

Affinity 371

Chapter 371 - Meeting The Earl Sisters Again

"Just as I thought, violet grade," Grey muttered when he saw the violet color on the region of the lightning element on the stone.

Grey currently had four different elemental grades for his seven elements, with the fire element supposedly being the highest with the cyan grade, lightning element follows being in the violet grade, the wind and water elements were blue grade, while earth, darkness, and space elements were all in the purple grade.

"Uh! What's this?"

A fascinated expression appeared on Grey's face when he looked at the water element, its grade for some reason had changed from purple to blue.

'How? I haven't even tried improving it in any way, nor have I absorbed any treasure that has to do with the water element.'

Grey found this discovery surprising. His elements had never increased without his knowledge, so he found this quite strange.

But he couldn't hide the fact that he was happy about it. The higher his elemental grades, the faster his cultivation was. This could be seen in how quickly he had been able to surpass his friends.

Yes, he was fortunate to encounter some treasures, but without his fast cultivation, he wouldn't have been able to improve this quickly. His ability to absorb treasures far surpasses others, this makes him absorb the treasures completely, not letting anything go to waste.

Even Overlord Plane experts wouldn't be able to do it that well.

Unknown to Grey, the drop of liquid Aetonth placed in his body when he was leaving the trial land was what caused the sudden increase in his water element elemental grade.

The water was slowly dissolving in his body, strengthening his ice ability, while also improving his grade.

Grey was the only one who could increase his elemental grade just by absorbing any special natural treasures that were affiliated with his elements.

For example, had he been the one to refine the elemental essence in the lightning tree, then there's a high probability that his lightning element's elemental grade might've seen an increase. But with Reynolds being the one to refine it, it only increased his strength, nothing more.

The grade of the treasures naturally has an impact on whether his elemental grade would increase or not, and the grade of his element before refining also determines if it's possible with that treasure, or not.

Let's take that Grey was to find a fire element natural treasure, due to the high grade of his fire element, if the treasure was not at least double the level of what the lightning orb he refined recently is, then there are no chances of his fire element's grade improving.

One has to remember that he still didn't know how high the cyan grade was. There's a chance that it's the grade above the violet grade, then there's also the chance of there being some elemental grades before it.

But in the history of the Azure continent, other than the violet grade which is just above the blue grade, Grey hadn't read or heard of there being a higher grade.

'I'll find out about it later, for now, improving is all that's important.'

After completing what he wanted to do in the Chaos space, he quickly left.

....

Grey opened his eyes, looking at the features of the majestic Frost City that could be seen even from this distance.

He planned to start his journey today, so after seeing Alice, he would immediately leave.

....

Frost City.

On getting to the gate, it was just as rowdy as the first time Grey visited the city. He didn't have a horse with him, and since he wanted to enjoy the view of the city, he decided to walk through the busy streets of the city, heading to the Reiss' family compound.

On his way there, he encountered some familiar faces, the Earl sisters. This time, the sisters were alone, with no one accompanying them.

"Hello," Grey waved as soon as he saw them.

He didn't really have anything against them, although it looked like he used them, he only took advantage of the opportunity they gave to him. He knew nothing of Gerald's birthday, nor the Lenz organization until meeting the girls.

"It's you!" Aldreda said in surprise when she heard Grey's voice.

Grey wore a hood to cover up his face, after all, he was still in danger. The Emperor hadn't stopped looking for him, it was just that he was fortunate enough not to have seen any of them all this while.

He was not only wary of the Emperor, but during his first trip to Frost City, he made an enemy of one of the big families here, so he couldn't afford to be seen by them.

What if they send a powerful Overlord Plane expert after him? He had used the Fusion State recently, and he could feel the energy hadn't died down. And even though he could still use it to escape, he didn't want to take such risks.

"It's been a while," Grey said coolly.

"Yeah, you disappeared after using us," Elda said coldly.

"Well, I can't really say I used you. But I just can't deny the fact that without your help, I wouldn't have gotten what I wanted." Grey said, making sure they heard the word 'help' in his statement.

"Well, that 'help' has placed our family in serious trouble. The Smith family are giving us troubles because we were the ones who brought you to the ceremony." Elda said in an annoyed tone.

Grey's expression changed when he heard this, he didn't expect the Smith family would actually place the Earl family in a difficult position just because he was acquainted with the girls.

"I'm sorry, that was never my intention," He apologized to the sisters.

"Your apology won't change anything, my family can't fight against the Smith family," Elda said, her body shuddering from frustration.

"What about the Reiss family, I thought they were fighting with the Smith family?" Grey couldn't help but ask.

"The Reiss family have their own troubles to deal with, they can't help us.. According to what I heard, the Emperor summoned the head of the Reiss family for questioning," Aldreda was the one who spoke up this time.

Chapter 372 - [Bonus] Earl Manor

'Hmm, I don't recall Alice saying anything about this. But he should be fine, as long as they don't find Alice in the compound,' Grey thought.

He wasn't too concerned about Alice's father being summoned to the Capital. First of all, they didn't find Alice in the compound, and secondly, the Reiss family is a big family.

They couldn't be dated back to when the empire started, but they rose to prominence around that time, after the empire was formed. The Emperor wouldn't want to eliminate them over mere assumptions.

They were most probably searching for Grey's friends since they thought he might have shared the Great Earth Essence Liquid with them, there wasn't even any proof of that happening.

He was more concerned about the Earl family. He didn't like others getting in trouble because of him. But there was nothing he could do to help them, it's not like he could fight against the Smith family alone, and he didn't want to ask Gerald for help.

The Lenz organization would be able to easily help the Earl family with as little as a single letter, but Grey decided against it.

"Did the Smith have any demands?" Grey asked.

If the only thing the Smith family wanted was for them to provide him, then he would go to them so that the Earl family wouldn't be bothered.

He could easily escape when he got there. If the Smith family remained unreasonable, then he might get help from Gerald.

"You, of course. What else would they want, they want you," Elda replied.

"Well, that settles it. I'll go with you to your family. Then you people would take me to the Smith family, that should be able to get them to stop bothering you people," Grey said.

"What?! You're going to come with us?" Elda was taken aback when Grey said those words so carefreely.

"Yes, I got you people into this mess. It's only right that I fix it," Grey waved.

"No, I don't agree with it. They'll kill you," Aldreda immediately objected.

"It's okay, I'll be fine," Grey smiled softly.

