

R Cultivator 181

Chapter 181: Finding Moaning Mathilda

Tyler and Lily entered the cave cautiously, their senses sharp as they walked deeper into the dimly lit passage. The cave had a cool, damp atmosphere, and the walls were made of polished stone that shimmered slightly in the low light. Every step they took echoed in the silence, and the air was thick with a sense of mystery.

After a few minutes of walking, they came across a large puzzle mechanism. It looked like a series of rotating stone blocks, each carved with ancient symbols that had to be aligned in a specific way.

"Well, it looks like we've got a puzzle on our hands," Tyler said, kneeling down to inspect the blocks.

Lily knelt next to him, her eyes scanning the mechanism. "Wait... this doesn't seem right," she muttered, glancing around. "These blocks... they're already in the correct position."

Tyler straightened up, frowning. "You're right. Someone's been through here."

Lily looked around and found out there is no trap.

"Do you think it's Mathilda?" Tyler asked, rubbing his chin.

"Could be," Lily replied. "I hope it is her."

They picked up the pace, continuing through the cave. As they walked, they encountered more obstacles — stone doors, pressure plates, and strange symbols glowing faintly along the walls. But every challenge had already been solved. The doors were open, the pressure plates disabled, and the glowing symbols had clearly been deactivated.

"Whoever went through here is really good," Tyler remarked, impressed despite the urgency. "It's like they knew exactly what to do."

Lily nodded, her expression serious. "Mathilda's good, but this level of precision... I didn't know she is so smart."

But as they walked further, the atmosphere began to change. The air grew warmer, and a strange glow began to fill the cave. As they turned a corner, both Tyler and Lily froze.

The cave walls were lined with statues — and not just any statues. They were all of naked figures, posed in provocative positions, their stone faces twisted into expressions of pleasure. Some were standing, some lying down, and others in bizarre, contorted stances. The further they walked, the more statues appeared, each more explicit than the last.

"Okay, this is getting weirder," Tyler muttered, eyes widening at the increasingly suggestive statues.

Lily let out a small laugh, though her expression showed a mix of curiosity and embarrassment. "It's like some kind of twisted art gallery. I guess we know what the builders of this labyrinth were into."

Tyler rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly. "I'm almost afraid to ask what comes next."

As they passed the increasingly indecent statues, the cave suddenly opened up into a massive chamber. The air was thick and humid, and at the center of the chamber stood a large stone pedestal, similar to the others they had seen before, but this one had a small pillar on top of it. Surrounding the chamber were even more statues, each posed in various explicit positions, their stone bodies arranged like some kind of strange ritual.

Tyler and Lily both stopped in their tracks, surveying the chamber before them. Something wasn't right.

"Looks like there was something here," Lily said, moving closer to the small pillar. She ran her fingers along the surface, as if trying to sense what had been there. "It's been removed recently."

Tyler frowned. "Recently? Then Mathilda must've taken it."

Lily nodded slowly. "There's no other explanation. Whatever was here... she's already got it."

Suddenly, a noise echoed through the chamber — a quick shuffle of movement, something small darting behind one of the statues.

Tyler and Lily both tensed, their senses heightened as they scanned the area. "We're not alone," Tyler whispered.

Before they could react, the figure darted again, running between the statues. Tyler's eyes locked onto it, and in a swift motion, he pointed his hand toward the source. "Gotcha!"

A small cry rang out as a figure was caught in a sudden burst of ice, freezing it in place. Tyler and Lily approached cautiously, only to find a small girl, no older than twelve or thirteen, trapped in the ice. She had purple hair and wore an adult-sized dress that clearly didn't fit her small frame.

The girl glared up at Tyler, her voice full of defiance. "Damn you, Tyler!"

Tyler blinked in surprise. "Wait, what? Who are you—?"

Lily's eyes widened in recognition. "Mathilda?"

The girl huffed, her arms crossed as she struggled against the ice. "Of course, it's me, idiot."

Tyler quickly thawed the ice, releasing her. As the small girl stepped free, she glared at both of them, clearly annoyed. Despite her youthful appearance, there was no mistaking the familiar spark in her eyes.

"Mathilda's illegitimate daughter?" Tyler teased, his voice full of mock surprise.

"No!" the girl snapped, her voice cute despite her irritation. "I am Mathilda!"

Lily covered her mouth in an attempt to suppress her laughter. "Oh my gods... poor girl, she doesn't even realize her mom is that pervert."

The small Mathilda slapped Lily's hand away when she tried to pat her head, then climbed onto one of the indecent statues and perched on top of it, her small frame striking a comical contrast against the larger-than-life figure. "I am Mathilda!" she declared again, her voice full of indignation.

"Yeah, yeah, we know," Tyler chuckled. "We were just messing with you."

Both he and Lily burst out laughing, the absurdity of the situation sinking in. "Why are you so small?" Tyler managed between laughs. "This is... too much!"

Mathilda scowled and leapt off the statue, tackling Tyler to the ground in a fit of frustration. "You little—!"

As they rolled around on the floor, Mathilda finally relented, sitting on top of Tyler with her arms crossed. "I accidentally entered this place and found an orb of light. It was overflowing with life energy. I just wanted to taste it, but instead, I ended up swallowing the whole thing. Next thing I know, I'm a kid again."

