, as it was a private plane, and left off the side airport, where there was little to no traffic.

It wasn't much of a detour, as the side airport was actually closer to them since they flew over the entire traffic, but Alex knew they were attracting a lot more attention than he would have liked.

He turned his head to look at the giant moving flare next to him and shook it slowly.

"You know, it would have been much less conspicuous if you had let me carry us both there. Your method of flight is a bit... flashy."

Kary shook her head no.

"I can't always rely on you, now, can I? I can fly on my own; why would I ask you to carry me? It's a lot faster this way, anyway."

Alex wasn't convinced it was faster since he was flying at about half speed right now, but he wasn't about to call her slow. That was a straight path into aerial dodgeball with fireballs as the playing ball.

The airport was already in sight, and Alex smiled at how much time they had saved coming here this way. But his smile vanished almost immediately after, as the whirring of helicopter blades caught his ears.

Thop thwop thwop thwop

"Unknown flying civilians! Identify yourselves!" a rough voice came at them from a speaker on the approaching helicopter.

Alex recognized the bland khaki colour of the vehicle but frowned, wondering what the army was doing here.

A second copter soon joined the first one, as they started circling the now static Alex and Kary.

"I won't repeat a third time! Identify yourselves, or get ready to be shot down!" the voice shouted at them.

"Woah! Calm down, buddy! We are not hostiles!" Alex shouted over the noise, amplifying his voice through mana.

"Then identify yourselves!"

"I am Alexander Leduc! This is Kary Deveille! We are en route to the private airport for a departure!"

The helicopters continued circling them for a moment, their blades slicing the air and Alex's wings beating the only sound that they could hear.

The crackling of Kary's flames was utterly drowned out.

She warily eyed the two war copters, hoping no one would take a rash action. Honestly, she was already surprised Alex was so calm about this.

"Did you know they would be there?" she asked him.

"Well, I was expecting a military presence in airports and ports eventually—just not this early," Alex admitted.

With all the sightings of him roaming around the internet as he flew around the city, he was honestly surprised there wasn't more of a regular presence in the sky over the city already. But the airports shouldn't have been under that much scrutiny already.

After a moment, the speaker crackled back to life.

"Alright, you've been cleared! Next time you fly toward the airport, call the tower to notify them of your arrival, Mr. Leduc!" the man shouted, before the two copters suddenly pulled away, each returning to different sides of the airport, flying low enough to avoid air traffic.

Alex frowned for a second, confused.

"Call the tower? How the hell am I supposed to do that? It's not like I have their number on speed dial," he complained, looking at the tower not too far from them.

"I guess we'll have to pull some strings to get the number, then," Kary said, shrugging as if it were a no-brainer.

But it wasn't that easy a number to get, Alex imagined.

They resumed their flight to the side airport, which was already almost under them, going toward the hangar at the far end, where Richard had said the plane would be parked.

Jack had graciously reserved this hangar for them, out of his many private hangars, even though Richard had expressed his reluctance to take the handout. He had his pride, after all.

They also had their own hangar on the other side of the side airport, but it was the only one, since they only had one private plane.

But Jack had insisted, explaining he wasn't doing this for the older man, but for the youngsters. Their endeavours were also a boon to his operation, so doing this was an investment, in his own words.

In the end, Richard had agreed, since arguing was useless. He'd known Jack for a long time, as Jack was a big client of his, and they often traded favours.

Once the old man was set on an idea, he was practically impossible to convince otherwise. It was better to argue less and cut the waste of time.

As the couple landed in front of the hangar doors, they finally came face to face with the plane that was now effectively theirs.

"Woah..." Alex said under his breath.

"Yeah, that's an understatement," Kary chimed in.

The large, entirely matte black plane, with a V-wing, two turbines at the back, and rectangular air ducts at the front of the wings, stood there, immobile in all its grandeur.

It was a sight to behold.

Alex had expected something smaller, or at least less impressive than this. In his opinion, it was more of a jet than a plane.

Of course, he was happy with the purchase, as it was exactly what he wanted in terms of speed and space.

Walking under the wing, as the signal lights flashed slowly, Alex tried to imagine which was faster, him or the plane.

He reached a lowered set of stairs, squarely in the center of the aircraft, and started climbing them.

"Hey! Who the hell are you, and what are you doing here?!" a woman called from the side.

"Excuse me?" Alex asked, confused.

He was sure this was his plane. Shouldn't the crew be aware he was coming and what he looked like?

"I said who the fuck are you, and what are you doing boarding my baby?" the woman asked, stepping between him and the stairs, as Alex stepped down from them.

"You're baby? This is my plane, lady. Who are you?"

"Unless you are secretly forty, and have suddenly gone through a rejuvenation cure, you are not the proprietor of this plane. It belongs to Bellemare & Delphi Security, and is leased under the name Alexander Leduc.

"And last I talked to the owner, he didn't sound anything like you," she protested, crossing her arms over her chest.

Alex looked at her like she was a confused animal.

"Are you aware of who Alexander Leduc is, miss..." Alex started, still not knowing her name.

"I'm Major Carol Schrute. I'm the pilot of this marvellous aircraft. And I might not have met him yet, but I spoke to them over the phone, and he didn't sound like a child!" she said, looking at him with glaring eyes.

