

## R Cultivator 196

### Chapter 196: Cedar Island (1/2)

Four Months Later...

The journey after that day had been surprisingly smooth, without any major troubles. Tyler and his crew sailed from island to island, with Tyler steadily expanding his influence wherever they docked. He founded new branches of the White Merchant Group in every port city they visited, gradually building a commercial empire that was beginning to gain some recognition. In particular, the White Merchant Group had started to make waves in the New Rose Kingdom, and the name "Tyler White" was quickly becoming synonymous with success.

Unlike most merchants, Tyler didn't bother renting spaces for his stores. Instead, he bought out properties, giving him more control and stability. He also made it a point to hire the slaves he had freed from his ship, giving them jobs as store managers and workers. This wasn't just a business move for Tyler—it was a promise he had made to the people who had joined him. He wanted to offer them a new life, a purpose, and in return, he earned their unwavering loyalty.

Every time Tyler bought a new batch of slaves, he would follow the same process—freeing them and providing them with jobs in his expanding merchant business. However, this time, things were different. As they neared Cedar Island, Tyler made a decision. He wasn't going to expand any further, at least not for a while. He had already established a solid network across multiple islands, and now, it was time to focus on something else.

Darla, meanwhile, was getting used to her new childlike body. The transformation had been a shock at first, but over the months, she had slowly adjusted. She explained to the rest of the crew that the captain had gifted her a natural treasure, causing her body to revert to a younger state. This revelation was met with a mixture of surprise and envy from the crew. After all, Tyler had access to some incredibly rare and valuable items, but no one dared to ask for one. They knew better than to expect such gifts from the captain without earning them.

However, not everyone was thrilled with Darla's new appearance. Situ, one of the ship's stewards, was a bit heartbroken. He had developed a quiet crush on Darla, but now that she had transformed into a child, he was unsure how to feel. He often muttered to himself, wondering if he would have to wait for her to grow up again before anything could happen between them.

One day, after mulling over his feelings, Situ approached Tyler. "Captain, I've been thinking... I'd like to settle down on Cedar Island once we arrive. Maybe open up a business there and—"

Tyler, who had been looking over some maps of their next destination, patted Situ on the shoulder before he could finish. "I understand, Situ. Cedar Island would be a good place to start over. You've been working hard for the crew, and I won't stand in the way of you finding your own path."

Situ gave a grateful nod, but there was still a hint of sadness in his eyes. He had enjoyed his time on the ship and had hoped for something more with Darla. But now, things were different.

Tyler, noticing the man's downcast mood, smiled and added, "Before you go, though, I have something for you. You know how Mathilda has been working on a potion?"

Situ's eyes lit up with curiosity. "The one which made by the Natural treasure you found?"

Tyler nodded. "That's right. She is still researching it. When it's ready, I'll make sure you get a dose. It is not good as the real natural treasure but it will extend your life and restore some vitality."

Tyler plan was to give a life orb to Situ too... But since he decided to settle in the Cedar Island Tyler decided to give him the Life Potion after Mathilda creates one.

Situ blinked in surprise, a mixture of relief and gratitude flooding his face. "Thank you, Captain. I—"

Tyler cut him off with a wave of his hand. "No need to thank me. You've been a valuable part of this crew, and I look after my people. Just make sure you come back to visit us once in a while, alright?"

Situ grinned, feeling a weight lift from his shoulders. "You can count on it, Captain."

With the decision made, Tyler returned to his preparations for their arrival at Cedar Island. He had heard much about the place—one of the larger islands in the region, known for its advanced teleportation arrays and bustling markets. It would be their final stop before heading to the distant Ixalaria Continent, where Tyler hoped to enroll in the academy that Hawk had mentioned months ago.

Cedar Island stretched out before them like a natural fortress, dominated by towering cedar trees that formed a dense forest all around. The island was blanketed with these ancient trees, their trunks thick and imbued with a faint glow, evidence of the Aura energy naturally present within the wood. The air itself felt different here, rich with vitality, as if the island itself breathed with an unseen power.

As Tyler, Mana, Lily, Silvia, and Mathilda stood on the deck of their ship, they gazed in awe at the sight. The buildings, made entirely of cedar wood, rose high into the sky. Despite being constructed from raw wood, the structures were grand, towering over the streets with a strength and durability that surpassed any stone or metal architecture Tyler had ever seen. These buildings, crafted from the Aura-infused cedar, were resilient, far tougher than ordinary buildings, and they radiated an earthy warmth that made the island feel alive.

Mana, unable to contain her excitement, began to explain everything in a rapid, cheerful voice. "These cedar trees aren't like any regular trees. They're special! Infused with Aura energy since the beginning of their growth. Because of that, the wood from them is incredibly strong, tougher than anything you'd find elsewhere. The buildings here can withstand things most normal structures can't."

"That's not all," she added, practically bouncing on her heels. "Just by living on Cedar Island, people—warriors and non-warriors alike—become stronger. The Aura that seeps from the trees enhances our bodies, making them tougher and more resilient. It's why so many warriors choose to stay here to train."

Tyler raised an eyebrow, intrigued by Mana's words. He had read about places that could naturally enhance a person's abilities, but seeing it in action was something else entirely. This island wasn't just home to unique trees and buildings—it was a natural training ground, shaping the people who lived within its boundaries. No wonder Mana was so eager to return here.

