

R Cultivator 381

Chapter 381: Small Shopping in the Tent

In a dimly lit alley on Fun Streak Island, the laughter and music from the main streets faded into an eerie silence. A group of unsavory men with wicked grins slowly surrounded a lone girl at the alley's dead end. She stood calmly, her long silver hair catching the faint glow of the streetlamp above. Delicate fox ears twitched atop her head, and three fluffy tails swayed gently behind her.

"Well, well... What do we have here?" one of the men sneered, licking his lips. "Did the festival send us a little treat?"

The girl's golden eyes scanned them lazily, her expression blank—bored, even. She didn't flinch as the men drew closer, each step filled with malice.

Moments later, the girl strolled out of the alley with the same indifferent expression, brushing dust off her outfit as if nothing had happened. Behind her, the once-lively alley was now a silent tomb. Lifeless bodies sprawled across the cobblestones, eyes wide with terror, as though they'd never even realized how close they were to death.

With a sigh, she flicked her wrist and her fox ears and tails faded into nothing, hidden by illusion magic. The disguise was necessary. Her appearance drew far too much attention on this island of vice and curiosity.

"No point in keeping them out. It's just a bother," she muttered to herself.

She hadn't taken more than a few steps before another group of thugs appeared from around a corner, faces flushed from alcohol and their minds drunk with desire.

"Hehe... Looks like we got a cutie wandering alone," one of them chuckled, elbowing his friend. "You lost, sweetheart?"

The girl—Su Fei—sighed again, visibly disappointed. "Is there really no end to this?"

Without a word, she turned and walked down another alley, this one narrower and darker than the last. The thugs grinned and followed, already fantasizing about what they'd do.

They never came back out.

Not a scream was heard. Not a struggle. Only silence.

Su Fei emerged once more, adjusting the collar of her robe. She didn't even glance back at the bodies. Her steps were unhurried, her posture relaxed. Despite the island's vibrant colors and festive air, Island where Pirates base is nothing but dangerous.

She wasn't with Tyler's group—not today. She had wandered off earlier to explore on her own, curious about the Fun Streak Island. She got bored quickly after looking around. The entire place was trapped in a state of constant festivity, like a never-ending carnival.

Meanwhile, Tyler and the others stepped through the grand entrance of the Circus Tent. The air inside was thick with a heady mix of spices, alcohol, and magic. Beneath their feet, the floor felt soft, like tightly stretched fabric. In fact, the entire place was covered in the same strange material—rich and resilient, reminiscent of a circus canopy but reinforced with enchantments. Unlike the playful image from the outside, the interior was vast and layered, like a small city thriving under a single colossal tent.

"Feels like we're walking on a giant drum," Tyler muttered, bouncing his heel on the fabric. "It's held together by spatial compression arrays and enchantments, huh,".

Alna replied casually. "Much bigger on the inside than it looks."

"Yeah ... That's what those array does." But Tyler didn't say that loudly.

At the entry, a small ticket booth sat to one side, glowing with soft runes. A man in a flamboyant outfit and thick clown makeup leaned lazily against the window, blowing smoke rings with a hooked pipe.

"To go deeper into the tent's first floor, we need to buy tickets," Alna explained, already fishing a pouch from her robe.

Tyler stepped forward and paid some Lydia. For someone like him, it was pocket change. The clown-like attendant handed them a stack of ornate tickets, each adorned with vibrant ink and sealed with a magical shimmer.

"Enjoy your stay," the man said with a crooked grin that never reached his eyes.

As the group walked further inside, the atmosphere changed. The deeper sections of the tent were divided into elaborate zones. The first area resembled a rowdy tavern—a pirate pub bustling with activity. Wooden tables, tankards overflowing with frothy brews, and crude laughter filled the space. Dozens of pirates, adventurers, and wanderers filled the room. Fully Naked women danced atop tables, their bodies coated in shimmering, multicolored paint from head to toe, gliding with hypnotic rhythm to lively fiddle music. Their movements were captivating, drawing eyes and coin alike.

Many Pirates threw Lydia Notes towards the dancers.

Lily rolled her eyes. "This place has all the charm of a drunk goblin's dream."

Past the tavern was a marketplace. Unlike the usual merchant stalls outside, this place was on a whole different level. Rich scents drifted through the air—sizzling spices, rare fruits, and incense made from alchemical herbs. Rare ingredients were displayed on floating trays and glass cases, lit with hovering lanterns that shifted colors. Crates of crystal rice, stacks of mutated golden truffles, and jars filled with preserved phoenix-chicken eggs and abyss fish scales lined the stalls.

Darla was practically sparkling with excitement.

Nearby, Mathilda's attention was captured by rare spiritual herbs—some still pulsing with life inside sealed containers. She was already bargaining with a merchant, her eyes gleaming like a dragon spotting treasure.

Tyler wandered a bit and found himself in front of something... massive.

A giant, cleaved head.

It sat on a metal pedestal behind a low barrier, carefully preserved. The head alone stood eleven feet tall, its skin leathery and gray with time, though still emanating a faint magical aura. The beast's face was twisted in a final snarl, green eyes like gemstones frozen in death. Its tusks were long and cracked, and a deep, clean slash marked its forehead from brow to jaw.

"A Titan..." Tyler murmured, narrowing his eyes.

A group of pirates nearby were casually leaning against a barrel, all of them bearing clown tattoos in different styles. One had his mark inked across his bald head, another on his forearm. Lily came to stand beside Tyler, arms crossed.

