

Nova's senses returned to him properly as he found himself in the front passenger seat of Lu Yi's car. He's driving, and Nova's hazy memories pieced the story together for him in a shaky sort of manner. The feeling of glass can be felt on his paw as he looks to see the wine bottle from earlier, along with the taste of it in his mouth. His muzzle scrunched and a sour pit formed at the bottom of his throat.

"Oh, you're up." said Lu Yi, glancing at him while keeping his attention on the road. "How are you feeling?"

"...A bit slow. I...I drank the wine..."

"I know, but you needed it." Lu Yi reminded him. "Brewster didn't quit drinking until you came around."

Nova groaned. "I can't believe I have to do it all over again."

"Baby steps, Nova. Just take baby steps."

"I know, I did a similar thing in my home. Though...I feel it's gonna be harder."

"Come on, don't focus on that." Lu Yi's tone became more chipper. "Here, check your bank account?"

"I have a bank account?"

"Yeah, well...Brewster does. He just uses debit cards though. He was at least smart enough not to use credit, or else he would've blown himself into debt."

Nova pulled out his glass phone (technically Brewster's), which several cracks spun around the edges like webs. Besides that, he looked and found the closest equivalent to a bank app, *Bank of Grandis*, and accessed...well, Brewster's bank account.

However...

Nova realized that he has zero idea of the economics of another world.

However, he did see that the most recent exchange of gold is from the Bounty League. Around 25,000 in total. That gave a total of 50,000.

"Is twenty-five thousand a lot?"

"Well, we weren't the only ones part of that hunt, so it had to be split even further."

"Oh, right."

Nova had more money than that in his bank account from where he came from. But seeing the money, he did have a few thoughts.

"Lu Yi? Can we go shopping?"

"Why?"

"Well...I wanna change things up a little with how I look. I don't wanna be wearing the same kind of clothes every day."

"Hmm...alright, let's go to Gyrate. They have some good clothing brands there, and I wanna get some clothes myself."

Unlike Graywater's rather sparse and muted structure, Gyrate is almost bright, vibrant, and dense. Nova couldn't help but look out the window like a child at an amusement park. The colors, the art, the city expressed it better than any city back in his world.

However...something in the sky caught his attention.

“What’s that?” Nova pointed to the giant floating stone in the sky with a glowing omega within it.

“Oh, that? It’s a Miracle.”

“A Miracle?”

“Let’s just say...they have a lot of history. Lots of people had died when they had come around, and they’re responsible for Miramon existing. But...they’re also the reason why Espers exist.”

“Oh...I didn’t know it would be complicated like that...” Nova felt bad for asking.

“Hey, there’s no shame in curiosity, especially since you’re not from here.” Lu Yi reassured him. “Look, we should focus on the Miracle later and focus on the shopping”

Lu Yi parked his car as they exited to what Nova could only guess being the mall square with how many digital billboards sparkled with their advertisements before his eyes. It almost reminds him of Times Square in New York. Through the revolving doors, the two walk into a mall and straight into a clothing outlet.

Charlotte’s Tapestries & Clothing Brands

“Let’s see...”

With Lu Yi having split off to find their own stuff, Nova was now alone as he searched through the various clothing articles. Admittedly, he had accidentally walked into the wrong size aisle before realizing that he was no longer his previous size. He’s smaller now, so he had to go to the other aisle for the smaller sizes.

And the first thing he grabbed? Pants. Orange pants to be exact, as to fit with Brewster’s orange jacket. Now he no longer had to feel uncomfortable having no pants at all. He also grabbed a few shirts, and a new jacket. It was more of an orange hoodie than anything, not as puffy yet just as loose. Having gotten everything he needed, he-

“Oh my! Is that a puppy?”

“What?”

Nova turned to see three women looking down at him, a brunette, blond, and black haired woman. Their faces are all alight with affectionate excitement at him.

“Oh, wait. You’re an Esper, right? I’m so sorry...” said the woman with black hair.

“No, it’s alright. You just surprised me.” said Nova.

“No, wait, maybe we shouldn’t,” said the blond one. “I heard someone tried to pet him, and he didn’t like it.”

