

R Cultivator 391

Chapter 391: Phantom Pearl

As the White Pearl glided deeper into the dense Pink Mist, the atmosphere shifted. A silence settled over the ocean, unnaturally heavy, as if the very air held its breath. Then, from the swirling fog, a monstrous form began to rise.

The creature loomed higher than the masts of the White Pearl, its sheer size casting a shadow that made the already-chilled fog feel even colder. The silhouette grew until it encircled the ship, its long, scaly body coiling around the vessel with unnerving elegance. It moved like a serpent made of muscle and mystery—both beautiful and terrifying.

Then, with a slow, deliberate motion, two massive heads broke through the mist. Fanged maws dripped with pink seawater, and glowing eyes—tinted the same eerie shade of pink—focused on the ship's deck with uncanny intelligence.

"A Twin-Headed Sea Serpent," Lily said calmly, her voice barely above a whisper.

In her hand, the card she'd received from the islander—the Seven of Diamonds—began to glow. It pulsed like a heartbeat, each flash sending ripples of energy through the air. Yet this time, the serpent didn't recoil or retreat like it had before.

Instead, its eyes narrowed on the ship... and it growled.

It saw the White Pearl not as a vessel, but as prey.

"Huh... Just as expected. That guy really did target us," Lily muttered, already pulling out her communication device.

"All crew members," she said, her voice steady and sharp, "prepare for battle. Non-combat units to the safe room. Slaves we picked up—put them in the isolation chamber. Now."

"This is Tuman. Roger that, Vice-Captain," came the reply.

Within moments, the ship's systems activated. Runes along the hull flared to life. Hidden weapons clicked into position. Energy from Prana stones surged into the array network.

The serpent moved first, coiling its massive tail around the ship in a crushing grip. But the impact was absorbed by a high-grade repulsion array.

The snake hissed in frustration, its heads rearing back before spewing globs of pink acid-like spit at the ship. Another defensive array activated instantly, shielding the ship with a radiant blue barrier.

The acid hissed as it struck, corroding the surface like molten metal on ice. But the barrier held. Fueled by the Prana stones Tyler had stockpiled, the ship endured the assault.

"This is Tuman," the voice came through again. "Everyone's in position."

"Good," Lily said. Then, without using her communicator, she spoke aloud—her voice echoing across the entire ship. "This is not a drill. Initiate Mode Shadow. Full lockdown. All hands—prepare for Phantom Protocol."

A deep hum resonated through the ship as mechanisms older than most nations began to stir. In the main control room, Lily seated herself in the Captain's Throne. She placed her palm on the embedded rune circle.

"Activating: Phantom Protocol."

Outside, the Twin-Headed Sea Serpent unleashed its full strength, tightening its coils with devastating force. The ship didn't even flinch under the pressure. The vessel seemed, suddenly slipped free from its grasp.

The serpent blinked—confused. Its prey had vanished.

The ocean was still. Only mist and silence remained. Then, in the pink waters below, it caught sight of something—a shadow.

The shadow of a ship.

But where the ship itself should have been—there was nothing.

Then the shadow moved.

A moment later, the ship rose from the water like a phantom from the abyss. No longer white and elegant—it was now cloaked in black and crimson. Its surface gleamed with dark energy, and the symbols etched along its hull had changed. A new flag fluttered in the unnatural wind—a skull mask with hollow eyes. The symbol of the Phantom Pirates.

The White Pearl was gone.

This was the Shadow Pearl.

On the deck, a figure stood defiantly. She wore a flowing black coat and a Phantom Mask with sharp, angular edges that obscured her features.

No longer Lily.

This was the Temptress of the Phantom Pirates.

"Hmm... I wonder which name Captain finalized," she mused. "The Blackwood Pirates? Or the Phantom Pirates?" She smirked behind her mask. "Not that this overgrown lizard would understand either way."

She drew her whip—an electrified weapon humming with latent energy.

Behind her, the crew appeared one by one, emerging from hidden compartments and sealed rooms. Each wore the signature cloak of shadows and a ghostly white mask. The transformation was complete.

The ancient array installed in the ship rendered them invisible to even immortal senses. It came from the ancient words Tyler had retrieved from the Abyss, written in a forgotten language. He had spent months decoding it with experts after their return, finally integrating it into the ship's systems.

"The ship is now the Shadow Pearl," Lily declared.

"Why not just call it the Black —" Darla asked from behind her Phantom Mask.

"That name's already taken," Lily said flatly, cutting her off without turning around.

"Now... fire the cannons."

With a thunderous roar, the ship's cannons launched molten projectiles—chunks of compressed red mana that glowed like lava. The shells slammed into the serpent's body, creating massive explosions that sent shockwaves through the mist.

One of the serpent's heads screamed in agony as it was blasted apart. The other reeled back in shock, hissing violently, eyes now burning with rage and pain.

But something shocking happened. The Blasted Head grew again.

Temptress eye's widened

"What the Actual Fu—"

"— ck..." Tyler groaned, his body aching as he struggled to keep consciousness. His head throbbed with a sharp, rhythmic pain that refused to dull. Everything around him was a blur, distorted like a half-remembered dream.

He could barely see straight. Above him, an enormous mechanical press loomed like the blade of a guillotine—descending ever so slowly.

"Damn it..." Tyler muttered, clutching his forehead as his vision swam.

The entire chamber had a surreal aura. It was oddly clean, pristine even, with walls that glistened faintly under Blue and Pink lighting. Huge candies and toy-like decorations were scattered around the room—yet none of it felt playful.