She studied the head and smirked. "Oh, isn't this the one that forced us to detour."

"Ha... was it? I might've been asleep," Tyler replied awkwardly, scratching the back of his head.

Lily gave him a knowing look. "You were sleeping.... with girls."

Tyler looked away and said, "That's a one nice slash."

She turned her focus back to the beast. "This one was killed with a single slash," she remarked with certainty.

The pirates nearby looked at her in surprise. One of them, the bald man with the clown tattoo on his head, stepped forward and grinned.

"Yes! This young lady has sharp eyes," he said proudly. "That beast was terrorizing travelers near the array. Our captain took care of it himself. One clean strike—just one card was all it took."

"Card?" Tyler raised an eyebrow, inspecting the wound more closely. It was impossibly clean, as if the creature's head had been sliced like silk.

"Yes, a card! That's our captain's weapon. It might sound funny, but it's deadly. His deck isn't ordinary. Every card is a deadly, make sure never get marked by it These cards are," the pirate boasted and started Yapping.

As the pirate kept bragging, Mathilda returned, carrying a floating tray of herbs and sealed scrolls. She glanced at the massive head, then at the pirates.

"Tyler, buy the Titan's head—especially those eyes. I can use them for refining nectar and elemental vision pills," she said, clearly interested.

Without waiting for his response, she looked at the bald pirate. "Hey, Clown Head. Where do you sell Immortal Dream Substances? I heard your tent has the finest quality."

"Clown Hea—" the pirate blinked, caught between pride and offense. He coughed and pointed down a long aisle lined with shimmering curtains. "That way, miss."

"Thanks," she said briskly and strutted off, her tray floating behind her.

Tyler sighed and turned to Lily. "Why do girls who shop never store their stuff in storage devices?"

"To show off, obviously," Lily replied with a grin. "What's the point of shopping if no one sees what you bought?"

Tyler sighed in resignation, finally giving up on making sense of it all.

Without bothering to haggle, he casually purchased the entire Titan's head, which still gave off a faint pressure. As he was preparing to store it inside his pocket dimension, he noticed Darla approaching. Floating beside her were several trays loaded with exotic ingredients—crystal-like fruits, shimmering roots, and even a few herbs that glowed faintly under the tent's dim light.

She looked cheerful, practically glowing with satisfaction, but what caught Tyler's attention was that none of it was being stored. The trays hovered around her like a parade of prized trophies. Not a single item had been tucked away.

He glanced at the massive cleaved Titan head in his hands, then back at Darla.

Alna walked by, carrying her own bundle of visible shopping bags.

'Should I just carry this head around too... to show off?' he thought, half-serious, half-bewildered.

Chapter 382: Kidnapped

After leaving the merchant stalls, Tyler and his group wandered deeper into the enormous circus tent. Music, laughter, and strange smells filled the air. Every corner offered something bizarre and unexpected—beast tamers juggling flaming lions, floating tea stalls, and illusion shows that bent reality itself.

Then Tyler's gaze fell on something that made him stop in his tracks.

"Is that... a boxing ring?" he muttered.

Indeed, a small crowd had gathered around a raised platform where an octopus man was dominating the scene. He looked a lot like Taka – their Ship's Cook — but with more muscle and far more flair. Each of his eight tentacles wore a different colored boxing glove, and he was currently in the middle of pummeling his opponent into unconsciousness. His punches were a blur, striking from multiple angles at once.

What shocked Tyler even more was the group of screaming fans nearby—mostly young women waving handmade signs with the octopus man's name and caricatures drawn in glitter ink.

"Who knew octopus guys had such a fanbase?" Tyler muttered.

A girl grinned beside him. "He's famous around here. They call him 'Kraken Prince.'"

"But look at him." Tyler squinted. "He looks annoyed."

"He is," Another Guy chimed in, munching on something fried and suspicious-looking. "He hates creatures with only two arms. He has his own preferences."

The match ended quickly with another victory for the tentacled fighter. Just as he was about to leave the ring, a new challenger entered—a spider woman.

Her upper body was humanoid, though she had six slender, human-like arms and six glowing eyes that blinked independently. Her long black hair flowed down her back, and her chest was bare except for a complex weave of silk-like cloth that barely covered anything. From the waist down, she had the massive black body of a spider, complete with hairy legs and gleaming fangs.

"Uhh..." Tyler blinked. "That's... a lot."

The octopus man's mood immediately changed. His tentacles twitched in excitement, and he adjusted his gloves as if preparing for a real match. It was obvious—he liked her. A lot.

"The Kraken Prince is smitten," The Girl beside Tyler whispered, with jealous.

Soon Tyler found out why Kraken Prince has many female fans. These females are perverts as Mathilda, they just wanted to get humped by those tentacles.

Tyler left quickly, realizing the match was less about fighting and more about the Kraken Prince trying to woo the spider woman.

As he reunited with the other girls who had gone off on their own, Tyler suddenly frowned.

"Wait... where's Alna?"

The group paused, glancing around. The guide who had been leading them had vanished without a word.

"I saw her talking with someone. From the way she talked it seems like it's someone she knew," Lily said, scanning the crowd. "I didn't see where she went after that."

They began searching, splitting up briefly, then regrouping when no one had found her. They stepped outside the tent to check the signal—there was none. The magical interference inside the tent seemed to block all communication.

Tyler tapped his communication device "Gang Leader Darla, can you hear me?"