"No, taking you to them is no different from killing you. I don't agree to this," Aldreda said.

"What are you saying, he said he'll be fine. Stop this tantrum," Elda immediately chided.

Unlike Aldreda, she was infatuated with Grey's look. She couldn't deny the fact that he was unbelievably handsome, but it didn't mean she'd choose him over her family.

"Sister! I..."

"Don't worry, I don't do things I'm not confident in. Do I look like someone who wants to die now?" Grey interrupted Aldreda as she was about to continue her objection.

"But, they will kill you," Aldreda said, tears already filling her eyes.

"Don't worry, I have a huge bargaining chip, so they wouldn't dare kill me. Also, have you forgotten I'm friends with Old man Gerald?" Grey asked nonchalantly.

He wasn't even scared of the thought of going there, the reason for that is simple, he had a plan against the Smith family. This would set the Smith family against the Emperor. Given the Emperor's nature, they might even attack them if he plays his cards well.

Unfortunately, he wouldn't be able to take it that far since he didn't know what plans the Emperor had for him. But he would make sure the Smith got in trouble with the Emperor.

"What's that?" Aldreda asked.

"Me, they wouldn't dare kill me," Grey replied.

"When are we going?" Elda asked.

She had no plans of even knowing what Grey planned, all she wanted to do was take him back to her family, and then send him to the Smith family.

It couldn't be helped, after what happened at the ceremony, she hated Grey for using them. Presently, she didn't even believe the name he told them was his original name.

"Now," Grey replied.

He didn't bother about Elda's attitude towards him. She had changed when she noticed how strong he was, so he didn't take her acting this way strange.

'Alice, I'll have to spend a little time with this family before leaving. Hopefully, my plan is successful. If not, I'll just escape for the meantime, again.' He thought to himself.

His plan of setting up the Smith family was very easy, after the Earl family had handed him over to them, he would tell them of the Emperor searching for him and his friends, being a big family, he believed they must have heard a thing or two.

After that, he would decide what to do next after the family head responds. If the family head plans to take the Great Earth Essence Liquid, then he would communicate with Old man Gerald and get him to inform the Emperor of the Smith family holding him captive and trying to obtain the Great Earth Essence Liquid.

But if the family head decides to send words to the Emperor so they would send people here to get him, then he would escape with the space element, thereby making it look like they were trying to play games with the Emperor. If the people sent are in the Origin Plane, he didn't even mind killing them so it would look like it was the Smith's family doing, either way, he would set them up against the Emperor.

....

A few minutes later.

Grey and the Earl sisters appeared in front of a manor, it wasn't as big as the Reiss manor, nor the Lenz' manor, but it had the appearance of a wealthy family.

"This is my first time coming here, it's pretty nice," Grey commented as the gates were opened for the trio to step in.

"Hopefully, it will be your last," Elda said.

Grey shook his head wryly. Elda's animosity towards him didn't seem to reduce even after he offered himself to the Smith family so they wouldn't bother them anymore.

They went straight to the main building, heading straight to the main hall.

On getting there, two guards were stationed in the front of the closed doors.

"You can't go in Milady, family head is in a meeting with the elders to solve the family problems, he asked us to stop others from disturbing them.." The guards stopped the trio.

Chapter 373 - Unreasonable Old Fogies

"We're here because of that. I have a way to solve this," Elda said calmly.

"I'm sorry Milady, but we can't go against the Lord's wishes," The guard at the left side of the door said.

"If my father were to find out you didn't permit me entry given the importance of what I'm about to tell him, I doubt you'd be able to keep your head," Elda threatened.

The two guards exchanged looks, they would naturally easily let Elda enter, but her family clearly told them to make sure no one disturbed them while they were in the meeting.

"Did you say it would solve the problem?" The guard on the right asked.

They were currently in a difficult position, if what Elda said was correct, then her father would most likely punish them for not allowing her to enter. But if she were lying, then they would be in even more trouble, but there might be a chance that the girls might be able to plead on their behalf.

Elda nodded to his question.

With gritted teeth, he made way for the trio. The second guard looked at him, and with gritted teeth, he also made way for them. They've decided to place their trust in the sisters.

....

Inside the hall.

Over fifteen people could be seen in the hall, all seated with sour expressions. The people consisted of both men and women, all looked to be over fifty.

A man with a dignified look could be seen sitting on a chair in the middle, with the others sitting on the sides. The man had dark circles around his eyes, it was evident he had been going through a lot lately. He was none other than the family head of the Earl family.

"What do we do now? They want the boy, who we don't even know where he came from. I've spent so much, yet I haven't heard of a Zeke Hoover, nor a person that fits the description of that young man in the neighboring cities," The family head said with a downcast look.

"Didn't you get anything from Old man Gerald?" A man asked.

"No, Old man Gerald gave me a glance and told me to leave. If my conjecture is right, the background of the young man isn't something a family like ours could dare to go against," The family head said, feeling a headache about the issue.

"The Smith family is being too unreasonable, they clearly know we can't find the young man, yet they are giving us unnecessary troubles," Another man chimed in.

"I think they're taking their frustrations out on us. After Donald was summoned by the Emperor, they couldn't fight with them anymore since they didn't know why the Emperor summoned him," A lady said.

"They're only being stupid, why bother us over something we don't have a hand in?" A man said.

They continued speaking about the matter with different people having different opinions about the problem.

While they were speaking.

Creak...

The door to the hall opened slowly, with Grey and the sisters walking into the hall.

"Elda, what's the meaning of this?!" An old man immediately scolded her when they saw the trio.

"Such audacity, you not only came here without permission, but you also brought in a stranger. This is what happens when your father lets you do as you please. We're in a mess because of your actions, now you defy the family rules as well?" Another person scolded, a man this time.

They weren't the only ones who scolded Elda as soon as they saw her, almost half of the people here scolded her with faces of disgust.

Elda looked at them with an apathetic expression, she didn't even want to see them again. She slowly glanced at the man sitting in the center chair, her father, waiting for him to speak.

"Leave at once, before your punishment increases," An old man said.

"Why are you here?" The family head finally spoke up.

His question silenced the others who were about to continue scolding Elda. Surprisingly, none of them even said a word to Aldreda.

"Father, I want you to meet someone," Elda said, before looking at Grey.

"You interrupted our meeting because you wanted to show your father the boy you like?! Family head, you're being too lenient with your children, this is why they keep bringing troubles," The old lady who scolded the first time said, pointing at Elda.

