

R Cultivator 136

Chapter 136: Wings of Refuge

Astrid sat quietly, her gaze fixed on the rippling waves outside the cabin window. The ship's gentle sway was a stark contrast to the chaos that had led her here.

She didn't touch the tea. Instead, she asked for milk. Darla soon returned with a glass of creamy milk. Astrid took it, added some sugar, and drank it slowly, a satisfied smile spreading across her face. Tyler and Lily exchanged glances, surprised by her sweet tooth.

Lily leaned forward, her curiosity piqued. "You seem to have a preference for sweet things," she remarked with a smile.

Astrid nodded, her eyes twinkling. "I suppose I do. It's a bit of a comfort for me, especially after... everything that's happened."

Tyler's expression turned serious. "What happened? You can talk to us."

Taking a deep breath, Astrid began, "I was targeted by a pirate group. They wanted to kidnap me and sell me as a slave. I managed to escape, but it was close."

Tyler frowned, his eyes narrowing. "That's terrible."

Astrid hesitated before continuing, "I think it's because of what I am. Being half-angel... it makes me a valuable target for certain people."

Lily listened intently, her expression softening. "That's a heavy burden to bear," she said gently. "But you're safe here. We won't let anyone harm you."

Tyler nodded in agreement. "You're under our protection now. We'll make sure you reach Rich Berg Island safely."

Astrid looked relieved, her gratitude evident. "Thank you, Captain Tyler. I don't know what I would have done without your help."

Tyler smiled reassuringly. "It's the least we can do. We're glad to have you aboard."

After Astrid left the room, Tyler turned to Lily. "What do you think?" he asked, his tone thoughtful.

Lily shrugged slightly. "She's telling the truth, but I feel like it's only half the story."

Tyler nodded in agreement. "Well, everyone has their own secrets," he replied. "Just make sure she doesn't show her face outside. After reaching Rich Berg Island, we'll drop her off and continue with our own course."

"Hmm..." Suddenly, Lily frowned.

"What happened?" Tyler asked, noticing her expression.

"I forgot to ask her if she has wings," Lily said seriously.

Tyler didn't even know what to say. The idea of asking a half-angel about her wings seemed absurd, yet somehow fitting with the strange events that had unfolded.

Mana popped out of thin air, her spectral form flickering as she spoke. "If she really had wings, we should ask her for some angel feathers," she suggested with a mischievous grin.

Tyler sighed, rubbing his temples. "Let's just focus on getting her to Rich Berg Island safely. No plucking feathers."

The ship sailed smoothly toward the next island, the crew bustling about as Tyler ordered them to load up new stocks. The sun hung high in the sky, casting a golden hue over the bustling port. Tyler also hired some people from the Island to work.

As the men worked, a sudden cry broke the rhythm of their labour. One of the men had cut his hand on a crate, the blood seeping through his fingers. Astrid, seeing the commotion, hurried over. She knelt beside the injured crewman, her palms glowing with a soft, ethereal light. Within moments, the wound had healed, leaving the man and onlookers in awe.

Tyler watched from a distance, his brow furrowing in concern. He approached Astrid, his voice low and serious. "Astrid, it's best not to show your healing abilities in public. Pirates could be watching, and they'll sniff us out."

Astrid nodded, understanding the gravity of the situation. "I'll be more careful," she promised, her voice tinged with regret.

As the day progressed, Lily and Mathilda returned from a stroll around the island, their faces a mix of amusement and intrigue.

"Oh, guess what I found," Lily said, a playful smile tugging at her lips.

"What?" Tyler's curiosity was piqued.

Lily leaned in, her voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. "I got some information. It seems several pirate groups are on the lookout for a half-angel girl. They're hoping to curry favour with the Silver Eye Pirates."

Tyler raised an eyebrow, his expression a mix of concern and amusement. "So, we're sailing with a prize on our ship, and every two-bit pirate wants to cash in?"

Mathilda chuckled, her eyes twinkling with mischief. "Looks like we've got a celebrity on board."

Lily nodded. "The thing is, these pirates are more bark than bite. They think they can score points with Captain Silver Eye, but they're more likely to trip over their own boots."

Tyler sighed, a weary smile on his face. "As long as they don't trip over their boots on my ship. I'd rather not spend my day fishing pirates out of the water."

"Any other news?" Tyler asked.

"I heard about some political situations in the Rosefall Kingdom. Probably that kingdom is as powerful as our sect." Lily Mentioned. She then began to share all the information she collected.

"Oh Also there is a bank in Rich berg Island." Lily said.

Tyler's eyes lit up. As long as he can open a bank account. He can open up his restaurants and auction hall in all the Islands he visits.

Astrid approached Lily Gomes as the ship rocked gently in the waters. She seemed thoughtful, almost hesitant, but her curiosity had gotten the better of her.

"Lily," she began, "about the thing you inquired earlier..."

Lily turned to face her, an encouraging smile on her face. "Yes, Astrid? What do you want to know?"

