

Death 371

Death... and me

Chapter 371: The New Projects

Rean's interest was immediately piqued.

"What a coincidence. I also have something to show you. Anyway, tell me your news first."

Droman nodded before continuing.

"I got permission to enter the Formation Masters Repository in the Formation Master Guild in the Capital. The last time I went was over 50 years ago."

"The Repository is the most complete one in our Sasamil Empire. Because of that, there are way too many Formation Masters who want to enter it. The rule says that each Formation Master who isn't part of the Capitals' Formations Master Guild can only browse their books for a month at most. After that, they can't return before a hundred years has passed."

"Fortunately, the Communication System helped me avoid this rule. It was considered a huge addition to the Formation Master Guild, so they made an exception. It was so good that I can even bring someone with me. Obviously, I thought about you."

Rean was delighted to hear that. That was indeed an excellent chance.

"Great! You talked about this place so much that even I got curious. However, you said that Guild Members can enter anytime they want. Why don't you join their guild as well?"

Droman shook his head.

"It's not that simple. There are so many slots for Formation Masters to join the Capital's Guild. After all, if they accepted anyone who concluded a Formation Master test, there would be way too many people again. Because of that, they only take around ten or so Formation Masters every year. I'm pretty confident about my abilities, but not to the point where I can compete at the Empire level."

"Also, half of these slots are destined to new Formation Masters. That being said, it's even harder for me to enter the guild."

Rean couldn't help but ask.

"Shouldn't the Communication System be more than enough to allow you to enter the Capital's Guild? Even the Imperial Family was moved by it, after all."

Droman laughed after hearing that.

"Hahaha! Of course, I can use that. However, the one who created the communication system was you, not me. I won't use your idea to benefit myself."

Rean shook his head in response.

"You know very well that my existence as the creator of the Communication System is a secret. That being said, I can't take it either. Isn't this chance being wasted instead?"

Droman didn't seem to care, though.

"Even if it's okay for you, it isn't for me. Call me stubborn or whatever, I don't care. Once your Formation Master level increases, you can go ahead and take this slot in my place."

Rean pondered a bit before asking.

"What about these ten slots available every year? I could try that. If I get to enter the Capital's Guild, you should have no excuse to not enter anymore, right?"

Droman laughed once again.

"Do you think it's that easy to join? You definitely have a lot of talent for formations, but that is the Capital's Guild. There is no lack of Formation Master Geniuses who try it every year. It would be tough for you to enter the top five and get a slot for yourself. I've been teaching you all this while. Trust me, I know."

Ren shrugged his shoulders in response.

"Well, we are already going there anyway. It won't hurt to give it a try, don't you think? Besides, I'm particularly good at Lightning Type Formations. Who knows? I might be lucky, and they will select these types of formations for the test."

"This..."

Droman pondered a bit and nodded in the end.

"Well, it would at least be a good experience for you. Very well, the next test just so happens to be around the corner. Since we are already going there to look in the Repository, I can use it to prepare you for the exam. The Formation Knowledge there is a lot better than the ones we have here, after all."

Rean was happy to hear that.

"When is the next test?"

Droman then thought about the date and said.

"It will start in 67 days. We have one month free to use the Repository in the Capital, so it is more than enough. The travel will take us around half a month to arrive if we keep using Teleport Formations."

Rean couldn't help but feel excited. He has never had the chance of competing in Formations with others until now. The Formation Masters in the Sect at his level were not his match, especially at Lightning Type Formations. As for Droman and the higher-level ones, it would make no sense to compete against them. After all, the difference in age, cultivation, and the runes they could use were too different. Rean wanted to find people who had been studying formations for the same time as him.

Droman could tell what Rean was thinking and smiled. In the past, he had also participated in the Capital's Test. The level of Formations during that time really opened his eyes.

"Anyway, what did you come to talk with me for?"

Only then did Rean remember the Circuitry Formation he had been working so far.

"Ah! That's right! I finally finished developing that idea of mine."

Droman was surprised to hear that.

"Oh! You did say something over a year ago that you were working on something completely new for the Electrical Formations. I asked you several times what it was about, but you never said anything. Did you change your mind now?"

Rean laughed before explaining.

"It's not that I couldn't show you, but it was not a mature concept yet. I wanted to first ensure it was viable before showing it."

Of course, that was a lie. It was just that the Electrical Formations Repository didn't have anything regarding the Circuitry Formations at that time. Obviously, Rean wouldn't say that.

Rean then brought out many piles of paper with several schematics. It wasn't only the Router Formation that was described there. Rean also thought about many other uses. That would ensure that no one would come up with the ideas before him, affecting his Destiny Points income. Still, the majority of it was all related to the router formation.

"This... How long will I need to read all those papers?"

Rean shrugged his shoulders.

"Now you know why I took this long to bring it out for you to see. If I could use jade slips, I would have done so. However, we both know that only at the Nascent Soul and above would I be able to put information into them."

Droman laughed, not minding it too much.

"Alright, alright. Let me take a look first. With my cultivation, I can at least read them much faster than you."

Droman then used his Spiritual Energy to grab everything and lifted the papers in front of him. After that, he used his Spiritual Sense to read the texts one by one. It was a much faster way of reading than using one's eyes. Of course, Droman also had to make sure to pay attention to the content. That being said, there was a limit to how fast he could read and understand everything that entered his mind.

Droman had a smile on his face as he read everything. After all, Rean always came up with new ideas that made his profession as a Formation Master more enjoyable. However, his smile began to disappear as surprise took its place. The concepts of Circuitry Formations were something completely different from everything they had done so far.

His surprise then slowly changed into shock. The more he read, the more he had to slow down the reading to make sure he wasn't missing anything. At some point, he completely forgot that Rean was still in the room as his entire being merged with those papers in front of him. Every now and then, Rean heard Droman murmuring something.

"Amazing! Can it really work?"

"Oh! I see... the metal paths on the board can keep the electrical signals separated even though they are so close to each other."

"What?! Can it really work with such a small output of electricity? Isn't it too weak?"