A moment later, the voice of Gang Leader Darla crackled through.

"What's going on? Did something happen?"

"It's Alna," Tyler replied. "She disappeared. We're outside now, but her comm isn't responding either."

"Alna? That doesn't make sense. She's not the type to walk off during a job," Darla said, voice growing worried. "She's responsible. Focused."

Tyler tried to reassure her. "Don't worry. We'll find her. I'll keep you updated."

As he ended the call, he turned to see Lily rejoining them, her expression focused.

"I got a clue," she said calmly.

Tyler raised an eyebrow. "Why am I not surprised?"

Rather than taking their air balloon, they walked along the side of the massive tent. Lily led the way, clearly searching for something—or someone. Her eyes scanned faces, darting between booths and alleyways.

"There," she said suddenly, pointing at a young boy trying to slip away unnoticed.

The boy spotted them and froze briefly—then bolted.

"Stop, Nicole!" Lily shouted.

The boy didn't stop. He ran faster.

"I know where you live!" Lily shouted again.

Nicole stumbled at her words, then reluctantly came to a halt. He turned around slowly, eyes filled with fear and suspicion.

Tyler instinctively prepared to cast a freezing spell but held back when Lily subtly shook her head.

"That's the guy Alna was talking to earlier," Lily explained. "I asked around, got his name, and found out the spots he usually hangs out. Locals said he's shady."

They approached Nicole, who raised his hands defensively.

"I—I don't know any girl!" he blurted out, panicking.

"We haven't even started interrogating yet," Lily said with a sigh. "You're not good at this."

"Huh... We don't have time for this," Tyler said, turning to Mana, who was floating in the air with a milkshake bottle in her hand.

Mana gave a small nod and stepped forward. Just as the bottle was about to fall, Mathilda caught it and took a sip, mumbling, 'Indirect kiss...'

In a moment, she vanished—phasing straight into Nicole's body. His eyes rolled back, and his limbs went stiff. His body lifted slightly off the ground, suspended like a puppet with its strings tangled.

"Mana's possession ability is getting scary," Darla muttered. "It's like watching a Ghost."

"She is a Ghost though." Tyler chuckled.

Moments later, Mana emerged from Nicole's body, her expression grim. Nicole collapsed to the ground, shivering and gasping for breath.

"Mana got the memories," Mana said softly. "Alna was kidnapped. A group of men with clown tattoos on their arms took her. They used him to lure her out. This guy is her friend."

Tyler and the others fell silent, their expressions hardening.

Tyler turned and looked back at the massive circus tent.

"Say, Lily," Tyler asked as they walked under the towering shadows of the giant circus tent, "Circus is a massive pirate group, with lots of members, right?"

Lily turned her head slightly, still scanning the crowd. "Yes. They have lots of members, actually. Why do you ask?"

Tyler narrowed his eyes. "I think I understand what's going on. Alna didn't just wander off. Someone noticed her, probably thought she looked too soft, too valuable... and decided to take her."

Lily nodded slowly, her face darkening. "That makes sense. And if it's Circus pirates who did it... Well, let's just say their higher-ups don't care much about what their underlings do for fun. As long as they don't interfere with official business, they look the other way."

Tyler sighed. "Then we'll go and find her."

Before Lily could respond, Mana floated down, still sipping from the milkshake Mathilda had returned to her. Her eyes glowed faintly, focused on something far off. "Actually... it looks like we don't need to search for them."

Tyler turned to follow her gaze. "What do you mean?"

"They're coming to us," Mana said, her voice calm. "The ones who kidnapped Alna."

A group of five rough-looking individuals emerged from the shadows at the edge of the clearing. Tyler immediately recognized them. They were the same ones who had been tailing his group the previous day, lingering just long enough to be noticed but not confronted.

"Ahh... it's the stalkers," Lily said, folding her arms.

The pirates paused mid-step, clearly caught off guard. Lily's words had struck a nerve. They realized the group had known all along that they were being watched—and had simply chosen to ignore them.

The leader of the small group stepped forward. A lean man with wild eyes, an oily grin, and a prominent clown tattoo spiraling up his arm. He looked down at Nicole, who was still on the ground, trembling and avoiding everyone's gaze.

"So," the clown-tattooed pirate said, "I assume you've already figured out the situation. Let's not waste time."

Tyler didn't say a word. His gaze was steady, unreadable.

"We have the girl," the pirate continued, unbothered by Tyler's silence. "If you don't want her harmed... you'll come with us. All of you. Quietly."

Behind him, the other pirates slowly began forming a loose circle around Tyler's group.

"Alright," Tyler said, surprising everyone.

Mathilda raised a brow. "That easy?"

Tyler gave her a slight nod. "For now."

Mathilda sighed in frustration as she hid some vial that she taken out.

With the five pirates surrounding them, Tyler and his group were led away from the tent.

After a few minutes of walking, Lily frowned. "This direction... Isn't this toward the Colorful Forest?"

"Yeah..." Tyler nodded, his eyes narrowing. I wonder what they want. Money? Or the girls? he thought.

Whatever it was, he didn't really care.

He glanced back casually.

"What are you looking at? Move!" one of the pirates barked, shoving Tyler forward.

But Tyler didn't even flinch. To the pirate, it felt like trying to push a mountain. His face flushed with embarrassment.

"Nothing, nothing," Tyler said with a smile.

