

R Cultivator 296

Chapter 296: Abyss Hunters (2/2)

The deafening sound tore through the battlefield like a storm, sending shockwaves in one direction.

In an instant, hundreds of warriors—beastmen, elves, humans—were shattered into pieces, their bodies exploding into a fine mist of blood and flesh.

The fog cleared in that direction, revealing nothing but carnage.

The survivors were frozen in terror, but another voice snapped them back to reality.

"Formation! Formation! Now!"

A group of warriors rushed forward, their movements synchronized as they formed a massive energy shield. The glowing barrier spread wide, encasing them in a protective dome.

The creature roared again, the sheer force of its voice attempting to tear through their defenses. The shield shook violently, but held firm.

The T-Rex paused, its glowing red eyes narrowing as it observed them. Then, without warning—

It turned and swung its tail.

A colossal tail, larger than the mightiest of warships, slammed into the shield with earth-shattering force. The ground trembled violently, and cracks formed along the shield's surface.

The defenders braced themselves, their knees buckling under the immense impact. But they survived.

The creature growled, seemingly dissatisfied. It stared at them for a long moment, then—

It turned away.

With slow, deliberate steps, it disappeared into the fog.

The warriors stood frozen, gripping their weapons tightly as they listened.

The footsteps faded. The ground, once trembling under the beast's weight, finally settled.

Then—silence.

Someone exhaled shakily.

"It's gone..."

They barely had time to catch their breath before—

Boom. Boom. Boom.

Footsteps.

Louder. Closer.

The shield flared to life, glowing bright as the warriors raised their weapons again.

The ground shook violently beneath them. The vibrations weren't coming from the front—but from behind.

A realization dawned on them, spreading like ice through their veins.

"...Wait. The creature left in the other direction."

A long, tense pause.

Then—

"I... I hear footsteps from behind."

The words sent a ripple of pure dread through the group.

The warriors turned as one, their eyes wide.

From the dense fog behind them—

A monstrous jaw emerged.

With a horrifying snap, it closed around dozens of warriors, dragging them into the abyss of its throat.

Screams tore through the air.

Blood splattered against the inner surface of the shield as the unfortunate souls were devoured whole.

"We're under attack! Again!"

The remaining warriors reacted instantly, shifting their defensive stance.

This time, they changed their formation—the energy shield morphed into a dome, sealing them within.

The beast let out a guttural growl, circling them, testing their defenses.

Then—it struck.

The battle erupted in full force.

Spells flew in every direction—fire, ice, lightning, and wind—exploding against the beast’s scaly hide. Warriors wielding enchanted weapons slashed and stabbed, aiming for its joints and eyes.

The T-Rex retaliated with ferocious, calculated brutality.

It lunged, its teeth piercing through armor and flesh, dragging more victims into its gaping maw. It smashed the ground with its tail, sending warriors flying like ragdolls.

The survivors fought with desperation, their movements fueled by pure survival instinct.

But deep down—they knew the truth.

The Abyss had no mercy.

And this battle...

Was a losing one.

Far from the Battlefield

Far away from the carnage, in an elevated chamber adorned with gold and crimson, a man in golden armor sat leisurely on a makeshift throne.

His throne, however, was not made of metal or stone—but of a naked man, kneeling on all fours beneath him.

The golden-armored man exuded dominance, his piercing gaze locked onto a holographic screen before him. The display projected the perspectives of the warriors battling the colossal beast, shifting between their frantic movements and terrified expressions.

The chaotic battle played out like a grand spectacle, yet he watched it with the same casual air as one might observe a stage play.

Beside him, a beautiful woman dressed in a sheer silk garment stood silently, holding a wine jar. Her delicate fingers trembled slightly, though she dared not show any outright defiance.

Her dress is transparent, anyone can see her whole body.

The golden-armored man raised his empty wine glass, shaking it lightly.

She hesitated for just a moment before stepping forward, her movements graceful yet restrained. She lifted the jar and poured the deep crimson wine into his glass.

The man swirled the liquid, watching the way it caught the flickering torchlight.

Then, without looking at her, he spoke in a tone of absolute authority.

"Serve me."

The woman's fingers tightened around the jar, her posture stiffening.

A pause.

Then—a sharp slap.

The man beneath the golden warrior flinched as a stinging handprint appeared on his exposed butt—a humiliating reminder of his place.

"Do you want to see your husband among those pathetic fools down there?" The golden-armored man mused, a mocking smirk playing on his lips as he glanced at the battle screen.

The woman froze.

Her breath hitched, her expression one of barely restrained desperation.

Then, slowly—she lifted the wine glass to her lips and took a sip.

Her gaze never met his.

With measured control, she leaned forward, pressing her soft lips against his, transferring the wine directly into his mouth.

The golden-armored man closed his eyes for a brief moment, savoring the taste—not of the wine, but of her submission.

As he pulled away, he wiped his lips with a satisfied smile.

"Good girl."

The man beneath him clenched his fists, his jaw tight with frustration and silent anguish, but he dared not move.

The golden-armored man turned his attention back to the screen.