"SPU? Spiritual Processing Unit? What is that?"

"This is crazy! No, wait! Let me go back to the SPU part to check something first."

"It might really work!"

By the time Droman finished reading everything, over a day had passed. It's not that it took him that long. After all, Rean didn't really put everything he knew in the papers, only the basics of the basics. For example, the Electromagnetic Waves were not there at the moment. Droman took this long to finish because he basically referred to different parts of the documents many, many times. At the same time, he applied his own knowledge of Formations into the project presented in the papers, which made him even busier.

"Rean! This is world-changing!"

"Uh? Where is he?"

Around an hour later, Rean returned to the Formations Hall after Droman sent someone to look for him.

Still, Droman seemed a little embarrassed when he looked at Rean.

"Ahem... I might have got a little too excited with these documents that I accidentally forgot you were there."

Rean laughed, not minding it at all.

"Hahaha! It's okay. Instead, I'm shocked that Master finished reading everything in a single day. It took me months to put all of this together, you know?"

Droman sighed before going back to the main topic.

"Rean, you aren't an idiot. You do understand how big this is, right?"

Rean nodded.

"Yes. That's why I came to you first, Master."

Droman nodded before saying.

"I'll be direct. We should use another power to display these Circuitry Formations."

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Chapter 372: Guilds

Rean was taken aback.

"Wait! What?! Why?!"

Droman then explained.

"Can't you see? It's too strange! We're already standing out a lot since we created the Communication System. If we start to bring out even more of those Electrical Ideas, everyone will become suspicious. Chances are that the Imperial Family and the other powers will think that we found some kind of inheritance and will demand it from us."

"This..."

In fact, Droman really thought that Rean and Roan got some kind of heaven-defying inheritance. Otherwise, what could explain their accomplishments until now? At the moment, everyone could accept that Droman thought about the Communication System. But if the Circuitry Formations came out from Dalamu, that would be too hard to swallow.

Rean, of course, became dejected. There were many Destiny Points right in front of him, but he couldn't get them. How sad was that?

Seeing Rean's face made Droman laugh in response.

"Hahaha! Don't worry. There is a way to avoid inviting problems with the Imperial Family. To be honest, it was quite convenient that we're going to the capital. Instead of using the Imperial Family, let's use the Formations Guild Instead."

"The Formations Guild? But aren't they subordinates of the Imperial Family to start with?"

Droman shook his head.

"Of course not! The Formations Guild is an independent organization. In fact, all the side occupation guilds are the same. Why do you think we have a Formations Hall instead of a Formations Guild in our Sect? That's because the Guilds prefer to keep their distance from everyone. In that way, even if a country is conquered by someone else, the Guilds will not become affected."

"The Guilds are present in the entire world. Also, they have good relations with each other. So, in case one of them is threatened, the other guilds will ally together. Of course, only if the Guild being threatened is not in the wrong. For example, if a certain country of empire wishes to rob them of their secrets just because they can."

"When all the Guilds are put together, even an Empire like Sasamil will not buy a fight against them lightly. In exchange, the Guilds have an agreement with these powers. They will not get involved in the power struggles of any countries or empires."

Rean couldn't help but ask.

"The Guilds definitely have members that are part of the Imperial Families or the powers controlling each region. What happens in that case?"

Droman understood what Rean meant.

"The Guilds had thought about it a long time ago. They won't stop their members from helping one side during a war or whatever. However, these members must understand that they won't receive any help from the Guilds. They will join those struggles on their own. The Guilds also won't protect them in case the side these members fought for loses. So asking for asylum in the Guilds is meaningless."

Rean then asked something else.

"One of these guilds is the Formation Master Guild. However, can they really stop the Imperial Family from finding problems with us?"

Droman nodded.

"That's why I selected them. As always, I'll be the one to hold the name of the creations. Once you grow strong enough, I can simply announce that it was you all along."

"I would then offer these Circuitry Formations to the Formation Guild. Once that happens, even the Imperial Family won't be able to do anything. Besides, we did give the Imperial Family the Communication System they have today. It would look bad to them if they went as far as buying a fight with the Formation Guild because of some new invention we had."

Rean scratched the back of his head.

"It sounds so complicated... The world should give more space for inventors, you know?"

Droman sighed after hearing that.

"You have no idea how many times I had the same thought. Unfortunately, this is the cultivation world. Might is right! Simple as that. The Formations Guild have might, so they are right. That being said, we would instead have both the Imperial Family and the Formation Master Guild guarding our backs. Anything related to the Communication System and Circuitry Formations would be safe."

Rean nodded.

"Okay. Then we can do both things at the same time. We can look into the repository while you talk with the Guild."

It was then that Rean noticed one thing.

"Wait. Wouldn't it be bad if we simply gave it to them for free? I refuse to believe that having their protection is enough."

Droman nodded.

"Now that you said that, we could use it to make you a member of their Guild straight away. That way, you don't need to go through any exams."

Rean immediately shook his head.

"Denied! Don't spoil my fun, alright? I want to participate in that test against everyone else by hook or by crook. Also, we will not give them the Circuitry Formations for now. Or could it be that you don't want to work on these projects before anyone else?"

Droman's eyes lit up before laughing out loud.

"Hahaha! Indeed. I definitely prefer to be the first one to try these little projects. Very well, we will keep these Circuitry Formations between you and me for now. By the way, we will be leaving the Sect in two weeks. After that, we will be gone for at least two months."

Rean nodded.

"No problem. I'll get everything ready on my side."

Rean couldn't cultivate the Light and Dark Cultivation Techniques of the Soul Gem System if Roan was too far away. Naturally, he would need Roan to go as well. Rean and Droman then let the next few days

pass, talking about the Circuitry Formations. As a higher level Formation Master, Droman contributed a lot to the parts where Rean got stuck.

Rean then called Roan through their Soul Connection straight away.

'So you would need to go to the capital?'

'Yeah. I'll take the Formation Guild Test to be accepted as their member after finishing my free month in their repository. Will you be able to come as well? After all, we still need to cultivate. I just don't know if Old Worm would accept that.'