Dude to pain in spiritual consciousness, Tyler couldn't use his divine sense at all.

Gritting his teeth, "Mana," Tyler called weakly, "put me in the Pocket Dimension... and take me out of here."

A pop of energy pulsed from within him, and Mana came out from his body. Her eyes shimmered with concern.

"Mana can't phase through this wall," she said, gently tapping the nearby surface. Her fingers met resistance, and ripples of sealing energy radiated from the contact point. "It's blocking everything... even me."

Tyler sighed, his energy already drained. "Huh... Then we need something that can stop that thing," he muttered, glancing up at the descending press. It had moved inches lower. Time was running out.

"Mana has this crazy idea," Mana said, her voice uncertain for once.

Tyler didn't even look at her. He simply slumped down, crossing his legs. "Whatever it is... do it fast."

He closed his eyes and began to meditate. He had to control the pain, slow his breathing, and prepare himself. Deep inside, he trusted Mana.

Mana wasted no time. She zipped into the Pocket Dimension, rummaging through Tyler's inventory with urgency. She also took Tyler's copper pot and Copper Ladle with her.

Moments later, she reappeared.

Tyler sat still, sweat beading down his forehead. The pain dulled slightly, and just as he exhaled, a loud creaking echoed above him.

The press had stopped.

Tyler opened one eye, groggy but curious. "Huh... did it work?"

Mana floated back beside him, looking smug. "It worked."

He tilted his head slowly, then widened his eyes. "Wait... this was your crazy idea?"

Before him stood a towering wall—no, a grotesque barricade made from the stacked clones of Apollo.

Tyler blinked, jaw slack. "You literally used a mountain of Apollos to block the press?"

Mana crossed her arms proudly. "Only because they still had the Immortal Armor. That thing doesn't break easily."

Despite himself, Tyler chuckled weakly. "I can't decide if that's genius or madness..."

Dozens of identical figures collapsing one atop another like stacked mannequins.

Mana has carefully positioned the stack directly beneath the press.

They are copies of Apollo.

Apollo, The Abyss Hunter that Tyler , Adam and Dusk defeated in the Abyss.

Meanwhile, far away from Tyler's chamber, another scene played out.

In a dark, dimly lit chamber filled with flickering screens and mismatched furniture, a strange figure lounged on a garish throne made of colorful plush toys and metal spikes.

The Clown.

His face was a grotesque smear of white and pink, with smeared lipstick and eyes that twitched with erratic delight. He leaned back and laughed hysterically.

"My precious Pinky... got hurt by a merchant ship? Really?" he snorted, looking at the card in his hand blinking , the card has Twin Headed Sea Serpent picture on it. "Well, it's not easy to kill Pinky. But what kind of merchant ship was that?"

He clicked his tongue and turned toward one of the screen—this one showing the Candy Crush room from the outside.

"What happened to Tyler Pancake? Is it ready?" he asked aloud, lazily.

The monitor displayed the press, that was stuck in half.

"Is he using his strength to stop that thing?... it's still a hopeless struggle, Hahahaha ". The laughter dying from his lips.

The Clown leaned back into his throne ignoring Tyler and others.

Chapter 392: Fighting Back

Inside the Circus – Second Floor

The narrow hallway echoed with the faint squeaks of oversized clown shoes. Two individuals, clad in ridiculous clown costumes, ambled through the garishly decorated interior. Their curly wigs bounced with each step—one electric blue, the other an absurd shade of lime green.

"Wait a second!" a guard clown barked, blocking their path with an inflatable baton. His oversized red nose wobbled as he squinted at them. "You forgot to register your names, you noodle-heads!"

"Noodle heads?" the green-haired clown giggled, her painted lips twisting into a mischievous smile. "That's actually kind of funny."

She plucked the 'register'—a helium balloon shaped like a scroll—from his hand and pulled out a thick black marker from her oversized sleeve. With exaggerated flair, she scrawled something on the balloon and doodled a tiny van next to it.

The guard raised a brow. "You're... Van emoji? And Essa?"

"It's Vanessa," she said with a haughty air, flipping her green curls and laughing behind her hand like an aristocratic noblewoman from a cheesy drama.

The blue-haired clown snorted, then grabbed a balloon of his own. He scribbled a single word: "Time."

"Wait, your name is... Time?" The guard tilted his head, baffled.

"It's Tim... e. Timmy," the male clown said with a wink, as if the pun were deeply profound.

The two released their balloons, which floated up and merged with the hundreds already clustered near the ceiling like a chaotic alphabet soup.

"Who the hell came up with these names?" the guard mumbled.

"Our friend did," the green-haired girl replied smoothly. She then reached over and scribbled a small, lowercase 'e' on the table.

The guard stared. "...Small e?"

"It's Lil 'e'... as in Lily, you dumass."

"Hey—how'd you know my name?" the guard blinked in genuine confusion.

The clowns froze.

"The heck?" the female clown muttered under her breath.

"My name is Duma SS."

The two stared for a moment, then slowly tiptoed past him without another word, leaving the confused guard scratching his head.

Once out of earshot, the blue-haired clown let out a snort. "They won't even suspect us. These guys are weirder than we are."

"Hmph," the female clown sniffed proudly. "Mana is a great actress after all."

"You just said your real name," the other clown whispered sharply.

"Oops..."