Beside him, several individuals sat in ornate chairs, each one possessing an aura of authority. Yet, unlike their leader, they remained reserved, their backs straight, their hands resting cautiously on their laps.

Though they, too, were enjoying the battle, none of them dared to act as brazenly as the man in gold.

After all, he was their leader—a being above them in both power and cruelty.

One of the seated figures, a towering eight-foot giant, leaned forward, his glowing eyes fixated on the battle.

"Leader, our slaves won't be able to hold out much longer." His deep voice rumbled like thunder.
"Should we intervene?"

The golden-armored man didn't even look at him.

Instead, he watched as the colossal T-Rex crushed another group of warriors in its massive jaws, their screams abruptly silenced by the sickening crunch of bone and flesh.

"No."

He swirled his wine glass again, amused.

"Our food supply is already running low. Let the beast kill at least another hundred of them first. Then, we'll make our move."

The giant nodded.

The golden-armored man turned his attention back to the woman beside him.

Wordlessly, she took another sip of wine and leaned in, pressing her lips against his once more to serve him mouth-to-mouth.

His smile widened as he ran a finger on her breast, enjoying the way she barely held back a shudder.

"On your knees and suck it..." He ordered.

The girl barely held her tears as she knelt down. Her husband who was acting as Chair closed his eyes.

Then— the golden armour guy reached his storage ring and pulled out a small photograph.

He gazed at it, his eyes gleaming with hunger.

A fox-eared woman sitting nearby caught sight of it and chuckled.

"Oh? That's the Angel who saved you, isn't it?"

The golden-armored man licked his lips, his fingers brushing over the image.

"Yeah... I love the way she slapped me." He let out a deep laugh, reminiscing.

"At the time, I was too injured to do anything." His expression darkened slightly, then twisted into a smirk. "Otherwise, I would have already taken her as my slave."

The fox-woman grinned. "Want to go after her? I heard they saw an angel in the River Floor. Must be a girl from another world."

Another man, clad in dark leather armor, waved a hand dismissively.

"We can deal with that later." He gestured toward the screen. "First, let's finish subduing this beast."

The golden-armored man exhaled through his nose, a low hum of agreement.

"Yes, yes." He leaned back against his living chair, resting an arm lazily over the man's back.

"As an Abyss Hunter, I have my priorities."

Yet, despite his words, his gaze drifted back to the photograph, lingering on the image.

It was a picture of a stunning woman with golden blonde hair and striking blue eyes.

Her features were delicate, yet held an air of quiet strength. Her white angelic wings were spread behind her, a sight that could have been considered divine—if not for the fierce determination in her gaze.

Even in a simple photograph, she seemed untouchable.

But he would change that.

If Tyler White had been present in that room, he would have recognized her instantly.

The woman in the picture—was Astrid Rosefall.

The golden-armored man tapped his finger against her image, his smirk deepening.

"I wonder... will you slap me again when I see you next?"

His golden eyes gleamed.

"Or will you kneel?"

As he touched the woman's head who is moving her head front and back.

Chapter 297: The Next Floor is an Illusion?

A spatial crack faintly resonating in a cave, like splitting the fabric of reality apart like a wound in the void. From within the shifting rift, eleven cloaked figures emerged, stepping onto the damp, moss-covered ground of an unfamiliar ancient forest.

As soon as their feet touched the earth, an eerie silence greeted them. The air was thick and humid, filled with the scent of decayed leaves and distant rain. Despite the dense canopy overhead, faint light filtered through the foliage, casting moving shadows over their forms.

Tyler, at the forefront of the group, narrowed his eyes as he took in their surroundings.

This place looks good.

His instincts said otherwise.

"Careful," he warned, his voice low but commanding. "Is this an Abyss-type forest?"

Tyler and others walked out and saw a greenish forest. They were little confused because usually Forest Type Abyss is full of Abyss Mist and Plant Monsters.

But this place seems very calm.

"Quick! Fly high and scan the moons!" he ordered.

Without hesitation, one of the Grandmasters, a seasoned cultivator with long silver hair, leaped into the air, his cloak billowing as he shot towards the sky. His eyes glowed faintly as he activated his Divine Sense, stretching his consciousness beyond the treetops, beyond the distant peaks, beyond the clouds—until he could see the celestial bodies above.

He hovered there for a moment, silent, before descending swiftly back to the group. His expression was one of relief.

"There are countless moons," he reported.

At those words, everyone sighed in relief.

The presence of multiple moons meant that they were not in the deep Abyss, but rather in its Top floors—a much safer Floor, though still dangerous in its own right.

If only that relief lasted.

Without wasting time, they moved forward, cautiously making their way out of the dense forest. But as they walked, something strange began to settle in their minds.

Mathilda, her sharp eyes scanning their path, frowned.

"There are no Abyss monsters at all..." she murmured, confusion lacing her tone.

Tyler nodded, his expression grim. That wasn't normal.

The Abyss—even its safe floor—was supposed to be crawling with monsters. The fact that they hadn't encountered a single creature so far was unnerving.

Mana, hovering in the air above them, suddenly gasped.