Another pirate, suspicious, glanced back in the direction Tyler had looked—only to find nothing. He quickly turned and hurried to catch up with the group.

The moment they were out of sight, a figure silently emerged from the shadows.

It was Su Fei.

Chapter 383: Into the Colourful Forest

Tyler and the others had spent an entire day inside the massive tent of wonders. After indulging in sightseeing, exotic performances, and extravagant shopping, everything seemed perfect—until they realized something was wrong.

Alna, the cheerful guide assigned to escort them, had vanished. After a brief search, they discovered the truth: she had been kidnapped. Under the threat of a group of pirates, Tyler and the girls reluctantly agreed to follow them.

With heavy steps and guarded expressions, the group—Tyler, Lily, Mana, Mathilda, and Darla—was led towards the other half of the Island. The five pirates surrounding them bore tattoos of grinning clowns on their arms, a telltale sign of their affiliation with the Circus who rules this Island.

Eventually, they arrived at the edge of the island, where an uncanny sight met them—the entrance to the Colorful Forest.

Despite its cheerful name, the Colorful Forest was anything but comforting. The trees were unnaturally vibrant, as if dipped in fresh paint—bright reds, glowing blues, rich purples, Goldish Yellow and emerald greens. Every plant, bush, and even the rocks seemed doused in surreal hues, the air shimmering with unnatural vibrancy. It was nearing evening, and the multicolored leaves reflected the sunset in brilliant, disorienting patterns.

"Where is Alna?" Tyler asked as they stepped into the forest.

"She's deeper inside," one of the pirates replied vaguely, refusing to meet his gaze.

As they advanced, Tyler noticed strange creatures nestled in the trees—giant tarantulas, each as large as a grown man's forearm, clinging to their webs like patient hunters. Strangely, even these spiders bore striking colors—bright reds and blues—and their webs glimmered in rainbow threads.

"Don't worry about them," said another pirate. "These Mini Tarantulas won't bother us unless we provoke them."

Without slowing his pace, Tyler gave a slight nod, but his eyes remained vigilant. Despite the pirates' assurances, he didn't trust the surroundings—or the company.

"Those are Mini?" Darla mouth twitched as she muttered.

They moved deeper into the forest. Soon, one of the pirates exchanged a subtle glance with his companions and gave a signal. With an almost synchronized motion, they summoned their weapons—short blades, curved sabers, and concealed crossbows.

Tyler stopped. The others followed suit.

"What do you plan to do?" Tyler asked coldly, his tone shifting. "It's true you have a hostage, but that doesn't mean we'll stand by while you try to ambush us. We just met that girl yesterday."

The pirates hesitated, clearly taken aback by Tyler's composure.

"Also," he continued, his gaze sharpening, "you're all just Master-level Immortal Practitioners. So I suggest you think logically before making any foolish decisions."

Silence. The forest held its breath.

Then—"Now!" one pirate barked.

Suddenly, glowing lines emerged from beneath the ground, encircling the group. They had walked right into a trap.

A transparent dome shimmered into existence, enclosing them in an invisible cage of energy.

"Hahaha! You fools think you're clever?" one of the pirates laughed. "This is our territory. Did you really think we'd be scared?"

Tyler ignored their taunts, crouching slightly and pressing his palm against the glowing array etched into the earth.

"Heh... What's wrong? Trying to break it already?" another pirate mocked. "Don't waste your time. This array can't be cracked so easily—"

"It's an Absorption Array fused with a Material Suppression seal Array. " Tyler said aloud, cutting him off. "These types are commonly used in prisons. The longer you stay inside, the more it drains your Prana and Aura. Eventually, you collapse."

The pirates stopped laughing.

Mathilda frowned. "That sounds like a pain in the ass. Can we break it?"

"Not easily," Tyler said, standing up. "But it's manageable. The key is to prevent total depletion of your energy. If you lose it all, you'll fall unconscious. That's their plan—to wear us down slowly."

The pirates exchanged uneasy glances. Clearly, they hadn't expected their trap to be so easily analyzed.

"Wait... Is he an array expert?" one of them whispered.

But Tyler was no longer interested in a slow solution.

"We don't have time for that," he muttered. Though he could use his unlimited supply of Aura and Prana stones to overwhelm the array and force it to break through energy overload, he had no intention of playing defense.

"I've decided to end this quickly." Tyler said loudly.

The pirates blinked in confusion.

One of the Pirate hesitated.

"What?" Another pirate noticed that and jabbed at him.

"Well is that shrine was always there?" The pirate pointed towards a direction.

"What shrine?" The others looked with confusion.

In the center of some dense trees, they saw a red shrine. It seems like an old shrine that is blended with the surrounding for years. The structure suddenly shimmered with divine energy, casting an ethereal light over the woods.

"W-What is that shrine?" one of them asked.

"Something is not right. Focus! Capture them first—deal with the shrine later!" another barked.

The five pirates lunged toward Tyler's group, blades drawn.

"Su Fei..." Tyler whispered.

A moment later, a clear, melodious voice echoed through the air.

"Time Reversal."

Reality itself bent backward.

The charging pirates froze mid-strike—then were thrown backward, flying in reverse as if someone had hit rewind on time itself.

Then she appeared.

Su Fei descended like a spirit of forest, her long hair fluttering in the wind, nine shimmering tails trailing behind her. Her eyes sparkled with divine light. Calmly, she walked to the edge of the array and tapped the invisible barrier with one of her tails.

The entire formation shattered like glass, releasing a ripple of multicolored light that danced across the forest.