Most of the reason Elda had animosity towards Grey even after he said he'd help was just because of this. After the problem started, some of the old people in the family had been blaming her for it. Since she was the eldest, she was supposed to know what to do, instead, she brought trouble to the family.

"Who's he?" The family head asked.

"Hello, I'm Zeke Hoover," Grey spoke up calmly, before taking off the hood of the robe that was hiding his face.

His bewitchingly handsome face came to view for the people who were gathered in the hall, and they all came to a single agreement, he was handsome.

"You're Zeke Hoover?" The family head asked, shocked.

"Yes, I encountered the sisters on my way back to the city and they told me about the crisis your family was facing because of me, so I decided to come to you so you could hand me to the Smith family," Grey went straight to the point.

He didn't really have a good impression of some of the people here, so he didn't want to stay here for too long.

Most of them were at the Peak of the Origin Plane. The old lady who was scolding Elda the most had not even gotten to the Peak of the Origin Plane, she was still in the Eighth stage, just like Grey.

Grey felt he might kill her with a single strike if he stayed here for too long. He didn't see any reasons for them to be scolding Elda without even allowing her to speak.

'Tsk, such unreasonable old fogies.'

Chapter 374 - Why Did You Come?

The Earl family elders looked at Grey in shock. People would usually run away if the Smith family was after them, well, people without sufficient backings. Yet, here Grey was, offering himself up so that they would be pardoned. This further increased the beliefs in their mind that Grey's background was terrifying.

"Hmm, although handing you over to the Smith family would help us pass through this difficult time, I don't agree with it." The leader replied after a moment of silence.

The reason for his refusal was simple: what if the strong backing behind Grey decided to act against them because they put him in danger, then what? They could still somewhat deal with the Smith family, although barely, they were still holding on. But if the terrifying force behind Grey decides to act, then they might be doomed.

All these were just his assumptions after adding up all he added when he tried searching for Grey. If even the Smith family couldn't get Old man Gerald to tell them where Grey was, that meant he wasn't someone they could mess with.

Grey noticed the sense of apprehension from the leader and was kind of stupefied..

What's he afraid of? I'm already here to help, why's he rejecting my help?

He didn't think much about it though, "I plan on going to meet the Smith family anyway so it doesn't really mean much who hands me over to them. But I'm doing this just so that your family wouldn't be disturbed by them again,"

Aldreda and Elda looked at Grey, they knew he had no idea what was going on, so he didn't even plan on visiting the Smith family. He's only saying this so that their father would agree to take him to the Smith family.

They couldn't help but feel grateful inside. If their father were to reject Grey's suggestion, there was nothing the others could do about it. And given what's happening, it would only suffice if he was the one who personally handed Grey over to the Smith family, the Smith family was that unreasonable.

"Father, you should consider what he said. This would definitely help resolve our problems with the Smith family, and as you've heard, he planned on going anyway," Elda stepped in to plead with her father.

This was her chance to redeem herself in front of the elders, although she wasn't particularly welcoming towards them, there was no way for her to live in the manor peacefully given how they currently treated her.

"Family head, I think it would be best for you to take the boy over to the Smith family,"

The elders joined in to try to convince the leader to take Grey over.

"Go outside while we discuss this, you'll be summoned when we're done," The leader sent them away.

He truly didn't want to hand Grey over to the Smith family, so he wanted to tell the elders about his reasons. If they still decided to hand him over to them, then he would accept it, after having a chat with Grey.

Grey and the girls left the hall, stepping outside.

When the guards saw them, they were a little tense, after all, they didn't spend a long time inside, so there was probably the possibility of them being chased out.

They exchanged gazes while simultaneously swallowing down a gulp of saliva.

'All he had to do was say yes, what's the use of having a meeting with the elders?' Grey thought inside as he walked out.

The trio sat down on the bench not too far from the hall, while awaiting the head of the Earl family to summon them.

After around ten minutes, the head of the Earl family came out from the hall, accompanied by the elders. He surprisingly had a look of disappointment, it was as if the outcome of the meeting wasn't what he wanted.

"Zeke Hoover, come with me," He called out.

Grey walked forward to meet him, and they went to the side of the hall, away from the ears of the others.

"To be honest, I don't want to hand you over to them. Think about it, the Smith family would most likely want to kill you, do you still want to go?" The head of the Earl family asked.

"I'm grateful for your concern sir, but do not fret, they will not dare to kill me, so you have nothing to worry about," Grey replied confidently.

It seemed like the head of the Earl family was worried about the same thing as Aldreda, that the Smith family would kill him the moment he was handed over to them.

"Hmm, since you say so, I'll do as you've said," The head of the Earl family replied.

The duo came back to where the Earl family elders were gathered, just as they were about to leave, Grey suddenly felt something vibrate in his storage ring.

He sent his spiritual sense inside and noticed it was the communication device Gerald gave to him.

'He must've known I'm in the city,' He thought.

He didn't take out the device, but he was able to assess the message there.

'Why have you come to Frost City, again?' Gerald's voice resounded in Grey's head, and for some reason, Grey felt like he seemed to be in pain when he said the word 'again'.

'I came to see someone, I'll be leaving soon,' Grey replied.

As soon as he replied, he suddenly felt the device vibrate again, it was like Gerald had been waiting for his reply again.

'Why are you handing yourself to the Smith family then? You know they obviously want you dead,'

Gerald was currently caught between tears, he thought he had been able to chase the little demon out, who knew he would come again, he didn't only come, he even wanted to hand himself to the Smith family who obviously wants him dead.

'Yeah, but they're troubling the Earl family, I can't sit by and watch them suffer because of my deeds,' Grey replied.

'You could've told me, I'll settle it. In fact, I'll summon the head of the Smith family now, they would stop causing troubles for the Earl family,' Gerald said hurriedly.

'No need, I have a plan to take them down,' Grey said.

Chapter 375 - These Guys Are Rich!

At the Lenz manor.

Ten minutes after Grey entered the Earl manor.

Gerald was casually sitting in his office, enjoying tea while playing a game of chess with Diluc.

After Grey left, things had gone back to the same for Gerald, he would occasionally have business meetings, but nothing really too serious to worry about.

The few weeks Grey stayed with him really stressed him out, the fear of Chris made things difficult for him. So when Grey finally left, he was beside himself with joy.