As she spoke, Mana's eyes sparkled with excitement. "And Mana can't wait to see my uncle! He's Man's father's brother."

Tyler nodded, watching the distant movement of carts in the city. The island was bustling, and from where they stood, he could see wooden carriages and carts moving steadily along tracks. His eyes narrowed, trying to get a better look.

"Are those... trains?" he asked, remembering the books Hawk had left behind. He had read about Northern technologies, and trains had been one of the more fascinating concepts. They looked similar to what he had studied, only these seemed to be powered by some kind of Aura/Prana-based mechanism. His eyes lit up with curiosity.

As they all stood there, marveling at the sight before them, Tyler's copper pot—secured at his waist—began to vibrate suddenly. The strange sensation stopped him mid-conversation, and his eyes widened in shock. The copper pot had never reacted like this before, not once since he had acquired it.

He froze, staring down at the pot with confusion and suspicion. "What in the world?" he muttered, his fingers brushing over the cool metal. He couldn't explain the sudden vibration. It was as if the pot itself was responding to something on the island.

The girl's noticed Tyler's strange reaction, and Lily was the first to ask, "What's wrong?"

Tyler didn't immediately respond and slowly said "Oh I think this Island is going to be interesting."

Meanwhile, in the heart of the city, a man carrying a long, bandage-wrapped package was walking through the busy streets. He, too, suddenly felt something—a shift in the air. The package in his arms trembled slightly, and the man's face turned to one of shock. He gripped the package tighter, his heart racing.

"Why is there a reaction now?" he whispered to himself, eyes narrowing as he scanned the bustling city around him.

Whatever was happening, it wasn't just a coincidence. Both the man in the city and Tyler on the ship felt the same strange pull. Something was drawing them closer, something connected to the island.

Tyler, feeling the weight of this unexpected development, clenched his jaw. He wasn't sure what was going on, but he had a feeling their journey on Cedar Island was about to take a mysterious turn if he find the source.

Chapter 197: Cedar Island (2/2)

"Life is full of surprises,"

"Like how the girl you liked turned into a kid,"

"If you bring it up one more time, I won't talk to anyone for a week. I'll be in my room, alone, with the door closed. And I'm going to cry," Situ said, his voice completely deadpan. "You make a grown man cry with your words. Isn't it such a horrible and terrible thing to do?!"

Crystal couldn't hold back her laugh, but she rolled her eyes. "All right, all right. I won't joke about it anymore," she said, raising her hands in surrender.

Crystal, one of the slaves Tyler had freed and employed on the ship.

"These men never get the hints." She sighed in frustration, shaking her head as Situ glanced at her, clearly oblivious to whatever signals she'd been trying to send.

Suddenly, both Crystal and Situ froze mid-conversation, their faces quickly dropping into serious expressions. They bowed in unison as a little girl with blonde hair and a flowing white dress passed by. It was Astrid. She rarely appeared on deck, usually keeping to herself in her room, meditating and practicing, but her occasional presence still demanded respect from the crew.

Astrid nodded slightly in acknowledgment, her steps light and graceful as she continued on her way. She wasn't one to engage in idle chatter, her mind always preoccupied with her training or thoughts of her homeland.

Meanwhile, in the kitchen, Taka, the octopus fishman, was moving swiftly, hiding all the food in a storage unit. He glanced around cautiously, hoping no one would catch him stashing away supplies.

He sighed in relief, thinking the coast was clear, but then heard a quiet rustling. His tentacles moved to open the storage he had just sealed, and there, inside, was Zuzia—a small girl with dragon horns and wings, munching away happily on the food he thought he'd hidden.

"Zuzia! Not again!" Taka groaned, rubbing his forehead in frustration as the little dragon girl grinned up at him, her cheeks stuffed full of food.

On the deck, despite the lighthearted exchanges and the excitement of reaching Cedar Island, Tyler's mind was elsewhere. His copper pot, the mysterious artifact that had accompanied him on so many journeys, had never acted the way it did earlier. The subtle but unmistakable vibration meant that something on Cedar Island was connected to it—something important. He didn't know what, but he could feel it deep in his gut that this was no ordinary coincidence.

As the ship docked at the port, the crew's anticipation mixed with Tyler's curiosity. Cedar Island loomed ahead, its towering cedar trees casting long shadows over the water. The city stretched out in the distance, bustling with activity, but Tyler's focus remained on the unexplained resonance from his copper pot. Whatever it was, he was determined to find out.

"What are we going to do now?" Lily asked, her gaze sweeping across the unfamiliar shores of Cedar Island.

Tyler folded his arms and, after a brief pause, replied, "Just like always... But this time, instead of renting a mansion, let's buy a house." He pointed toward Situ and continued, "In his name. After that, we'll start a new business, leave him in charge, and then we move on."

Situ was moved to the point of tears, his eyes widening as he processed Tyler's words. "Captain, you're too kind..." he mumbled, clearly overwhelmed.

"But Situ needs an assistant," Mathilda chimed in, her voice thoughtful as she cast a glance at Crystal, who stood nearby.

"I don't really need an ass—" Situ began to protest, but Mathilda cut him off before he could finish his sentence.