"An orb?" Lily asked, her curiosity piqued. She rummaged through her pouch and pulled out a glowing orb. "Does it look like this?"

Mathilda's eyes widened. She quickly grabbed the orb to examine it "Yeah! You have one too?"

Lily smirked. "I got this from a temple I explored with that Manhunter woman. It was supposed to be her share, but well... not anymore."

Mathilda stared at Tyler in confusion, and he whispered, "She got dumped."

"I can hear you," Lily shot back, but her tone remained playful.

Tyler quickly changed the subject. "So how did you manage to finish all the puzzles and traps before us?"

Mathilda grinned, her mischievous side showing even in her small form. "The first cave? Easy. It just needed to get wet, so I poured a bunch of aphrodisiac potions into it. The thing opened up like it was begging for more. Fufu. It even cleared all the traps by itself."

Lily groaned in disbelief. "Of course. It probably loved it so much it opened all the paths for you without any trouble. And here I Have to go through all troubles just to get this orb."

Tyler shook his head, laughing. "You're unbelievable."

Mathilda puffed her chest out, clearly proud of herself. "The statue is just Statue of Culture."

After the laughter died down, Mathilda's expression turned serious. "There's more, though. When I swallowed that orb, I got some information. Turns out this labyrinth has been here for centuries, long before the Rosefall Kingdom even existed. It emerges every 500 years or so. Some immortals were using it to research something called the Pseudo-Eternal Code."

Lily's eyes widened in recognition. "The Pseudo-Eternal Code? That's... that's the stuff of legends."

Mathilda nodded. "Yeah. These orbs we found? They're a product of that research. They grant a thousand years of lifespan and even strengthen the soul. That's why I'm a kid now—my body couldn't handle all that life energy, so it reverted me to my younger form."

"There is also a method producing Lifespan by Intercourse. But it looks like someone already took it away many decades ago." Mathilda continued with disappointment.

Tyler's eyes lit up with excitement. "So if we eat these orbs, we get a thousand more years of life?"

Lily, ever the practical one, cut him off. "These kind of treasures only works once, Tyler. Once you've absorbed one, that's it. You can't just keep eating them for eternal life."

Tyler's excitement faded, his dreams of immortality dashed. "Well, that's a bummer."

Mathilda shrugged. "The main point is, we could use one of these orbs to help Astrid. If she eats it, her soul will get strong enough to break free from whatever's possessing her."

"But wouldn't that strengthen Evergreen's soul too?" Tyler asked.

Mathilda frowned in thought. "That's the tricky part. But I've got an idea... we need to find Astrid and Lutz for this."

As Mathilda explained her plan, Tyler and Lily exchanged determined glances. They had come far, but their journey was far from over.

Chapter 182: Two Options to save Astrid

"We actually found a way to save Astrid, but we need your help. Find us in the part of the Labyrinth where it snows." Tyler used the Labyrinth Communication Charm he had acquired from the Room of Fortune to send a message to Lutz. The charm only worked inside the Labyrinth; the receiver didn't need any device to receive the message. The sender just needed to think about the person inside the Labyrinth.

An hour later, Tyler White, little Mathilda, and Lily Gomes found Lutz waiting for them outside.

"As expected, you seem to have some sort of map of the Labyrinth," Tyler said, noticing how easily Lutz had found them.

"No, it's more like a compass for the Labyrinth. It points to where the abnormal weather is," Lutz explained, tossing a compass to Tyler.

Tyler caught it and examined it. The compass didn't have traditional directions. Instead, it had four needles, each labeled with different environments: desert, snow, sky, and forest. With this, Lutz was able to navigate the Labyrinth effortlessly.

"Alright, mini Mathilda will explain the plan," Tyler said, pointing to Mathilda.

"Don't give me weird names," Mathilda pouted, then turned to Lutz.

Lutz, focused on saving Astrid, adopted a serious expression and listened intently.

Meanwhile, Tyler subtly placed the compass into his Copper Pot, and created a perfect copy without anyone noticing—except for Lily. She wanted to turn around and call him out but refrained. After all, she'd promised not to pry. Still, her intuition told her Tyler was being sneaky.

"This Labyrinth was created by Angels who once served a certain god," Mathilda began. "They tried to replicate the god's power and immortality, conducting countless experiments here. That's why the Labyrinth required Astrid's angelic blood to emerge."

She explained further that the angels were researchers who had come up with various methods to extend life spans. One of those methods was going to be their key to saving Astrid.

"We're going to use one of their experiments to break Astrid free," Mathilda said.

Lutz, visibly troubled by guilt, nodded. "I'm glad Astrid was able to meet friends like you. Tell me what I need to do—I'll do anything. Because of my mother, Evergreen's greed, and my own foolishness, Astrid is suffering. It's my responsibility to help her."

Mathilda nodded, appreciating his sincerity. "It's quite simple. First, we need to find Astrid and capture her safely. Once we have her, we'll bring her to the Procreation Temple within the Labyrinth."

Lutz frowned. "The Procreation Temple? What exactly are we planning to do there?"

Mathilda explained the temple's ancient purpose. "The temple was designed to strengthen souls and expand lifespans by channeling immense life force. We believe that if Astrid consumes a life-force orb there, it'll not only restore her strength but will also reinforce her soul, allowing her to break free of Evergreen's control."

