

R Cultivator 386

Chapter 386: Mathilda Strikes

More entities emerged—like living paintings brought to life—each riding a unicycle, each formed from swirling, multicolored paint that seemed to dance and ripple across their semi-liquid bodies. First one, then three, then a dozen. The Dream Carnival trembled with their arrival, as though chaos itself had been summoned to the stage.

Tyler's eyes widened as the unicycling nightmares began to encircle him. Their erratic movements made it impossible to tell which direction they'd strike from.

He took a cautious step back and yelled out, "Girls! Little help here!"

From all around him, laughter echoed. Dr. Juggler's voice reverberated through the air like the chime of warped bells. "Haha... Do you really think your little harem can save you?"

Tyler quietly listened to see if he can find the hiding Juggler.

One of the painted figures lunged toward him, arms wide like a twisted juggler preparing to grapple. But just as it was about to collide with him, it paused mid-leap. Then, inexplicably, it reversed direction—riding the unicycle backwards through the air, retracing its steps.

"Time reversal?" Tyler muttered, he relaxed a little since the Girls took action.

Before he could analyze it further, two more of the painted entities launched at him. But before they got close, a streak of lightning whipped across the battlefield. The electric arc cracked through the air and coiled around both figures, reducing them to steam in the blink of an eye.

From atop the red shrine, Lily flicked her whip again, letting residual sparks hiss along its length.

The remaining entities, however, weren't deterred. They surrounded Tyler in a wide ring, and just as they were about to rush him en masse, they all stopped—frozen mid-motion. Their heads, or what passed for heads in their fluid-like forms, tilted toward the tent.

Even Dr. Juggler, hidden somewhere in the twisted scenery, went quiet. His voice came after a pause, laced with confusion. "What... are they looking at?"

From the shadows of the tent, a new figure emerged. At first glance, it resembled one of Dr. Juggler's creations—its body a glistening swirl of greenish paint, semi-translucent and vibrant. It was shaped like a woman, with elegant curves and graceful motion. She moved with a kind of girlish charm, hopping and skipping as if skipping through a garden, completely unfazed by the chaos around her.

Tyler blinked. "Another one...?"

Dr. Juggler gasped. "That's my work! That's my technique! Who the hell stole my Art?! It took me fifty years to develop that Minion Formula!"

A voice called lazily from behind the paint woman. "Relax. I can only make one minion. It's harder than it looks."

Mathilda stepped out from the tent, brushing paint dust off her sleeves.

Tyler's jaw dropped. "Wait—you made that?"

"Huh?" she said with a teasing grin. "This Minion Formula is a Good Art that can create humanoid entities. You are genius Dr. juggler. "

"You little—thief!" Dr. Juggler's voice cracked with disbelief. "How did you even get into my tent? It's laced with seven layers of airborne poison! That place is my sanctuary!"

Mathilda twirled a bronze-colored token in her hand. "Poison? Huh. I didn't notice. But thanks for the notes. They were just lying around."

Inside Dr. Juggler's hidden lair, there were no detection arrays—he'd never needed them. The entire tent was toxic to anyone who wasn't him. The walls were laced with volatile alchemical fumes and his own unique poisonous concoctions. It should have been impossible for anyone to survive, let alone steal from him.

Mathilda continued strolling forward, utterly unfazed. She held up the token and tapped it once. The large circus tent shimmered, shrunk down to the size of a coin, and vanished into her palm.

Then she tossed the token into her storage pouch with a little wink. "Hope you had backups."

Meanwhile Tyler is looking at the entities made by Dr. Juggler and Mathilda. Dr. Juggler's entities looks like Circus performers. Mathilda's looks like a Naked Woman with perfect figure.

"Tsk..." Tyler clicked his tongue. Mathilda is definitely a Genius for to master a Technique that she just got. But she is a pervert.

Dr. Juggler screamed in frustration from wherever he was hiding. "That was my Lab! You arrogant little—!"

Before he could finish his rant, the green paint woman—Mathilda's new creation—suddenly exploded in size. It roared silently and charged at the unicycle creatures that had surrounded Tyler, dispersing them like bowling pins. The entities scattered, crashing into trees, dissolving into puddles, or bursting in plumes of colored smoke.

Tyler stood still, letting out a breath he hadn't realized he was holding. He turned to Mathilda and gave her a mock salute. "Remind me never to piss you off."

"Oh, you wouldn't survive," she replied sweetly.

From above, a new storm of laughter rang out, though this time it sounded more manic, tinged with madness and panic. Dr. Juggler's voice echoed once more, but it had lost its confident lilt.

"This is my Domain!" he shouted. "You think you can just waltz in and dismantle my masterpiece?!"

Tyler narrowed his eyes and looked toward the distorted sky, where the paint-colored clouds swirled like oil on water.

"I think we already have," he said flatly. "Your monsters are falling apart. Your tent's gone. Your hostage is safe."

He raised one hand, calling forth a ripple of magic beneath his feet. The chessboard shimmered into view again—the signature of his own domain.

"Your carnival's over, Doctor."

Rain began to pour from the painted sky, gentle at first—then torrential. Each drop that struck the ground washed away a bit of color, as if the very world was melting.

Tyler closed his eyes for a moment, feeling the familiar pulse of his Domain beneath his feet—his chessboard, a grid only he could fully perceive. Within this domain, every step, every breath, was accounted for. He sensed a presence—faint, quick-moving—perched high above in a tree.