"Let Crystal be your assistant. She's the right person for the job," Mathilda said, her tone leaving no room for argument. She winked at Crystal, as if giving her a hint, and Crystal's face flushed red.

Crystal nodded shyly, her blush deepening. She had already decided to follow Situ, feelings for him having blossomed over time. Unfortunately, Situ only had eyes for Darla, and Darla, well, her heart seemed to be set on Tyler. It was a love triangle that left Crystal feeling stuck, yet determined to stay close to Situ no matter what.

"You guys do your stuff. Mana is going to find Uncle!" Mana said excitedly, barely waiting for a response before disappearing in a blur of energy.

Tyler shook his head with a sigh. "She forgot she's a ghost now. I wonder how her uncle will react." His tone was light, but his thoughts were complicated. Mana was betrayed by her loved one. Her father died in front of her. She was thrown into another planet but destiny brought her back.

The following morning, after purchasing a magnificent mansion made entirely of the high-quality cedar woods Cedar Island was known for, Tyler gathered the crew for a serious discussion. Seated before him were Lily, Mathilda, Astrid, Silvia, Tuman, Situ, and Crystal, each one curious about what was to come.

"Tuman, I don't plan to stop the White Merchant Group's operations. I want you to sail the ship across the waters and reach Ixalaria Continent. It's a long journey; it'll take more than a year to get there," Tyler said, his tone decisive.

"Thanks to Situ's training, everyone onboard is capable of handling merchant business now," Tyler continued, giving a nod of appreciation to Situ, who had diligently mentored the crew during their travels.

"It's my duty," Situ replied with modesty, but a small smile tugged at the corner of his lips.

Still, Tyler couldn't help but think to himself, 'The profits will be lower without me around.' The Copper Pot he possessed allowed him to duplicate items effortlessly, which he would then sell to adventurers in the sea or at islands they passed. This unique ability had been the source of his immense revenue thus far. Yet, at this moment, Tyler was more focused on other goals. "Once I finish at the Academy, I can pick up expanding my business empire," he thought silently.

Suddenly, Tyler's expression shifted. His eyes twitched, and his body tensed.

Lily, ever perceptive, immediately noticed. "What's wrong?" she asked, concern evident in her voice.

"It's Mana... She's in distress. I can feel it," Tyler replied, his connection with Mana allowing him to sense her emotions from afar.

Without wasting any time, Tyler, Lily, Astrid, and Silvia, along with Zuzia—the small winged cat perched on Tyler's shoulder—left the mansion. Tyler concentrated, using his Ghost contract with Mana to guide them towards her location.

The sky above Cedar Island began to darken. Three moons—one red, one white, and one purple—slowly rose, casting eerie hues across the land.

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Meanwhile, just as Tyler Crew landed on Cedar Island, something stirred far out in the heart of the open ocean. The scene was surreal—endless waves rippling beneath the pale light of three glowing moons, one red, one white, and one purple. Floating amid the expanse was a massive vessel, painted a striking shade of red, cutting through the sea with purpose.

Inside the captain's quarters, a man stirred from his slumber. His sharp eyes opened as an unsettling sensation washed over him. "What is this feeling? Is disaster approaching?" he murmured, his gaze drifting to an old, weathered picture of a young Mana that rested on the table.

"Captain, we're approaching our destination," a crewmate's voice echoed from outside the cabin.

The captain tore his eyes away from the picture and sighed. "I'll deal with this later. For now, the Orion Cube Fragment is our priority," he muttered to himself, rising from his seat and making his way towards the deck.

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Back in Cedar Island

Mana stood quietly by the riverside, her gaze fixed on the three moons that now dominated the sky—one red, one white, and one purple. Their light reflected off the water, casting an otherworldly glow across the landscape. The air felt thick with tension.



"Mana," Tyler called out, his voice carrying across the cool night breeze.

She turned around, revealing her true form—no longer the small, mischievous devil-child but a tall, graceful figure. Tears welled up in her eyes as she ran toward Tyler, throwing her arms around him in a tight embrace. For a moment, Tyler felt awkward, realizing that in her true form, Mana was now taller than him. But despite the oddness of the hug, he gently patted her back, his concern overriding everything else.

"What happened?" Tyler asked softly, feeling the weight of her distress.

Mana pulled back slightly, her eyes still glistening with unshed tears. "Something happened to my uncle's family," she whispered, her voice shaking.

This was the first time Tyler had ever heard young Mana speak in her original form, and it struck him how different she sounded—more mature, more vulnerable. His expression hardened as he realized the gravity of the situation.

Tyler held Mana tighter, sensing her trembling. "We'll figure this out," he assured her, glancing at Lily, Astrid, and Silvia. "No matter what happens, you're not alone."

## Chapter 198: Investigation

Mana's father, Vale Redwood, and her uncle, Valir Redwood, were the sons of the infamous Redwood Pirates, a feared pirate couple who terrorized the seas for years. Their parents had discovered a mysterious treasure containing clues about a secret known as the "Orion Project." However, the cost of this discovery was their lives.

After their death, Vale chose to follow in their footsteps, taking over as captain of the Redwood Pirates. He vowed to continue their legacy, seeking the truth behind the Orion Project. In contrast, Valir refused to follow the same path. He turned away from the pirate life and decided to settle in their hometown, wanting a quiet life far from the chaos of the sea.

