

New Eden 231

Chapter 231 Feral Power

The big man, Burt, grinned at the old guy, electing to ignore him, and kept walking toward Violette. Before he could put his hands on her, however, the old man lunged at him, with speed unbecoming his age.

He grabbed the gangster's wrist as the man tried grabbing Violette's arm, and they immediately devolved into a scuffle. The butler turned his head to watch, his grin still wide.

Alex took this moment to act. Since the butler wasn't looking at him, he rapidly struck the hand with the gun to his side, moving his body forward to get out of the gun's line of fire.

The man was not expecting this, and he pulled the trigger instinctively. The muffled gunshot still attracted the attention of the nearby people, and they rapidly saw the firearm as Alexander tried to disarm the butler.

The nearby civilians rapidly started panicking, screaming and running away, as the four men were fighting to overpower their opponents. Alex was having a better outcome than the old man, since his opponent wasn't as muscular.

But the situation went from bad to worse.

In a moment of inattention, the gangster stumbled into Violette, pushing her into the pond. Although the water wasn't deep, it was still deeper than Violette's height.

Violette's inability to swim rapidly kicked in as she struggled to keep her head over the water. She screamed for help, making her situation worse, as mouthfuls of water slid down her throat.

In a matter of seconds, she was already sinking.

Alexander couldn't let go of the butler, or he would get shot, and the old man was having trouble containing the goon. As for the passersby, most had already fled the scene.

"Someone help the girl! She can't swim! Please! Someone help!"

Alexander cried out for help, but no one was listening. He watched as the bubbles on the surface were rapidly thinning.

Flashes of him on the phone, inside his parents' house, hearing the doctor's voice announcing to him he had lost his loved ones, passed inside his mind.

He turned his head back to the butler, but something was different. His eyes were shining slightly, and his hair was changing colour from auburn to white.

Claws grew out of his hand, and his strength suddenly grew tenfold. Alex looked into the butler's eyes, as the man before him started shaking in horror.

"What are you?!"

Those were the last words he would ever utter, as Alexander ripped his throat out with his clawed hand. Alex left the man gurgling in his blood, dashing toward the goon and the old man.

He spun-kicked the goon in the side, hitting his ribs with a clear snap sound. The whole man's body flew a few feet away, as he gasped for air, his lungs on one side punctured by his broken ribs.

Alexander lost no more time, jumping the last few feet separating him from the water, and swimming down.

The pond was about ten feet deep, and on its bed lay Violette. No more bubbles were escaping from her mouth, and her face was serene.

In two kicks of his feet, Alex was already at the bottom of the pond, picking up the girl's body. He spun his body downward, setting his feet on the muddy pond bed.

When he kicked off the ground, his body soared rapidly to the surface, breaching it quicker than a dolphin's jump, landing back on the grassy surface of the pond side.

He delicately put Violette on the ground as the old man looked at him with wide eyes. But the old-timer rapidly snapped out of his daze, noticing the girl was unmoving.

"Step aside," he said, leaning down next to Violette.

Alex obeyed, quickly understanding his intentions. The man quickly started performing CPR on the girl, trying to bring her back from the brink of death.

Alex had another thought in mind, snapping his head to where he had kicked the goon. The man was trying to crawl away, and Alex could still hear his rugged breathing from afar.

He dashed forward to the hulking man dragging himself across the ground. The speed at which he moved could be considered inhuman, as he reached the man in a second.

He stepped onto the big man's back, pinning him to the ground. Burt flailed around in pain, trying to turn and defend himself.

Alex granted his wish, flipping the man on his back. But it wasn't to give him a fighting chance.

When the gangster realized who was standing over him, and how he looked different, he tried pulling out something from his jacket.

Alexander moved faster than him, punching hard at the man's arm, hearing a loud crack, as Burt howled in pain.

Alex was currently in a frenzy, and his eyes saw red. He noticed a spot of blood on the man's shirt where he had kicked him, and a weird protrusion poking at the shirt.

A manic grin formed on his lips as he tore the shirt open, exposing a broken rib poking out of the man's torso. Alexander jammed his hand inside the man's chest, sliding next to the rib.

Burt screamed in pain and horror, punching Alex in the face with his other hand, but it felt like hitting a brick wall. Alex kept looking into his eyes as he slowly reached the man's heart with his hand.

As he grasped the heart with his clawed hand, he could feel the increasingly fast heartbeat.

"Who do you work for?"

"I'm not telling" AARRGGHH!!!!"

When the man started responding negatively, Alex gave his heart a little squeeze.

"I will not ask again."

"They'll kill mât€"AARRGGHH!!"

"If you don't tell me, I'll kill you!"

"Stop! I work for the Bianchi Family! Killing the handler and I will put you in big trouât€" *cough*

As soon as Alex got his answer, he crushed the man's heart, planting his claws into it like it was just a mushy steak. The man coughed up blood as his eyes started losing their lustre.

Pulling his hand out of the cavity, blood dripped off of it. Alex then started feeling dizzy.

He heard from behind him, "She's breathing! She'll be ok!"

But before he could even be happy about it, his eyes closed, and he fainted.

Chapter 232 Underwater Flashback

The events, from Violette's perspective

This day had been great, with Violette seeing so many new things. The park was beautiful; the pond was breathtaking, and the ducks were so close, she could practically touch them.

She was walking her way forward to them when she heard Alex talk behind her. She wondered who he was talking to, since his voice was so low.

When Violette turned around and noticed the two men, her first thought was, 'Friends of his?'

But they rapidly brought her to speed, when Alex ordered her to stay back, and she noticed a gun in one of the man's hands.

Fear assaulted her heart when the bigger man got up and started walking toward her. She slowly inched backward, trying to stay away from him.

Before she knew it, the situation devolved into a brawl, and she didn't know where to stand to stay out of it. In seconds, an old man started fighting the scary big man, and Alex was now fighting the other man on the bench.

Violette's fear kept pushing her back until she was standing at the edge of the pond. And before she knew what had happened, something impacted her, and she flew backwards.

When her body hit the water, panic immediately filled her mind. She flailed as best she could, trying to stay at the surface, trying to scream for help. But every cry for help came at the cost of swallowing more and more water.

Her coughing eventually brought her under the water, where she tried to hold her breath, or what little air she still had in her lungs.

