

Reincarnated as an Energy with a System

- Chapter 441: Flower In The Mud

Chapter 441: Flower In The Mud

The normal carriages that belonged to the palace only had enough room for 4 people at one time.

Since Ning wasn't part of the guards that were supposed to protect Lisa and Reeve, he was forced to separate from their group and had to take the next carriage, along with the person he was supposed to look after, princess Elina.

"What's your name?" she asked Ning. The carriage inside the palace started moving and soon they were leaving the palace for the city market.

"My name is Ning, your highness," Ning said as respectfully as he could.

"Ning? That's a weird name," she said. She looked at his face for a little bit and asked, "Are you new?"

"Yes, your highness," Ning replied.

"Tsk, they gave me a new guard. Can you even protect me if there is a threat?" she asked.

Ning stopped himself from chuckling and answered, "I will try my best, your highness."

"I hope your best is good enough," Elina said as she harrumphed and looked outside.

"Tsk, I wanted to sit with sister, but she always wants to be with brother-in-law now," Elina said with an annoyed look on her face.

Ning ignored her and looked out of the window while falling into different thoughts that crossed his mind.

He looked at the electrical poles on the street, he remembered the trains, the telephones, etcetera. The Tower and the nobles had indeed conspired against the normal folks to take the absorption techniques away from them, and that was indeed very selfish and horrible.

But was it bad? He doubted anyone could've come up with the light bulb to illuminate themselves if they could produce fire at the snap of a finger.

Would anyone have come up with a train if everyone had vehicles that they could use Enchantment on to drive far away?

Would people focus on medicine and treatment to improve their lifespan which would inadvertently lead to a better healthcare system for the people, if they all had a long life span thanks to the Aether?

Society would have probably still been in the medieval ages like back when Ning was here for the first time if the Tower hadn't conspired at all.

To be honest, Ning really didn't mind the result they had produced. He had no problem with that at all.

'Maybe I really should keep quiet about all of this,' he thought. If keeping quiet about it helps society, then he would absolutely do it.

'No!' Ning thought to himself. 'This was not their plan. This was just a result they had likely never seen coming. Their original intent for all of this was to keep themselves high in social and political ranks, that was all.'

People deserved to get the information.

"Sigh, I will have to think about this when I'm freer," he thought. He slumped back on his seat, looking out the window when the princess called for him again.

"I asked, how much longer will it take until the market?" she asked.

"Uh..." Ning looked outside and didn't really recognize the place he was in. They had taken a different route from the one the carriage driver had taken on his first day in the city.

Also, he had been lost in his own thought for a while, so he was a little confused.

"I... don't know, your highness," Ning said.

"What? How could you not know?" the princess got annoyed. "Aren't you supposed to know all of these things as a guard?"

"Uhh... I'm sorry, your highness. I've only been employed for a week, so I haven't had the chance to learn all of these things," Ning said.

"Tsk, do they think of me as that useless that they stuck me with an actual newbie?" she couldn't help but comment snarkily. "If anything I might have to protect you in case of danger."

Ning felt a tinge of annoyance as well. He already didn't want to take care of this brat, and now that he was hearing all sorts of insults, he felt like he would snap at any point.

'Relax, Ning, Relax. She's just a kid. She's thousands of years younger than you. Let her talk her crap,' he told himself and let it be.

Fortunately, the market wasn't very far away, and they reached there within the next 5 minutes. It seemed the princess was incredibly bored, and as soon as she got out of the carriage, she immediately ran to the other carriage where Lisa and Reeve were walking out.

"Sister~," she said as she went up to Lisa and hugged her.

"What's wrong? We were only separated for 15 minutes. You aren't going to tell me you can't handle just that small-time being alone, are you?" Lisa asked.

"Of course not," Elina said. "It's just that Uncle Tim gave me an incompetent guard."

"Huh?" Lisa looked up to Ning who was walking out of the carriage too. "What do you mean 'incompetent'? He's one of the best," Lisa said.

"What? No way. He didn't even know how much time it took to go from the palace to the market. How could a guard be this ignorant?" she asked.

"He's new to the city, so that's probably why. Haven't you roamed the city all this time? Why do you have to ask him such a simple question? You should know it by now," Lisa said.

Elina's face changed as she put on a cold look and said, "I'm a princess. I don't need to know all of that."

Lisa hit her lightly on the head and said, "stop acting like a child. You're already 40 years old. Very soon, it will come time for you to get married too. You cannot remain childish like this all the time."

"What?" Elina exclaimed. "No way I'm marrying anyone before I hit 50."

"Sigh, do what you want then. Let's go," Lisa said and walked away from the road into the commercial section of the city.

Reeve, Lisa, and Elina walked on ahead, while the two guards and Ning shadowed them, staying as close as possible to keep an eye on them, but as far as possible so as to not be a hindrance to them._w

Chapter 442: A Place For Nobles

Lisa and Elina were trying to appear like nobles while trying to hide the fact that they were princesses, which was why Lisa went with a wig in the first place.

They walked into a clothing store and Ning waited for nearly half an hour before the two princesses could finish choosing 10 sets of clothes, including ones for Reeve. Now that he was a prince consort, he needed to stop dressing like a commoner.

Once they were done, they left the area and went to another place at the behest of Elina. It was a jewelry shop with many different kinds of necklaces, rings, earrings, bracelets, etc hanging on the wall in full display. There was a high-ranking Aether user there at all times to protect the store.

Elina seemed to really like the jewelry and started buying a bunch of it. Lisa, after having lived as a peasant for the last 10 or so years, didn't really care much for such materialistic needs.

After many requests from Elina, she bought a simple-looking necklace that also doubled as a storage device at a rather hefty price. Her heart bled when she saw the price, but as a princess the amount she had to spend was astronomical. Such that she could buy thousands of such jewelry in a year, and still have enough to buy it all over again.

Due to Lisa's insistence, they didn't stay in this place for a very long time and moved on to a food market.

"What are we doing here?" Elina asked, looking around at what she would call a low-status market.

"Just buying some food ingredients," Lisa said, walking around the market. As Elina and the rest watched, she bought many things such as flour, vegetables, rice, etc.

She also bought quite a lot of spices before she was done.

"What are you planning to do with that?" Elina asked.

"I've been wanting to cook for a while. After coming here, I've been missing my bakery, so I will cook this food," Lisa said.

"Why did you buy the ingredients then? There should be a lot of ingredients back at the palace," Elina said.

"Yes, but that's the royal pantry. I wouldn't know how much trouble I would create if I wanted to use as many ingredients as I wanted. So, it's better that I just buy what I will be using," Lisa said.

"But... isn't that a lot? You bought nearly 25 kilos of flour alone. How much food will you be able to make with that? You aren't planning to feed the entire palace, are you?" Elina asked.

"Of course not," Lisa said. "I will donate the food I make. There are less fortunate out there that can use the food."

"You've changed, sister," Elina said.

"Of course," Lisa said. "I've lived as a commoner for over 10 years. While I may have been one of the more fortunate ones, I've seen how the less fortunate have to suffer each and every day just to fill their stomach."

"I know I can't change that, at least not with the status I have right now, but I can hopefully fill their stomach for even if it's just one day now," Lisa said.

Reever smiled when he heard his wife say that, and also got a little sad at the same time.

"What's wrong?" Ning asked, seeing his sad face.

"Oh, it's nothing," Reever said. "I'm just sad remembering that I won't be able to go help those people in the deserts now. I hope they find a way to get their food somehow with me not around."

"I see," Ning said. He made a mental note to go let those people know later on that they could go to the city on their own and sell their stuff for more money.

"Alright, I'm done," Lisa said after buying the final ingredient from the market. "Let's go back now."

"What?" Elina cried out. "It's barely 2 in the afternoon. We still have a lot of time before we need to leave," she said.

"Where do you want to go now then?" Lisa asked.

Elina thought for a while, and said, "There's a place opened up not far from here where only the nobles are allowed to visit. Do you want to go there?"

"Hmm? What is this place?" Lisa asked. Reever got curious too.

"Hehe, I bet you've never visited a place like this before since it was only established in the capital two years ago and took the high ranking people by a storm," Elina described.

"What are you talking about?" Lisa asked.

"Come, it's better to show you," Elina said and took the lead. They walked out of the place and went to a location that was a bit more... wealthy.

After walking for just 3 minutes, they reached a large building with flashy lights on it even during the day.

Ning looked up at the building and read the name, "JERRY'S DELUXE CASINO?"

Elina was trying to show off a casino place.

"What is this fancy place?" Lisa asked.

"It's a casino, sister," Elina said.

"What's a casino, sister-in-law?" Reeve asked with his head tilted upwards to look at all the words in the building.

"It's a place where you can earn a lot of money using very little money," Elina said.

"It's a gambling place. You put in your money and play against other players or the casino itself and see if you can win money," Ning explained from behind.

"Gambling? Did you take us to a gambling den?" Lisa suddenly got angry.

"No! This is more sophisticated than that," Elina explained. "Come on in, you will understand when you go inside."

Elina walked first and walked in. The guards of the casino seemed to recognize her and let her in without question.

"They're with me," she explained to them and they let Reeve and Lisa enter as well.

"What about the guards?" Reeve asked.

"Since miss has so many people in her group, you may take in 1 servant," the guard explained.

Without even deciding amongst themselves who would get to go in, Ning walked into the casino.

"Let's go in."

Chapter 443: Getting Coins

Lisa and Reeve walked into a fully white building with a look of awe on their faces. Elina hadn't been lying when she said this place was amazing.

There was a distant sound of a crowd coming from inside the place. Lisa was truly surprised by how many people were there.

"And you said only Nobles are allowed here?" Lisa asked.

"Nobles and their friends," Elina said. "This place has a minimum stake of 500 Gols, so not anyone can come here. If anyone doesn't seem to belong in this place, the guards won't even let them enter"

"Stake? What do you mean?" Reeve asked.

"Let's go to that counter first. I will explain later," Elina said. They walked over to the counter with a woman on the opposite side of it.

Elina brought out a stack of paper money and put it up on the counter. "1000 gols worth of tokens. Give me mostly 20s and 50s," she said.

The woman on the other side of the counter nodded and took the money. A moment later, she brought out a plate with about 30 yellow-colored glass coins, and 8 blue-colored glass coins.

Elina took them and stored it in her storage bag. "You cannot use the money to gamble and instead have to use their glass coins. Also, you can only buy a minimum of 500 Gols worth of these coins, so poor folks usually can't come here," she said.

Lisa thought she understood it a bit, and so did Reeve. Ning felt like he knew about this before, but the memory was way too vague to trust it.

"How much do you want to buy for, sister?" she asked.

"Hmm... let's start with 500. I don't really want to spend too much money since it's not really mine," she said.

"What about you, brother-in-law?" Elina asked expectedly.

Reeve didn't know what to do. To him, 500 Gols was still a lot of money to just throw away in a gambling house. Also, he didn't have 500 Gols on him at the moment since he didn't need much money in the palace at all.

"It's fine, I will buy it for you," Lisa said and took out 1000 Gols to get herself the coins as well.

"Give her mostly 10s and 20s," Elina told the girl behind the counter. The girl nodded and a moment later brought out the coins.

Lisa took half and Reeve took half.

"Alright, let's go," Elina said, but Lisa didn't move. Instead, she turned around to Ning and asked, "Hey Ning, you want to join us too?"

Ning thought for a while, but he didn't see the purpose behind gambling since he could easily create money out of thin air, especially since the paper money seemed to have no sort of uniqueness to them, so he could create as many as he wanted without having to worry about authority.

'But it might be fun,' he thought. He was still deciding when Elina spoke. "Sister, why are you asking the guard to play? I doubt he even has money for it. If he could bring out 500 Gols like nothing, he wouldn't be working as a guard, would he?"

"Elina, you shouldn't speak like that. Ning is my and my husband's—"

Before Lisa could finish speaking, she heard a slam from behind her. When she turned to see where the sound had come from, she saw a high stack of money on the counter.

"For 10,000 Gols please," Ning said, passing the money to the dumbfounded lady behind the counter. He turned around to see the shocked faces of Elina, Lisa, and Reeve.

He looked directly at Elina and asked, "Were you saying something?"

"Y-Y-You! Where did that money come from? Did you steal it from the pa—" before Elina could finish her sentence, Lisa glared at her not to speak where they were from.