Roan pondered a bit.

'This is convenient. We will be entering the Imperial Family's turf. I can use this chance to investigate the situation of the Imperial Succession. The more information I have, the bigger our chances will be once the Emperor makes his move.'

'As for Old Worm, I'll talk to him. In any case, I'm pretty much at my limit as an Earth High-Level Alchemist. I can't concoct anything above this level since I'm lacking the necessary cultivation.'

Rean nodded.

'Alright. Droman will bring us over in two weeks, so make sure you're ready.'

Rean then returned his attention to Droman. The guy was once again looking into the Circuitry Formations' documents. However, this time he began to use a Jade Slip. After all, reading all these papers was too annoying. At the same time, he and Rean discussed several points of the Circuitry Formation.

On Roan's side, he went straight to the Alchemist Repository, where Old Worm was once again watching the entrance. As always, Old Worm had several Alchemist books around while he read one without caring for the world.

Old Worm noticed Roan's presence, though. Right after, Roan heard a Spiritual Sense Message from him.

'It's been some time since you came to the repository. Is there anything you need from me?'

Roan nodded and then explained that he would go to the capital with Rean and Droman. After hearing everything, Old Worm closed his book and got up.

'I see. That's quite convenient. Considering your level, I think you should also compete for one of the ten slots of the Alchemist Guild in the capital. After all, you can't improve anymore with your actual cultivation. At most, you can learn how to concoct a few more different pills.'

Roan couldn't help but ask.

'The Alchemist Guild Test? Should I really waste time with it?'

Old Worm nodded.

'Their Alchemist Repository is much better than ours. I'm a member of their Guild, so I can guarantee that you won't regret it.'

This time, Roan was a little surprised. He didn't know that at all. Rean told him that joining one of the Guilds in the capital was very hard, even for those with high cultivation. It wasn't something exclusive for the Formation Master Guild. Sure enough, Old Worm was very good at keeping a low profile.

'Can't you simply bring me inside to check the books available? I would rather not waste my time in a meaningless competition.'

Well, Roan wasn't as excited to compete as Rean.

'It's against the rules.'

Old Worm's answer was as short as ever.

Roan pondered a bit and nodded in the end.

'Alright. Do I need any special invitation or something like that?'

Old Worm then left the counter and walked out with Roan.

'Usually, you would need some local guild's letter. Droman is definitely using it to have Rean compete for the slots in the Formations Guild. However, as a member of the Capital's Guild myself, I can bypass this rule.'

Roan was satisfied to hear that. At least he wouldn't need to do anything else. He could use his time on other tasks.

Old Worm then headed to his hut with Roan.

'Let's revise what you know for the next few days. Then we can leave together with Droman and Rean.'

Roan didn't mind and simply followed. And just like that, Rean and Roan spent their next two weeks in the Sect.

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Chapter 373: Sasamil's Capital

A few days before departing, Droman went to the Formation Guild he was part of to get permission for Rean to participate in the Capital Guild's competition. Once he came back, he found out that not only would Roan be going, but Elder Faulk would follow them as well.

"Elder Faulk is coming with us? That's great! I was afraid that bringing Roan away for the next two months would be a problem for you."

Old Worm shook his head.

"I also have my own things to do there."

Roan then looked at Rean before asking.

'Where is the Chicken?'

Rean shrugged his shoulders after hearing that.

'Malaka finally got rid of Mia's intense training schedule, so she went out on a mission with Calina straight away. What I didn't expect was that Kentucky would go with them too. Try to feel his presence. Kentucky is still close enough for you to perceive his position.'

Roan then closed his eyes and focused on his connection with the Minokawa. Sure enough, he could faintly feel the chicken's presence far away to the northwest.

'That's good. With the dumb bird's defense, those two shouldn't be at much risk.'

'Well, Elder Reliance wouldn't let us bring Kentucky to the Capital anyway. Don't forget that he said that he believes that no more than ten or so cultivators would be able to recognize Kentucky's Race. However, the Capital would definitely have some of these cultivators. We better not risk it.'

Rean nodded and then asked something else.

'Was it really okay to not tell Calina that we are going to the Empire's Capital? Her family is still living in the Imperial Palace, no?'

Roan snorted after hearing that.

'So what? Would you go there and tell them that she's alive? You can't possibly be that naive. Anyway, nothing good would come out if we told Calina about that. Let her focus on her training and the mission.'

I also left a menu of exercises that she and Malaka will have to complete before we come back, so they will be very busy themselves.'

Rean nodded. It seems like it will be only him and Roan this time.

Droman and Faulk were both at the Soul Transformation Realm, so there wouldn't be much risk if both of them go out together. That being said, Zuan didn't leave his seclusion to follow him anymore. Especially after he gave the Imperial Family Version 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 of the Router Formation. With the information now public, he wasn't that important anymore.

Droman and Faulk talked for a bit before they took Rean and Roan and left the Sect through the Sect's Long Distance Teleport Formation. As mentioned before, these teleport formations couldn't teleport that far and were quite expensive. However, with the Sect's actual income from the Data Storages' Copyrights, it wasn't a burden for them anymore.

Of course, with those two in the lead, no one noticed their departure. Only Mia and Zuan were informed about the reason for them to go out. They knew it would be a good thing for both of them, so they didn't try to stop either one.

Their group went from one teleport formation after the other, passing by two or three countries per day. There were parts of the path where the teleport formations were not available, so they had to fly when it happened.

Just as Droman mentioned, the travel to the Capital took them half a month to be completed.

Unsurprisingly, the Capital of the Sasamil Empire also carried the same name as the Imperial Family, Sasamil City. This was the biggest city in the Empire, with over one hundred million inhabitants. Without a doubt, a gigantic metropolis that expanded for over 1000 kilometers. Still, the entire city was surrounded by an enormous wall.

The wall wasn't only responsible for protecting those who approached by land. It had many Formations that worked together to create a gigantic Protection Formation that covered the entire city. It's said that the costs to keep this formation running every day were higher than a small country would get in a whole week in income. Don't underestimate this amount. We are talking about a single city here.