It didn't last long, and she soon breathed instinctively, sending even more water into her lungs. As she slowly sank, her lungs burned, and her mind blurred.

As she sank into darkness, her mind went back to another similar moment in her life.

'Is this what he felt? I guess in the end, I die as Tommy did. Like I should have in the first place.'

Her mind flashed back to a joyful summer day as she played with her brother in their backyard.

"Violette, we can't be near the pool like this. You can't swim, remember?"

"Oh, come on, Tommy. I'm not even that close. And you know how to swim, anyway. You can always save me, hihi!"

"Please, Violette. We're gonna get in trouble."

Violette skipped and hopped next to the pool, ignoring her brother's pleas to step away. Little did she know, her father had taken a swim early in the morning, and a small puddle of water was still drying where he had pulled himself out of the pool.

"See, there is nothing to worry about," Violette said, spinning around and walking backward.

Tommy looked at her with a scared look. He feared their parents would scold them if they knew they played by the pool.

His father had always been clear, not to be near it without supervision. They shouldn't be left alone at all, in the first place.

But Violette always escaped the maid's purview, getting herself into trouble. And since Tommy was the big brother, if only by a few minutes, he refused to let his sister be in trouble alone.

This was another situation like those.

"Violette, we really should head back inside. We aren't allowed near the pool alone."

"God! You're such a stickler for rules. What's the worst th—Eep!"

"Violette!"

As Violette reached the wet spot, her shoe slipped on the wet concrete, making her fall backwards. She splashed into the pool, her body going into instant survival mode.

Tommy jumped into the pool after her, trying to help her out.

"Help! *Cough* Help me!"

When her brother grabbed her from behind to help her keep her head over the water, the girl kept violently flailing her arms and legs.

"Violette! Stop struggling! You're going to make both of us drown!"

He tried to push her toward the side of the pool, but she was making it very hard.

"Help me! Help!"

"Violette! You need to st—"

Whack

As Tommy finally pushed her close enough to the side of the pool, Violette's flailing arms found purchase. Her elbow violently yanked backward, hitting her brother in the temple.

The poor boy lost consciousness instantly.

Violette finally touched the edge of the pool, hanging herself for dear life. But when she turned her head to thank her brother, he was nowhere to be seen.

"Tommy? Tommy?!"

She then noticed her brother at the bottom of the pool. Her eyes went wide.

"Someone help! Anybody!"

By the time the maid finally heard her screams, she had been hanging on the side of the pool for two long minutes. The house was enormous enough as it was, and the maid was looking everywhere for her.

But the backyard was the last place she had thought of, since the girl usually hid inside the house, in nooks and crannies that were hard to get for adults.

The old maid had pulled Violette out of the water before throwing herself in, getting the young master out. She rapidly went to work, trying to make him breathe again.

But no amount of CPR opened the young boy's eyes. After struggling for minutes, Violette crying to the side, the maid finally called the emergency services.

She tried pulling the girl away, so she didn't have to look at her motionless brother as his life slipped away. But Violette kept fighting back, screaming at her brother to wake up.

When the ambulance arrived, they saw the colour of the boy, and how cold he was, and immediately knew it was too late. It wasn't their job to decide his state, so they kept trying to bring him back, as they drove madly to the hospital, but the results didn't change.

The doctor declared him dead at the hospital, seconds after they arrived. That was a grim day for the Bellemares.

Suddenly, Violette felt something compress her chest rhythmically. She felt her lungs being filled with air and the urge to cough.

She reopened her eyes, coughing out water to the side, as the old man from earlier leaned over her.

"She's breathing! She'll be ok!" the old man cried out to the side, before she lost consciousness again.

'I'm alive... Seems like you'll have to wait for me a bit longer, Tommy...' she thought, as her eyes closed again.

Chapter 233 Prime Suspect

Alexander woke up in a hospital bed, feeling like this situation was familiar. He looked around, and the room was at least not a normal room.

He was inside a VIP room. But when Alex tried to sit up, he noticed they cuffed his hand to the bed.

He also saw two police officers guarding the door. Both of them were now looking at him, fear evident in their eyes, hands lurking next to their sidearm.

'Urgh. Not again.'

One officer turned his head, speaking into his radio.

"Suspect is awake. Call the detective."

Alex wondered if he would get the same detective as last time. Detective Trudeau had been quite helpful the last time.

But Alex already knew this time would be different. He hadn't accidentally killed a man this time. By the blood they surely found on his hands when they found him, it was easy to deduce this time was intentional.

He also knew that a quick autopsy of Burt would reveal a crushed heart. And since he had his blood all over his hand, that would be a simple question to answer too.

He knew he was in trouble, but he still revelled in the memory of that feeling of absolute power he had at that moment. He recognized the feeling of melding with White, but it was more feral this time.

Like the wolf had only partly been there, sharing only its strength and feelings, instead of thoughts.

'Can you hear me, White?' Alex tentatively asked in his mind.

No answer came.

'Luna? Morpheus?'

Still nothing.

Alexander mentally shrugged. He could imagine it was a onetime deal, where his emotions surged strongly enough that he reached into a deeper part of his game powers.

There was no use in thinking about it now.

His attention snapped back, when the sound of a door opening resounded. It was Detective Trudeau entering the room.

But this time, he stayed further away. The look in his eyes was one of wariness.

'He probably thinks I'm a monster or something.'

"We meet again, detective. Although this time it might be under strenuous circumstances."

The detective looked at his calm attitude and felt like tearing his hair out.

He was wondering in his head if the young man had turned into a sociopath.

"Before you ask me any question that I will gladly answer, how is Violette?"

"Violette? Ahh the girl. She's fine. She is unconscious, her mind probably still in shock from almost drowning, but she will be ok."

Alex sighed in relief. He knew her parents would still chew him up, but at least she was safe.

This question and reaction also assuaged the detective's thoughts. The man couldn't be a sociopath if he felt relief at the girl's safety, after all.

"Young man. I want to know something."

"Hmm?"

"What are you, exactly?"

"That is a curious question, detective. I'm human, just like you."

"Did you know that a kid was filming the scene at the park yesterday?"

"I did not."

"So you wouldn't mind explaining what I see in this video, right?"

Detective Trudeau got a little closer, turning his phone toward Alex. On the screen, Alex could see from a short distance what had happened at the park.