"Chariot," he whispered.

Far in the distance, Dr. Juggler, now panicked and exposed, tried to flee. But He zipped horizontally with an unnatural twitch, then suddenly propelled forward—only to be yanked out of the air and slammed into the muddy ground.

A trident appeared before him, inches from his throat—Tyler's Abyss Trident, gleaming with ominous blue runes. Rain hissed off its tip as if the weapon itself rejected the very water.

Tyler and Mathilda stood over him, Not even a drop of Rain Water fell on them, their gazes were cold and unmoved.

"Huh... I surrender," Dr. Juggler said with a sheepish shrug, raising both hands in mock surrender, though a twitch of his fingers betrayed his real intentions.

Mathilda, ever the alchemist, snapped her fingers.

A silvery powder burst into the air from her palm, dancing through the downpour. As it spread, it crackled—reacting with something invisible. Thin green mist, previously unseen, began to corrode and disintegrate under the powder's touch.

"Invisible poison. Again," she said with an exasperated sigh. "Trust me, it won't work as long as I'm here."

Before Dr. Juggler could try another trick, a whip snapped through the air with a thunderous crack. It wrapped tightly around his head and sent a jolt of lightning surging through his skull. He slumped, unconscious, face-first into the wet dirt.

Lily and Su Fei stood beside Tyler.

A moment later, a loud rumbling sound echoed as something heavy rolled toward them.

Mana appeared, effortlessly pushing a large cauldron-like pot. The thing clanged with every bump in the road, steam rising from its sealed lid. She stopped beside Tyler and wiped a strand of hair from her face.

The lid flipped open—and Darla's head popped out, eyes wide.

"Is it over?" she asked, scanning the eerie remnants of the battlefield.

Tyler let out a breath, nodding. "Yeah... at least for now. Let's just hope his captain won't make things diffi—"

He never finished the sentence.

Laughter erupted above them—wild, guttural, and unhinged.

"HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!"

Clap. Clap. Clap.

A figure sat on the highest branch of a nearby tree, clapping slowly with white-gloved hands. His face was painted in exaggerated clown makeup—wide, red lips curled into a manic grin, blackened eyes that seemed to drip paint, and a nose that gleamed unnaturally red under the rain.

A Blue lion, massive enough to rival a carriage, rested at the tree's base. Its mane glowed faintly in the dim light, its eyes glowing with feral intelligence.

On the lion's back stood another man, regal in presence yet theatrical in flair. He wore a tall black top hat, a crimson tailcoat with gold trim, a gold vest, black pants, and polished shoes. A cane rested in his gloved hand, while a coiled whip hung from his belt.

Together, they were unmistakable.

The Clown—the Captain of the Circus Pirates.

And The Ringmaster—the Vice-Captain of Circus Pirates.

The rain gradually came to a stop as Tyler retrieved his domain, allowing the soaked and color-washed world to settle into a heavy silence.

The Ringmaster's eyes narrowed slightly, his gaze landing on Su Fei with a spark of interest.

Meanwhile, the Clown stood atop the tree branch, his head tilting side to side, observing each member of the group with gleeful fascination—like a child seeing new friends. His grin widened unnaturally, eyes dancing with manic delight.

Chapter 387: Clown's New Friends

Inside a massive room that looked like it was stitched entirely from fabric, the walls swayed gently with the breeze, as if the whole chamber was breathing.

Lanterns hung overhead, glowing in shifting hues, casting playful shadows across the space.

At the center of the room stood a long, grand dining table carved from dark driftwood, polished smooth and engraved with carnival symbols—stars, masks, and animals frozen mid-performance.

An extravagant feast was laid out across its length. Towering platters of seafood dominated the table: golden-fried leviathan rings, grilled sea serpent tail, butter-drenched lobster, rainbow clams still steaming from the pot, and spiral shells filled with spiced crab meat.

The food was served by a procession of stunning women clad only in shimmering veils of colorful silk that barely covered their bodies, accentuating their every movement.

They danced with each step, placing the dishes delicately and bowing with grace. After them came handsome men with strong builds and confident strides, carrying massive barrels of exotic wine and rare alcohol.

Their attire was just as minimal—only bright-colored sashes wrapped around their waists and tribal body paint covering their torsos.

Once the barrels were placed in position, the men departed silently. The women, however, remained, lined up gracefully behind the table. They waited for a signal.

The signal came from the figure seated at the head of the table—the Clown.

He didn't sit like a noble or even a proper host. No, he crouched on the chair in a squat, his knees bent, arms resting on them like a mischievous monkey king.

His face was painted in stark white, with deep red smears for lips and a star around one eye. His wild, frizzy hair was a mess of orange and pink, topped with a tiny tilted hat. His eyes gleamed with a strange light—somewhere between madness and curiosity.

To his right sat the Ringmaster, a tall, elegant man with sharp eyes and refined posture. His dark suit was tight and pristine, his top hat casting a shadow over his chiseled face. To the Clown's left, the seat remained empty, though a small blue creature—cat-sized, with long ears and stubby legs—happily munched away at the food on the table like it belonged there.

"Welcome to the Circus," the Clown announced, raising a wine glass with exaggerated flair. His voice echoed strangely in the tented chamber, theatrical and full of mischief.

Seated across from him were his guests—Tyler, Mana, Lily, Su Fei, Mathilda, Darla, and Alna. Each one sat upright, wary but composed, unsure whether this was a meeting or a trap... or both.