Alex chuckled.

"Miss Schrute, whoever you talked to wasn't me. And I assure you, this is my aircraft. Now, step aside."

Alex tried walking by her, but she roughly pushed him back.

"Kid, I was a pilot for the Canadian Air Force. If you think I'll just let you walk into this plane without knowing who you are, you are dreaming. Or asking for a beating, whichever one you'd like."

Alex looked at her, his face turning into a shit-eating grin.

"Great... I get to pilot around a pretentious prick... Probably a kid from old money, too, by the arrogance of his tone..." she mumbled to herself as she climbed the stairs.

11:36

"A beating? From you? I highly doubt that. Will I need to show you some ID for you to step aside, or maybe toss you into the plane and climb in after you?" he taunted.

Kary sighed annoyedly.

"Why are you always trying to pick fights, love? Just show her some ID. We don't have time to lose in a pissing contest. I'm sure Jack is about to get here with Jonathan, and I doubt seeing you fighting just about everyone and their mothers is a good example for the kid."

Alex pouted at Kary, who was raining on his parade.

"Aww... But it would have been fun. If she's anything like Alfred, she could have been a bit of a challenge," Alex whined.

"Alfred? Alfred Lancaster? You know the Colonel?" the woman suddenly asked, her demeanour changing.

Alex smirked at her.

"What's it to you?" he asked.

"The man's a legend. I doubt he would hang around a snot-nosed brat like you, son," the woman mocked.

"Hah!" Alex laughed.

"He doesn't have much of a choice when I work with his boss and basically guard his precious little lady so often. Hell, I wouldn't be surprised if he showed up here to drop her off," Alex replied, smirking at her.

Kary shook her head, fishing in Alex's pockets to pull out his ID.

"Hey!" he complained.

"I said we didn't have time to waste, and here you are, flaunting your connections," Kary rebuked, pulling out his driver's license and pushing it to the woman.

The Major grabbed the ID card and looked at the name. She then pulled a frustrated grimace.

"Great... I get to pilot around a pretentious prick... Probably a kid from old money, too, by the arrogance of his tone..." she mumbled to herself as she climbed the stairs.

Alex could hear her, but he was too focused on her leaving with his ID.

"Hey, I'm going to need that back! Aaaaand, she's gone..."

'What a pleasant start...' he complained, mentally.

Chapter 936 Meeting A Legend

Alex was about to climb into the plane, to at least go drop their luggage, when he heard the sound of tires pulling up to the hangar door.

Turning his head, he saw a black sedan with completely tinted windows, and smirked.

"Now, this is going to be fun," he mumbled.

"Hmm?" Kary hummed, wondering what he was up to.

"Hey! Major pain in my ass! Get back down here! I got someone you have to meet!" he shouted into the plane through the open stairs.

From the inside, he heard the pissed-off voice of the major hollering back at him.

"It's Major Schrute, you rich dumbass! And I'm busy! Do you want to leave this airport at some point, or not?!"

Alex chuckled.

In the meantime, the sedan had already stopped before the hangar door, and Alfred was pulling open the door for Violette to disembark the car.

The girl jumped out of the car and ran over to Kary when she noticed her.

"Kary! It's finally happening! We are going on an adventure in real life!" she squealed happily, slamming into Kary's legs for a hug.

Kary giggled at her antics and gave her head a little pat.

"Yes, we are. And guess what? We'll get to meet plenty of amazing people, some of whom you have already met and others whom you'll be meeting for the first time. But all of whom will make great friends, in or out of New Eden. Isn't that exciting?" she asked, revving her up.

Kary could feel the girl practically vibrating with excitement as she imagined whatever her tiny mind was seeing.

"Who is coming with us? Is there anyone else leaving from here?" she asked, looking around.

She had already seen Alex and smiled toothily at him, but he was busy annoying the pilot into getting back out of the plane.

After unloading a carry-on with all of Violette's stuff, Alfred calmly walked toward the aircraft and stopped next to Kary.

"It's nice to see you again, Ms. Deveille. I see your boyfriend is being an annoying mongrel again. Who is he antagonizing this time?" he asked, smirking tiredly as he looked at Alex, who was shouting stupidities into the lowered stairs.

"Nice to see you too, Alfred. He's trying to get the pilot to come meet you. She didn't believe us when we said we knew you. I'm surprised, though. Apparently, you are some kind of legend in the military? What's that about?" she asked, smiling warmly at him.

"Ah, that is something of an urban legend. Rumour has it I once took down a full regiment of men in the Iranian desert while armed with nothing more than a pistol," he said casually.

Kary raised an eyebrow at him.

"And does that hold any truth?" she asked, already assuming it was true.

"Beats me. I only ever went there once, and it was for an extraction. Safe to say I got my target out. The rest is classified," he grinned, not giving in to her silent prodding.

Kary chuckled at his secrecy.

"So mysterious, Alfred. You should act like that with women more often. You wouldn't look so lonely. Get a girlfriend; have some kids. You've done enough to deserve a family, no?" she teased him.

Alfred's smile vanished, replaced by a sadness deep enough to drown in.