"The Rosefall Kingdom. You mentioned something about the political situation there."

Lily nodded and quickly replied, "The Rosefall Kingdom is currently managed by their Prime Minister, Rover. The king has been ill for quite some time. It's said that the Crown Prince left for an adventure and hasn't returned yet. In his absence, the other princes are seeing this as an opportunity to gather public and official support, hoping to secure their claim to the throne."

Astrid's expression grew wistful. "Are you from Rosefall Kingdom?" Lily asked, curiosity evident in her voice.

"Yes," Astrid confirmed. "My aunt was the former hero of that country. She died saving the Crown Prince. I believe that as long as I can return to my country, everything will be fine."

"Hero of Rosefall, Knight Evergreen," Lily said, recognizing the name. She also heard about some people talking about her.

"Yes," Astrid affirmed, a mix of pride and sorrow in her voice.

Tyler, who had been listening to their conversation, chimed in. "Sadly, we will part ways at Rich Berg Island. We'll send you off on a cruise, and you'll reach the Rosefall Kingdom."

Astrid understood that Tyler couldn't offer more help. She was still grateful for all they had done for her and didn't want to trouble them further.

Two days later, a man waited on a small boat. He watched as a huge ship with a Jolly Roger featuring a silver eye came into view. The Silver Eye Pirates had arrived. He rowed his boat toward the ship, suppressing his fear as he looked up at the imposing vessel looming above him through the mist.

As he climbed aboard, a giant man, towering at seven feet, approached him. "Where is the information?" the giant man asked.

"They left the island the day before yesterday. Two days ago, I was loading up stocks on their ship and got hurt. A beautiful girl with golden hair healed me with light magic," the man reported. It was the same man Astrid had healed.

"Where are they now?" the giant demanded.

"They went in that direction," the man said, pointing shakily. He is looking forward to the reward.

"Good," the giant replied.

"Huh... My reward?" the man asked, scratching his head nervously.

"Let's see if what you said is true. After that, you'll get your reward." The giant man lifted the informant effortlessly and threw him into a small cell on the ship.

The man landed with a thud, looking around in horror as he spotted a skeleton in the same cell.

"This is not what you promised." He cried out, pleading to be let out, but the giant ignored him and walked away. As he did, he shrank into a small dwarf-like figure.

"Huh... How tiring. Who told you to trust a pirate?" the small man grumbled as he made his way to the captain's quarters.

"Captain, we found a clue," the dwarf said, addressing the dark room.

The Captain opened his eyes, revealing two silver pupils that shone in the dim light. "Good. Set course. We should capture her before she reaches the kingdom," the Silver Eyed Captain ordered.

"Aye, Captain," the dwarf saluted and walked away.

"Make sure you find her faster," a voice suddenly said from the darkness.

Captain Silver Eye turned toward the pitch-black area of the room and nodded. From the shadows, a figure in a black hood emerged, stepping onto a flying sword and soaring away into the night.

Chapter 137: Taste of Raw Meat ; First Encounter with Federation

The ship glided smoothly through the calm waters, its sails filled with the gentle ocean breeze. Lily walked along the deck in the middle of the night, enjoying the cool air and the serene sound of the waves lapping against the hull. The ocean stretched out before her, silent and deep, its surface shimmering under the pale moonlight. She looked up at the starry sky, her thoughts drifting along with the gentle rocking of the ship.

As she gazed at the stars, her eyes caught a glimpse of something unusual—a figure moving swiftly through the night sky, riding what seemed to be a flying sword. The figure, dressed in a black hooded cloak, was barely more than a silhouette against the stars, but it moved with purpose and speed.

"Huh... Some rats," Lily murmured to herself, realizing that this mysterious figure was likely an intruder. She watched as the figure flew off into the distance, disappearing into the darkness of the night sky. Satisfied that the figure posed no immediate threat, she turned and made her way back to her cabin, deciding to report the incident to Tyler in the morning.

Meanwhile, the figure in the black hood, now far from the ship, sighed. "Looks like they're not an easy target," he mumbled to himself. The crew of Tyler's ship seemed more vigilant and capable than he had anticipated. He adjusted his grip on the hilt of the flying sword, pondering his next move. Capturing Astrid was Captain Silver Eye's problem, not his.

As the night wore on, the ship continued its steady course toward Rich Berg Island, unaware of the dark plans being hatched in the shadows. Lily, back in her cabin, fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning, Lily found Tyler on the deck, discussing the day's plans with some of the crew. She approached him, her face serious. "Tyler, we had a visitor last night," she said, her voice low. "Someone on a flying sword was spying on us."

Tyler's eyes narrowed. "A flying sword? Probably some pirates," he mused. "Especially with her on board." He raised his chin, gesturing in Astrid's direction.

Astrid, wearing a chef's apron, was busy in the ship's kitchen. She emerged with a plate of tuna, her face beaming with pride. "This is tuna, my childhood best friend's favourite dish," she announced, setting the plate on the dining table where Mana and Silvia were already seated.