"Hmm... the food's good," Mana mumbled, already digging into a plate of grilled sea bass. She either didn't notice or didn't care about the odd atmosphere.

"Hahaha! I'm glad you enjoyed it. Please, eat more, eat everything!" the Clown cackled, waving dramatically.

He poured himself a glass of crimson wine and turned his gaze to Tyler. "By the way, you're the boss of this White Merchant Group, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am," Tyler answered, setting down his utensils. "And... sorry about the incident with Dr. Juggler—"

The Clown cut him off with a snort. "Don't let that bother you. That idiot always does that. Kidnapping guests, making a show out of it... even though we send him slaves to play with." He rolled his eyes, as if scolding a naughty pet. "He never listens."

Tyler reached for a piece of lobster and took a bite. The flavor was incredible—rich, buttery, and slightly sweet. He gave a nod of approval.

Across the table, Darla noticed and made a mental note. Taka had told her once to always observe the reactions of those they served, to know what delighted them.

She observed every expression: Lily's smile at the wine, Su Fei simply eating crabs in silence, Mathilda's narrowed eyes scanning the performers, she just want to eat those girls and Alna's quiet fascination.

After a while, the Ringmaster cleared his throat and spoke.

"Mr. Tyler," he said calmly, "we are in need of certain land-based products—herbs, pills, food supplies. We'd like to request regular deliveries to Fun Streak Island. While we are pirates, we do not steal from those we contract. We value our trade agreements."

The logic was simple. The Circus Pirates could plunder and loot other merchant vessels as they pleased, but once they established a trade agreement with a supplier, they honored it. Breaking that would mean no merchant would ever dare return.

Tyler leaned back in his chair and raised a brow. "If it's a profitable deal, I'm all in. And having the Circus as a customer means my ships can move freely in these waters, yes?"

"Precisely," the Ringmaster nodded.

"Hahaha!" The Clown laughed loudly, leaning forward as he tapped his fingers on the table. "You're smart. I like you already."

"Cough. Sorry, I'm damn straight," Tyler replied dryly.

The room fell into a brief silence.

Then, laughter erupted—wild and unhinged.

"HAHAHAHA! I love you, White! But only as a friend! HAHAHAHA!" the Clown howled, slamming his palm on the table. The vibrations made the wine glasses rattle and some of the seafood dishes slide an inch. Even the blue cat-creature paused to blink in confusion.

Ringmaster sighed and cast a sideways glance at Su Fei. His expression was unreadable, but there was a trace of disappointment in his eyes. Now that the Clown had declared Tyler a 'friend,' none of the Circus crew were allowed to 'play' with their guests—especially not the rare and divine-looking Heavenly Fox.

He had hoped to tame her.

But captain words are rule.

After the lavish dinner, The Clown personally took Tyler on a tour through the inner halls of the Circus Castle. The massive corridors were decorated with gaudy curtains, oversized masks, and chandeliers made of glowing balloons. Everything screamed bizarre, and yet, somehow, it all fit together in the absurdity of this place.

"This is where we play with the slaves," the Clown said nonchalantly, gesturing to a room with red curtains and eerie music playing in the background. Then, with a wild grin, he pointed toward another corridor, "And this is where we play Candy Crush."

Tyler raised an eyebrow. "Candy Crush?"

The Clown kicked open a thick steel door. Inside, the room narrowed toward the top like a funnel. Suspended from the ceiling was a massive press with sharp ridges shaped like candy molds. Below, large colorful candies were scattered, along with several people tied to the floor.

With a loud metallic groan, the press slowly descended.

Crunch!

The sound was grotesque. Giant candies were shattered into syrupy mush, but so were the screams of those unlucky enough to be underneath.

The Clown clapped in glee. "Isn't it satisfying? The squish of sugar and sinners alike!"

Tyler stood there, unmoved. His face remained calm, almost bored.

He wasn't a hero.

He had no idea who those people were—probably pirates or criminals. Whatever they'd done, they weren't his problem. His business was trade, that's all.

"Let's head to the Game Arena next!" the Clown exclaimed, grabbing Tyler by the arm. "And after that, I'll show you the Time Pass Room! They're my absolute favorites!"

Tyler allowed himself to be dragged along. As strange as this man was, he found him oddly tolerable—entertaining, even. Maybe it was the eccentricity or the fact that the Clown treated him like a long-lost friend, but their bizarre companionship somehow clicked.

Back in the main hall, the Ring Master glanced over at the rest of Tyler's crew. "Huh... Dr. Juggler wants his lab tent back."

Mathilda shrugged and reached into her storage pouch. "Oh, here it is." She casually handed over a small, folded piece of fabric.

The Ring Master blinked in surprise. "Just like that? No negotiation? No Reward?"

"Of course. We're allies now, aren't we?" Mathilda replied smoothly. "Besides, we wouldn't let a tiny tent damage the bond between us."

What she didn't say aloud was that she had already made a full copy of the tent with Tyler's Copper Pot.

Back with the Clown and Tyler, the tour had shifted toward the workshop towers overlooking the sea.

"You know," Tyler began, "If you're interested, I can help you build a teleportation hub. I know long-range teleportation is unstable in the Northern Seas, but smaller ones might work. We could connect this island to nearby villages or trade routes."

The Clown tilted his head, curious. "A teleportation hub, huh?"

He rubbed his chin with painted fingers. "You merchants sure are crafty. I hadn't thought of that. Most pirates just want loot and rum."