The pirates were stunned, lying in a heap, groaning in confusion.

"W-Who the hell is she?" one gasped.

"Hmph... I can't use my powers fully." Su Fei ignored them and said to Tyler coolly

Tyler walked over and adjusted his coat. "Yeah like Hell I will allow you to use your full power."

Tyler then looked at the Fallen Pirates.

They clutched their heads, their faces contorted in agony, as if a thousand ice needles were piercing their minds from the inside.

"Mana," Tyler called out softly.

"On it," she replied.

Floating gracefully in the air with her usual carefree poise, She quickly lunged towards the pirates. She possessed one of the pirate who seems like the leader of this small group. The man twitched violently as his body arched, then fell limp. His eyes turned milky white, and he began to float unnaturally, as if suspended by invisible strings.

"It stills gives me the creeps every time," Darla muttered, folding her arms as she watched the strange possession unfold.

Tyler didn't respond. He waited as Mana scoured through the man's memories. After a few seconds, the pirate's body fell back to the ground like a discarded doll, and Mana hovered up above them, her expression unreadable.

"So?" Tyler asked.

"There's a hidden facility inside this forest," Mana said. "A laboratory. And it's not just any lab—it's one run by someone named Dr. Juggler."

"A lab?" Mathilda's eyes lit up with interest. "Like an alchemy lab?"

Mana nodded. "Exactly. According to his memories, this Dr. Juggler is one of the top crew members of the Circus Pirate Group. He's the one who gave the order to kidnap us—specifically the girls."

A tense silence settled over the group.

Tyler tilted his head. "Dr. Juggler, huh? Like a Juggler role in a Circus? What's his cultivation level?"

"He's a Five-Star Grandmaster Mage," Mana replied. "But his strength doesn't just come from his cultivation. His potions, toxins, and biological tricks are the real problem. According to this guy's memories, even touching one of his needles could paralyze a Grandmaster Level Titans."

"Ohh~" Mathilda giggled, "A mad scientist, huh? I like it! Let's go meet him—I want to see whose poisons are deadlier, his or mine!"

She spoke like a child eager to meet a new friend at the playground... one that made toxic death juice for fun.

Su Fei glanced at the pile of groaning pirates nearby. "Are you gonna kill them?" she asked, her eyes narrowing.

Her nine elegant tails shimmered momentarily before retracting and vanishing into three, then finally disappearing altogether. She seemed to melt back into her more human form, her fox features hidden once more.

Tyler, deep in thought, narrowed his eyes. He wasn't pondering the pirates. No, he was genuinely curious: had Su Fei made her tails invisible, or had they actually disappeared?

Acting on pure scientific curiosity (or so he claimed), his hand suddenly moved and spanked her butt.

Su Fei's eyes widened in shock. She froze, then glared at him with all the fury of a thousand burning suns.

"Huh? I was just checking if the tails are still there," Tyler said with the most innocent smile he could muster.

Su Fei let out a sharp, suspicious snort, clearly not buying it—but not murdering him either.

"I want to check too!" Mathilda chirped, hand raised like a kid volunteering in class. She dashed toward Su Fei with glee.

Before she got close, a gust of wind whooshed past—and Mathilda was sent flying backward, tumbling through the air like a floppy doll.

A few minutes later...

With Mana in the lead and they continued moving deep in the forest. Behind them, Mini tarantulas began spinning shimmering rainbow silk across five frozen ice statues, like decorators in a haunted fairy tale.

Chapter 384: Dr. Juggler

Night had arrived.

Three moons floated in the sky, casting a gentle glow over the land. But the Colorful Forest was anything but dark. Under the celestial lights of moons, the entire landscape came alive in radiant hues. The trees shimmered with neon greens and electric blues. And some shades of colours are also shining. Leaves glowed like polished gemstones, while the rocks and even the earth seemed painted in vibrant strokes of red, orange, and violet.

Bathed in moonlights, the forest looked like a dream—or a drug-induced hallucination.

A small group made their way through this surreal wonderland.

"What are you looking for?" Lily asked, raising an eyebrow as she noticed Tyler scanning the surrounding trees with intense focus.

"A tree shaped like a butt," he replied without missing a beat.

"...Huh?"

"Nah, never mind," Tyler said with a faint smirk. "Old joke. Used it twice already."

Lily blinked. "You're weird."

"I was led astray by Mathilda."

"I didn't do anything," Mathilda replied, dead serious. "But if you do find a tree shaped like a butt, you better tell me."

She chuckled, shaking her head. "Anyway, why are the trees even colorful like this?"

Tyler stopped to inspect a bright turquoise fern glowing at his feet. "Good question. This doesn't look natural. But I thought since it's a 'Fun Streak Island' under the 'Circus', everything is painted for looks."

"From what I heard, someone once tossed a giant glitter bomb on the island," Lily said, shrugging. "Supposedly, it painted everything."

Tyler arched a brow. "You don't actually believe that, do you?"

"Not really. Sounds like something the Clown would've done, though. According to the pirates at the tent, he wanted the whole island to look like a circus stage."

"Figures." Tyler looked around again, more thoughtful now.

Mathilda, walking slightly ahead, chimed in, "If I had to guess, they probably tampered with the water source. Tainted groundwater can mutate plant life—change pigments, bioluminescence, even shape. They may have injected alchemical agents into the soil as well."

"So we're walking through a magically mutated art gallery?" Lily asked.