The boy had originally been filming the ducks until the muffled gunshot happened. The angle at which he filmed allowed for a limited view of Alex's first killing blow.

But you could clearly see the inhuman speed at which he pounced on the other man, accompanied by the strength at which he sent him flying.

It also captured very well his figure flying out of the pond with a body in his arms. Alex was already sweating.

The following scenes were any more flattering, as he saw himself jamming his hand into the chest of a man, and torturing him before killing him.

Of course, Alex didn't need to see the video, since he remembered what had happened. But seeing it from a bystander's point of view depicted him as not quite human.

The end of the video showed him fainting, as his hair turned back to its original colour. Silence filled the room, as the two officers still present looked on in horror from the side.

Alexander cleared his throat.

"I'm not sure you would believe me if I told you, detective."

"Try me."

Alexander had resolved himself to tell the truth, but before he could, the door to the room slammed open. Three suited men came in, surrounding the bed, as a fourth man walked in with a slow gait.

Alex recognized the last man as the old man from the park. The one that had defended and reanimated Violette.

But seeing him in his high-class suit, with his face much more stoic as in the park, made him wonder who this was.

"Young man, don't say another word. My lawyers will represent you here, and this interrogation is over."

The officers in the room were about to move in on the old man, but a simple glare from him sent shivers down their spines. Those were the eyes of a killer.

"Mister Boudreau. Do you have any ties to Mr. Leduc?"

"That is beside the point, detective. Back your stuff and go. You can come back with a warrant for arrest when you want to detain him."

The detective clicked his tongue. He then closed his notepad and nodded to the police officers.

One of them reluctantly walked over to Alex, pulling out the cuff keys. Once Alex was uncuffed, he smiled at the officer.

"Boo!"

The officer jumped back, putting his hand on his gun, before grunting and leaving the room.

An enormous hand slapped the back of Alexander's head, making him grunt.

"That was unnecessary, kid."

"That slap was unnecessary. Also, who are you?"

"Jack Boudreau. But that's not important right now. What is important is what happened in that park. I have a small idea of what it was, but I want to confirm with you. That is why I will be moving you to my private healthcare facility, free of charge, of course."

"I don't need health care, Mr. Boudreau. I'm fit as a fiddle."

"Unfortunately, I will be the judge of that."

With a snap of his fingers, four large men came into the room. The bulge in their suits clearly pointed to side arms.

Alex didn't want to deal with this, so he reluctantly obeyed.

'Does everyone but me have a gun? Should I think about getting one?'

Chapter 234 Another Like Us

They brought Alexander to a location that wasn't far from the hospital he left from. But the building looked a lot more like a lab facility than a healthcare center.

The inside was filled with rooms that were filled with tools he couldn't recognize. The only solace he had was that where he thought they would put him in a cell, they instead gave him a comfortable room.

Mr. Boudreau promised Alex he wouldn't be kept here long. They just wanted to run a few tests.

"You said at the hospital that you might know what is happening to me. What makes you think that?"

"Because, Mr. Leduc, you aren't the only one to whom it's happening. And if our suspicions are correct, a certain woman in high places will have some explaining to do."

Alexander could infer what woman the man was talking about through his own suspicions and the information David had given him. But to think someone else was already finding out about it, made him think the woman in question wasn't being very careful.

A guard then walked in to explain which zones Alexander could go, and which to stay away from. He was also given times at which meals would be served, and the palace to go get them.

It was almost lunchtime, so after the guard left, Alex started heading in the cafeteria's direction. The signs on the walls made it easy for him to navigate, so he easily found the place.

Many people were present in the cafeteria, most of them in lab coats or other doctor and nurse attire. But one person stood out from the lot.

A young boy, around the same age as Violette. He was also dressed in the same clothes as Alex, ergo a green outfit, matching pants and white shoes.

He was sitting at a table alone, eating his food with rapt hunger. Almost like he hadn't been fed in days.

If these facts alone weren't enough to separate him from the masses, another thing grabbed Alex's attention.

The boy was eating with his spoon, while spinning his other hand in the air beside him. And right under that hand, a fork was dancing over the table.

Alexander's eyes immediately focused, seeing the light green particles floating around the fork.

"Wind magic! This kid is a player!"

This explained how the old man knew about the condition. But how was this kid already so adept at controlling something so foreign as mana?

He then thought back to another person who had rapidly grasped the basics. Violette!

'Are kids more receptive to the changes? Wouldn't that mean that they have a better chance of surviving?'

Alexander thought about what David had told him previously. But every time they talked, David never mentioned kids in the future.

Almost like the subject held no meaning. This was either a terrible thing, or David didn't want to tell him just yet how important a part they played.

Alexander stopped staring and grabbed a tray of food. He then walked directly to the table the kid was sitting at.

When he sat down, the kid lost concentration, his fork dropping to the table.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you."

The child nodded cautiously before resuming his trick, ignoring the man at his table.

Alexander understood why the kid was shy, since they didn't know each other. But he still tried getting his attention again.

For lack of a better idea, Alex tried doing some magic of his own to elicit a reaction. But after trying for two minutes straight, nothing was happening.

He remembered he was more skilled at sensing it than using it, even in the game. He wasn't a dedicated mage, after all.

Magic was just a tool for him. But another idea flashed in his mind.

Something specific to him.

Alex concentrated again, looking deep within himself, trying to feel the part of his soul where White would usually be inside New Eden. After a few seconds, he finally felt a brief flicker of power light up.

'Ahh, there you are.'

Alexander visualized himself reaching out to that little white flame and touching it. As soon as he did, all the surrounding sounds started getting increasingly louder, and he knew he had succeeded.

When he opened his eyes, claws were already growing on his hands, and by the reflection on his stainless utensils, he could see his hair changing colour.

The child sitting next to him had acute mana senses, because he felt his aura change and pivoted his head to look at him. His eyes went wide as he stopped spinning his hand.

His fork dropped to the table once more.

"It's you! You're player Astaroth!"

Alex smiled at him.

"I'm surprised you know me. Do you play New Eden?"

"Of course I do! I wasn't lucky enough to get into the tournament, but I watched every second. I had to lock my screen on your cameras, since what you were doing was the most interesting."

"Oh? So I take it I have a fan," Alex responded, smiling wider.

"I'm a HUGE fan! I loved your idea about using wind to speed up your movement speed, and I already adapted it into my fighting style!"