"Tyler... there is a..." She trailed off, her voice shaking with disbelief.

Tyler's eyes snapped to her.

"What? What is it?"

Mana hesitated for only a moment before speaking again.

"There's a village ahead."

Silence fell over the group.

A village? In the Abyss?

One of the Grandmasters, the woman who slept with Tyler, furrowed her brows.

"That's impossible," she said.

Yet, as they hurried forward, what they saw defied all logic.

Before them lay a small, peaceful village—wooden houses with smoke rising from chimneys, children playing in the dirt roads, villagers chatting as they went about their daily tasks. The scene was idyllic, completely at odds with the twisted horrors of the Abyss.

Tyler felt his mind grinding against the impossibility of it all.

"How the hell...?" he muttered, his eyes scanned the area curiously.

This place shouldn't exist.

Abyssal zones were forbidden lands —where life did not belong, where entire civilizations had been swallowed by madness and corruption. For example if this village is swallowed by the Abyss from a random world, it is impossible for the village to survive.

Yet here it was, standing like a relic of a time that should not be.

Suddenly, a group of children ran past them, laughing as they played.

And then—

They passed straight through them.

Like ghosts through mist.

Mana screamed.

"AHH! Are we dead?! Are we ghosts?!" she panicked, her voice rising in pitch.

Tyler turned to her, deadpan.

"You are a ghost, though."

"That's not the point!" Mana shot back, flailing.

Mathilda ignored their exchange, her sharp gaze locked onto the village.

"Is this entire place an illusion?" she asked.

Tyler considered the possibility. It was reasonable. But something felt different. This wasn't like a mere illusion array—it felt deeper, like a truth they weren't meant to perceive.

He reached out his copper ladle and plucked a leaf from a tree from the nearby forest. Holding it between his fingers, he studied its vibrant green color, its veins, its delicate edges. A real leaf.

Then, as he took a step forward—

The leaf slipped through his fingers, becoming intangible.

Like the children.

Tyler exhaled slowly, realization dawning.

"This leaf came from the forest." He turned to the others, his eyes sharp. "But the moment it entered the village, it became... like them."

Everyone stiffened, the weight of his words settling over them.

Mathilda's face darkened.

"So this place isn't an illusion."

"Or at least... not entirely."

Before they could theorize further, a soft voice made them freeze.

"@#£__..."

They turned.

Standing right beside them, mere inches away, were the same children that had run through them earlier. Their curious eyes stared directly at them.

The words they spoke were incomprehensible, like whispers from a forgotten tongue.

Tyler's entire body went rigid.

A primal instinct screamed at him to run.

"MOVE!" he barked.

The group bolted—racing out of the village, their cloaks fluttering behind them as they breached its borders.

Only when they were well beyond the village's outskirts did they stop.

The kids looked at each other in confusion and they left.

One of the Grandmasters, turned to Tyler with a grave expression.

"Did we... become illusions?"

Tyler, heart still hammering, narrowed his eyes and took a steadying breath.

"Probably. But not fully."

He turned back to look at the village.

From the outside, it was picturesque, peaceful—as if the very concept of danger had never touched it. But they all knew better.

This place was not normal.

And more importantly—they were now connected to it in some way.

Tyler's eyes darkened.

"Where's the spatial passage that leads to our next destination?" he asked.

One of the Grandmasters pulled out a compass, that is used to track Lily Gomes.

The needle spun wildly for a few seconds before finally pointing straight ahead—

Towards the village.

The group fell silent.

Tyler clenched his jaw.

"Well, Let's go around." He simply said.

Mathilda folded her arms, clicking her tongue, "Looks like we don't have a choice."

They had hoped to avoid that place—but fate had other plans.

After a brief discussion, they decided to circle around the village.

But after several minutes of walking, they found themselves standing at the edge of a vast lake.

The compass is now pointing backwards. They turned around and saw the village.

Meaning—their destination wasn't just near the village.

It was inside it.

Tyler stared at the calm waters of the lake, then back at the distant houses that should not exist.

He let out a slow breath.

"Well... this just got a lot more complicated."

The Abyss was never merciful. And now, neither was their path forward.

That night, inside a dimly lit cave, Tyler and the grandmasters sat in silence, deep in thought. The flickering light of an enchanted lantern cast eerie shadows on the stone walls, emphasizing the gravity of their situation.

Tyler, leaning against the rough cave wall, finally broke the silence. "Should we try jumping back into this passage and find another one?" he asked, his tone heavy with uncertainty.

The grandmasters exchanged glances, each weighing the risks. One of them, an elder with a long beard, sighed before responding. "The curse has already formed a pathway. It's like a GPS function—once the route is set, we can only follow it. There's no way to take detours or go back."

Tyler exhaled, rubbing his temples. "Then we'll wait. The Grandmaster already went to investigate should arrive by tomorrow. Once he's here with information, we'll plan our next move."

Everyone nodded in agreement. There was nothing else they could do for now. They simply sat in the cave for rest of the night.

The Next Day

Unlike the previous Abyss floors they had explored, this one had a clear distinction between day and night, even though there was no visible sun. A soft, eerie glow illuminated the forest outside, casting long, unsettling shadows.