"Basically," Mathilda replied.

"We're here," Mana said suddenly, her voice cutting through the discussion.

They came to a stop in front of a small white tent nestled beside a strange lake. The water swirled with streaks of orange, red, and pink. Instead of blending into a single color, the hues formed bold contrasts, like an oil painting with a life of its own.

The tent looked almost absurdly plain against the forest's radiant backdrop. No guards. No barriers. Just a simple white structure near the water.

"This is it?" Tyler asked, eyes narrowing.

Mana nodded. "It matches the memory I extracted. Dr. Juggler's lab."

"I don't see any pirates," Tyler muttered, still scanning the area.

"Unless it's absolutely necessary, no one comes here," Mana said. "Even the pirates avoid this place. They're terrified of the doctor's poisons."

The group approached cautiously, their eyes darting through the trees. Every step closer to the tent made the air feel heavier. The lake's vibrant surface rippled unnaturally, even though there was no wind.

Then it hit them.

A wave of dizziness crashed over the group like a sudden tide. Tyler staggered, and even Mana, whose ghostly form rarely faltered, clutched her head.

The forest around them warped. Trees twisted, their colors blurring together. The ground undulated like it was breathing. It was like falling into a dream you couldn't wake from.

"Tch. Petty tricks," Mathilda growled.

She reached into her pouch and pulled out a small packet, tossing its contents into the air. The powder hissed like water on a hot pan. For a moment, the air crackled—and then cleared. The dizziness faded, the illusions vanished, and the forest returned to its vibrant, though unsettling, stillness.

Everyone blinked as their vision stabilized.

"Not bad," Su Fei said, clearly impressed.

Mathilda winked. "Impressed, huh?."

Mathilda flexed her fingers, feeling her strength return. "Gas-based illusion toxins. Cheap, but effective if you're not prepared."

"Is it normal for Toxins in the air?" Lily asked.

"No... Atleast not when the pirates are visiting."

"Looks like the good doctor knows we're coming. He also guessed that we defeated his lackeys." Lily muttered, now more alert.

"Well, he still has an hostage," Tyler said. "So let's proceed caution."

He took the lead, his boots crunching softly on the glowing grass, and approached the white tent with careful steps. Behind him, the others followed.

Boom!

Before they could step into the tent, a deafening explosion echoed through the forest, sending a shockwave rippling through the colorful trees. Birds scattered, tarantulas dropped from their webs in surprise, and a plume of black smoke shot out from the entrance.

A man burst from the tent, coughing and stumbling. He was wearing a white lab coat—now singed and stained with soot—and a pair of thick-rimmed glasses that sat askew on his face. His hair stood up in frizzled tufts, and his face was smudged black with soot, giving him the appearance of a deranged chimney sweep.

"Ugh... another failure," he rasped, voice hoarse as if he'd inhaled too much smoke. He pulled off his glasses, wiped them absentmindedly on his soot-covered coat—which only made the lenses dirtier—and shoved them back on.

"Dr. Juggler?" Tyler called out, raising a brow.

The man blinked and looked up, squinting through his foggy glasses. "Huh... Oh my stars... they actually brought you all here." His voice carried a strange mix of excitement and disappointment. "Though it looks like the delivery boys aren't around anymore."

He didn't seem to be addressing the group directly. Rather, he was talking aloud to himself—as if they were part of some unfolding play he had already rehearsed in his mind.

"Wait," he said, squinting again, "you lot managed to walk all the way here and avoid the toxins in the air?"

Mathilda crossed her arms. "Petty tricks don't work on professionals."

Dr. Juggler's eyes lit up with curiosity. "Impressive. That formula should've at least made you hallucinate mildly... But the fact that you were able to insta counter it is already impressive. Guess I'll have to make a stronger one next time." Then, without warning, he flicked his wrist and tossed a vial into the air.

Tyler's eyes narrowed.

Before the vial could hit the ground, a red shrine shimmered into existence behind them. A glowing symbol lit up under their feet.

Clink.

The vial froze mid-air.

"Time ," Su Fei announced softly, Three tails flicking behind her.

Dr. Juggler adjusted his glasses, completely unfazed. "Oh ho... a Time Domain. Fancy. Must be expensive to maintain and it seems like you didn't use your full power. Guess that gives me only one option."

Calmly, he wiped the soot from his face using the sleeve of his lab coat. Beneath the grime, a layer of white face paint became visible—painted on in jagged patterns like a clown's mask. This, it seemed, was his true face.

He looked like a scientist straight from a circus—a painted clown with a lab coat.

"Right," he muttered, almost theatrically. "Time for the performance."

From his left pocket, he pulled out a set of crystal balls and began juggling them with surprising dexterity. His hands blurred, the glass spheres catching the moonlight in rainbow hues.

"Not this one... not this... definitely not this..." he mumbled as he juggled faster and faster. Then, with a sharp inhale, he stopped suddenly, snatching one ball out of the air. Then he stored all the balls into his pocket.

"Gotcha." His lips curled into a wide, unsettling smile. "This one's yours, I presume."

He held the crystal ball out for them to see.

Inside it, suspended in a swirling silver mist, was a young maiden—unconscious, her limbs curled as if floating in a dream.

"Alna!" Mathilda gasped, taking a step forward.

Dr. Juggler raised the crystal slightly. "Ah-ah-ah," he chided, wagging a finger. "One more step and I crush it. And with it, your dear friend. Hahaha!"

