

R Cultivator 171

Chapter 171: Unexpected Encounter

Lily sobered up a little as she walked, her mind slowly clearing from the lingering haze. She recalled how they were engulfed by clouds in the last trial, clouds that had an intoxicating effect, making them feel drunk and disoriented. She glanced at Isadora, who was still in a kissing posture, eyes closed and lips slightly puckered, completely oblivious to what was happening around her.

"She's probably letting out her charms unconsciously. And since I was drunk, I was affected," Lily muttered to herself, realizing what had happened. Though she wasn't fully sober, her sharp mind was piecing things together.

"Stop releasing your charm," Lily said, lightly tapping Isadora on the forehead.

Isadora blinked, nodded, and slowly came out of her daze, though she still swayed on her feet.

"Now, put on some clothes," Lily instructed, noticing Isadora's state of undress.

Isadora nodded again, but instead of putting on her clothes, she began to remove her innerwear, as though her fogged mind was interpreting Lily's command incorrectly.

"Hey, I told you to *put on* some clothes!" Lily exclaimed, grabbing Isadora's hand to stop her from stripping completely.

After a few frustrating moments, Lily managed to get Isadora dressed properly. They continued their journey to the next area, where both women, though still somewhat drunk, were now in better shape.

Finally, they arrived at the next trial. Isadora stumbled a bit, her arm clinging to Lily as they approached a slate with a question written on it: *"**How many letters are there in the Ancient God Language?**"*

There were floating platforms with numbers inscribed on them, clearly meant to be the answer to the question.

Lily read the question aloud in a half-drunken state. "How many letters... are there... in the Ancient God Language?"

"Ah, easy..." Isadora slurred, still clinging to Lily. "It's two thousand..."

"Two thousand, your arse!" Lily retorted, rolling her eyes. Despite the wine-like effect of the trial still coursing through her, she was slowly recalling something she had read about the Ancient God Language. She just needed to clear her head a little more.

Lily wracked her brain, focusing through the fog of intoxication. The answer was on the tip of her tongue. Then it clicked.

"The real answer is 2 something," Lily said to herself, though still a little uncertain.

"Two-seven-four..." Isadora murmured, completely out of it.

"Yeah 274," Lily corrected with a sigh. "We've got this."

They stepped forward, approaching the floating platforms with the numbers on them. Feeling a bit more confident, Lily took the lead, guiding Isadora.

First, they jumped onto the platform marked with the number '2'. The platform felt solid beneath their feet, confirming they were on the right track.

"See? Told you I was right!" Isadora grinned. Lily smiled as she Isadora helped hop onto the next platform marked '4'.

Isadora giggled as she wobbled slightly, leaning heavily against Lily.

Then, they stepped onto the final platform, marked '7'. As soon as they landed, a faint hum filled the air, and the path to the next area opened up before them.

They both stood there for a moment, catching their breath.

"Wait a minute..." Lily frowned. "Wasn't the answer supposed to be 274?"

"Yeah, why?" Isadora asked, resting her head on Lily's shoulder.

"But I'm pretty sure we stepped on 247..." Lily said, her brow furrowing. "That's not what we said earlier."

"Oh no... let's go back and start again!" Isadora exclaimed in a sudden panic, as if realizing they'd made a mistake.

Lily couldn't help but chuckle at the absurdity of it all. She playfully knocked her knuckles against Isadora's head. "We're here safely because *247* is the right answer, you dummy."

Lily smirked and looked ahead at the next puzzle. The passage opened into a larger chamber, with towering walls covered in inscriptions and symbols. The air felt denser here, like they had stepped into a sacred place. In the center of the room stood a large stone pedestal, with a shimmering orb floating above it.

Both women approached cautiously. Lily could feel the energy radiating from the orb, a mix of power and mystery. This had to be important. She reached out to touch it, but paused, her instincts kicking in.

"Wait. Something's off," she muttered, narrowing her eyes.

Isadora, still not fully sober, staggered next to her, peering at the orb with curiosity. "It looks... so pretty though."

Lily scanned the room, looking for any signs of traps.

Meanwhile, Tyler found himself back at the God statue inside the shrine. However, something was different from before. There was now a door behind the statue, a door Tyler was certain hadn't been there when he first entered. His eyes shifted to a small key resting near the base of the statue.

"Looks like a prize for clearing the trial," Tyler murmured to himself as he bent down and picked up the key.

He examined it briefly before inserting it into the door's lock. With a soft click, the door creaked open, revealing a narrow passage leading into darkness. Tyler hesitated for a moment, then stepped forward, letting the door close behind him. As he ventured deeper, the passage became even darker, the walls seeming to close in on him.

He reached into his pocket, pulling out the Angel Gimmick Ring and placing it above his head. The ring shone brightly, casting a soft glow around him, but strangely, the light didn't pierce the darkness ahead.