Despite being born at sea, Mana always considered her father's hometown her own as well. She spent her childhood traveling with Vale across the oceans, learning the ways of pirates and adventure, but she held a deep connection to the Redwood homeland where her uncle Valir lived. She only met them during her childhood.

After returning to the island, Mana was filled with excitement and hope, eager to reunite with her uncle Valir and his family. She flew swiftly through the familiar streets, her heart racing as she approached the family home. But when she arrived, something was wrong. Instead of the warmth of her uncle's embrace or the familiar faces she had expected, she found strangers living in the house.

Confusion and shock hit her all at once. Mana didn't confront the occupants or investigate further, her instincts telling her something was terribly wrong. Instead, she used her powers to possess a random woman walking down the street. Speaking through the woman's mouth, she inquired about the Redwood family.

The new owner of the house revealed the devastating truth: "The Redwood family was targeted by the Woodcutter Association. They were punished for their crimes and banished from the island. After that, they disappeared."

Mana's heart sank. She released the woman from her control, her mind swirling with disbelief. The news of her family's exile hit her harder than she expected. Unsure of what to do, she rushed back to Tyler, tears forming in her eyes. But she saw a place that she used to play when she was little. She just stood there watching the moon. Tyler and the girls came to Mana. Mana unconsciously turned into her actual form.

"Mana," Tyler called out, his voice carrying across the cool night breeze.

She turned around, revealing her true form—no longer the small, mischievous devil-child but a tall, graceful figure. Tears welled up in her eyes as she ran toward Tyler, throwing her arms around him in a tight embrace. For a moment, Tyler felt awkward, realizing that in her true form, Mana was now taller than him. But despite the oddness of the hug, he gently patted her back, his concern overriding everything else.

"What happened?" Tyler asked softly, feeling the weight of her distress.

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This was the first time Tyler had ever heard young Mana speak in her original form, and it struck him how different she sounded—more mature, more vulnerable.

She didn't use her usual illeism either.

Tyler listened carefully, his expression serious. He understood the gravity of the situation. Now, their next goal was clear—they needed to find out what truly happened to Valir and his family, and uncover any clues that could lead them to the truth.

Tyler held Mana tighter, sensing her trembling. "We'll figure this out," he assured her, glancing at Lily, Astrid, and Silvia. "No matter what happens, you're not alone."

As Mana wiped her eyes, Zuzia, the dragon in her adorable cat form, crawled onto Mana's shoulder and nuzzled her cheek. It was a small gesture, but it brought a fleeting smile to Mana's face, the warmth of Zuzia's affection giving her some comfort.

"I'll take care of it," Lily said after a moment, her expression hardening as she stepped forward. She knew what had to be done. "I'll find out everything we need to know about the Woodcutter Association and what they did to your family."

Without wasting any time, Lily slipped away into the shadows, her skill in gathering information unmatched. The Woodcutter Association was notorious on Cedar Island, one of the top powers with immense control over the cedar trade. If anyone could uncover their secrets, it would be her.

The rest of the day passed slowly for Tyler and the others. Mana remained quiet, lost in her thoughts, while Tyler stayed close, trying to reassure her with his presence.

By evening, Lily returned to the mansion, "I've paid off the local guilds and got us some solid leads," she announced. "We'll know more by tomorrow."

Tyler's eyes narrowed as he processed the news. "Good work, Lily. Tomorrow, we get to the bottom of this."

They all knew it wouldn't be easy, but Tyler and the crew were ready.

That night, as the mansion was enveloped in darkness, two shadowy figures slipped inside. Their movements were careful, deliberate, expertly avoiding all the Detection Alarm Arrays Tyler had set up. Both wore long cloaks, their faces hidden, and short knives hung at their waists, glinting in the faint moonlight. They crept through the halls, their footsteps silent.

But just as they reached the main corridor, a soft, unexpected noise caught their attention.

Chomp chomp.

The intruders froze and slowly turned to find a small girl with dragon horns, holding a plate of steak. Zuzia, oblivious to their shock, was eating the steak sneakily, her cheeks puffed up as she stared at them.

For a moment, nothing happened. Zuzia simply continued to chew, her eyes meeting theirs.

Chomp.

Suddenly, Zuzia flinched and tried to hide the plate behind her when a tentacle wrapped around her waist, gently pulling her back.

"I t-told you not to steal food," came Taka's deep voice as he appeared from the shadows, reprimanding her like a scolding parent. But as soon as he saw the two strangers standing in the hallway, his eyes widened.

"Let's kill them," one of the intruders muttered, drawing his knife. Aura gathered around their blades as they prepared to strike.

Without hesitation, they hurled the knives toward Taka, but before they could reach him, another tentacle shot out and effortlessly caught the blades in mid-air.

"Seriously? Using a k-knife at m-me?" Taka chuckled, shaking his head. "Heh..."

Before the intruders could react, his tentacles moved with lightning speed, binding both of them. They struggled in vain as Taka easily disarmed them. With a swift flick of his knife, their cloaks and masks were torn away, revealing their faces.