His laughter echoed through the colorful forest, as unsettling as it was theatrical.

Tyler stepped forward calmly, eyes steady. "What do you want?"

"What do I want?" Dr. Juggler repeated with a wide grin. "Oh, so many things. A stable corrosive gel that doesn't eat my socks. A pet that doesn't explode. A performance worthy of applause... but right now?"

He scratched his head.

He spun the crystal ball once in his hand and then held it close to his chest. "I want to see what kind of specimens you all are."

"We're not your test subjects," Lily snapped.

"Oh, but you were supposed to be," he said, tilting his head like a curious child. "Especially the girls. I need you girls for a small experiment And you..."—his eyes briefly flicked to Su Fei—"You weren't even in the program. Intriguing. The RingMaster will definitely snatch you away from me if he saw a such a high level Fox bloodline."

"Release the girl," Tyler said firmly, Aura subtly rising around him.

Dr. Juggler raised a brow. "Threats? You're in my forest. My lab. My stage. If you want her back, you'll have to entertain me first. Also I have the hostage so don't do anything funny. Why do I have to repeat myself."

He sighed.

Mathilda cracked her knuckles, a gleam in her eyes. She is looking at something in the Air.

Dr. Juggler's grin stretched unnaturally wide as he noticed Mathilda, "Ohoho... looks like there is really a genius alchemist in your group."

Suddenly, he stomped his foot. A wave of colorful spores exploded from the trees around them, swirling like mist in the moonlight.

"Welcome", he declared, arms spread, "to my Dream Carnival!"

The trees themselves seemed to shimmer and sway like a painted illusion. The lake behind the tent bubbled unnaturally, and faint music—like a broken calliope—played from nowhere.

It's his Domain.

Chapter 385: Battle at the Colourful Forest

Tyler and the others were suddenly engulfed in a shimmering, painted haze—like ink dropped into water, spreading tendrils of color in every direction.

It was Dr. Juggler's Domain.

The world around them twisted. The forest faded into a strange dreamscape. Trees shimmered as if made of brushstrokes, swaying like dancers in a surreal painting. The lake behind the tent bubbled with unnatural colors, its surface reflecting nothing of the real world. Somewhere in the distance, a broken calliope wheezed out a haunting tune—off-key, whimsical, and deeply unsettling.

From the center of the illusion, a giant pinwheel emerged, its rainbow-colored blades spinning lazily at first. Standing on top of it was Dr. Juggler, arms stretched wide like a performer on stage.

"Play in my Domain—Dream Carnival," he whispered, almost reverently.

"What a nice name," Tyler said, clearly impressed by his naming sense.

"What a lame name." Su Fei said. She was unimpressed, her tone laced with sarcasm. She was not near Tyler.

A mist of colorful gases began to spread across the forest. Wherever it touched, life withered—trees shriveling, grass curling, flowers turning to dust. The toxic beauty was mesmerizing and deadly.

Tyler turned quickly, but the others had vanished from sight.

"Lily? Mathilda? Mana? Darla? Su Fei?" he called out, but no one responded.

Elsewhere in the dreamscape:

Su Fei lounged atop a red shrine, legs crossed, looking bored as her tails flicked lazily in the air. "This is just like those low-budget circus, But at least i don't have to fight." she murmured.

Darla had somehow hidden inside a giant cooking pot, the lid slightly ajar as she peeked out cautiously. The pot was sealed tight enough to keep the poisonous gas at bay, and she muttered about needing better air filters next time.

Lily stood tall amidst the gas, lightning crackling around her. The poisonous mist dared not come near—every particle that approached was instantly incinerated by her electric field.

Mana was nowhere to be seen—vanished without a trace.

Mathilda, ever the bold one, marched straight toward Dr. Juggler's tent. The poison mist swirled around her but did nothing to her. She didn't even flinch.

Tyler clenched his fists. "Rain," he muttered, activating his own Domain.

Dark clouds swirled above, summoned from thin air. Raindrops fell heavily, drenching the forest. As they struck the poisonous mist, the gases hissed and dispersed. The air began to clear. Droplets washed away the illusion's rot and made the dreamscape shimmer with broken reality.

With a leap, Tyler sprang onto the base of the giant pinwheel and started climbing. Each blade spun slowly beneath his feet like giant leaves, slick with condensation. He jumped from one to the next, using bursts of wind to lift himself higher.

As he reached the top, the pinwheel suddenly whirled to life, spinning violently.

"Whoa—" Tyler was thrown from its surface as if flung by a catapult. The wind screamed in his ears as the world flipped upside down.

Boom!

Before he could crash into the ground, he activated Mode: Dragon. A surge of red energy rippled through his body. Scales spread like armor across his skin, glowing faintly as they hardened. He attempted to fly away—but he hit the ground face-first anyway.

"Ugh," Tyler groaned, pushing himself up. "Still working on the landing..."

He floated upward, eyes locked on the now-rampaging pinwheel. Dr. Juggler had disappeared. The eerie music continued to play, echoing faintly across the distorted forest.

Suddenly, the pinwheel spun with a shrill whine and took flight like a monstrous blade, its rainbow edge gleaming with lethal intent. It shot directly at Tyler.

"Not today," Tyler growled, diving to the side.

Boom!

The massive wheel sliced into the ground where he'd stood, carving a long, jagged trench through the painted land.

Meanwhile, Su Fei had gathered the others atop her red shrine. The shrine hovered midair, untouched by the illusion's decay. From their high vantage point, the girls watched the battlefield unfold.

