

R Cultivator 151

Chapter 151: Temporary Alliance

In the midst of the vast, open sea, a small boat drifted aimlessly under the pale light of dawn. Within it, a figure began to stir. The maiden, dressed in a provocative outfit that accentuated her dangerous beauty, slowly opened her eyes, disoriented but aware enough to grasp her surroundings.

Cough "A sneak attack? How cheap," muttered Isadora Nightkiss, the infamous Manhunter, her voice dripping with disdain. As she fully regained consciousness, she pushed herself upright, she touched her back where she got pierced. The pain was a stark reminder of her carelessness, something she rarely experienced.

Glancing around, Isadora quickly realized she was no longer on the pirate ship. Instead, she was in a small, simple boat, floating in the middle of the ocean. The gentle rocking of the waves did little to soothe the confusion and irritation brewing within her. She began to analyze her situation, her sharp mind piecing together the fragments of memory.

Her attention snapped forward as she noticed two figures standing at the boat's bow, both wearing Phantom Masks that concealed their identities. Their presence was imposing, yet familiar.

"Phantom Blackwood? Temptress?" Isadora murmured, recognition dawning on her. The names slipped from her lips with a mixture of curiosity and caution.

The taller of the two figures, Phantom Blackwood, nodded in acknowledgment. "You're correct," he said in a deep, measured tone. "We found you floating unconscious in the sea. It was purely by accident that we crossed paths."

****A Few Hours Earlier...****

Tyler's ship sailed swiftly through the calm waters, heading towards the Rosefall Sea. Their destination was the Rosefall Kingdom, where they hoped to save Astrid from the danger that seemed to loom ever closer. The urgency of their mission was palpable, yet a troubling mystery weighed heavily on Tyler's mind.

"How did the Silver Eye Pirates find Astrid?" Tyler muttered, his brow furrowed in confusion. The ship that had initially boarded Astrid was supposed to be a secret, known only to a select few. His thoughts churned with possibilities, each more unsettling than the last.

Beside him, Lily was equally lost in thought, her sharp mind working through the puzzle. The situation was far more complicated than either of them had anticipated.

As they navigated the open sea, something unusual caught Tyler's eye. In the distance, a small boat drifted aimlessly, and on it, a figure lay motionless.

"Someone's floating out there," Tyler said, pointing toward the boat. Without hesitation, he and Lily directed their ship toward the mysterious vessel.

When they landed on the boat, Tyler's eyes widened in recognition. "It's Isadora," he said, astonishment clear in his voice.

Lily quickly moved to examine the unconscious woman. "What is she doing here?" she murmured. "She's unconscious, and there's a wound on her back. But there's no sign of a significant battle. It must have been a sneak attack."

Tyler nodded, the situation becoming clearer. "She's after Astrid too, isn't she? We should wake her up and find out what she knows."

But before he could act, Lily placed a hand on his arm, stopping him. "Let's do it under our other identities," she suggested, a sly smile playing on her lips.

Agreeing with her plan, Tyler and Lily donned their Phantom Masks, transforming into the infamous Phantom Pirates. They made sure to move Isadora's boat far from their ship to keep their identities hidden. Once they were satisfied with the distance, they prepared to wake her up, ready to confront her as Phantom Blackwood and Temptress.

"So, how did the infamous 'Manhunter' end up in such a pathetic state?" Temptress teased, her voice laced with mockery. The whip in her hand trailed lightly across Isadora's body, a silent threat that lingered in the air.

Isadora, ever the actress, pouted and adopted a pitiful expression. "Is that any way to treat a maiden?" she asked, her voice soft and alluring. Her eyes flickered to Phantom Blackwood, who sat calmly at the edge of the boat, his presence imposing yet unmoved. She subtly shifted her body, her movements deliberate, drawing attention to her exposed cleavage in a bid to provoke a reaction.

But Tyler, beneath the mask of Phantom Blackwood, didn't so much as flinch. His gaze remained distant, as if her attempts at seduction were no more than a passing breeze.

"Tsk... boring," Isadora muttered, dropping the act when it became clear that her charm had no effect. She returned to her usual demeanor, the playful edge gone. Inside, Tyler felt a wave of relief. Isadora truly lived up to her title of 'Manhunter'—her tactics were relentless, and it took all his willpower to remain unaffected.

"Alright... what do you want?" Isadora asked, her tone now serious, recognizing that her usual tricks wouldn't work on these two.

"How did you end up like that?" Temptress, or rather Lily, demanded, her voice sharp with curiosity.

Isadora's eyes narrowed as she recalled the events. "Hmph. That half-angel... I almost had her. But just when I was about to escape, someone launched a sneak attack on me. I had no choice but to use the hypnotized pirate as a distraction and escape."

Her mind flashed back to the moment. She had been so close to securing Astrid when, out of nowhere, a figure had appeared behind her. Before she could react, something sharp had pierced her back. Desperate, she'd thrown Astrid down and used the hypnotized pirate as a shield, leaping off the ship into the sea below. The attackers hadn't pursued her, but the poison from the blade had done its work, sapping her strength until she lost consciousness.