With no other choice, Tyler continued onward, his footsteps echoing softly in the narrow space. He felt cold water beneath his feet as he walked, but he didn't stop, his focus solely on reaching whatever lay ahead.

After what felt like an eternity, Tyler finally saw a faint light at the end of the passage. He hurried toward it, eager to leave the oppressive darkness behind. Stepping into the light, Tyler found himself in a part of the maze that looked entirely different from anything he'd seen before.

The walls surrounding him were like clouds—soft, fluffy, and strangely bouncy. Tyler reached out to touch them, his hand sinking slightly into the surface. Despite their softness, the cloud-like walls were impenetrable. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't tear through them.

"Fluffy but unbreakable," Tyler mused to himself as he examined the strange new area.

Deciding to explore, Tyler reached into his storage and pulled out another flying boat. He was about to refill its energy when suddenly, something caught his attention. His senses flared in alarm, and without thinking, he leaped off the boat.

Just as he jumped, the flying boat erupted in white flames. Tyler watched in surprise as the boat burned, though he felt no heat from the fire. It took him only a moment to recognize the strange, ethereal flames.

He recalled where he has seen this flame before.

"Captain Silver Eye," Tyler muttered under his breath, his eyes narrowing.

"Phantom Blackwood," came a voice from the other side of the maze.

Tyler turned sharply, his eyes locking onto a figure approaching him. The man's imposing presence was somewhat undercut by the fluffy cloud-like ground beneath him, but his aura was unmistakable. If not for the softness of the surroundings, his steps would have been more ominous.

The man's eye gleamed with a familiar glint—the notorious Silver Eye, captain of the Silver Eye Pirates, a figure Tyler confronted before.

"It's good that I found you. We still have some unfinished business," Captain Silver Eye said, his gaze narrowing as he tried to assess Tyler's power level.

However, Tyler's mask concealed his aura, preventing the captain from sensing his true strength. Without that mask, Captain Silver Eye would have already attacked, knowing Tyler was only at the level of a 1-Star Elite Warrior.

"Oh... Sorry about what happened before," Tyler said casually, shrugging. "Now that the labyrinth is open, how about we go our separate ways and mind our own potatoes?"

"Hmph... If I let you off, where would my reputation go?" Captain Silver Eye scoffed, his silver eye gleaming ominously. In an instant, white flames erupted on what appeared to be Tyler's body.

The captain sneered, feeling victorious, but then something caught his attention in the corner of his eye.

Tyler stood calmly a few feet away, unscathed.

The figure that had been engulfed in flames was nothing more than an ice statue, a perfect replica of Tyler.

"Ice Substitution Method," Tyler murmured quietly, his eyes gleaming behind the mask.

Captain Silver Eye's silver eye flickered in surprise, but he quickly masked it with a disdainful scoff. "Impressive trick, but parlor games won't save you," he said, his voice cold as his eyes shined brightly.

Tyler stood calmly, his posture relaxed but ready. "I don't need to be saved," he replied casually, though his mind was racing. He knew Captain Silver Eye wasn't someone to take lightly, and that white flame was no ordinary power.

The fluffy, cloud-like terrain beneath their feet seemed almost surreal, but it offered little advantage to either of them. Tyler weighed his options. Confronting Silver Eye head-on was too risky, but escaping was equally uncertain.

Chapter 172: Tyler vs Captain Silver Eye

Tyler stood in the surreal cloud maze, his eyes fixed on Captain Silver Eye, whose entire body radiated an ominous silver glow. He knew he couldn't afford to let his guard down. Captain Silver Eye was a dangerous opponent. Tyler's mind raced as he considered his options. Attacking outright would be a mistake—one that could cost him his advantage.

If he attacked, Captain Silver Eye might gauge his true power level, and that was something Tyler couldn't allow. His real strength was too low, concealed beneath his mask, and he intended to keep it that way for as long as possible. The maze, with its fluffy, bouncy walls, provided an ideal environment for evasion, and Tyler planned to use that to his full advantage.

Captain Silver Eye's hands shimmered with a metallic glow, transforming into silver as he dashed toward Tyler. His movements, fast and agile, seemed comical in the cloud-like maze as he hopped across the bouncy floor like a rabbit. From a distance, it looked less like a deadly pursuit and more like a strange game of tag.

"As I said before, you feel less intimidating because of this maze," Tyler remarked, a smirk playing on his lips as he dodged Captain Silver Eye's first punch by jumping onto a bouncy cloud platform.

"Fight me, coward!" Captain Silver Eye bellowed, his frustration evident in the force behind his words.

"Chase me," Tyler replied with a smirk, taunting him as he disappeared further into the maze.

Captain Silver Eye's silver eyes glowed ominously, and suddenly, Tyler found himself surrounded by an illusory fire—white flames licking at his body. But Tyler remained calm. He had already anticipated this. The one being engulfed by the flames wasn't the real him.

