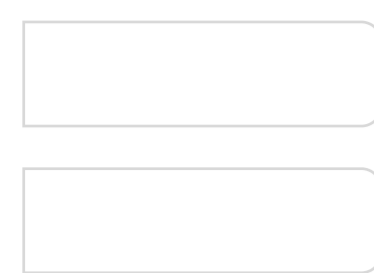


## Chapter 9 Patriarch Competition



Today, Sebastian didn't go right away to tend to his spiritual herbs. Early in the morning, he headed to the vast square at the center of the Stone Mansion. It was finally time to determine who would become the new patriarch—a position that had remained vacant for over three months, stirring some unrest within the family.

In the immense, stone-bricked square, around 300 prominent family members gathered. They were all the Stones' elite.

They formed a large circle, leaving an open area in the middle where five middle-aged men stood, one of whom was Ronan.

Sebastian observed from among the crowd, prepared to assist his father if needed to secure the role of patriarch.

Soon, a man with thick brows and slightly graying hair sneered and addressed Ronan. "You do know there's a crucial condition to becoming the Stones' patriarch, don't you?"

The man was Edgar Stone, a powerful branch family leader. Older and more experienced than Ronan, Edgar was at the Earthly Seventh Realm—a respectable rank among the Stones—and believed himself well-suited to lead. Given their family ties, Sebastian had to address him as his uncle.

Ronan glared coldly at Edgar, irritation flashing across his face. "I'm aware. The patriarch's relatives must have promising talent to ensure that resources aren't misused on personal kin."

Sebastian's mother had passed away long ago, leaving only his father to guide him. Without Soul Vein, he faced prejudice, and Edgar was quick to mock him for it.

"Haha, your son has no Soul Vein! If you become the patriarch, you'll waste so many valuable pills on him! You've been gathering spiritual herbs and pills everywhere to support him, right? But everyone knows what his true potential is." Edgar laughed heartily. "Everyone knows he's just a failure!"

Ronan was aware that his son was quite remarkable among his peers. Sebastian simply preferred to keep his abilities hidden to avoid attracting unwanted attention.

"My son can unleash the true energy flame! He has talent in alchemy. Are you really going to claim he's useless? I doubt the elders of the Stones would agree with you." Ronan sneered.

At that moment, the crowd began to murmur. News had spread throughout Tiberia about Sebastian declining the chance to be a disciple of the Elixir Emporium's master. Even without Soul Vein, having the true energy flame gave him a shot at becoming an alchemist.

Edgar scoffed. "But he turned down the Elixir Emporium's master. Without a mentor, he can't become an alchemist."

Just then, Sebastian's calm voice cut through the noise. "I can now create the Low-earthly Rank Body-forging Pills."

Everyone fell silent in disbelief at Sebastian's claim, but Edgar erupted in laughter. "You're just a kid of 16! Do you think you can refine pills? Don't think that a few empty boasts can help your father become the patriarch. Plus, lying in front of the elders will bring serious consequences.

"Do you think you're that Alchemy Genius? The Andersons are a prestigious family with deep roots!"

Sebastian stepped forward, his gaze steady. He produced an alchemy furnace, looking at Edgar with a sneer. "Are you up for a bet? If I can refine a batch of Body-forging Pills, will you apologize to me publicly?"

Edgar's laughter faded, and the crowd was taken aback. No one expected Sebastian to act so boldly!

The arrogance of this junior infuriated Edgar.

Ronan supported Sebastian, knowing it was time for his son to stand up for himself.

Edgar was brimming with anger. "What did you just say?" As he spoke, a wave of true energy enveloped Sebastian, only for Ronan to disperse it.

Sebastian locked eyes with Edgar and raised his voice. "I want to make a bet! If I can produce a batch of Body-forging Pills, you must apologize to me publicly!"

He reiterated his challenge with complete seriousness, pride evident in his voice. It was unusual for a young man to confront an elder so directly in the Stones.

Edgar trembled in rage but hesitated to agree right away, while those around them waited for his reply.

Sebastian continued, "You called me a useless failure in public. Now I want to show you I can succeed and make you apologize! As an elder, are you too afraid to take this bet?"

Edgar felt a strong urge to strike Sebastian, but he refrained, knowing that harming a junior from his clan was a grave offense.

An elder interjected, "In that case, Edgar, you can take this bet, but you won't need to apologize. Those were just angry words from a child. How about this—if he can produce a batch of pills, you'll have to compensate him?"

"I agree! If my son loses, I'll no longer compete for the position of patriarch!" Ronan declared, nodding at Sebastian.

The crowd erupted in excitement—Ronan had made a bold wager!

Edgar snorted. "Fine, let's gamble! If I lose, I'll give him the thousand-year-old Redmyst Spirit Mushroom I just acquired."

The crowd gasped. The thousand-year Redmyst Spirit Mushroom was a highly valuable Low-arcane Rank spiritual herb.

"Sebastian, start refining the pills now! How long will it take?" asked the elder, a respected figure in the Stones.

Everyone believed that crafting a Low-earthly Rank pill would take at least half a day, usually needing two to three hours, especially for a 16-year-old boy.

"It won't take long at all!" Sebastian assured them. He settled cross-legged while the elder and Edgar approached to oversee the alchemy furnace, ensuring Sebastian wouldn't cheat.

"Using such a low-quality furnace? It seems Ronan is rather short on funds!" Edgar mocked, as everyone knew that Ronan had spent all his money on Sebastian.

Sebastian took out the necessary materials from his storage bag, carefully organized them, and then released the true energy flame to warm the furnace before adding the ingredients. His movements were precise and practiced.

His true energy flame surprised the onlookers. While many could conjure flames during attacks through training, they couldn't control them as effortlessly as Sebastian, unless they had practiced rare fire manipulation techniques.

As Sebastian filled the furnace with flames, a subtle medicinal scent began to waft from it.

An hour passed, and everyone noticed Sebastian, who had been meditating with his eyes closed, suddenly frown. It was clear he had reached a critical moment, and Edgar was now sweating nervously, anxious about losing the thousand-year Redmyst Spirit Mushroom.

As the mist began to rise from the furnace, Sebastian opened his eyes, a look of joy on his face. He stood and said, "Please check my work."

"What? You finished in just one hour?" Everyone voiced their skepticism.

The elder was the first to approach. Though he couldn't refine pills himself, he was familiar with the process. He had closely observed Sebastian, aware that he had some foundational knowledge of alchemy. While he couldn't see inside the furnace, he could sense the subtle changes in heat emanating from it.

As the elder opened the furnace lid, everyone was immediately hit with the pleasant aroma of medicine. They recognized the scent and had witnessed the refining process firsthand. When the elder extracted five pure white pills, they could hardly contain their surprise.