Isadora's expression hardened as she finished recounting her story. "I didn't even sense the person's presence until it was too late." she admitted, a rare trace of unease in her voice.

Tyler, still masked as Phantom Blackwood, leaned forward slightly. "What is his strength?" he asked, his tone measured and probing.

"Probably Master Level," Isadora replied, her voice steady. "If it wasn't Captain Silver Eye or Vice Captain Giant Burgess, then the Silver Eye Pirates have three Master Level Immortal Practitioners on board."

Tyler and Lily exchanged a quick glance, each processing the gravity of her words. If the Silver Eye Pirates were as formidable as she claimed, then this mission had just become far more perilous.

"You're after the Labyrinth too, aren't you?" Isadora continued, her voice edged with frustration. "Only that Half-Angel can lead us to it."

Tyler and Lily kept their expressions neutral, but internally, they were thrown. *Labyrinth?* They had no idea what she was talking about, but decided it was best to play along, for now.

"You also know about the Labyrinth?" Lily asked in 'surprise'.

Isadora's lips curved into a knowing smile. "More than you do, I'm sure," she replied, her tone dripping with smug satisfaction. "But I'm not here to give away secrets for free. Let's just say it's a place of immense power, and only someone with Angelic blood can unlock its mysteries." She leaned in slightly, her eyes narrowing as if she had uncovered some grand revelation. "You're after her because of this too, aren't you?"

Tyler and Lily exchanged a quick glance, silently communicating what the other was thinking. This girl was easier to fool.

"Enough with the small talk," Tyler said, redirecting the conversation. "Where are the Silver Eye Pirates?"

"They're just drifting around the Rosefall Sea," Isadora answered, a hint of annoyance creeping into her voice. "It looks like they're waiting for someone before delivering her."

Tyler sighed of relief. If Isadora was telling the truth about the Silver Eye Pirates waiting in the Rosefall Sea, it meant they still had time to reposition themselves and prepare for a confrontation.

A calculating gleam entered her eyes as she shifted her gaze between them. "Hey, how about we work together? If the three of us join forces, we can definitely take down the Silver Eye Pirates, capture the Half-Angel, and explore the Labyrinth together."

Lily's lips curled into a mocking smile behind her mask. "Why do we even need you?" she asked, her tone dripping with sarcasm.

Isadora's expression tightened, but she quickly masked her irritation. "Because I know things about the Labyrinth that you don't," she said, her voice smooth and persuasive. "We can explore it together."

Inwardly, Isadora was scheming. She needed them distracted with the Silver Eye Pirates so she could make her move, planning to escape with the Half-Angel at the opportune moment.

But Lily wasn't easily fooled. She saw through Isadora's act and, using Sound Transmission, communicated her suspicions to Tyler. *She's lying. She has other motives... probably planning to betray us later.*

Tyler gave a slight nod in response. "Alright, let's do it," he agreed aloud, his voice betraying nothing of his inner thoughts.

His plan was simple: keep a close eye on Isadora, use her to deal with the Silver Eye Pirates, and ensure she didn't slip away with Astrid. Just like that, a temporary and uneasy alliance was formed, each party with their own hidden agenda.

Chapter 152: First Encounter with the Silver Eye Pirates

The Silver Eye Pirates' ship sliced through the dense mist of the Rosefall Sea, its presence almost ghostly in the thick fog. Two pirates on the deck noticed a small boat drifting towards them, its outline barely visible through the haze.

"Hey, look at that?" one of the pirates called out, narrowing his eyes to get a better look.

"Huh, there's no one in the boat?" the other responded, his voice tinged with confusion.

Before they could react, a shadowy figure materialized behind them. With swift, silent movements, the first pirate was knocked out cold, his body crumpling to the deck. The second pirate turned around in panic, only to find himself face-to-face with a seductive, tanned-skinned girl. Her eyes gleamed dangerously as she locked onto his gaze.

"Follow my command, my little birdie. Go to sleep," Isadora Nightkiss purred, her voice dripping with enchantment. The pirate's resistance crumbled instantly as his eyes glazed over. With a gentle tap, she sent him overboard, his unconscious body slipping into the water without a sound.

Tyler, observing from the shadows, nodded in approval. Isadora's skills were as impressive as they were dangerous. "Let's go," he whispered, signaling their next move.

As they stepped forward, a commanding voice cut through the fog. "Where do you think you're going?" The sound was followed by the emergence of two imposing figures onto the deck. One was a tall man with piercing silver pupils; the other, a massive, hulking figure that could only be described as a giant. It was Captain Silver Eye and his Vice-Captain, Giant Burgess.

Tyler didn't break stride. He glanced at the two, his expression calm and composed. "Alright. You guys take care of them," he said, his voice laced with confidence. He then turned and headed towards the ship's interior, where the cells were located, leaving the battle to Lily and Isadora.