As the fire subsided, Captain Silver Eye scoffed in irritation, realizing that he had only managed to melt another Ice Substitution—a clever decoy left behind by Tyler. "Tsk... Another trick," Captain Silver Eye muttered under his breath, the strain from using his ability becoming more apparent as a faint trail of water leaked from his silver eyes. His power came at a cost, and Tyler had noticed this early on.

Tyler smirked again, standing a few feet away from where the illusory fire had raged moments before. "Looks like that ability of yours takes a toll on you," he remarked casually, his voice carrying a hint of mockery.

"Tsk..." Captain Silver Eye clicked his tongue in irritation. His legs turned silver as he powered up again, this time moving at an even greater speed. In the blink of an eye, he closed the distance between them, his first punch shattering Tyler into ice once more.

But Captain Silver Eye wasn't fooled this time. "There," he muttered, eyes tracking the real Tyler, who was trying to stay one step ahead. He took a Speed charm.

In that instant, Tyler's instincts screamed at him to move. Without hesitating, he reached into his robe and secretly activated multiple Wind Boost Charms, a set of enchanted charms which is also designed to enhance speed. As the charms activated, a surge of wind energy coursed through his body, making him much faster than before.

In a flash, the Captain was upon him again. Tyler's instincts kicked in, and with a swift transformation, red scales began appearing across his skin.

Mode Dragon.

Tyler's entire body hardened under the scales just in time to meet the force of Captain Silver Eye's punch. The blow connected, sending Tyler flying through the maze with immense force. But instead of crashing helplessly, Tyler used the bouncy surface to his advantage. He ricocheted off the fluffy walls and floor like a pinball, moving farther and farther away, disappearing into the distance with each bounce.

He disappeared into the maze's fluffy expanse, his figure becoming nothing more than a blur as he used the momentum of Captain Silver Eye's punch to escape further.

Captain Silver Eye, panting slightly, watched in disbelief. "What just happened?" he muttered, momentarily stunned. He hadn't expected Tyler to use his attack as a means to escape rather than to fight back.

His anger flared up, and he prepared to chase after Tyler, silver flames beginning to ignite around his body again. But before he could move, his vice-captain appeared, stepping into the maze with urgency.

"Captain... It's time," the vice-captain who just appeared said.

Captain Silver Eye growled, his gaze lingering on the direction Tyler had disappeared. His fists clenched, and he could feel the urge to continue the chase burning inside him. But he has other things to do.

With a final glance at the maze, he clicked his tongue in frustration. "Next time, Blackwood... Next time, I'll kill you."

With that, Captain Silver Eye turned and left with his vice-captain, his silver form fading into the misty, surreal environment of the maze as the echoes of Tyler's escape faded into the distance.

Tyler sat in the Lotus position, his red dragon scales shimmering faintly in the maze's dim light. His mind, however, was far from calm. As he continued bouncing around, his eyes were closed, deep in thought.

"Hmmm... When am I going to stop?" Tyler muttered to himself, still bouncing through the cloud maze without a clear destination. The soft, springy floors beneath him continued to propel him upward and forward with each bounce, leaving him floating in limbo.

Suddenly, with no warning, his trajectory shifted. The fluffy clouds disappeared, and he felt a hard, jarring impact as his face slammed into cold, jagged stone. His body crumpled forward as the pain rushed through his skull.

"Ouch! That hurts..." he groaned, rubbing his forehead and wincing. His dragon scales had taken the brunt of the impact, but it still stung. As he shook off the disorientation, he blinked and looked up, only to find himself in a completely different environment.

The maze of fluffy clouds was gone. In its place, a strange, stony expanse stretched out before him. Tyler's eyes widened as he took in the sight. He was standing at the foot of something impossible—Penrose Stairs, an optical illusion made real. The stairs looped endlessly in a square, defying the laws of physics. Each step looked perfectly normal, yet no matter which way he turned his head, the stairway seemed to circulate indefinitely, without ever leading to a real destination.

Tyler stood up, brushing the dust off his scales as he stared at the stairs. "What the...?" he whispered under his breath. His mind struggled to grasp what he was seeing. It was an illusion brought to life, and yet he could feel the solid ground beneath him. The impossible structure seemed both real and unreal at the same time.

Curiosity piqued, Tyler began to walk toward the nearest set of stairs. "How does this even work?" he wondered aloud, his voice echoing in the eerie silence. As he placed a foot on the first step, he felt the stone beneath his boot, solid and firm. He continued upward, step by step, expecting at any moment to break the loop or reach the top. But no matter how far he climbed, the stairs only led him back to where he started.

After what felt like minutes of climbing, he found himself right back at the bottom. His eyes narrowed. "This thing really is endless..." Tyler murmured, stepping back and observing the structure again.

He sat down on the edge of the steps, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. "Okay, so it's a trap," he concluded. The Penrose Stairs weren't designed to get him anywhere. They were meant to confuse, to make people waste time endlessly climbing with no real goal. A clever trick, but not one that could stop him for long.