They waited patiently, expecting the grandmaster to return with his findings. However, the time dragged on, but he is nowhere to be seen.

"He should have arrived by now," one of the grandmasters muttered, glancing toward the village's direction. "Something must have happened."

Tyler frowned. "I don't like this. If he encountered trouble, we need to find him."

A man with silver hair stepped forward. His name was Silver, and his presence exuded an air of confidence. "I'll go check," he volunteered.

"Wait, Mr. Silver," Tyler interjected. "Let's go together."

The group quickly made their way back toward the mysterious village, moving cautiously through the dense forest. Upon reaching its outskirts, they stopped, carefully observing the settlement.

Tyler activated his divine sense, attempting to scan the village for their missing companion. His expression darkened. "My divine sense isn't working inside."

The others tried as well, only to reach the same conclusion. The village was completely shrouded, cutting off their spiritual perception.

As they debated their next course of action, movement caught their attention. A figure emerged from one of the houses, carrying a large stack of grass on his back.

Everyone's eyes widened in shock.

"That's him," Silver whispered in disbelief. "That's Xing Zhao , the grandmaster who went missing."

He turned into a villager?

Chapter 298: The Mysterious Village

Tyler tightened his grip on the telescope that he had quickly retrieved from his storage device. He peered through the lens, focusing on their missing companion. The grandmaster, an expert in illusions, now looked completely different. His posture, his expressions—everything about him resembled an ordinary villager. He walked calmly, delivering a stack of grass to a group of cows in a nearby field, his demeanor casual as if he had always belonged there.

Since they couldn't use divine sense, they had no choice but to rely on the telescope for observation.

"This can't be real..." a grandmaster muttered. "He's acting as if he belongs here."

"He's been swallowed by the illusion," Mana said gravely. "It's not just an illusion—it's his reality now."

Another grandmaster, unable to contain himself, disappeared in a burst of speed. He reappeared beside the missing man and tried to grab his shoulder.

His hand passed through as if touching air.

The group collectively held their breath.

Without wasting another second, the grandmaster who attempted the rescue quickly retreated, returning to the others. His face was pale. "I couldn't touch him... It was like he wasn't even there."

Tyler lowered his telescope, clenching his jaw. "So, from our perspective, he's an illusion. But from his... he believes he's real."

Mathilda crossed her arms. "Can we interact with anything in the village at all?"

Tyler narrowed his eyes at the cows Xing Zhao had just fed. He picked up a small rock from the ground and tossed it toward the village. The moment it entered the village, it phased through the air, almost ghost-like, before landing on a patch of grass.

The rock shimmered for a moment, appearing insubstantial. Then, within seconds, it solidified, as though it had always been part of the village.

"...The moment something enters that space, it becomes part of it," Tyler murmured. "But it seems the smaller the object, the faster it integrates."

Mana's expression darkened. "Then if we step in, we might never be able to leave."

The weight of those words settled over the group.

Tyler continued staring at the village, deep in thought. "It's not just an illusion. It's a full-scale assimilation."

He lifted his telescope again, watching the missing grandmaster's face closely. There was no trace of confusion, no sign of struggle. He was completely immersed in his new life.

"He's lost his memory," Tyler said finally. "He genuinely believes he's one of them now."

A heavy silence followed.

The village was beautiful—quaint houses, vibrant fields, children running about joyfully. It was peaceful in a way that felt entirely out of place within the Abyss. But beneath that serene surface lurked an unknown danger—one that had already claimed a powerful grandmaster without a single sign of resistance.

And now, the compass that guided them to their next destination was pointing directly toward it.

Tyler exhaled sharply.

They had no choice.

They had to go inside.

"But before that, let's try something else," Tyler suggested, his mind already working on a plan.

He quickly took out a piece of paper and began writing.

[Grandmaster Xing, snap out of the illusion.]

Infusing the message with a trace of his aura, Tyler folded the paper and tossed it toward the village. It fluttered in the air before landing near Xing Zhao, resting close to his feet.

A few seconds later the paper integrated with the illusion.

Everyone held their breath as they watched through the telescope.

At first, nothing happened. Xing Zhao continued feeding the cows, completely unaware of the note at his feet.

"Ahh... He's not even noticing it," someone groaned in frustration.

Just as they were about to give up, a woman approached him. She pointed at the paper, scolding him as though he had littered.

Xing Zhao frowned, confused, and picked up the note.

Excitement rippled through the group as they watched.

"Come on, read it," Mathilda whispered.

Xing Zhao unfolded the paper and stared at it.

And then... he frowned even more, his confusion deepening.

Silence stretched among the observers.

"...He can't read it," Tyler muttered.

Through the telescope, they saw Xing Zhao tilt his head, completely baffled. Then, with a dismissive shrug, he crumpled the paper and tossed it into a nearby dustbin before returning to feeding the cows.

A heavy silence fell over the group.

Tyler clenched his fists. "The illusion is stronger than I thought."