"I've already given in that department, Ms. Deveille. But I would rather not talk about it. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have other things to do. Keep the little miss safe for me, will you?" he said, turning on his heels to leave.

Kary smiled emphatically at him.

"Sorry I brought it up. Yes, I'll take care of her. See you in a few days, Alfred."

He nodded, starting to walk away, but Alex hollered at him.

"Hey! Wait, don't go yet! This dumb gal is finally getting down here!" Alex shouted, running away from the stairs and laughing.

"I swear to god, Mr. Leduc, I will shut your mouth indefinitely if you keep insulting me! I'll find another job! It's not worth your attitude!" the major growled, as she launched after him.

Alex ran by Alfred, smirking at him, and Alfred sighed tiredly.

Jumping over the sedan, Alex took cover behind it, giggling like an idiot, while Alfred lifted his arm to bar the woman's path.

"Alright enough, Major. I didn't hire you to fight with this idiot. I hired you to pilot a very expensive plane. I don't trust many people, so please do not make your references regret pushing for you," Alfred said, turning his head toward the woman.

She grunted at him, stopping at his arm.

"Listen, pal. I don't know who you are, but if I decided to beat his ass, I will. Don't get in my way. I don't discriminate towards the ancient," she glowered.

Alfred smiled at her, his face becoming almost too friendly.

This sent shivers down her spine, and she felt the hair on her arm rise.

Carol reflexively jumped back, her instincts telling her this man was dangerous.

This made Alfred smile genuinely at her.

"At least you have sharp instincts, just as advertised. I'm the one you have been speaking to, Major Schrute. I work directly for Bellemare & Delphi's CEO. My name is Alfred Lancaster. I would say it's a pleasure to meet you, but you are making it difficult."

The major's mouth suddenly dropped as she heard the name.

"Alfred Lancaster? THE Colonel Lancaster? The ghost of Pashu?" she asked, her voice quivering.

Alfred looked at her and sighed.

"I've been called that, yes. Now, with the introductions out of the way, would you mind putting up with that little ass hat for me? I know he is a handful and a half, but he is good at what he does, and we need him to do that. Please?" Alfred asked, looking at her with a pleading expression.

The woman took a moment to reply, her mind still reeling from meeting this legend. She had heard many things from her fellow Air Force friends, who had flown missions in and out of Iran.

"My C.O. told me so much about you, back when you were called in Pashu... He said that was a highly contested zone, chock full of Anjoman rebels... You're a legend, sir..." she said, looking at him with idolatry.

"Major, this is classified intel. Your C.O. should have known better than to share that war story with anyone. In any case, I would advise you not to talk about it. If you want to share war stories, you should do so in the company of war buddies and trusted people, neither of which I am to you," Alfred reprimanded her.

"Yes, sir! I'm sorry, sir!" she said, saluting to him and becoming obedient.

"Now, will you do the job you were hired to do? Or should I postpone this operation and waste everyone's time and an extravagant amount of resources to find another willing and trustworthy pilot?"

The woman stiffened up a bit, realizing he wasn't joking.

"I'll do my job, sir! I'll ignore him if I have to!" she shouted, looking over Alfred's head.

"Good. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have other things to do. Your last passengers should be arriving shortly, and I am a busy man. Goodbye, Major Schrute."

Alfred nodded goodbye to Kary again, as she nodded back. He then smiled at Violette, who waved at him excitedly, and turned back toward the car, where Alex was standing, grinning like a dumbass.

He sighed as he walked over to the driver's door, where Alex was standing.

"You need to stop picking fights, kid. One day, you'll pick a fight you can't win, and we'll be fucked..."

Alex huffed a laugh.

"As if there was a fight I couldn't win. Not in this world, at least," he replied, cockily.

Alfred shook his head, pushing him out of the way so he could open his door.

"Behave, Alexander. Don't start giving bad habits to the little lady, or I'll beat the ever-living crap out of you. I'll play that stupid game and get to your level if that is what it takes," he threatened.

Alex waved him goodbye, a big cheeky grin on his face, before Alfred closed the door and drove off.

As he turned toward Kary, she shook her head disappointingly as well.

"He's right, though. Be a good example for Violette, instead of acting like David. I can't believe I have to say this, but he is not a good example of a good person. You should know better than to imitate him."

Alex chuckled.

"I was just trying to get her out of the plane. It worked, didn't it?"

He heard the major click her tongue before she dropped her salute.

"I'll be in the cockpit, running my last checkups before takeoff. When we are ready to leave, come knock on the door, 'Sir,'" she said sarcastically, dragging the last word out.

"Aye, aye, Captain!" Alex mocked, doing the worst salute he could, making her grit her teeth to keep quiet.

Violette walked up to him and kicked him in the shin.

"Stop being a meanie, Alex. I don't like it," she admonished him.

He looked at her, his eyes wide as if surprised, and lowered to her level.

"I'm sorry, Violette. I'll be nice starting now..."

She smiled at him.

"Good! Then, help me get my things inside. The suitcase is heavy, and the stairs are steep!" she adorably ordered him.

Alex laughed as he grabbed her suitcase.