He was about to make a move on the game when someone suddenly knocked on the door.

"Strange, I don't recall having any meetings today," Gerald muttered to himself, but still gave Diluc the nod to go see who it was.

Diluc went to their door and after speaking with the guard, he came back to take his seat.

"Master Gerald, Grey's back in Frost City," He reported what he was told to him.

"What do you mean Grey's back in Frost City? He was supposed to go to the Magical beasts' forest," Gerald said, not too worried.

Even though Grey was back in Frost City, it was only because he knew him well, that was why his people were able to notice him, it's not like the Smith family would be able to find him.

He decided to let people monitor his movements while he continued playing the game of chess with Diluc.

A few minutes later, the communication device he had with him vibrated, and when he heard the message, he almost fainted.

"What?! I'm dead, the boy wants me dead,"

Gerald was flustered.

The message stated that Grey wanted to hand himself over to the Smith family.

Gerald had a good few people in each family, so he was always caught up with whatever was going on. Although, he never intervened unless he had something to gain from it.

He hastily sent a message to Grey, hoping he would reply immediately. When he heard Grey's reply, he almost went crazy.

Diluc was calming him down, while he replied to Grey, trying to persuade him not to go.

After almost ten minutes of persuasion which seemed futile, he hastily sent Diluc after them. Grey and the head of the Earl family were already in a carriage, headed to the Smith manor.

"No matter what, nothing must happen to him," He ordered with a flustered look.

He drank what was left of the tea on his cup, trying to use it to calm himself.

'They shouldn't be able to kill him immediately, knowing the fool, he would want to torture him first. That would be even worse, what if Chris finds out?'

Gerald's fear of Chris was stopping him from thinking rationally. But knowing there was nothing to be done, he poured himself another tea, trying to use it to calm his mind once again.

The cup didn't seem to be doing a good job, so he threw it away and started drinking directly from the jug. This for some reason seemed to have an effect on him, as he visibly calmed down.

'Aish, since knowing this kid, my peaceful life has been ruined. I really shouldn't have called him over that day,' He sighed with a melancholic look.

....

Frost City.

The head of the Earl family was the only one who followed Grey as they headed to the Smith manor. They didn't speak on the way, with Grey looking at the city as they moved on.

Although he stayed in Frost City for over a month the last time he visited, he had only been to a few places, so he was taking his time to commit the route to memory so that after escaping, he wouldn't wander around.

It took them around twenty minutes or so to get to the Smith manor from the Earl manor, it wasn't close by, but it couldn't really be said to be far either.

The carriage got to the manor gate, and they were stopped by the guards.

"What's your business here?" One of the guards asked the coachman.

"The Earl family head wishes to see the head of the Smith family, he has important business with him," The coachman replied calmly.

"No carriages are allowed into the manor, if your Earl family head wants to come in, then he'd have to walk inside," One of the guards said with disgust evident in his eyes.

He didn't put the Earl family in his eyes, even though he was only a guard at the gate, the Smith family's pride ran deep through his veins.

'Such blatant disregard, heh! This Smith family really is something,' Grey scoffed when he heard this.

The coachman was about to protest when the head of the Earl family's voice came from inside.

"Since Master Jean has given this order, it's not wise to go against it,"

The head of the Earl family highlighted the carriage, accompanied by Grey who had his robe on, and they entered the manor.

He didn't want to make a ruckus at the gate of the Smith manor, especially given what has been going on lately.

With his hand behind his back, he gently walked forward, with Grey behind him. A guard led them inside after they passed through the gate.

The Smith manor was almost double the size of the Earl manor, even the Reiss and Lenz manor didn't match up to it in size. This showed the proud and dominant attitude of the Smith family.

Grey even guessed that they were the ones with the biggest manor in the entire Frost City. Even, other than the Palace, he wasn't sure he had seen any manor as big as this one.

'These guys must be rich. *Sigh* If only Void were here, then he'd be stealing everything while I was held captive,' He thought to himself.

Because of his arrays, he currently has a need for huge numbers of essence stones, and what's the best way for someone who's as poor as him getting them, stealing of course!

Chapter 376 - The Emperor Wants Me!

Grey soon started calculating how he would be able to steal the essence stones in the manor. It wasn't like he had any good relationships with the Smith family. If he could take from the Reiss family without feeling bothered, then he could obviously steal the entire reserve of the Smith family if he could without batting an eye.

They soon got to the hall in the main building, and even though the Earl family wasn't much in the presence of the Smith family, they weren't really a pushover either. If push comes to shove, then they will be able to deal some damage to the Smith family before they are eliminated.

The guard went in to announce the arrival of the head of the Earl family to the people of the Smith family who were inside the hall.

He soon came out, inviting Grey and the head of the Earl family inside.

Grey walked behind the head of the Earl family, the sight that welcomed him in the hall were extravagant decorations, statues of dragons, griffins, and other mythical magical beasts were placed in different places in the hall.

Looking forward, he saw what looked like an almost four meters high throne. Grey almost had the feeling of standing in front of a king because of the throne..

Seated on the throne was a man with a slim build, he had short brown hair, and his eyes were in a slit, it was almost like he didn't open them. He was Jean Smith, the current head of the Smith family.

Jean wasn't the only one in the hall, there were three people in the hall as well, all ladies. Two of the ladies looked to be in their early thirties and a younger one who looked to be around eighteen.

"Francis, what brings you here," Jean asked while still in his seat.

He didn't even bother to offer him a seat. Usually, whenever the heads of the big families visit each other, the host would stand up to welcome them, before inviting them to take a seat. Although the Earl family can't be regarded as one of the big families, they were at the top of the hierarchy below the big families.

Jean's attitude was a blatant show of disregard to the Earl family.

Francis looked at Jean, with a sigh, he went straight to the point, "You've been asking for Zeke Hoover, well, here he is. I hope this will make amends for the error of my children,"

Jean looked at the youth covered by a robe who was standing behind Francis.

"Remove the robe," He said to Grey.

Grey had already looked at everyone in the hall, and to his surprise, Jean Smith was only in the Early stages of the Overlord Plane. If what he sensed was right, that was around the same stage as Francis.

Most people in the Origin Planes will not be able to properly sense the stages of those in the Overlord Plane. Even with Grey's high spiritual sense, he could only get a rough estimation.

He recalled hearing the Smith family was wealthy. Their wealth was what propelled them to the peak of the hierarchy in Frost City.