The kid started blabbering about what parts of the tournament were his favourite, and which fights had given him the most inspiration.

He even discussed all kinds of tricks he had come up with to make his magic fit more styles of combat. By the details he gave, Alex could tell this kid would grow to be a monster in the game.

Alexander listened to him talk, not interrupting him once. The kid told him about his class, the skills and spells he developed, and what combat style he preferred.

Surprisingly, for Alex, this kid was obviously a mage, but he preferred using his magic at close range. He wasn't using anything as powerful as Phoenix's flame avatar, yet, but what he was describing was ingenious at a bare minimum.

Everything the kid was describing was applied magic he wouldn't be able to use with little practice, but was still a very smart way of using magic.

He even insisted on showing him one spell that he could already use in this body. Alex was about to tell him he didn't need to, but the words escaped him.

The kid had raised his hand high, and Alex's eyes immediately detected the high concentration of wind mana gathering on his hand. When the kid brought the hand down, a whistling sound accompanied it.

Shweeeee *Shing*

The boy's hand went right through the table, barely finding any resistance. The metal table now had a straight cut through that spanned half the table's width.

"What the...?"

Chapter 235 Favors For The Future

"Jonathan! What did I tell you about using that dangerous magic outside controlled environments?!"

The boy froze at the sound of the authoritarian voice. A wry smile appeared on his lips as he turned to face Mr. Boudreau.

"I'm sorry Grandpa. I just got so excited to meet Player Astaroth and I got carried away."

While saying that, he dispersed the mana around his hand, scratching the back of his head with an apologetic smile.

Jack turned his head to look at Alex, whose hair was still white.

"I see you met our other resident, Mr. Leduc. Would you mind changing back? I know you mean no harm, but that form is quite... dangerous."

Alexander smiled. He then closed his eyes, imagining himself letting go of the little flame next to his soul.

As soon as he did, he felt the surge of power slowly recede. Fatigue also slowly crept up on him.

'My mana capacity is still so low here.'

"Good. Is it too late to join you for lunch?"

Alex was about to tell him to take a seat, but when he looked at the half-cut table, he chuckled. He grabbed his tray of food, which was still untouched, and walked to the next table over.

Mr. Boudreau sat down across the table while some food was brought to him. Alexander was half expecting him to get some food of much higher quality, but he was brought a tray from the cafeteria.

Seeing the frown on Alexander's face, the older man laughed.

"Young man, I was in the military before getting rich. I've had much worse food."

The old man started eating the food on the tray like it was some gourmet five-star meal. Alexander shrugged and ate as well.

The food was good, although bland. While they ate, Mr. Boudreau explained a few of the tests he wanted Alexander to go through.

They were mostly to learn about his abilities and see if he had full control over them. Alexander agreed to the testing since he also wanted to know where his limits were.

The conversation then took another twist.

"Mr. Boudreau. I wanted to thank you for saving Violette's life. And also for helping when the situation didn't concern you."

Alexander lowered his head as he said that. He knew full well that even if he was the one to pull Violette out of the water, he couldn't have reanimated her.

Alexander knew nothing about CPR and how to do it. He would have been useless beyond just pulling her out of the water.

He also wasn't sure he could have tapped into his Soulmaner powers if Violette hadn't been in grave danger. And since he didn't know what the goon was going to do to her, he wasn't sure they would have appeared in time.

"Don't worry about it, Mr. Leduc. I only intervened because it was the right thing to do. As for saving the Bellemare girl, I'm not entirely sure it was all me."

Alex frowned at his statement.

"What do you mean? You are the one that performed CPR on her."

"Indeed. But something was weird when she coughed out the water in her lungs. It floated around in the air for a second before falling to the ground."

"She used magic!" the boy next to them exclaimed.

Jonathan had been listening to their conversation with rapt attention. At the mention of floating water, his enthusiasm flared up.

"Jonathan. You know that interrupting an adult conversation is rude."

"I'm sorry, Grandpa."

"Also, what are you still doing here? Don't you have some studying to do?"

"But Graanpaaaa! I hate studying. Why do I even waste time with that, when I can do magic?!"

"Your abilities are irrelevant to the need to study. Go do your homework, young man."

"Fine," the boy grumbled, getting up and turning to leave.

"One day I'll fly away and escape from all that homework!" he said, punching his hand to the sky.

"Bye, Mr. Astaroth!"

After saying that, he took off with uncanny speed.

"At least run at a normal speed, so you don't hurt yourself or someone else!"

After shouting this, Mr. Boudreau sighed loudly.

"The more his magic grows, the more of a problem he becomes."

Alexander chuckled. He could imagine how Violette would soon start acting the same way with him or her parents.

"You called Violette a Bellemare. I take it, you know her parents?"

"I know her father quite well. I am an investor in his company. It wasn't the first time I saw the girl, although last time she was just a baby and still had a twin brother."

"So I assume you stepped in because of her?"

"She was part of the reason. Sadly, when I asked her stubborn father to have her brought here for examination, the man almost bit my head off."

Alexander laughed at the statement. That sounded very much like the picture he had of the man.

Even if he despised the man for becoming abusive, he could tell he was still an overprotective father deep down inside. His reaction to seeing him for the first time was a testament to that.

"The man was rambling about some young man being an incompetent fool. Something about him sending a certain Alfred after him."

Mr. Boudreau said these words while looking at him with a knowing smile. Alexander gulped nervously.

"I believe you will have to go make amends with the Bellemare family."

"Yeah... I just hope I live to tell the tale, ha ha..."

"I think you have bigger problems on your plate. Like the Bianchi family."

At the mention of the name, Alexander's traits darkened. He still had to find out where they were and give them a piece of his mind.

"By your expression, I take it you were able to learn their name from the goon you killed. Your methods might have been tasteless, but they were efficient."

"Twice they attacked me. This time, they need to pay the price."

Alexander didn't realize how angry he was until he felt Mr. Boudreau's intense stare. The old man looked him in the eye before looking down at his hands.

Alex had gripped the side of the metal table and unknowingly used mana. The table now had a hand-shaped dent in it.

"Sorry."

"Think nothing of it. But we need you to get to control your newfound abilities."

"Why are you helping me, Mr. Boudreau?"

"Because I have a feeling there will soon be more of you. And having a capable enforcer that owes you one isn't a bad thing."