"You don't need to worry about that. This is my own money," Ning said as he took the coins the lady passed him. Amongst them were many red ones that represented 100 Gols.

"You are lying! I will talk to uncle Tim about this. I will get you fired," she said.

"You'll get me fired?" Ning asked with a chuckle. "How about I leave right now, and you will have to find yourself a carriage and return back on your own without a guard?"

"You!" Elina got angry. Ning on the other hand was finally feeling some sort of relief putting the little girl in her place. However, he couldn't help but call himself stupid when he realized their age gap.

He was fighting with a little girl that was born while he was asleep for eternity in the forest.

'What the hell? Why am I so childish despite being so old?' he thought.

"Elina, stop talking. Let's go," Lisa said, shutting up Elina from speaking any further. Elina gritted her teeth but spoke no further. She took her past the corner and into a massive hall with many people.

The entire hall was probably around 50 meters wide in all directions as well as nearly 20 meters high, with a wide staircase leading to the 2nd floor.

They could see many tables spread all around the room, lit up by light hanging on them from up above.

There was a massive chandelier in the middle of the room, hanging from high in the ceiling. The cool air in the place helped make it feel not as crowded as it was.

Ning could see hundreds of people playing in the casino at different tables. There were also quite a few on the 2nd floor, but not as many.

What surprised him the most was that nearly a third of the people in the room were actually employed by the casino.

"What do we do now?" Lisa asked.

"Now we go and sit at any place and play their game," Elina said and she looked around for an open spot.. She found one immediately and said, "For now, let's go there."

Chapter 444: A Game

Ning watched the 3 of them go over to a table and sit down. He didn't immediately sit down too as there were only 3 spots at the table.

"You can go elsewhere and play if you like," Lisa said.

"It's fine," Ning said. "I will just watch for now." He stood behind the 3 of them and looked at the dealer who was handing out cards.

It had been a long time, so he had forgotten about the specifics on almost everything back on earth. He knew about cards and how many there were, or he thought he did, he couldn't remember any of the games that were played with the cards.

"What are we playing?" Lisa asked.

"This table is for 'find the duplicate'," Elina said. The dealer was a bald man wearing a white shirt under a red waistcoat. Ning was quite surprised to see a rather massive stack of cards in his hand.

As far as he knew, there shouldn't have been this many cards in general. He leaned onto Reeve and asked, "do you know about this game?"

"Huh? Ah, yeah," Reeve said. "It's a rather simple game actually. There should be about 10 different types of cards with him in that stack, all numbered 1 to 10. 1,2...5. Since there are 5 of us here, there should be about 100 cards in his hands. He will pass them along into 20 cards for each of us."

"Then, we put how much we want to stake in this match and start putting down the cards. I believe it will be us 4 against the dealer, so we will have to put down a card that he puts down. If we do it, we win the money, if he puts down a card that we have, he wins the money."

Ning wasn't sure he understood the explanation, so he decided to wait for the match.

"Please put in your bet," the dealer said.

The man that was already on the table put out a red coin worth 100 Gols. Reeve and Lisa decided to start low, so they both brought out 20 and 40 Gols worth of coins each. Elina on the other hand brought out 100 Gols worth of coins as well.

Seeing that they had all dropped their bet, the dealer passed along the card. He was very proficient in what he was doing, so before anyone knew it, he was done.

Lisa and Reeve's rings pulsed a bit, letting them know that he was using Aether. Ning noticed it too.

'Enchantment? On his body to make it faster perhaps?' Ning thought.

Once the dealer passed the cards, he waited for the people to be done. Ning watched the people shuffle their cards on their own and placed them down on the table.

"Shall I begin?" the dealer asked. After getting the confirmation from all of them, the dealer turned over the first card.

4.

From right to left, Elina, Lisa, Reeve, and the other guy turned theirs over.

5, 7, 5, 10

None of them won. The dealer then took another card from his deck on the table and flipped it.

7.

"Aww, I lost," Lisa said, seeing the flipped 7.

The dealer nodded and took away her 40 coins. He then looked at the rest and asked, "Would you like to increase the bet before you proceed?"

None of them accepted and simply turned over their cards.

6, 8, 1

It was the dealer's turn again, and he flipped a card.

6

Elina lost. The dealer took away her coins as well. Then, he asked the same question, "Would you like to increase the bet before you proceed?" the reply to which was a no.

Reever and the other guy flipped their cards.

4, 2

The dealer turned his card around.

1

He then asked the same question again, but this time, the other man accepted and added a 100.

Once done, they turned their cards again.

2, 9

The dealer said nothing and turned his cards.

9

"Dammit!" the man cried out, seeing 200 Gols being taken away by the dealer. "Screw this," he shouted and left the table.

Ning took the man's seat and waited.

"Would you like to add, sir?" the dealer asked.

Reever felt tempted. The match had been going on for a while and he had only bet 20 Gols. "Yes," he said and put in 30 gols to increase it up to 50.

His hands shook as he slowly turned over his card.

8

The dealer then turned his card.

6

"Oh god," Reever said. "This suspense is gonna give me a heart attack soon."

"Sir, wou—"

Before even listening to the dealer, Reever turned around his card.

6

"Wait... Did I win? I won! Yay!!" he shouted out loud as he celebrated winning 50 Gols.

Lisa and Elina congratulated him. While Ning took out his own coins to play. "Another round?" he asked them.

"Of course," they all responded and started playing all over again. They played for maybe 10 more minutes before they were fed up and wanted to find something else.

By then, Ning had lost about 400 Gols, Reever won about 200 Gols, Lisa was up only 20 gols, and Elina was down about 100.

"What else is there?" Lisa asked. She was fully engrossed with gambling, looking forward to the next table.

"Let me see," Elina was about to look around when someone spoke close to them.

"Eh? You are already allowed to leave the house?" A voice appeared from behind them. The four of them turned to see a handsome young man, barely in his mid-20s.

He was wearing a hat that covered most of his head, but there were parts of his head that were still visible.

'Blonde hair?' Ning thought with a hint of surprise on his face. 'Which means...'

"Brother Gilian, I didn't think I would see you in this place as well," Lisa said with a smile on her face. However, there was nothing warm about that smile at all.

'Gilian Xanders,' Ning thought. 'The 2nd son of the Emperor, one of the only 3 to children to inherit the golden hair.... the one that sent assassins after us.'

Chapter 445: Gillian Xanders

Gillian Xanders was a bit taller than Lisa and had an extremely well-built body. As a possible successor to the throne, it seemed he didn't skip out on his daily training even for a day.

"You know, I have nothing to do all day, so I end up wandering to this place," Gillian said.

He then turned to Reeve and bowed a little towards him.

"Good Afternoon, brother-in-law. I hope you are doing fine here. Please let me know if our hospitality has been lacking in any kind," Gillian said to Reeve.

"Oh no, brother Gillian. It's been the best," Reeve said.

"That's right, brother," Elina said.

Gillian turned to Elina and asked, "Your sister gets to leave home for the first time since she's been back and the first place you take her to is the casino? I will talk to the manager here and have you barred from ever entering."

"What? No brother, that's not true. We've been to the other places before this as the market and such. We were about to return when I decided to bring her here. It wasn't my plan," Elina said.

"Leave her alone, brother. She will cry if you keep on going," Lisa said.

"Hahaha," Gilian laughed and patted Elina's head before saying, "sorry, I was joking. I don't even know the manager here."

"Don't scare me like that," Elina cried. Then her eyes darted towards Ning and an evil grin appeared on her face.

"Brother, you should meet with this awesome guard here. He brought out 10 thousand Gols to bet in the casino today. Isn't he awesome?" Elina said. Her words didn't show it, but the intention behind it was clear.

Lisa sighed when she heard that. She didn't realize just how petty and mischievous her sister had grown up to be in the 10 or so years she was away.

"Hmm," the brother turned around to look at Ning. "I didn't know we had a guard like this? What happened to your personal guards?"

"Well, sister doesn't have personal guards yet, and for some reason uncle Tim decided to stick him with me," Elina said.

"Oh, Uncle Tim won't do that with someone like you," Gillian said as he turned around to Ning. "What's your name, Guard?"

Ning stepped forward and bowed to show his respect. "It's Ning Ruogong, your highness," Ning said.

"Ning Ruogong?" the prince's eyes went wide. "Are you the one from the zoo incident?"

"Yes, your highness," Ning said.

"Ah, thank you for saving my brother." Surprisingly, the prince himself bowed a little in front of Ning, surprising everyone in the room.

All the nobles that were secretly trying to listen to the prince were shocked to see him bow.

"Who's that man?"

"I don't know. They are talking too quietly."

"Is he another husband to one of the princess? I thought there was only one."

The people started gossiping in the background. Ning was also surprised to see the prince bow towards him.

"I see I have made myself quite a reputation to even be known by the 2nd prince himself," Ning said.

"Eh? Zoo? Saving Brother? What is this all about?" Elina asked.

"Hmm? Did you not hear about the person who saved the eldest brother?" Gillian asked.

"Huh? No way. He can't be it. He looks younger than me," Elina said.

"You shouldn't judge a person by their appearance, dear sister," Gillian said. "Alright, I won't bother you guys now. I'm returning back to the palace now. Have fun."

Gillian left through the door before anyone could even say anything. His presence was quite something. Throughout the whole meeting, it felt like he was in the middle of it all, with the others around him just there to be the other half of the conversation.

"The prince sure has quite some intensity," Ning said. Lisa's eyes were dead serious as she looked at the door where Gillian had just passed through.

"A-are you really the person who saved our brother from being a hostage?" Elina asked with a meek little voice.

"Hmm, yes. That was why I got to enter the palace as a guard," Ning said.

"I see," Elina said, followed by a very weak little "Thank you for sa..."

"Hmm? What was that?" Ning asked with a smile on his face. He had clearly heard what she had wanted to say, but he still teased her.

"Thank you for saving our eldest brother," She shouted a little louder with a very serious face.

"It's okay. I did it because he was Lisa's brother," Ning said. "Let's go play some other game."

They all walked towards a desk with some dice games being played on it. Ning sat down along with the 3 of them and got close to Lisa.

"Your brother seems better than how you explained him to us," he said softly. "Him thanking me, it felt genuine too. Does he perhaps care about the other prince and princesses since they aren't a threat for him to the throne?"

Lisa kept quiet, not answering anything.

"Are you sure he really is the one that sent the Shadow Pavillion after you?" Ning asked. "He doesn't seem that bad to me."

"I'm sure of it. It was him," Lisa answered quietly. Her thought running rampant.

"What about the Amien fella? Is it not possible that it could be him as well?" Ning asked. Amien was the other emperor candidate in the family. He was the 5th son of Kain and was younger than Lisa by half a year.

"No, it's not Amien. He won't do something like this," Lisa said.

"Are you sure?" Ning asked. "He has a right to the throne too, you know?"

"I'm sure," Lisa said. "Amien... he doesn't want the throne at all. He's made it clear multiple times. He's even told father this quite a few times."

"Still, it could all be an act, you know," Ning said.

"No, it's not," Lisa said. "You will understand when you meet Amien soon. He really has no interest in the throne."

"I see..." Ning said. "And just to be clear, you don't know it's Gillian right? You just think of him as the suspect for trying to kill you by a process of elimination?"

"Yes. Don't get sucked into his outer presence, you will fall into his trap as well," Lisa said.

"You really don't like him, do you?" Ning asked as he looked at her face. There were signs of tears pooling up in her eyes.

"I will never forgive him. He killed my mother," She said with rage replacing the tears in her eyes.

Ning kept quiet for a while. 'I see,' he thought. 'No wonder she hates him so much.'

Reever and Elina were busy playing the game. They gave no thought to what had happened before anymore and continued having fun.

Ning started playing consciously too and started bidding more and more. By the time they were ready to leave Ning lost nearly 4000 Gols in total.

Elina couldn't help but laugh at him the entire time as she had ended up with 560 more Gols than she started with.

Lisa was also down a few Gols, but Reever's winnings canceled it out in the end.

Ning felt sad as he knew that Elina had now found something new to make fun of him with. The return back to the palace wasn't going to be fun.

They walked out of the casino and met with the two guards before joining them to go find 2 carriages. In the same arrangement as when they left, they returned back to the palace.

Once back, everyone went their own separate ways.

A few weeks passed since then. Ning steadily went to his classes 4 of the 5 days in the week. He would only have the 5th day as a break day.

Steadily, he was learning more and more about Aether.