"It's practical," Tyler said. "Your supply lines would be faster and safer. Plus, if you're serious about expanding, it'll help you reach other islands quickly."

The Clown's eyes shimmered with ambition. "Honestly, I don't plan on staying here forever. One day, I want to go further north—join the Search for Eternity like the great pirate legends. Maybe I'll find some ancient treasure trove or a lost realm... Or maybe, just maybe, I'll turn this island into a flying fortress and sail the skies myself."

"That's quite the dream," Tyler said with a faint smile. "Best of luck with that."

The Clown suddenly threw his arm around Tyler's shoulder. "You should join my crew!"

Tyler didn't even hesitate. "No thanks. I'll stick to being a merchant."

"HAHAHAHAHA!" The Clown threw his head back in laughter. "No hesitation at all! You're something else, White! Most people take at least a second to pretend they're considering it!"

The two continued walking through the strange and colorful halls of the Circus Castle. Balloons drifted past them and strange music echoed faintly through the corridors.

Chapter 388: Game Arena

Tyler and the others sat in the spectator seats of the Game Arena, perched high on the third floor of the massive circus tent. Unlike the chaotic first floor or the illusion-filled second, this level was stark,

structured—yet equally unsettling. The entire floor had been converted into an arena, with magical spotlights shifting colors over a massive central stage encased in retractable steel panels.

Rows of seats formed a circular balcony around the central stage, where masked immortal practitioners and a few rugged-looking pirates filtered in, their cloaks fluttering and weapons hidden—or barely hidden—beneath layers of enchanted fabrics. Though there weren't many spectators yet, it was clear this place usually hosted packed crowds. The event had been announced hastily, just to amuse the Clown's new guests.

That alone was a chilling thought.

The Clown appeared out of nowhere, materializing in a puff of confetti and maniacal laughter, before plopping down in a seat cushioned with bright red velvet. His painted grin seemed wider than usual.

Tyler gave him a nod and leaned back. This wasn't the kind of entertainment he was used to, but it was better to observe silently than stand out.

The Ring Master, clad in black-and-gold robes with eyes like dying embers, stepped onto the stage. His voice echoed clearly through the magically amplified arena.

"Welcome, one and all, to today's special show!" he announced, whipping the air. The familiar blue lion cub that followed him leaped onto the platform, growing into a massive beast with every step. "Since this was organized quickly, we'll only be holding three games today."

The lion let out a thunderous growl, pacing the arena as the crowd watched, half in awe and half in fear. It is using skill which affects Spiritual Consciousness.

"As always, the participants are... the slaves," the Ring Master continued with a smile too wide to be kind. "And remember, should they win even one of the games, their freedom shall be granted."

He cracked his whip again. "Let the games begin!"

The steel panels around the stage hissed and began retracting, folding themselves with unnatural grace. As they vanished into the floor, they revealed several slave contestants—men and women of various races, from humans to beastkin to elves—standing in tense anticipation.

At the very center stood a massive, ancient-looking scale made of bronze and bone. Each side of the scale was covered with thick cloth, hiding what lay beneath.

"The game is simple," the Ring Master said. "All contestants must form teams of two. One will become the chooser. The other, the judge."

There was a moment of chaos as the slaves hurried to pair up, whispering quickly, trying to decide who to trust. Within a few minutes, all had chosen their partners.

"Now, here are the rules," the Ring Master declared, standing atop his lion mount. "Each team's chooser must select one side of the scale—left or right."

He paused dramatically.

"If the chooser selects the left side, then both members of the team are set free. If they choose the right side, only they go free—while their partner remains a slave."

The audience shifted, murmurs spreading like wildfire.

Tyler's eyes narrowed. "What a twisted setup..."

Back on the stage, the slaves had made their decisions. One by one, the choosers vanished behind curtains that led to the base of the scale, entering enclosed chambers to choose the side.

The Ring Master grinned. "But that's not all! The judges will not know their partner's decision. Instead, they will choose which side—left or right—shall be annihilated. Not by side name, no—by quantity!"

He raised a finger. "The judges must choose whether to eliminate the side with the greater number of practitioners... or the lesser. Think wisely."

Gasps spread through the arena.

"Of course," he added, "if the chooser picked the right side and ends up on the eliminated scale, well—bad luck. Their selfishness will be their end. Which means you guys, the judges, at least gets freedom."

Tyler muttered under his breath, "So basically, they're playing a psychological game... Trust, betrayal, sacrifice, and selfishness. The circus really knows how to twist people's hearts."

Beside him, Lily crossed her arms. "This crew is dangerous. manipulators. This isn't a game—it's emotional torture wrapped in a circus act."

Mathilda looked unimpressed. "What's the point of this? It's boring."

Mana yawned and stretched her arms. "Agreed. I expected more explosions or beast fights."

"Yeah... Give us something spicy. Like a sexual game or something—ouch!"

Mathilda yelped as someone smacked the back of her head.

She turned around, eyes blazing. "Who hit me!?"

Tyler, Lily, Mana, and even Darla all raised their hands in perfect unison, like guilty children in a classroom.

"Traitors," Mathilda hissed, rubbing her scalp.

. The judges remained outside, looking visibly more nervous. The pressure was on them now—to pick life or death, based on nothing but probability and blind faith in their partner's morality.

On the left side of the scale, a few faint glows indicated activations—some had chosen the left. On the right, slightly more sparks blinked.