A tentacle gently covered Zuzia's eyes. "Y-you shouldn't see this," Taka said in a protective tone.

"Hehe... V-Vice Captain Lily's training really made me s-stronger," Taka smiled smugly, proud of his growth.

"You did well," came Lily's voice from the darkness as she stepped into the hallway. Taka's tentacles tightened, and the two intruders slumped to the floor, unconscious.

Lily gave Taka a nod of approval. "We'll find out who sent them. But first, let's make sure there aren't more lurking around."

Taka grinned and blushed. He is little shy when people complimented him.

The next day, Tyler woke up, feeling the warmth of the morning sun seeping through the windows of the mansion. He stretched and got out of bed, ready to discuss last night's events with Lily. As he entered the common room, he saw her lounging comfortably, a satisfied smirk on her face.

"So, your plan was to make some noise and let the enemy make the first move?" Tyler asked, piecing together what had transpired. He realized that Lily's decision to openly gather information the previous night wasn't careless—it was intentional, designed to bait the enemy into action.

"Hehe..." Lily responded with a sly grin, clearly pleased with how things had unfolded.

Tyler leaned against the wall, his arms crossed. "Did you get any information from those guys?" he asked, knowing Lily wouldn't have gone through all that trouble without a reason.

Lily nodded, her expression becoming serious. "Turns out, the assassins weren't from the Woodcutter Association like we thought. They were sent by the Adventure Guild itself."

Tyler's eyes narrowed. "The Adventure Guild? Why would they get involved?"

"They must have their reasons, but it doesn't change the fact that they made a move against us," Lily said, her voice cold and calculating.

Tyler raised an eyebrow, his hand already moving to the hilt of his sword. "Should we pay them a visit? Maybe send a message?"

Lily shook her head, her eyes gleaming with mischief. "No need for that. We'll ask them for information like nothing happened. Let's keep them guessing about what we know. Besides, if they sent assassins, they're hiding something valuable. Let's figure out what it is first."

Tyler grinned, already anticipating the game she was about to play. "You've got something planned, don't you?"

Lily smiled, standing up and walking past him. "Of course. But patience, Captain. We'll have our answers soon enough."

As Tyler watched her walk away, he couldn't help but feel little confused. The Defective personality of Lily is vanishing little by little. Tyler doesn't know if it is good thing or bad thing. He sighed and decided to Focus on Mana's matter.

## Chapter 199: Visiting the Guild

The Woodcutter Association had humble beginnings, first founded by an ordinary woodcutter. His days were spent chopping wood in the dense forests of the Cedar Islands, making an honest but meager living. One fateful day, as he swung his axe, it slipped from his grasp and tumbled into the river. Devastated and without the tools to continue his work, the woodcutter fell to his knees and began praying to the lake god, hoping for a miracle.

But instead of divine intervention, something far darker surfaced from the depths—a Demon, or more precisely, an Abyss Demon. This creature had escaped from the clutches of the Northern Hunters and

sought refuge in the quiet waters of the lake. It was gravely wounded, barely clinging to life, having fled its pursuers to this secluded spot. As it surfaced, its breath labored, the woodcutter's axe—by some twist of fate—cut through the air and struck the final blow, ending the demon's suffering in one fell swoop.

The woodcutter, astonished by what had just happened, saw opportunity in the demon's demise. He gathered the remains of the Abyss Demon and sold them in the black markets. The sale of such rare and powerful materials made him rich overnight. Flush with wealth and eager to cement his new status, the woodcutter invested all his money into expanding his business, cutting down forests and selling the finest cedar wood to the Northern Islands and beyond. He soon married a beautiful woman, his life transformed beyond his wildest dreams.

However, as his wealth and power grew, so did his ruthlessness. The once kind and humble man became cold, calculating, and vicious in his pursuit of dominance. Competitors in the lumber trade began to fall—one by one. Their businesses went bankrupt under mysterious circumstances, or their ships filled with goods were raided by pirates. The rumors spread quickly—everyone knew the Woodcutter Association was behind these acts of sabotage and piracy, but no one dared confront them. They had become too powerful, too entrenched in the economy of the Cedar Islands.

Today, something unusual stirred on Cedar Island. A new merchant group from overseas had announced its intention to start a cedar wood business, which instantly became the talk of the town.

"Oh no... Another one is going to go bankrupt," a local merchant muttered, shaking his head.

"Think they'll last even a month?" another scoffed, clearly not expecting much.

The rumor mill on Cedar Island buzzed with chatter, and the general consensus was that no one survived long when competing with the Woodcutter Association. The newcomer was expected to crumble just like those who had tried before.

What the locals didn't know was that the mastermind behind this new venture was none other than Tyler, who had deliberately ignored the whispers as he made his way to the Adventure Guild, accompanied by Lily.

As they approached the entrance, murmurs followed them like shadows.

"Hey, isn't that the girl who was asking about the Redwood family?" one of the guild staff whispered, nudging a coworker.

"How are they still alive after poking around like that?" another added in disbelief.

Despite the stares and hushed gossip, Lily remained unbothered, her expression calm and composed. She stepped up to the receptionist, her gaze piercing. "I'm here for the information we requested."

The receptionist, visibly nervous, stammered, "W-we need some time to arrange that. Please wait."