Tyler stood at the base of the infinite Penrose stairs, gazing upward, deep in thought. The endless loops and impossible geometry of the staircase played tricks on the mind, but Tyler knew there had to be a way out. After considering his options, he made a decision. Without hesitation, he jumped straight into the hole at the center of the staircase.

His body plummeted downward, surrounded by the dizzying, spiraling illusion of the stairs. Wind rushed past his ears, but Tyler didn't panic. He kept his Dragon Mode active, scales still covering his body, ready to absorb the impact of whatever awaited him at the bottom.

But the hard crash he anticipated never came. Instead, Tyler felt a splash as his body hit water. The sensation of cool liquid enveloped him, and he quickly swam to the surface. As he emerged, he took a deep breath, shaking the water from his face. He floated in a vast, dark lake, the surroundings quiet—too quiet.

Suddenly, a voice broke the eerie silence. A soft, anguished cry echoed through the water. "Nooo... This is not real... This can't be real..." The voice was filled with despair.

Tyler's eyes widened. He recognized that voice immediately. "Lutz?" he muttered to himself, scanning the area for the source of the sound.

Chapter 173: Rooms of Memories (1/3)

Lily and Isadora sprinted down the narrow temple passageway, their footsteps echoing off the stone walls. Behind them, creeping vines twisted and lashed, reaching for their ankles with a menacing hunger. The air was thick with the scent of damp earth and ancient moss, and the dim lighting made it hard to see more than a few feet ahead.

Lily clutched an orb tightly in her hand, its glow casting soft hues of rainbow light on the walls around them. At a glance, the orb appeared like a gem of many colors, but under closer inspection, its true color seemed to be an ethereal white, pulsing with a mysterious energy. The orb radiated with life force, and Lily could feel its power coursing through her as she ran.

"Where is this passage going?" Isadora asked, her breath coming in short, hurried bursts as she kept pace with Lily.

"I have no idea! The passage just opened up after I took the orb," Lily shouted over her shoulder, glancing quickly behind them at the ever-chasing vines.

Isadora's hand flew to her temple, massaging her head. "Why can't I remember anything?" she groaned, clearly struggling with the haze that had clouded her mind.

Lily, despite the danger, allowed herself a brief chuckle. "Looks like you sobered up," she teased, though her focus remained on the path ahead.

As soon as Lily reached the edge of the crumbling temple, her eyes fell on the towering wall of the Labyrinth ahead. The path they had followed seemed to close behind them as the structure collapsed, leaving them no room for error. With quick thinking, she attempted to summon her flying sword, but nothing happened.

"Damn it," she muttered under her breath. Whatever enchantment surrounded this section of the Labyrinth was still preventing the use of flight-based treasures.

Without wasting any more time, Lily took out her whip. With a swift flick, it shot forward, wrapping tightly around a nearby sturdy branch that jutted out from one of the few standing structures. Isadora grabbed onto her waist as they leaped into the air, swinging just as the last section of the temple collapsed into a cloud of dust and rubble behind them.

They soared through the air, their combined weight pulling on the whip before they landed gracefully onto the solid ground on the other side. Lily wasted no time and quickly retrieved her whip as they steadied themselves on the uneven surface.

At that moment, something clicked in Lily's mind. *Oh... I can use my storage treasure now...* She thought to herself, realizing the strange restriction on her items had lifted as soon as they escaped the temple. Wasting no time, she quickly stored the orb back into her spatial storage.

Isadora noticed this immediately. "Hey..." she shouted.

Lily waved her hand nonchalantly, already anticipating the question. "I know, I know... We'll share it later. Just relax," she said with a playful smirk.

With the orb secured and the immediate danger behind them, the two women finally had a moment to take in their surroundings. They had landed on a part of the Labyrinth that felt almost surreal. The ground beneath their feet was soft and pillowy, like fluffy clouds, though the air still carried the eerie tension of the maze.

"Where are we?" Lily muttered under her breath, her eyes scanning the strange landscape. Everything about this part of the Labyrinth felt different from the rest.

As they took in their new surroundings, a thin trail of smoke caught Lily's eye. It was coming from somewhere not too far ahead, rising into the mist like a beacon. She pointed toward it. "Let's go there first. Maybe we can figure out what's going on."

Isadora nodded, and the two of them moved cautiously toward the smoke, their footsteps barely making a sound on the cloud-like ground. They advanced quietly, using the mist and the uneven terrain as cover. As they got closer, they ducked behind some large wall and peeked out to get a better view of the source of the smoke.

What they saw made Lily's heart skip a beat.

Captain Silver Eye stood there, his imposing figure as fearsome as ever. His signature silver eye gleamed in the mist, and the rest of his pirate crew was gathered around him. Vice Captain Burgess, a hulking figure of a man with a cruel grin, was by his side, barking orders to the rest of the Silver Eye Pirates, who were busy tending to what appeared to be some kind of campfire.