"They can't see the exact numbers," Tyler noted. "Just the idea that one side has more... or less."

Lily leaned in. "It forces them to judge based on instinct. Or desperation."

The Ring Master's voice returned. "Judges! Make your choice. Choose: will you destroy the side with more... or less?"

Silence.

Then slowly, each judge walked toward the glowing stones on the platform. One by one, they placed their hands on a crystal, indicating their decision.

A loud chime echoed as the results locked in.

The stage dimmed. Magic surged. A countdown began from ten.

As the final number dropped, a flash of searing light erupted.

The covers on the scales removed.

The Left Side has the more members. The people who chose the Right Side is lesser.

The judges voted for the Lesser votes.

Right side of the scale burst into brilliant flames. Screams followed—brief, sharp, then silent.

When the smoke cleared, the Ring Master stood proudly atop his lion, unharmed and smiling.

"Game one... is complete."

"A huge W to the participants! You are all free!" the Ring Master announced with a wide grin, clapping his hands.

The audience responded with polite applause, though the excitement was far from enthusiastic. Some cheered. Others just blinked, unimpressed.

From his velvet throne, the Clown leaned forward, his masked face unreadable.

"What the heck... That's boring..." he muttered. His voice had a tinge of disappointment, like a child denied his favorite toy. "Lesser people died. Not fun."

Tyler, Lily, Mana, Mathilda, and a few others were seated comfortably in the special guests' area, watching with a mix of curiosity and disgust.

"Well, at least the slaves are alive," Lily said, crossing her legs.

"For now," Tyler muttered.

"Now onto the next game!" the Ring Master bellowed, spinning his whip dramatically. "This one is called—Do You Want Love or Freedom?"

The lights dimmed, and the arena rumbled beneath them. The massive metal sheets enclosing the stage began to shift, sealing off both sides before slowly parting again.

This time, the environment was entirely different.

Gone was the cold, gladiator-style pit. In its place was a cozy chamber, dimly lit with warm lighting and filled with dozens of oversized, luxurious beds. Silk sheets. Satin pillows. A scent of incense lingered in the air.

On each bed sat a pair of immortal practitioners, their wrists loosely bound together with glowing cuffs. Surprisingly, none of them looked angry or ashamed. In fact, most looked... familiar. Comfortable.

"They're all couples," Lily observed. "I guess this is going to be another type - emotional kind of game."

The Ring Master raised his hand, a devilish glint in his eyes. "This one is called Love or Betrayal!" he shouted.

He spun in place and pointed toward the beds. "Each couple has their own little paradise. Each bed is divided by a beautiful silk screen. Soon, the cuffs will vanish. And each couple will be separated—one on each side."

The crowd leaned in, intrigued. Even the Clown seemed mildly curious now.

The Ring Master continued, his voice now dipped in sin. "The game is simple. One rule only. Do not look over the screen. Trust your beloved. If you peek, you can totally stop whatever happening on the other side. You forfeit your freedom... but you preserve your love—maybe."

He smiled. "But if you stay still... if you trust your partner completely... and they betray you—you lose only lose love but not freedom. So what do you choose? Blind trust or painful truth? Let the second game begin!"

Mana yawned. "Still not my type of game..."

"Oh, this one's got potential," Mathilda said, her eyes sparkling with mischief. She wiped the corner of her mouth dramatically. "I sense scandal in the air."

"Stop drooling," Lily scolded, tossing a peanut at her.

"Ouch!" Mathilda rubbed her forehead. "Who did that?"

Tyler, Lily, Mana, and even Darla all raised their hands at once.

"I need new friends," Mathilda grumbled.

Back in the arena, the game was underway.

The cuffs faded away with a shimmer of light, and the participants were carefully guided to opposite sides of their beds. The silk screens were lowered between them. The beds were massive—large enough to roll around and not touch the sides. The screens were high and elegant, shielding what happened on each side completely.

One elven couple sat in silence. The elf man glanced toward the screen, his eyes tracing the shadow of his partner on the other side. Her silhouette was still.

And then... another shadow appeared.

The shadow of a man.

The elf's eyes widened. His heartbeat quickened. His breath caught in his throat. The shape was unmistakable. Someone was on the bed with his partner. But who?

The man started to touch his partner, followed by moans.

Chapter 389: Premonition of imminent disaster

The elf man glanced toward the screen, his eyes tracing the shadow of his partner on the other side.

The elf's eyes widened. His heartbeat quickened. His breath caught in his throat. The shape was unmistakable. Someone was on the bed with his partner. But who?

The man started to touch his partner, followed by moans.

The male elf clenched the sheets.

His fingers inched toward the screen, trembling. He wanted to rip it away, scream, confront—protect.

But then came the hesitation.

The rules.

If he peeked, he can stop it. But he'd lose his freedom.

But if he did nothing, and his love truly betrayed him...

What was left?

He stared hard at the screen, frozen in indecision.

A man is promising her freedom. The elf girl who was a slave for almost 6 months couldn't take it anymore.

She cried and decided to let the man do anything he wants.

The male elf heard everything. He saw his woman kissing another man.

The bed shook.

They removed their dress and familiar moans that only he knows was resonating.

The elf couldn't care anything and removed the screen.

There was no other man.

There is no one except the Elf Girl was sitting confused.

It was a ruse. A trick of light and shadow.

A test of trust.

Other couples faced similar dilemmas. Some had whispers echoing from the shadows. A moan here, a gasp there— But some where real.