Of course, the two weren't actual clowns. Beneath the garish makeup and silly outfits were none other than Tyler and Mana, infiltrating the twisted circus.

Earlier

After the press stopped, Tyler pushed against it with raw strength. It was like lifting a mountain, but he noticed a tiny gap on one side.

"Mana!" he whispered.

Understanding immediately, Mana turned incorporeal and squeezed through the narrow opening in her ghost form.

"It actually works." Mana replied.

"Then let me collect all the Apollos first."

A few moments later Mana escaped with her Ghost form.

The moment she escaped, the press slammed down, obliterating everything below.

The Clown King, watching the monitor, howled with laughter—completely unaware that Mana had already slipped through.

In a dressing room upstairs, Mana reappeared and spat out a pearl onto a makeup table. With a flash of light, Tyler emerged from the pocket dimension, unharmed.

"If we want, we can escape," Mana said, brushing her hands.

Tyler shook his head. "No. This guy isn't going to stop. And he might've already targeted the White Pearl. We have to fight."

Mana nodded, but hesitated. "How are we going to infiltrate without being noticed?"

Tyler's eyes scanned the dressing room—and landed on a rack of clown costumes.

Moments later, two new 'crew members' joined the twisted ranks of the circus performers.

The inside of the circus was a chaotic mess. Most of the lower-level members weren't even properly vetted. They were hired in bulk, used purely for inflating numbers and creating the illusion of power.

Tyler and Mana blended right in.

After all... who would suspect two clowns, in a place filled with madness?

Meanwhile, aboard the Shadow Pearl...

The silent pink sea roared as massive waves clashed against the reinforced hull. It's all because of the Serpent.

A thunderous screech echoed across, and the Shadow Pearl shook violently. A monstrous Twin-Headed Sea Serpent twisted through the storm, its immense bodies cutting through the waters like a pair of demonic lances. Its fangs glinted with venom, and the glare in its dual eyes burned with ferocity.

The ship's cannons roared back in defiance, unleashing bursts of mana-infused artillery. One of the serpent's heads recoiled from the blast, part of its face scorched—but even as the smoke cleared, the damage was already healing.

"It's regenerating again!" cried a crew member from the deck. "This thing's not dying!"

"Damn it! It's like nothing can kill it!" another yelled.

Amid the chaos, a stunning woman stood near the helm, her form graceful, almost unbothered by the storm. It was Lily—no, not Lily. Here, among the masked, she was Temptress.

Clad in a sleek, tight-fitting outfit with silver patterns and a high slit on her dress, she stood poised like a viper waiting to strike. Her long hair fluttered behind her, and her eyes were locked onto the serpent. Every twitch of its muscles, every blink, every pattern in its attack—she was observing it all.

Heavy footsteps approached, followed by the swish of cloth. A woman in a Phantom Mask and a low-cut alchemist's robe adorned with glowing sigils walked up beside her. She wore a tall, crooked witch hat and held a flask so large it looked more like a giant glass vase.

"Mathilda?" Temptress turned slightly.

"Shh," the masked woman replied. "Not today. Call me the Alchemy Witch. No—wait—Dark Alchemist. Or Malefic Brewer... Void Catalyst maybe? Argh, I'll figure out the name later."

Temptress raised an eyebrow. "...Good luck with that ."

"Yeah, yeah," Mathilda waved her hand, sloshing the ominous purple liquid inside her flask. "Now. Got any bright ideas on how to kill that thing?"

"I think I've figured something out," Temptress replied, her eyes still on the serpent. "It's risky... but if it works, we can finish this in one shot"

Then she told her the plan.

Mathilda squinted. "You figured out a plan just by watching it?"

Temptress gave a sly, confident smile and nodded. Her body language was full of grace and pride, and even in the madness of battle, she struck an alluring silhouette.

Mathilda, behind her mask, stared a second longer than necessary. If one looked closely, they might have seen the smallest trace of drool at the corner of her mouth.

"Alright then..." Mathilda said, clearing her throat and lifting her flask. "Try it. I'll take command from here."

Temptress gave a curt nod, then reached for her weapon — a sleek, enchanted whip with Electric Arcs — and leapt off the ship, flying towards the Twin Headed Sea Serpent.

"This is MC," Mathilda said into the communicator. "That stands for Malefic Catalyst. I'll be taking command."

There was a pause. "Huh? Who?" came the voice of Tuman, one of the helmsmen.

"Tsk. It's Mathilda, you idiot. But I'm in Shadow Mode. Just call me MC. Remember it," Mathilda — No — MC barked.

"Y-Yes, ma'am!" Tuman replied hastily, his voice shaking.

"Wow... Leader Tuman's got guts," one crew member whispered. "Is he immune to poison now or something?"

MC heard the murmur but ignored it. She didn't mind their fear—it was well earned. Nearly every man on the Shadow Pearl feared Mathilda. All except for Tyler.

As the ship rocked under another strike from the serpent, MC took her place at the helm, watching the sky where Temptress danced through the air like a stormborn goddess.

Temptress zigzagged between acid spits and geysers of water. She flew low over one of the serpent's heads, lashing out with her whip. The creature roared, more in annoyance than pain.

The Battle raged on in the Pink Mist.

MC is also waiting for the chance to strike.

Back in the tent...

Tyler and Mana moved through the lavish corridors like other crew members.

Mana softly hummed a haunting soothing melody, her voice light and ethereal.

For a brief Second, The pirates stationed nearby, upon hearing the tune, froze. Their eyes glazed over, their minds drifting into a trance-like daze. They stood motionless.