That made some sense in Alex's head.

'So he's preparing for later already? A businessman indeed.'

Chapter 236 Sent Back Home

After calming down, the discussion turned to an information trade. Alex wasn't quite fond of spreading a secret that David had entrusted him to strangers, but he needed to.

Mr. Boudreau had the information he wanted, and he had information to trade it with. It was more of a transaction than just telling him, so it eased his conscience a bit.

After trading information, the two men finished eating and went their separate ways. Jack still had many duties to attend to, and Alex had tests to take part in.

Mr. Boudreau promised to release him after they knew the extent of his powers. He couldn't hold him there if he wanted, anyway.

He was quite aware of Alexander's destructive power, and he didn't want to lose him just to satisfy his curiosity.

The test took almost all day, and when he was released, they handed him his personal effects back. As soon as he turned his phone on, notifications started flowing in like a broken dam.

Half of them came from his friends, the other half were less pleasing.

Alex flipped through the notifications one by one, replying to his friends as he did. Kary was already waiting for him at the penthouse, and was dreadfully worried.

She had seen the news and was aware of a part of the situation.

Some other of his friends asked why he hadn't been online in a few days, to which he replied he had been busy.

The less they knew, the better off they were.

Violette had texted him she was back home. Her parents were quite adamant about it after the park incident.

She had woken up while he was being tested and her parents immediately had her discharged and brought her home. Violette told him that Alfred would come with men to grab her pod.

Alex gulped. He knew full well they wouldn't just be there to grab the gaming pod.

The other texts he received were mainly messages coming from Mr. Boudreau's lawyers, telling him to contact them if law enforcement ever approached him for questions.

And the last few were from the detective, wanting to set up a private meeting to discuss the park incident. Alexander almost laughed.

He knew the detective was only doing his job, but the fact alone he tried to meet up privately, knowing full well he wouldn't get past Jack's lawyer team, proved his tenacity.

Alex replied to the detective that if he wanted to meet him, it would be with lawyers present. Then he grabbed the rest of his things and asked to be brought back home.

A dedicated driver drove him home and escorted him up to his penthouse. Once he was inside, the man quietly went back down and left.

As soon as he stepped inside the penthouse and the elevator doors closed, Kary came running at him. She jumped in his arms.

"Oof!"

"Are you alright? I saw the news! Were you hurt at all?"

"Kary, I'm fine, haha. Calm down, please."

The woman pulled back a bit, giving a weak punch to the chest.

"Why didn't you call me when you were out of the hospital? And why wouldn't they let me visit you?"

"Because I wasn't at the hospital anymore."

"What? Then where were you all day?"

"In a private facility outside the city. They were testing me to see if my condition was stable."

"What condition? The news only said you killed two men in self-defence. Also, where is Violette?"

"Violette is back with her family. And yes, it was in self-defence. They were armed and threatening me and Violette."

"Can you tell me what happened?"

"I can. But first I would like to take a hot shower. I had a long day."

Kary let him go, nodding her head.

"I'll order food while you wash up."

"Thank you. I'll tell you everything while we eat."

Kary pulled out her phone, starting the order, while Alex walked up the stairs with tired steps. He walked to his room, throwing the bag with his stuff on the floor, before pausing.

He opened up the bag, reaching in to pull out the clothes he had worn the day before. When he did, he was upset.

They were covered in blood and they probably wouldn't be salvageable. He shoved the clothes back inside the bag, sad to have to throw them away.

He undressed from the green lab clothes he was still wearing and shoved them into the bag, too. Then he walked into his bathroom and turned on the shower.

After taking a hot shower, washing away the sweat from the tests, and a part of his weariness with it, he dressed up in loose-fitting clothes.

The food had just arrived as he walked down the stairs. He saw the delivery guy from the corner of his eye and laughed.

The guy was obviously trying to hit on Kary, but she seemed unphased by his attempts. When the guy saw Alex lean on the corner of the steps, his face turned to a jealous frown.

He hurriedly got Kary to pay, as he wanted nothing more than to leave. Alex was smiling at him with a cocky grin while waving his hand.

As soon as the elevator doors closed, Kary turned to him and shook her head.

"You didn't have to act like that. I wasn't interested, anyway."

"Act like what? I was just being polite."

"More like marking your territory, you hound dog."

Kary pushed past him while giggling, going to the dining room. Alexander just laughed it off.

He knew she wasn't mad at him.

"What did you get?"

The bag was plain white, so Alex couldn't guess. But when Kary opened it, the smell emanating from it rapidly reached his nostrils.

Kary didn't need to respond anymore. Drool was already amassing itself in Alex's mouth.

"Vietnamese! Tell me you got some Pho!"

"Of course I got Pho. What kind of degenerate orders Vietnamese without some Pho?"

"Oh my god, I'm in love!"

The words came out of his mouth faster than he could think of them, and he almost froze up. Kary was looking at him with wide eyes.

"I'm sorry. Is it too soon? I spoke without thinking..."

"Why are you sorry, silly? I was just surprised you said it first, that's all. The fact you said it without having to think tells me it was sincere."

She stopped setting the table to kiss him.

"I love you too. Now help me set the table, you big dummy."

Chapter 237 Planning The Slaughter

After eating, Alex was already feeling his eyelids becoming heavy. The consumption of the paltry amount of mana for the testing and the rest of the day had drained him.

Although he wanted to log in to New Eden, Kary insisted he go to bed and get some proper rest. He couldn't win an argument with her, so he did as she asked.

He crashed into bed, falling asleep almost instantly. Kary giggled to herself.

She sat near him, browsing some forums a bit before she would follow him to bed. She found a post on New Eden's most popular forum, and her eyes narrowed.

The poster's username was Khalar. She looked at the post and it specifically asked all the players to not get to level fifty for as long as possible.

He reasoned that something big would happen at level fifty and that they should wait for as many players to be near that limit as possible. Kary doubted the man's intelligence for a moment.

'Does he not know he will just be riling them to get there faster?'

The rest of the posts were info she mostly knew, so she stopped browsing shortly after. When she lay next to Alexander's sleeping body, she dragged her hand across his face.

A smile formed on her lips as she closed her eyes.

New York City, a penthouse in Upper East Side, Manhattan

Damien Grimm was also browsing through the forums, sitting comfortably in his luxurious office. Damien liked to surround himself with objects that reflected his wealth.