On the table sat a clean, white plate showcasing a dish of tuna. The tuna slices were a vibrant, deep red, indicating their freshness and quality. Each slice was cut thinly and precisely, with a sheen that caught the light, highlighting the fish's delicate texture. The tuna was artfully arranged, each piece overlapping slightly for an elegant presentation.

Next to the plate was a small, stylish dish containing soy sauce, its dark colour providing a rich contrast to the bright tuna. The aroma of the soy sauce was salty and slightly sweet, complementing the subtle, oceanic scent of the raw tuna. A sprinkling of finely chopped scallions or a light dusting of sesame seeds

was added on top of the tuna for a touch of colour and flavour. The dish exuded a simple, refined elegance, inviting diners to enjoy the purity and freshness of the tuna.

"Isn't this just raw fish—ouch!" Mana began to say, but Silvia elbowed her before she could finish.

Silvia took a pair of chopsticks and grabbed a piece of tuna. She dipped it in soy sauce and placed it in her mouth, chewing slowly to savour the taste. Her eyes lit up. "It's good," she complimented, reaching for another piece. Astrid's face brightened with a happy smile.

"Chewy, chewy..." Mana muttered, contrasting Silvia's reaction as she bit into the tuna and found it a bit too chewy for her taste.

"Usually, I love the taste of raw meat in my mouth with white sauce, but this isn't for me," Mana said, shaking her head.

Astrid and Silvia didn't understand her comment, but Tyler, who overheard, nearly choked on his own laughter. Trying to maintain his composure, he turned to Mana. "Oh, what type of meat?" Astrid asked, curious.

"Oh, it's Tyler's—mmm mm." Her mouth was quickly covered by Tyler's hand, cutting her off.

"Nothing you need to worry about," Tyler said, his face slightly flushed. "Just enjoy the meal."

After separating from them, Mana asked, "Come on. Nowadays you're very busy with other things. You even forgot to feed me meat."

"Can you please stop? Do you think I don't know you're visiting Mathilda's room?" Tyler gave her a sidelong glance.

"Well, it's not like you're not allowed. Just come and come... I mean, come and enjoy. It's been a long time since I had meat," Mana said. Suddenly, her eyes turned suspicious as she looked at him. "Are you targeting another girl? So you've put us on hold?"

Mana asked suspiciously.

"What do you mean? I don't target girls. I just wait for them to jump on me," Tyler replied smugly.

Suddenly, something fell on the ground. Tyler and Mana looked to the left. Darla had dropped the tea tray and was cleaning it up.

"Are you alright?" Tyler asked as he helped her.

"I'm good," she replied. Her face turned red as she murmured, "So I have to jump on him?"

Tyler's ship stopped in the middle of the sea. Not only Tyler but many other ships were blocked by a group of ships with white hulls and a blue kingfisher symbol on them.

"Those are Federation ships," Lily said.

The Federation is one of the top three powerhouses in this world. The Federation, the Bank of Atlantis, and the Ocean Overlords are the top powerhouses that rule most of the northern territories.

"Please stop. The Federation is looking for someone. The Federation is looking for someone. Please cooperate," a crewman from the Federation said.

A Federation crewman is a basic rank for those who handle the essential functions of the ship, such as maintenance, supply management, and general labour.

An Ensign with a picture was boarding each and every boat. He stood on the deck of the ship and used his divine sense to scan the whole vessel. Tyler was surprised because the Ensign was only a 5-star Elite Warrior, but he had a powerful divine sense.

"Every Federation member is baptized by their organisation's secret method, which enhances their divine sense to another level," Lily explained, noticing his confusion.

Tyler quickly instructed Mana. She disappeared and reappeared near Astrid, giving her a mask and telling her to put it on.

It was the Phantom Mask. With it, her presence changed completely. If the Federation is looking for the Angel, they needn't worry.

Ensigns are junior officers who carry out orders and handle tasks as assigned by their superiors.

The Ensign then reached Tyler's ship and politely said, "Excuse me, Captain. I will just make a quick check if you don't mind."

Tyler nodded.

The Ensign used his spiritual sense to scan the whole ship. He was taken aback because he felt that this ship was the wealthiest one here. Even the furniture in the rooms looked very expensive.

"Thank you," the Ensign said, nodding, and was about to leave.

"Can you tell us who you are searching for?" Tyler asked.

The Ensign nodded and gave a paper to Tyler. "If you find her, please inform us."

It was a wanted poster of a girl with a bounty of 80 million Lydia. She had tanned skin and was wearing a cowboy hat.

Her name is 'Manhunter' Isadora Nightkiss.

Soon, the ships left one by one.

One of the ships next to Tyler's was full of male adventurers. They were drooling over the women on Tyler's ship.

After Tyler's ship left, the adventurers' ship also departed in another direction. By midnight, the men on that ship were naked and crawling on the deck. They were shouting for someone to save them.