As they continued to watch, Captain Silver Eye's gaze swept across the area, as if he sensed something in the air.

"What's wrong captain?" Vice Captain asked.

"Nothing... Finish the preparation quickly before this part is transforms." Captain Silver Eye said.

"Yes captain." The Vice Captain nodded.

Tyler moved cautiously towards the heart of the strange, colorless space, his steps echoing in the otherwise silent void. As he advanced, the blurred surroundings slowly gave way to stark white walls, the only remaining color in this surreal landscape.

The oppressive silence was heavy, almost suffocating, yet he pressed on, following the distant sound of Lutz's cry.

As he moved closer - Slowly, images began to form around him, shifting and blurring until they solidified, like fragments of a dream coming into focus.

"A Room of Thoughts???... like where Astrid was locked," Tyler muttered, recognizing the strange quality of the space. But this wasn't Astrid's memories. No, something felt different.

As the images sharpened, a scene unfolded before him.

A young girl, no older than ten, stood alone, gripping a sword that was nearly as tall as she was. Her brow furrowed in concentration as she practiced, slashing the air with determined, deliberate movements. Sweat dripped down her face, and her hands trembled with exhaustion, yet she kept going.

"997... 998... 999... 1000." The girl counted her strikes aloud, her voice a mix of pain and pride. She stopped, her small frame sagging under the weight of her effort. Wiping the sweat from her brow, she glanced towards a group of girls her age who were passing by, laughing and wearing beautiful dresses. They paid her no mind, walking with carefree joy as if they belonged to a different world entirely.

The girl sighed, longing evident in her eyes. She watched them for a moment longer before turning back to her sword.

"Have you finished practicing?" A deep, authoritative voice rang out from behind her.

The girl spun around to see a middle-aged man approaching, his face stern but kind.

"Yes, Grandfather," she replied, straightening up despite her exhaustion.

"Good... my little Evergreen. Now you can go and play," the man said, his tone softening.

A smile broke across the girl's face. Without hesitation, she dropped her sword and ran, eager to join the other children. But her excitement quickly turned to disappointment.

"You stink."

"You look dirty."

The girls' cruel words hit her like daggers. They sneered at her appearance, her clothes soaked with sweat and her hands calloused from practice. The girl recoiled, her joy shattered as the children turned their backs on her.

But just as she was about to walk away, a boy with a handsome smile stepped forward, extending his hand. "You can use a sword, right? That's cool," he said, his voice warm and genuine.

The little girl's eyes widened, her cheeks flushing red. She hesitated for a moment, then slowly took his hand, a small smile tugging at the corners of her lips.

Tyler walked further as he watched the scene play out, his brow furrowing. "Evergreen?"

Suddenly, Tyler stopped in his tracks. The atmosphere in the room shifted, growing heavier, darker. In the center of the room, he saw them—Lutz, kneeling on the ground, tears streaming down his face. His body trembled as he sobbed uncontrollably.

Just a few feet away, the King of Rosefall lay on his back, struggling for breath. His face was pale, his chest rising and falling in shallow, labored gasps. Death clung to him like a shadow, waiting to claim him at any moment.

And there, standing over the King, was Astrid.

She held a knife in her hand, the blade gleaming ominously in the white light. Her eyes, once filled with innocence and hope, were now cold and distant. She stared down at the dying King and Lutz with an expression of disdain, as if their suffering meant nothing to her.

"What the hell is happening?" Tyler whispered and looked at them with confusion.

The wedding dress of Astrid is torn and her breast is revealing a little. But there is no knife scar in it. It seems like she healed herself.

What happened next made Tyler eyes widened, Astrid moved closer to the king.

"Don't worry about me. It is atonement for my sin. Don't blame yourself. I always love you, Astrid." The King said.

Astrid then plunged the knife into King's heart. There was not even a single tear. The King of Rosefall Kingdom passed away.

Chapter 174: Room of Memories (2/3)

Tyler's eyes darted around the room, confusion swirling in his mind as the surreal scene unfolded before him. "What is happening?" he muttered under his breath, trying to make sense of the strange events.

Astrid—or rather, the being that looked like Astrid—turned her gaze to him. A smile crept across her lips, but it was not the warm, kind expression he was used to seeing. This smile was cold, calculating, and sent a chill down Tyler's spine.

"Phantom Blackwood..." she began, her voice carrying an eerie calmness. "No... according to this girl's memory, you are Tyler White."

Tyler felt a jolt of realization. He quickly deactivated the mask function of his disguise, revealing his true form. His expression hardened as he stared at the figure before him, wary and on edge.

"This girl has a deep respect for you in her heart," Astrid continued, her voice smooth as silk. "But she also harbors envy."

"Envy?" Tyler repeated, tilting his head slightly, his brows furrowing.

Astrid nodded slowly. "Yes, because you were able to travel the world freely. She envies your freedom."