A grandmaster let out a deep sigh. "It's not just his memories that were erased—his entire understanding of his past life is gone. He probably doesn't remember our language."

Tyler took a deep breath, calming himself. "Then if words don't work, we need to think of alternative ways."

The Next Step

After a long moment of contemplation, Tyler turned back to his team.

"We can't just rush in blindly," he said. "We need to prepare countermeasures before entering. If we step in without a plan, we might end up just like him."

Mathilda nodded. "Agreed. We need to set up anchors outside the village—something that ties us back to reality in case we start slipping."

Tyler narrowed his eyes at the peaceful yet unsettling village before him. Their previous attempts to interact with it had failed, and now the Grandmaster Silver's clone had dissolved into nothing but a puddle of water. Even stranger, the villagers had reacted to it briefly before returning to their daily routine, as if nothing unusual had happened. It was as if the illusion had a way of correcting itself.

"How about using a puppet?" one of the grandmasters suggested. "We could create a puppet and control it remotely."

"Nice idea, genius," another grandmaster scoffed. "And how exactly do you plan to control it?"

"Through divine sense, obviously—" The first grandmaster stopped mid-sentence, realization hitting him hard. They had already confirmed that divine sense didn't work inside the village.

A sigh passed through the group, but before the idea could be entirely dismissed, Tyler suddenly spoke up.

"No, wait... It's actually a great idea. But instead of a puppet, we'll use cloning."

Everyone turned to him, confused.

"Cloning?" Mathilda raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah," Tyler nodded. "If we can send in a clone, we might be able to interact with the village without risking ourselves. We just need someone with a cloning art."

The grandmasters exchanged glances, and finally, Grandmaster Silver stepped forward. "I have a cloning art, but it's water-based. I'll need special spring water to make it work."

Tyler quickly rummaged through his storage device, producing a container filled with a rare type of spring water infused with aura. "Will this work?"

Grandmaster Silver's eyes widened slightly. "This is perfect."

A Few Hours Later

An identical copy of Grandmaster Silver now stood beside him. The clone, crafted from pure water, moved fluidly, its form stable thanks to the special spring water provided by Tyler.

Then, Silver's divinity soul emerged from his body. A small fragment of it sliced away and entered the clone, bringing it to life.

The water clone blinked, nodded at Tyler and the others, and took a step forward.

Grandmaster Silver, still sitting cross-legged, opened his eyes and smirked. "It's not that hard to control."

"Good," Tyler said. "Just walk inside and drag Grandmaster Xing out once you start turning into an illusion."

Grandmaster Silver nodded in understanding as he focused on his clone, directing it toward the village.

The group watched in tense silence.

The moment the clone entered the village, its form shimmered slightly, as if adjusting to its new environment.

A few minutes passed, and then—

Grandmaster Silver suddenly coughed violently, spitting out blood.

"What happened?!" Tyler asked, stepping forward.

Grandmaster Silver wiped his mouth and let out a bitter smile. "The moment the clone fully integrated into the village, I lost my connection to it. A piece of my divinity was severed."

Tyler frowned. "I'll give you a Divinity Recovery Pill later."

Grandmaster Silver nodded in gratitude.

The group continued watching the clone, now seemingly a full-fledged part of the village. It walked as if it belonged there, even greeting villagers, who responded without hesitation.

"That's disturbing..." Mathilda muttered.

"What's worse is that it didn't even hesitate," Mana said. "It's as if it had always lived there."

The group shared an uneasy glance.

Then, without warning, the clone's form suddenly collapsed into a puddle of water.

The villagers around it gasped in shock, murmuring among themselves. But after a few moments, they simply moved on, acting as if nothing had happened.

A heavy silence fell over the group.

"What now?" Mathilda asked, arms crossed.

Tyler let out a slow exhale, deep in thought. "This Illusion has its own rule. The moment someone integrates into the village, they become part of its reality. Their mind, memories, and existence shift to match whatever rules govern this place."

"So, we can't just drag them out," One of the Grandmaster muttered.

Tyler shook his head. "No. If we want to save Grandmaster Xing, we have to figure out how not to lose our memories."

The group exchanged glances.

One thing was clear—this wasn't going to be easy.

Chapter 299: Entering the Mysterious Village

The group sat in tense silence, each member lost in their own thoughts. Tyler and the others consumed their Aura Pills and Prana Pills. Without natural Aura or Prana in the Abyss, these pills were their only way to maintain their strength. It had been over a week since they had arrived at this mysterious floor, a place where reality and illusion blended seamlessly.

Their objective remained unchanged—to find a way into the strange village without succumbing to its illusion.

"Do we really need to save him?" one of the grandmasters suddenly asked. "We just need to drag him to the spatial passage, right?"

"But we don't know where the spatial passage is," another grandmaster countered. "Divine sense doesn't work inside. If we go in blind, we might get swallowed by the illusion before we even find it."

"And how exactly are we supposed to drag him out?" someone else added. "The moment we step inside, we'll start turning into illusions too."

"We don't need to fully integrate," the first grandmaster argued. "The moment our bodies start changing, we grab him and pull him out before it's too late. As for the spatial passage, we'll use the compass to navigate."

