

After the Familia finished laughing –despite my phrase was not meant to be a joke- I was given some water that I drank avidly. Ah, fresh water after being engulfed by an explosion was pretty good. Then, the Familia assaulted me with questions.

How did you escape? Ow, I used the shadows generated by my body to create a shadow portal and let the explosion throw me inside it.

Why have you never used such magic before? Because it consumes most of my power so I was reserving it for something that I couldn't defeat with a sword.

Why did it take you so much time to charge the attack? Because Chanting was optional and so I didn't use it on normal enemies, but it helped to channel magical power and increased the damage... if I got the time to set it up.

And so on.

Fortunately, Finn didn't come to me to ask if I could just teleport the entire Familia to the Twilight Mansion with a single spell. Maybe he wanted to let me rest... or maybe the Familia had lost most of their potions and so they needed every single ounce of magical power they had to deal with the Dungeon.

Either way, it worked for me. Because there was a little meeting with some minotaurus that the Familia needed to have, and a certain blonde girl needed to save a little white rabbit.

Yes, I could avoid that specific encounter if I wanted, but I didn't.

There was an ugly truth I discovered: changing the future is hard, and even when you succeed, it's not always going to turn up as you imagined. That's why I avoided interfering too much into the Skyrim plots I knew about: because when I did, things *always* took an unexpected turn of events. Some were for good, others were for the bad, and I was lucky that I had fate on my side on my adventures on Skyrim, or the result could have been catastrophically bad. So I limited myself, trying to give warnings and little nudges here and there so I could predict the outcome of my interference and maintain a general understanding of how things were going to go. Making things better without straying too much from the path.

Because what use is having knowledge of the future if you're not able to use it by interfering too much?

Also, the encounter with the minotaur was not *all* bad for Bell. Sure, he risked death, but he also got an OP Skill that let him grow to an absurd rate and met Ais. At the end of the day, it was a net positive for him and so I didn't see a reason to change it. Like, I could make myself the target of Lias... I don't remember the name of that Skill, but whatever. The point was, I could make myself the target of Bell feeling –which sounded wrong on many accounts, thinking about it- but I was not going to remain here forever, and what would happen to that Skill if I disappeared? No, better let Ais be the target.

For her own good too. Bell had a strange effect on the girl, calming her down with his innocence. I couldn't have that effect on her, so why should I remove a positive thing for her life?

No, I was going to let the events play as they did in the original and only after that sweep down and take Bell under my wings to make him the hero this world needed.

That didn't mean that, when I saw the minotaurus appear, I didn't feel a little guilty about letting them escape.

-X-

Eina was not sure what to make of this day.

It had come over a long, long month, at least for her. After the mysterious Rexen had shown up and beaten the Goliath basically on his own, there was a lot of movement at the Guild. Mostly people asking if the news were true or not, how it was possible, who this Rexen was and why nobody ever heard of him, and so on. The Guild was unable to answer those questions, and the target of all the curiosity had conveniently decided to disappear. Only after they had found out he was doing a job for the Loki Familia to help them in their next expedition, and nobody had the courage to disturb him. Not only because it could create problems with the Loki Familia but also because he *had* kicked Goliath's ass in a fight. It didn't seem prudent to do anything... aggressive.

Then, when they got confirmation that he had accompanied the Loki Familia to their expedition to Deep Floors, most people just calmed down. And if that was also the only thing that had happened, she would have returned to her usual routine.

But she was *also* appointed as the Advisor of a new, young Adventurer, Bell Canel.

Bell was a good kid... but he wanted to be a hero, and that was going to get him killed. Adventurers shouldn't go on adventures. They needed to be cautious, they needed to be prepared, and they needed to think about survival first. He had always managed to get it for the two weeks he was in her care, but today... today he had gone to the Fifth Floor, and encountered a minotaur there.

Now, the fact that he had encountered a minotaur was not his fault. It was not a monster that was supposed to be there. Something must have pushed the creature outside the Floors it usually stalked, and so it was not Bell's fault that he had found himself against a creature that he couldn't hope to defeat. It was just bad luck.

What was his fault was being at the Fifth Floor to begin with, and also showing up covered in blood, asking for Ais Wallenstein.

Eina pouted a little. This guy had the gall to ask her personal information about a girl after she had just lectured him. Did he have no self-preservation?

In the end she still told him. Apparently, he got a crush when she saved him from the minotaur. How cute. Eina couldn't stop herself from giving him a suggestion, even if she

shouldn't have. There was no hope for the poor boy. They were of different Familias and she was far, far above him in... anything she could think, really.

"Thank you, Eina-san! I love you!" Shouted the boy, waving while running away.

"Eh!?"

Before she could properly process what he had just said, Bell impacted headfirst into something. Something tall, muscular, and armored. He fell on his butt and raised his head, finding himself facing the wall he had just hit.

Eina gaped. It was the most discussed adventurer in Orario.

It was Rexen.

-X-

When Bell Cranel raised his head, he found a man he didn't know watching him. He was... really tall, all things considered, taller than most other people he had seen in the city. But he clearly was an Adventurer. His equipment didn't leave doubts.