Thanks to that, the city was protected against attacks that could come from both air and earth. It made the protection formation of the Dalamu Sect look like a joke.

The city was divided into three different sectors:

First, the Outer City, where most of the populace resided. 90% of the city's size was the Outer City alone. All the visitors had to first pass through the Outer City's gates before entering it. Everyone had to pay a fee as well. As one could imagine, the majority of visitors were Cultivator Merchants who came to sell, buy, or exchange their goods in this place.

Of course, there were many other types: Mercenaries, Vagrant Cultivators, Clans, Side Occupation Guild Members, etc. Last but not least, the city's own citizens who went out to do their own things.

The Second Sector was the Inner City. From this point onward, one had to be a cultivator in the Energy Gathering Realm or above to enter. Of course, this only applied to new visitors. There were still things like young children from the cultivators who lived inside, their family members from outside the Capital, ordinary merchants who had an invitation letter, etc. Those ones could bypass this restriction and enter.

Still, more than 95% of the Inner City people had cultivations above the Energy Gathering Realm. After all, any person who had the conditions to live in this place wouldn't have issues with cultivation resources. At the very least, their families had enough to bring them up to the Energy Gathering Realm. This number became even more impressive when you remember that the majority still had a Gray Color Aptitude, the worst of all seven colors.

It was really a stark contrast with the life one had in the Tribes, where most of the residents wouldn't ever reach the Energy Gathering Realm. In fact, even the Outer City was much better since more than 20% of the people there would at least reach the Energy Gathering Realm in their lives. One must remember that in an entire Tribe, only around 1% would receive cultivation resources. Anyone with Gray Color Aptitude wouldn't usually receive any cultivation resources whatsoever.

Many sects liked to conduct their businesses in the Inner City. Even though the Inner Part had only around 7% of the total size of the Sasamil City, it was still a much bigger place than most of the cities outside the Capital. Dalamu Sect also just so happened to have a place of their own. As a Sect with a Saint Realm Cultivator, it would be weird if they didn't have at least a place to stay here. Nonetheless, compared to the real big sects, clans, etc., their state was somewhat unimpressive.

Last but not least, there was the Core City. That's where the ten Noble Clans and the Imperial Palace were located. As mentioned in the past, the Imperial Family had nine subordinate clans under their control. Samikil, Lavil, Taran, Fole, Susume, Dekaslo, Mantil, Porem, and Wavile. This is the place where others could find them.

The Core Part was only around 3% of the entire city's size. Still, that meant a length of over 30 kilometers occupied by nothing more than the guilds, clans, and Imperial Family. One could only imagine just how many members they had to fulfill all this extension by themselves. In fact, there wasn't enough space for everyone. That being said, many Clan and Imperial Family Members needed to be sent to live outside.

One could also find the Capital's many Guild Main Branches there. Due to the Capital's size, all Side Occupations had quite a few branches around the city to attend to customers. However, only the Main Branches had the repositories that Droman and Old Worm wanted to access. Joining one of the branches outside the Core City wasn't much different than joining a Guild Branch in other cities in the Empire.

Although Sasamil City had teleport formations inside the Inner and Core Parts of the city, those were restricted. Anyone who arrived outside had to use the Teleport Formations in the Outer City. All of a sudden, one of the thousands of long Distance Teleport Formations began activated. Just a few seconds later, the formation flashed with a silver light. The silver light only lasted for a second before disappearing as fast as it appeared. However, now one could see four figures standing above the formation. Naturally, those were Rean, Roan, Droman, and Old Worm.

"Phew... we're finally here."

Droman and Old Worm began to walk outside the formation straight away, not giving the twins time to check the things around.

"Come down. All the formations here are used constantly. If you block it for too long, you will have to pay a fee."

Rean and Roan nodded and followed them. Sure enough, just a few seconds after they left the formation, it flashed once more, bringing a new group of cultivators with it.

That wasn't the only one, though. There were hundreds of formations in that place, all bringing and sending cultivators or wealthy people back and forth.

"As expected of the Capital. This is only the teleport formation. Only those with enough resources would use something like this. I can only imagine how many people arrive by foot outside the city walls."

Droman laughed.

"This is just part of it. Wait until you try to spread your Spiritual Sense in the city."

Old Worm and Roan didn't care about any of that and kept walking, forcing Droman and Rean to follow them right after.

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Chapter 374: New Finding

Before leaving the teleportation area, Rean's group had to pass by a checkpoint.

"What is this?"

Droman then explained.

"Everyone who wants to enter the city has to pay a fee for that. It also depends on the cultivation of each individual. That's one of the ways they use to keep the protection formation of the city operating all the time."

"Energy Gathering or below pay 10 Rank One Spirit Stones;

Foundation Establishment pay 100 Rank One;

Core Formation goes for 50 Rank Two;

Core and Soul Fusion is 200 Rank Two;

Nascent Soul 100 Rank Three;

And lastly, Soul Transformation pays 300 Rank Three."

"As for Saint Realm cultivators, they don't need to pay anything. After all, it would be considered disrespectful to experts at their level."

Rean nodded.

"It seems that even here Rank Four Spirit Stones don't come out that easily."

Droman agreed with Rean.

"Exactly. Rank Four Spirit Stones are definitely much easier to find here in the Empire's Capital. However, they are still considered high-level commodities. Oh, if you have the right connections, you might even get your hands on Rank Five Spirit Stones."

Rean bitterly Smiled. Even the Router Formation's Data Storages sales didn't give him and the sect Rank Four Spirit Stones. How would he get his hands on Rank Five ones? From what he heard, Rank Four Spirit Stones are rarely used in any kind of trade unless the things you want to buy or sell were extremely rare. All the Rank Four Spirit Stones in the Dalamu Sect were mined from the Spirit Stone mines in their territory. Very few came from outside through trades. That also explained why the Dalamu Sect had so few of them.