The compass still pointed toward the village—their next Abyss floor passage was inside.

Grandmaster Silver took a deep breath and proposed, "Speed is everything. We go in, check a specific spot, then run back out before the illusion takes hold. We repeat the process until we find the passage."

"Sounds like an average plan," Grandmaster Ayla, a woman who had shared a night with Tyler, remarked.

Silver turned to her. "Do you have a better suggestion, Grandmaster Ayla?"

Ayla shook her head. "No. And honestly, we don't seem to have any other options."

Silver looked at Tyler. "Boss, what do you think?"

Tyler exhaled sharply. He thought the plan was reckless, but they had run out of alternatives. "It's risky," he admitted, "but let's do it."

Since Silver was the one who suggested the plan, he volunteered to go first. He grabbed the compass, took a deep breath, and disappeared into the village.

Everyone watched closely as he reappeared inside, sprinting forward without hesitation. He ignored the obstacles—after all, they were just illusions for now. But then he suddenly stopped, turned around, and this time, he made sure to avoid the obstacles as he ran back toward the group.

Silver looked at them. "My speed is reduced inside. I could only make it to the fourth house before I started slowing down. I also felt the objects around me."

He raised his hand which was illusory but it slowly turned back normal.

Tyler sighed. "Looks like the plan failed. If you couldn't go further, I doubt anyone else can."

"We don't need to walk there," Silver pointed out. "Once we find the exact location, we can just jump from the sky."

"It's okay if we can't rescue Grandmaster Xing," he continued. "According to the contract, his family will be compensated."

"That's cold," Ayla remarked, frowning.

"I'm just stating the facts, also it's abyss death is everywhere." Silver replied without emotion.

Tyler lifted a hand, silencing them. "Enough. First, we locate the passage. Everything else comes after."

Tyler and his team had spent the last few days tirelessly trying to locate the passage leading to the next Abyss floor. With their divine sense rendered useless, they had resorted to the only method available—trial and error.

"We'll run into the village from every direction to see if we can find the passage," Tyler suggested, scanning the surroundings.

The grandmasters nodded in agreement. One by one, they took turns dashing into the village from different entry points, ensuring they escaped before being fully consumed by the illusion. It was a risky plan, but it was their only chance.

After several attempts, Grandmaster Silver returned with a triumphant smile on his face. "I found it."

Tyler immediately turned to him. "Where?"

Grandmaster Silver pointed toward the lake behind the village. "Just run straight through that broken well and go toward the grayish hut in the middle."

Tyler narrowed his eyes. "And we can reach it just by running?"

Grandmaster Silver nodded confidently.

Tyler exhaled. "Alright, everyone, get ready. We move once Grandmaster Silver has recovered."

A few minutes later, the group stood near the village border, ready for their final dash. Mana, deciding it was too risky, retreated into Tyler's body, remaining hidden in his spirit space.

Tyler was held by Grandmaster Silver, while Mathilda was supported by a female grandmaster. With a silent signal, the group vanished into the village.

They moved swiftly, ignoring the illusions of villagers and obstacles. The more they advanced, the more their bodies began to turn half-illusory. Soon, they could interact with the environment, touching the very objects they had previously passed through.

"Where's the passage?" Tyler asked impatiently as they neared their destination.

But Grandmaster Silver remained silent.

Tyler immediately felt a sense of foreboding.

"Retreat!" he shouted.

But before he could act, his hand suddenly slipped from Silver's grip.

"An escaping charm?" Silver muttered with a sinister smile. "Do you really think you can escape a grandmaster?"

Tyler's heart pounded. Silver had betrayed them.

Without hesitation, Tyler activated a speed-boosting charm on himself and sprinted toward the lake.

The other grandmasters realized something was wrong.

"What are you doing, Silver?!" one of them yelled.

"Run! Silver is trying to trap us all inside!" Tyler shouted back.

Chaos erupted.

Silver unleashed his domain to lock Tyler in place, but the remaining grandmasters quickly Activated their domain to protect him. They fought back, resisting the oppressive force of the domain.

It seems like Silver has been hiding his strength. He is at pinnacle of Grandmaster level.

Meanwhile, Grandmaster Ayla and the other female grandmaster who was holding Mathilda had reached the edge of the village.

Just as they were about to cross the border and escape—

Another domain activated.

A surge of energy threw Mathilda backward, straight into the heart of the village.

"Mathilda!!!" Tyler's eyes widened in horror.

Without thinking, he reversed course and ran toward her, completely ignoring his own safety.

The remaining grandmasters, caught off guard, found themselves overwhelmed. The two female grandmasters who had been aiding them suddenly turned against their allies, launching coordinated attacks.

Silver's domain struck like a crashing wave, sweeping up the struggling grandmasters and flinging them deep into the illusionary village.

Tyler barely managed to escape the impact, his mind racing. There are three traitors?!

The realization struck him like a hammer. Silver wasn't the only one—Ayla and the other female grandmaster had been working with him all along.

Tyler clenched his teeth, gripping the unconscious Mathilda in his arms. His body was turning illusory. Mathilda, still unconscious, was rapidly fading into the illusion as well.