“No, it’s okay. But...I’m sorry that I did that.” Nova realized that he’s technically apologizing for Brewster. “I guess I...didn’t want to admit I liked being petted?”

“Well, you’re not gonna bite me or anything, right?” asked the brunette.

I won't, promise.”

“Then...can I pet you?”

“Sure, just...don’t make it awkward, okay?”

“Okay...”

The blond woman slowly extended her hand...and gently petted him on the head, squishing his mohawk. And as quiet as he got, Nova internally admitted that being petted felt...**really good**.

"He's so soft!"

"Wait! Let me try!"

"Give me a bit of room!"

Two other hands soon joined in, and Nova suddenly found his head being petted, his cheeks being pinched, and his chin being scratched. Nova felt like he was in heaven, not even realizing that he had been pushed to the floor and now his belly is being rubbed. His leg moved on its own without even thinking about it. And between all of that she could hear the voices of the women all indulged in their excitement.

He also heard a few clicks of a digital camera, but that thought slipped away into the oblivion of bliss.

"Ahem."

The petting stopped, the bliss stopped, and Nova slowly opened his eyes to see a woman with fair skin and a spider body for her lower half on the ceiling, looking down at them.

“Girls, as much as you are loyal customers of mine, I do hope you don’t harass my new ones.”

“Oh, sorry Miss Charlotte,” said the Brunette.

With that, the three women left to an aisle, leaving the spider Esper to crawl down the walls of the outlet and extend a hand to him. Nova took it, letting him stand and dust off whatever stuck to him from the floor.

“Are you alright? You looked like you were drowning back there.”

“Well, I’ve never been petted before. It felt quite nice.” Nova smiled sheepishly. “Who are you? I’ve never been here before, admittedly.”

“I’m Miss Charlotte, just someone using their skills as a spinster to make a brand from the ground up. Every design here has been personally weaved and constructed.”

Nova looked down to the orange hoodie he just chose, feeling how soft it is in his paws.

“It’s really good quality.”

“I’m glad to have met your standard,” Charlotte smiled. “By the way, I think...I have heard you somewhere?”

“...I’ve gotten a taste of my own reputation, admittedly.”

“Oh! Well, it seems that I don’t have to explain too much then,” started Charlotte. “I’ve heard of you, Brewster. And I will admit, you’re not as bad as the gossip about you has entailed.”

“I’ve...had a change of heart recently. I’m trying to fix those things.” Nova scowled at himself, because he’s fixing someone else’s mistakes. But there was nothing he could do about it. Though a harrowing thought became fixated in his mind. “Am...Am I banned here? I’m sorry if I intruded...”

“No, no...” Charlotte bit her lip. “But I will admit I considered it. You just sounded like a bad customer. I’m happy that I was proven wrong.”

“Um...I’m thankful that you didn’t ban me.” Nova straightened out the clothes he picked. “Well, I got everything I need, so I should get going.”

“Be sure to say where it comes from! Helps with brand recognition.”

“Oh, sure.”

“And if anyone asks if it looks like some other style from another brand, just say the design is handmade by me.”

“...Why is that?”

“..”

“..”

“I’ve gotten into lawsuits over similar looking styles.”

Nova and Lu Yi met back together at a cafe nearby as it was time for lunch. And as they sat down, their food came to them. Not long after did they scarf down the food altogether.

“Lu Yi? I don’t wanna ruin lunch but...I wanna know more about the Miracles.”

“Oh, well, you can just *Noogle* them.”

“N...Noogle?”

Lu Yi blinked. “What’s your home’s version of Noogle?”

“*Google*.”

“Close enough.”

Nova took out Brewster’s phone and used the world’s version of Google, which is indeed called...*Noogle*. It even functioned the same as well, prompting him to search for *Miracle*. Images of floating structures varying from an inverse pyramid, a symbol of infinity, a cuboidal structure, and a split oblong structure, all presented themselves to him. It took a few seconds, but his mouth slowly started to drop as unfamiliar but official news outlets talked about various headlines.

Incoming Resonance Suddenly Ceased; Miracologists Left Confused

“Huh...there’s articles about the Miracles and...Resonance?”

“Oh, right. To make it simple, Resonance is what the Miracles do. When the Miracles do that, then new Espers and Miramon are made.” Lu Yi then pulled out his glass phone, scrolling through something. “Though, now that you mention it, there was something interesting I caught in our hunt from yesterday.”