As she spoke, she walked over to Lutz, who remained kneeling on the ground, sobbing uncontrollably. Without warning, Astrid placed her foot on Lutz's head, pressing him further into the floor.

"Who are you?" Tyler demanded, his voice low and cautious.

"Who knows?" Astrid replied with a shrug, her tone teasing and elusive.

Tyler narrowed his eyes. Something wasn't right. This wasn't the Astrid he knew.

"This room is just like the Room of Thoughts," Tyler observed, glancing around at the shifting, ethereal walls. "But it seems like an advanced version... This is the Room of Memories."

As if responding to his words, the scenery in the area shifted once again. Behind Astrid, the image of a young girl—Evergreen—appeared, wielding a sword, just as in the earlier memory. Her expression was fierce, determined.

"You are the Country's Hero... Evergreen," Tyler said, the realization clicking into place.

Astrid—or Evergreen—laughed, her voice echoing through the room, a chilling sound that made Tyler's skin prickle. "Hahaha... As expected. You're smart. I was also curious—how did you figure out that my son was the traitor?"

With a casual movement, she pressed her foot down harder on Lutz's head, causing blood to trickle from his scalp. The sight made Tyler's fists clench in anger, though he kept his composure.

"It's simple," Tyler said, his voice steady but cold. "When Astrid took that cruise ship, other than my crew, he was the only one who knew about her whereabouts. And when Isadora was ambushed, he was the only one in that cell. It all fit."

Evergreen's smile widened, her eyes gleaming with dark amusement. "Oh... Nice. I really love smart people."

She sauntered towards Tyler, her movements slow and deliberate. When she reached him, she leaned in close, her breath hot against his ear as she whispered, "How about this? We can join forces... together."

Evergreen pressed her body against his, her voice laced with temptation.

Before Tyler could respond, the Room of Memories shimmered again, a blinding light filling the space. A white, cloud-like mist appeared behind Lutz, glowing with an ethereal brightness. The shifting scenes around them paused, and a new memory took its place.

This time, the memory showed a younger Lutz, much smaller, curled up in a corner. His face was streaked with tears, his body trembling as he cried quietly.

He was playing Hide and seek with Astrid. But he saw a horrible scene. It was scene where his Mom Evergreen begged for mercy. But the King ruthlessly Forced her.

Evergreen shook her head in pity as she watched Lutz, her voice laced with disdain. "Even though he knows the truth, he's still denying it. What a weak-minded fool, just like his father."

This happened after the Labyrinth emerged. Lutz, using a Half-Angel as a medium, successfully opened the Labyrinth. His aim was the Rooms of Memories—to reveal the dirty deeds Astrid's father committed and make both father and daughter suffer.

However, things did not go as planned. The king, in a rare moment of vulnerability, begged Lutz not to look at those memories. But it was already too late. When Lutz glimpsed the truth from King's memory, it shattered his heart, leaving him lost and broken.

The Room of Memories began to glow intensely, and threads of light started to extend towards Tyler, as if attempting to latch onto him, eager to reveal the depths of his memories. The shimmering energy swirled around him, tugging at his mind.

Scenes flickered to life. He walked forward, step by step, his eyes fixed on the middle-aged man before him. He stomped his foot down, pinning the man. This is when Tyler stomped the Immortal.

"Oh, look at us—same pose!" Evergreen quipped with an amused grin, watching Tyler mirror her actions in the memory.

Tyler, uninterested in her jest, asked sternly, "What happened to Astrid?"

Evergreen rolled her eyes as if the question bored her. "She's sleeping. She doesn't want to wake up. A fool, just like my son. She didn't even resist when I took over her body." Her voice dripped with condescension, the words laced with a hint of disappointment.

The Room of Memories, which had briefly focused on Tyler, now shifted its attention back to Evergreen.

A younger, slightly more grown-up Evergreen appeared in the scene. She was in the wild, battling a fierce beast. Her face was set with determination as she fought, and eventually, her efforts were rewarded. She managed to slay the creature, claiming a special fruit as her prize. Excitement danced in her eyes as she eagerly rushed off to find someone—her friend, the boy who had once shown her kindness.

Her heart raced with anticipation as she approached, but when she arrived, she stopped dead in her tracks. The fruit she had fought so hard for slipped from her hands, hitting the ground with a soft thud.

Before her, the boy was standing with another girl. They were holding hands, smiling at one another with warmth and affection. The sight shattered Evergreen's joy in an instant. Her chest tightened, and her fingers trembled as she took in the scene.

Without a word, she turned and left, unable to bear it any longer. Her steps were quiet, but her emotions roared within her. The boy, perhaps sensing something, glanced over his shoulder. All he saw was the smashed fruit on the ground. He shrugged, dismissing it, and turned back to the other girl, continuing their conversation as if nothing had happened.

"She's so much prettier than me," young Evergreen whispered to herself. "She wears such cute dresses... She's so much more feminine." Her voice was barely audible, filled with a mix of envy and sorrow.