"Yes, Ma'am!" he said, acting like her butler.

'At least he can still be his normal self. He's not a lost cause, for now,' Kary thought, smiling at his tomfoolery.

Maybe if this side of him rubbed off on David instead of the other way around, there would still be hope for him, too.

Chapter 937 Last Ones Arriving

While Alex carried their luggage, another car pulled up, this time a limousine, and Kary immediately recognized it.

Mr. Gu exited the driver's side, headed to the back door, and stopped to smile at Kary.

"Hello, Ms. Deveille. I hope you've been well, at least since the last time we saw each other."

As he said this, he pulled open the door, leaving the front of it clear, so whoever was inside could disembark unimpeded.

Out came rushing Jonathan, who was captivated by the black aircraft in the hangar.

"Woah! It looks almost like the one in the X-Men comics!" he exclaimed, running toward the stairs.

"Calm down, Jonathan," Jack said, pulling himself out of the limo with a sigh.

"Jack," Kary saluted him as she watched Jonathan run off.

"Kary. *Sigh* I swear, I can't get a steady read on this grandchild of mine. One day, he is morose, training as if he would die if he didn't, and the next day, he's jumping to the ceiling at the thought of travelling to hunt monsters. Are all kids this unpredictable?"

Holding her laughter as much as she could, Kary nodded at him.

"I believe most children are hard to follow, at times. At least I'm sure I was, if I believe all that my mother tells me. As for Alex, well, he is still hard to follow sometimes, so I don't doubt he was a handful growing up. I think it's pretty normal."

Jack huffed.

"You can say that twice. He was probably a tornado. My issue is that normal just isn't going to cut it with our current future..." he complained, looking nervous.

Kary understood what he meant, but she smiled warmly in response.

"I think it's best to keep hope that we fix that and that he will still have a normal future. I wish that for every kid on Earth, with all my heart. It's up to adults to ensure they do, is it not?"

Jack looked at her, and his nervousness vanished.

"How wise and mature of you, Ms. Deveille. You are absolutely right. It is an adult's and parent's sacred duty to ensure the children get to grow up in the best environment. I would be derelict in my duty as his guardian if I didn't do my utmost for it. Sadly, I cannot join this time," he said, looking annoyed.

Kary's brow raised at his facial expression. She could tell there was something he wasn't sharing, but it wasn't her place to pry.

"Well, I can only hope we can rely on your strength the next time. Whatever is holding you here today, I'm sure you'll conquer and get over it. Your track record is filled with success stories, after all, isn't it?" she said with a big smile.

Jack laughed lightly, extending his hand for a handshake.

"Thank you for the vote of confidence, young lady. It's nothing too dangerous, unlike what you are about to face. But it brings with it the complexity of politics. Sadly, with all I have planned, playing politics is unavoidable," he grumbled.

Kary grabbed his hand, shaking it firmly.

"It's well deserved, Jack. I'm sure everything will go the way you need it to. In the meantime, once we land in Korea, we will try to keep everyone concerned in the loop. Rest assured, we will do our utmost to keep Jonathan and Violette safe," she promised him.

Alex came back down the stairs leading into the plane as she said that, looking toward them. He had crossed paths with Jonathan inside, and Jack had come to drop him off, so he wanted to talk to him before leaving.

"Jack! Come to send us off, have you?" Alex asked, a broad smile on his face.

"I've come to tell you not to do anything stupid on foreign soil, boy. You have a reckless tendency to ignore political power, and that is a habit that could bite us in the ass. I also came to ask that you come back to us in a timely manner, this time. Don't die, okay?"

Alex looked at him, pulling a fake surprised expression.

"Oh? Are you worried about me? How thoughtful. Should we have a heartfelt embrace before I go?" he joked.

"And the moment is ruined," Jack said, his face returning to normal.

Kary and Alex laughed a bit, as Jack shook his head disappointingly.

"And here I thought you could have a serious conversation. It's my fault for expecting you to be an adult for more than thirty seconds. I should know better, by now," Jack commented, his tone sarcastic.

Alex snickered at his words.

"Hey, you said it, not me. But I do need to be serious for a moment. Have you dealt with the problem I mentioned?" he asked, turning to look at Mr. Gu.

"I have. It was no small task, given that he is also an awakened, and a strong one at that. Plus, with his background, I could hardly just take him out and forget about him," Mr. Gu replied, looking perplexed.

"Were there any complications?" Alex asked, worried.

"None that you should let trouble your mind. He has been dealt with, and won't be a problem for the foreseeable future. Focus on your task with the peace of mind that he won't pop up to trouble you."

Alex nodded, even though he wasn't satisfied with just a half measure. He could tell by Gu's words that Damien was still alive.

"Is everyone there, or are you waiting for someone else to arrive?" Jack asked, wondering why they weren't getting ready for liftoff already.

"If I am to believe what David told me, then there should be himself and one more that we are waiting on. Cory Hitchcock, the priest player from last time."

Jack jogged his memory for a second before remembering the American boy.

"Ahh, yes. The one who blocked a shot from the Raijū with a powerful barrier. It's a good idea to bring him along. His healing and defensive skills can't hurt to have around."