Grey was sure the heads of the other big families were in the Late stages of the Overlord Plane, yet, Jean was still in the Early stages. Although he knew he was no match for him in a battle even if he used the Fusion State, he didn't have a problem with escaping from him.

He slowly removed the robe covering his face, showing the few people in the hall what he looked like.

"To think William lost to you," The young lady in the hall was the first to comment.

She looked at Grey with eyes that clearly showed surprise. She had heard of his handsomeness from the people who went to the ceremony, but she didn't think he would actually be this handsome. Unfortunately, he was an enemy who would be killed soon.

Grey looked at the young lady, she was surprisingly in the same stage as William, the Seventh stage of the Origin Plane, and she was younger, this showed that her talent surpassed him.

"He didn't really put up much of a fight," He replied to the girl's comment in a calm manner.

"Hmph!" Jean snorted coldly when he heard Grey's remark.

Grey's casual and calm attitude left him suspicious. For someone who would most likely die given what he did, he seemed too calm.

"Do you know why you're here?" He asked.

"Yes, I heard you're searching for me, well, here I am," Grey shrugged with a casual expression, he didn't really show much of an emotion.

"I commend your guts for actually coming, but get this straight, you're not leaving here, alive," Jean said.

There was no use in hiding his intentions from Grey, he had always mostly been a straightforward person, well, on some occasions.

"Heh! I doubt that," Grey scoffed.

"Why are you so confident?" Jean was curious about Grey's coolheadedness, so he wanted to quell his curiosity.

"Cause the Emperor wants me," Grey replied calmly.

"Huh?"

Surprise was written on the faces of all the people here, even Francis looked at Grey in shock.

'So that's his reason for being so confident. If it's true, then it will be impossible for Jean to kill him.'
Francis heaved a sigh of relief after hearing Grey's words.

"The Emperor?" Jean asked, he wanted to be sure.

Grey nodded.

"Hmm, but I don't think I heard anything of the Emperor searching for anyone called Zeke Hoover," Jean spoke after a while.

Lately, there's been a rumor circulating amongst the higher-ups in the Qilin empire, the Emperor was reportedly searching for a young man.

"You don't really believe that's my name, right?" Grey asked while walking to take a seat on one of the empty seats in the hall, he was tired of standing.

Jean looked at Grey, he couldn't make a move on someone whom the Emperor was searching for, although he couldn't confirm it yet, he didn't dare to act rashly since the Emperor was involved.

He wanted to doubt Grey, but the fact that Grey knew about this either meant he was right, or he was like them, from one of the big families in the empire. They could oppress the Earl family because they were weak, and since the Reiss family was going through a rough time, they could still cause them troubles, but they didn't dare to start a war with them.

If Grey's family turned out to be one of those ones that had been formed even before the Qilin empire was created, then they would be in trouble.

"Father, don't be tricked by him. Why is he here if he clearly knows the Emperor is searching for him?" The young lady spoke up when she saw the hesitation in her father's eyes.

Jean looked at his daughter, then at Grey. He kept quiet for a few seconds before switching his gaze to Francis, "Since you've brought him over, I'll forgive you. You can leave now,"

Francis took a glance at Grey, after getting a nod from him, he turned around, leaving the hall. After finding out about Grey's connection to the Emperor, he felt a little bit less worried about him.

In the hall, Grey was left with Jean and the three ladies.

"Answer my daughter's question," Jean said.

He looked at Grey, according to what he heard, Grey had something the Emperor wanted but he's asking Grey to confirm if he was truly the one.

"I have something he wants," Grey said to Jean.

Jean nodded, according to what he had found out from other sources, the young man the Emperor was searching for had something he wanted. There wasn't much information about the young man though, so although most of the big families knew about this, they didn't know what Grey looked like.

A conflicted look appeared on Jean's face, this was not how he planned it to go after finding Grey. He initially wanted to get people to beat him up, then he would destroy his essence beads just like he did to his children, and then he would throw him into the dungeon while torturing him, but a single word from Grey changed all that.

Now, he was not concerned about his children's revenge anymore, but he was curious about what Grey had that the Emperor wanted. It's normal, any would want to find out why an Emperor would be searching for a youngster.

"What does he want from you?" After keeping quiet for a few minutes, Jean couldn't hold himself back anymore.

If what the Emperor wants was something great, then he would think of his next course of action. He would either hand Grey over or kill him and obtain whatever it is.

"I don't think it would be wise to tell you," Grey replied.

"Hmph! Even if the Emperor wants you, I could just kill you here, if he comes, I'll tell him I had no idea you were the one he was searching for," Jean snorted coldly.

Chapter 377 - You Should Be!

"And you believe that?" Grey sneered, not bothered with Jean's threat.

Although Grey didn't know much about the Emperor, he was sure the Emperor would most likely execute Jean and the entire Smith family if he found out about this.

The Emperor wants him for the Great Earth Essence Liquid, if Jean killed him, it would be equivalent to saying he had obtained the Liquids from Grey. This would in turn mean he wanted to usurp power from the Emperor after using the liquid, turning him into the threat.

Jean naturally didn't believe what he said, he was only trying to bait Grey into telling him about it.

Others Grey's age would've been scared if their lives were threatened, but the fact that Grey agreed to come here in the first place showed that he wasn't simple. In fact, this made Jean all the more suspicious of Grey's motive of coming.

He could almost sense an ill foreboding.

"Fine, you can keep the secret with you.. Given the amount of effort the Emperor has put into searching for you, I believe he would reward the Smith family handsomely for capturing you," He said after giving it some thought.

Greed had been the downfall of many great individuals, so it was best not knowing why the Emperor was searching for Grey. There was a high chance he might covet the thing if he were to know it's worth.

This is a simple case of the saying, better safe than sorry.

Grey nodded, not too bothered with them.

Swoosh!

He suddenly placed his feet on the ground, using the force he generated to push the seat back, casually evading the wind blade that was sent towards him while still seated on the chair.

Boom!

The wind blade struck the ground, sending out wind current in all directions. The breeze blew Grey's hair, making his short hair dance in the wind.

Raising his head, he saw the fiery gaze of the young lady who was sitting close to Jean.

'She's most likely a prodigy of their family, well, it's none of my business.' He thought with his gaze turning cold.

"I'll take this as a mistake and let this go, if you attack me again, then don't blame me for reciprocating," Grey said coldly.