For a Brief Second, several helium balloons floated down from nowhere, obscuring the vision of nearby surveillance arrays. The timing was perfect—comically absurd yet strategically precise.

Under the same Brief Second, Tyler and Mana's hands flickered like ghosts, phasing through walls, cabinets, and floorboards. They each placed small glowing charms—some pulsed with red sigils, others shimmered with blue runes.

Tyler, holding tightly to Mana's hand, in his "Ghost Mode." Though his own mastery of the ability was limited, as long as they were connected, he could tap into her power. He was able to phase through a little. Atleast his hands.

The entire second floor was now thoroughly planted.

Tyler gave a slight nod. "Ready for the upper floors?"

Mana gave a mischievous grin "Race you."

She ran funnily and Tyler chased her.

With that, they moved towards the upper floors, leaving behind only a faint glimmer of light and a few drifting balloons.

Chapter 393: When a clown moves into a palace, he doesn't become a king. The palace becomes a circus.

"When a clown moves into a palace, he doesn't become a king. The palace becomes a circus."

These words were scrawled boldly across a massive board hung on the third floor of the towering circus-like fortress. Beneath the sign, vibrant lights flickered and whimsical music played, masking the danger that lingered in the air. Beneath that sign, two clown-dressed pirates attempted to walk in, their curly green and blue wigs bouncing with each exaggerated step.

"Stop right there," a sharp voice called out.

"Huh? Registration again?" Tyler asked, voice muffled under the squeaky red nose and painted smile. He tilted his head like a confused jester.

The man who stopped them wore magician-like attire—complete with a swirling cape and star-embroidered top hat. He looked them up and down with visible disdain. "Hmph. Are you two even worth it? This isn't a floor for newbies. Get lost."

He dismissed them with a wave, treating them like dirt beneath his boots. Tyler and Mana were shooed away without a second glance.

"He thinks we're just some background clowns," Tyler muttered under his breath as they turned away. "That guy's only at Master Level. Should I just knock him out?"

"Possess?" Mana asked with a raised brow, keeping her tone light.

Tyler shook his head. "Wait. Let's not blow our cover just yet. We need to understand the entry requirements first. Each Floor is our goal. If we can't get through this way, we'll go back and sneak in using the same hidden path we used after leaving Candy Crush room from fourth floor to the second floor."

Before he could say more, another pirate appeared in front of them. Mana had already vanished from Tyler's side.

The pirate suddenly stumbled, his eyes glazing over. He lost his footing, and Tyler quickly caught him, easing him down beside a stack of barrels. With smooth precision, he grabbed a half-empty beer bottle and poured a little over the man's shirt to make him appear drunk.

From the outside, it looked like nothing more than a clumsy partygoer who had too much to drink.

A moment later, Mana's form flickered into view behind a support beam. She had exited from within the pirate's body like a shadow dispersing at dawn.

"Mana got the intel," Mana said quickly, her voice low. "Second floor is for normal crew members. Third floor is reserved for core members—those who work directly under the Clown, the Ring Master, or Dr. Juggler. Each of them has a special tattoo on their hand for identification."

"Let me guess," Tyler muttered, "we can't replicate it?"

Mana nodded. "Exactly. The ink is enchanted. The tattoos resonate with each other. If we try to forge one and they won't be able to sense it, it'll expose us immediately."

Tyler sighed and crossed his arms. "Then we need another route. If not, We won't be able plant the explosive charms in the third floor.."

His eyes scanned the area again—but Mana had already disappeared. A few moments later, he spotted her casually walking up to a man near a cluster of carnival curtains.

"Do I know you?" the man asked, squinting at her suspiciously.

Mana smiled sweetly, flipping her hair. "Actually, there's no need. Everyone knows that Hell is hot, so don't be a Thot."

The man blinked. Recognition dawned on his face. "Oh... you're from the upper floor!"

Tyler's jaw nearly dropped. "That was a secret code?" he muttered to himself.

Mana turned and flashed him a wink. "Yeah... Take us to the secret trampoline."

The man nodded reverently and beckoned them to follow. He led them through a maze of fabric walls, some vibrant with stripes, others dull and grey.

Eventually, they reached a strange open area hidden in the folds of the circus structure. There, beneath dim lighting, was a giant trampoline set into the floor. Its surface shimmered with strange energy, and hanging above were banners that said, "Launch to the Stars!"

Mana leaned close to Tyler and sent a voice transmission, "As long as we jump on this, it'll launch us straight to the third floor."

Tyler blinked. "Just like that?"

Mana shook her head slightly. "There's one issue. That guy over there." She gestured subtly toward a man seated on a high stool. He was inspecting everyone before they were allowed to jump.

"Great..." Tyler groaned. "More checkpoints."

Mana smirked. "Don't worry. Mana got this."

She began to hum again—a soft, almost whimsical tune that twisted subtly through the air. The two guards standing nearby began to sway. Their eyes lost focus. One of them let out a dreamy sigh.

"They're out," she whispered. "Let's go."

Without hesitation, Tyler and Mana leapt onto the trampoline. The moment their feet touched the surface, it rippled like water and launched them upward with a whoosh. They soared through the air in a perfect arc and landed lightly on the third floor platform above.

Back below, the guards snapped out of their trance—but their memories of the last few seconds were hazy, like waking from a strange dream.

"Why are you standing here?" the trampoline overseer barked.

"I... I don't know," the pirate who led them stammered.