"Yeah, he's a good kid. It's a bit of an issue that he stays so far away, but I heard you had something in the works for him. A job at the hospital so that he could be closer?" Alex said.

Jack frowned, turning his head toward Gu.

"My apologies, sir. I completely forgot to mention this to you," Mr. Gu said, bowing slightly at Jack.

"I guess now is a good time to explain what he means, then," Jack replied, wondering what this was about.

"I talked with the young man a few times since the Raijū incident, and apparently, he is taking up courses in the medical field. He expressed his interest in becoming a doctor. He said something about healing people in New Eden has awakened the will to help more people outside the game."

Jack looked at him with a raised eyebrow.

"So you offered him a job at the hospital? In what capacity?"

"Ah, but I didn't offer him a job, per se. I offered him a paid internship, both as a generalist doctor trainee and as a healer for our underground facility. The second part I offered off the books, of course."

Jack scratched his chin, contemplating the offer.

"It's not a poor deal for either of us, I assume?" he asked, wondering what terms Mr. Gu had offered the kid.

"Far from it, sir. I offered him half a million for the entire school year, since he's taking a sabbatical, and if he does his job in the hospital well, he gets a letter of recommendation for any college he wants to apply for.

"Our hospital is one of North America's most reputable private hospitals, so our letter should carry weight, even across the border. And I think half a million is cheaply paid to have a healer on hand for any incident we may encounter over a ten-month period."

Jack nodded his head.

If it had been him, he would probably have offered an extra quarter just to be sure he never talked about the facility. Of course, he trusted him enough to keep his mouth shut since the kid already knew of it.

But an extra incentive often went a long way, in matters of privacy.

Just as Jack was about to open his mouth and say it was a good idea, the loud sound of wings flapping resounded above them, as the zombified drake under David's yoke started descending from the sky.

It landed with a heavy thud before David jumped off, and the monster disappeared into his shadow.

"I'm not late, am I?" he asked, seeing that almost everyone was there already.

"You aren't late yet. Cory still hasn't gotten here either," Kary said, nodding at him.

"Cory?" David asked, confused.

"Ahh, the healer kid, yes. I thought his name was Cody," David said, slapping his forehead.

Everyone looked at him with an expression that said, 'At least get his name right.'

And as if summoned by his name being spoken, the strident sound of a motorcycle engine caught their ear. A sound not unfamiliar to Alex.

"Does he drive a Honda bike?" Alex asked, surprised a sixteen-year-old had a motorcycle licence.

"That's right. You didn't get to see it last time. Yes, he got it for his sixteenth birthday," Kary said, remembering Alex had been dead before he could see the bike.

"Nice. He must be all the rage with his classmates and friends. Honda makes some nice motorcycles," Alex commented, thinking about his dad's bike.

This made his heart pinch for a second, remembering it was also the reason his parents no longer walked this world.

The engine sound got closer, as a spot in the distance started growing, getting closer to them.

"This means we'll be ready to leave soon," David said, heading toward the plane.

"Hi, Jack. Hi, Gu Fang. Bye Jack. Bye, Gu Fang," he added, walking right by them.

"This guy, I swear," Alex said, shaking his head at the scene.

'Always trying to stir people's emotions wherever he goes. Unbelievable,' Alex thought, not realizing the irony of him thinking that.

Chapter 938 Seeing It Again

Jack and Gu Fang ignored David as he climbed aboard the aircraft. There was no reason for them to take the bait.

Even though they wanted to send them off properly, Jack was already on a clock, and staying any longer was eating away at his very limited free time.

Watching Cory parking outside the hangar, Jack sighed tiredly.

'This is half the team that will put our name out in the world. Kids, most of them... How sad has the world become that we rely on such young people for our survival...' he thought, his anger simmering beneath a heavy burden of responsibility.

But, even if he wanted to join them and make this a more reasonable assortment of adults, he couldn't.

He had another role to play in this conflict—the role of flag bearer.

He would be their fortress, beacon of safety, and shield when they needed to rest.

That was his role.

Once the motorcycle's engine was shut off, Jack smiled at Cory, who was taking his helmet off.

"I trust your trip was uneventful, young man," he said, looking at his confused face.

"Uh, yes, sir. As much as you'd expect a road trip that lasts a day."

"You should park your bike inside the hangar, young man. I presume you will be gone for a few days, and you wouldn't want it to get towed away," Jack added, pointing at the bike.

"Ah! Yes, that would be an ideal outcome," Cory replied, his face paling at the thought of returning to an impounded ride.

He put his motorbike in neutral and pushed it inside, not wanting to start it up again just for a few meters, and smiled at Jack.

"Thank you again for the job offer, sir. It will greatly help me make up my mind about my career and help my parents live comfortably for a while," Cory said, pushing the bike inside.

Jack shook his head.

"Think nothing of it. You are also doing me a favour, granting us access to a healer in case of grave injury. Not many organizations have access to such a precious asset, I'm sure."

Cory smiled and nodded.

He had thought about it on his way here, and it made the most sense that Jack saw this as a transaction, more than just helping a kid out. Having a healer, in a situation where the world was going to shit, and many people would end up injured, was the silver lining that most wouldn't be able to attain.