He had always been one to attack whoever attacked him, since the Smith family was going to go through a tough ordeal soon, he decided to let her go for it. Well, that's all on the premise that she didn't attack him again. If she did, then she might just join her siblings who are trying to heal their essence beads.

"Hmph! Don't think because my father didn't agree to kill you doesn't mean we can't teach you a lesson. You ruined the life of my brother and sister, if we let you go, isn't that the same as saying the Smith family are afraid of you?" The young lady asked.

"Well... technically, you should be," Grey replied with an amused smile, not even putting Jean in his eyes.

It was almost like Grey was the one who caught them, not the other way around.

"You..." The young lady stood up from her seat, anger written over her face, she turned to her father, "Father, let me teach this scoundrel what it means to offend our family,"

Jean gave her a nod, he also wanted Grey to be beaten, since he could beat William, it meant that he was at least in the Seventh stage of the Origin Plane. What he found strange though was that, even with his cultivation stage at the Overlord Plane, he couldn't see through Grey's stage.

He had tried using his spiritual sense multiple times, but whenever it got close to Grey, it was like there was something that was taking the power into boundless space, no matter what, he could get his spiritual sense close to Grey.

If Grey were to hide in this hall, there was no way he would be able to find him. Thinking about this, he sucked in a cold breath.

'I need to contact the Emperor as soon as possible. After getting feedback from him, I'll send the boy over to them. No, I'll tell him to send people to come and pick him up, that way, even if he escapes on the way, I wouldn't be blamed.'

Jean immediately started thinking of ways to send Grey away, the sooner the better. He recalled that the Emperor sent people here to summon Donald Reiss, he was hoping to see if they were still in the city so they could take Grey.

For some reason, he didn't like the fact that Grey was with them.

After all was said and done, he had great confidence in his daughter, hence he allowed her to fight with Grey. She had been able to go toe to toe with an expert in the Ninth stage of the Origin Plane when she just broke through to the Seventh stage.

No matter how strong Grey was, there's no way he would be able to easily beat someone in the Ninth stage, so even if he was stronger than his daughter, it wouldn't be by much. This was the reason he allowed her to fight.

The young lady stepped down from where they were sitting, heading towards Grey while releasing a malevolent aura.

"Even if I'm not allowed to kill you, I'll beat you to a pulp!" She said confidently.

"You're that confident?" Grey raised a brow.

To be honest, he felt the young lady was okay in strength. But if she thought she had a chance against him, then she was dreaming.

Even Reynolds' Elemental Warrior would be able to easily beat her up, much less Grey.

If Alice and Klaus were in the Sixth stage, they wouldn't have a problem with facing her given their strength and foundation. This young lady might be strong to others, but when compared to Grey and his crew, she was lacking, by a lot.

The only thing he found strange was how she was able to advance this quickly. One has to remember that William was already in his twenties, so it was understandable that he was able to reach the Seventh stage.

'Hmm, there's no way she would've advanced this much, unless... the trial land.'

Chapter 378 - You Can Fight With My Cat!

"Did you also partake in the special training?" Grey couldn't help but ask.

He felt compelled to ask, at least he wouldn't find it too amazing if she entered the trial land. After all, there were tons of things in the trial land that could make one advance very quickly.

Grey and his friends could be said to be lucky, especially Grey given what they obtained, but there were a few people who were also extremely lucky. For example, Jonas.

According to what Grey heard, Jonas got to the Fifth stage of the Origin Plane when he came out of the trial land. It was said that he wasn't far from the Sixth stage at the time of leaving the trial land.

Given the months that have passed, there's a high chance that he had gotten to the Sixth stage, or even the Seventh stage by now.

Jonas inherited an expert's legacy, making him advance by leaps and bounds, but that was not the only legacy that was up for grabs in the trial land.

After the first black door opened, others opened as well, and Grey didn't know what those ones held. There would obviously be people who would've been lucky to get into that door, and who knows, maybe any of the doors had better legacies than the one Jonas inherited.

The young lady was taken aback by Grey's question, but she quickly understood it but refrained from answering.

Grey already knew his answer from her body language and couldn't help but heave a sigh, "And here I thought thinking you advanced normally,"

If Klaus, Alice, and Reynolds were to hear this, they would most likely beat him up, especially Reynolds.

How could you say something like that when you're advancing even more freakishly than them?

When they came out of the trial land, Grey was only a single stage ahead of Klaus and Alice. But now, Grey had gone from the Fourth stage of the Origin Plane to the Eighth stage in a matter of three to four months, and he had the guts to say something like this?

Reynolds had only managed to reach the Fifth stage, and the last time Grey met with Alice, she just broke through to the Fourth stage. Klaus would most likely be in the Fourth or Fifth stage.

Currently, Grey has moved three stages ahead of all of them, and was even four stages ahead of Alice. Thinking back to how they were all in the Arcane Plane while he hadn't even started cultivating, it was almost impossible to believe. If one didn't witness it, one would have a hard time believing it.

Swoosh!

The young lady struck out a palm, sending out a wind tornado towards Grey.

Bang!

The tornado crashed into an earth wall, halting in its tracks. After a few seconds, it died down.

Grey soon appeared in full view after the earth wall sank back into the ground. He was still sitting so comfortably in the chair that it was almost hard to believe he was the one who was attacked by someone a few moments ago.

He yawned as if bored, "If that's all you have, then I suggest you go take a seat. Sitting here is more entertaining than battling with you,"

The young lady's expression changed a couple of times within a second, but one expression which was very clear to see was the rage that was burning inside her. She was visibly shaking after hearing Grey's mocking words.

"I'll kill you," She said with dense killing intent spreading all over the hall.

Jean watched on accompanied by the two middle-aged ladies.

They didn't do anything to stop her. They would've been able to stop her before the battle started, but now that Grey had somewhat trampled on her pride, they knew stopping her might hurt her instead.

The first exchange had already shown that Grey was extraordinary, but the young lady hadn't used her full strength yet, so it was unknown if Grey was stronger than her by a huge margin or not.

Swoosh! Whoosh!

Multiple wind blades shot towards Grey from different angles, while a gust of wind moved towards him from above him.

The young lady was trying to make sure Grey wouldn't be able to dodge her attacks.

But did Grey need to dodge her attack? The answer was a simple no.

Although not dodging the attacks would make him expend some energy, he didn't mind. He wanted to completely shatter the pride of this pompous-looking arrogant genius.