"Sorry." He said, standing up and bowing down to apologize. "I was not looking where I was going."

"It's alright kid." Replied the man. His voice was strange, like he couldn't pronounce the r right, but it was not unpleasant. He paused a little, then he continued. "You must be the one Ais saved from the Minotaur."

Bell straightened up. He knew Ais-san! He must have been a member of her Familia! How embarrassing! "You know Ais-san?"

He snorted, clearly amused by something. "Sort of. We don't really interact that much."

Ah, so not a member of the Familia... an acquaintance? "Please, if you see Ais-san, tell her I'm very grateful to her for saving me."

"You should tell her that yourself, kid. She was... well, not devastated, but surely upset when you ran away."

Bell felt like he was transforming into a puddle by embarrassment. "Ah, I'm sorry. I was just..." He stopped, not really sure who to explain how he had felt at that moment.

"Overwhelmed?" Helped the man.

"Yes! Overwhelmed. The minotaur was chasing me, and I was going to die, and-" He stopped and looked down, the fear he felt in that moment briefly returning to him.

"That's our fault." Said the man. Bell raised his head, seeing the man looking away from him, shame on his face. "A group of minotaurus attacked the expedition as we were returning to the surface. We had some problems in the Deep Floors and most of the members were

eager to discharge some of their frustrations on them.” He sighed. “The monster ran instead. That’s why there was a minotaur in the Upper Floors. I’m sorry.”

“Ah, no, you don’t need to apologize, Mister...?” Yes, Bell, realized just in that moment he didn’t know how the man was called.

“Rexen. You can call me Rexen.” Supplied the man, giving him his hand. “Nice to meet you.”

“Ah, thank you. I’m Bell. Bell Cranel.”

“Very well Bell... can I ask you what you were doing on the Fifth Floor with Guild equipment?” Asked the man. “You have to be either very green or very poor to have that kind of equipment. Your Familia didn’t get you something a little better?”

Bell managed to get a laugh out, even if it was a clearly fake one. That comment hurt. “Ahah, I’m the only member of my Familia...”

“Ah, I see. New Familia. Maybe a month old. You went very far in very little time then. Good job.”

An unexpected surge of pride made Bell smile. “Thank you! But my Advisor always tells me that I’m too reckless...”

“That’s the Advisor’s job, reminding you that you’re still mortal.” Dismissed the man. “I’ve seen a lot of people die because they thought they were invincible when, well, they were not. Be grateful your Advisor care enough to repeat it every time you do something stupid.”

That comment of doing stupid things didn’t hurt in the slightest, much to Bell surprise. Maybe it was because he had put it in a way that praised Eina-san, or maybe because Bell knew that he did stupid things sometimes.

Bell decided that he liked this man. He remembered him of his Grampa.

“Well, not that the minotaur was your fault.” Continued Rexen. “What do you say to come to the Hostess of Fertility with me and my party tonight? To repay you for that little incident.”

“Ah, thank you, but Ais-san has already repaid me...”

“That’s her, I’m me, and I still feel that I owe you. Please?”

Ah, who could Bell refuse? “If you rea-”

A hand fell on his shoulder and gripped it with more strength that Bell had believed was possible. On the edge of his vision, he saw Eina-san emitting a menacing aura.

“Could I have a word with you, Bell-kun?”

“Ah, I...” He turned toward Rexen, hoping for some help... but he just looked at him.

“Very good, Bell-kun. Sorry for the inconvenience, Rexen-san. I’ll be brief.”

"It's no problem." Dismissed the man. Bell felt Eina-san starting to drag him away, and he raised his arms to ask for help... but he was ignored.

Then, Eina-san sprinted, and before he could understand what was happening, Bell found himself in a corner inside the Guild, Eina-san near him, trying to catch her breath.

Unsure what had triggered that reaction, Bell said the first thing that passed on his mind. "Look, Eina-san, I know you said to not trust strangers and that not all Adventurers are good people, but I don't think Rexen-san is-"

Eina-san's hands moved before he could see them, locking into place, and the half-elf looked up, the light making her glasses shine obscuring her eyes. "Bell-kun..."

Bell gulped and accepted his end.

"You have to go!"

Bell blinked several times. "Eh?"

"Do you know who that man is?" Asked Eina-san. "He's Rexen. *The* Rexen. He defeated Goliath not even a month ago!"

"So... he's a good Adventurer?"

"He's a very good Adventurer. Bell-kun, you have to ask him to be part of his party."

"Eeeh!? Eina-san, I cannot do that! I'll be useless in a party with such a powerful Adventurer!"

"You don't understand. They're searching for people to get into the Lower Floors. It's your occasion! You remember, girls like dependable men? Going deeper into the Dungeon will help you become stronger."

Bell was not sure how to take all of this. Eina-san always told him to be cautious... and now she was telling him to go to the Lower Floors? Why? "Wouldn't it be too dangerous for me to go into the Lower Floors? I mean, if his party is strong enough to deal with the Goliath, they probably won't have any problem protecting me, but... I don't want to be a dead weight."