"No," Tyler growled.

He activated multiple speed charms, pushing his body beyond its limits. His figure became a blur as he ran in the opposite direction, away from the village.

He had almost reached the boundary when—

His foot caught on a rock.

Tyler's balance wavered.

The next thing he knew, he was falling—

Straight into a mysterious river that hadn't been there before.

Mathilda tumbled beside him.

The cold, ethereal water engulfed them both. Tyler gasped, struggling against the sudden pull dragging him downward. His consciousness wavered.

Darkness swallowed him whole.

Outside the Village

Grandmaster Silver's body shimmered for a brief moment before morphing into something else.

His once-human form transformed into a tall, silver-haired elf.

The two female grandmasters, still standing by his side, followed suit—both of them morphing into twin silver-haired elven women.

Their deception was complete.

"The mission is finished," Silver said with a satisfied smirk. "Tyler White won't be a problem for Princess Silvia anymore."

Ayla let out a dramatic sigh, placing a hand on her hip. "Aww... But he was really good in bed."

The other twin scoffed. "Sister, you need to stop sleeping with every handsome guy you see."

"You wouldn't understand, you should have tasted him. Do you think he have already did Princess Silvia?" Ayla said wistfully.

Silver rolled his eyes. "Enough. Princess is pure maiden, Don't talk about her. Let's head back to the Elven Kingdom. We've done our part."

"Oh my... Are you gonna trying to marry her? With her status, you can become one of her husband." Ayla said while smirking.

Grandmaster Silver who looks young smiled, "I will definitely become her consort."

"Oh... Before that do you wanna taste my body?" She asked.

Grandmaster Silver dodged and said, "I don't wanna get killed by your curse. Every man you fuck dies ..."
He said as he glanced at the village where Tyler disappeared.

The temperature dropped and the both sisters are staring at him as dead man.

"Say that again..." Kyla , sister of Ayla said with murderous expression.

"Leave it sister. He is stating the truth." Ayla shook her head.

"Better watch your mouth." Kyla warned.

The three elves disappeared , leaving behind the illusionary village that had claimed Tyler Mathilda and the remaining Grandmasters.

Chapter 300: 300. Village Of Vale

The sun rose steadily, casting its golden glow over a vast, green landscape. A village nestled between a dense forest and a winding river came to life with the gentle morning breeze. The air was crisp, carrying the scent of fresh earth and blooming flowers. Birds chirped melodiously, adding to the peaceful atmosphere.

By the riverbank, a young girl walked barefoot, carrying a clay pot to fetch water. Her long blonde hair cascaded down her back, swaying slightly with each step. Her blue eyes gleamed with innocence, and her pale skin looked even more radiant under the morning sun.

As she reached the water's edge, she knelt down, dipping her pot into the cool stream. She hummed softly, a familiar village tune echoing through the air.

Suddenly, her song was cut short.

Her eyes widened in shock as she noticed something floating in the river.

At first, she thought it was just driftwood, but as the current brought it closer, she realized—

It was a person.

A young boy, unconscious, his dark hair slicked back from the water, his body gently swaying with the river's movement.

Panic surged through her. Without hesitation, she dropped her pot and waded into the river, her heart pounding. The water was cold, but she barely noticed.

As she reached him, she carefully turned him over, placing a hand against his nose and mouth.

He was breathing.

She let out a sigh of relief.

Now that she got a closer look, she realized—he was handsome. In fact, the only other person in the village who looked this good was Leon, but Leon was too feminine. This boy, however, had a strong jawline and a presence that made her heart race.

The girl felt heat rise to her cheeks but quickly shook her thoughts away. "Now was not the time."

She gently placed her hands over his stomach and pressed down, trying to force the water out of his lungs.

A few moments later, she hesitated before taking a deep breath and leaning forward.

'If this is what it takes to save him...' She placed her lips over his and breathed into his mouth.

A faint gurgling sound came from his throat.

She pulled back just in time as he suddenly coughed violently, water spilling from his lips.

His eyes flickered open.

At first, his gaze was unfocused, lost. But as he blinked a few times, they settled on her face.

The girl's heart skipped a beat.

"Thank goodness," she whispered, smiling warmly. "You're alive."

The boy groaned slightly, his body weak.

"Huh...?" His voice was raspy, confused.

The girl tilted her head. "What's your name?"

He hesitated. His mind felt foggy, his thoughts scattered like pieces of a puzzle he couldn't quite put together.

Then, almost as if forcing himself to remember, he muttered,

"T-Tyler..."

The moment the name left his lips—

A sharp pain shot through his head.

He gasped, clutching his temples as an invisible force seemed to tighten around his skull. His vision blurred, and before he could process what was happening—

Darkness swallowed him whole once again.

The girl gasped, shaking his shoulder. "Hey! Wake up!"

But Tyler had already lost consciousness.

She bit her lip, looking around in worry.

Then, with determination in her eyes, she grabbed his arm and began pulling him toward the village.

She had to get help.

Unbeknownst to either of them, an unseen force was at work.