Lily stepped forward, her whip coiled and ready in her hand. With a sharp crack, she lashed out, the whip striking the deck with such force that it left a deep imprint. Her eyes were fixed on Captain Silver Eye, who stood unmoved, a cigar perched casually in his mouth. He took a long drag, exhaling a thick cloud of smoke that seemed to carry with it a terrifying pressure.

Lily didn't flinch. With a swift motion, she flicked her wrist, and the whip coiled around Captain Silver Eye's neck like a serpent. She yanked hard, aiming to pull him toward her for a powerful kick. But to her surprise, he didn't budge an inch. His silver eyes glowed ominously, and sensing danger, Lily instinctively dodged just as a flash of silver light erupted from his pupils. Where she had been standing, silver flames now licked the deck, burning not like fire but like a corrosive poison that rapidly ate away at the wood.

"Silver Serpent," Lily muttered under her breath, recognizing the deadly ability. "What a pain in the neck..."

Meanwhile, Isadora faced off against Giant Burgess, who towered over her like a mountain. She twirled her extended rod, striking at him with precision and force. But no matter how many blows she landed, Burgess didn't even flinch. He stood there, unmoved, his massive form seemingly impervious to her attacks.

Frustration mounting, Isadora attempted to use her hypnotic powers. She locked eyes with him, her voice soft and commanding, "Sleep, my giant..." But Burgess merely blinked, his mind unyielding to her charm. It was as if her powers had no effect on him.

"Damn it," Isadora cursed under her breath. She had hoped to at least incapacitate him, but nothing seemed to work.

Back in the ship's interior, Tyler had reached the cells. He moved quickly, his eyes scanning each one for Astrid. But when he reached the last cell, he found it empty. His heart sank. Where could she be?

Outside, the battle continued to rage. Lily dodged another blast of silver flames, her mind racing as she tried to figure out a way to counter Captain Silver Eye's relentless attacks. The flames weren't just burning; they were eroding everything they touched, leaving nothing but ash in their wake.

Captain Silver Eye grinned, his cigar glowing brightly. "You can't win, little girl," he taunted, his voice low and menacing.

Lily clicked her tongue in irritation. "We'll see about that," she muttered. She needed to be smart, to find a weakness in his seemingly impenetrable defenses.

Isadora, meanwhile, continued to dodge Burgess's massive fists, each one powerful enough to crush her in a single blow. She was fast, but she knew she couldn't keep this up forever. She needed to find a way to either incapacitate him or escape.

Isadora Nightkiss dodged the attack with a swift, graceful movement, her lithe form twisting just out of reach. However, her eyes widened in shock as Giant Burgess suddenly shrank, his massive frame

collapsing into that of a smaller, yet shockingly swift, dwarf. Before she could react, he appeared right in front of her, moving faster than she could follow.

"Eh?" Isadora gasped, caught off-guard by his sudden transformation and speed.

Boom!

With a thunderous sound, Burgess's hand expanded back into its giant form, delivering a powerful punch that sent Isadora flying through the air. She crashed into the deck, her body skidding to a halt as she tried to regain her bearings.

Lily, who had been locked in her own battle with Captain Silver Eye, glanced over at Isadora's predicament. "Looks like I'll have to use my elemental power," she muttered, gripping her whip tightly. But before she could act, something shot toward her—Isadora, hurtling through the air.

"Catch me, Temptress!" Isadora shouted as she flew uncontrollably toward Lily.

Lily quickly stepped back, narrowly avoiding the impact as Isadora crashed into the deck with a groan.

"Tsk... Cruel," Isadora sighed, dusting herself off as she stood up. Despite her casual tone, her eyes were sharp, analyzing the situation with newfound caution.

Captain Silver Eye exuded a menacing pressure, his eyes shining brightly with an eerie light. He took a slow drag from his cigar, the smoke curling ominously around his head. "Alright. Time's up," Lily suddenly declared, her voice cutting through the tension. Without hesitation, she grabbed Isadora by the arm and soared into the air on a flying sword.

"Do you think you can escape?" Giant Burgess roared, preparing to give chase. But Captain Silver Eye raised a hand to stop him.

"Wait... look around," the captain said, his tone dangerously calm.

Giant Burgess glanced around the deck and nearly stumbled in shock. Surrounding them was a small heap of exploding charms, stacked higher than his giant form. Perched atop this pile was Phantom Blackwood himself, Tyler, casually sitting and watching them with a calm expression.

"What are you doing? You madman! What do you want?" Vice Captain Burgess shouted, his voice trembling with a mix of anger and fear.

Tyler smiled faintly, plucking an exploding charm from the heap and tossing it into the sea. The resulting explosion sent a massive wave crashing against the ship, causing the vice captain to fall silent, his bravado deflated.

"Captain Phantom Blackwood. Nice to meet you," Captain Silver Eye said, his voice steady and unphased. "I am Captain Silver Eye. The Half-Angel and her lackey have already been delivered. If you go now, you might still be able to catch her."

Tyler nodded in acknowledgment. "Thanks," he said simply, waving his hand as he made the pile of exploding charms vanish into thin air. In the next moment, he disappeared like a ghost, leaving the deck eerily silent.