A beautiful girl stepped out of the cabin, her beauty enhanced by her alluring attire. She wore a black, fitted corset top that accentuated her figure, paired with a cropped leather jacket with fringed sleeves. Her sleek leather shorts hugged her hips and revealed her tanned thighs. High-heeled, knee-high cowboy boots added to her confident stride, their spurs glinting in the light. A classic black cowboy hat with a silver band cast a shadow over her eyes, enhancing her mysterious allure. Silver hoop earrings, a matching choker, and fingerless gloves completed her captivating look, perfectly befitting her nickname, the Manhunter.

She is Isadora Nightkiss. She looked at the men crawling like dehydrated people in the desert with disdain.

"The Federation even sent someone to capture me in the south. Looks like I should just go back north immediately after getting that thing," she sighed and looked at the three moons in the sky.

"Ahhh..." The men around jumped into the ocean one by one. They couldn't swim and drowned in the sea with satisfied smiles.

Isadora Nightkiss didn't care about these men as she took a small portrait from her pocket.

"Looks like I have to find you to get that," she said, looking at the portrait.

It was a picture of Astrid.

Chapter 138: The intruder on the Ship

The creaking wooden steps led the pirate below the deck, balancing a plate of stale bread and a cup of water. The ship's cell was a dank, cramped space, lit dimly by a flickering lantern. Approaching the

prisoner, the pirate noticed the man's parched lips and sunken eyes, a clear sign of severe dehydration. "Please," the prisoner croaked, "let me out. I'm dying."

The pirate's brows furrowed, a mix of confusion and concern sweeping over his face. He'd only been in the cell a day, yet his condition had deteriorated rapidly. As the pirate stood there, uncertain, the thud of heavy footsteps echoed behind him. The vice-captain of the Silver Eye Pirates emerged—a towering giant, easily seven feet tall, his presence alone commanding respect and fear.

"What's going on here?" the giant's voice boomed, causing the pirate to step aside. With one swift motion, the giant unlocked the cell, his large hands carefully examining the prisoner. "He's on the brink of death," he muttered, a note of suspicion lacing his tone. "Someone must have infiltrated our ship and extracted information from him."

With a nod, the giant, whose form began to shimmer and shrink, transformed into a small, stout dwarf. He scurried off to inform Captain Silver Eye of the situation. The captain, a man whose eyes gleamed with an eerie silver hue, listened intently. "This is the work of Isadora Nightkiss," he declared. "She must be after the Half-Angel as well."

"What's our move, Captain?" the vice-captain inquired, his voice tinged with a mix of fear and admiration for Isadora's audacity.

Captain Silver Eye's gaze hardened, his silver eyes flashing with anger. "That vixen dares to infiltrate our ship and dispose of our prisoner. The Federation has been looking for her, yes? Let's tip them off—tell them she's heading to Rich Berg Island to rob."

"And what about the White Merchant Group?" the vice-captain pressed.

"Rich Berg Island," the captain repeated, his tone leaving no room for further questioning. The vice-captain nodded, understanding the captain's unsaid words.

Three weeks had passed since Astrid boarded Tyler's ship. The ship cut through the waters, its sails billowing in the wind. Inside, life bustled as usual. Lily Gomes sat in a corner, engrossed in her studies.

Nearby, Astrid guided Silvia through the intricacies of magecraft, while Mana meticulously tallied the ship's supplies. Mathilda, immersed in her alchemical experiments, hummed cheerfully, knowing she had an endless supply of ingredients thanks to Tyler and Mana's magical capabilities.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting the sea in shades of orange and pink, a small boat approached the ship, bobbing gently in the waves. A single lantern flickered at its bow, revealing a figure rowing steadily. The person wore a cowboy hat, a short leather jacket, and even shorter shorts, their tanned skin glowing under the moonlight. This was Isadora Nightkiss, the infamous "Manhunter."

"So, the Half-Angel is aboard that ship," she murmured to herself, her lips curling into a smirk. As she drew nearer, her senses tingled—there was a formidable presence on the ship. "At least one Master Level Warrior or Mage," she noted, her confidence unshaken. "I've handled worse."

With the grace of a shadow, Isadora leaped aboard the ship. The night was quiet, save for the occasional creak of the ship's timbers and the gentle lapping of waves. She moved stealthily, her eyes scanning the deck for any signs of activity. A few crew members patrolled the ship, their footsteps echoing in the silence. Isadora knew she had to be careful to avoid detection.

Slipping into the shadows, she made her way toward the staterooms. Her target, Astrid, was somewhere within the maze of cabins. She approached a lone sailor, her eyes glinting mischievously. With a seductive smile, she sauntered up to him, her fingers lightly tracing his chest.

"Hello there," she purred, her voice dripping with charm. The sailor's breath hitched, his eyes glazing over as he fell under her spell.

"Where is this girl?" Isadora whispered, holding up a small picture of Astrid.

The sailor, his mind clouded, pointed toward the lower cabins. "She's in cabin number 14," he replied, his voice barely above a whisper.

Isadora's smile widened. "Thank you," she cooed, stepping back. The sailor, his lips parched, stumbled forward, desperate to kiss her. But Isadora held up a hand, her expression turning to one of mock disappointment.