"But won't that also strengthen Evergreen's soul inside her?" Lutz asked, concerned.

"I also had the same question. That's the tricky part" Tyler chimed in. "Strengthening Astrid might also empower Evergreen's influence over her. But we think there's a way to prevent that."

Tyler then tossed the compass back to Lutz. He already has a copy.

Mathilda elaborated. "Actually, there are two ways to do it."

"The first option is soul sacrifice," she explained. "Someone would need to sacrifice their lifespan and soul to strengthen Astrid's. Even if Evergreen's soul grows stronger in the process, Astrid's soul would become strong enough to devour it."

Everyone listened intently, absorbing the gravity of the situation.

"Next option is to Force her in sexual intercourse" Little Mathilda said with serious tone.

Lutz was dumbfounded.

"Yeah, The second option is through sexual intercourse," Mathilda continued with a straight face. "There is an array in that same pleasure church where it stimulates sexual interaction to the highest by directing to the soul. We can set it up so that all the pleasure will be directed toward Evergreen's soul, distracting her while Astrid absorbs the Life Orb. Because she'll be too distracted, Evergreen's soul won't have the chance to strengthen."

Lutz frowned deeply and shouted, "Absolutely not!"

"Why? Don't you two love each other?" Mathilda asked, confused. She recalled how Astrid often spoke fondly of Lutz—always mentioning him, always worrying about him.

"With everything that's happened... I doubt she feels that way about me anymore." Lutz sighed, shaking his head. "But that's not the real issue. The problem is that the one inside her is my mother. I can't do... that with my own mother."

Lutz's refusal was resolute, his voice heavy with both guilt and disgust.

"But these are the only solutions we've found," Mathilda insisted, her small form seemingly weighing down under the burden of the situation.

Lutz stood there, lost in serious thought, before turning sharply to Tyler. His eyes were pleading, desperate. Tyler blinked in surprise, unsure of what Lutz wanted from him.

Lutz took a deep breath and suddenly knelt before Tyler, bowing his head. "Please, Phantom Blackwood or Tyler White, whatever name you go by—please save Astrid. I beg of you."

Tyler, taken aback, quickly raised his hands in protest. "Whoa, whoa! I can't sacrifice my soul for her! That's... too much."

"Stop acting dumb. He's definitely asking about the second option," Lily interjected, rolling her eyes.

"Ah... right." Tyler scratched the back of his head, speechless for a moment. He looked over to Mathilda for confirmation.

Mathilda chimed in, her voice calm and matter-of-fact. "Actually, the first option—the soul sacrifice—was originally part of an experiment for achieving a longer lifespan. According to the research, whoever sacrifices their soul will be reborn as the child of the person whose soul gets strengthened. It's as if the soul fragments don't enter reincarnation but stick with the recipient's soul until they produce an heir."

"So, in short, whoever sacrifices their soul for Astrid would be reborn as her child?" Tyler asked, his eyebrows raised in disbelief.

"Yeah... It's another way to achieve immortality. But the project was abandoned when they discovered that the reborn person couldn't remember their past life," Mathilda explained, shrugging as if discussing a scientific anomaly rather than the fate of their friend.

Tyler was still trying to wrap his head around this bizarre piece of information. "So, we're supposed to choose between soul sacrifice or distracting her soul through... well, a different means." He sighed. "Neither of these is ideal."

"We don't need to risk the soul sacrifice," Lutz said, his voice breaking the tension. "Mr. Tyler, please. Can you do it? Can you save her?"

Tyler stared at Lutz, bewildered. "You're asking me like this is some kind of simple favor. That's your girlfriend, man."

"I know. But there's no other way. If you don't do it, I'll have to sacrifice myself. And I'm ready to do that if it means saving her." Lutz's voice was steady, but his eyes betrayed the turmoil he was feeling. Deep down, he had already made peace with the idea of sacrificing himself, but a part of him longed to find another way—to stay alive and atone for his past mistakes. He wanted to be there for Astrid in the future, not just in spirit.

Lily stepped in, sensing the mounting tension. "Let's not decide anything just yet. First, we need to find Astrid. We can figure out the rest after that."

Tyler shot her a thumbs-up. "Exactly. Let's focus on finding her first. No point in making a decision without her."

He reached into his pouch and handed out a set of Labyrinth Communication Charms to everyone. "Here. Use these to keep in touch. They only work inside the Labyrinth, but they'll allow us to communicate no matter where we are in this place."

Lutz nodded, pocketing the charm. Without wasting another moment, he rushed off to search for Astrid.

Once Lutz was gone, Tyler discreetly pulled out several copies of the Labyrinth compass from his bag—an exact copy of Lutz's magical tool. Both Lily and Mathilda knew about Tyler's mysterious ability to copy objects, but they had agreed not to pry. For now, they accepted the compasses without a word.

"With these compasses and the communication charms, we should be able to cover more ground," Tyler said. He handed one to Lily and another to Mathilda, who both nodded in agreement.

"We'll split up and search in different parts of the Labyrinth," Lily said, already scanning the surroundings. "Let's move quickly. The longer we take, the more danger Astrid could be in."

"Also beware of other pirates." Mathilda warned. Both Tyler and Lily nodded.

"I hope I will meet that Manhunter again." Lily gritted her teeth.