"Prepare for docking," Captain Silver Eye ordered, his voice cold with simmering anger. "He dared to infiltrate my ship and threaten me. I will definitely pay him back."

The vice captain nodded, turning to relay the orders, but no one responded. A sense of unease crept over him as he moved through the ship, checking on the crew. To his shock, every crew member lay unconscious, each knocked out without even raising an alarm.

Captain Silver Eye watched as the vice captain's expression turned grim. "We've been played," he muttered, clenching his fists. The ship drifted quietly in the mist.

Inside the small boat, tension simmered between Lily and Isadora, the two women exchanging sharp words like daggers.

"You clearly lost to the vice captain," Lily mocked, a smirk playing on her lips as she glanced at Isadora.

"So what? You didn't stand a chance against the captain either," Isadora shot back, her tone equally biting.

Before Lily could respond, Tyler appeared beside them, his sudden presence quieting their argument. His expression was calm but carried a weight of concern.

"What happened?" Lily asked, noticing the seriousness in his eyes.

"She's not there. Looks like they delivered her to whoever hired them," Tyler replied, his voice low.

"Then what are we going to do?" Lily asked.

Tyler didn't hesitate. "We'll go to Rosefall Kingdom," he said.

Isadora, who had been brooding quietly, finally voiced the question that had been bothering her since their encounter with the Silver Eye Pirates. "Where is your ship, by the way?" she asked, her eyes narrowing with suspicion. "I didn't see any sign of it. Are you really even pirates?"

Tyler paused, caught off guard by the question. He couldn't exactly tell her the truth—that he didn't have a pirate ship, a proper crew, or even a Jolly Roger to call his own. He was far from the image of a typical pirate captain.

"They're... busy with something else," Tyler replied, his voice taking on a mysterious tone.

Chapter 153: Arriving at Rosefall Kingdom

In the misty expanse of the Rosefall Sea, a colossal ship cut through the waters, heading steadily toward the land. The crew on board moved with practiced efficiency, following the command of their leader.

"Dock the ship at Rosefall Kingdom," Mana ordered, her voice carrying authority as she watched the port draw closer. The looming landmass stood in stark contrast to the vast ocean behind them.

Tilting her head in curiosity, Mana remarked, "I thought this was a floating island."

Beside her, Mathilda explained, "They probably anchored it due to the turmoil in the kingdom."

Meanwhile, inside a much smaller boat, Tyler, Lily, and Isadora navigated through the same waters, their destination the same—Rosefall Kingdom.

"The islands aren't floating. That's good for us. We can sneak in more easily," Isadora Nightkiss noted, her eyes gleaming with anticipation.

Tyler unfolded the map of Rosefall Kingdom that Isadora had produced. The kingdom was an impressive sight, composed of five smaller islands surrounding a large central island. Each smaller island was connected to the central one by wide, sturdy bridges. It was clear from the map that Rosefall Kingdom was no minor nation; it was an expansive country with 55 cities and a population of 75 million. Each city was ruled by a governor, and each island had its own minister. The prime minister served as the second most powerful figure in the kingdom, just below the king.

Tyler, wanting to gather more information without revealing his lack of knowledge about the labyrinth, subtly signaled Lily.

"To think that the labyrinth would be here," Lily sighed, feigning familiarity as she glanced at the map.

"Yes... 1,000 years ago, when they founded this kingdom, they decided to build the capital above the labyrinth," Isadora explained, unaware that she was divulging critical information.

Lily and Tyler exchanged knowing glances, nodding as if they had already known this detail.

As their small boat finally reached the port, Tyler prepared to go ashore. Rather than removing his mask, he opted for a master-level disguise charm, transforming his appearance. He handed similar charms to Isadora and Lily, allowing them to alter their appearances and presence completely.

"Wow... Three master-level charms? You're so rich," Isadora remarked with a flirtatious wink, looping her arm through Tyler's.

"Tsk... Gold digger," Lily muttered under her breath, clearly annoyed.

"Bruh... You're already holding him," Isadora retorted, pointing out Lily's possessiveness.

The port was bustling with activity, filled with ships from various factions. However, one ship stood out among the rest.

"That's the White Merchant Group," Isadora noted, her gaze fixed on the impressive vessel.

"Yeah... We know. They hired us to safely escort that half-angel to the kingdom. We did our best to get her on a passenger ship heading here, but she got caught. Our plan was to retrieve her after she sets foot on land," Tyler said, spinning a story with ease.

"So that's why you saved her. I was wondering why you let her go when you haven't opened the Labyrinth yet." Isadora nodded, seemingly convinced by Tyler's explanation.

"Oh, and their Vice Captain, Lily Gomes, is supposed to be particularly beautiful and powerful," Lily added, her voice filled with self-satisfaction. Tyler's eye twitched slightly, knowing full well she was indulging in a bit of narcissism.

"Yeah, she's strong, but I didn't use my full power last time," Isadora replied casually, her confidence unwavering.

"So what? Maybe she didn't use her full power either," Lily murmured under her breath, though loud enough for Isadora to hear.