However, Rank Three Spirit Stones were still possible to be obtained through the Data Storages' sales. Dalamu made a few supplying contracts using Zafa Bank as the intermediary. The deals were basically for large amounts of Data Storages for a reduced price. In exchange, the costs would be paid in Rank Three Spirit Stones. At the moment, Dalamu and the twins had no lack of Rank Three stones. Naturally, the fees to enter the city were not an issue.

At the counter, Old Worm and Droman presented two badges. One was the Guild Droman was registered with. However, Old Worm's one was from the Capital's Alchemist Guild. As soon as the attendant saw that, he immediately changed his bearing.

"Welcome back to the Capital, Senior Alchemist. Members of the Capital's main Guild Branches are exempt from paying the City Entrance Fee. Their companions are also allowed to pass for free. Please go ahead."

Rean and Droman looked at Old Worm with surprise. Even Droman didn't know that the Guilds had this privilege.

Old Worm and Roan then stepped aside and headed out as if nothing had happened. Rean and Droman could only sigh and follow the two.

"They could at least tell us beforehand, don't you think?"

"Well, Elder Faulk had never been the type to talk much. I guess that's why he and Roan get so well with each other."

Rean had to admit that it was true.

Anyone with cultivation below the Saint Realm was prohibited from flying inside the city. That being said, Rean's group had to walk to reach their destination. Of course, with the city being larger than 1000 kilometers, running would take them way too long.

It was because of that that the city had many small Teleport Formations connecting everywhere. The only thing they didn't do was to teleport straight inside the Inner and Core Part of the town. Of course, there were exceptions, but even Old Worm couldn't use them.

Finally, they took a teleport formation that sent them close to the Inner City entrance. They appeared in front of a bustling street that connected to the gate of the Inner City. Shops, stalls, weapons, talismans, etc. They could see everything being sold on the sides.

"Oh! That's a lot of cultivation related items. I might find something good for crafting or to use in formations here."

Droman nodded.

"Well, most of the items being sold in the Outer City aren't very good. Usually, only those without much money would come here to buy something. Of course, the biggest majority aren't as rich as you, so this place is always full of cultivators. The other three gates connecting to the Inner City have similar environments as well."

"However, it's not rare to find a few hidden gems in the middle of trash. Sometimes the owners of those items don't know the value of what they're holding."

Rean and Roan nodded. This type of market could be found even on Earth, let alone in the cultivation world where Spiritual Energy exists.

Droman and Old Worm didn't seem to be in a hurry either. They began to browse the various stalls, paying attention to see if there was something they could use for themselves. They knew that the Inner City would be a better place to find high-level items, but those were definitely not put there by mistake. Naturally, their price would be salty.

Rean and Roan didn't have much to do, so they walked around as well. Roan went straight to the shops where Skill Books could be found. He was responsible for combat, so he was always open to new ideas. Rean, on the other hand, looked for items that he could use in the Circuitry Formation. To be more specific, Rean was looking for a very unique type of metal. He went from stall to stall, shop by shop, looking at what they had to offer.

'Hum? This sand...'

There was one thing that Rean had had a problem finding, a substitute for silicon from Earth. From what he knew, silicon was present almost everywhere on Earth to the point of being the second most common element after oxygen. As a metallurgist in his previous life, he knew quite a bit of it. Not only because it was used in electronic devices, but that silicon was also used for steel refining, aluminum-casting, etc., which was his area of expertise.

The problem was that silicon never came in its pure form. Instead, it was mixed with other elements, making it quite difficult to produce. Back on Earth, silica sand was the most common material. However, the process itself to extract the silicon alone was nothing easy to be done here in the Cultivation World.

The Electrical Formations Articles had a few examples of materials where he could get silicon from. However, it turned out that the articles didn't select silicon as the best conductor for the Circuitry Formations, only as an alternative. In the Cultivation World, there was a much better material called Zalion.

The material could do the same thing as silicon but at a much higher speed. The reason for that was none other than Spiritual Energy! Rean still didn't know what kind of energy Spiritual Energy is. Electricity existed because of electrons. Could Spiritual Energy be something similar? However, this kind of energy could interact with basically everything. Even the photons that light is made of.

The Articles didn't explain much about the nature of Spiritual Energy, just that it could improve electrical currents' speed. Zalion just so happened to be the best type of metal.

Unfortunately, another problem came out when Rean and Droman were discussing it. Droman had never heard about any metal that had the properties Rean talked about. Rean also tried to find more in the Blacksmith Hall, but even the Blacksmith Hall's head knew nothing about it.

At that time, Rean thought that Zalion was probably like silicon. It didn't exist in its pure form. Naturally, no one knew about it.

In the end, Rean could only give up and set his mind on the good old silicon. It's just that the methods to extract it in the cultivation world where technology didn't exist was quite annoying. Besides, there was the issue of it not being very compatible with Spiritual Energy itself.

Fortunately, there was one good news. The Articles explained how Rean could identify Zalion Ore on his own. Rean didn't find any metal in the Dalamu Sect after using the method described by the Electrical Formations' Repository, though.

However, it looked like he finally found something in this Outer City Market.

Spiritual Energy revolved around Rean's hand as he held a hand full of sand. However, if one looked closely, they would see that a few Electrical Sparks came from it now and then.

One must not forget that it is possible to use other elements even if one doesn't have an affinity with them. It's just that you won't be able to control it as proficiently as someone who has that kind of affinity. Fortunately, the method described by the Circuitry Formations' Articles was straightforward and didn't need much proficiency of the user.

'The conductivity is not as good as the Electrical Formations Repository described, but it's very close.'

Rean was just about to try once again when all of a sudden, the shop merchant in front of him called his attention.

"Hey, kid. Do you want some of it? This is just a sample, so you can have it. Let me know if you need more too."

Rean was taken aback for a second and then smiled.

"Just one moment. I'm only testing something. I might really buy this ore if it is what I want."

The merchant narrowed his eyes. Why would Rean need to test anything? Still, Rean ignored it and continued his test.

'I see... So that's what's happening.'