Something had sealed away Tyler's powers and memories, making him completely vulnerable.

Tyler slowly stirred, his fingers twitching as he showed signs of waking up. His breathing deepened, and his eyelids fluttered slightly. The moment she noticed, the young girl watching over him gasped and quickly ran out of the hut.

The sound of the door creaking shut barely registered in Tyler's mind as he let out a low groan. His head throbbed, and an unfamiliar scent filled his nostrils—a mixture of herbs, wood, and something faintly metallic.

His eyes finally cracked open.

"Where... am I?"

Tyler's voice was hoarse, barely more than a whisper. His gaze darted around, taking in his surroundings. The hut was small, made of sturdy wooden beams, and had shelves filled with herbs, dried meats, and various clay jars. There was a single window, allowing soft daylight to filter in, casting long shadows across the room.

Before he could gather his thoughts, the door swung open again. The young girl from earlier stepped inside, her expression filled with relief and excitement.

"Oh! Tyler, you're awake!" she exclaimed, her blue eyes gleaming.

Tyler frowned. Tyler?

He looked at her, confused. "Tyler...? Who is that?"

The girl blinked, caught off guard by his response. "That's... what you said your name was before you passed out in the river," she explained.

Tyler opened his mouth, then hesitated. Did I?

His mind felt foggy, empty. The more he tried to recall something—anything—the more his head throbbed. It was as if his memories were buried beneath a thick layer of mist, completely out of reach.

The girl stepped closer and gently placed the back of her hand against his forehead. Her touch was warm, gentle.

"Are you feeling unwell? Do you have a fever?" she asked, tilting her head in concern. "Do you remember anything at all?"

Tyler's lips parted, but no words came out. Remember?

His mind was blank.

He knew that words had meaning, that he should have memories—but no faces, no names, no images came to him. It was all just... nothing.

The unease in his chest tightened.

"...I don't know," he admitted finally, his voice barely above a whisper.

The girl's expression softened with sympathy, but before she could respond, Tyler's eyes landed on something in the corner of the room.

A copper pot.

Next to it, a copper ladle.

His body moved before he could think. He reached for them, his fingers wrapping around the ladle's handle instinctively.

The moment he touched it, a strange sensation washed over him.

Familiarity.

His grip tightened. His heart pounded.

He didn't know why, but the weight of the copper ladle in his hand felt right.

The girl noticed his reaction and smiled. "Oh, that was with you when I found you in the river," she said. "It looked important, so I kept it here."

Tyler stared at the ladle, turning it over in his hands.

Why did this feel like it belonged to him?

Why did it feel like—it was a part of him?

His confusion deepened.

"...Wait," he said suddenly, his gaze snapping to the girl. "Who are you? Who am I? Where am I?"

The girl stepped back slightly, startled by the sudden flood of questions.

"Oh, um—" She hesitated, then took a deep breath and smiled reassuringly.

"Hold on, I'll explain everything one by one," she said gently.

She sat down on a wooden stool beside his bed, her hands folded neatly in her lap.

"My name is Catherine. I found you unconscious in the river this morning. I don't know where you came from, but from the way you were dressed, you're definitely an outsider."

Tyler listened to her carefully.

"This is my home," Catherine continued. "And my home is in the Village of Vale."

She glanced toward the window, where the faint sound of villagers talking and children laughing could be heard in the distance.

Tyler followed her gaze, trying to process everything.

Village of Vale.

Outsider.

Lost memories.

His fingers curled around the ladle once more.

"...Then, who am I?" he asked, his voice low.

Catherine gave him a small, sad smile.

"I was hoping you'd be able to tell me that."

It took some time for Tyler to accept reality. Unable to remember anything, he decided to entrust the Copper Pot and ladle to Catherine for safekeeping. She carefully placed them inside an old wooden box and closed the lid.

Even if his memories were gone, something deep inside told him that those items were important. At least this way, he could keep them safe.

"Is this your house?" Tyler asked, his gaze sweeping across the modest room.

Catherine nodded, but a blush crept up her cheeks. She quickly looked away, her heart racing. Tyler was half-naked, his lean and well-toned body exposed. The sight made her pulse quicken, and before she knew it, her eyes drifted to his lips.

The same lips she had pressed against while saving his life.

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No, no, no... that wasn't a kiss! That was just emergency aid!' She quickly shook her head, trying to clear the thought.

Tyler, noticing her sudden movement, frowned. "Are you alright?"

"I—I AM OKAY!" Catherine blurted out, her voice louder than necessary. Her face turned a deeper shade of red as she grabbed the broom from the corner.

"I—I'm going to sweep outside! You rest for now!" She stammered before rushing out, before leaving she looked at him and said, "By the way, Welcome to Village Of Vale."

Tyler watched her leave in a hurry, a bit confused by her reaction. He sighed and laid back on the cot made of wooden frames and woven strings. His body felt heavy, his mind still foggy.

As he closed his eyes, outside, Catherine stood near the door, clutching the broom tightly, her face still warm with embarrassment. She hesitated, glancing back toward the hut, debating whether to go back inside.