The three of them set off in different directions, each armed with their communication charms and compasses. The Labyrinth, a twisting, endless maze of magical traps and strange landscapes, seemed to pulse with an eerie life of its own as they ventured deeper into it.

"Labyrinths, angels, soul sacrifices... I didn't sign up for this," Tyler muttered to himself.

Chapter 183: Finding Astrid

The labyrinth stretched endlessly before Lutz, a maze crafted by angels, filled with clouds and hidden paths. He knew that if anyone could find a way out, it would be Evergreen, who now possessed Astrid's body. As a being with the bloodline of angels, she could sense the exit, and Lutz feared she was already trying to escape.

Having researched the labyrinth extensively, Lutz had studied the records left by Evergreen and knew its secrets. He had been the one to open the labyrinth, and he could also sense the path that led to its exit. Without wasting any time, he made his way to a section of the labyrinth filled with thick clouds. After crossing numerous fluffy cloud corridors and dead ends, Lutz finally arrived at a platform of clouds that appeared no different from any other part of the maze.

Lutz activated his prana, channeling it into the cloudy platform. An array hidden within the clouds responded to his power, and the platform transformed into an actual cloud, lifting him into the air. As he ascended, he felt the shift in atmosphere, rising above the labyrinth itself. At the top, the sky was an illusion, bright and endless. It felt like a new area entirely, one separated from the rest of the labyrinth's confines.

As he landed atop the clouds, he saw the cloudy door that marked the exit of the labyrinth. This door, however, could only be opened by someone with the bloodline of an angel. For Astrid, a half-angel, this restriction wouldn't pose a problem.

Lutz scanned the area and frowned. "She's not here. Did she escape already?"

Just as the thought crossed his mind, he noticed a cloud drifting in the distance, and on it lay a golden-haired maiden, peacefully sleeping.

"Astrid," Lutz breathed in relief as he hurried toward her.

He reached Astrid, but something felt off. She was just lying there, unmoving, with no sign of trying to escape. Lutz approached quietly, his instincts warning him to be cautious. He gathered his magic, intending to cast a water prison around her to confine her safely. But before he could act, he sensed danger.

A sudden flash of light—a sword slash—cut through the air where he had stood moments earlier. Lutz narrowly dodged, rolling away just in time.

"Tsk... I thought I had you, my son," Evergreen's voice hissed, coming from Astrid's lips. Her tone was cold, devoid of any warmth or familial attachment.

"You tried to kill me?" Lutz stood, facing her. "I'm your son."

Evergreen, fully possessing Astrid's body, simply shrugged. "I don't care about that anymore. From now on, I am Astrid. This girl's soul is rebellious, constantly fighting me. I've had to use nearly all my soul energy just to keep her under control."

Lutz clenched his fists, his heart breaking at the thought of Astrid suffering like that. "Please... stop torturing her."

Evergreen's lips twisted into a sinister smirk. "And if I don't? What will you do?"

"Then I'll stop you," Lutz declared, his expression hardening with resolve.

Evergreen let out a mocking laugh. "Try anything funny, and I'll hurt this body. You wouldn't want that, would you?"

Lutz hesitated for a moment, but then a sly smile crept across his face. "You're bluffing. You already think of this body as your own. You won't risk damaging it."

He waved his staff, and water began to form in the air around Evergreen, swirling in preparation for an attack.

"Tsk..." Evergreen clicked her tongue, her eyes narrowing. "Why are you suddenly so smart?"

What she didn't know was that it wasn't Lutz's idea at all—it had been Lily's suggestion. A simple tactic, but one that worked.

Meanwhile, Tyler was on his own, wandering through a different part of the labyrinth. He took out his communication charm and sent a message to Mathilda, a sense of unease creeping into his voice.

"Hey, Little Mathilda, are you going to be fine on your own?" he asked, concerned for her safety.

I'm not little!" came the instant reply, followed by a stream of unspeakable words. Then, Mathilda's tone softened slightly as she sent another message. "Don't worry. I can make them regret it if anyone tries to harm me."

Tyler sighed, slightly reassured. He sent another message, this time to both Lily and Mathilda. "I don't want to do this. I really don't want to force myself on Astrid. Help me with this."

Mathilda's response came first, her words dripping with mischief. "Hmm... how about we feed some aphrodisiacs to Lutz and let him save his lover?"

"That's cruel," Tyler muttered, shaking his head at the suggestion.

Lily, who was also searching for Astrid, chimed in with a plan of her own. "It's simple. You just have to..." She trailed off as she explained, and Tyler's eyes lit up as he listened to her idea.

Just then, Lutz's voice crackled through the communication charm. "This is Lutz. I've already found her. I'll bring her to the church."

"Nice... I'll tell everyone to come back," Tyler replied, relieved that Lutz had managed to find Astrid before things got worse.

Lutz emerged from the cloud maze with a few sword scars, his expression weary but determined. Behind him floated a sphere of water, and within that sphere was Astrid, still unconscious and suspended in a deep sleep.

Tyler met up with him, eyeing the water prison warily. "Is she okay?"

"She's still fighting back," Lutz said grimly. "Evergreen is trying to suppress her, but Astrid's soul is strong. She hasn't given up yet."

"Good," Tyler nodded, glancing at Astrid's peaceful face. "But we don't have much time. If we're going to save her, we need to act now."