"What did you say?" Isadora was about to press the matter, but Tyler quickly diverted the conversation.

"Let's go find an Adventurer's Guild or something similar. We need more information," Tyler suggested, steering them toward their next objective.

As Tyler, Lily, and Isadora strolled through the bustling streets of Rosefall Kingdom's port, the vibrant energy of the city washed over them like a tidal wave. The trio, disguised by master-level charms, blended seamlessly with the crowd. Their eyes darted from one sight to the next, taking in the sheer grandeur and mysticism of the place.

On either side of the street, vendors and merchants called out to passersby, their stalls overflowing with goods that ranged from mundane trinkets to rare treasures.

Tyler noticed an elderly man selling top level charms, their symbols glowing faintly in the midday sun, while a few steps away, a woman displayed a collection of mystical herbs, their leaves shimmering with ethereal light.

As they continued down the street, the scent of roasted meat and spices wafted through the air, making Tyler's stomach growl. They followed the scent to a large, dimly lit cavern, its entrance flanked by stone statues of mythical beasts. A wooden sign above the door read "The Azure Fang Inn."

"Let's eat." Tyler simply said.

The trio found a table in a quiet corner, away from the main crowd. A server, a young woman with a gentle aura, approached them with a warm smile. "Welcome to The Azure Fang. What can I get for you today?"

"Whatever's hot and filling," Tyler said with a grin. "We've had a long journey."

As the server nodded and hurried off to fetch their order, Lily glanced around the room, her sharp eyes scanning the other patrons. "I'm going to see if I can gather some information," she said quietly to Tyler and Isadora.

After Lily left, Isadora shifted her gaze to Tyler, her expression playful yet curious. "Phantom Blackwood," she said, her tone light but with a hint of something more.

"Just call me Wood, since we're in disguise," Tyler responded, a small smirk playing on his lips as he leaned back in his chair.

"Alright then, Wood," Isadora replied, her eyes narrowing slightly as she moved closer to him, her breath warm against his ear. "I noticed something interesting today. My charm didn't seem to work on you."

Tyler raised an eyebrow, playing it cool even as he felt a subtle shift in the atmosphere. "Well, since we're in disguise, I doubt it would work as effectively," he replied nonchalantly, trying to dismiss the topic.

"But it didn't work before either," Isadora said, her voice carrying a hint of a sulk as she pouted slightly. She moved even closer, her presence almost overwhelming despite the ordinary appearance she had adopted. Tyler fought the urge to reach out and comfort her, realizing with a start that her charm was still very much in play, just in a different form.

'Oh no... Her charm still works,' Tyler thought, catching himself before he acted on his impulses.

"Come on... You don't like a maiden?" she teased, her tone challenging as she gazed up at him through lowered lashes.

Tyler felt a surge of heat at her words. It had been a while since he'd been this close to a woman, and the tension between them was undeniable. Taking the challenge head-on, he leaned in, his hand sliding onto her thigh, fingers tracing a slow, deliberate path. "Manhunter, don't try me," he whispered, his voice low and dangerous. "You might be the one who gets hunted in bed."

Isadora's breath hitched slightly at his words, but she didn't pull away. Instead, she leaned in even closer, her lips almost brushing his ear. "I would love to see that," she whispered back, her voice a soft, seductive purr.

The air between them crackled with unspoken tension, the line between challenge and desire blurring as they held each other's gaze. Tyler knew he was playing with fire, but for a moment, he didn't care. In this game, the hunter could easily become the hunted, and that thrill was almost intoxicating.

Just as the moment seemed about to escalate, the server returned with their food, breaking the tension like a splash of cold water. Tyler pulled back slightly, giving Isadora a knowing look as they both turned their attention to the plates set before them.

"We'll continue this conversation later," Tyler said, his voice still holding that edge of challenge, though his expression had softened slightly.

"Looking forward to it," Isadora replied with a sly smile, her eyes promising that the game was far from over.

Lily returned to the table, a satisfied look on her face.

"That was fast," Tyler remarked, surprised by her quick return.

"Oh, this inn happens to sell information. I just bought some," Lily said nonchalantly as she sat down. "Apparently, the Crown Princess has returned to the capital."

Tyler frowned slightly, processing the information. "Crown Princess? Not Prince?" he asked, his curiosity piqued.

"Yeah," Lily confirmed with a nod. "And guess what? The Crown Princess is actually Astrid Rosefall."

Tyler's eyes widened in surprise. "What the heck... She's the heir to the throne?" He leaned back, the realization dawning on him. "Now it all makes sense. That's why everyone is after Astrid."

"But why is the Crown Princess hiding from her own nation?" Isadora tilted her head.

Tyler recalled the conversation between Astrid and her childhood friend, Lutz. The king was poisoned by someone. But he decided not to say it.

Chapter 154: Angel in a Cage

"Holy molly. The prices are so high," Tyler muttered as he pulled out a sleek, black card from his pocket. The card had "Phantom" engraved in silver lettering. As he guided his energy into it, the card hummed softly, and an amount of Lydia, the local currency, poured out in a neatly stacked bundle.