Currently, he was in the training hall with the teacher for the Enchanters, who was teaching them to fly.

Ning was surprised the first time he had heard of it. He didn't even think he could use Enchantment to make himself float as he still somewhat held the misconception of Enchantment telekinesis being the same as his normal telekinesis.

'Man I wish I could go to the Invoker classes too,' he thought internally.

He looked at the training room with quite a few people in there, along with Rachel. The teacher stood in front of them.

"The first step to flying is first learning how to float in midair," the teacher said. "Who here can tell me why you can keep an object in mid-air?"

A few children raised their hands to answer. The teacher chose Thomas to answer.

"Is it not because we turn Aether to Kinetic energy and that can help us move it as we want?" Thomas asked.

"Not quite," the teacher said and made an object fly. "You are right that I am putting Kinetic energy into it to make it float around."

He then stopped the object in the air, no longer moving in any direction, just staying in one place.

"However, Kinetic energy is when an object moves,, right? What about now that the object is no longer moving? I am surely not putting any kinetic energy in it. Then why is it still floating? Any idea?" the teacher asked.

The children shook their heads. So did the adults, including Ning.

"Let me rephrase the question so you understand better. Why is this object not falling to the ground?" he asked.

"Ah!" Rachel cried. "You are canceling out the effect of gravity on it, right?"

"Exactly," the teacher said. "To make this object float, I'm putting in gravitational energy on it to counter the pull of the planet and thus make it weightless."

Ning's eyes went wide. "Gravitational Energy?"

He had, in thousands of years, finally learned the name of another type of energy.

Chapter 446: Aether Flight

Gravity. Ning never even realized that it could be one of the energy. Having forgotten nearly everything about the earth, he hadn't remembered the different types of energies as well and was waiting for the next one to be unlocked.

'I wonder if the next one I unlock is gravity or something else,' he thought.

The system actively tried to not give him information about energy or anything related to gathering a massive amount of energy in a small span of time.

So, for the past thousands of years, he had to live in the dark, unable to learn about the different types of energies.

It also didn't help that Kumia didn't really have a science-dependent society like Vilmore had come to be.

'Right, there must be quite a little information about energies in this world now,' he came to a sudden realization.

'Nice, I can finally learn about them.'

"Gravity is something you've been interacting with since birth. So, don't worry about not being able to counter the gravity with your own. You will be a natural at it," the teacher said.

"Alright, everyone get on top of the padding and try it."

The students nodded and walked onto the half a meter thick padding that was spread halfway through the training room.

Ning took a section to himself and started practicing. He closed his eyes and focused on flying. He wasn't trying to fly because of flying itself as that was something he was already capable of.

He wanted to learn how to fly so that he could learn to control gravity. If he could change gravity on something... there would be a lot of different things he could do.

He closed his eyes and tried to sense the current gravity. As gravity was a daily thing to him, it was hard to know when it was there as you usually forgot about it.

'Gravity,' he thought. 'Something pulling me downwards.'

The Aether in his sea started bubbling slowly and reduced in size. The Aether that escaped from the sea had now changed already and was traveling throughout his body.

'Focus!' he said to himself. 'Imagine that whatever is pulling you downwards isn't there anymore.'

Suddenly, he felt light, as if he had no weight. He wasn't floating, but that was probably only because currently, his body had no motion at all.

'Let's go up,' he thought and jumped with his weightless body. Suddenly, his body started flying upwards and quickly reached the ceiling, hitting his head on it.

'Shit! That's too much force, lower the gravity a bit,' he thought and instead lost all of the gravity he was pouring out.

With no control, he fell onto the padding.

"Great Job, Ning," the teacher said. "I have never seen someone understand gravity manipulation this fast."

"Thank you, teacher," he said while standing up and rubbing his head to get rid of the ceiling dust.

"Although, when you've learned to counter the gravity, instead of jumping, add some kinetic energy to yourself. That will help you maneuver yourself more easily than a random jump," the teacher said.

"Okay, teacher," Ning said and went back to practice.

Ning tried it once again. He imagined himself being weightless and before he knew it he was. Then, instead of jumping, this time around, he imagined himself going up slowly.

The Aether in his body turned to kinetic energy, giving him motion. He slowly drifted upwards and halfway through, he tried to change the direction.

Suddenly, he felt himself wobbling, nearly losing the counter gravity he was putting on himself.

'Focus!' he told himself again. Doing multiple things at once was hard. It was easy to lose concentration and forget about doing one of the things in the process.

Until the way to do it was ingrained into his mind, he needed to keep on concentrating.

After a few minutes, Ning was very proficient in flying. Slowly, the other students were getting the hang of it too.

One after another, the students started flying in the air with a face of glee and happiness. Even the adults were experiencing this for the first time and were incredibly happy about it all.

One of the students raised their hands from mid-air and asked, "Teacher, why don't we see more people flying in the air in the city?"

"Flying... is very dangerous," the teacher said. "You never know when you will lose focus and fall to the ground. You don't want to fall to the ground from such a high height, right?"

The kids shook their heads.

"Yes, for that reason, Flight is banned in the cities across most of the world. There is also another reason and that is the fact that flight takes up a lot of Aether.

"With how heavy you are, and how many different things you have to keep your mind on, the complexity of the task is very hard, and it is possible for you to run out of Aether mid-flight."

"So, it's banned," the teacher said.

"Eh? Then does that mean that we can't use this technique despite learning? That's so boring," a few students said.

"There are a few cases where you can fly," the teacher said. "But you don't need to know that right now. For now, just fly and enjoy."

The kids wanted to learn more but the teacher just kept his mouth shut. Ning wondered what the few cases where flying was allowed were.

'Some of it should be if there is an emergency or something like that. What about the rest? I hope the teacher tells us, or maybe I will have to ask the sys—'

"LOOK OUT!" somebody shouted behind him while he was distracted.

"Wha—"

Before Ning could react, somebody crashed onto him in mid-air. Ning had just managed to turn around and caught the person, but that ended up making him lose focus and the both of them fell to the ground.

Fortunately, there was padding on the floor.

"Are you okay?" Ning asked the person, only to see a horrified expression on their face.

Chapter 447: Followed

Ning looked into the eyes of Rachel, the girl he had been sitting next to in class. He wasn't really close to her, but he would like to believe that they had established a base level of friendship over the last few weeks.

Still, he questioned that thought when he saw the fearful look in her eyes. It was like she had seen a ghost.

'Did I hurt her?' Ning wondered and reached out to her.

"Are you hurt somewhere?" he asked.

Instead of accepting his help, the girl scrambled backward. Ning was surprised by the act, but he did realize that she wasn't hurt.

'Right,' he thought. 'She doesn't like physical interaction very much. Well, it wasn't me who bumped into her, so it should be alright.'

Rachel walked back to her corner of the area and started training again, but throughout the rest of the class, she kept staring at Ning.

Ning saw her staring at him from time to time but wondered why that was so. 'Did I offend her by offering help? No way right?' he thought.

The flight training lasted for half an hour more. By this time, most of the students were very capable of flying.

"Okay, that's it for today. I'll see you guys on the 1st day," the teacher said and left the room.

The kids returned back to the class for the rest of their studies, while Ning and the others were free to go home now.

'Tomorrow's the weekend, huh?' he thought. He walked out of the tower and walked back to the palace.

However, along the way, he saw someone following him from behind.

'What's this girl up to?' Ning thought when he saw her behind him, following all the way through.

At some point, Ning stopped and decided to confront her.

"Rachel, why are you following me?" he asked as he slowly turned around.

Rachel was shocked to see him find it out. "Ho-How did you know I was following you?" she asked.

"I've been keeping track of you for a while now," Ning said. "So, why are you here? It can't be because of what happened in the training right? You do know you were at fault for crashing onto me there, right?"

Rachel's eyes changed a bit, and a guilty look appeared on it. However, she didn't say it out loud.

"Ning..." She said. "Who are you?"

Ning was a little surprised to hear such a question.

"What do you mean by that?" Ning asked. "You aren't implying that I'm using a fake name, right?"

She didn't answer immediately and looked at him up and down. "Are... are you really okay?" she asked.

"Hmm?"

That was a question he wasn't expecting. 'Am I fine? Of course, I am. What does she mean?' he wondered.

"Don't worry, you didn't break any of my bones back there," Ning said with a chuckle.

"No, that's not what I meant," Rachel said. "Are you feeling well?"

"I'm feeling perfectly fine," Ning said. He was starting to wonder where this line of questioning was going.

"Wh-what about your Aether?" she asked.

"My Aether?" Ning was even more confused. "My Aether is fine. What do you mean?"

Her eyes went back to being frightful once more. "Who are you?" she muttered.

Fortunately, it was noon and not a lot of people were out on the street to hear this odd conversation.

Ning scratched his ears as he asked, "I supposed you're not asking for my name, are you?"

Rachel said nothing, waiting for him to answer.

"I... am a part-time guard at the palace for now," Ning said.

"Eh?" Rachel was surprised. "A guard? You?"

"Of course," Ning said. "Part-time only though. I still need to continue my studies after all."

"Wait, wait, wait," Rachel couldn't wrap her head around it. "How the hell are you a guard?" she asked.

"Well, through a bunch of coincidences really," Ning said.

"No way, you can't be a guard. Are you a Head-guard?" she asked.

"Nope, just a random guard," Ning said.

"What?" Rachel gasped when she heard that. "Even if it is the Royal family, they wouldn't dare employ an Aether Emperor as a mere guard."

Ning's eyes suddenly changed. He slowly walked up to her and asked, "Aether Emperor? Why would you say I'm an Aether Emperor?"

Rachel started fearing for her life right now. She was an Aether Magister. At her age, that was an accomplishment that was hard to come by anywhere else in the world.

Only the lucky noble children with tons of resources for themselves could match her speed. However, even then, in front of an Aether Emperor, she was nothing.

Ning could handle her like a fly buzzing around him.

Ning walked up closer to her and asked, "Why did you make that assessment?"

Rachel had a secret that she promised herself to never tell anyone lest they come to use her for some malicious purpose. She always believed that she could keep the information to herself.

However, right now, she was fearing for her life. She didn't know if she could survive an attack from an Aether Emperor.

Suddenly, she grabbed Ning's arm.

"Hmm?" Ning looked at her grabbing his arms and was very confused. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"You will see," Rachel said with an angry face. Ning waited for a few seconds, but he didn't 'see' anything.

"I thought you hated contact. Why are you touching me now?" he asked.

"Eh? What's going on? How... how are you still okay?" she asked. Suddenly, a thought came to her mind.

"No way!" she said. Her eyes were as wide as a pigeon's egg. "Yo-you are not an Aether Emperor, are you? You are an Aether S—"

"Ning?" Someone called him from the side. Rachel jumped a little in surprise.

Ning turned to see Fiona and Jamie walking together.

Fiona saw Rachel's hands-on Ning's hands and immediately put on a sour expression.

"I thought you were going to the tower to learn about Aether," she said as he shook her head.. "Turns out, you were just trying to find yourself a girlfriend."

Chapter 448: Police Station

"Stop talking nonsense, sister Fiona," Ning said and turned around towards Rachel.

"Sorry, she interrupted you. You were saying something?"

"D-" Rachel tried to speak, but she was too scared to speak up.

"D?" Ning asked.

"Do-"

"Rachel, I can't understand what you're trying to say," Ning said.

"Don't kill me," Rachel shouted. She immediately stood up and ran away.

"Eh?" Ning was surprised. He didn't expect such a drastic reaction from her. Jamie showed no reaction to the happenings in front of him, but Fiona's eyes narrowed as she looked with a suspicious look.

"You threatened to kill her?" she asked.

"Haha, of course not," Ning said as he looked at the running figure of Rachel. She really was scared for her life.

"Then? What did you do?" Fiona asked.

"Nothing," Ning said. "I think... she just ran away because she learned how strong I was."

Fiona's eyes widened. "You told her that you are an Aether Emperor?" Fiona asked.

"Ah, no. She figured it out on her own. She must've thought of me as an infiltrator or something. That's why she was afraid for her life," Ning said.

"Oh, you better explain it to her then. Lest she spreads rumors," Fiona said.

"It's alright. She's not the type to do such a thing. Still, I guess I should explain it to her in the next class," Ning said.

He then turned around and looked at Fiona and Jamie. "What are you guys doing here?" Ning asked.

Jamie put up his hands and started making gestures towards Fiona.