One woman tore the screen down, only to find her husband is railing an unknown female with all his might.

Another participant refused to look, even when he thought he heard the unmistakable sound of kissing. His partner, on the other side, was praying quietly, hoping he wouldn't tore the screen and see herself who is riding another man.

"Yeah... Now we're talking." Mathilda leaned forward, eyes gleaming as the second game unfolded before them. The cozy beds, the curtains, the psychological stakes—it was twisted in all the right ways. "I like this concept. It's spicy."

She kicked her feet up, resting her chin on her palm. The sinister glint in her eyes was unmistakable. Mischief practically oozed from her voice.

"If it were me running the game..." she paused for dramatic effect, then smirked, "I'd have one partner take a strong dose of Aphrodisiacs. The other would be forced to watch everything through a magical screen. The only way to earn their freedom? They have to sit through it without reacting. No interruptions, no peeking, no shouting."

She laughed softly, darkly. "If they interfere, they lose everything."

The group collectively turned to stare at her.

Tyler raised an eyebrow. "Your ideas are scarier than this entire circus combined."

The silk screens were pulled away, and the results laid bare for all to see. Gasps rippled through the arena. Some couples clung to each other in tears.. Others turned their backs, the silence between them louder than any scream. And a few...

A few simply walked away, their bonds shattered.

Not a single pair had won.

Not one couple had earned their freedom.

Whether through betrayal, mistrust, or sheer manipulation, every participant had lost something—some their liberty, others their love.

The arena grew quiet for a moment, absorbing the raw emotional carnage left behind.

Then, from the upper stands, the Clown burst into laughter.

"Hahaha... Yes! Yes!" he clapped like a madman, his mask tilting as he doubled over in joy. "This is exactly what I wanted! Isn't it delicious?"

The Ring Master stood, arms spread wide like a stage performer. "So many claim loyalty, claim trust, claim eternal devotion... but with just a screen and a few whispers, they crumble!"

His voice echoed through the arena.

"I'll play with those so-called loyal couples later... Oh, I'll break them one by one. Love is such a fragile thing!" The Clown muttered.

The Ring Master glanced down at the arena floor, where couples were being escorted away—some sobbing, some staring blankly, others refusing to look at each other at all.

"No one even got their freedom," The Ring Master said.

The lights in the arena flickered once.

Then again.

The spotlight turned slowly toward the Ring Master, who now stood center stage beneath a haze of crimson fog. The crowd fell silent, holding their collective breath as the eerie organ music returned—haunting, dissonant, and full of ominous flair.

"And now..." he purred, stretching his arms wide with theatrical flair, "let us prepare for the Final Game..."

A fresh wave of tension swept across the audience. Whispers buzzed through the air like locusts—some excited, others fearful. Everyone knew the final game would be unlike the others. Something darker. Something unforgettable.

"The Final Game," the Ring Master declared, pausing dramatically, "is just a simple game."

A mechanical groan echoed across the arena. Once again, massive metal sheets slid into place, enclosing the entire space in darkness. A few seconds later, the sheets peeled back like curtains unveiling a stage—only this time, it wasn't a circus or twisted playground. It was a castle.

A towering, black-stone fortress emerged from the depths of the arena, surrounded on all sides by a river of bubbling lava. The heat radiating from the molten moat shimmered in the air, casting the castle in a surreal glow. Fiery geysers erupted in the distance, and winged shadows occasionally darted across.

"The contestants are already inside," the Ring Master said, his voice echoing like a god from above. "They've lived in this castle for nearly six months. They've trained together, fought together... trusted one another."

The crowd leaned forward.

"But among them... is a traitor."

Gasps rippled through the arena.

"The traitor's only task is simple: eliminate the others without getting caught. And the rest? Their job is to survive... and expose the traitor. All while continuing their duties until the scheduled meetings begin."

As he spoke, a massive screen lit up above the arena, showing live feeds from different parts of the castle. A girl with short hair traced glowing symbols into a wall—an array specialist, perhaps. A man stood alone near a balcony, sharpening a dagger. Another group shared a meal in what looked like a war room.

"To preserve the suspense," the Ring Master added, grinning with sinister delight, "we will not reveal who the traitor is... not even to you, dear audience."

The screen cut to black. Then, with a chime, it showed the first meeting room.

A long table.

Blood on the floor.

One body slumped over—dead.

The remaining contestants took their seats, their faces pale with fear. Heated arguments erupted. Accusations flew like daggers. Finally, they voted.

The one chosen screamed as a trapdoor opened beneath their chair. They fell—straight into the lava.

Silence.

The screen showed no sign of celebration. The game didn't end.

That Person is Not A Traitor

"Wrong guess," the Ring Master whispered, amused. "The traitor still lives."

In the VIP seats, Tyler leaned back, arms crossed. "Interesting setup," he muttered. "Feels like a twisted version of a murder mystery."

"Yeah... I can already guess who the traitor is..." Lily said calmly, brushing her white hair behind her ear.

Tyler turned to her, eyebrow raised. Mana stopped chewing her snack, suddenly focused. Mathilda, Alna and Darla leaned in as well. Even Su Fei too.

"Really?" Tyler asked, curious.

Lily nodded. "It's the girl in the red dress."

"No way..." Mathilda's eyes widened. "You mean... Red is sus?"

"Highly," Lily replied with a faint smirk. Didn't explain.