"Your energy is too low for me to enjoy," she sighed. "Go hydrate yourself."

The sailor, now feeling an overwhelming thirst, turned and staggered toward the ship's railing. "Water... I need water," he mumbled, his voice hoarse.

"There are a lot in the sea." Like a devil whisper he heard that.

"Right right." The man quickly crawled towards the sea.

"Help me... Save me.. I want to drink water. I want to kiss her." The man mumbled as he crawled on the ship.

Isadora chuckled softly as the sailor collapsed, his strength drained. "One down," she muttered, her eyes glinting with satisfaction. As she moved to incapacitate the rest of the crew, a voice stopped her in her tracks.

"Oh I should also knock everyone here down." She mumbled.

"Oh, how do you plan on doing that?" the voice asked, a hint of amusement in its tone.

"Of course by using my powers- wait what?" Isadora whirled around, her guard up. A young woman sat on the stairs, her eyes bright and curious.

"Isadora Nightkiss," the woman said, her voice steady. "What brings you to our ship?"

Lily Gomes smiled, her eyes fixed on the intruder.

Isadora's eyes narrowed as she faced Lily, her body tense and ready to spring into action. "How did you find me?" she asked, her voice tinged with annoyance.

Before Lily could respond, Mana emerged from behind her, hovering in the air with a massive pillow that dwarfed her petite frame. She rubbed her eyes sleepily and let out a cute yawn, seemingly unfazed by the tension in the air.

"That little girl is a Ghost Spirit," Isadora muttered in surprise. She thought that this Ghost Spirit, with her unique abilities, must have sensed the disruption among the ship's crew.

She was half right. Mana doesn't have any unique ability but she has soul contracts of slaves on board, instantly alerted when one of them fell under Isadora's attack. Without delay, she had alerted Lily of the intruder's presence.

"Well, well, well," Mana said, her voice light yet tinged with a warning. "If you're planning to fight, do be careful not to damage the ship. Our captain won't be pleased."

With that, Mana vanished, leaving Isadora to ponder her next move. "I'm not in the mood for a fight right now," Isadora confessed, her gaze darting around the deck, wary of the ship's defences. She knew better than to underestimate the number of Master Level warriors or mages on board. She doesn't know that Lily Gomes is the only Master Level Warrior on the ship. Deciding that a strategic retreat was the best option, she began to back away.

"Who said you could leave?" Lily retorted, her form blurring as she appeared right next to Isadora. Her hands reached out with a teasing gesture, fingers poised as if to grab Isadora by the chest.

"Pervert!" Isadora exclaimed, her body instinctively flipping backward, her movements fluid and graceful. She landed deftly on her feet, smirking at Lily's audacity.

"Tsk... I almost caught her," Lily grumbled, a playful glint in her eyes.

"Molested her, you mean," Mana interjected, reappearing behind Lily with a mischievous grin.

"Tsk, tsks... bring me a sword," Lily demanded, her sword destroyed when fighting a Sea Titan.

"Aye, aye... but she's making a run for it," Mana pointed out, her gaze following Isadora's retreating form.

"You can't escape," Lily declared, lunging forward. But just as she was about to close the distance, the dehydrated slave stumbled between them, his weakened body collapsing in their path.

Lily was forced to halt her pursuit, her eyes flicking between the fallen man and the shadowy waters beyond the ship. In the blink of an eye, Isadora had vanished into the dark expanse of the sea, her departure as silent as her arrival.

Tyler emerged from the shadows, his brow furrowed with concern. "Why didn't you guys let me handle her?" he asked, his tone a mix of curiosity and annoyance.

Lily turned to face him, her expression calm but firm. "Because she's called the 'Manhunter,' and you, Tyler, happen to be a man."

Tyler sighed, a wry smile tugging at his lips. "That's a pretty lame reason, don't you think?"

Lily shrugged, her eyes twinkling with a hint of mischief. "Better safe than sorry."

Tyler glanced around the deck, his gaze settling on the disoriented sailor who was still mumbling and crawling towards the railings in a desperate search for water. "Did you find out why she was here?" he asked.

Lily nodded towards the sailor. "That's easy. Let's help him recover and then ask him."

Chapter 139: Taking a Detour

The first rays of morning sun filtered through the sails, casting a golden glow across the deck of Tyler's ship. As the crew stirred to life, Astrid, with her angelic heritage, stepped forward to tend to the sailor who had fallen under Isadora's charm the previous night. Drawing upon her light element, she gently laid her hands on the man, channelling her healing energy into his frail body. The process left her feeling drained, and she gratefully accepted a glass of juice from Darla, who had appeared at her side.

As the sailor's eyes fluttered open, he looked around in confusion. "What happened?" he asked, his voice weak but coherent.

"You had a little run-in with a powerful seductress," Tyler explained, keeping his tone light yet probing. "What did she ask you?"

The sailor shook his head, a stubborn refusal in his eyes. Despite being physically healed, it was evident he was still mentally under Isadora's influence.