Without a word, Tyler and Lily moved to the waiting area and sat down. There was no sense of urgency or impatience in their demeanor, though the room was thick with tension.

Meanwhile, the receptionist hurried to the Guild Master's office. Before entering, he saw someone delivering a glass of juice to the Guild Master. Taking it upon himself, the receptionist grabbed the tray and entered the room, presenting the drink to his superior.

The Guild Master was a rotund, bald man, his wide form practically sinking into the plush chair. He took a sip of the juice, then looked up with irritation at the messenger.

"They failed to kill those little brats?" he asked, scowling. "Where are they now?"

"They're waiting downstairs for the information, sir," the receptionist replied, his voice strained.

The Guild Master sighed, rolling his eyes. "Just give them some fabricated nonsense. I doubt they'll survive much longer anyway. Escaping one assassination attempt doesn't mean they're worth the effort," he said dismissively, waving his hand while taking another sip of juice.

The receptionist nodded but didn't move to leave. Something felt off about his behavior—his eyes were unfocused, his posture unnaturally stiff.



"Why are you still standing there?" the Guild Master barked. "Anything else to report?"

"Four," the receptionist said, his voice eerily monotone.

The Guild Master blinked, confused. "Four? What the hell are you talking about?"

"Three," the receptionist continued, his eyes now completely blank.

A cold shiver crawled down the Guild Master's spine as dread began to settle in. He stood up from his chair, but his body betrayed him. His limbs grew heavy, his movements sluggish.

"Two... one..." the receptionist finished, just as the Guild Master collapsed back into his seat, paralyzed.

"P-poison?" the Guild Master choked out, his eyes wide with fear. His muscles twitched as the realization hit him.

Suddenly, a face popped out from the back of the receptionist's head—Mana, her mischievous grin unmistakable. "Special product of our dear Mathilda," she said sweetly, her voice laced with playful menace. In a blink, she disappeared back into the receptionist, fully taking control again.

Without skipping a beat, the receptionist—now under Mana's control—opened the door to let Tyler and Lily into the room. The Guild Master, now completely at their mercy, could only watch in horror as they entered.

Tyler glanced at the immobilized Guild Master, then at Mana with a bemused smile. "Nice job, Mana."

Lily walked forward, crossing her arms as she assessed the situation. "You know, we would've preferred it if you just told us the truth from the start," she said coolly.

Tyler nodded in agreement, leaning casually against the desk. "Now, you've got two options. You can give us the real information we came for, or... well, we'll let poison do the rest of the talking." He gestured to the quivering Guild Master, whose sweat now poured in rivers down his face.

The Guild Master tried to speak, but his voice was nothing more than a raspy wheeze.

Lily held up a small vial of antidote, twirling it between her fingers. "This can fix you up. But first, we need to know everything about the Redwood family and the Woodcutter Association. No more lies. Also why did you send assassination after us?."

Tyler leaned in slightly, his eyes darkening with intensity. "Your move."

Faced with no other choice, the Guild Master blinked rapidly, signaling his compliance. Mana, still controlling the receptionist's body, chuckled. "Good boy," she teased.

Lily uncorked the vial, letting a single drop of the antidote fall into the Guild Master's mouth. The paralysis slowly began to lift, though his limbs remained weak.

Between gasping breaths, the Guild Master began spilling the truth. "We... we really don't know why the Woodcutter Association targeted the Redwood family. They paid us to eliminate anyone asking questions about them. It was all... a misunderstanding. Please, don't kill me."

Suddenly, the receptionist, whom Mana had been possessing, collapsed onto the floor as Mana floated back into the air, her usual mischievous grin back is no where to be seen.

"Is she alright?" Tyler asked, glancing at mana.

Lily tilted her head thoughtfully. "Let's see," she replied, then turned to Mana. "Mana, if you had 10 fried fish and had to share them with five people, how many would you have left?"

Without missing a beat, Mana replied, "Ten."

Tyler smirked, whispering to Lily, "Well, that sounds about right."

Tyler then placed some documents in front of weak guild master.

"Wait, let me make sure," Lily said, raising a brow as she continued her questioning. "But what if those five people tried to force you to share your food?"

Tyler sighed, bemused. "Seriously, what's with these questions?"

Mana's response was swift and without hesitation. "Ten fried fish and five dead bodies."

"Yup, she's perfectly fine," Lily confirmed with a nod, as if that settled everything.

The Guild Master, still pale and trembling, finally spoke up. "What... what is this?"

"Probably Lily trying to ease Mana's mood?" Tyler said.

"Not that. This..." The Guild Master asked, looking down at the documents Tyler had just placed in front of him.

Tyler gave him a calm, almost disarming smile. "Oh, this?" he gestured to the papers. "These are just some documents stating that I'm buying your guild."

The Guild Master's eyes widened in shock. "What?! You can't just—"

Tyler cut him off, still smiling. "Oh, I can. Don't worry, I will pay you full. You will be just bedridden until we deal with bigger fishes."

Lily chuckled. "Don't worry. It'll be painless... for you, at least."

Mana, still floating nearby, giggled. "And I'll keep all my fried fish."

Tyler turned to the Guild Master, his voice taking on a sharper edge. "Now, sign."