"Yes, yes, I know. He won't leave just because we are 2 minutes late," Fiona said.

"Oh, what's this about a police station?" Ning asked.

Fiona turned around in shock. "You can understand what he's saying?" she asked.

"I know sign language," Ning said with a chuckle. He too had only realized this a couple of days ago when he saw Jamie talk with Fiona through gestures. Somehow, his brain translated every single gesture and he knew exactly what it meant.

The Omniscient All Language skill he got was truly one of the best skills he bought from the system.

"So? You're going to a police station?" Ning asked.

"Yes," Fiona said. "You know what? You should come too. It will be good for you to learn these things as well."

"Sure," Ning said. He didn't have anything else to do anyway. He changed direction and started walking with them.

"So... where is the police station again? I don't remember ever learning about it," Ning said.

"Right outside of the governmental zone towards the commercial zone," Fiona said.

"Oh," Ning said with a surprised face. "That's quite far. Shouldn't we be taking a carriage or something there?"

"No," Fiona said with a sour face. "I hate carriages. You have no place to fight or run away if you ever get attacked in it."

"Uh... who would attack us in the city?" Ning asked, but Fiona didn't answer. He sighed and decided to not talk about it.

They walked for about 15 minutes and finally reached the police station.

The station was a simple building with a giant wooden door at the front. It was two-story-tall and was completely barricaded with iron bars on the windows.

"Let's go in," Fiona said and walked in.

There were people all busy with their own tasks. Ning could see a bunch of people handcuffed to the side of a metal bench that was bolted onto the ground.

Some of them were kids. 'What are these kids here for? Stealing?' he wondered.

"Miss Fiona, you're here," a middle-aged man with a rather fat body walked up to them. He was wearing a blue shirt and pants with a badge on his chest that said 'Inspector Reen'.

The man had a rough beard and short hair, neither of which seemed to be going gray. Also, for some reason, he was sweating a lot despite the perfectly cool temperature inside the building.

"Yeah, take us there," she said without even caring to greet the man.

"Um..." the man didn't lead the way and instead hesitated.

"What?" Fiona asked.

"He actually..."

...

"You morons! How could you have let him die?" Fiona shouted at the police officers as she watched a rough, beggar-like person with dirty clothes lying dead in the interrogation room.

Ning looked at the corpse who had both of his hands tied to the middle of the table in front of him. The man's head was staring upwards with his mouth open and some foam coming out of it.

He had been poisoned.

"W-we don't know how he died, miss Fiona. No one entered the room at all," the police officers said.

"Then who killed him?" Fiona shouted.

"I-I don't know, miss," the inspector Reen said.

"Didn't he kill himself?" Ning asked from the side.

"Huh? Are you saying it's suicide?" Fiona asked with anger still on her face.

"Yes," Ning said. "I mean, it sure looks like it."

"No way," Fiona said. "His hands are tied, and he is not even awakened."

"Hmm... then that means..." Ning walked up to the man and opened his mouth. He opened it wide and called Fiona over.

"See that? All of his teeth are fine except for that molar? He likely hid poison in there and ate it when he knew he was going to be investigated," Ning said.

"Poison in the teeth?" Fiona was surprised. "That shouldn't be... hmm, no that is possible actually. This just increases our suspicions even more."

Ning turned towards her. "Who is this man anyway?" he asked.

"He's a very wanted criminal that's been known to kill quite a few people outside of the capital. He tried to play the part of a beggar to enter the city, but the guards recognized him and captured him," Fiona said.

"Oh," Ning said. "But then why are we here? Shouldn't the police be fine taking care of this man?"

"They would, but..." Fiona's voice got a little quieter.. "We were called in because we have suspected for a while that he might be part of the infamous criminal organization known as the Shadow Pavillion."

Chapter 449: List Of Assassins

"Shadow Pavillion?" Ning asked with a surprised face.

"Yeah, they are a group of assassins that have managed to make themselves the most sought-after killers when it comes to getting a job done," Fiona explained.

"So, you're saying he was one of them?" Ning asked.

"Very likely. Although he would just be a low-level assassin in the Pavillion, it's still concerning that someone from the pavilion came to the city," Fiona said. "It can only mean that they are here to kill someone in the city."

"Shit!" Ning shouted.

"What? Why did you shout?" Fiona asked.

"I think I have an idea why they could be here," Ning said.

Fiona's eyes widened. "You have an idea why they are here? Why?" she asked hurriedly.

Ning's voice lowered as he whispered next to Fiona. "I think they are here for princess Elizabeth," he said.

Fiona's face scrunched up as she thought. "Why would they be here for her? She shouldn't have any connection with them," she said.

"They came after her on the train while we were coming to the capital," Ning said. "Someone had paid the pavilion to assassinate her."

"What? Why am I only learning this information now?" Fiona shouted, making the police in the back jump in fear.

"You all get out!" Fiona slammed the door behind her and confronted Ning. "When were you going to tell me the princess was targetted by the pavilion before?"

"Uhh... never, I guess," Ning said. "Has the princess spoken up about it yet?"

"No," Fiona said.

"See? Why would I say anything if even the princess wants to keep it quiet," Ning said.

"You are a guard now," Fiona scolded him. "You don't do what the prince and princesses tell you to do. You do what's best for their safety."

"You take their screams, their cries, and hatred towards you for not doing what they want, but what they need," Fiona said.

Ning sighed. Fiona wasn't wrong about it. Also, it wasn't like Ning wanted to keep it a secret. He just didn't think of it as necessary and had completely put the idea out of his mind. After all, with the rings they had, it would be impossible for them to get assassinated, unless by someone of high Aether Rank.

"I guess I am in the wrong here. Sorry," Ning said.

"Whatever, we need to go back now. We need to stop tomorrow's feast if possible," she said.

"I don't think you should do that. Many of the citizens are looking forward to the feast. Even the princess herself is looking forward to it. If you simply just cancel it, you will get a lot of bad reputation from the citizens," Ning said.

"Then what the hell are we supposed to do?" Fiona asked.

"Do what you would in this situation. Tell the princess, tell the guards, tell the emperor," Ning said. "As for the pavilion, don't worry about them. I will take care of it."

"You will take care of it?" Fiona looked at him with a suspicious look.

"What?" Ning asked with a chuckle.

"What are you planning to do?" she asked.

"Don't worry about it. Just go back to the palace and let them know the situation. I will come back later," Ning said and left the room.

It was still a bit past noon, so the sun was still high in the sky.

"System, give me a list of names, images, and locations of all the members of Shadow Pavilion currently in the city," Ning said.

<Understood>

Ning suddenly got information put into his mind. He sighed when he learned the number.

27

There were 27 members of the Shadow Pavilion currently in the city. "So many people to kill the princess?" he thought.

"Hmm," his eyes narrowed when he saw 2 names on the list.

From Ning's perspective, these 2 people were nobodies. However, in terms of importance, they were the most shocking names on the list for him.

After all, the 2 names belonged to 2 guards from the palace.

'The assassins have infiltrated the palace already?' he wondered. However, that couldn't be correct. Those guards had apparently been working there for many years now.

Ning fell into thought. 'Maybe they aren't part of whatever is happening?' he thought. There was no way the shadow pavilion had been planning to kill the princess for so long.

Then... "The palace employed those individuals?" Ning thought. He shook his head. Just because they were a part of the assassin organization, it didn't mean that they were bad people.

'I will have to deal with them later,' he thought and went to the other names on the list.

The first man on the list was a thin man in his late 20s, who worked as a carriage driver in the capital.

Ning made his way onto him and found him waiting for a rider.

"Sir, are you going somewhere?" the man asked Ning. Ning looked around in the commercial area to make sure no one heard him.

"Have you killed someone before?" Ning asked.

"Eh?" the man was surprised, but then started laughing. "What type of joke is this brother? You make me laugh. Haha, so are you going anywhere?"

"That was not a joke," Ning said. "Have you killed anyone before?"

The man's eyes changed as he got angry. "If you don't want to ride then stop disturbing my business, you son of a—"

He was about to push Ning away, but Ning caught his hands. In a matter of seconds, the man lost his freedom and looked at Ning.

"Have you killed anyone before?" Ning asked.

"Yes, master. " the man said.

"Good. Go confess your crimes in the police station. Give them every bit of information they ask for," Ning said.

"Understood, Master," the man said as he bowed towards Ning and rode away in his carriage.

"That went well," Ning thought. "Hopefully the rest goes just as easily as well."

Ning looked through the list and read the next name on the list as well as the location where she was.

"Dammit!" Ning thought.. "I should have asked that guy to give me a ride first."

Chapter 450: Shadow Pavillion Member Structure

Ning made his way to the girl that was next on the list. She was a clerk in some clothing store.

He walked into the store and quickly located her.

"Hello, how can I help you?" the girl asked when she saw Ning walk directly towards her.

Ning looked around for the other customers and staff before directly grabbing her hand that was on the table.

The girl was surprised at first, but then her eyes got normal as she looked directly at him.

"Have you killed anyone before?" Ning asked.

"No!" the girl said.

"Eh?" Ning was surprised. "You haven't? Aren't you part of the Shadow Pavillion?"

"Yes I am, Master," the girl spoke.

"So despite being a part of it, you don't kill? What do you do then?" Ning asked.

"I'm an aid, master. I help assassins settle down in the capital when they come here. I make sure to prepare their hotel rooms, keep tabs on their target and any other ways they may need help in the task," she said.

Ning looked at her closely and asked, "so you are an accomplice?"

"Yes, master," the girl said.

"How many people have you helped kill?" Ning asked.

"I don't remember the count, master," the girl said.

"Sigh, that means many, right? Okay, go to the police station and turn yourself in. Answer then every question they ask about your task and the Pavillion," Ning said.

"Okay, Master," the girl said and left the counter. The staff was a little confused when they saw the clerk leave the store.

"Where is she going?" someone asked.

"She quit. Find someone else to be a clerk for now," Ning said and left as well.

He then spent the next 5 or so hours doing the same. He went to every single member on the list and made them all do the same thing. Surrender themselves to the police and confess to their crimes.

The police station was very confused seeing the slew of people coming in to surrender themselves, claiming they were part of the notorious secret assassination group called the Shadow Pavillion.

They thought they were being pranked at first, however as the people started telling them what their crimes were and what sort of people they had killed or been an accomplice for, the police very soon realized that they were telling the truth.

Without hesitation, Inspector Reen once again called Fiona and the others. When she reached the station and saw 25 different people all in an interrogation room, it was like someone had dropped a pie from the heavens.

'He said he would take care of it. Was it really him?' she thought. However, she decided not to think of it for much longer and started interrogating the people.

To her surprise once again, they didn't hide a single piece of information and gave her everything she wanted.

'What the hell did he do?' Fiona thought as she continued interrogating.

Ning walked back towards the palace. He was a bit tired from having to do all the things today and really wanted something to eat.

'Lisa must be making some bread right now. I will ask her,' he thought.

He thought about what he had learned today along the way. The Shadow Pavillion was a truly mysterious group of people. They weren't like a normal organization where people worked together.

No, they were all different individuals working alone. The job began when someone came to hire an assassin. They would hire them through someone the organization deemed disposable.

They were given no information at all, and all they did was take in the target's name and price and sent it to the higher-ups.

The person would leave the target's information somewhere for the aid to find, while they sent the information and the payment to the headquarters through another middle man.

The aid would then start shadowing the target, learning as much information about them as they could before the headquarters decided on which assassins to send.

Once enough information was gathered, they would then drop that information somewhere where the assassin could find it.

The aids would also register a hotel room for the assassin under a name the organization chose.

From what Ning learned, there were many assassins hired for tomorrow's event to kill the princess. It didn't seem like a new job, but rather the same old job from the train which they failed to do.

He did know that the Shadow Pavillion didn't stop until the job was done.

He reached the palace and went directly to the kitchen. He saw a ton of maids and cooks helping the princess in making the bread. He could also see vegetables being cut, but those were probably going to be cooked tomorrow morning.

"Your highness, how's the work going?" Ning asked. He didn't like to call Lisa by her name in front of everyone as they usually frowned at him and would give him an earful as to why he couldn't call her that.

That was why he only stuck to calling her Lisa when nobody else was around.

"Ah Ning, look at how much bread I've made," Lisa said cheerfully as she showed the stack upon stacks of bread.

"Uhh... that's a lot," Ning said as he looked at the loaves of bread that were stored on one side of the kitchen. That would surely feed a lot of people in the slums tomorrow.