The game continued for hours. Each in-game day brought new betrayals, new deaths, new paranoia. Trust crumbled. Alliances shattered. Suspicion became a plague.

Finally, with just four contestants left, the remaining players turned on the girl in the red dress.

She tried to act innocent. Her voice cracked. She wept.

But it was too late.

They voted.

She fell into the lava.

The screen froze for a moment. Then, in fiery letters:

TRAITOR ELIMINATED. GAME OVER.

The audience erupted in applause, cheers, and whistles. The tension released in a wave of excitement. Even Tyler clapped once.

"Well called," he said, glancing at Lily. "If you were in there. You would have finished the game in the First round huh."

"Yeah... Boring game," Lily replied.

But this time... there was no laughter from the main seat.

The throne atop the grandstand—the one the Clown had occupied during every game—was empty.

Tyler noticed.

"He's not there," he muttered.

"Bathroom break?" Mathilda offered with a shrug.

"Maybe..." Tyler replied. But something felt off.

Far behind the giant throne, deep in the shadows of the performer's lounge, the Clown sat hunched over, clutching his head with both hands. His wide grin was gone, replaced by something unfamiliar on his painted face—panic.

"No... no, no, no... This can't be happening... AHAHAHA...!"

Tears smeared his white makeup as he began to cry and laugh simultaneously, the sound echoing eerily in the empty chamber.

The Clown felt intense pain in his head. He has ability to see a glimpse of future.

Visions flooded his mind.

Visions of Future.

Blinding flashes.

Smoke.

Fire.

He saw Fun Streak Island, once a land of joy and madness, in ruins. The vibrant cities reduced to ashes. The forests scorched. The grand circus tent—his tent—engulfed in flames, its laughter silenced forever.

And there, standing atop the burning wreckage of the Big Top, was the harbinger of destruction.

The Clown is confronting the Culprit.

The Culprit is covered in gleaming red dragon scales, his eyes glowing like molten gold. In his hand, he held an Abyssal Trident, crackling with dark energy.

It is Tyler White.

Chapter 390: 390. Upheaval

The docks of Fun Streak Island buzzed with restless energy as rows of slaves quietly marched toward a large ship anchored by the bay.

Their steps were heavy, burdened not only by their chains but also by uncertainty. Heads bowed, eyes flickering with nervous anticipation, each of them carried the scars of a cruel past and the hesitant hope of an unknown future. Some whispered prayers under their breath, grateful to leave the hellish arena behind. Others looked over their shoulders with haunted expressions, unsure if what awaited them would be any better.

The ship before them—The White Pearl—gleamed like a silver beacon in the morning light, its arrays humming softly beneath its reinforced hull. A month ago, Tyler White had claimed ownership of a Level 3 Fishery which was almost destroyed after attacking a Dragon Boat. That zone now needed workers—managers, guards, builders, and laborers—and Tyler had decided to fill that gap using talent from the most unlikely source: the very arena where countless had fought for survival.

These slaves weren't ordinary. Most were Master-level cultivators, and a select few had even reached Grandmaster level. Powerful individuals reduced to pawns—but not for long. Tyler had paid a hefty price to secure them, especially since he planned to start small businesses and outposts across various northern islands in the near future.

As the last of the slaves filed onto The White Pearl, Tyler stood at the end of the dock, overseeing the operation. He double-checked the manifests with Darla, who was coordinating from the deck, her clipboard held tight as she gave rapid orders to the crew.

Then, as if from nowhere, a squeaky, rhythmic sound echoed through the bustle.

Creek...squeak...creek...squeak...

A clown—decked in his usual outrageous attire, complete with checkered pants and a crooked smile painted too wide—rode toward the ship on a unicycle. His hat had bells that jingled with every spin. In one fluid motion, he tossed something through the air toward Tyler.

Tyler caught it instinctively.

It was a playing card—an Ace of Spades.

Immediately, a mental voice echoed in Tyler's mind through a telepathic link. The tone was low, clear, and—unusually—devoid of humor.

Tyler's brow furrowed. He examined the card again, flipping it between his fingers, deep in thought.

Lily, who had been leaning casually against a crate nearby, noticed his unusual expression and stepped closer. "What's wrong?" she asked.

Tyler replied "It's the Clown. He wants me to stay. Says it's about a Teleportation Hub."

Lily raised a brow. "So? Are you going?"

Tyler tapped the card against his palm and gave a small nod. "Here's the plan. You take The White Pearl and escort the slaves to the Level 3 Fishery. Organize them, assign teams, assess who can lead. I'll stay behind and see what the Clown really wants. Once you're done, come back, and we'll leave together."

Their conversation was casual to any outside observer, but beneath their calm expressions, a more urgent dialogue played out silently through Divine Sense.

"This feels off," Lily said, her Divine Sense like a sharp whisper in Tyler's mind. "During the negotiation, the Clown was unusually... normal. No riddles. No theatrics."

"Exactly. That's what's bothering me," Tyler replied. "Something serious is going down. His usual playfulness looked forced. If he's reverting now, there's something bigger at play."

He scanned the harbor subtly. The usual circus-themed chaos still surrounded the island—jugglers throwing fire, mechanical animals parading down the street—but something in the air had shifted.

"If things turn bad, activate Mode Shadow on the ship," Tyler added.

Lily nodded, her eyes briefly glowing as she relayed mental commands to Darl and the others onboard.

"Take Mana with you," she said. "Keep her cloaked. If something happens, she can help you."