As the scene played out, Evergreen's voice echoed again in the memory, recalling her grandfather's words: "If you can't get something, you can use your strength to take it." The young Evergreen repeated the words in her mind, even though she knew deep down that her grandfather hadn't meant it in that way. But in her heart, she had decided to twist the meaning, to use it as a justification for the path she would soon take.

The boy's eyes fluttered open, disoriented and groggy. He realized his hands were bound tightly behind him, restricting any movement. He struggled, twisting his wrists in an attempt to break free, but the ropes held firm. Panic set in as he glanced around. He was in a small tree house, high above the ground, sunlight filtering through the leaves.

Suddenly, the door creaked open, and Evergreen stepped in, holding a tray with a steaming cup of tea. Her smile was wide, too wide, and there was a manic gleam in her eyes.

"Good morning, darling," she said sweetly, her voice dripping with unsettling affection as she set the tray down in front of him.

The boy's heart raced as he stared at her, panic filling his chest. "Evergreen? What are you doing?" His voice trembled as he spoke, his fear impossible to hide.

She tilted her head, looking almost amused by his question. "What am I doing?" she echoed, her tone light but laced with something far more sinister. "Just taking what I want."

The boy's breath quickened, and he tried to wriggle free once more. "Release me! My friends were right about you... You're a weirdo!" he shouted, desperation creeping into his voice.

Evergreen's face darkened in an instant. The sweet façade vanished, replaced by cold fury. Without warning, she swung her fist at him, her knuckles connecting with his face. Pain exploded in his jaw, and blood trickled from his nose where her punch had landed. His vision blurred for a moment.

"Ahh... I'm sorry," Evergreen said in a mockingly gentle tone, her voice softening as if nothing had happened. "Don't talk to me like that, okay? It makes me upset."

The boy, too terrified to speak, nodded quickly, his heart pounding in his chest. His face throbbed with pain, and he could taste blood on his lips.

"Good," she said, her unsettling smile returning as she picked up the cup of tea. "Now, drink this."

The Tea contains Aphrodisiacs.

Chapter 175: Room Of Memories (3/3)

Evergreen held the cup to his lips, and the boy hesitated, his eyes wide with fear. Evergreen's expression darkened again, her fingers tightening around the cup. "Drink it," she commanded, her voice low and dangerous.

He had no choice. Trembling, he parted his lips and allowed her to tip the cup, the warm liquid sliding down his throat. The taste was strange, bitter, but he didn't dare resist. As he drank, he felt his body grow heavy, his eyelids drooping despite his efforts to stay alert.

Evergreen's smile widened as she watched him drink. "There we go... That's much better." She brushed a strand of hair from his face, her touch oddly tender despite the madness lurking beneath her gaze. "Everything's going to be fine now, darling. You'll see."

She began to remove her dress.

Evergreen's obsession with the boy consumed her for an entire year. She kept him hidden in her small treehouse, far away from the prying eyes of those who searched for him. His family scoured the land, desperate to find their son, their hope waning with each passing day. Evergreen, ever the actor, even joined in their search, pretending to console his grieving parents and aiding in their futile efforts. No one suspected her involvement. She wore a mask of empathy so convincing that even the boy's parents leaned on her for support.

Inside the treehouse, things were different. Six months into his captivity, the boy's resistance had faded, and Evergreen, believing she had finally broken him, released him from his chains. He no longer fought back or tried to escape. He smiled at her, spoke sweetly, and told her everything she wanted to hear. It was as if he had come to accept his fate, even love her in his strange, twisted way. Evergreen convinced herself that he was hers now, fully and completely.

But then, one day, Evergreen heard troubling news. The girl, the one who had once held the boy's heart, was to be married. The very thought of it sent a cold fury through her veins. She watched the boy closely after that, noticing the shift in his demeanor when he learned about the wedding. His eyes clouded with longing, his mind clearly elsewhere. He tried to hide it, but Evergreen saw through his attempts. She always did.

One night, the boy slipped away, thinking he was clever, thinking Evergreen wouldn't notice. But she knew. She always knew. She followed him quietly through the dark forest, her hand gripping the hilt of her sword as she moved with the silence of a shadow.

He found the girl just as the moon reached its peak, the night before her wedding. She stood by the edge of the river, her reflection shimmering in the water, dressed in white, her face glowing with innocence. The boy fell to his knees before her, sobbing, and he told her everything. He confessed the horrors of his captivity, the twisted affection Evergreen had forced upon him, the lies he had told to survive.

The girl, overwhelmed with emotion, knelt beside him, placing her hand on his shoulder. "We'll run away," she whispered. "Tonight, before the wedding. We'll disappear, and no one will find us."

But before they could make their move, a shadow emerged from the trees. Evergreen, her belly swollen with the weight of their unborn child, stood silently behind them, her sword gleaming in the moonlight. Without hesitation, without a word, she lifted the blade and brought it down with a swift, practiced motion. The girl's head rolled to the ground, her body collapsing in a heap beside the boy.