Still seated on the chair, Grey sneered before waving his hand around him. An earth sphere surrounded him, blocking all the attacks simultaneously.

The earth sphere wasn't completely brown like the previous one, rather, there was a light silvery color in it. This indicated the stronger version of earth.

The earth element is regarded as the best defense element for nothing. Just like how the water element makes use of its ice attributes to make terrifying attacks and defenses, the earth element could allow the Earth Elementalist to produce walls and armors made from jadeite or even diamond.

Grey's adeptness in the earth element has seen an increase over the years, and with the increase of his cultivation level, the toughness of the earth he could use increased. Of course, he hadn't really gotten to the stage where he could use jade or diamond, but he was getting to that stage.

Bam! Boom!

All the chairs that were around where Grey was sitting were sent flying after the wind attacks hit the sphere Grey created.

After the attack died down, Grey once again removed the earth sphere, still sitting casually on the chair. He was even looking at his nails as if he wasn't doing anything.

Staying with Klaus for so long had started to rub off him, he could annoy people if he really wanted to. Although, he didn't do it as frequently as Klaus usually does, in fact, he rarely did, unless he wanted to break down his opponent mentally.

"*Sigh* Just go back, maybe after a few more years, you can fight with my cat," He said with a sigh.

His gestures and actions enraged the young lady, but what infuriated her more was when Grey said maybe in a few years she might be able to fight with his cat!

Chapter 379 - One Strike

"Your cat?! You're dead!" The young lady shrieked, clearly more enraged.

"Actually, saying this is like an insult to my cat, he'll probably kill you with a single attack," Grey said after thinking for a while.

"I'm not even confident in beating him," He added, but his voice was so low that other than him, no one else heard it.

Although he had never tried to fight with Void, the few times they sparred, he was well beaten. Not just that, but Void didn't hold back, although he was the one who told him not to hold back, he at least expected him to hold back a little.

But who would've thought Void listened to him and fought at full throttle. There were times he almost wanted to hold a grudge against the small cat, but unfortunately, he couldn't.

Who could hate such a wonderful cat?

"Guess you'll not make it to the Emperor," The young lady said icily before attacking him once again.

Just like the previous times, all he did was to wave his hand, and all the attacks were effortlessly deflected. The young lady didn't stop at a single attack this time, instead, she continued attacking, again and again and again.

But to her dismay, all her attacks were literally waved off by Grey, all he did was to wave his hand, and the attacks were disrupted. It was almost like he wasn't even putting any effort.

Jean and the two ladies looked at Grey with shock, they knew how strong the young lady was, yet she has been unable to make Grey even move an inch from the chair he was sitting on.

"You coward! Fight like a man if you have the guts, stop hiding inside your shell like the tortoise you are!" The young lady yelled angrily.

She couldn't take it anymore, her pride was being trampled by the unmoving Grey.

"Heh! Fine, if you can block three attacks, then I'll take it as my loss and apologize to you," Grey sneered.

He had already calculated everything he wanted to do, he'll infuse a bit of darkness energy into the young lady's essence bead when he attacks.

When he was fighting with that young man back at the Chimera forest, even though he had broken through to the Overlord Plane, he only sensed it when it was too late.

But unlike the one for the young man, he wouldn't put much into this attacks against the young lady, just a little that would be able to slowly corrode her essence bead while she's unaware.

Before she would take note of it, at least more than half of her essence bead would've been corroded, leaving it unrepairable.

"Three attacks? Fine, but what if you lose?" The young lady tried to calm herself.

She was currently fuming, but she knew if Grey didn't attack, there was no way he would stand up from that place. She felt that as long as Grey stood up, then she would definitely be able to attack him given the speed she possessed as a Wind Elementalist.

Grey looked at her calmly before replying, "I'll apologize, that should suffice, right?"

"You'll be flogged," The young lady said.

She didn't want Grey to go unpunished, so after she beat him up, she would get her family guards to flog him for his evil deeds.

"Haha, then what if you lose?" Grey asked.

"Then I'll forget about you doing any harm to my siblings," The young lady said.

"Are you really sure you're siblings? You know, I don't think a real sister would do this," Grey mused.

His question managed to enrage the young lady who was already trying to calm down once again.

"Don't let his words get to you, he's trying to infuriate you,"

Jean's voice suddenly echoed in the room.

Grey threw him a nonchalant look, he didn't really care if the young lady was calm or incensed.

"I know, father," The young lady replied before taking a deep breath to rationalize her breathing.

"Come!" She yelled.

Grey tapped his left leg on the ground, and to Jean's and the two ladies' surprise, the young lady was sent flying by an earth pillar that sprouted out of the ground from where she was standing.

Bam! Bang!

She slammed into the ground hard, before sliding almost fifteen meters. Her body came to a halt after she hit the wall of the hall.

All it took was a single action from Grey, and the young lady was already on the ground.

She struggled to stand up, looking at Grey who was still sitting leisurely on the chair. He even hung his right leg on the hand of the chair while swinging his left leg in the air.

"What? How?" She couldn't believe what happened.

From the attack, everyone in the hall knew Grey was being lenient with her. Had he made earth spikes come out instead of the pillar, then the young lady would've been impaled by the attack, causing a fatal injury, if not even death.

"That's the first attack, I must say you're doing very well. Tsk tsk, and here I was thinking I would expend a little bit of effort to defeat you," Grey shook his head in disappointment.

Hearing his words and seeing the disappointed look on his face sent the young lady crazy once again.

'I'm a one in a million genius, the greatest genius in the history of Frost City, yet, I can't even touch a hair on this guy's body?'

She started questioning life when she thought about it.

After returning from the trial land, it had been smooth sailing all the way, because of how high her stage was when she came out, a lot of people respected her. Some even lauded her to be someone who would go above the Overlord Plane, reaching the legendary Sage Plane, but now, her heart was shaken by Grey's appearance.

"Do I still need to attack again, or do you want to continue teaching me a lesson?" Grey asked when he saw the dazed young lady.

"I refuse to accept this," The young lady said.

"Oh really? I don't think you have a choice here, you'll accept it whether you like it or not," Grey chuckled.

Jean shook his head before saying, "Enough, you are no match for him."

The young lady who was about to pounce on Grey stopped and looked at her father, "You don't have to worry father, he relied on sneak attacks if not, I wouldn't have been hit,"

"You can not beat him, I don't think there's anyone in the Origin Plane who can." Jean said with a serious look.