Mathilda and Lily arrived shortly after, both looking prepared for whatever came next. They circled around Lutz and the water sphere, concern etched on their faces.

"Looks like she's hanging in there," Lily observed. "But Evergreen's influence is growing. We can't delay."

Tyler hesitated for a moment, his mind racing through their options. "So... about that plan we talked about."

Lily nodded. "It's the only way, unless you want to sacrifice someone's soul."

"Absolutely not," Tyler said firmly. "No one's sacrificing anything today."

Mathilda crossed her arms, grinning slightly. "Well, it's either that or... you know, the other thing."

Tyler groaned inwardly, the awkwardness of the situation hitting him all over again. But there wasn't any time for second thoughts.

"Fine," he muttered. "Let's do it."

Lutz, standing by Astrid's side, looked to Tyler with a mixture of hope and desperation. "Thank you," he whispered, his voice barely audible. "Thank you for saving her."

Tyler nodded stiffly, not quite sure how to respond. All he knew was that they had to act fast—before Evergreen could tighten her grip on Astrid's soul.

They soon arrived at a chamber with a huge bed, crafted from wood and vines found in one part of the labyrinth and topped with fluffy clouds from another. It was an oddly serene and beautiful sight, a perfect contrast to the chaos surrounding them.

"How do you know all of this?" Lily asked, curiosity gnawing at her. Mathilda seemed to understand the labyrinth's intricacies better than anyone.

Mathilda smiled confidently, a twinkle of mischief in her eyes. "You noticed, huh? Don't worry, I'm still me, Lily—Onee-sama. I'll explain later."

Lily gave her a nod, trusting her friend despite the unanswered questions. "Alright."

"Now, place her on the bed. And Tyler, strip," Mathilda said, pulling a lever that activated an array in the room. The vines glowed softly as particles like fireflies floated through the air, casting a warm glow. The atmosphere became calm, almost magical. On the bed, Astrid lay peacefully, though inside her body, two souls continued their battle for dominance.

"We'll wait outside," Mathilda said, signaling for Lily to follow her. They both left without another word.

Lutz, standing beside Tyler, looked uncertain but resolute. He patted Tyler on the shoulder. "I'll leave it to you."

But instead of the usual response, he heard a clanking noise. Turning around, Lutz realized it wasn't Tyler standing next to him—it was an ice statue.

"Ice Escape Technique?!"

"TYLERRRR!" Lutz shouted, his voice echoing with frustration and betrayal.

Tyler, already at the entrance, gave a quick wave before sealing it shut. "I'm sorry, but you can handle it!" he called back, disappearing from sight with a shameless grin as he made his escape.

Lutz gulped, his eyes fixed on the sleeping beauty before him. Astrid's face, usually so calm and gentle, was now tense, betraying the inner turmoil she was enduring. Her lips trembled slightly, and beads of sweat dotted her forehead. She was struggling, fighting a battle he couldn't fully understand but knew was crucial.

He clenched his fists, his knuckles white. The weight of the situation bore down on him like a crushing wave, but the thought of Astrid's suffering fueled his determination. There was no running from this. Tyler's escape had left him no choice.

"Fine," Lutz muttered, his voice low but resolute. "I'll do it myself."

Chapter 184: Lutz's Resolve

Lutz stood near the altar, his heart pounding as he took in the sight of the chamber. Every vine, every flicker of light seemed to mock his hesitation, daring him to take the plunge. Astrid's life depended on him. Her golden hair gleamed even in the dim light, splayed out on the bed as though she'd been placed there by some cruel god. Her face, normally so calm, now twitched in pain, likely a reflection of the battle raging within her.

Lutz swallowed hard. "Astrid... I'm sorry." He wasn't sure if the words were for her or for himself. A pit of guilt had opened inside him, widening with every step that led him toward his decision. His mother, Evergreen, had caused so much suffering, not just to Astrid but to so many others. And now, this was the only way he could atone.

"You can do this... We are all counting on you..." Lutz heard a faint voice.

"Are you guys watching?" Lutz muttered under his breath, slightly annoyed.

"Huh? No... No!" Little Mathilda's voice stammered in a panic, like a child caught with her hand in the cookie jar.

Smack

"Ouch!" Mathilda yelped as Tyler's voice chimed in, stern and chastising. "I told you, no peeking."

Lutz let out a breath of relief, but his hands were trembling. He wasn't going to touch Astrid, not like they'd all assumed. Instead, his eyes turned toward the second altar, one that had been dormant since they entered.

With deliberate movements, he began to remove his dress, piece by piece.

Meanwhile, Mathilda rubbed the back of her head where Tyler had smacked her. Grumbling, she reactivated the observation array. She and Tyler both watched in fascination as a small cylindrical device, dark and glass-like, emerged from the floor near Astrid's bed.

"We need to insert the life orb into this," Mathilda explained, her voice tinged with excitement. "It will concentrate the energy and activate the array. The energy will be directed at Astrid, strengthening her lifespan and soul. Lutz just needs to focus on Evergreen's soul."

But something was wrong. As the mechanism became fully visible, Mathilda's face paled. "Wait... there are three slots?"

Tyler frowned. "So we need three life orbs? You've already used one, and Lily only has one left."

Mathilda bit her lip. "It looks like this array needs even more life energy to work properly. Without three orbs, we won't be able to give Astrid's body the energy she needs."