"Looks like he's just physically healed. Mentally, he's still charmed," Lily observed, her gaze sharp and thoughtful.

"Should I use my fist to make him confess?" Tyler suggested, red scales appeared on his hand.

"Wait... I think she has an idea," Lily replied, using her voice transmission to communicate privately with Tyler.

Tyler understood that she is talking about her Defective personality. Her personality changes in an instant.

Lily's demeanour shifted abruptly, her tone becoming softer and more vulnerable. "Oh no... If we don't know what the intruder's motive is, we won't be able to catch her. I was thinking of luring her using bait and maybe marrying her to one of our sailors."

The sailor's eyes lit up at the suggestion, his resistance crumbling. "She's looking for Astrid," he blurted out. "As long as we trade Astrid for her—"

"Alright... shut up," Tyler interrupted, swiftly shoving a pearl into the sailor's mouth to silence him. "Situ, lock him up. We'll release him once he's fully recovered."

Situ nodded and moved to escort the sailor below deck, ensuring he was securely confined until the charm's effects dissipated.

Astrid watched the scene unfold, a mix of guilt and concern washing over her. "It's all because of me," she said quietly. "I'm only bringing more trouble to you all."

"Huh... no, no. This isn't even a problem," Tyler reassured her, his voice confident and soothing. "Didn't you see how our vice-captain just chased her away with ease?"

Lily blinked, confusion evident on her face. "Huh? Our ship has a vice-captain?"

The crew exchanged amused glances, looking at Lily as if she had missed an obvious point.

"Since when did I become vice-captain?" she asked, her eyebrows furrowing.

"Just now," Tyler replied with a grin.

As the sun climbed higher in the sky, casting a warm glow over the ship, Tyler and Lily found a quiet spot on the deck to discuss their next steps. The gentle lapping of the waves against the hull provided a soothing backdrop to their conversation, but the topic at hand was anything but calm.

"So... there's a good chance they'll hunt her down on Rich Berg Island," Tyler said, his voice low and serious. He leaned against the railing, his eyes scanning the horizon as if searching for answers in the endless expanse of sea.

Lily nodded in agreement, her expression pensive. "There's still more than a month to reach Rich Berg Island," she noted. "We should use that time to prepare."

Tyler sighed, running a hand through his hair. "We should disguise her. Make it harder for them to recognize her."

Mana suddenly popped out and asked "How about the Phantom Mask?"

Lily shook her head immediately, dismissing the suggestion. "Nope... that might reveal our pirate identity."

"Oh... " Mana lost interest and vanished away.

Even last time when Astrid used the Phantom Mask, Tyler asked Mana to control the mask for Astrid to recognise as a normal disguise tool. It's too risky to use anything that ties back to the Phantom Pirates.

Lily bit her lip, thinking. "Then we need something new."

"We should find a good disguise charm," Tyler decided. "One that can fool Master Level."

The ship anchored near a small island, a necessary pit stop for Tyler and his crew. While the crew tended to the ship, Lily Gomes ventured alone into the nearby town, intent on gathering information and catching up on the latest news. Tyler, meanwhile, busied himself looking for merchants to trade with, hoping to sell and purchase goods that would be useful for their journey. He also kept an eye out for any disguise charms that might help conceal Astrid's identity, but the ones he found were not of the quality he needed.

Still, Tyler decided to purchase them, thinking it better to be over-prepared than under. As he made his way back to the ship, he spotted Lily returning with a purposeful stride.

"I heard that there's a Master Level Charm for sale at the Lao Lang Pai Sect," Lily reported, her voice filled with excitement.

"Old Wolf Sect?" Tyler echoed, tilting his head in curiosity.

Lily nodded. "Yeah, it's a small sect, but we have to pass through their area anyway. We can afford to delay our schedule to Rich Berg Island by a couple of days."

Tyler considered this, his mind already weighing the pros and cons. "That's not a problem, let's take a detour." he agreed. "I just hope they haven't sold it yet."

"They're likely to still have it," Lily said reassuringly. "I heard their sect master got injured at sea and is now recuperating. They're trying to gather more money, so they'll probably wait for the right buyer."

Tyler's eyes lit up at the opportunity. A Master Level Charm would be invaluable for Astrid's safety. "This could be exactly what we need."

"But I also heard that they were targeted by Xiang hai bang," Lily said.

"Infinite Sea Gang?"

"Stop translating whatever I am saying. Our ship already has the best translator," Lily quipped, glancing to the side.

In the bustling market, two adorable girls caught Tyler's attention. The white-haired girl was haggling prices with a local vendor, fluently conversing in the island's native tongue. It was Silvia, who had the unique ability to understand any language and make herself understood in turn. Accompanying her was Mana, her constant companion.

As Silvia expertly negotiated, Tyler couldn't help but smile.

Astrid sat quietly in her cabin, the gentle sway of the ship a comforting rhythm. Her fingers traced the outline of a locket resting on her chest. Inside was a small picture of her younger self, smiling alongside a boy.