Turning the phone towards him, Nova looked to see that Lu Yi had a picture of...papers?

“What am I looking at here?”

“There was a suitcase within one of the chests. It’s a data graph for Miracle activity.”

The paper itself is a graph paper with labeled x and y coordinates. The x-coordinate was about the passage of time in minutes, with the end of the graph being at 60, whilst the y-coordinate measured *Waves*. With both combined the graph was shaped to a bell curve that suddenly cut off right at its apex on the 30 minute mark.

“From the data, it looked like there was going to be a massive Resonance that hadn’t been seen in a long time. The Union was preparing for the tidal wave...but it disappeared,” said Lu Yi. “Social media outlets are just publicly scratching their heads on what just happened.”

Nova looked to the internet and searched upon the Miracles once more, going through images and pictures given to him by the search engine. A Miracle shaped like a cube, another curling around and inward like an infinity symbol, and the very same Miracle that he saw hanging above Gyrate. All the images, all the angles, and the memory came flooding back. Back before he was transported to here, the other side.

‘That giant thing that came from the ground...that was a Miracle?’

The realization hit him like a truck full of bricks.

“Oh God...”

“What?” Lu Yi looked concerned. “What is it?”

“There...There was a Miracle that appeared and sent me here...” Nova’s paws shook in horror. “If...and...”

The jumble of information and the horrible implication choked the words out of him, causing him to whimper. Several heard it as they glanced over to Nova, but Lu Yi’s eyes widened at what Nova was talking about, taking his paw.

“We have to go to the Union.”

The two rushed out of the cafe as Lu Yi drove off in a hurry. Nova hurriedly took the wine bottle from earlier and chugged down the rest of its contents. Part of it was because of an incoming withdrawal. But that wasn’t all of it. The harrowing implication that all of his friends could be *dead* terrified him, and he didn’t want to feel that pain again.

The depressant effect of the wine kicked in, and while his mind hadn’t slowed down just yet, a sense of regret in his heart deepened even further. He was beginning to repeat his mistakes.

“We’re here.”

“Wait...”

Nova’s sudden pause nearly caused Lu Yi to trip.

“How...How are we gonna prove it to them?”

Lu Yi blinked, only to realize what Nova meant by that. “Well...there must be some way we can prove it to them. I mean...you’re not really Brewster, that must count for something.”

“Hi there!” said a voice in a rather cheery tone.

Nova looked up to see a woman wearing a plastic transparent sweater, a simple white a purple dress underneath, necklaces with a cross on it, and...rather weird but cool headphones. Nova could only tilt his head, but it seems that Lu Yi recognizes her.

“Discboom?”

“Hey Lu Yi, long time no see,” Discboom smiled. Though her attention was to someone else, crouching down to meet Nova eye to eye. “And you must be Brewster, it’s nice to finally meet you.”

“I...uh...” the wine was starting to kick in, his speech slurred a little. “Sssorry if I’m kind of...drunk. There’s...I thought...I don’t wanna think about it...”

“It’s alright,” said Discboom. “And to answer your question...but it’s best to not talk here. Let’s head to the bar, shall we?”

With the wine now taking its full effect, Nova had to try his best to keep his paw wrapped around Lu Yi’s hand as they walked behind Discboom. His steps stumbled, or sometimes he lost control of them. But he always got up and kept moving forward. Various people come and go, along with Espers as well. Some give him a weird look, probably due to his drunken stupor, but that mattered little at that point. With a quick

elevator trip, Nova found himself being placed on a couch with a glass of light beer given to him by Discboom. The bar's music played gently, and the only people that seemed to be here was a woman with the lower half of a pale snake, and a man with dark skin and pink hair, standing out at the bar porch with a shot glass in hand.

"Oh...thank you," Nova accepted the glass, though he kept it on the table. "Can you tell...can you tell me why you've come for me."

"Well, it'd be hard to explain to someone like you, who has never been in the Union," started Discboom. "But I'll try and make it simple."

Discboom pulled out a vinyl disc of sorts. It...well, it didn't look like anything in particular. However, Nova squinted to focus, finding a face upon the disc, belonging to an Esper.