Tyler didn't hesitate. He pulled out a life orb and inserted it into one of the slots.

"That's not enough—" Mathilda started to say, but her words trailed off as Tyler produced a second orb and placed it in the second slot.

Mathilda's eyes widened in disbelief as he revealed a third orb and pushed it into the final slot. She stared at Tyler, her mouth slightly agape. Tyler made a huss gesture with teasing smile.

"Looks like you're finally starting to trust us," Lily teased, grinning at Tyler. Mathilda turned away, but a small smile tugged at her lips as well.

It means Tyler is ready to reveal his secret to them. Tyler's actions were a clear sign that he was putting his faith in them. It was a moment of silent acknowledgment that their bond had grown stronger.

The cylindrical tube began to hum as concentrated energy surged through the room. Light streamed into the chamber, filling the air with radiant, almost ethereal power. The energy entered Astrid's body through her eyebrows, and her life span immediately began to grow. Inside her, the two battling souls also started to gain strength. Both Evergreen and Astrid's soul began to strengthen.

In the tranquil village where Astrid's consciousness resided, she stood calmly, plucking fruits from the trees. Behind her, her pure white wings fluttered slightly in the warm breeze. She smiled, feeling a sense of peace. But that peace was short-lived as she heard a familiar voice behind her.

Opposite her, a woman stood, tall and proud with an air of authority. It was Evergreen, her expression one of disdain. "A princess of a kingdom, and this is your mental world? How... quaint," she sneered.

Astrid smiled, undeterred. "I don't care about kingdoms or castles. These things give me peace."

Evergreen's lips curled into a snarl. "That's why I hate you. People like you. The ones who say that wealth doesn't matter—rich people. The ones who claim beauty doesn't matter—those who are born beautiful. And you, claiming status is meaningless. It's revolting."

Astrid shook her head, unphased by Evergreen's outburst. "I never did anything to harm you. You're just... jealous."

Evergreen's eyes flashed with anger. "The timid girl speaks up, finally." With a swift motion, she grabbed Astrid by the throat, lifting her effortlessly into the air. The wings on Evergreen's back flared out, majestic and terrifying. They flew toward a looming, illusory castle that hung in the sky. Astrid struggled in her grip, trying to break free.

"This is my mental realm," Evergreen hissed, her voice dripping with malice. "All I ever wanted was wealth, power, and glory. And you... you're in my way."

Astrid gasped for air, even though she is soul, everything felt real. Her vision blurred as Evergreen's grip tightened. But in the physical realm, light continued to pour into Astrid, strengthening her soul. Even as her consciousness struggled in Evergreen's grasp, a warmth was building inside her.

Outside the room, Mathilda's face turned. "Oh no..." she whispered, her Little hands moved as she reactivated the array.

"Hey I said 'no peeking'." Tyler said. But he stopped his joking tone when he saw her serious expression.

"What's happening?" Tyler asked, alarmed.

"It's bad. Look." Mathilda pointed to the screen. Astrid's body twitched violently on the bed, her face contorted as if caught in a terrible nightmare.

The altar in the room had activated, sending out an ominous red glow. Lutz stood in the center, fully exposed, as his life force was being siphoned into the array. His body had already begun to show signs of aging, his once-youthful features now lined and haggard.

"What the hell is he doing?" Tyler asked, panicking.

Lutz's voice echoed faintly through the array, calm but resolute. "Don't worry about me. I've thought this through."

Even inside her mental world, Astrid heard his voice. Her eyes widened in horror. "Lutz... What are you doing?"

Evergreen's brow furrowed. "That voice... My idiot son. What is he up to?"

In the physical world, Lutz continued speaking, his voice growing weaker as the array drained his energy. "Astrid probably hates me by now. Because of my mother's selfishness, and my foolishness, she lost everything. I don't want to add to her pain."

"No... Lutz, that's not true..." Astrid's voice cracked, tears forming in her eyes. Even as she struggled against Evergreen, she couldn't help the ache in her heart for him.

Tyler slammed his fists against the door, trying to force it open. "We need to stop him!"

Mathilda shook her head, despair in her eyes. "We can't. If we interfere with the array now, it could harm Astrid."

Lutz's voice grew softer, almost a whisper. "I've made my choice. If this works, I'll be reborn as Astrid's child someday. I hope... she won't hate her own child. Knowing her, she'll be a better mother than mine ever was."

Evergreen's expression darkened. "You idiot..." she muttered.

"No, Lutz..." Astrid sobbed. Inside her mental world, her strength surged, her soul growing brighter and brighter. Her wings flared out with newfound power, and suddenly, she broke free from Evergreen's grasp. The oppressive castle faded, replaced by the tranquil village once more.

Astrid turned to face Evergreen, her voice steady and filled with resolve. "Goodbye, Aunt Evergreen."

Evergreen's eyes widened, her confident facade crumbling. "No... Astrid, wait—"

But it was too late. With a simple motion, Astrid waved her hand, and Evergreen's soul shattered into countless pieces, dissolving into nothingness.

The light in the room dimmed, leaving only silence. The door to the chamber creaked open, allowing Tyler and the others to rush inside.

Tyler's gaze fell on the altar, now cold and dark. Where Lutz had once stood, there was only a pile of ashes. His heart sank as he turned to the bed.