Isadora's eyes widened, gleaming with interest. "Wow... A Platinum Card... You're dyamn rich," she said, her tone a mix of admiration and envy. She is totally faking it.

To understand how Tyler came to possess such a card, we need to go back to when he visited Rich Berg Island.

After Tyler had established himself on Rich Berg Island, he quickly realized the importance of having a secure way to manage his finances, especially in a world where powerful practitioners could easily rob others of their valuables. The Bank of Atlantis, the most prestigious bank in the region, offered a solution—bank accounts protected by powerful arrays and the highly coveted 'Bank Card.'

The Bank Card was an advanced, rectangular item infused with intricate and complex arrays, making it more than just a simple piece of metal. On the outside, it looked like an ordinary card, but its functionality was extraordinary.

The card's benefits were manifold:

It could store original Lydia notes and coins, transforming them into a digital form that existed within a secure, encrypted pocket dimension. This dimension could only be accessed by the owner of the card through their divine sense.

Even if the card was accidentally broken, the money wouldn't spill out like it would from a damaged storage treasure. Instead, the funds remained secure within the bank's encrypted system.

The card was highly portable and convenient, allowing Tyler to carry large sums without needing a physical vault or storage item.

Tyler's first bank card was registered under his real name. The card was keyed to his unique divine sense, meaning only he could access the funds. However, when he assumed his Phantom Blackwood persona, he needed a separate financial identity. Using the unique properties of his Phantom Mask, which altered his aura and divine sense, Tyler was able to create a second account under the Phantom Blackwood name, completely distinct from his true identity.

Now, Tyler could effortlessly manage his finances without ever needing to visit the bank in person. Whether he needed to deposit or withdraw funds, he could do so with a simple swipe of his card, making transactions in the cultivation world far more convenient.

Back in the present, Tyler handed the Lydia to the merchant, who nodded appreciatively before handing over the small array disks Tyler had purchased.

"The items are pricey because of the turmoil in the capital," Lily explained, glancing around at the bustling market. "People are afraid that a civil war might break out at any moment."

Tyler nodded in agreement as they walked down the busy streets, the weight of the situation sinking in. The inflation and instability were affecting the entire country, Tyler could feel the tension in the air.

The whole kingdom seemed to be holding its breath, waiting for the storm to break.

In the heart of the Royal Capital of the Rosefall Kingdom, the Grand Emperor Palace stood as a symbol of power and opulence, with its towering spires and grand halls. Within its depths, however, lay a place of sorrow—a room that shifted between reality and illusion.

Inside this room, an ornate birdcage, crafted from silver and gold and adorned with intricate patterns, held a young girl within its grasp. The girl, with delicate, angelic features, was bound by chains that seemed to weigh down not just her body, but her very soul. Her luminous wings were clipped, and she gazed up at the sky through the bars, her eyes reflecting a deep sense of despair and resignation.

The sound of footsteps echoed through the chamber, cutting through the oppressive silence. A man with a dignified bearing entered, his presence commanding attention. As he stepped closer, the grand birdcage, her illusion wings, shimmered and dissolved, revealing that it had been nothing more than an illusion. The room returned to its original state, an ordinary chamber devoid of hope.

The man, Prime Minister Rover, looked at Astrid with a calculating gaze. "Your emotions are reflecting well," he remarked, his tone almost approving.

"This is the Room of Emotions," he continued, with a hint of satisfaction in his voice. "A replica, made from copying the original Memories Island. Unlike the original, which can delve into the past, this one only shows current thoughts, stirred up by emotion. But I've heard that another replica of Memories Island exists within the Labyrinth."

Astrid's eyes narrowed as she looked at the man who had become the architect of her misery. "Why are you doing this? Why did you poison my father?" she demanded, her voice laced with both anger and desperation.

Rover's lips curled into a smug smile. "Nuh huh... I didn't poison the King. The King's old sins are merely coming back to collect their debt," he said casually. He then reached out and patted her head condescendingly. "There is a saying, 'Children carry their parents' sins.'"

"That is complete nonsense," Astrid retorted, her voice shaking with emotion.

"Is it?" Rover countered, raising an eyebrow. "Children can enjoy their parents' wealth, fame, and power, but not their sins? That seems unfair."

He stepped back, his smile growing colder. "Don't worry, though. You'll marry my son, and he will rule the whole kingdom once the King passes away. As for the Labyrinth, I've already promised it to those pirates. Hmm... but who really cares?"

With that, Rover turned and walked away, his footsteps echoing through the chamber as he left Astrid to her fate.

As Prime Minister Rover reached the doorway, he paused, as if something had just crossed his mind. Slowly, he turned back toward Astrid, a faint smirk playing on his lips.

"Oh... I almost forgot," he began, his tone casual but laced with underlying malice. "It seems like a new merchant group is making quite the waves on Port Island. They call themselves the White Merchant Group."

Astrid's eyes widened in surprise, her heart skipping a beat. She tried to mask her reaction, but Rover had already noticed.