Death... and me

Chapter 375: Plans of Action

Rean then returned the sand on the mount in front of him and began to ponder.

'It's just like silicon back on Earth. The Zalion Metal is mixed with a few other elements. However, it's a lot easier to separate Zalion from the other elements than silicon from others. Besides, I still haven't found anything like silica sand, which is around 77% silicon in its composition. It has to be it.'

The merchant saw that Rean seemed to have finished whatever he was doing.

"So, is it what you were looking for?"

Rean nodded, satisfied.

"That's it indeed. Can this senior tell me which kind of sand is it?"

The merchant didn't mind before explaining.

"We call it Marfin Sand. You can find quite a lot of it in our Sect Territory in the County of Gobope. It has a pretty yellow-white color, so people like to often use it as decoration. If you are planning to build something here in Sasamil City, it can be a good addition."

Rean was delighted to hear that. He came to this merchant because he saw he selling several types of sand. It wasn't rare to find people like him since even the Cultivation World needs to build residences. The reason this sand caught his attention was that it really resembled silica sand back on Earth. Rean didn't expect that this wasn't silica sand, but Zalion instead.

"That's great! How much does it cost?"

The merchant smiled before immediately offering.

"It costs five Rank Two Spirit Stones for 10 kilograms. Don't try to bargain with me. This is already a great price since moving it from Gobope all the way here is not cheap. This is also not easy to obtain since we need to separate it from common dirt. If not because the cultivators like the color, which gave us the idea to sell it, we wouldn't even do it."

Rean laughed before saying.

"Good! Give me a minute."

Rean then left straight away. A few seconds later, he returned in a flash with Droman.

"Can you tell me what is so urgent?"

Rean nodded as he pointed at the Zalion sand.

"That's the metal I told you about. It has the characteristics that we exactly need!"

"What?!"

Droman quickly grabbed some of the sand. Rean had told him what kind of reaction he needed to expect from the sand, so he also tried it himself. Sure enough, he got the same result as Rean.

"It's true!"

Droman's eyes lit up as he looked at the merchant. The man was obviously puzzled by Rean and Droman. Although Marfin Sand was quite beautiful, there was no need to be this excited, right?

Droman didn't care, though.

"What's your name, friend? Also, from which power you came?"

The merchant understood that he probably will get a good deal, so he immediately became even more polite.

"Ahem... This friend can call me Olibo. I'm a member of the Illusion Mountain Sect from Gobope Country. I see that you are very interested in our Marfin Sand."

Droman nodded.

"Yes. Tell me. How much of this sand can you produce? Also, how much do you think is available in your Sect Territory?"

Olibo was taken aback by that question. Still, he quickly pondered about it and answered.

"Well... If our sect goes all out, we should be able to produce around a ton per month. As for how much is available in our territory... I'm not sure. But I know that it is only present in our Sect's Territory since I've never seen any other sand seller with an identical type as ours. If you don't believe me, you can go around and try to find something similar."

Droman shook his head.

"I'll be direct. My Dalamu Sect wants all the Marfin Sand present in your Sect Territory."

"What?!"

Olibo almost fell back when he heard that.

"A-All the Marfin Sand? Th-That would be at least a few hundreds of tons! Are you sure that's what you want? My friend, our sect might not be a big power, but we won't accept being fooled either."

Droman shook his head.

"I'm not making fun of you or your sect. We really want to make this deal. However, there will be a condition."

Droman had already learned from Rean. They should hold a monopoly from it as soon as possible. The best way, obviously, would be to involve the Zafa Bank.

"Condition?"

Droman nodded.

"All the Marfin Sand will be sold exclusively to my Dalamu Sect. You won't be able to sell it to no one else. In exchange, we will buy all the available sand there."

Droman then looked at Rean before asking through a Spiritual Sense Message.

'Are you sure you want to buy everything? I doubt that this is the only place where you can find this kind of sand.'

Rean smiled before answering.

'I'm sure. The reason is simple too. No one needs to know what we are going to use this sand for. So what if everyone sees us buying it? Who other than ourselves know how to use it? Besides, we are only acquiring one ton per month. It isn't that hard to hide it for a while. Also, we will need more of it in the future when we reveal the Circuitry Formation.'

Droman agreed with Rean and continued to negotiate with Olibo.

"Also, this is a secret trade between your Illusion Mountain and our Dalamu Sect. We will have our own people going to collect the sand at your sect, so there is no need for you all to appear."

Olibo couldn't help but think that their Marfin Sand had a much better use than they thought. But then again, they had been selling it for many years already, but no one ever showed so much interest before.

Droman could tell what Olibo was thinking, so he added.

"If you want to go around investigate, then so be it. Other than my sect, no one else has a use for this sand anyway. However, you better not mention that my Dalamu Sect wants it. Otherwise, this deal will be called off. Remember, this is a secret negotiation between our two sects."

Droman then passed the guy a Thoughts Transmission Talisman.

"Use this talisman to tell me your sect's decision. In any case, I'm pretty sure you won't find anything. Well then, we are off."

Without even waiting for Olibo to answer, Droman turned around and left with Rean.

'Is this okay?'

Droman nodded.

'I might not have known something like 'copyright' before. However, if we are talking about typical negotiations, then I'm pretty good at it. Don't underestimate the head of the Formation Master Hall.'

Roan and Old Worm noticed the things that Droman and Rean did. However, none of them seemed to care too much about it, so they didn't ask anything. Roan bought quite a few low-level skill books that the Dalamu Sect didn't have during this time. Not that Dalamu couldn't get them, but that they didn't have a need for it.

Old Worm didn't find anything that interested him, though.

"Let's enter the Inner Part. There are a lot more shops there that we can browse. It's already quite late anyway, so the gate to the Core of the City has probably been shut already."

Rean became puzzled.

"They close the gates here? Isn't this City way too big to do something like that?"

Droman shook his head.

"It's only the Core. The Inner and Outer Gates are open all the time. It's just that there isn't much in there other than the guilds, Clans, and the Imperial Palace. So to keep order, they keep it closed for the night."