## Chapter 200: Leaving Cedar Islands

A lot of things had changed since Tyler arrived on Cedar Island. The once-powerful Guild Master had mysteriously fallen ill and, shortly after, sold the Adventure Guild to Tyler. Under new management, the guild began to thrive. The new Guild Master, as the people of Cedar Island knew him, was an enigmatic figure, but his actions spoke louder than any introduction. He was generous, quick to offer new tasks and opportunities for adventurers, many of which involved tracking down smugglers attempting to transport the highly illegal Woodpeck Fish.

Woodpeck Fish, while seemingly ordinary in appearance, had sharp beaks that allowed them to chew through wood with ease. These creatures were unique in that they could devour both underwater trees and the valuable wood from land. In the lush and resource-rich world of Cedar Island, where underwater trees flourished, Woodpeck Fish were a rare commodity. They were hunted illegally due to their high market price, despite strict laws prohibiting their trade. This made them a prime target for smugglers, who operated in secret, supplying these prized creatures to buyers across the Ixalaria Continent.

Cedar Island itself was governed by an Island Master, appointed by Ixalaria. However, this governor rarely intervened in the day-to-day affairs of the island. His involvement was only guaranteed during crises, leaving the island's powerful factions—the Woodcutter Association and the Adventure Guild—to wield significant influence.

Tyler's acquisition of the guild went smoothly, and under his leadership, business continued as usual. That was, until Tyler discovered a key piece of information hidden in the guild's records. The Woodcutter Association, known primarily for its dominance in the lumber industry, was deeply involved in the illegal smuggling of Woodpeck Fish. The smuggling operation was lucrative, with shipments regularly being sent to the Ixalaria Continent, where the fish fetched an enormous price. Armed with this knowledge, Tyler devised a plan to target the Woodcutter Association where it hurt the most: their business.

Soon after, the Adventure Guild made a surprising announcement. They, too, would be entering the wood business. The people of Cedar Island were abuzz with gossip. It was becoming clear that the new guild master had set his sights on the Woodcutter Association, and many speculated about who this mysterious individual might be.

But while rumors swirled outside, Tyler remained unfazed. He was enjoying a peaceful dinner with his crewmates aboard their ship.

"Normally, Cedar trees take about 5 to 15 years to reach maturity," Lily explained as she detailed her findings. "But with the right arrays and fertilizers, we can accelerate the growth process, getting the trees ready for harvest in just six months. And if we use even more advanced arrays, we can bring that down to three months. The Cedar wood has different grades, and its demand is especially high in the Northern Seas."

Tyler leaned back in his chair, considering the plan. "The best way to hurt the Woodcutter Association is to take over their business," he said thoughtfully. "And we're going to do it in the most straightforward way possible. We'll sell the same wood for half the price. With the three-month array, we'll be able to outproduce them and keep this going for a full year."

"An entire year?" Mathilda asked as she bit into a piece of Woodpeck Fish, savoring the delicate flavor. "Won't the three-month maturity array burn through a lot of money?"

Tyler chuckled. "Mathilda, have you forgotten? Money is the last thing I'm worried about."

She smiled sheepishly, knowing Tyler's wealth had never been a concern for their group.

"One year, huh? But what about the academy?" Lily asked, her brow furrowed. Tyler had previously mentioned their plans to attend a prestigious academy in Ixalaria.

Before Tyler could respond, Mana popped out of thin air, her sudden appearance startling everyone at the table. "Don't worry, Mana will take care of everything here," she said confidently, floating in the air. "You all go to the academy. I'll handle things on the island."

Tyler and the others exchanged surprised glances. "Really, Mana?" Tyler asked, a bit skeptical but intrigued by her sudden decision. "It's good to have you here, but are you sure?"

"Yeah," Mana said with a small smile. "Lily already did some investigating. It seems Mana's uncle's family went to Ixalaria Continent, but we can't pinpoint exactly where. Mana will start the search for them after we bring down the Woodcutter Association. They're connected to Mana family somehow, and Mana need to figure out why they targeted them."

Tyler leaned back, nodding in understanding. "If that's what you want, then I trust you. We'll leave the island in your hands, Mana."

Mana was resolute. She would stay on Cedar Island, leading the charge against the Woodcutter Association while Tyler, Lily, and the others attended the academy. Taka, the octopus fishman, would also remain on the island to assist Mana, along with Situ and Crystal, two more of Tyler's trusted crew members. Together, they would ensure that the guild continued to thrive, and the Woodcutter Association's smuggling operations were brought to an end.

Meanwhile, Tyler's merchant ship, The White Merchant, would continue its voyages across the seas, making its way to Ixalaria Continent. The ship was an essential part of their operations, keeping their business alive and generating profits even while they pursued other objectives.

The next major step for Tyler and his crew was the academy. In just one week, they would use a teleportation array to travel to Ixalaria Continent.

"Oh, by the way, you've been running around the island looking for someone. What was that about?" Lily asked curiously, her eyes flickering with intrigue.

Tyler shrugged nonchalantly, though there was a flicker of frustration in his gaze. "It's nothing. I was just trying to find someone, but it seems like they've already left the island."

In truth, Tyler had been searching for the source of the mysterious resonance that had occurred in his copper pot. The copper pot vibrated a little back then.