"You seem pretty excited about it all," Ning asked with a chuckle.

"Of course. I haven't made bread in quite a while. Just being in the kitchen helped me calm down a lot," Lisa said.

"And, the emperor hasn't said anything about this right?" Ning asked.

"No, he usually doesn't," Lisa said. "It was only my... mother who did that."

Lisa got sad when she remembered the past.

"Hey, I'm quite hungry. I haven't eaten all day. Can I get something to eat?" Ning asked, trying to distract her.

"Oh, you're hungry? Should have said that earlier.. I'll get you something right away," Lisa went to get some bread from the pack and prepared a meal for Ning.

Chapter 451: Elijah Goldilock

After eating until he was full, Ning left the place and went to the area with the guards.

He went to find the two guards that were part of the Shadow Pavillion and made them go to Fiona to confess everything.

After that, he exercised for a bit to loosen his body before going to his room to wait.

Suddenly, someone knocked on the door. Ning opened it to see Fiona outside.

"Oh, hey. What are you doing here?" he asked.

"Did you do it?" she asked.

"Uh... if you mean about the assassins, then yes," Ning said with a smile.

"How?" Fiona asked.

"I have my ways," Ning said.

"Tell me how then," Fiona asked with an annoyed face.

"Will you tell me how you can go invisible?" Ning asked.

Fiona stopped speaking. "Are you a member of the Shadow Pavillion too?" she asked.

"What? No," Ning said. "Why would you even think that?"

"Because you know about the members of that organization," Fiona said.

"Hmm, did you not interrogate them yet?" Ning asked with a confused face.

"I did, at the police station and those two guards as well. I didn't know they had already infiltrated the palace," Fiona said.

"Well don't worry, those are the only two," Ning said. "So, from your interrogation, you should have learned that the Pavillion members have no idea who the other people are, right?"

"Unless they are forced to work together on a mission, they will have no idea," Ning said.

"Sigh, you're right," Fiona thought and shook her head. "I don't know how you did it, but good work. Thanks to you, tomorrow's event will be safe."

Ning simply smiled and said nothing.

"I have something to do right now, so... uh, can you..." Ning asked.

"Uh, yes. I will leave," Fiona said and walked away. She couldn't just keep the information to herself and needed to pass it along to Tim, who managed the guards and probably even the Emperor so that he was aware of it all.

Ning went back to his room and lay on the bed. He hadn't lied to Fiona to get rid of her. He really did have something to do. Only, he needed to wait a bit longer.

* * * * *

A man walked out of the train around the evening time and looked around. He was in his mid 30s, and was wearing a long overcoat with a briefcase in his hand. He had a black hat on him that seemed to disappear in the night.

He took out a cigarette and used a lighter to light it. His face lit up to show the thick beard that was on his face.

He blew out the smoke and started walking out. He looked around the dark city and walked towards a certain hotel.

"Hello, I booked a room," the man said with a rough voice.

"May I know what name you booked it under, sir?" the lady at the register asked.

"Elijah Goldilock," the man said.

The lady nodded and checked for the name. "It is there, sir. May I know how long you want to keep it for?" she asked.

"Just for tonight," the man said.

The lady took his information and registered the room under his name. The man took the keys and asked, "did someone leave something under my name?"

"Hmm, let me check, sir," the lady took out a record and started checking.

"Ah, yes. Here it is," she said and went to get a parcel for him. The man took the parcel and went up to his room

As soon as he walked in, he locked the door and found a chair to lodge under the handle. Once that was done, he immediately tossed aside his suitcase that was just there for a show.

The suitcase had random papers in it as a mislead in case someone checked it. He never came here with anything of importance in the first place.

He opened up the parcel and took out the bunch of papers. The papers were nothing but news articles, but none of the news seemed to correlate to one another.

The man started by making two different piles. He would keep the first and second paper on one pile, and the third on a different one.

Once that was done, he would only read the second pile with the 3rd paper, and even there, he would only use the single letter that was underlined. Furthermore, he would have to go through the entire list of pages to just list out the first letter, before moving on to the second one.

He took out a black piece of paper and started writing down what was being said.? Soon, he got the information he wanted.

Princess Elizabeth will be donating food to the beggars and poor folks in the slum. She will have a lot of guards around her, one of which is understood to be considered very strong. Be careful of the person named Ning.

Our information says he is likely an Invoker Aether King, which was why you were given the job.

This job requires many people to be completed successfully, so you will have to work with your comrades. You can meet them in the Grapevine Pub. Ask the bartender for a whiskey with sweet ice in it.

The rest of the information will be provided by your comrades tomorrow.

The man immediately crumbled the piece of paper and lit it on fire. He then tossed it into the trash before tossing it in the other newspapers as well.

It seemed the job was a bit more difficult than he had first expected. The princess' guards might be more of a problem than he had thought.

* * * * *

Ning laid on his bed with his eyes closed, waiting for it to happen. Just then, the system spoke.

<A person had entered the hotel room registered under Elijah Goldilock>

"He's here huh?" Ning thought with a smile. He had been waiting for him ever since he learned that someone big was coming later that night.

"Alright, let's go see him."

Chapter 452: Visitor In The Night

The middle-aged man in the hotel took a shower. The water was slightly cold, just the way he liked it.

He wiped himself with a towel and walked to the bed to dress up. Once done, he looked around his coat's pockets to find his cigarette.

"You know that's bad for your health right?"

The man immediately turned around to see someone standing in the room. He side-eyed his door, but it was still blocked with the wooden chair. He then looked at the window, but it had metal grills on it.

He immediately pulled out a gun from his storage and pointed them at the person. "Who are you, Kid?" he asked in a rough voice.

"Nice to meet you. My name is Ning Ruogong," Ning introduced himself.

"Ning?" the man's eyes narrowed a bit. 'Was this the same Ning from the documents?' he wondered.

"How did you get into the room?" the man asked. He still hadn't figured out how someone could possibly enter a locked room.

"Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. That's not very nice now, is it? When someone introduces themselves, you have to introduce yourself too," Ning said.

The man cocked his gun and asked Ning again, "How did you enter the room? Answer me or you will die right now."

Ning ignored the gun and walked to the door before taking the chair. He placed it back in the room and sat on it with one leg perched on top of the other.

"Alright, listen, Elijah," Ning said. "Should I call you Elijah? Or would you prefer if I called you Sam?" Ning asked.

The man's face showed the purest shock he had ever felt in his life. Even his hands that never shook when he slit his target's throat started shaking a little.

"That's your name, right? Sam Wiseman? Born in the Odrain Empire to two duds, bullied as a child, but you got lucky and found a fruit sold by a merchant and accidentally got awakened."

"Your parents died during the coup in the capital and since then you've gone out of your way to kill any noble and royalty you can find. The Shadow Pavillion noticed your work and hired you 35 years ago, and since then, you've been one of the most successful assassins in the field."

"Quite an amazing resume you ha—"

BANG

The man shot his gun, but the bullet didn't hit Ning at all. It had veered off to the side and hit the wall behind Ning.

"That's quite rude you know? I was in the middle of talking," Ning said.

"Who are you and why do you know so much?" the man asked, while at the same time wondering why his aim was off. He tried calming himself and not letting his emotions mess up with what he needed to do.

"I have my ways of finding information about someone," Ning said.

BANG

The man shot once again. This time, instead of the head, he aimed at the heart. As the chest was larger than the head, his chances of hitting him would be higher.

"You really want to call the hotel staff, huh?" Ning asked as he pried open his clothes to reveal the place he had been shot at.

It was very close to the heart, but Sam couldn't tell if he hit the heart at all. After all, Ning was still speaking.

He was about to shoot once more when he saw the bullet wound pulse. The wound didn't bleed at all. When something finally came out, the man realized it was the bullet. Once the bullet was out, the wound went back to being fixed.

"Ho-How did you?" the man started freaking out.

"Alright, let's get to the point," Ning said. "You came here to kill the princess under the Pavillion's order, but that's not happening. All the Pavillion members have already surrendered themselves to the police, even the ones that weren't part of tomorrow's job."

"Wha—"

"One of your stupid members decided to enter the capital through the gate, looking like a beggar despite being a wanted criminal. So stupid. You can blame him for the mess... although he did kill himself already," Ning said.

"I came here to make you do the same—? Can you put that thing away? You know it won't hurt me," Ning said. However, the man didn't listen to him. Ning sighed and continued.

"Anyway, I wanted you to go and give yourself up as everyone else did," Ning said. "However... I didn't expect the Pavillion to send an Aether Emperor to do the job. That changes everything."

The man couldn't even speak with just how much new information was being thrown at him. The kid— no, this thing couldn't possibly be a child. This man, this thing, he knew a lot. He knew things that Sam had never revealed to anyone, and he knew things that even Sam had forgotten.

Not to mention, he didn't die when a bullet shot his heart.

"What do you want from me?" the man asked, gun still pointed at Ning.

"I want you... to fight me," Ning said with a smile on his face.

The man got a little confused. "What?" he asked, not sure if he heard him correctly.

"You heard me, I want you to fight me," Ning said. When he still saw the confusion on the man's face, he proceeded to explain. "Well, you see, I recently entered the Aether tower, because I didn't know how to properly use Aether."

"It's been a few weeks and, well, it's been fun, but I can't do anything serious with what I've learned. So, I was hoping you could help me with it by fighting with me," Ning said.

"You want to fight?" the man immediately started using some Aether to use telekinesis on Ning.

"Uh... not here, you idiot," Ning said. He stood up, completely ignoring the man's control, and walked up to him.

"We will be fighting someplace else," Ning said and grabbed the man before disappearing.

Chapter 453: Fight In The Night

When Ning and the man reappeared, they were flying high up in the sky. Ning looked up in the sky while letting go of the man.

"AARGHHHH!" the man shouted in the pitch-black night as he fell from the sky.

"Sigh, so dark," Ning said as he looked up. "It's such a shame that this planet has no moons. Would've been great to have some light in the night."

Ning looked towards the ground and by now, the man had stopped shouting and had instead started flying.

"Not bad," Ning thought. Being able to realize that he was falling and then making himself fly at a moment's notice wasn't an easy task at all. The man had likely had training for flying for quite some time.

Ning stopped using 'Super Flight' himself and started freefalling just as the man did. Along the way, he focussed and got himself to start floating. Once he achieved that, he slowly lowered the counter gravity, so that Vilmore's gravity still had some effect on him, and he just ended up slowly drifting onto the ground.

The man was very confused right now. This had been the most confusing day in his entire life. What was happening? He was just in his hotel room and suddenly he was in the sky, falling to the ground somehow.

"What's going on?" he wondered and looked around. The only thing he could see was the starry sky while the rest of the land was pitch black.

'Where the hell am I?' he thought. No matter the place, it should have some light. But right now, there was none.

Just as he was looking around, he saw a light far in the distance. The light started getting brighter and brighter until he could hear the sound coming along with it too.

'A train?' he thought. He used the train's light to look at where he was. It seemed like a massive meadow with trees far away in the surrounding. Aside from that, he saw nothing.

Then, in the light, he saw something drop from the sky. With the bright light, he could easily recognize it to be Ning.

"What did you do? Where am I?" the man demanded.

"Well, we couldn't possibly fight in the hotel room, so I brought you here," Ning said. "I'm hoping you will show me some good skills."

The man didn't waste time and immediately emptied all of the bullets he had left in his gun towards Ning. He needed to kill him quickly before the train's light ran out.

Ning was prepared, so he managed to dodge 3 of the bullets from hitting him, but the final one hit him in the shoulders.

The man tossed the gun and ran towards Ning. He jumped with incredible agility and kicked at Ning.

Ning put up his arms to block. However, when he got hit, he felt his bones crack as he was sent flying away.

The train passed and darkness loomed over the man once more. He took a deep breath and looked towards where Ning had gone to. He couldn't see in the dark, so he was just looking for sounds of movement.

'Did he go unconscious?' the man thought.

"That was a nice kick," Ning said and he walked towards the man. Based on Ning's assessment, the kick just now had the force behind it was equivalent to that of a Level 25 body cultivator, or a Golden Core realm cultivator.

That was quite strong for a body augmented using just the Aether in the person.

"How... how are you alive?" the man asked. Ning could see the man not looking at him straight due to the darkness all around him.

"Let me help you a little," Ning said and created fire around him. He made a ring of fire on the grass that gave them light to see each other.