How could he, Bell Canel, possibly keep up with them? He would just remain behind, useless.

"No, I wouldn't suggest you go to the Lower Floors just to be a supporter. The members of his party grew enormously in the month and half they got together into the Dungeon. Even the supporter has shown some progress, she defeated a Monster Party coming from them from the Middle Floors while fighting the Goliath. And she's only Level 1! The other member helped, sure, but it's still impressive. And the other member Level Up and got a Skill after the Goliath fight."

Bell's eyes widened as he realized what his Advisor was saying. "You think he'll be willing to... teach me?"

"It's a possibility." Said Eina, returning to a calmer state of mind. She put up her glasses, making the shine again. "It's also possible that it's just a coincidence that his two party members suddenly became much stronger in such a small time, but I doubt it. Everything about the man is strange."

Bell blinked. Strange? How?

"But you don't have to worry about it. High Leveled Adventurers are all a little... peculiar." Continued Eina-san, not sounding very convincing. "My point is, you'll be well protected while you'll have a mentor that seems to like to train young Adventurers." She smiled a little. "Every hero needs his teacher, after all."

Bell still hesitated. Sure, he wanted to be a hero and find girls to save into the Dungeon, but he wanted to do it on his own power.

Eina seemed to read his mind and she took one of his hands in hers. Bell blushed a little at the sudden gesture. "Bell, I cannot protect you in the Dungeon. I can give you my advice, but the Dungeon is unpredictable, and you're on your own. One day you'll be caught off guard and you will not have someone to help you." She strengthened her grip on his hand. "You need a party, until you can find new members of your Familia. So... please."

At such a heartfelt request, the boy could only look down in shame. Was he really going to make Eina worry, when he could just ask? "Alright Eina-san. I'll ask."

"Good. Now go to your goddess. You need to tell her the good news."

He nodded and ran, briefly stopping to tell Mister Rexen that he would join them at Hostess.

This day had started off bad, but it seemed to have turned for the best.

-X-

"Eh? An Adventurer invited you to dinner?" Asked a childish-looking woman with... generous assets.

"Yes, Goddess-sama!" Replied Bell, sprayed on the bed while his goddess updated his Status.

"Is this Adventurer a girl?" Asked Hestia, narrowing her eyes.

Bell, sweet innocent Bell, blinked. "Uh, no. He's a man called Rexen. He felt bad that he got me involved with the minotaur by accident, and wants to repay me, I guess?"

"He's better be sorry." Murmured the goddess, humphing.

"Ah, no, he was not actually involved personally... he was just there when it happened and couldn't stop it."

"Hmm!" Replied the goddess. Now, normally she wouldn't be so hard on the man, but right now she was in a bad mood... all thanks to a certain Skill appearing on her little Bell back. A Skill caused by a certain someone.

"Do you know anything about him?" Asked Bell. "Eina-san said he's a very competent and powerful Adventurer, but also that he seems... strange."

"I only heard what the people near my workplace say." Replied Hestia, starting to draw the new Status on a sheet of paper... omitting a certain part, of course. "There are a lot of rumors about him, but the only thing I gathered up is that he's relatively new here in Orario. And despite that he managed to do some pretty impressive deeds... well, just one."

She got down from her child's back and let him sit down. "I cannot tell you much outside that. Some say he's amazing, others say he's cheating. Nobody knows him well, really." She paused, thinking. "Well, the voice says that he's working with Loki Familia, but I and Loki don't really like each other, so I cannot just ask her if it's true. You'll have to ask him, since he invited you to dinner."

"You approve, Goddess-sama?"

"I'm not sure what to think about him." Admitted the Goddess of Hearth. "He doesn't *sound* awful, though. I suppose you could at least give him a chance. But don't agree on anything."

Bell looked down on the floor, looking conflicted. "Should I follow Eina-san's advice? It seems like a smart thing to do, but..."

As his goddess, Hestia was compelled to reply to her child's doubts. "It sounds like a smart decision, yes. And I too would feel better if you had someone to look over you while you go to the Dungeon."

Bell didn't look convinced.

Hestia smiled. Such conflicted emotion from her child. "Don't worry, Bell-kun. It doesn't matter if you ask help to other people to become stronger. Like your Advisor said, everyone need a mentor." She paused, kicking her legs up and down as she thought at a way to convey her message better. "We're a little Familia, Bell-kun. We don't have a lot of money, and since you're the first member, nobody can give you thing other Familias, bigger and more established, usually grant to their new member. Training, equipment..." She shook her head. "I cannot help with that, Bell-kun. I don't know how to fight and I don't have money. So, if you have the opportunity to get at least one of them, you should take it. You already accept your Advisor advice, right? It's not really that different."

Bell continued to look at the floor for a second. "Alright. Now I need to go, Goddess-sama. Rexen-san is waiting."

Hestia let her children go. Maybe this was going to be the opportunity for Bell to grow and for the Familia to start it's rise.

She'll need to talk with Rexen though... or ask some of her friends if they knew more than the vague rumors about him.

Or both.