"All present except Mathilda," Darla reported, peeking out of her pot.

"She'll be fine," Lily said, arms crossed. "She's probably looting his laboratory."

"I wish I brought popcorn," Su Fei added, swinging her legs.

Below, Tyler ran left. The pinwheel followed like a spinning predator, digging into the earth with every turn. When he shifted direction and ran right, the giant wheel twisted sharply to pursue, gouging more trenches into the ground.

The girls' heads turned in unison, following him like an audience at a tennis match.

"He doesn't want to use his other domain," Lily remarked, her eyes following Tyler's movements.

"Think he'll break it?" Darla asked curiously.

"His other domain isn't even complete," Su Fei replied with a smirk. "But he managed to fight me with it. If he activates his chessboard, he could escape any enemy domain instantly."

Meanwhile, Tyler slid to a halt behind a jagged rock formation just as the spinning pinwheel crashed into it, sending shards of painted stone flying in every direction.

From the swirling shadows of the distorted Dream Carnival, Dr. Juggler's voice echoed like a dissonant melody through the illusion-painted forest.

"Isn't it fun?" he called, his voice layered with mischief. "How about surrendering in the next two minutes? Otherwise, I might just drown you in Potions of Poison."

Tyler stood alert amid the neon-hued trees, their bark gleaming like wet paint under the moonlight. His eyes scanned the dreamlike surroundings, sharp and calculating.

"Come out and fight me, clown," he growled, voice cutting through the warped air like a blade.

"Clown?" the voice giggled from everywhere and nowhere. "Oh no, no, no. My Captain is the clown. I'm merely a humble scientist of joy. A doctor of chaos. A curator of the absurd." A dramatic pause. "Also, certified alchemist, if you must know. But you may call me... Dr. Juggler."

Tyler rolled his eyes, irritation flickering behind them. "You've taken a hostage. Why are you even hiding? Stop hiding and show yourself."

From above, the giant pinwheel twisted sharply mid-air, screeching like warped metal. It dove like a guillotine, aiming directly at him.

Tyler reacted in an instant. He leapt upward, twisting midair with supernatural grace. He landed a swift kick against the edge of the spinning blade, using it as a launchpad to propel himself higher. As he soared, icy spirals curled around him—conjured from his Prana—crackling in the moonlight like a frozen tempest.

"I've had enough of your games!" he shouted, his voice booming through the surreal forest.

He unleashed a volley of ice spheres, hurling them directly at the pinwheel. The glowing forest fell silent as the projectiles struck.

"Hahaha... Nothing is going to—"

Dr. Juggler's voice cut off mid-laugh.

The massive pinwheel creaked, then froze solid, trapped in a prison of shimmering, translucent ice. The wind howled as the object hovered, encased and immobile.

"...That was unexpected," Dr. Juggler muttered.

Tyler landed gracefully, brushing frost from his sleeves. "Pull yourself together and come out, come out, wherever you are." His voice had turned cold, almost mocking. "Unless... you want me to assume the girl you captured is already dead. Then we can only leave. FYI we just met Alna yesterday."

There was silence for a moment. Then, from behind the frozen pinwheel, a pale, gloved hand emerged. It held a small, glowing crystal orb.

Inside, Alna lay unconscious, curled up as if asleep. Her face looked peaceful, though slightly pale.

"This is the last time I show this," Dr. Juggler's voice warned. "Look, she's fine. Happy dreams and all that."

But before he could make another move, the crystal orb in his hand vanished instantly.

"Eh?" Dr. Juggler gasped. "Where did—?"

Tyler stood calmly, twirling a small copper ladle and the crystal ball before storing them away in his pocket dimension.

"How did you...?" Dr. Juggler's voice was no longer amused. Irritation bled into his tone, laced with genuine curiosity.

Tyler said nothing.

Instead, he stepped toward the frozen wheel, scanning for signs of the maniacal scientist. But there was no one there.

Suddenly, a strange noise echoed behind him—a soft squeak, like a wheel on broken pavement.

A unicycle rolled into view, and riding atop it was a grotesque humanoid figure. Its entire body was made of shifting, colorful paint. It juggled spheres of vibrant watercolors, each dripping like molten wax.

Tyler's eyes narrowed.

Every time a drop of the painted fluid hit the ground, the earth beneath hissed and melted like acid.

Before Tyler could react, the painted figure lunged forward, the unicycle gaining unnatural speed.

It crashed into him with a sloshing thud.

"Chariot!" Tyler shouted.

A shimmering pattern flared beneath his feet—a luminous chessboard formed of Red and White tiles.

In a blink, Tyler shifted sideways on the grid, moving horizontally in an instant to avoid the impact entirely. Just like a Chariot piece (Rook) in a chess game.

The painted figure slammed into a tree, which burst into a kaleidoscope of colors before melting into the ground and vanishing entirely.

But then—without warning—it reappeared, intact and unharmed.

"Teleportation? No... this is something else," Dr. Juggler muttered, visibly confused.

"It's back again," Su Fei said with a frown, narrowing her eyes. "That annoying little trick."

Suddenly, more entities emerged—each riding a unicycle, each made of the same swirling, colorful paint. One, then three, then a dozen. The carnival was coming alive with chaos.

Tyler's eyes widened as he took a step back. He watched the painted figures encircle him with growing dread.

He swallowed hard, "Oh I am dead."