The boy gasped, his breath catching in his throat. He stared at Evergreen in shock, too numb to react, too horrified to understand what had just happened. His eyes darted from the girl's lifeless body to Evergreen's cold, emotionless face. He tried to speak, but no words came.

Evergreen, her voice eerily calm, looked down at him and said, "You were mine. She was never going to take you from me." And with one swift motion, she swung the sword again, severing his head as cleanly as she had the girl's.

The next day, the village was abuzz with rumors. The bride had vanished, people said, run away with the boy who had been missing for so long. There was no evidence, no bodies, nothing to contradict the story Evergreen had crafted in her mind. She returned to the village as if nothing had happened, her secret secure.

A year later, Evergreen had moved to a new village with her baby, Lutz. The child was a constant reminder of the boy she had once loved—or obsessed over. Every time she looked into Lutz's innocent eyes, she saw his father staring back at her. Part of her wanted to kill the child, to erase the memory of the boy she had lost, but another part of her couldn't bring herself to do it. Lutz was all she had left of him. The child, both a source of pain and comfort, was placed in the care of Evergreen's mother while she threw herself into her work as a merchant.

Evergreen quickly made a name for herself in the region. She became known not only for her successful business ventures but for her prowess in battle. She fought off pirates who threatened her trade routes, earning the admiration of those around her. Along the way, she took on a few lovers, men who entertained her for a while, but none of them ever lasted. None could compare to the love—or madness—she had experienced with the boy.

Everything changed when Evergreen stumbled upon an ancient book during one of her travels. Its pages spoke of secrets of Labyrinth. This made Evergreen form a new plan.

At the same time, Evergreen noticed that the Crown Princess had begun to take a liking to her son, Lutz. The princess doted on him whenever they crossed paths, and Evergreen saw an opportunity. She hired a group of mercenaries to stage a fake attack on the princess, and when the moment came, Evergreen swooped in, pretending to be the hero.

The plan worked perfectly. The princess, grateful for her "rescue," invited Evergreen into the castle. Soon, she was rubbing elbows with the kingdom's elite, her influence growing by the day. Her first objective was clear: seduce the king. It didn't take long. The king was drawn to her beauty, her confidence, her strength and her mysterious allure. But Evergreen, ever calculating, played the long game. She didn't want to be a mere mistress. She wanted power. She wanted control.

She convinced the king to keep their relationship a secret, biding her time until she could make her move. As she continued to weave her web within the royal court.

One day, while playing hide and seek in the royal palace, Lutz stumbled upon a sight that would haunt him for the rest of his life. As he crouched behind a curtain, hiding from his friends, he peeked through a gap and saw his mother, Evergreen, in bed with the King. His heart raced, his young mind not fully understanding what was happening. But before he could turn away, Evergreen's eyes caught his.

Without missing a beat, Evergreen whispered to the King, "Let's do force play."

The King, naive and eager to indulge her whims, agreed without question, thinking it was just a harmless game. But to the traumatized Lutz, what he witnessed was something far more sinister. From his vantage point, all he saw was his mother being forced, and the image burned itself into his memory.

Deeply shaken, Lutz ran from the room, his mind reeling from the horrific sight. He didn't understand the complexities of the adult world, nor did he realize that what he had witnessed was a calculated move on his mother's part.

Evergreen, always plotting, saw an opportunity in Lutz's accidental discovery. The Prime Minister had long had his eye on her, infatuated with her beauty and charm. Sensing his vulnerability, she played the role of the distressed woman perfectly.

"Please," she whispered to the Prime Minister one day, tears glistening in her eyes, "take care of my son if anything happens to me."

Blinded by love and his obsession with her, the Prime Minister promised. He was ready to do anything for her, not realizing that Evergreen was simply manipulating him, planting seeds for the future.

Though Evergreen had made a name for herself, her talent in cultivation was limited. She had only reached the level of an Elite Warrior, which meant her lifespan would be restricted to around 200 to 250 years. This wasn't enough for her. She wanted more—much more. Her ambitions turned toward the Crown Princess Astrid, whose half-Angel bloodline promised immense potential.

Evergreen's research in the royal library had led her to a terrifying possibility: the Labyrinth. Deep within its mystical chambers was a way to transfer one's soul into a new, younger, and more powerful body. At first, she had hesitated, uncertain if such a thing was possible. But as she observed Astrid growing up, becoming more beautiful and more talented with each passing year, Evergreen decided to gamble.

She carefully staged her own death, secretly storing her soul inside Astrid's body. The intricate spell she had woven would remain dormant until they reached the center of the Labyrinth, where the final piece of her plan would fall into place, and she would take over Astrid's body completely.

Now, after years of planning and preparation, Evergreen had succeeded. Standing before Tyler, in Astrid's body, she felt a surge of triumph. All her sacrifices, her schemes, had led to this moment.