Meanwhile, out on the open sea, a Federation ship glided through the waters, its sails taut against the wind. The ship was a small vessel, one of the many in the Federation's vast fleet, tasked with maintaining order across the Boundless World's sprawling seas. In the ship's modest command room, an Ensign delivered his report.

"We've received a tip that 'Manhunter' Isadora Nightkiss is heading to Rich Berg Island, likely to rob something or someone," the Ensign informed the man in charge. This man, the Lieutenant, was a

seasoned officer and a five-star Master Mage, his demeanour as calm as the sea he sailed. He flicked the ash from his cigar into a nearby tray, a wisp of smoke curling into the air.

"I really don't care about this Manhunter," the Lieutenant murmured, his voice laced with a touch of boredom. "But I don't know why the Commander is so hell-bent on capturing her."

The Ensign, standing at attention, showed no reaction to his superior's musings. He knew better than to comment on the whims of higher-ups.

"Alright, set sail for Rich Berg Island," the Lieutenant finally said, stubbing out his cigar. "I heard that the Rosefall Kingdom is in turmoil. Let's hope the waves of their troubles don't reach the island."

The Ensign saluted and turned to carry out the orders, leaving the Lieutenant to his thoughts. The Federation's structure was a well-oiled machine, each rank playing its part in the grand design. Crewmen handled the essential functions of the ship, such as maintenance and supply management. Ensigns, the junior officers, carried out orders and tasks as assigned by their superiors. Lieutenants assisted commanders in managing their departments and took care of day-to-day operations, while commanders were in charge of specific departments like navigation, engineering, or security. At the helm of each ship was the captain, the leader ensuring the safety and success of the vessel's mission.

However, not all Federation ships had a full complement of officers. Many lower-level ships, like the one pursuing Isadora Nightkiss, were led by Lieutenants who often were either Master Warriors or Master Mages.

As the Federation ship altered its course, setting a new heading towards Rich Berg Island, the Lieutenant pondered the mission ahead.

"Rich Berg Island is going to get lively." The Lieutenant thought as he took another cigarette.

With the sun dipping below the horizon, casting a golden glow over the sea, the Federation ship sailed on, a silent sentinel in the vast expanse of the ocean.

Chapter 140: Change of strategy

The wreckage of the enemy ship disappeared beneath the waves, swallowed by the merciless sea. Tyler White and Lily Gomes leaped from the sinking vessel, their forms cutting through the air with precision. Tyler held a battered man tightly in his grasp, his body limp and unresponsive. With a powerful thrust, they landed on their own ship's deck, Tyler tossing the beaten pirate at their feet. The man groaned in pain, his bruised and bloodied face a testament to the fierce battle he had endured.

"This is the fourth one," Tyler remarked, his voice laced with frustration as he wiped the blood from his brow.

Around them, the crew bustled, the aftermath of the attack still fresh in their minds. The tension was palpable, each of them on edge, ready for the next assault.

Lily glanced at the subdued pirate, her mind working rapidly. "It must be that 'Manhunter' tipped the pirates off," she guessed, her tone edged with suspicion.

Situ stepped forward, wordlessly dragging the prisoner away to the cells below deck. These pirates were no ordinary foes; they were marked men, each carrying a bounty that could fetch a small fortune.

Astrid, standing to the side, couldn't hide the tears that welled in her eyes. She clenched her fists, guilt gnawing at her. "I'm so sorry. It's all because of me," she choked out, her voice trembling.

Tyler turned to her, his expression softening as he waved his hand dismissively. "Don't worry about it. It's not your fault. They're free Lydia knocking at our door," he said, his attempt at humour falling flat in the grim situation.

But beneath his calm exterior, Tyler's mind raced. This couldn't go on. They were being hunted, and it was only a matter of time before their luck ran out. "We can't keep doing this," he muttered, more to himself than anyone else.

Lily's eyes narrowed, an idea forming in her mind. "I have an idea," she said, her voice low and calculating. "Let's just give her to a pirate then."

The words hung in the air like a curse. Shock rippled through the crew, and the atmosphere grew tense. Tyler's eyes, however, lit up with a spark of interest.

"No!" Mathilda, Silvia, and Mana cried out in unison, rushing to stand protectively around Astrid. Their expressions were fierce, unyielding, as if they would fight to the death to keep her safe.

Tyler raised a hand to calm them. "The fact that these girls are showing trust in you explains a lot about your character, Astrid," he began, his voice steady. "But don't worry, Lily's idea isn't what it seems."

He paused, letting his words sink in. The crew's tension eased, their defenses lowered as they nodded, slowly beginning to understand.

Astrid looked at Tyler, uncertainty clouding her features. "I'm not sure that it will work," she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper.

Tyler stepped closer, his gaze locking with hers. "Well, are you ready to do it?" he asked, his tone gentle yet firm.

Astrid took a deep breath, her resolve hardening. She knew what was at stake, and despite her fear, she nodded. "I will," she said, her voice filled with determination.