After finishing his explanation, their group entered the Inner City and went to the shops in front of the Core Gates. Even if the gate closed, the shops were as lively as ever. Even the night time wasn't enough to decrease the number of customers.

Rean and Roan did find a few things that interested them, so they bought them with their money. In Rean's case, he and Droman walked around together and found a few parts they could use during their projects. Of course, the Inner City shops turned out to be a lot more expensive than outside.

Old Worm and Roan didn't stay together, though. A few hours later, the four of them gathered once more to head to the Dalamu Sect's Residence in the Inner City.

As mentioned before, it wasn't anything impressive. The first floor and second floors were used as a shop where Dalamu conducted their trades. The third was reserved for the Dalamu Sect members who came to the Capital. Usually, it stayed empty, with only the disciples doing some cleaning now and then. Today was a rare occasion where more than one guest would pass the night within.

Old Worm and Roan went straight to their rooms and locked themselves inside. Rean and Droman, on the other hand, discussed what they would do tomorrow.

"The test will start in 37 days. We have one month of access to the repository. Let's make the best of this time to prepare you for the exam. I'll focus on the formations you aren't that proficient in. As for the Marfin Sand, we should get an answer from Olibo and their Illusion Mountain Sect tomorrow."

Rean pondered a bit before saying.

"In that case, let's first seal this deal. It is a lot more important than the access to the repository."

Droman agreed with Rean. They talked about a few more things before they returned to their rooms as well. However, this was only the start for Rean and Roan. After all, they also had to gather information about the situation in the Imperial Family.

Death... and me

Chapter 376: Finishing the Deal

Sure enough, while Rean and Droman were practicing Formations in the Dalamu Sect's Residence, Droman's Thoughts Transmission Talisman activated. He quickly put it on his forehead before a stream of information flowed into his mind. Soon after, he faintly smiled.

"Here we are. Olibo has just contacted us and asked to go to their shop back on the Outer City."

Rean was delighted to hear that.

"That's good. Let's go then."

The two left Dalamu's residence and took the nearest Teleport Formation to the Outer City's gate. Soon, they arrived at the shop where they had discussed things with Olibo before. However, it wasn't just him there this time. There was also another older man present. Droman looked at him and could tell that the guy was at the Middle Stage of the Core and Soul Fusion Realm.

The man also looked at Droman and immediately understood that the latter had cultivation much higher than his own. Not only that, but he could see Rean's Core Formation Realm as well. Due to Rean's age, the man was really shocked by his talent.

"Hello, two sirs. I'm called Bareu Fam, the Illusion Mountain Sect Master. I've heard from Olibo that you would like to seal a deal with us."

Droman nodded, getting straight to the point.

"Olibo should have explained it to you already. We want all the Marfin Sand present in your sect's territory. This trade also has to be kept a secret. My sect members will pass by the Illusion Mountain every month to fetch the extracted Marfin Sand. Not only are we willing to accept the price you offer, but you also won't even need to care about the cost of moving the sand out."

Rean, who was listening, then smiled and asked.

"Did your investigation return any useful information?"

Bareu and Olibo scratched the back of their head while feeling a little embarrassed. Sure enough, they had taken some of their Marfin Sand and went around, looking to see if there was anything that they had missed. They went to the Formation, Blacksmith, and Alchemist guilds in the Outer and Inner City. But all they heard was that it had a nice color. Other than that, those experts couldn't find anything good about it at all.

"It's like the two sirs said. No one can tell if this sand has any use. Some even thought we were making fun of them. In the end, what is the thing you need this sand for?"

Droman shook his head.

"You will find out in the future as long as you don't seclude yourself in a cave forever. But until then, this is a secret from our Dalamu Sect. I will repeat one last time. Other than our Dalamu Sect, no one has any use for this sand. If you want to investigate further, be my guest. Just make sure to not mention our name."

Bareu couldn't shake off this feeling that he was losing something incredibly significant here. Unfortunately, without knowing what this sand could be used for, he couldn't get anything from it. However, he knew that Droman was right about one thing, he doesn't believe that their Sect was really the only place where this kind of sand can be found. It's just that they were the only ones who bothered to extract it for selling. If he let Droman go and he found another source, they might lose everything in the end.

In the end, Bareu gritted his teeth and said.

"One Rank Two Spirit Stone for every kilogram. If you can pay this price, we will keep everything a secret. We will even increase our collection strength to extract more sand per month."

Droman narrowed his eyes.

"Three Rank Two Spirit Stones for every 20 kilograms. That's as far as I can go. It might be something important for us, but I won't let you rip us off that easily."

Bareu had asked for double the price to keep everything hidden, but Droman only wanted to pay 50% more to do that. Still, that was a lot more than they had ever expected to get with Marfin Sand.

"Deal! It has to be a contract with the Zafa Bank as an intermediary."

Droman immediately nodded.

"Obviously. We wouldn't make this deal without them anyway."

Droman and Bareu then went to the Zafa Bank Branch in the Capital. The process was quite simple. The Zafa Bank would make sure that the deal was carried as stated in the contract. At the same time, they would have 10% of the Illusion Mountain Sect's profit with the sand selling. Bareu didn't mind it since it could guarantee the transparency of their agreement. Besides, he was already getting 50% for the sand, so he wasn't losing anything.

Later that day, the two parts came out of the Zafa Bank.

"It's a pleasure to do business with you. How much of this sand do you have available at the moment?"

Bareu looked at Olibo, who was usually responsible for this part.

"We didn't expect we would need to sell so much so soon. Because of that, we don't have that much. Putting everything together, we should have around three tons."

Droman then threw a small bag with 45 Rank Three Spirit Stones.

"Rank Three Spirit Stones!"

It was supposed to be 450 Rank Two Spirit Stones. However, Rank Three Spirit Stones were worth 10 times more. That's why Droman gave them Rank Three instead... Or so it was supposed to be. The higher the rank of the Spirit Stone, the harder it was to get. Although a Rank Three Spirit Stone carried around ten times the amount of Spiritual Energy than a Rank Two, the fact was that it was a lot better. Besides, it was much harder to obtain Rank Three Stones. Rank Three Spirit Stones could be bought in the Capital, but their price was 13 Rank Two Stones instead of 10. Naturally, receiving Rank Three Spirit Stones as payment was a lot better.