There, lying peacefully, was a small girl, no more than twelve years old. Her face was calm, her breathing steady. She looked like she was merely sleeping.

"Did it... work?" Tyler asked, his voice hoarse.

Mathilda hesitated, then nodded slowly. "I think so."

Tyler said softly, " Let's take her back."

Lily stepped forward, gently lifting the small girl into her arms. "She's safe now."

And they all left the chamber in silence.

(Probably in future)

Years later, high above the clouds, A mature-looking Astrid flew through the clouds, her face serene. She placed a hand on her swollen belly, a soft smile spreading across her lips.

"Lutz W***** " she whispered, feeling an unexplainable warmth fill her heart, her voice carried away by the wind.

Chapter 185: Leaving the Labyrinth and Reunion (2 in 1 Chapter)

"We all know that these Ancient Angels did many experiments and created this Labyrinth just to expand their lifespan and live longer, right?" Little Mathilda said. She sat alongside Tyler, Lily, and the still-sleeping Astrid on top of a wall of the Labyrinth. Despite their strange surroundings, the mood felt surprisingly calm. They all held barbecued meat in their hands, with Tyler's habit of storing nearly everything in his storage treasure once again saving the day. The group drank Blue Dew Tea, a rare tea from the Rosefall Kingdom, which Tyler had stocked up on during their last trip to the capital.

As they enjoyed their food, Mathilda continued, "This one ancient angel created the Possession technique."

"The same one Evergreen used," Lily said, her tone darkening as she remembered the recent battle.

"Yes. She used it on me, but unlike Evergreen, this soul barely had any power left. It was more like a crumbled soul that was about to extinguish. I simply squashed her and got her memories in return. That's how I know a lot about the Labyrinth now."

Tyler nodded, a thoughtful look on his face. "I'm glad you're alright." He reached over and patted Mathilda's head gently.

Mathilda smirked, a glint of mischief in her eyes. "Oh, do you prefer young girls now?"

Ouch. Tyler's swift smack to her head served as an answer, and she rubbed her head with a pout.

She continued despite the teasing, "There's also something called the Time Chamber, used for traveling into the future."

"Traveling into the future?" Tyler asked, intrigued by the concept.

"It's not exactly time traveling," Mathilda clarified, frowning in concentration as she tried to recall the fragmented memories. "It's more like the time ratio is different inside. For example, someone could go inside for a few days, and months or even years could pass outside. It's another method the ancient angels probably used to extend their lives. I don't know where that chamber is, though. My memories of the layout are a little fuzzy."

Tyler rubbed her head again, a silent gesture of support, as Mathilda shrugged.

Lily, looking more curious than ever, asked, "What about the Life Orbs? How are they produced?"

Mathilda took a bite of her meat before answering. "The Labyrinth goes into a sort of dormant state for centuries at a time. During this period, it acts like a giant cauldron, absorbing the ambient energy in the air. It then compresses and converts that energy into pure Life Energy. From what I know, they're using a branch of the Elves' World Tree as a core. That tree has strong Life attributes."

"So that's how they made the Life Orbs?" Lily asked, taking a sip of her tea.

"Yep, but it takes centuries to form just two or three of those orbs," Mathilda said. "Lily and I got lucky with the two we found. I'm not sure if there are any others left."

Tyler leaned back, unfazed by the information. 'It doesn't really matter. I can make as many Life Orbs as we need with my Copper Pot.' Tyler thought.

Tyler then asked, "Is there any way out of this Labyrinth?"

Mathilda nodded. "There are two ways. One, you can use the exit doorway up in the clouds. Two, you can close the Labyrinth completely."

Tyler rubbed his chin, considering their options. "Let's close the Labyrinth. I don't want to leave it running, especially with the citizens of Rosefall Kingdom trapped here."

"We might need to wake her up." Mathilda pointed at Astrid, her voice gentle but concerned. Her gaze lingered on Astrid, who was still unconscious, resting before the sacrifice altar. "She's basically the master key to the Labyrinth. But I wonder how it works. How can she control the Labyrinth? It doesn't make sense that it would work just because she has an Angel bloodline."

Lily, who had been pacing nearby, paused and crossed her arms. "Her ancestor must have been one of the researchers in the Labyrinth. It's likely that the Labyrinth detected the same family bloodline running through her veins, triggering the connection."

They both fell silent for a moment, the tension in the air thick as they waited for Astrid to wake. The labyrinth's mysteries still loomed around them, but none were more pressing than Astrid's potential role in unraveling it all.

A soft gasp escaped Astrid's lips as her eyes fluttered open.

A few minutes later, they arrived at the sacrifice Altar.

Without a word, Astrid slowly pushed herself to her knees before the altar, tears streaming down her face. She didn't speak, and neither Tyler nor the others approached her. They knew she needed this moment—space to mourn, to process everything she had lost.

Astrid had lost more than anyone could have imagined. Her father was gone, her childhood friend was likely dead, and even the hero she had once admired had vanished from her life. The Rosefall Kingdom, her home, was in shambles, and the future looked uncertain. But despite it all, life moved forward. She had to keep moving. She reached down and touched her belly gently, a small glimmer of hope lighting her sorrowful eyes. There was still a future—a chance she could reunite with Lutz, the one she had loved and lost to time.