The chair he was sitting in had been in a mafia movie in the past, and was worth well over one hundred thousand dollars. His desk was also the desk of a once important man, costing a ludicrous amount of money.

He was browsing the forums through a brand new laptop, with an escort sitting at his side. The woman was currently licking his neck while caressing his body.

When he saw the post and the name tied to it, he grinned manically.

"What a dumbass! He just gave a valuable piece of information for everyone to grasp. How stupid can this guy be?"

The woman, seeing he was smiling, decided to be more forward. She grabbed his belt, undoing it.

Damien smiled at her.

"Splendid! Good news and some good times? What could I ask more?"

The escort giggled as she dropped his pants down. But she wasn't expecting the man to get rougher with her.

Damien slapped her across the face, still grinning.

"Suck me. And you better make it the best blowjob you ever did."

The woman looked at him, surprised, as she held her hand to her face.

"Come on, bitch! I don't pay you to just look at me!"

"Sir—"

"Shut up, Louis! Go take a walk or something."

"Please don't rough the lady up, sir. The company is already reluctant to send us women anymore."

Bang!

Louis, Damien's attendant, was standing still, his face pale. Next to his head, a bullet hole was still fuming.

Damien was looking at him like a crazed animal, the gun in his hand still smoking. The escort lady was on the ground, frozen in terror.

"Remember your place, you trash! Don't talk back to me. Piss off and come back in an hour!"

"Y... Yes, sir."

The attendant bowed low before fleeing the room, closing the door behind him.

He gritted his teeth while standing in the corridor.

Inside the room, Damien put the gun back inside the desk drawer he had grabbed it from. He looked down, his eyes still bloodshot.

"Now. Where were we? Ahh, yes. You were going to give me your best blowjob. C'mon. Get to it."

The woman furiously nodded her head before grabbing his junk and getting to work. Damien lay back in his chair, sighing in contentment.

When Louis came back an hour later, the woman had mascara smears on her face, obvious signs of her previously crying. Her face was slightly puffy at her left cheek, where a visible hand mark was present.

The attendant shook his head slightly, seeing Damien was already back inside his gaming pod.

"Come with me, darling. Let's get you cleaned up before I call your handler up."

The woman nodded weakly. The attendant helped her wash up, cleaning her slight cuts caused by Damien's rings, and applying unguent to her bruises.

His practiced movements betrayed the number of times he had to do this. He treated the woman with respect as he patched her up and called her handler.

The handler wasn't pleased to see his worker in this state, and Louis had to fork out a hefty compensation sum. Since Louis had already expected this to happen, the money was ready and in a suitcase.

The handler smiled before he grabbed the woman by the arm and left.

Louis was once again left alone to his thoughts, in this place he hated so much. Since he knew his master would be inside New Eden for many hours, he took care of cleaning and went to catch some rest.

Nightmares haunted his night as he shivered and whined in his sleep.

Inside New Eden, Azamus was already planning his next moves. Since Khalor had so nicely indicated that a big event was going to happen when people reached level fifty, he was getting ready.

He was calling his most trusted aides and setting up their course of action for the next few weeks.

He planned on having his guild be the one to breach the level fifty mark, with as many players as possible. To do that, he was planning something that Khalor would later qualify as 'The reason so many died.'

He was planning on taking the levels off players. Azamus was planning to raid all the small guild headquarters, wiping out as many players as they could.

This would be a power move to establish his dominance, but it would also gather many resources. Some players were unlocking higher levels in crafting classes, and Crafter was already becoming a respected class in itself.

So gathering all those materials, stealing gold reserves, and gaining levels by bucket loads were all excellent results of his plan. He grinned as they arranged the details.

This would cement his place as the best player in the world, for sure, he thought.

'That'll show those worthless bastards whose best!' he thought, grinning manically.

Chapter 238 3 VS 1

Alexander woke up the next morning feeling refreshed and well-rested. Next to him, the naked form of Kary, still sound asleep.

Although he was tempted to cuddle up to her and go back to sleep, he had many things to do that day. Alfred would come by to get Violette's pod, and he was sure there would be an altercation.

He started pushing his furniture to the walls all around the house. He wanted to make sure there was nothing they could throw him over or break on impact.

He had closed the room door, so the noise did not wake Kary. By the time he was done with everything, he was already sweaty.

The good news was that he was also warmed up. His intercom rang at that moment.

'Dammit, they are already here. Here goes nothing.'

When he answered, the receptionist told him four men were downstairs, asking to be allowed up. When the woman mentioned a man named Alfred, he told her to let them up.

Alexander waited in the living room, with a straight line of sight to the elevator doors. When they rang and opened, he saw the food men inside.

Alfred was heading their formation, his face as stoic as ever.

"Hello, Mr. Leduc."

"Alfred."

"I see you were ready for our arrival," the man said, looking around the penthouse as he got in.

The three men behind him started fanning out, following the same pace as Alfred.

"I wasn't expecting you to just pick up the pod. What were Richard's orders?"

"I was ordered to rough you up. Make it... Memorable. But you are to stay alive. Unless you fight back too much and we can't help it."

Alexander smiled wickedly.

"Did you think I would just let you trample me?"

"I wouldn't dare hope so. That is why I brought... backup."

Alexander had been observing the men as they slowly walked to him. He could see the tips of tattoos on their necks, where their shirts stopped.

He could also observe that their chests were much thicker than their arms in terms of proportions.

"You wore body armour? To beat up a twenty-five-year-old man? Hah! I expected more from you guys."

The men seemed offended by his words, but didn't react otherwise. Alfred, On the other hand, did something Alex hadn't expected.

He started unbuttoning his vest. When he took it off, it revealed a Kevlar vest under it, worn over his shirt.

But then he started unfastening it. His men stopped walking, looking at him with smiles.

Once he took off the vest, he also undid his shirt, and took that off too, revealing his muscular body, riddled with battle scars.

"Better?" the man asked, smiling.

"What about your men?"

"They will keep it on, if you don't mind. We wouldn't want you to go berserk and accidentally kill one."

"If you're afraid I'll kill you or your men, why take off your vest?"

The three men accompanying Alfred looked at him incredulously before bursting into laughter.

Alfred lifted a hand, making them shut their mouths.

"Son, if you take me down, I'll have deserved to die in shame."