He had tried to trace the source, but despite his efforts, whoever or whatever had triggered the resonance seemed to have vanished from the island, leaving him with more questions than answers.

"Alright, but if you start chasing shadows again, let me know. " Lily knows that Tyler is hiding something but decided not to pry more. 'It's probably about the copy ability.' she thought.

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A week later, Tyler, Lily, Mathilda, Astrid, and Darla arrived at the Teleportation Array, their destination clear in their minds. The group stood together, observing the massive structure before them. Tyler's sharp gaze noticed something peculiar about the array.

"An encryption array," he murmured to himself, his curiosity piqued. The real array was obscured, hidden behind layers of protective wards and encryption techniques, likely to prevent tampering or unauthorized use.

Mana, along with the rest of the crew who had stayed behind, came to see them off. As the group waited in the designated area, they noticed an old man with a weathered wooden axe sitting calmly in the waiting area, his presence quietly imposing. The aura of the man drew the attention of Tyler and Lily immediately.

Tyler's eyes narrowed slightly as he recognized the figure. "I didn't expect the mysterious head of the Woodcutter Association to be the one sending us off."

The old man looked up from his seat, meeting Tyler's gaze with a smirk. His voice was gravelly yet commanding. "And I didn't expect the new Guild Master of Cedar Island to be just a child."

Tyler gave a slight smile in return, unfazed. "Neither did I expect the legendary woodcutter who slew the Abyss Demon to show up here, of all places."

Mana, standing beside Tyler, looked at the old man with obvious hostility. Lily remained indifferent, while the others eyed him cautiously. The tension between the two groups was palpable, yet neither side made a move.

The woodcutter's weathered face showed amusement, but his eyes held a dangerous glint. "I see. A treasure, perhaps? Something that keeps you young," he said, as if Tyler's youthful appearance was a puzzle he had already solved.

"Possibly," Tyler replied with a shrug, not giving away any further details.

The old man straightened in his chair, all pretense of small talk fading as he spoke with authority. "I'll cut to the chase, kid. Stop your wood business. Now."

It wasn't a request, nor a plea. It was a command, spoken with the confidence of a man who was used to getting what he wanted. But Tyler, never one to bend easily, responded in kind.

"I'll cut to the chase too. Why did you target the Redwood family?" Tyler asked, his voice carrying a cold edge.

The woodcutter smirked at the question. "Ah, so this is about revenge, then. Well, what if I kill everyone here? Right now." His words were casual, but the threat was clear, and deadly.

Tyler didn't flinch, meeting the man's gaze with steely resolve. "Really? Here, near the Teleportation Array? Killing us here would be asking for trouble with the Island Master. Besides, are you sure you can kill us?" His confidence bordered on arrogance, but it was well-earned. "We might look like kids, but trust me when I say I've stomped far more powerful beings than you under my feet."

The woodcutter let out a mocking laugh, the sound grating and dismissive. "Kids these days. You speak as if you've seen the world. I'm pretty sure your mind regressed along with your age."

Tyler smiled, unbothered by the insult. "Old man, I don't have time to play games with you. I won't be here much longer. My Ghost Spirit will take care of things in my absence. Good luck with that."

Tyler turned to walk toward the Teleportation Array, his steps unhurried, confident.

The woodcutter's smirk twisted into a sneer. "I'll kill this 'Ghost Spirit' of yours once it leaves this place," he growled, his voice laced with menace.

Tyler glanced back over his shoulder, his smile widening. "I'd be more worried about saving your lumber factory if I were you."



At that moment, a beautiful woman descended from the sky, landing gracefully near the woodcutter. She approached him quickly and whispered something in his ear. As her words sank in, the woodcutter's face stiffened, his composure faltering for the first time.

Tyler chuckled. "Looks like your daughter came to give you some bad news."

The woodcutter's glare intensified, and his fists clenched around the handle of his axe. The woman's face flushed at Tyler's words, but her gaze lingered on him with interest, a glint of something deeper in her eyes.

Tyler chuckled. "Looks like your daughter came to give you some bad news."

The woodcutter's glare intensified, and his fists clenched around the handle of his axe. The woman's face flushed at Tyler's words, but her gaze lingered on him with interest, a glint of something deeper in her eyes.

Mathilda couldn't resist adding her own commentary, grinning widely. "Damn, Tyler! Flirting with the old man's Wife right in front of him?" She gave him a thumbs-up, thoroughly enjoying the spectacle.

Tyler, unfazed by the exchange, turned to Mana. "If things get too dangerous, you know what to do."

Mana nodded, her expression serious. She stepped forward to hug Tyler, and the rest of the crew followed suit, saying their goodbyes. There was an air of finality about their departure, but also a sense of resolve.

As Tyler, Lily, Mathilda, Astrid, Darla, Silvia, and Zuzia stood within the Teleportation Array, the massive pillars surrounding them began to spin. The outer pillars rotated clockwise, while the central one spun counterclockwise, creating a vortex of energy that enveloped the group.

In a brilliant flash of light, they disappeared, leaving behind the tense atmosphere at Cedar Island. The woodcutter, who was leaving the waiting area, watched them go, his expression unreadable. The beautiful woman beside him glanced at him before flying off into the sky, her thoughts clearly elsewhere.