"So you really are the Ning from the report. But they seemed to have gotten your information wrong as they assumed you to be an Invoker Aether King. You are clearly at the rank of an Emperor like me," the man said.

"Oh, they think I'm an Invoker? Why would they— Ah, must've been those two guards from the palace," Ning thought. After all, he acted as an Invoker in the palace, and as an Enchanter in the tower.

"You are correct," Ning said. "They were indeed wrong to think of me as an Invoker Aether King. I'm not."

Ning ran forward and punched at the man. The man put up his palm to block the attack, but when Ning hit him, he realized that he had made a mistake.

The man had never been thrown this far away from a simple attack before. He landed on the grasses a few meters away and immediately got up to look at Ning in shock.

He looked at his palm that was red. Then, he looked at the fire burning around him. The man's eyes went wide.

"Dual Awakener," the said in shock.

"Yes," Ning said. "Nice catch."

"I have rarely seen a Dual Awakener," the man said, still in shock. "Yet, I've never seen one that is an Aether Emperor as well."

"Oh," Ning said. "I will take that as a compliment then."

"How did a monster like you become an Aether Emperor. Your skills, your ability to regenerate your wound, your ability to move to a different place. That's not something a normal Aether user should have," the man said.

"Oh, you're not wrong about the fact that I'm not using Aether for those things, but don't look down on Aether just because you don't know how to do it."

"With enough knowledge, practice, and imagination, anything and everything is possible with Aether," Ning said.

"Alright, let's get on with the fight. I don't have much time. I still need to sleep before accompanying the princess tomorrow. It's going to be a long and tiresome day," Ning said.

"Very well. I shall show you my skills then," the man said as he brought out two short daggers. He then got into a stance, ready to fight.

Ning smiled when he saw that.. The Assassin was finally going to use his skills. "Come!"

Chapter 454: Defending

Ning looked at the man's two daggers that were about 15 centimeters long and glinted yellow in the firelight.

They were so sharp and smooth that Ning could nearly see the reflection of everything around him.

Suddenly, the daggers started moving. They no longer looked so sharp or smooth and instead looked overly fuzzy.

'Is it moving?' Ning thought. That was what it seemed like. Like a fly's wing moving up and down, the dagger seemed to be moving up and down very rapidly. The assassin was making it vibrate.

'You can do that too, huh?' Ning thought in surprise. He really loved it when he saw the ingenuity of people in using their Aether.

Suddenly, the assassin moved like a hunter in the night. Ning couldn't even react when he flew past him. By the time Ning realized what had happened, he felt a bit of coldness in places he shouldn't.

He looked down and saw that his left arm had fallen off his shoulder.

"Woah! How did you cut my arm so fast?" Ning asked. He couldn't believe how quick the attack was.

"Aether Emperors really are on a different level than an Aether King huh? That terrorist leader was strong, but he was nowhere near your level," Ning said as he turned around.

When he did, he saw the Assassin move once again as he flew past him. Ning could feel himself losing all connection with his lower half, as his head started to slip through his neck.

The whole body fell onto the ground, while the assassin stood up straight in the fire looking at Ning with a look of disdain.

Now that Ning was dead, he needed to figure out where he was and how he could return to any civilization.

"Not so fast," Ning spoke. The man turned around and looked in horror as Ning stood up, neither his head nor his arms missing.

"Yo-You Freak! How are you still alive? I even cut your head off," the man shouted.

Ning looked a little surprised and said, "oh, I'm sorry. Were you under the impression that you could kill me? My bad, I should have let you know that there is nothing in this world that you can do to me and keep me dead."

His smile looked innocent, but the fear it struck on the assassin was beyond imaginable.

Ning saw the fear in the assassin's eyes too and laughed, "Haha, did you believe me just now? Come on, don't fall for such obvious lies. Of course, I can die too."

The assassin was a little taken aback and started to get angry at Ning. He felt like he was made fun of by a kid. However, he wasn't so easily dissuaded by his words.

He had seen for himself the head and arms get cut off. Not to mention the bullet from last time. 'How is he doing all of this? Is this something only someone that is a Dual Awakener can do?' he wondered.

He carefully thought of ways to fight him. There were some ways that he could think of. He wasn't sure if that was possible or not, but he would have to try to find out.

The first thing the assassin tried was cutting Ning into multiple pieces. He dashed forward with incredible speed with his two daggers that vibrated at a very high frequency.

He had come to learn that such vibrations could make it very easy for him to cut off anything.

Ning saw him start to move and put up both of his hands in time to protect himself.

The dagger struck his left arm again, but it only cut halfway through this time. The assassin was surprised to see how strong Ning's arm had become all of a sudden. 'Dammit! Just how much Aether does he have to make this strong of a body?' he thought.

He jumped back and started thinking of other ways to hurt him now that physical harm would likely not do it.

Ning looked at his arm too in surprise. He wasn't surprised that he was intact, but rather that it had been cut in the first place.

'A normal blade wouldn't have done that,' he thought. 'So there really is something beneficial to putting that vibration to the blade.'

Making it move back and forth like a saw would make any blade cut things easier.

The assassin put away his daggers before bringing them out again. Ning didn't realize that the assassin had switched daggers already. While using it as he did was beneficial

to cutting, the dagger also got incredibly hot to the touch and would be uncomfortable for use afterward.

So, the assassin brought many pairs of daggers along with him during every journey.

He held the new daggers in his hands again. They looked the same as the previous ones, but these ones were a little special. The handle of these daggers was wrapped in something different.

The assassin strengthened up his body once more, but not to the same level as last time. Last time, he just needed to cut Ning. For that, he could move at the highest speed and not worry about the timing of the hit at all.

However, for this attack, he needed to be slow so that his brain could understand what was happening in front of him.

He dashed once again. Ning looked at him coming towards him and put up his arms again. However, he was surprised that the man didn't make his dagger vibrate again.

'Why?' he wondered. The dagger hit his arms once more, but it couldn't even break past his skin, let alone do any damage to him.

He was about to say something when suddenly he felt shocked. Actual shock. The dagger sparked up as electricity flowed through him, frying him from the inside, making him fall to the ground.

The assassin kept on him, letting as much electricity as he could produce, and passed it along. The daggers he was holding were wrapped in rubber, so he himself was safe from the harm.

Once he saw Ning stop moving, he jumped backward and kept his eyes open. He was sure that would hurt Ning a lot, but he wasn't sure if that could kill him.

Ning looked around with a bit of confusion. "Eh? Did he electrocute me?" he wondered as he searched for the assassin.

The assassin was standing a little far away, looking towards Ning as well.

'Aii... I didn't think this would be a problem at all,' Ning thought as he felt his body slowly regenerate back. He was currently looking around him using his energy vision, rather than his body's.

His body was effectively dead and would require a bit more time to get back to being alive. Honestly, he hadn't expected it to take so much time to regenerate after his cells were electrified.

It took him a full 30 seconds for his body to be even barely useful. He slowly stood up once he got control of the body back.

"That was quite good," Ning said while facing the assassin again. "I'm amazed by your skills, truly."

"You still aren't dead. Would you mind telling me how you did it?" the assassin asked.

"Uhh... it's quite simple actually. You spend 2000 years doing nothing but gathering energy, and then make yourself a body that never dies," Ning explained to the assassin.

The Assassin frowned. He thought Ning was toying with him again. He put his daggers back in and pulled out another pair of daggers.

"Are those different daggers?" Ning asked, but the Assassin didn't answer.

The assassins immediately threw the daggers towards Ning. Ning didn't bother to interfere with them as he wanted to see what they would do.

The daggers struck him in the arm with incredible force. Ning waited for something to happen, but nothing did.

"What was this supposed to be for?" Ning asked the assassin. The assassin grinned menacingly, but as time went on, his smile faded.

"Why aren't you dead yet?" the assassin asked.

"Hmm? Dea—" just as Ning spoke, he felt an intense headache that lasted for a few seconds before disappearing.

"Wooh!" he shook himself. "Yikes, did you try to poison me just now? I was expecting you to fight with Aether, not some measly poison. Come on, you are disappointing me."

The assassin's eyes were beyond shocked. 'What the hell is he? How the hell is poison not working on him either?' he thought. He had never met anyone or anything as surprising as Ning.

The assassin started truly fearing for himself. He brought out over 10 different daggers that flew in the air around him.

He then started sending all of them towards Ning. Ning strengthened his body a bit, but aside from that, he did nothing.

Ning watched as the assassin flawlessly controlled over 10 daggers at the same time while sending one after another to attack Ning.

The strength of the daggers wasn't anything to scoff at either. Each of them hit him hard enough to cut his skin easily. The daggers flew around him, making numerous cuts on his body.

Ning let the attack happen for a while before deciding to stop it. He suddenly sent out his Aether to gain control of the daggers from the assassin.

Seeing himself lose control of his dagger so easily, the assassin got scared.

Ning's wounds started to heal as he played with the dagger in one hand. "That was not a bad trick. I can see how you would be successful at assassinating unsuspecting victims," he said as he threw the daggers back at the assassin.

"Get ready," he said. "I will start attacking now."

Chapter 455: Terror

Ning had quite a few ideas for the attack, and it became hard for him to decide what to use.

"Attacking physically is boring, so I will attack from the distance," Ning said.

The assassin got ready to handle whatever he would be attacked with.

Ning put his hands forth and concentrated. The assassin got scared. Due to Ning being both an Invoker and Enchanter, he didn't know how he would attack at all.

A chill went down his spine when he saw the precipitations around him start to converge on him. The droplets of water appeared out of nowhere and stuck onto him.

More and more appeared in a matter of seconds, and before he knew it, he was surrounded by water, unable to breathe.

He tried to move, but he realized that he was already floating in the water, and couldn't use anything to push himself around.

He immediately enchanted himself to move to the side, but the water moved along with him under Ning's control.

He was starting to get breathless and was going to drown when Ning let go of the water.

The assassin fell to the ground and spit out the water in his lungs. He huffed for breath while the fear of nearly dying kept him vigilant.

He saw Ning's left hand still in the air and wasn't sure what he was about to do.

"Dodge!" Ning said. Suddenly, a ball of fire appeared in front of Ning that flew towards the assassin.

The assassin used what little energy he had mustered after nearly dying and jumped to the side.

Ning shot more fireballs towards him and made him jump around. That was quite funny to watch.

Ning stopped again and started creating many rocks around him the size of eggs. He shot multiple of them at once towards the assassin, who used his strong enchanted body to block them.

Once the barrage of stones stopped, the assassin looked in fear towards Ning at what he was going to do next.

Ning put his hands forth and tried to do something, but it didn't happen. "Hmm... weird. Is it because I'm not very familiar with electricity yet? I will have to learn how it works later," he said out loud and proceeded to do something else.

The assassin suddenly felt his clothes grow hot. The water in them started steaming heavily, practically cooking him inside them.

Ning had enchanted the assassin's clothes with heat energy.

The assassin threw away his shirt and stood there in his undershirt. He was huffing really quickly and knew that if he stayed here for long, the mad man in front of him will surely kill him.

He immediately turned around, put all of his strength into his legs and ran off.

He ran as far as he could for minutes on end. He hit a few trees a couple of times, but he didn't let that stop him. Even when the tree broke in half, he kept running.

After close to 10 minutes of running, the assassin found himself in a dark place, in the middle of the forest.

He fell onto his knees and breathed very heavily as he used one arm to hold onto a tree for support.

"You run really fast huh?" Ning said.

The assassin's eyes went wide and looked above him to see Ning sitting calmly on the tree.

"How?" he cried out.

"Come on. I need to try out a few more attacks," Ning said.

"No, please no," the assassin cried. "Just kill me please. Don't make me suffer."

"What?" Ning exclaimed. "No way. I have been looking forward to this since I learned your Aether rank. You can't take that away from me."

The assassin huffed, trying to catch his breath, while his eyes darted around in the darkness, trying to look for a way to escape.

He couldn't see any. So, he chose to do the one thing he could to get out of this torture.

The assassin took out a dagger from his storage and stabbed himself in the heart.

However, when the dagger hit his chest, he felt no pain. He tried hitting again, but all he could feel was the dagger hitting something really hard.

Ning had enchanted his body to protect himself. The assassin also enchanted himself to increase his strength and stabbed himself. However, no matter how hard he hit the attack never pierced his skin at all.