His confidence took Alex aback. Then he growled in anger.

"Then let's see what it takes to bring me down, shall we?"

As he said his last words, Alex closed his eyes, reaching into himself. When he reopened them, his eyes shone and his hair started changing colour.

The men with Alfred were already lunging at him, their smiles gone from their faces. The living room devolved into a brawling arena.

Alfred stood back, letting his associates gauge out Alexander. The three men with him were from JTF-2, and he believed they would be plenty to get the ball started.

Alexander was at first cocky, but after a few punches to his body and face, he started taking the men seriously. Even though he was currently enhanced beyond his normal self, that didn't mean he was invincible.

Stronger than the average man, certainly. But these three men did not seem to be average at all.

For every hit he delivered to one of them, he took four from the other two. Even if his strikes were much more powerful, the men got back up every time.

They were slowly getting slower and more reckless, but so was Alexander. He quickly grasped that he wouldn't win if he wasn't willing to wound them more seriously.

Claws grew out of his fingers at a thought. When he slashed out at one of them, tearing his clothes off the Kevlar vest, his claws dug into the vest.

The man on the right quickly grabbed Alex's extended hand. When Alex tried punching him away, the man on his left grabbed the inside of his elbow, locking his other arm in place.

The man that had just been slashed rapidly started punching in Alexander's abdomen. Alex knew he could withstand a few blows, but this would be bad if it kept going.

The men restraining him were putting their entire weight behind it, making it almost impossible for him to get free. So he opted for another solution.

He jumped, sending both his feet into the man punching his chest. The kick sent the soldier flying off like a cannonball, the force behind it also sending all three remaining men to their backs.

Alexander wasn't done, though. He fiercely pulled his right arm over himself, willing the mana in his body inside it.

The increase in strength was instantaneous. It flung the man holding onto his right arm into the living room wall, losing consciousness momentarily.

Alexander then rolled over his third assailant, lifting his arm to slash the man's face off. But two loud shouts interrupted his attack.

"Alex, don't!"

"Enough!"

Alex's head snapped in the staircase's direction. Standing at the top, Kary was looking at him with horrified eyes.

This instantly brought Alex back from the frenzy his mind was entering. Alfred also turned to look at her.

His orders didn't include beating up the kid while someone was watching, so he decided it was enough.

Alex was already turning back to normal, and exhaustion was apparent on his face.

"Alright, I think we've done our job. I'll grab the pod now."

Alexander stayed in a combat-ready posture as the three men he had fought against smiled at him, before going up the stairs.

All four of them saluted Kary as they passed near her.

The pod was out of the room and the penthouse in minutes, while Alex never stopped glaring at them. As soon as the elevator doors closed, Alex collapsed.

"Alex!"

Chapter 239 Reassuring

Alexander came to, an hour after collapsing. His body was aching from the severe beating he had taken, but also from profound exhaustion.

He could easily surmise that he had overused his little mana, which disappointed him.

'I need to expand my mana capacity. But how can I do that here?'

As he looked at his penthouse ceiling, Kary finally noticed his open eyes.

"You're awake! You scared me, passing out like that. What was all that about?"

"It was nothing—Ow!"

Kary punched him in the stomach lightly when he said it was nothing. Her angry stare dissuaded Alex from lying again.

Sigh

"It was payback from the Bellemare family, for putting Violette in danger. I was expecting at least that much..."

"But it wasn't your fault. Why would they lash out at you?"

"It doesn't matter anymore. I will need to go to their home and apologize in person. To Violette and her parents. I owe them that much."

"Even after they sent a goon squad to beat you up?!"

"I'm almost certain they didn't send them. Alfred, the one that led them, had already warned me to keep her safe, or else. So I think he acted on his own."

Kary looked at him with a stare of disbelief. But that wasn't her priority right now.

She fetched a bowl of hot water and a soft towel to clean up Alex's wounds. Some cuts on his body were bleeding again from his moving.

Alex let her take care of him, knowing by her occasional inquisitive looks that she had another question burning in her mind. She didn't seem willing to ask it, but he could feel it was important that she did.

"What did you really want to ask me?"

"..."

"Is it about the form I took?"

"No. That I already recognized. Although I'm curious how, that's not what's bothering me..."

"Then what is it?"

Alex grabbed her hand, which was wiping away blood from his face. There was a slight twitch when he grabbed her hand.

'Is she scared of me?'

"Kary. Did I scare you?"

Tears started rolling off her cheeks. When she turned to look at Alex, there was worry and fear in her eyes.

"They say you killed the men in the park, on the news. I know it was self-defence. But seeing you earlier, ready to claw out that man's throat, it scared me."

Alex understood her underlying fear. She was wondering if he was turning into a cold-blooded killer.

The pattern he was establishing surely wasn't painting a pleasant picture. Even if he was justified both times in his mind, it didn't mean it would be enough justification for others.

In this case, Kary worried that she had badly judged him. No sane woman would want to date a man that had no qualms with killing to defend himself.

Alex reached his arms around Kary, embracing her slowly into a hug.

"I wasn't going to rip his throat out. I was aiming at his chest. The threat to my life was quite real, and I needed to establish a threat in theirs, too. But I wouldn't kill anyone in cold blood. I promise."

Kary wept for a while, letting Alex console her, as he assured her he wasn't a psychopath or anything similar. When she stopped crying, the bowl of hot water had run cold.

But Alex's wounds had already clotted up, so there was no point in whipping them anymore.

Alex felt like this was as good a time as any to reveal to her the secret he had been keeping. It took him well over two hours to get her to wrap her head around what he was saying.

After all, it wasn't a rational truth, and a rational person like Kary couldn't accept it at face value. Of course, what she saw earlier helped her a lot, in believing something was indeed changing.

When Alex convinced her about the incoming future, he then tried to have her feel the surrounding mana. Her mana sense was either too weak, or the surrounding mana was still too little, but she wasn't able to sense it.

This lightly enforced his theory that kids were more sensitive to it than adults. He could infer that his Perfect Mana Sense had helped him greatly.

But then he wondered how Khalor had used it. He had probably been the first to use it, too.

Then again, with his knowledge of the future, he probably had a better way of sensing and using it than him. He would need to ask him the next time they talked.

Alex then remembered he was supposed to meet Clark today. He gulped as he reached for his phone to call the trainer.