"You really found some good friends," he remarked, his voice dripping with sarcasm. The smirk on his face grew wider as he saw the flicker of hope and fear in her eyes. "But don't get too excited," he added, as if delivering a final blow. "Even the brightest flames can be snuffed out if you're not careful."

With that, he turned on his heel and strode out of the room, his footsteps echoing ominously in the silence.

Slowly, the room began to morph once again, the walls closing in until the golden cage reappeared, trapping her within its confines.

As Astrid sank to the floor, tears welling in her eyes, the room filled with the ghostly images of her past. A small boy, his face bright with youthful innocence, chased after a giggling little girl. They ran in circles around Astrid, their laughter filling the air with a bittersweet melody.

"Lutz..." Astrid whispered, her voice barely audible as she watched the fleeting memories of her happier days. But even as the past replayed before her, she knew it was nothing more than a cruel trick of the room, a reflection of her deepest emotions and shattered hopes.

Tyler surveyed the bustling street, his eyes gleaming with a sly grin as the Lydia symbols seemed to flash in his gaze.

"Since we already know that the half-angel is in the capital, we'll reach there tomorrow," Tyler declared, his voice full of determination. "We'll regroup here at night." Without another word, he vanished into thin air like a phantom, leaving Isadora blinking in surprise.

She turned to Temptress, who was still standing calmly by her side. "You're not leaving?" Isadora asked, half expecting Temptress to disappear like Tyler had.

"No," Lily replied with a mischievous smile. "I'll accompany you."

Meanwhile, Tyler reappeared amidst the throng of people, this time in his original appearance—his familiar, unassuming guise. He was immediately joined by Mana, Mathilda, and Silvia, who materialized behind him like shadows.

"I smell opportunity," Tyler said, his tone sharp with intent. "Mana, inform Situ that we're going to open branches in the Rosefall Kingdom."

Mana nodded, her eyes already glowing with the possibilities. Tyler then turned to Mathilda, his grin widening. "The prices of pills and potions are skyrocketing across the country. Well, it's time to do some charity."

Mathilda understood his plan instantly. While others might see this as a magnanimous gesture, Tyler's true motive was more strategic. By selling the pills and potions at rock-bottom prices, he would not only undercut the competition but also gain favor among the populace. What the others didn't know was that the cost of producing those pills was minimal for him—thanks to his ability to replicate ingredients and pills effortlessly.

Tyler had another plan as well. If Phantom Blackwood couldn't reach Astrid directly, then Tyler White would find another way to get to her.

Chapter 155: White Crown Galleria

As they continued their walk through the bustling streets, Silvia's eyes widened as she pointed excitedly, "Ah, an angel!"

Tyler, Mathilda, and Mana turned their heads in the direction she was pointing. Sure enough, there was a man with large, white wings sprouting from his back, and a glowing halo floating just above his head. His very presence seemed to radiate a divine aura, causing passersby to glance at him in awe.

Noticing Silvia's stare, the man chuckled warmly. "Little girl, I'm not an angel," he explained with a friendly smile. "I'm more like a harpy—a beastkin, actually. Swan race." He gave a playful wink. "There's still a debate going on, even after centuries, about whether humanoid birds like me are considered harpies or beastkin."

Silvia's gaze was fixed on the glowing halo above his head, her curiosity apparent.

The man noticed her interest and reached up to grab the halo, easily lifting it from above his head. "Oh, this?" he said with a grin. "It's just a trinket—it cost me 250 Lydia. Pretty cool, right? I bought it from that store over there." He pointed to a nearby shop, its display windows filled with various mystical and enchanted items.

Tyler and his group exchanged glances.

Few minutes later...

The four of them emerged back onto the street, each wearing a glowing halo.

Tyler carefully examined the Halo device in his hand, his eyes shining with curiosity and excitement. "What are you doing?" Mathilda asked, her tone both amused and mildly exasperated as she watched him tinker with the small object.

"I'm curious," Tyler replied, his fingers deftly prying open the casing. "This one isn't just an array-infused item—it's technology. And technology like this is popular further north. It's one of my goals to study these things."

As the casing popped open, Tyler leaned in closer, his breath catching slightly as he peered inside. The interior was a marvel of engineering and craftsmanship, a blend of cultivation arrays and advanced technology. He could see tiny semiconductor materials that emitted light when energy passed through

them, complex arrays that seemed to regulate the flow of energy, heat sink arrays to manage the temperature, and two metal leads connecting everything to the main body.

Tyler didn't fully understand the intricacies of the device, but the mere fact that something so small and seemingly simple could hold such complexity thrilled him. His mind raced with the possibilities, ideas for experiments and applications already forming.

"Alright, alright," Mathilda interrupted, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder. "You can experiment with it in your free time. We've reached the place."

Reluctantly, Tyler closed the device and slipped it back into his pocket, still buzzing with excitement. He looked up, and saw slightly at the sight before him. They had arrived at a massive building, a structure that once served as a grand castle for esteemed guests. Its towering walls and ornate architecture spoke of a time when it had been a place of luxury and status.