"Then get lost!" the man growled, clearly irritated.

Meanwhile, on the Pink Mist...

The sea trembled under the furious thrashing of a colossal beast.

Temptress soared through the rain-heavy sky, it's not the rain, it's the water falling because of splashes made by the Serpent. With pinpoint precision, she landed atop one of the twin heads of the massive sea serpent. Its glistening scales reflected the eerie pink hue of the surrounding mist.

She placed a handful of explosive charms on the serpent's skull, her fingers moving like a blur, but before she could finish, the serpent's tail whipped up from below and slapped her midair like a fly. She spun out in the air and was sent crashing into the waves, but with a burst of energy, she regained control and shot back toward the ship, drenched but alive.

An instant later, the charms she had planted detonated with a thunderous boom. One of the serpent's heads was blown open, bone and flesh scattering through the sky. For a moment, it looked as though the fight had turned in their favor—but the wound began closing, flesh knitting itself back together unnaturally fast.

"Tsk... Damn it. Missed the timing," Temptress muttered under her breath, wiping blood from the corner of her lip as she landed back on deck.

Mathilda—no, Malefic Catalyst now—stood beside her, hands on her hips, her eyes still locked on the creature. "Looks like you've got another plan already brewing."

"Yeah," Temptress replied, pulling off her wet gloves and wringing them. "That damned Twin-Headed Sea Serpent—its regeneration is tied to both heads. So long as even one remains, the other will heal. We need to destroy both simultaneously."

Malefic Catalyst nodded. "You tried planting explosive charms on both heads before. But being on top of one of those things for more than a few seconds is suicide."

"Exactly," Temptress agreed, already uncoiling the whip from her waist. "So we go with Plan C."

Malefic Catalyst grinned. "The cannon?"

"It's already loaded and aimed," Malefic Catalyst said, snapping her fingers. The gun crew responded with a salute.

Without another word, Temptress took to the air again, soaring high above the pink mist that covered the ocean. The serpent hissed, its twin heads rising to meet her. They struck like vipers, jaws snapping shut inches from her every time she darted past them.

She weaved through the air with impossible grace, twisting and flipping through tight loops. The whip in her hand shimmered, its length extending unnaturally. She began to circle around the Twin heads.

With each pass, she lashed the whip around the serpent's two heads, threading it like a needle until both skulls were bound tightly together.

Electric sparks began to crackle through the whip as Temptress channeled her mana into it. The lightning surged, paralyzing both heads for a crucial moment.

"Now!" she shouted.

Malefic Catalyst raised her hand. "FIRE!"

The cannons roared.

From the shadowy orbs embedded in the hull—called Shadow Pearls—cannonballs surged forth. These weren't ordinary munitions. They were forged from abyssal ore brought up from the deep, humming with corrupted energy.

The serpent's two heads thrashed, its paralysis fading fast. Its massive muscles bulged as it fought against the whip, just seconds from tearing itself free.

But the rain of cannonballs struck.

Explosions rocked the sea.

The serpent's heads were shredded, black ichor and shattered bone raining down like a grotesque storm. The headless beast stood tall for a moment, twitching violently, as if refusing to believe it had died.

Even Temptress's whip snapped under the force, unraveling into glowing threads before vanishing.

Silence followed. A stillness so complete, even the wind seemed to hold its breath.

"Is... is it over?" one of the crew members whispered.

MC watched the giant, headless body standing motionless in the mist. Then she smiled faintly. "It is."

The serpent's corpse collapsed with a mighty splash, sending a wave rolling across the pink sea. For a moment, the ship rocked like a leaf in a storm—but it held strong.

Then, the cheers erupted.

The have defeated the Twin Headed Sea Serpent.

Chapter 394: Clown left the Circus

"This is the Twilight Sunflower," Tyler whispered, eyes widening with wonder. "They shine under sunlight... I thought these were extinct."

Before them, nestled under a delicate beam of filtered sunlight, stood a solitary sunflower as white as fresh snow—from its silky petals to the roots coiled in mineral-rich soil. Its glow was faint, almost ethereal, as if moonlight had decided to grow in the form of a flower.

"Wow..." Mana said, stepping beside him. "That over there... it's Natural Carbonated Water from the underwater sources of the Trench Fires—those deep-sea volcanoes. But it's mixed with a lot of chemicals, so it's not for drinking. Just for display."

They were inside a vast, dimly lit warehouse hidden within the cavernous underbelly of a floating port city. The place was packed with rare treasures—strange minerals, glowing herbs, and mystical artifacts—preserved using ancient techniques and sealed enchantments. Some crates hummed with protective runes, while others were suspended mid-air inside transparent cubes of time-stasis. The whole place gave off a surreal, museum-like atmosphere.

To avoid drawing attention from other pirates, especially those with spiritual tattoos that could sense intruders, Tyler and Mana had deliberately chosen this less-patrolled area. It wasn't empty—but it was quiet enough for them to move unnoticed.

Near the base of the Twilight Sunflower, a cluster of Sunstones glowed with gentle heat, mimicking the solar light needed to keep the flower alive. Everything had been arranged with care, a testament to how valuable this flower was.

While they explored, both of them moved with caution, discreetly planting concealment and barrier charms across the room. Just in case they had to escape in a hurry.

"I want that Twilight Sunflower," Tyler said suddenly, his gaze fixed on the rare bloom.

Mana raised an eyebrow. "Mana doesn't think it's going to be that easy."