Even if more and more people awakened to their powers from New Eden, healers were a rare breed, even in the gaming community. At least, pure healers were.

"I still very much appreciate the chance to try the waters in the medical field, sir. And I will make sure everyone I work with stays fit for combat in the more... private sector," Cory said, smiling.

Jack nodded his head and turned to look at Alex, who was still staring at the motorcycle, his mouth hanging loosely and his eyes teary.

"You okay, son?"

Alex snapped out of his daze, realizing he was being talked to.

"Huh? Yes, I'm alright," Alex replied, rubbing his eyes.

"Cory, where did you get this bike?" he asked the kid, focusing on him.

"That beauty was my sixteenth birthday gift from my parents and uncle," Cory proudly replied, caressing the gas tank on it.

"Do you know where they got it?" he asked, focusing on the motorbike a bit unsettling.

Cory frowned a bit, wondering why he was so fixated.

"Why? Did you want one like it? I wouldn't bother trying. It's practically a collector piece. My uncle bought it off a guy who was holding onto it for some dude from up here. Something about it had been in an accident, and he never wanted to ride it, or something," Cory replied, grinning from ear to ear.

"His loss, if you want my opinion. That baby is amazing to ride on," he added, gripping the handlebar with a grin.

Alex was now sure this was the one—the bike his father had rebuilt from scratch.

The one he and his mother had died on...

Tears started flowing from his eyes again as he walked to the motorcycle and slid his hand across it.

The tears threw off Cory, making him uncomfortable with how he acted with his ride.

"Dude, you are making me uncomfortable," Cory said, scratching the back of his neck.

But Kary put her hand on his arm, pulling him back and whispering in his ear.

"Let him have a moment. I think he needs this."

Cory was confused as to why she was asking him this.

"Why? Is he being nostalgic or something?"

Kary smiled softly.

"Something like that. That bike, I think I know whose it used to be," Kary said, looking at Alex.

He had told her all about his parents' accident, the time he had brought her to their grave. She knew all the details, down to the make and model of the motorcycle.

It was why she had thought Alex would be happy to see one like his dad's. However, she hadn't thought it was the exact one when she saw it the first time.

Especially since her mind wasn't in the best of places at the time.

Cory's eyes widened.

"Was it his? Is he the one who crashed it? I would get why he suddenly got emotional..."

But Kary shook her head.

"Not exactly. Alex was too young to ride it back when it was totalled. It wasn't him on the bike when it crashed, but his parents," she whispered, as Alex was still trailing his hand across the bike's length.

Jack looked at the scene and decided it was time to take his leave.

He waved at his grandson, who barely waved in return, too caught up in watching the aircraft from every angle possible, and climbed back into the limo.

Kary and Cory waved at him as he embarked, and he smiled at them, mouthing the words 'Good luck' before closing the door, and the vehicle drove off.

Kary quickly explained to Cory so Alex's reaction wouldn't confuse him, and his face turned sad.

"Man... Losing his parents at my age... I couldn't begin to understand his pain," Cory said, his tone filled with angst.

Alex finally broke away from the motorcycle, breaking away from his sad trance.

"Is she running fine?" he asked, looking at Cory.

"Like a charm. Haven't had the slightest hiccup with it in months," Cory replied, smiling at him, his mood dampened.

"Good. At least it's in the hands of someone I can trust will take care of it," Alex said, smiling softly.

He then cleared his throat, drying away his tears, and put up a fake smile.

"I think we should get ready to leave. You were the last one we were waiting for, so let's get moving," Alex said, grabbing Jonathan's suitcase, which was still at the hangar door.

"Alex, I..." Cory started saying, before Alex shook his head.

"Whatever you were going to say, don't. It's yours, and I am glad it found you. Just make sure you stay careful. Accidents on those don't forgive... Ever..."

Alex then climbed into the plane, not looking back.

Cory looked at his back as it disappeared up the stairs. Then he looked at Kary.

"Is he going to be okay?" he asked.

Kary nodded slowly.

"Don't worry about him. He'll bounce back from it before we make it to Korea. It was just a small reminder of what he lost, but it'll pass. You know how tough he is," she said, smiling.

She then walked over to Jonathan, who was still inspecting every bolt and screw he could see from the outside of the aircraft.

"Wouldn't you have more to look at inside the plane, Jonathan?" she asked, giving him a motherly smile as she kneeled beside him.

Jonathan's grin widened up to his ears as he nodded frantically.

"It's ours, right?! That means I can go everywhere inside it?!" he asked, his words barely containing his excitement.

"Of course!" Kary replied with as much excitement.

She was just as curious as him about the plane since she hadn't seen it inside yet, but she was better at hiding it.

"I'm gonna touch EVERYTHING!" Jonathan shouted as he ran toward the stairs.

He climbed into the aircraft at a borderline dangerous speed for him, before disappearing into the airplane.

Kary giggled at his burst of emotion and stood back straight.

"We should get onboard as well. I'm sure the Major will be happy that we are all here and glad we can start flying toward our destination. She seemed impatient to fly this bad boy off the ground," Kary said, looking at Cory.

He nodded, grabbing a small backpack from under his seat, before walking away from his beloved bike.