In the room, the ancient tea table was set up against the window. The flowers outside the window were red, swaying gently in the wind, as if trying to offer solace to the tense atmosphere within. The fragrance of the tea lingered from the cups on the table, but the serenity of the scene was deceptive. The air in the room felt heavy, oppressive even, as if a storm were brewing just beneath the surface.

The tea in the cups rippled ever so slightly, disturbed by an unseen force, as though it might spill at any moment. Elder Xie, a weathered figure of the Lao Lang Pai Sect, sat with a bitter expression on his face. He had lived a cautious life for so many years, navigating the treacherous waters of sect politics and external threats, but now, it seemed, all his efforts were crumbling around him. The Sect Master had been ambushed, leaving their once formidable sect vulnerable, a target for opportunists.

Some people had grown bolder, sensing weakness where strength once resided. The Xiang Hai Bang, or Infinite Sea Gang, was the worst of them. They had made things difficult for him, pushing the limits of

what even they had once feared to do. Today, three of their thugs sat opposite him, their presence a dark cloud over his already troubled heart.

If he resisted, the consequences could be dire. If he agreed, he would be exploited, left with nothing. The brawny man before him, the leader of this trio, had made that much clear. They had offered to pay half the price for the precious tea leaves that had once commanded respect and wealth. But now, they intended to pay only fifty Lydia for tea that was worth five thousand. The loss would be staggering, a crippling blow to his already strained resources.

"Please, be reasonable," Elder Xie implored, his voice a thin thread of hope.

"Be reasonable?" The brawny man smirked, settling into his chair with a large blade resting casually across his lap. "We're being reasonable. We're here to do business, not to hurt you. Why would you say that, Elder Xie? If you say things like that, you'll be insulting us."

He glanced back at his companions, who grinned and nodded in agreement. The brazenness of their actions was infuriating. In the past, no one would have dared to speak to him, to anyone from the Lao Lang Pai Sect, in such a manner. But with their Sect Master injured, the once-respected sect was now vulnerable, its power diminished.

As Elder Xie sat in silent contemplation of his dire situation, another presence was making its way toward the Lao Lang Pai Sect's compound.

Wearing Phantom Masks, Tyler and Lily Gomes appeared at the outskirts of the Lao Lang Pai Sect Island. The island was modest, unassuming, with the sect's compound nestled among the trees like a hidden gem. But the tension in the air was palpable, a sign of the troubles plaguing the sect.

Lily Gomes carried an unconscious Astrid in her arms, her expression as unreadable as the mask she wore. They moved swiftly, purposefully, until they reached the entrance of the sect's compound.

"Senior, what can I do for you?" A young disciple, clearly anxious, greeted them at the gate.

Tyler, concealed behind the Phantom Mask, spoke with a voice that carried the weight of authority. "I heard that the tea leaves from Lao Lang Pai are unique. I am here to buy some."

The disciple hesitated, glancing nervously at the unconscious girl in Lily's arms. "Our Grand Elder is the one who sells the tea, but..." Her voice trailed off, uncertainty in her eyes.

The girl hesitated, her voice trembling as she explained, "There are guests with Elder Xie right now..."

But Tyler, now a pirate accustomed to getting his way, wasn't the type to wait for others. Ignoring her words, he strode confidently into the sect, his steps purposeful and unyielding. Lily followed closely behind, carrying the unconscious Astrid with a calm that belied the tension in the air.

As Tyler approached the hall, a harsh voice echoed through the corridor, dripping with mockery.

"Is there anything wrong with buying your Old Spice Tea for fifty Lydia? How can you say that's not reasonable? How about this? You can search us. We'll pay as much Lydia as you can find on us. Then, we can use that to buy your tea."

The door to the hall was ajar, allowing the cruel laughter of the men inside to spill into the hallway. The female disciple accompanying Tyler paled, realising the situation was even graver than she had feared.

Suddenly, a low chuckle cut through the tense atmosphere. Tyler's voice, laced with sarcasm, rang out. "Fifty Lydia for Old Spice Tea? That's so cheap. I'll buy it for sixty instead."

The room fell silent as everyone turned to face the source of the voice. Standing in the doorway was a Masked man and Masked woman, who is carrying an unconscious beauty. Next to them is a female disciple of the sect.

The burly man at the head of the table sneered, clearly unimpressed by the new arrival. He looked Tyler up and down before addressing him with disdain. "Are you a bandit or something?"

Without waiting for a response, he turned to his companions. "Kill him!"

One of the thugs, a one-star Elite warrior, stepped forward, cracking his knuckles with a sinister smile. "Bad luck for you to have met us," he taunted. "It's time for you to die."

Elder Xie, desperate to avoid further bloodshed, tried to intervene. "Sir, there's no need for that!" he pleaded, his voice strained with worry. He doesn't know who the newcomer is, but he doesn't want the stranger to die in his sect and bring more problems to the sect.

But the thug paid him no mind, already closing in on Tyler with malicious intent.