"Already thought of that," Tyler said aloud with a small grin, then turned and gave Lily a reassuring pat on the shoulder. "I'll be back before you know it."

Lily rolled her eyes. "Well don't get caught."

As Tyler prepared to leave, Mana emerged from behind and took a key. She then opened an imaginary door from Tyler's chest and entered inside.

Tyler looked at his chest with confusion.

"She has a Key? And where the heck that door comes from?" Tyler muttered.

Lily turned toward the ship, watching as the slaves settled into their quarters.

Tyler sat in giant flying balloon basket, its a Lydia Coin designed balloon. The balloon floated gently through the misty skies of Fun Streak Island, following the designated sky paths. Independent flight was strictly forbidden here, but these balloons were an exception.

He was headed for the Circus' tent.

After a smooth descent, the balloon docked near the Tent. A pair of pirates wearing circus uniforms escorted Tyler through a twisting corridor that smelled faintly of burnt sugar and alcohol.

Eventually, they arrived at a lavishly decorated room—half bar, half performance stage. Crystal bottles glimmered under neon lights, and the walls were lined with circus-themed memorabilia. At the center, atop a polished oak table, sat the Clown—squatting in a bizarre pose, mixing drinks like a bartender at a carnival gone rogue.

"Shake, shake, shake..." he muttered to himself while shaking a cocktail shaker far longer than necessary. Then, without offering it to anyone, he downed the drink himself with a dramatic gulp.

"Ah... my friend... Tyler White! Hahaha!" the Clown slurred, his painted face twisting into a grin far too wide to be natural. His tone was cheerful, but his bloodshot eyes told another story.

Tyler took a seat across from him, crossing his arms. "What happened, my friend? I doubt this meeting is really about building a teleportation hub."

The Clown stopped in the middle of making a Moscow Mule and let out a slow, exaggerated laugh. "HAHAHAHA... As expected! You noticed something was wrong!"

Meanwhile, outside the Island, The White Pearl was slowly departing the harbor, moving steadily toward the mysterious Pink Mist that encircled Fun Streak Island. The mists shimmered like silk under the sun.

Back inside, the Clown leaned forward, whispering in a hoarse voice, "You see, I have... a gift. Or maybe it's a curse. Who knows? It activates randomly—like a switch flipped by the universe itself—and gives me a glimpse... of the future."

Tyler narrowed his eyes but remained silent, listening.

"It's not always clear," the Clown continued. "Sometimes it's a dream. Sometimes a vision. Sometimes it's just a gut-churning scream inside my skull. But every time... it's real."

He stood, motioning for Tyler to follow. They walked through a dimly lit hallway into another room—this one darker, colder. The walls were black with streaks of red, and strange devices lined the perimeter.

Tyler immediately recognized it.

This was the Clown's infamous punishment chamber. A place where he dealt with slaves for fun. He had a twisted name for it: "Candy Crush."

"Once," the Clown said, pausing before a large steel platform, "I saw a future where my brother succeeded beyond me. Married a beautiful women. Succeeded in Life. I... didn't take it well."

His voice faltered for the first time, and regret flickered in his eyes.

"I killed him," he said simply. "All because of a vision."

Tyler tensed, his instincts sharpening.

"I had a new vision. My Fun Streak Island getting destroyed. And the Culprit is..."

The Clown reached into his sleeve and suddenly threw a playing card toward him.

Tyler caught it reflexively. It was the Joker—blank-eyed and smirking.

Thinking it was another telepathic message, Tyler activated his Divine Sense and probed the card.

That's when it hit him.

A sudden flood of chaotic laughter exploded inside his mind—a thousand voices cackling at once, each louder than the last. His spiritual consciousness trembled under the weight of it. It wasn't just noise. It was a Divine Sense attack, like his own Brain Freeze, but twisted into something nightmarishly unpredictable.

Tyler clutched his head, gritting his teeth as the pain intensified.

At the same time, out in the open sea, The White Pearl glided silently into the Pink Mist. The temperature dropped. The Sound of wind and Water cease to exist.

Lily stood on the deck, holding tightly onto the card they had received from the islanders.

A loud rumble shook the water.

Out from the deep rose the Two-Headed Sea Serpent, its eyes glowing crimson as it loomed before the ship. Lily stepped forward and raised the card with confidence.

But the serpent didn't back down.

Instead, it locked eyes with The White Pearl... and growled.

This time, it wasn't responding to the card. It saw the ship not as a vessel—but as prey.

Back in the chamber, Tyler stumbled backward, disoriented.

And that's when the Clown struck.

With surprising strength, he shoved Tyler into a pit hidden beneath a trapdoor in the floor. Tyler barely had time to react before he landed hard inside a cylindrical cell with curved steel walls.

Above him, the Clown leaned over the edge, eyes wild, breath uneven.

"I'm sorry, Tyler," he said softly. "I really am. But I saw it. I saw you... destroying my entire island. The Culprit is YOU"

His voice rose to a scream, echoing down the shaft.

"I CAN'T LET THAT FUTURE HAPPEN! Hahahaha!"

A massive mechanical press began to descend from above—gears grinding, steam hissing from unseen vents. Its surface was lined with glowing sigils designed to suppress magic and cultivation.

Tyler was still in pain. He placed his hand on the Giant Candy for balance.

Above him, the Clown laughed maniacally as he walked away, leaving only echoes and the sound of metal crushing downward.