But before his hand could make it to the device, it vibrated in his pocket.

'Shit.'

He took his phone out, seeing the caller ID. It was Clark.

Kary saw his palling face and then saw the ID on the phone screen. She managed a soft giggle, even though she was still feeling weirded out by the revelations Alex had told her.

Meanwhile, the phone kept vibrating in Alex's hand.

"You should answer before he gets even madder."

"I know. I know. But we were supposed to evaluate my progress today. But I can hardly move, let alone go train with him."

"Then tell him that."

"He's gonna be mad at me. I've been skipping for many days, lately."

"It's not like you don't have a reason."

"You tell him that. The last time I tried explaining, even though I was at the hospital, he chewed me out."

"Stop making excuses. Your phone is about to hang up automatically."

"I might just let it—Hey what are you? Stop—Heeeey, Clark."

Kary had reached out and tapped the answer button before it sent the call to voicemail. Alex looked at her with wide eyes, slightly angry.

But he knew it was better this way. Not answering would only make Clark even angrier, and then his next training session would be absolute hell.

At least, this way, he saved himself from too much pain. He spent the next ten minutes pitifully explaining the situation to his angry trainer, getting yelled at for being reckless again.

Try as he may, Alex couldn't get Clark to understand he wasn't at fault here. Clark ended the call after telling him to be ready for the next time he showed up at the gym.

Alex was tempted to cancel his membership then and there. He spent the rest of his day relaxing, since his body was still hurting all over.

Chapter 240 Reuniting

Alex and Kary spent the day watching shows on the television, cuddling up under a summer blanket. They ordered food for their meals, since neither of them had the energy or will to get up and cook.

When the sun started setting outside the windows, Alex resolved to log into New Eden. He hadn't been on in a few days and he had missed the award ceremony.

He was hoping someone had grabbed his item for him, since losing a free item like that sucked. But Kary told him no one could have taken his item.

Apparently, a special person had been there during the distribution of rewards, and they had put aside a certain item for him. Alex was slightly sad that he couldn't choose for himself, but at least he would not come out empty-handed.

When he asked her who it was, Kary shrugged.

"I didn't recognize him. It was a tall, well-built man with blonde hair and golden eyes. He had no aura that I could read to recognize him, either."

"Great... Now, how am I supposed to find him?"

He did not know who that man could be. Alexander could think of one blonde man, but his eyes weren't golden.

"Well, he was with the old man you were sitting next to, at the table, the other day."

"The guild master of the adventurer's guild?"

"Wait... That was the guild master?! How did you meet him? No player has met him yet, even when they asked for an appointment."

'Lucky bastards...' he thought.

"I had little choice in the matter. Violette met him, too. He told us he was an old friend of our master. That's all I could pull out of him. That and the adventurer's card."

It was Kary's turn to think they were lucky bastards. Many players could still only wish to meet figures with actual power in the game.

And yet, he and Violette had met more than one already. By her reaction, Alex knew he shouldn't tell her he had also met the king of the Ash Elves and a Semi-divine Kingdom Spirit.

She would thoroughly freak out. Then again, he guessed she also met some of her own, since she wasn't reacting too strongly.

They brushed aside the matter, getting ready to log in. Kary lay down on the bed, grabbing Alex's helmet.

Alexander looked at her with a frown.

"It's stupid that I can't let you play in the pod instead of me. They should at least put in a function to allow the main user to allow second access..."

"If they did that, it would mean there is a risk for people to threaten other players into allowing them access to their pods. It's safer this way."

"I understand that. But it means I can't let you take the pod, instead of my helmet."

"The other solution would be for me to have my pod moved here, but then I would be back to the same problem when I'm home. Also, my mother would think I'm moving out, and she would freak out."

"Does your mother not want you to move out?"

"That's not the issue. She would absolutely want to meet you first. And she can get very... overprotective."

"Ahh. I see. Well, I don't mind meeting her, as long as she doesn't try to kill me. I've had enough of those people lately, ahah."

Kary looked at him with a deadpan stare.

"You're so dumb," she said, before giggling and dropping the gaming helmet on her head.

"Log in."

Kary went still as soon as she said the words, meaning she was already plunging into New Eden.

Alex didn't wait any longer, laying down inside the gaming pod, before closing the lid.

"Log in."

Launching 'New Eden'

Logging in

Welcome back player Astaroth

Opening his eyes, he saw the familiar ceiling of his inn room. Next to him, Phoenix was already re-equipping her armour.

Astaroth enjoyed looking at her dress up for a second, before doing the same. After they left the room, Astaroth went downstairs to go pay for the extra days he had been in the room.

The innkeeper was grumpy about him not paying in advance, but Astaroth slipped a little extra in for him, in the form of a gold coin, and his displeasure vanished.

"Thank you for your continued patronage, good sir!"

Astaroth chuckled at the instant change in demeanour before exiting the establishment.

Phoenix soon joined him, followed by Violette. They had told her when they were connecting, so she had hurried online too.

She jumped into Astaroth's arms.

"I'm so glad you're okay! I thought Alfred would have roughed you up more, and that you couldn't play for a little while."

"Well, let's just say I got pretty roughed up. But I didn't go down without a fight, hehe."

Phoenix shook her head disapprovingly.

"My dad told me to tell you something."

"Hmm?"

"He wants you to come to our house as soon as possible. He said he has something he wants to discuss with you."

"Your father."

"Yes."

"He wants to talk to me."

"Yes."

"That's strange. I thought after the punch to the face and your mother's slap, he would never want to see me again. Do you know what he wants to discuss?"

"Nope!"

Sigh

"Fine. I'll try to make time soon, when I'm fully recovered from Alfred's brief visit."

"Okay! I'll tell him you said that later."

"So! What do we do now?"

Phoenix looked at him with a giggle.

"You have something to do. Violette and I can grab a quest from the adventurer's guild with you, but you need to speak with the guild master while we do it."

"Urgh... More talking. I feel like I'm wasting all my time in New Eden in meetings lately. I barely get to fight anymore."

"Stop grumbling. You get to meet power figures and gather some reputation more than any other player."

"That's fine and all. But we still don't know what we use the reputation for, yet. What's the point of having so much of it?"

"I guess you'll be the one to find out first, aren't you?"

Phoenix giggled at Astaroth's discomfited face, as did Violette. They then left for the adventurer's guild.