"This is...?"

"A Soul Disc," explained Discboom. "All Espers have one. But a few hours of research showed that you weren't really Brewster."

"I...uh..." Nova didn't really know what to say. He's never heard of such a thing before. He turned to Lu Yi and asked. "Did you know about this?"

"During my time at the Union, I learned about it actually." Lu Yi confirmed. "Despite Discboom's power in relation to Soul Discs, it's...kind of like that detail that you don't really think about because it's never in your face."

"Wh-What power?"

“I practice healing, Brewster,” said Discboom. “I use my power as an Esper to heal the stability of Espers. “However, there’s a reason why I’ve taken interest in you.”

“What would that be?”

Discboom pulled another vinyl record, one that is completely blank. “This was Brewster’s Soul Disc. However, it seemed to have gone blank. In most cases, a blank record would mean that the Esper has perished in some way. However, your activity as a bounty hunter has raised our suspicions.”

Nova’s alertness spiked through the alcoholic daze as he realized that the Union is on to them. He glanced at Lu Yi, who looked just as panicked as he was. Nova’s question came out in a timid yet careful voice.

“I-I’m not in trouble, am I?”

“Far from it,” said Discboom. “We’re just here to ask some questions. You...whoever you are, might be important to some new research.”

Well...seeing as there was no consequence...

“My name’s Nova. I...somehow ended up in the body of Brewster, so I had to act in his place for the past few days. I don’t know how I got here...but I want to go home.”

“I see...” Discboom sighed in a sort of relief. “So you really are the new Anomaly. We had to confirm it for ourselves.”

Nova wondered what Discboom meant when she said “we”, but a glance at the snake woman and the man at the balcony porch made him realize that they’re on it too. Though for the time being, they must be listening.

“I’m guessing you’ve taken interest in him because of everything that’s happening right now.” said Lu Yi.

“We can only presume so. Nova arriving just as the Resonance disappeared is no coincidence.”

A new voice joined in, gentle and kind. Nova could see that the snake woman from earlier had now come to join in on the conversation, slithering towards them and eventually just holding herself nearby.

She introduced herself. “Feng Nuxi, Esper Union Logistics Division Chief.”

Nova tried to match up, emphasis on tried. “Nova...demolitionist.”

“It is nice to meet you, Nova, but there are other things of more importance for the time being.” said Feng Nuxi. “While the sudden vanish of an incoming Resonance is public, your arrival is something that’s only being discussed here, in this bar.”

“Wait...what about the doctor at Bronze Serpent Medical Care?” asked Nova. “I...I had to take an MRI.”

“We’ve also taken care of that, contacted Mr. Sahten and requested to keep the information under wraps.” The man at the bar balcony porch drank the contents in the shot glass, but otherwise stayed where he was. “Officially speaking, you’re completely healthy. As healthy as Brewster would be at his current state.”

“O-Oh...”

“Besides that,” said Discboom. “Currently, you are the only one who seems to have...crossed over.”

“And Brewster? I mean, his relationships with people aren’t all that great. I got to experience that firsthand...but...I don’t really want anything bad happening to him.”

“Well, he technically disappeared when you arrived,” Lu Yi contributed. “Brewster’s body didn’t sustain any real damage. So...I guess he swapped with you?”

“He swapped with-” Nova stopped himself and took a deep breath. “I mean...I just hope that he doesn’t mess up my life when I come back.”

“We can only hope...” Lu Yi sympathized.

“Can you tell us how you crossed over to our world?” asked Feng Nuxi.

It was Nova’s turn to laugh, though it was more of a huff. A huff of self-depreciated humor. “Well, I didn’t ask to come here. I just...I did...the Miracle that appeared in my world put me in Brewster.”

The room went quiet, yet Nova continued. “I...read what the Miracles did here. And if one appeared in my world...then...”

The man from the balcony had come around, interrupting Nova’s moment of grief by cutting to the point. “If we are to find this Miracle as soon as possible, then you might just be the key to doing so.”

Nova looked to see it was the man with pink hair, his eyebrows shaved like thunderbolts. He mostly wore baggy attire with his jacket and pants, but Nova could see the shimmer of various war medals on the side.