"Man, I can't decide if I'm happy to see Korea finally, or if I'm sad to leave my bike behind..." he said, sounding excited.

Kary giggled at his dilemma.

"You can start missing your motorcycle once we are in the sky, at least," she said, climbing into the airplane.

He chuckled, realizing he was being like a protective father.

"You're right. Man, I'm so excited about this. Even though we are going there to risk our lives, I've always wanted to see Korea!" he said, gripping his bag tightly.

"You and me both, Cory. But the mission comes first. We can be tourists after we are done. Make sure you don't lose focus when we get there. Those are monsters, not zoo animals," Kary warned him, to cool him off.

He nodded, realizing she was right.

But she was having thoughts along the same line as him.

'I wonder how nice Jeju is at this time of year. I can't wait to see it in real life, instead of through a drama.'

Chapter 939 All Aboard

With everyone on board, and their baggage safely stowed in the luggage compartments, Kary went to the front of the plane, knocking on the cabin door and announcing herself.

"Major Schrute. It's Kary Deveille. We are all aboard and ready for takeoff. The rest is up to you," she said, waiting for a reply.

The door slid open, with the major sitting in the pilot seat, as she flipped switches, turned knobs, and read gauges, making her last pre-flight checks.

"Ms. Deveille. I still have to radio in the tower for a lift-off clearance, and taxi this baby to the runway. We won't be off the ground for another half hour. But the plane might move a bit until then, so make sure none of you fall and hurt yourselves in the process.

"I would hate to have to cancel liftoff and call in a medical crew just because someone was reckless and ran in the plane during taxi."

"I will make sure everyone is seated or holding on, then," Kary said, smiling at the woman.

The major looked at her and grinned.

"I like you more than that dickhead. Care to join me for liftoff in the cabin? I have a few seats to spare," she said, pointing at the three extra seats, one of them right next to her.

"I wouldn't dare disturb you during that process, Major. But we do have young ones on board. Could they take you up on that offer?" Kary replied, uninterested in a plane lift-off.

She could fly already. What new would seeing that from a seat in a cockpit bring to her?

The major grimaced a bit before sighing.

"Sure. As long as they behave, don't touch anything, and don't scream like crazy little shits, I'm fine with it."

Kary giggled at her words and nodded.

"I will go get them. Be back in a moment."

Leaving the cockpit doorframe behind her, Kary walked back to the mid-section of the aircraft, where the passenger lounge was.

On her way there, she passed the bathroom and flight attendant section, impressed by all the gadgets and gizmos this plane was equipped with, before entering the passenger compartment.

Calling it a compartment was a gross under-appreciation, of course.

It felt more like the lobby of a five-star hotel, if a bit condensed in its space, but with all the luxury of one.

There were a few rows of seats, with enough room between each seat for anyone in them to lie completely down if they wanted, as well as a table for meals between each of the rows.

The seats could pivot to accommodate groups instead of single passenger rows, and Jonathan was currently playing with this, as Violette was spinning around on the seat he was unlocking constantly.

Cory was seated behind the wing, looking excitedly outside the porthole as the engines started turning on.

Alex, for his part, was seated in the front, back toward the front of the plane, as he looked outside with a thoughtful expression.

Kary could tell he was thinking about his parents and didn't want to bother him for now. So she walked to Jonathan and Violette, looking at Cory.

"The Major has told me she has room for three well-behaved passengers up front for a cockpit view of takeoff. Who's interested?" she asked, giving them a big grin.

Jonathan almost jumped up as Violette looked at Kary with big, shining eyes.

Cory looked excited at first, before he realized that the two kids and her already tallied three. He turned back to his porthole, slightly disappointed, before Kary threw a balled-up napkin at him.

"I can fly on my own, dummy. I'm not interested in watching a plane takeoff, even if it's the best seat in the house," she said, winking at him.

He jumped up from his seat, looking at her with a fat grin.

"Then count me in!"

She led the three of them up front, knocking on the cabin door once again, before it slid open.

The Major didn't bother looking at them, as she watched the hangar doors open in front, before starting to state rules.

"Alright, listen up! Three seats, three passengers! One in each, and everyone strapped in. No touching of anything that isn't on the seat. No pressing of buttons, or turning of nobs unless I give you permission.

"I will take absolutely no questions during takeoff, and if you have any that you want to ask, hold them in. I'll answer them once we reach thirty thousand feet, and auto-pilot is engaged.

"There will be no screaming, no whining, no crying, and no dispute about who sits where! Any offender to these rules can return to the passenger compartment, or take a trip to the luggage bins! Have I made myself clear?!"

Kary held in a peal of laughter, as the woman treated them like soldiers. But their straight faces and excited eyes were enough to tell her they would obey the woman.

So she left the cabin, leaving the Major to deal with the three of them on her own.

The door closed behind her, and seeing as no one followed behind her in the following seconds, she assumed they were obeying the rules, and she went to sit with Alex.

Grabbing his hand as she sat next to him, Alex snapped out of his thoughts.

"How are you feeling?" she asked, giving him a loving smile.

"I'll be fine. I was shocked to see that old thing again after so long. Seeing someone ride in on it brought back the memory of my parents riding out on it, and it hurt a bit, but I'll get past it..."