That made the assassin realize the difference between him and Ning. He looked up with fear in his eyes as he spoke.

"They are wrong. Th-The Pavillion is wrong about your strength," he said. "They think you are an Aether King, but you are not, are you?"

"Hmm... oh no," Ning said.

"You... You are not even an Aether Emperor. You..." the assassin's eyes went wide as he even said the next few words. "You are an Aether Saint, aren't you?"

Ning smiled.

"I'm correct," The Assassin said in both shock and fear. Every country only held a few dozen or so of Aether Saints because of how much talent and resources it required to reach that level.

As far as he knew, the Shadow Pavillion, which was the best-known assassin group in the entire world, only held about 10 Aether saints.

And somehow, this kid, this freak in front of him was one.

Ning scratched his head and said, "honestly, I don't know what I am. I don't really feel a bottleneck and have been advancing in rank like a breeze. Which, by the way, was never my intention."

"Also, I haven't bothered to check what rank, so I don't know what it really is."

"It may be Aether Saint, or... it may also be the rank one step higher. Given the time I absorbed Aether, it's one of the two."

The assassin's eyes nearly popped out of his sockets. "A rank... higher?"

"You don't mean an Aether..."

"Enough talking.. Will you fight me or not?" Ning asked.

Chapter 456: Thanking

"Please spare me, brother. Just kill me if you want to," the assassin cried. "Please don't torture me anymore. I never torture my targets, so treat me the same way I treat them."

"Give me a swift death," he said.

Ning sighed. He still had one more thing he wanted to try, but he didn't want to use it if it meant the opponent wouldn't block it at all.

"Alright," Ning said and jumped down from the tree. "Are you ready?" he asked the assassin.

"Yes," the assassin said and took a deep breath to prepare himself for the swift death. "Thank you."

The assassin closed his eyes, getting ready to die. He felt Ning touch his head. 'Is he going to blow me apart? Electrocute my brain? Rip my head from my body?' many thoughts ran across his mind, while he waited for Ning to kill him.

However, nothing of that sort happened. Just as he was wondering what happened, he suddenly felt a jolt of energy enter his mind. Before he knew it, he started thinking of Ning as the person he should look up to and unequivocally follow.

Once Ning dominated the assassin's mind, he teleported the two of them back into the hotel room once more.

"Alright, since you don't want to fight, fine. I won't fight you either," Ning said. "What were your directives from the Pavillion?"

"To kill the princess, Master," the assassin said.

"That's it?" Ning asked.

"I was supposed to meet the rest of the assassins tomorrow morning in a pub, but you have them arrested already," the assassin said.

"Alright, go to the pub tomorrow morning and send a message to the Pavillion that you have no helper. If they tell you to still kill despite learning that you have nobody to help you, act as you tried. Shoot me at that time," Ning said.

"Yes master," the assassin said.

"Also, take this," Ning said as he gave a ring to the assassin.

"What is this, master?" the assassin asked.

"Put some Aether energy into this ring, and say whatever you want to say in it. I will hear it on the other side," Ning said.

"Like a telephone?" the assassin asked.

"Yes, but just one way," Ning said. "From now on, you will be my eyes and ears in the organization. Anytime, anything of import happens, you let me know, okay?"

"Yes, master," the assassin replied.

"Okay, I'll leave now," Ning said and left the hotel. He reappeared back in his room on top of his bed.

"Ning? Are you okay?!" someone was shouting outside.

"Huh?" Ning was surprised that someone was calling him when he had just returned. He took out his clock and checked the time.

'Who's calling me at 13 in the evening?' Ning wondered as he walked up to open the door.

When he opened it, he saw Fiona outside. His hands were in the air, ready to knock at the door.

"What's wrong? Why are you shouting?" Ning asked.

Fiona looked at him with confusion and said, "Why the hell did you take so long to open? I have been calling you for nearly 2 minutes now."

"Oh, uh... I fell asleep," Ning said.

"This early?" Fiona asked.

"Tomorrow's a big day. I need my full night of sleep, you know?" he said. "Anyway, what are you doing here? It's close to nighttime now."

"I came to thank you for helping with the assassins," she said.

"Oh, don't mind about those. I was really just helping the princess. You can save your breath," Ning said.

"No, let me thank you," she said.

Ning found it surprising that she insisted on it so much, but he just shrugged and said, "Alright, go ahead. Say it."

"No," Fiona said.

"Wha—" before Ning could say anything, Fiona pushed him aside and walked into his room. She closed the door behind them and looked at him.

"What are you doing?" Ning asked.

Fiona didn't speak and simply pushed Ning back onto his bed.

"Thanking you," she said as she unlocked her belt and threw it to the side. She then undid her pant button and started taking it off as well.

Finally, she took off her black top, standing there in her undergarments.

Ning was genuinely surprised. "This... this is you, thanking me?"

Fiona undid her bun and let the hair flow down to her lower back. "Of course," she said.

"Well, I am honored to think you would want to do this with me, but I will have to let you know that I'm not really interested in you. I already have a girl I love," Ning said while trying to get up from the bed.

Fiona pushed him back once again and said, "You aren't leaving anywhere."

Ning narrowed his eyes as he looked at her and asked, "if I'm not interested in this, and you still do this, you know this is an assault, right?"

"I don't care," Fiona said. "I've been attracted to that strength of yours from the day back in the zoo."

Ning smiled, "only my strength?" he asked. "Surely you don't think I don't know about how you like younger men right?" he asked.

"You know about that? That makes it easier then," Fiona said as he finally stripped off of her undergarment as well, standing in front of Ning in the nude.

Ning sighed. "Look, you're beautiful and all, and any man would be happy to get you, but I'm not that man. Please, dress back up, I really have no interest in you," he said.

"Then who?" Fiona asked. "It can't be the princess right? You do know that they will execute you if they find out you have feelings for the princess."

Fiona was now starting to try and blackmail him, and Ning didn't really like it.

"Sigh, you leave me no choice," he said. Suddenly, a tumultuous amount of Aether escaped from his body and started surrounding her, forcing her body down to the ground.

He walked up to her and stared at her straight in the eyes and said, "Do you still want to blackmail me?"

Chapter 457: The Slums

Ning controlled the air around him with his Aether as he pressed down on Fiona.

Her body uncontrollably shuddered as it fell to the ground. She gasped for breath, but none of it entered her lungs.

Ning was using his Aether to command his air after all. She looked at him with fear in her bloodshot eyes.

"Will you try blackmailing me again?" he asked. However, she couldn't speak. She couldn't even move from the air around her.

"I came here on a whim to help a couple who seemed to be having trouble. I stayed here because I wanted to help them survive the unfairness. Did you really think I was here because I fell in love with a little girl? Pathetic!"

Ning undid the air around her, letting her breathe once again. Fiona breathed heavily on all four. She was shaking a little as she looked towards him in pure terror.

"Get dressed and leave my room," Ning told her. "Oh right, about this little incident of ours, keep it a secret, okay? Don't go around telling people how strong I am. I want to live peacefully."

"You..." Fiona snarled. "You think I will keep quiet about this? I will tell the Emperor. He will deal with you."

"Oh," Ning said with a surprised face and looked at her. "You'll tell the emperor, is it? Go ahead then. Go tell the emperor everything, including all the lies you can concoct. Then you may see if I'm bluffing when I tell you that I will unravel this whole empire overnight."

Fiona's eyes went wide. There was no way what he had said could be true, but... those eyes, they held no fear of any consequence.

Either he was really good at bluffing... or he had the strength to back up his claims. Given the demonstration he had put on just a second earlier, she decided to believe he wasn't bluffing.

She quickly dressed and started to leave. Before she did, however, she turned around one last time and said "Sorry" before leaving.

The door closed behind her and Ning was left alone. "Sigh, what am I doing threatening a little girl?"

He laid back on his bed and collected his thoughts. He remembered Ely and thought, 'I wonder what she's doing right now?'

Ning had already learned that Kumia was safe, but beyond that, information of a planet so far away cost him way too much energy.

"What's her cultivation base now, System?" he asked.

<Spirit Transformation 5th Realm>

It cost him a bit of energy, but he was fine with that. 'It took her 300 years, if she cultivated in the Origin, then 3900 years to go up 4 realms in Spirit Transformation huh?' he thought.

That should have been the normal amount. Maybe she wasn't spending all her time in cultivation as well, and may not all years was spent in the Origin.

"Well, I'm just happy she's doing fine," he thought. "Alright, time to sleep. Tomorrow is going to be a long day."

Ning pulled up his blanket and fell asleep. He cared not for what happened next. He didn't care if Fiona came back with an army to apprehend him.

He didn't really care about anything other than living a simple life until he could gather enough energy to go back to his friends in Kumia.

Very early in the morning, before the sun even rose, someone knocked on his door.

Ning woke up and walked up to the door. When he opened it, it was Fiona on the other side.

"What do you need?" he asked.

Fiona fidgeted a little as the words didn't leave her mouth at all. "W-we need your help," she said.

"My help?" Ning asked. "What do you need from me?"

"We need to go check slums and areas for any unusual activities before the princess is set to depart for there," Fiona said.

"Aren't the other guards involved in this?" Ning asked.

"Yes, everyone is," Fiona said, unable to maintain eye contact with him.

Ning sighed. "Is this something every guard is doing?" he asked.

"Y-yes," she said.

"Then why did you say you needed help? Just say there's an order to do that. Or did you forget that I'm still a guard?" Ning asked.

"I... I don't think I can give you orders anymore," Fiona said.

"Stop acting like that. I don't want people to notice anything wrong about me," Ning said and walked. "Let go on the patrol then."

Fiona nodded and quickly followed.

About 12 palace guards and quite a few soldiers, dressed in civilian clothes got out of the palace to check the slums.

They walked there separately and intermingled to not look very suspicious.

The slum was right outside the commercial district on the eastern side of the city.

Ning walked around alone in the slum, looking at the pure joy in the poor folk's faces.

'They are happy that they are getting to eat,' Ning thought. Such was the life of the impoverished.

Ning felt a bit bad when he saw the elderly, the disabled, the single mothers, the little children, all of whom had barely anything to eat or wear.

Their houses could barely fend off the sun, let alone wind and rain.

He wished he could do something for them, but... there wasn't anything he could think of doing without causing an upheaval that spanned the entire empire.

It wasn't just this empire either that had such people. He was sure there were plenty of other places with such a situation.

Ning shook his head and casually used his analysis on one of the people, and shook his head.

He then turned to another one and used it. 'Hmmm...' his eyes sharpened a little when he saw the same, or rather, lack of the same information.

He moved on to another person, then another one. And another one.

After analyzing through many people, he came to understand one thing. The people who were poor and looked beggarly all were similar to each other in one way.

None of these people were Aether users.

Chapter 458: The Feast

'Wait, didn't Reeves tell me that this nation didn't hold prejudice against people who didn't have Aether? Then why are these folks the only one begging?' he wondered.

It wasn't exactly only the non-Aether users that were here. There were also some Aether users. But they were simply an Aether Starter. And, if after many years, they still remained that, then they could be considered as good as a? Non-Aether user.

Ning wondered if the nation secretly hated them by any chance. "Hmm, that's not right. Jamie is clearly a non-Aether user, but he's doing pretty fine," Ning thought.

He thought over it for a few minutes when he realized what it was that was causing all of this.

"I see," he thought. The Aether users, no matter how bad they were, as long as they had just the tiniest amount of skills, could find a job for themselves somewhere.

And as expected, a bad Aether user could always do more than a good non-Aether user.

So naturally, the non-Aether users, especially ones with no set of skills, or physically able to do something, would always end up in the slums.

"Aether... it all comes down to that again," Ning thought. "It's so easy to get it as well."

A thought came to his mind. "Maybe I should help them."

He walked off to a corner of the slum and when he could see no one, he disappeared.

* * * *

Lisa, along with many of her brothers and sisters walked along with the slums with many servants behind her.

"Here you go," Lisa said as he handed a loaf of bread and a bowl of soup to a nearby child.

"Thank you, princess," the child said and walked up to his mom to hand her the food.

"Hey you, come here," she called the child again.

"Why did you give that food to your mother?" she asked curiously.

"Mommy always gives me her food, so I gave mine to her," the child said.

"Is that true?" Lisa said with a smile, but behind her smile, she felt pain for the child and his mother.

"Here's some more bread for you then. For being a very good boy," she said as she handed another loaf of bread and a bowl of soup that was meant to be his mother's.