“Gaius, Training Division Chief of the Esper Union.”

“Um...Nova...” Nova couldn’t say much, intimidated by the man.

“I’m going to cut to the chase, Nova,” said Gaius. “The Union would like to study you, at least for a time. You may be Brewster in the physical sense, but your presence can provide key details that may help us with tracking down that Miracle you mentioned.”

“That, and your unique case may help with De-Esperification,” added Feng Nuxi.

“De-Esperification?”

“I’ll answer your question with another question,” said Gaius. “Did you *choose* to come here? Or did the Miracle that came to your world put you here?”

Gaius’ hard gaze ensured that Nova answered honestly. Even then, the question already hit him personally, so there was no reason to hide his feelings on the matter. “I was put here in this world for...I don’t know the reason. Maybe there isn’t one. But...I didn’t have a choice.”

“And many who became Espers didn’t have that choice either,” Feng Nuxi said sympathetically. “The thing about Esperification is that it comes suddenly, and no one could ever truly ever prepare for when that moment comes. In a sense...suddenly becoming an Esper is like suddenly gaining a chronic condition.”

“I...wait,” Nova relented. “Well, I know that my time being Brewster has been brief so far...but, I guess this isn’t...that bad? Calling becoming an Esper a chronic condition sounds a little harsh.”

“Such cases always vary from person to person,” nodded the snake woman. “And there are indeed cases where becoming an Esper improved their lives. But even then, people who just became Espers would suddenly have to deal with whole new bodies and changes in their own personality. If you were to one day become Brewster from your former self, would you have accepted?”

“...”

Nova thought quite hard on the matter. He had to exclude *who* Brewster is and focus on *what* Brewster is. And well, he is a dog with a pretty cool gun, that he’ll admit. But when Feng Nuxi mentioned about the changes in personality, he thought about his own past. He did think on the bright side, perhaps he could have gotten better. Though those optimistic thoughts were fleeting compared to something he focused on the most.

‘What if I got worse?’

‘If I became like Brewster, both mentally and physically...then...I could have faced...’

‘...’

‘But...I could also end up like him too. I can’t do that. I don’t want that.’

“...I wouldn’t.”

“I can tell the decision must have been hard,” Feng Nuxi noted. “You...wished that you had Brewster’s kind of power, didn’t you?”

“I mean...sometimes,” Nova admitted sheepishly. “Look, I’m okay with you studying me. As long as it brings me one step closer to going home...”

“Very well, we’ll be seeing you tomorrow in a designated research facility in the building. We’ll send an escort when the time comes.”

With Gaius effectively ending the conversation, both Gaius and Feng Nuxi take their leave, whilst Discboom went to the bar table. With how things had ended, it wasn’t long before Lu Yi and Nova left as well, albeit quietly. Driving back to Graywater, it was mostly silent, save for a bit of dialogue.

“...I hope that the people I left behind will be alright...”

“Well...how we’re they?”

“They’re good people. I...I don’t want to think about the Miracle or the Miramon that would come from them.”

“I know...it’s a horrible thing. But...I wouldn’t lose hope.” Lu Yi encouraged.

“Why? I read some of the articles. I don’t think any weapons from my world could even hope to scratch a Miramon...” Nova moped.

“Yes, that is true. But that means that your world is eventually gonna get its own Esper Seven.”

“Esper...Seven?”

“Yeah. We actually met them just recently. Can you guess who?”

Nova thought about it for a moment...though the best he could think about was, “The guy with the medals?”

“And Feng Nuxi too.”

“Wait, she’s one too?”

“Heh, yeah. Most people don’t really realize that unless she directly mentions it,” Lu Yi chuckled. “But what I’m getting to is..If a Miracle comes to your world, there will eventually be Espers too. And, if things played out the same as our world, they will become a key role in uniting the world against the threat of the Miracles.”

“You don’t know that..”

“I don’t. I just have faith that it will happen.”

“..Faith..”

Nova’s feelings broiled in him, conflicted on whether he should believe in such a thing or not. Faith can help a lot of things...but he did have a particularly bad time with it. But with how his situation is, unable to observe his world, the only thing he can really do is have faith...

...

It made his heart heavy with doubt, though the spark of hope was still there.