"I know. Every item here is surrounded by detection arrays. If anything leaves the detection zone, the entire system will go off. And the 'circus' will come running."

Mana stepped forward, her body shimmering as she phased through the detection field like a ghost slipping through a veil.

Tyler observed carefully, then added, "Even if you manage to phase through, using a storage device won't work. See those faint silver lines of prana? They're connected directly to the flower's stem. If that connection gets cut off, it triggers the alarm."

Mana sighed. "So basically, it's impossible to steal it without alerting someone."

"Not impossible," Tyler said with a sly grin. "As long as the flower doesn't technically leave the array's circle—and we don't use a storage device—we're in the clear."

He held up the ordinary looking copper pot.

Mana's eyes lit up. "You sneaky genius." She took the pot from his hands.

With her command , the copper pot expanded, unfolding into a wide basin large enough to hold the sunflower without disturbing the detection array. Mana carefully loosened the roots of the Twilight Sunflower and transferred it into the pot, making sure not to sever the prana lines.

Then, she reached in the Copper pot and took out a second sunflower and slipped it into her personal storage device. As expected, the alarm charms didn't react. Then she poured out the Twilight Sunflower.

With slow, steady movements, Mana lifted the copper pot and stepped backward, exiting the circle.

Tyler exhaled in relief. "Beautifully done."

Mana smirked and whispered in his ears. "Then you owe me a full day alone."

He chuckled. "Deal."

Just then, a faint vibration passed through the floor.

Soon, the eerie sound of a calliope echoed across every floor of the tented complex, its haunting melody warping through corridors like a carnival gone mad.

"Pinky... My Pinky... They killed Pinky..." came a voice—high-pitched, manic, trembling with fury. "HaHaHa! I'm gonna massacre them! Everyone, get ready. We're going on a hunt!"

Tyler froze, blinking. "Huh... What just happened?"

"Pinky?" Mana tilted her head, equally confused. "Who's Pinky?"

Tyler also shrugged his shoulders.

"Since many are leaving. It will be easier for us to sneak around." Tyler said.

Mana eyes lit up.

Let's rewind the clock—just a little—before The Shadow Pearl had clashed with the Twin-Headed Sea Serpent.

In the heart of a bizarre and cluttered workshop—tucked deep within the floating circus fortress—a madman worked tirelessly. Broken puppet limbs, cracked masks, glowing crystals, and half-dismembered clown dolls littered every surface. There, under flickering fluorescent lights, the Clown stood hunched over a workbench, his manic giggling the only sound echoing in the room.

"At last... my weapon... is ready," the Clown whispered with trembling excitement. Hovering above him was a tiny, metallic object shaped like an ornate wand crossed with a futuristic firearm. It shimmered with unstable prana, pulsing like a heartbeat.

Behind him, lounging on a beanbag throne made of stitched-together circus banners, the Ring Master scratched a tiny blue lion cub curled in his lap. He looked up, unimpressed.

"Kinda looks like a weewee," he muttered.

"What—No, it doesn't!" the Clown barked, whirling around. "And what the heck is a weewee?"

"Penis," said the Ring Master casually. "I just don't like saying the word."

The Clown blinked. "No, it does not—" He turned back to the weapon, eyes narrowing. "Wait. You always do this. You ruin everything! HAHAAAAHA!"

"I'm just saying..."

"How about you stop breathing, you waste of oxygen!" the Clown snapped, his painted smile twitching with barely concealed rage. "Maybe then the air would stop smelling like circus peanuts and disappointment."

"What does it even do?" the Ring Master asked, ignoring the insult. "Impregnate people from a distance?"

"No! It's a laser gun," the Clown snapped. "People will feel a flash in their eyes. BLINDING LIGHT. Confusion. Panic. Screaming. It's a masterpiece!"

"I mean... I already feel flashes in my brain just looking at it," the Ring Master muttered. "Is it gonna shoot... white stuff?"

The Clown froze, eyes wide.

"NO! It's not a weewee!"

Suddenly, something flickered in his peripheral vision. A blinking red light. A loud beep. Then silence. The Clown's expression shifted—his grin collapsing into a blank stare before twisting into a grotesque smile as his eyes welled up with tears.

"...My Pinky?" he whispered.

The Clown's shoulders trembled. "MY PINKY IS DEAD?!"

That was his pet. His companion. His partner in giggling chaos. Gone.

His laughter bubbled up slowly, twisted and hollow. "Hahaha... haha... HAHAAHAHAHA!"

With a violent slap, he smashed the large orange button labeled EMERGENCY.

All throughout the circus tent, a deep vibration surged like a wave of vengeance. Lights dimmed. The haunting music of a mechanical calliope screamed to life, echoing through every hallway, every chamber, every bloodstained curtain.

"Pinky... My Pinky... They killed Pinky..." came a voice—high-pitched, manic, trembling with fury. "HaHaHa! I'm gonna massacre them! Everyone, get ready. We're going on a hunt!"

He grabbed a clown hat from the wall, jammed it onto his head at an angle, and pointed a finger at the Ring Master.

"You! Stay here and guard the tent. If anyone tries to touch my collection, gut them like a balloon animal."

The Ring Master sighed. "Sure. I'll just sit here. With my blue lion. And trauma."

"I will bring the Trauma with me." Clown took the Weewee.

Still laughing and sobbing, the Clown disappeared in a blur of wild magic and red mist. Chaos was about to unfold, and he would be its maestro.