Kary smiled, lifting his hand to her lips and kissing it.

"I'm sure you will. You are a strong man. But it's okay to cry, you know. That's a painful memory to deal with. Just know that no one will judge you, and you are not alone."

Alex looked at her, a smile stretching on his lips.

"Thank you. I'm okay, really, but thank you. Support is all I could ask for..."

Chapter 940 A Needed Conversation

The plane slightly shook as the engines pushed it forward and out of the hangar. Alex watched the metal building leave his view as the rest of the airport replaced it.

They were finally moving forward with something that he had thought about for a long time.

Ever since the first day that David had convinced him that the world was ending, Alex had thought about this day.

The day when he would have to leave home to protect other humans across the globe. And this day had come.

He had imagined it quite differently, many times, as his situation changed over the last months. Over half a year had already flown by, and so much had changed since then...

He had gained many reliable allies, friends he trusted his life with, and a woman he loved with everything he had, and that was just people-wise.

Alex killed a mafia family, allied himself with both a company of mercenaries, and one of the wealthiest men in the country, as well as died to protect someone dear to him.

Most recently, he had found out he was embarking on a path to godhood, even though reluctantly, he sent a man through time who had most likely become the most fearsome foe they would ever fight and beat to a pulp the person who could have made this whole ordeal easier.

But even with all these things, he didn't feel as febrile as he did now.

The true fight for survival was now starting, and humanity was embarking on a path that could spell its demise or make it stronger as a race.

One wrong move, a single loss, or the unlikely retreat from an unwinnable fight, and thousands would die.

The weight of this burden on Alexander's shoulders made his mind heavy with doubt, as he started wondering why David had picked him to help.

Was it because he was a wild card? A random variable that he had no idea what would happen with?

OR was it because he felt Alex had more potential than anyone else? He doubted that.

David had seen the future. He knew who the strong ones were, and where they would come from.

But why hadn't he reached out to them? Shouldn't he trust those powerful people to make a better frontline for humanity?

All these questions troubled Alex's mind as the plane finally took to the air, and he watched the ground disappear from view under the aircraft.

As soon as they crossed the clouds, Alex decided he wanted to talk with David to clear his mind on the subject.

"Have you seen David?" he asked Kary, who was reading a book that had been lying on the table before her.

"I did. He stayed in the cargo hold, for some reason. I'm sure he's still there."

Alex nodded, standing up.

"I'm gonna go have a chat with him. Be right back."

Kary looked at him with a worried look.

"Do you want me to come with you?"

Alex shook his head.

"You don't have to. I just have a few questions to ask him. It should take more than a few minutes. If there is anything, I'll call you over," he reassured her.

Kary nodded, going back to her book, as she watched Alex walk away from above the pages.

'What's troubling your mind, Alex? Can't you tell me?' she thought.

But she couldn't bring herself to ask him. If he wanted to tell her, he would.

Alex made his way to the back, where he took a small flight of stairs into the cargo hold.

It was colder in that part of the plane, even though it was still a heated area. The lack of insulation on the walls contributed to this, and Alex slightly shivered as the cold bit at his skin.

"What are you doing down here, Skelly?" Alex asked, not seeing David.

"I 'was' enjoying the silence, fuck-face. What do you want?" David asked, jumping down from a rack above Alex.

Alex jumped up a bit, not expecting him to land beside him, and shook his head slowly. "The hell were you doing on the ceiling, dude? Do you think you are Spiderman or something?"

"Spiderman would have felt you coming and fled, dumbass," David chuckled.

"What do you want to ask?" he added, sitting on one of the hull seats next to Alex.

Alex looked at him and frowned.

David seemed totally unbothered by the cold, and just looking at him, seated in that metal chair, which already had some frost forming on it, made him cold.

"I was wondering about something and thought you would hold the answer to my quandary."

David waited for him to ask his questions, looking at him with a deadpan expression.

"You know who will become strong, in theory, right?" he finally asked.

The question made David frown.

"In theory, yes. Why do you ask?"

"I was wondering... Why did you never go to them? For help, I mean. If you know who is going to be strong, and at what point, why did you stick with us, instead of going toward the pre-determined powerful players?"

David understood the actual question behind his words.

"You want to know why I trusted you, over someone I knew would be powerful in the future..."

Alex looked at him with wide eyes.

Was he that easy to read? He sighed before nodding.

David leaned against the cold wall, looking at the ceiling for a second.

"To be honest, I don't know either. You were a wild card from the beginning. I had no idea if you would grow strong, or die early like last time. All I did know about you was that you had a good heart and tried helping whenever you could.

"At least that was true until you..." David said, cutting his sentence mid-way.

Alex knew what he meant.

"Until I died in that timeline, right?"

Nodding silently, David sighed.

"I won't tell you how you died, as it doesn't matter anymore. You've already become too strong for that to happen again. But I will say this. Becoming stronger has also changed something about you, on a fundamental level..."

"What do you mean?" Alex asked, frowning.

"I mean, I don't know if you'll be our saviour or our downfall in the end anymore. The heart you showed in the past life... It's gone."