Tyler and the rest of the crew soon found themselves standing near the core of the Labyrinth, a massive chamber that exuded a haunting energy. Beside them lay the dormant ****Room of Memories****, its once vibrant walls dull and lifeless. It was clear that something had caused the room's functions. But they didn't dwell on it—they had a more important mission ahead. The Labyrinth needed to be closed, and Astrid was the key to achieving it.

"Before we leave... let's consume this." Tyler's voice broke the silence as he produced two small, glowing orbs from his pouch. They pulsed with life force, casting a warm glow over the dark chamber.

"Are those...?" Lily asked, her eyes widening.

Tyler held them up. "Life Orbs. We don't know if they'll work outside the Labyrinth, so it's better we consume them now while we can." He glanced at Astrid and Mathilda, who had already used one each earlier and were now in their child-like forms as a result. Both had gained a thousand years of lifespan, but at the cost of looking like they were no older than twelve.

After a moment of hesitation, Tyler and Lily nodded in agreement and each took one of the Life Orbs. The moment Tyler consumed his, he felt a rush of life force flood his body, rejuvenating every cell, every muscle, and every fiber of his being. It was overwhelming. The sensation of time reversing within him was surreal as his once mature, thirty-year-old form began to regress. He grew shorter, his muscles softened, and his facial features became youthful again.

When the sensation finally passed, Tyler blinked open his eyes, now standing at a much smaller stature.

"Wow," he muttered, glancing down at himself. He looked to be about twelve years old—an odd feeling, considering he now had a thousand-year lifespan ahead of him. He looked up to find three pairs of eyes staring at him, wide with amusement.

Astrid, who had been crying earlier, looked at Tyler and Lily with astonishment. Little Lily, who had just transformed into a child herself, was grinning, her cheeks flushed from the excess energy coursing through her. And Mathilda? Well, she was grinning for a different reason entirely.

"Tyler, you're so cute!" Mathilda cried out, her voice a high-pitched squeal. Without warning, she threw herself at him, hugging him tightly and giggling uncontrollably. She was practically drooling. "I could just eat you up!"

Tyler's face turned crimson as he awkwardly tried to pry Mathilda off him. "Mathilda, knock it off! This is serious!" But the rest of the crew couldn't help but laugh at the scene. Astrid also let a small chuckle but it quickly faded away. They all looked like a group of twelve-year-olds now, but the reality of their extended lifespans hung in the air.

Once the laughter subsided, Astrid stepped forward with renewed determination. She placed her small hand on the glowing core of the Labyrinth, her expression solemn.

In an instant, the Labyrinth began to tremble. Light erupted from the core, spreading out in brilliant waves that enveloped the entire structure. Tyler, Lily, Mathilda, and Astrid held hands tightly as the light bathed them, a strange warmth filling their bodies.

The massive walls of the Labyrinth shimmered before slowly sinking into the ground, as though being swallowed by the earth itself. It was like watching the entire place dissolve into an illusion, the ancient stones and halls disappearing into nothingness.

It took an entire day for the Labyrinth to fully vanish, leaving behind crumbled ruins and remnants of what once was. When the dust finally settled, they stood in a desolate landscape. Pirates, Federation soldiers, and citizens who had been trapped within the Labyrinth were now scattered across the land and sea, some stranded on small islands of rubble, others desperately swimming to shore.

Armies of armored soldiers descended from the skies, swooping in to rescue those floating in the sea. The soldiers brought them to what was left of the Rosefall ex-Capital Island. Among the crowd, some pirates wasted no time fleeing with their loot, eager to escape the chaos while they could.

Above them, an imposing figure—an army commander—floated in mid-air, his presence commanding. He raised his voice, addressing the survivors. "Please, stay calm! I know you've endured years of torment inside the Labyrinth, but the White Crown Army is now in charge. We will do everything in our power to aid you."

His words sparked confusion among the crowd.

"Years?"

"White Crown... what?"

The army commander scanned the island, his sharp eyes locking onto Tyler's group. His expression shifted, and he murmured to himself, "There they are... but they look so young."

Without hesitation, the commander activated his communication charm, sending a message to someone. Moments later, a fast-flying boat shot through the sky, stopping right in front of Tyler and the others.

"I can feel it... it's Mana," Tyler said with a grin just before a familiar presence wrapped him in a tight hug from behind.

It was Mana, her arms encircling him as if she never wanted to let go. "Mana missed you," she whispered, her voice filled with relief.

Then, another figure stepped off the boat. A tall girl, towering over Tyler and the others, walked toward them. She had long white hair, pale skin, and an ethereal presence. She looked about fourteen or fifteen years old, with long, pointed ears.

"Silvia? Why are you so big?" Tyler's first question broke the silence.

Silvia blushed, glancing away as she peeked shyly from behind Lily. "Why are you so small... and cute?"

Before Tyler could respond, Mana added with a puzzled look, "She's grown up really well in five years."

Tyler's confusion deepened. "Five years? It's only been a few months since we entered the Labyrinth!"

Little Mathilda, still hugging Silvia, looked up thoughtfully. "Tyler, I think I understand now... I know where that Time Chamber is... The whole Labyrinth was the Time Chamber."

Tyler and others were dumbfounded.

Not even a Month passed in Labyrinth. But Five Years passed in outside world.

— End of Volume 3: The Rosefall Kingdom Arc —