The child's eyes shined with pure glee. He really had never seen this much food before.

"Thank you," the child said. If the first time was something his mother had told him to say, then this time it genuinely came from his heart.

"Poor child," Reeves said softly, a little behind the whole group. Ning was next to him as he listened to him.

"It's quite tragic to see so many people living like this," Ning said. He looked to the side to see two of the servants walking behind the princess.

He had given them a special job that he had asked for approval with Lisa. Although he hadn't told them the reason for it to her, so there was a good chance she would end up being surprised when she learned it.

"By the way, brother Ning, is my wife safe? I heard some rumors about assassins and such in the palace yesterday," Reeves asked.

"Oh, don't worry about it. She's safe. We captured all the assassins that were coming for her yesterday," Ning said.

"I see," Reeves said. "As long as she's safe."

He looked towards his wife giving food to the poor and smiled.

"Do you want to go there by any chance? To the desert?" Ning asked.

"Sorry?" Reeves was taken aback.

"The desert," Ning said. "It's been a few weeks, right? Those people must be looking forward to you by now. In fact, they must be desperate."

"To be honest, I haven't really given much thought to that," Reeves said. "After all, the only reason I cared about it was to earn money for myself."

"Although, I wouldn't really mind going back there once just to tell them all that they could do what I did on their own. If they become self-sufficient, it would be fine," Reeves said.

"Hmm, let's go there after this feast then," Ning said.

"Right after? Hmm, we might have to stay in a hotel for the night, but that should be fine. I will talk to Lisa about it later," Reeves said.

"Right, how's your Aether coming along? Have you broken through to the Grandmaster rank yet?" Ning asked.

"Oh right, Brother Ning. I meant to thank you so many times, but I keep forgetting. This technique is so good. Even Lisa said that she has never seen anyone grow up in rank as fast as me," Reeves said excitedly.

"It's alright. I'm glad you're improving," Ning said. His eyes once again moved to the servants who were behind Lisa.

Once Lisa handed the folks bread and soup and walked on. The two servants would go up to them and hand them a piece of fruit as well as a piece of paper.

The servants themselves didn't know what these were, and were prohibited from looking at them, so they just did what they were ordered to do.

Once they all moved on forward, Ning looked back to the people who were opening the pieces of paper and read it first.

The moment they read it, their eyes went wide in surprise and they suddenly gobbled up the piece of fruit before even touching the bread and soup that were next to them.

Ning couldn't help but smile. That was all he could do for them for now.

"Brother Ning?" Reeves called.

"Oh, sorry, you were saying?" Ning asked.

"Right, I was saying that since I have the Aether absorption technique, do you think I can learn how to use Aether in combats or other scenarios? I know I can't go to the tower, but I want to learn something like that," Reeves said.

"Hmm, sure," Ning said. "I can teach you th—"

Suddenly, the sound of a gunshot rang, and Ning fell to the floor with blood pouring out of his chest.

Chapter 459: Undying Fort

"AAAH!" People cried out when they heard the gunshot and saw Ning fell to the ground.

Reeves was stunned for a few seconds, not understanding what had happened. When he realized Ning was on the ground, he immediately got down to help him.

Ning was slowly turned around to reveal that he was shot in the chest.

"Urgh!" Ning cried out in pain in front of all the people.

Fiona's eyes went wide and immediately turned around to her guards. "Go find the assassin!" she shouted.

The guards ran away to look for someone in the direction where the attack had come from.

Ning showed an incredibly pained expression, but on the inside, he simply understood that Sam couldn't get out of killing the princess, so as he had told him, he had shot him.

'Dammit, that man. He could've just shot my arm or leg. How the hell am I going to explain being fine?' Ning thought. He was getting a little annoyed, but thankfully, he had prepared the fake blood in advance all over his body just for this.

"I'm okay," he cried out and slowly stood up. He put his hands inside his shirt and pulled out a metal plate with a hole in it.

"I was wearing armor on the inside just in case today," he said. That was the best lie he could come up with at the moment.

"But you're bleeding," Fiona said.

"It's just a flesh wound. I'll go get it checked right now," he said.

"Let me help you, brother Ning," Reeves said.

"Thank you, brother Reeves." Ning grabbed his shoulder for support and walked away from the crowd.

After walking a bit far away, Ning stopped relying on Reeves and stood up straight.

"Tsk! My shirt got ruined," Ning said.

"Wh-what?" Reeves was surprised to see Ning acting perfectly fine.

Ning pulled out the pack of blood that he had put on his body. "What?" he asked when he looked at Reeves' face. "Oh yeah, this was fake. Don't worry. I had to act like I got shot so the assassin would run away."

"You planned all of this?" Reeves asked.

"Yes," Ning said. "We have to keep your wife safe, so we do what we can."

Reeves felt gratitude towards Ning that reached almost sky-high. He had done so much for them, and yet he kept on doing even more.

Ning took out a bandage from his storage and put it around his chest. "Let's wait here for a moment before we return," he said.

After a while, they returned back to the feast and saw that nothing had changed except for the security being a little tighter.

"I'm so sorry. We checked everything this morning. I don't know where the assassins came from," Fiona spoke.

"It's alright," Ning said. "I'm not really hurt. How are the princes and princesses doing?"

"They're fine. Although, the 5th prince asked to return back to the palace," Fiona said.

"I see," Ning said. The 5th prince was the last prince aside from Gillian and Elizabeth to have a claim to the throne.

Ning had wondered once that he might have been responsible for the assassins, but given how introverted and anti-social he was, as well as having an extreme love for arts and crafts, Ning gave up all suspicions he had.

So it really could just be the 2nd prince that was absent today.

The feast ended about 5 hours later around noon. On the way back, Ning used his analysis to check on the smiling faces of the slum folks and saw that they had indeed become an aether user now.

'That worked quite well. Now I hope they put it to good use,' he thought.

The group returned back to the palace. Reeves was now walking next to Lisa, along with the other royal family members.

Just as they were entering the palace, they stopped when they saw someone walk out.

It was a relatively young man, about 30 years old. He was wearing a military outfit, one that belonged to someone in high rank.

"Good Afternoon, your highnesses," The man bowed towards them all.

"Mr. David, what are you doing here?" one of the princes asked.

"I just came to give the report to the emperor," David said.

"Report?" the prince's face changed a little. "No way, is the Undying fort in trouble again?"

"Haha, no, your highness. My report was that there is no trouble," David said.

He then turned to Lisa and said, "I heard that you were alive, your highness. It's good to see that the news wasn't a lie."

"Thank you, Mr. David," Lisa said.

"If you will, I need to return back to the fort by sundown, your highnesses," David bowed a little and left them.

'Undying fort... isn't that the place next to the forest where the main war with the Aether beasts took place? Do they still wait there for caution?' Ning wondered.

"Who was that?" Reeves asked Lisa softly.

"That's David. He used to be a Vice Commander of the Defense army, but now I suppose he's the Commander of the Defense Army," Lisa said.

"Oh, a commander huh? At such a young age," Reeves said.

"Oh, he's not young. He just looks like that because he's an Aether genius. He reached a very high rank at a young age, so he kept his youth."

"If I'm not wrong, he should be around 150 years old this year," Lisa said.

'That's still considered young for an Aether user right?' Ning thought from behind them.

Once the group entered the palace, Ning waited for Reeves to come out of the palace again.

Reeves told Lisa what he was doing, so she gave him her approval without a single thought.

"Alright, brother Ning. Let's go," Reeves said excitedly.

"Let's go," Ning said with a smile. They walked out of the palace, and Reeves started looking for a carriage.

"Uhh... brother Reeves, don't tell anyone about this okay?" Ning asked.

"About wha—" halfway through Reeves' words, the scenario changed from a road and wall, to a desert.

Chapter 460: Duke Tremen

"—at?" the moment he finished speaking, his eyes went wide and he immediately looked around him.

"What? Where are we?" he started getting a little scared of what had just happened.

"What just happened?"

"I teleported us," Ning said. "It's one of the things I can do. Don't mind it."

"Tele...port?" Reeve was still confused. "Aether users can do that?"

"Yes," Ning said, not bothering to explain some more. "Come on. The village is just over there."

"Huh?" Reeve looked around. "Oh, we're in the desert?" It took him some time to realize that.

Ning started walking and Reeve followed. He slowly touched his ring and got a little confused. "Did you really use Aether?" he asked.

"Of course," Ning said.

"Hmm, then why didn't my Aether glow?" Reeve asked. "It didn't even vibrate."

"Oh, that's because it doesn't register me when I'm using Aether of course," Ning said. He picked up a bunch of sand from the desert and made it move around him fabulously.

Reeve was left staring at the amazing control Ning had come to learn in just a matter of weeks.

"Come on. We still need to go there, you know," Ning said and they walked to the village.

The villagers were beyond stoked to see Reeve finally return after so many days.

Reeve smiled and immediately started putting on a performance for them.

Ning watched from beside him. This time, the performance was much grander than the first time. 'He's really improving quite well as an Aether user huh?' Ning thought.

As he was watching the show that Reeve had put on, Ning got a message directly onto his mind. It was a message from Sam, the assassin and it said 'Master, I have reached the Ordain Empire just now.'

'Oh, he returned already? This bastard, he didn't even apologize for shooting me and just left,' Ning thought.

Ning shook his head and sent a message back. "Next time, try not to shoot me in the chest, okay? You nearly caused me quite some trouble," he said.

Ning stopped talking and focused on the show in front of him with a smile on his face when a message came again.

'What do you mean, master? Why would I shoot you?' it said.

Ning's face changed a little because of the confusion. "What are you saying? You shot me today right?" he asked.

He waited for a while and another message came again.

'Shoot you, master? I didn't do anything like that. After I visited the pub today and saw no one, I told the Pavillion about what had happened.'

'After learning that I didn't need to stick around any longer, I took the first train back in the morning.'

'That's why I reached the capital of Ordain so fast, master.'

Ning's eyes narrowed. 'He didn't shoot me?' he thought. His slacking body straightened as he got serious.

"Brother Reeever, I need to go somewhere. If I don't return back in time, just go to the City of Beginnings and wait for me there, okay?" Ning said.

"You're leaving, Brother Ning?" Reeever asked.

"Yes. Something urgent came up," Ning said and ran away from the group. When he was out of sight, he immediately disappeared and appeared back in the slums.

"System, who shot me today?" he asked.

Suddenly, a few pieces of information were sent directly to his brain. He got the name of the shooter, his information as well as the affiliation he worked for.

"The Great Raiders group?" Ning was surprised. "Weren't they the terrorists from back then in the zoo?"

"First they came to kill the Eldest prince, now they came to disturb the princess' event?" Ning thought.

He asked the system and located the person who had shot him. "What the hell?" Ning read the information in surprise.

The person that shot him was hiding in a duke's mansion. 'A duke is responsible for this?' Ning thought in shock. 'Why was a duke trying to kill a princess.'

He wasted no time and immediately teleported out of slums and inside the duke's manor.

"Where am I?" he didn't know the layout of the Duke's mansion so he was a little confused.

The mansion belonged to Duke Tremen. One of the only 3 dukes of the Empire. The other two dukes stayed outside of the capital, so he was also the only duke of the capital.

A duke trying to kill a prince and princess... was a serious crime. If the Emperor found out about this, all of the Duke's family being hanged to death would be a very likely outcome.

'Where do I go now?' Ning looked at the information on the map he had just asked for from the system and walked.

He walked through the mansion, extra careful so that no one saw him. He sneaked past the servants, flew past them, and sometimes even teleported past them.

Finally, just as he was about to reach the terrorist, he turned a corner and crashed into someone that was trying to turn the corner towards him.

'Shit!' he thought and tried to scramble away from the place. But before he could do so, the other person stood up and looked at him in surprise.

"Master!" the figure called out to him.

"Huh?" Ning stopped right as he was about to run away. "Master?" he turned around slowly to look at the person's face.

In front of him was a girl in her late teens. She was wearing a very pompous looking dress and had a lot of make-up on her.

It didn't take very long for him to recognize the girl at all.

"It's you," he said with surprise clear in his voice. "You... what was it, Camie. Right? You're Camie."

"Yes, master," the girl said. "Why are you in my house, master?"

Ning looked around. "You are the duke's daughter?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes," Camie said. "I am Camie Tremen. The sole daughter of Duke Tremen."

"Ah...shit!"

He had accidentally made a Duke's daughter his servant.