Inside the Pink Mist

The Shadow Pearl drifted silently, its hull cutting through the endless fog of shimmering pink. The mist was thick, clinging to the sails and curling like fingers over the deck. Visibility was almost zero, and even their navigation arrays were flickering erratically.

"We can't find a way out," Mathilda muttered, her brows furrowed as she stared into the swirling void beyond the ship's bow. "This pink mist... it's not natural. It's an ancient array. Looks like we're trapped."

"Mm. That matches what I've sensed," Temptress said, lounging casually on the ship's railing, her voice calm despite the tension in the air. "There are only two things that can lead us out. One is the Twin-Headed Sea Serpent—it was the one that guided us through last time. The other is likely some sort of control mechanism... probably hidden somewhere deep inside Fun Streak Island."

Mathilda tilted her head. "So, in short, we're screwed?"

Temptress smiled, eyes glinting mischievously. "Well, not entirely. There is another way."

Without explaining further, she leapt gracefully into the air and flew ahead of the ship, her silhouette cutting a sharp figure against the pink haze. The Shadow Pearl followed slowly behind, its sails catching the strange wind generated by the mist itself.

At the very edge of the densest fog—where visibility dropped to near zero—Temptress stopped. She hovered midair for a moment before pulling something massive out from her spatial ring.

A ripple of energy spread through the mist as she revealed the enormous, lifeless body of the Twin-Headed Sea Serpent. Its scales glistened, still faintly glowing with remnants of ancient magic. One of its heads was crushed; the other hung limply to the side, its once-proud eyes dull and empty.

Despite her petite frame, Temptress handled the corpse with ease. She was, after all, a Grandmaster-level warrior.

"Time to put you to work one last time," she murmured.

Then, in a sudden spin, she twirled through the air and slammed the serpent's body into the mist like a whip. The impact released a burst of compressed aura. The fog rippled violently—and then, it parted. A swirling vortex of open air formed before them, revealing a temporary pathway out.

"The mist reacts to the serpent's body," Temptress said as she rejoined the ship. "Looks like I was right."

Mathilda blinked. "So... you're just going to whip your way through ancient array?"

"It's more effective. Remember how it used it's tail and made way for us." Temptress winked.

As the Shadow Pearl surged forward, following the gap through the mist.

The ship slipped into the water - To be specific - it's shadow.

And from within the shadow the ship raised again. But this time Mathilda and others turned back normal.

With the path opened, The White Pearl shot ahead, emerging from the edge of the mist and breaking free from Fun Streak Island's binding array.

The mist slowly closed behind them.

Chapter 395: Clown's Diary

Fourth Floor

Tyler and Mana stepped onto the fourth floor of the Circus, entering a wide chamber that resembled a library. Rows upon rows of aged scrolls were neatly arranged on shelves made of coral and crystal, the air thick with the scent of salt and parchment.

"This place is packed," Tyler muttered, glancing at the myriad scrolls. He picked one at random and unraveled it carefully.

"Most of them are maps," he noted, eyes scanning the faded ink. "Maps of islands, sea routes, currents... some of these routes don't even exist anymore."

Mana examined a scroll beside him, nodding in agreement. "These are ancient," she said, brushing a finger along the edge. "Some of these ink patterns look like pre-cataclysmic arrays."

They exchanged a glance, then silently stored all the scroll in their respective storage devices.

After combing through the room, they continued forward, eventually arriving at another chamber. This one was quiet—eerily so. The moment they stepped inside, Tyler slowed his pace.

"It looks like... a bedroom?" he said, tilting his head in confusion.

The entire room was washed in shades of white and grey. The walls, the floor, even the furniture seemed to be drained of color, as if life itself had been bleached from the space.

Mana frowned, then walked toward a switch embedded in the cloth-like wall covering. With a soft click, she activated it.

In an instant, color rushed back into the room like a flood. The transformation was immediate—and startling. The lifeless chamber bloomed into a vibrant, whimsical space that looked like it belonged in a circus-themed nightmare.

The canopy bed at the center had thick red and gold drapes, the top of which was adorned with a wide-grinning clown face. Balloons—some real, some enchanted to float endlessly—hovered above the canopy and along the chandelier, which now pulsed with soft carnival lights.

The walls were decorated with portraits of strange, exaggerated figures—twisted jesters, acrobats, and masked performers. Their eyes followed Tyler and Mana wherever they moved.

"I feel like we've just walked into a fever dream," Tyler said under his breath.

"Correction," Mana whispered. "A clown's normal dream."

Velvet curtains filtered golden light through the tall window, bathing the room in an eerie glow. On the floor, marbles, wooden toys, and spinning tops lay scattered—as if a child had just been playing moments ago. From somewhere, a music box played a slow, slightly off-tune lullaby.

Tyler stepped cautiously into the room. "This is definitely the Clown's bedroom."

Mana followed behind, her gaze flicking toward the bed. "Wait... someone's here."

There, nestled under the circus-themed canopy, lay a young girl. Her entire body was painted like a clown's—white base, red cheeks, painted lashes, and exaggerated lips. But she wore no clothes at all. She was perfectly still, her chest unmoving.

Tyler narrowed his eyes. "Is she... dead?"

"Mana can't feel a soul," Mana said flatly. "No heartbeat either."

Without hesitation, Tyler walked over and placed his hand on her chest.

Mana raised a brow. "Pervert."

Tyler gave her a sideways glance. "It's for research purposes." Then, with a slight smirk, he pinched the girl's nipple.