Now, the castle had been repurposed, its grand halls and chambers likely filled with new occupants and purposes. The imposing structure still held an air of majesty, but there was also a sense of change, as if it had adapted to the times, much like the device Tyler had been studying.

Tyler stood before the grand entrance of the castle, the sprawling fortress casting long shadows under the setting sun. It was an imposing structure, easily one of the largest in the country, boasting a staggering 13 million square feet of ancient stonework and towering spires. Yet, despite its grandeur, it had long been neglected, the once-glorious walls now showing signs of wear and the air heavy with memories of a bygone era.

As Lily had gone off to gather information about Astrid, Tyler had tasked her with finding any other valuable insights as well. Now, as he looked up at the castle, he knew this was something worth pursuing.

"I got information that this place is for sale," Tyler said, breaking the silence.

The elderly owner of the castle, a man well into his twilight years, stood beside Tyler. His expression was a mix of sorrow and resignation, the weight of history pressing down on him. "This castle belonged to my great-great-grandfather," the man began, his voice thick with emotion. "He left his family and went north, never to return. For generations, we've carried on his legacy, but now... it's time to say goodbye."

The old man's words hung in the air, a poignant reminder of the passage of time. He had kept the castle in the family for decades, a symbol of pride and heritage, but it was clear that the burden had become too much to bear.

Tyler's response was as direct as ever. "I will buy it."

The elderly man's eyes widened slightly, though not with shock but with curiosity. "Lydia or Aura Stones or Prana Stones?" he asked, a glimmer of hope sparking in his eyes. The currency of this world is Lydia. But some people prefer to get Aura Stones or Prana Stones. They are like Gold and Silver for the mortals.

Tyler considered for a moment before replying, "I'm happy to pay with Aura Stones and Prana Stones."

He can't copy Lydia. But he can Copy tons and tons of Aura Stones and Prana Stones.

The old man's face brightened visibly at this. Aura Stones and Prana Stones were highly valuable, and Tyler's offer was more than generous. "Which portion would you like to buy?" the man asked, his tone one of anticipation.

Tyler gave him a steady look. "All of it."

The man blinked, confusion crossing his features. "Oh, that portion... Wait, what?"

Tyler repeated himself, his tone leaving no room for doubt. "I want the whole castle."

Hours later, the elderly man left the premises, clutching the official documents with a mixture of disbelief and astonishment. He had never imagined anyone would buy the entire castle, yet Tyler had done so without hesitation, even covering the taxes.

As Tyler watched him go, Mana and the other girls approached, curiosity evident in their expressions. "Why did you buy the whole castle?" Mana asked, echoing the question on everyone's mind.

Tyler's thoughts drifted back to his previous world, where 'immortal gathering points'—places where Cultivators rented stores to sell their wares—were commonplace. He saw the potential to create something similar here.

"Ever heard of the term 'shopping complex'?" Tyler asked, a slight smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. It was a business model he had learned from books, and while not entirely new to this world, such complexes were more common in the northern regions.

He went on to explain his vision—renting out portions of the castle to small businesses, turning the vast, empty halls into a bustling hub of commerce and trade. It was a bold plan, but one that could generate substantial profit.

"I'm going to the capital," Tyler announced, his mind already shifting to the next task. "Mana, Mathilda, can you take care of this?"

Mathilda grinned, patting her chest with confidence. "Sure! Don't worry, I have plenty of experience handling things from the sect."

Tyler nodded, appreciating her enthusiasm. "Also, after giving the slaves on our ship new jobs, tell Situ to buy more slaves for the ship. If Situ wants to retire, he should start training a successor to replace him."

Mathilda frowned slightly. "I don't think we can buy slaves in this country," she pointed out.

Tyler remained unfazed. "That's alright. Mana will contact some pirates. I'm sure they'll have those goods."

Mana, who had once been in charge of her father's adventure ship, nodded in agreement. "Leave it to mana," she said confidently. She knew the world of piracy well, and while it wasn't the most ethical source, it was effective.

"What is the name of this place?" the mana asked, looking at Tyler expectantly.

"Hmmm? White Shopping Mall?" Mathilda suggested a hint of uncertainty in her voice.

"That sounds so bland," Tyler murmured, clearly unimpressed.

"White Haven Hall," Mana offered, trying to add a touch of elegance.

"White Stone Plaza," Tyler considered but didn't seem thrilled.

"Everwhite Mall," came another suggestion, but it still didn't quite hit the mark.

"White Fortress Bazaar," was the next idea, but it didn't quite capture the essence Tyler was looking for.

Mathilda and Mana continued to debate, tossing out names and considering their merits. The discussion was lively, with each suggestion falling short of Tyler's expectations.

Suddenly, Silvia, who had been listening quietly, spoke up. "How about White Crown Galleria?"

Tyler's eyes lit up at the name. "Silvia is the smartest," he said, a broad smile spreading across his face. He patted her head with genuine affection. "White Crown Galleria it is."

With that, the name for the shopping complex was set, embodying the grandeur and sophistication Tyler envisioned.