He could already tell from the start that Grey was stronger than his daughter, but he didn't expect the difference to be this huge. One had to know that his daughter could hold her own against a Ninth stage Origin Plane Elementalists. But in front of Grey, she didn't amount to much.

Jean could tell that Grey wasn't in the Overlord Plane, well, more like didn't dare to think that he was. How scary would it be for an eighteen years old boy to be in the Overlord Plane that they all struggled for over hundred years to reach?

The thought frightened him, and he wasn't even thinking about it!

"You should listen to your father, he does have a point," Grey advised.

The young lady ground her teeth hard, before turning around to leave the hall. She couldn't bear to see Grey's arrogant face, all she wanted to do whenever she was looking at it was to pummel his handsome face until he was unrecognizable.

Luckily for her, she didn't encounter Klaus, given how foul mouthed he was, she might probably not be able to take this defeat the way she did. There's a chance that she might even want to fight a life and death battle with him.

Grey smiled when he saw her leaving, he had already completed what he wanted, that was why he didn't bother to let her continue. His darkness element essence had already been placed in the young lady, and he could tell that it had traveled to her essence bead.

In a couple of days, it would be able to corrode at least half of her essence bead.

Jean looked at Grey with a conflicted expression, he was almost wishing he didn't bring him into his house. Had he known that because of the Emperor he wouldn't be able to harm him even when he was in his house, he would've just let the matter go. Besides, he still had other talented children, those two were unlucky, hence they met a freak like Grey.

Jean called on the guards outside to escort Grey to a secured room in the manor, while telling them to make sure no one went in or out of the room.

After they took Grey away, he called on an elder in the Overlord Plane, telling him to hurry to the Capital to report Grey's capture to the Emperor. He didn't dare to tell him to take Grey along, because he had heard of Grey staying in the Lenz manor the previous time.

While the guards were taking Grey to his room, he was making a rough map of the manor in his head while looking around. He planned to steal as much essence stones as he possibly could. After all, it's not everytime he would steal from Alice's father.

After getting to his room, since there was nothing to do, he took out his communication device, trying to contact Alice and Reynolds.

Chapter 380 - Searching For The Vault

Grey spoke with Alice and Reynolds for a while before soon getting tired.

With nothing left to do, he recalled the books he sto... borrowed from the Lunar Academy when leaving, the books about forge mastering. Since leaving the Academy, he hadn't really had any time to go through them.

'I'll need to think of a way to prepare a storage ring for the others. There's also that multi-elemental sword, I need to find a way to reduce its consumption, or even better, make a new one, entirely from scratch!'

The thought of the sword kind of excited him since it was something he hadn't seen before. He had not even seen a sword that could use two elements, much less one that has the ability to use all elements. It was like a cheat or something.

Time soon flew by, and day turned into night.

Grey spent all his time reading the books about forge mastering, further deepening his shallow understanding of the topic. Sadly, there was no way for him to practice, or else he would have improved even further..

He had already come to the decision that since he couldn't practice for now, he would increase his theoretical knowledge about it, then when he could, he would start using it.

'It should take around two to three days for the people from Capital to come, so I should be able to find the vault within this period of time.' He thought.

He took out an empty piece of paper from his storage ring, placed it on the ground while also taking out ink and a quill pen. He slowly started to draw out the rough map he made of the Smith family manor in his head.

After almost twenty minutes, he drew out almost the entire front view of the manor, as well as the places he walked through while being carried to his room.

With the map in hand, he sent out his spiritual senses to check the people who were watching the door. They were still doing their job dutifully even though it was already night. Surprisingly, they were not the only ones Grey found, he sensed almost five more people hiding in different locations, all were at the Peak of the Origin Plane.

'This guy sure is cautious,' He chuckled.

Grey blinked twice and disappeared from where he was standing, the room was soon left empty.

Outside the room.

Grey appeared behind the room, hiding in the tall flowers close to the room.

None of the people guarding the room noticed his departure, it wasn't like they could sense him anyway. And due to Grey being an Earth Elementalist, the room he was placed in was actually made entirely of wood. This way, there would be no way for him to be able to use the earth element to create an opening in the room.

After appearing behind the flowers, Grey did a rough estimate of where the people were hiding before blinking from one place to another within seconds.

He appeared within the line of sight of one of the men, but he didn't stay for even up to a second, so it was impossible for the man to see him.

When Grey blinked past, the man looked at the spot Grey appeared before disappearing within a second. He was almost sure he saw someone there, but due to how fast, he thought maybe it was an illusion, or his eyes were playing tricks on him since he has been looking at the same place for hours now.

And just like that, Grey evaded all of them without anyone realizing what was going on. He soon appeared in the main building.

Almost all the manors he had seen had the same building system, they were divided into three buildings, the main building, left and right wing.

If his guess is correct, which it probably is, then Jean would be staying in the main building. Not just that, but the vault would also be in the main building as well.

There's a chance the essence stones were not kept in the vault. Take Alice's father for example, he kept all his essence stones in his bedroom, with most of them being mid or high grade.

Grey was sure there might be some essence stones in the vault, but it would probably only be low grade essence stones.

After sneaking into the main building, Grey started moving around the halls, searching his room with his spiritual sense, he would instantly retract it once he knew who was inside, trying his best not to attract any attention, while also using the space element to perfectly shield his aura from the people in the building.

There were guards patrolling the halls, but they weren't that many, so Grey didn't have any problems with dodging them.

After thirty minutes, he finally found Jean's room. Now the issue was getting inside the room.

Although it was already late, Jean was very much awake, in fact, he was quite busy in his room. He wasn't the only one there, rather, he was accompanied by one of the middle-aged ladies from before.

When Grey sent his spiritual sense inside, he quickly withdrew it, before moving as far away from the room as possible.

'I'll have to look for his office then,'

He changed his direction, deciding it was best he searched for his office. Who knows, there might be a secret room in the office that might just be the vault.

One hour later.

Grey looked around the office intensely, but unfortunately, he couldn't sense if there was a secret room in the office or not. He couldn't start touching everywhere since it would alert Jean of someone entering his office.

He could only leave in disappointment, times like this made him miss Void even more. Given Void's size, and specialty in the space element, coupled with his superior sensory abilities, he would've already found the place by now.

Grey wouldn't even need to take the risk of coming out in the first place, he would've stayed in the room, studying his books while Void did all the dirty work.