A web-like grid of shimmering threads lit up across the girl's body for a split second before vanishing.

"See that?" he said, straightening up. "That's a fresh-preserving array. Same type I use on Apollo's body. Except Apollo's already at the Divine Seeker Realm—his body won't rot for centuries even without it."

Mana approached, inspecting the glowing remnants of the web and then she touched her wrist "She has developed acupoints, but her foundation is empty. Novice level at best."

Tyler nodded grimly. "So the Clown was keeping her... like a trophy? Or he bangs the corpse? What a sick freak."

Without another word, Tyler and Mana began to implant charms around the room. He moved with precision, placing them at key locations—the door, the corners, near the windows. When he approached the girl to set one on her directly, he paused and hesitated.

"Look at this." Mana said suddenly, holding up a small book.

Tyler turned. She was holding a diary, worn but intact. Most of the pages were filled with erratic writing, sketches, and symbols, but what caught Tyler's attention was the cover—a strange, feather-like array embedded into it.

"This... this clown was probably an array master," Tyler muttered. He pulled a feather-shaped tool from his storage pouch and traced it along the array on the diary's cover. The intricate circle rotated slightly with a soft hum, as if unlocking a mechanism.

Suddenly, the world around them shimmered—and changed.

The vibrant bedroom faded, replaced by a quiet village under a dusky sky. Huts with thatched roofs lined dirt paths. Smoke rose lazily from chimneys. The scene was peaceful... but dreamlike.

Tyler reached out and tried to touch a nearby fence. His hand passed right through.

"We're inside a memory," he said. "A memory cloud. The diary's embedded with a recording array."

In the real world, both Tyler and Mana stood motionless, their eyes unfocused as their divine sense penetrated the diary. Within the memory, however, they were fully immersed.

"So all of this is a projection from the Clown's memories?" Mana asked, eyes scanning the dreamlike village.

Tyler nodded slowly. "Looks like we're watching a biography... Let's see what kind of monster he really was."

"Mana wonder if he has tragic story. Like ' Villains are not born, they are created ' kind of story."

They began to explore the village, walking silently through its ghostly paths. Eventually, they reached a small, worn-down house at the edge of town. It wasn't a random stop—both of them felt it. This place radiated the strongest presence.

"This must be the Clown's childhood home," Tyler said.

They phased through the front wall—and froze.

Inside the dim-lit room, a couple is having pleasure.

The couple in the bed failed to notice that a small boy was hiding inside the cabinet, watching them through a hole.

"That's the clown?" Tyler asked, narrowing his eyes.

Tyler and Mana both focused on the boy peeking from within the shadows.

"He's watching his parents fight," Tyler added.

The scene shifted abruptly.

The boy was older now, perhaps by a few years. Another boy stood beside him, younger by a little. They huddled together inside the same cabinet, once again observing a heated argument.

"That must be his brother," Tyler murmured. He recalled the Clown once casually mentioning that he had killed his own brother because he saw his brother's future which was better than his own.

This time, their parents weren't fighting in pleasure —but money.

The father, reeking of alcohol, slurred angrily. "What do you want me to do? There's no one dying lately. No dead, no job!"

His voice cracked through the room. He was an undertaker. Undertaker means a mortician responsible for burying the dead. But the village had been unusually peaceful without any disaster, leaving him unemployed.

His wife snapped back with venom. "You spend what little we have on cheap liquor! We're starving while you wait for people to die!"

The father's fist slammed against the wall, and the boys flinched from inside the cabinet.

The memory flickered and changed again.

Now Tyler and Mana stood above a house in the village. Below, an elderly man shuffled slowly under the shadow of a towering metal jackfruit tree. His body trembled with age, his steps barely lifting from the ground.

Then—a jackfruit, thick and heavy as stone, fell directly on his head.

The old man collapsed immediately, lifeless.

Tyler's expression darkened. "He died from that?"

Mana nodded solemnly.

The next memory followed quickly.

The old man's funeral. The clown's father, dressed in undertaker robes, stood beside the grave, reciting rites. Coins clinked into his palm from grieving villagers.

Then it happened again.

A little girl drowned in a shallow river near the village.

Next, a hunter got caught in a bear trap that had seemingly been misplaced.

One by one, villagers started dying—always in accidents. Always conveniently spaced just enough to avoid suspicion. The father's income steadily grew.

Tyler and Mana exchanged glances.

"It was the clown," Mana whispered. "He orchestrated all those deaths."

"And his little brother was with him," Tyler added. "Watching everything."

They had been right.

The memory clearly showed the Clown and his younger brother perched atop the metal jackfruit tree, then the clown dropped a heavy fruit directly onto the old man's head.

The same pattern repeated with the other deaths.

They saw the clown dragging the helpless little girl into the river, her cries muffled by the water. Meanwhile his brother just watched it from the shore.

Then came the hunter—his fate sealed when the clown deliberately misplaced a bear trap along his usual path.

Each death had been orchestrated, each one staged to look like a tragic accident.

Mana's voice was low, almost a whisper. "Mana take back what Mana said about villains not being born."

Tyler nodded, face serious.

The scenery shifted again.

Another year passed.

Now, the older boy—clearly the future Clown—was holding an old man’s head underwater, his face calm and practiced. Beside him, the younger brother gripped the man’s legs, helping to drown him.

Neither of them noticed a small figure in the distance.

A child—no older than six—was watching the murder unfold from behind a tree, his eyes wide with horror.