"This should be enough for all three tons of Marfin Sand. I'll have my people go to your sect in a week to fetch it. After that, they will pay a visit to your sect every month to take the Marfin Sand away. Is that good enough?"

Olibo and Bareu nodded. They were a very small sect. It can be seen since their strongest member was Bareu himself. With his cultivation, Bareu has his means to get Rank Three Spirit Stones. However, he had to care for the Sect as well. If all the deal was done with Rank Three Spirit Stones, it would be a blessing for his Sect.

"Don't worry. As soon as we get back, I'll have our disciples increase the pace of extraction of Marfin Sand. If Sir Droman can keep paying us this Rank Three Spirit Stones, I'll do my best to extract at least three tons per month."

Droman nodded, satisfied.

"Perfect. As long as there are three tons per month, I'll pay for it with Rank Three Spirit Stones."

Olibo and Bareu were delighted to hear that. The two parties then talked a bit more about other issues before they parted ways.

On the way back, Droman and Rean discussed the deal.

"Alright. Since they won't be going to our sect, it shouldn't be hard to keep this deal hidden. After we come back to Dalamu, we can begin the process of refining this sand into what we need."

Droman nodded.

"Yes. But let's think about it later when we arrive there. For now, let's focus on the Formation Master Exam of the Main Branch Guild. The Core City should be open already, so let's go there."

"By the way, did you see Elder Faulk and Roan?"

Rean nodded.

"Roan doesn't have access to the Main Branch Alchemist Repository. That being said, there wasn't much of a reason for him to go there. So I believe he went somewhere else instead. I can only feel his general location at the moment. Well, he can care about himself. As for Old Worm, I have no idea where he went."

Droman had an idea, though.

"Well, he is part of the Main Branch Guild. Considering how much Elder Faulk loves alchemy, he probably went there to read the Alchemy Books."

Rean admitted that Droman was probably right.

However, Rean was lying about something. He knew where Roan went. Not only that, they had been in contact with each other all this time. The Main Branch Guilds liked to start their exams at the same time. That meant that Roan would need to wait over a month before it commences. Last night, the twins decided that Roan would head out to look for information about the Imperial Family's situation. This is what Roan was exactly doing at the moment.

'Did you find anything?'

Roan shook his head.

'No. But that is to be expected. I don't know the Capital, so it will take some time to find where the Black Market is located.'

'Are you going to buy something?'

'Are you dumb? The Black Market would definitely have a place where you can buy sensitive information. As long as I find it, it should save me a lot of trouble... or buy even more of them.'

Rean understood. He would be looking for information about the Imperial Family, after all. It might instead bring him a lot of issues. Still, Roan was confident in his ability to escape or keep his identity hidden if necessary. Besides, the twins had already placed a save point inside the Dalamu Sect Residence, just in case.

Death... and me

Chapter 377: Finding the Black Market

Roan walked around the Inner City, going from shop to shop. He used Rean's Light Ability to make his body look older. At the same time, his hair and eyes had also changed color. It's just that the effect wasn't as great as it was with Calina. Nonetheless, it was more than enough for Roan's objective.

Roan then entered a shop called Myriad Resources. Like many of the available shops in the Inner Sect, you could find a great variety of items on display. Roan walked into the shop until he finally stopped in front of an article on display. It looked like a needle that brimmed with some weird energy. It was also one of the spotlights of the entire shop. It also had an exorbitant price of 500 Rank Three Spirit Stones!

One must remember that anyone at Roan's level would usually find it very difficult to bring out such a number.

A shop attendant noticed Roan's presence in front of the item and quickly came forward.

"This customer has good eyes. This item is called Spiritual Piercer. Although it's an object that you can only use once, it can definitely pierce through any defense. If used correctly, it might even save your life."

Roan nodded before asking.

"What's the level of the attack?"

The attendant smiled.

"It is guaranteed to work on anyone at the Middle of the Core Formation Realm and below. However, it can also be a great threat to those at the Late or maybe even Peak Stage, depending on how you use it."

Roan pondered a bit and shook his head.

"It's too weak. I need something stronger. Show me something that can pierce through a Core and Soul Fusion Realm cultivator."

The attendant was taken aback for a second. Still, he shook his head in the end.

"If we really had such an item, it wouldn't be shown in the outside like this."

Roan smiled after hearing that.

"It seems like you know something. Can you tell me where I can find items like the one I told you about?"

The attendant noticed that he slipped his tongue and quickly denied everything.

"This customer must be joking. The City Guards wouldn't allow such items to be sold to just anyone. After all, Core and Soul Fusion Realm cultivators can even create a sect or clan of their own by relying on their power alone. Items capable of breaking through their defenses easily would be strictly regulated in the city."

Roan then approached the guy and passed him a small bag in a way that only he and the attendant noticed. At the same time, he sent the guy a Spiritual Sense massage.

'We are both good citizens, right? We need to keep our eyes open if such an item suddenly appears. Don't you know a place where anyone might be breaking the laws? I will go there and investigate it myself.'

The attendant's Spiritual Sense entered the bag and quickly saw a hundred Rank Three Spirit Stones inside. His eyes opened wide but promptly returned to normal a moment later.

'This customer is right. We all need to help keep the city clean.'

The guy immediately put the bag away before anyone could notice anything different.

'If you go to the Alakaste Shopping Street, you will find a place called The Dawn Treasure Store. Some... 'rumors...' say that if you ask the attendant on the seventh counter for Rank Ten Spirit Stones, they might bring you to a certain special place. There, you can 'investigate' and see if you can find anything worth 'reporting' to the city guards.'

Roan patted the guy's shoulder, satisfied.

'I'll definitely make my part as the citizen and will investigate the area.'

Roan then pointed at the Spiritual Piercer.

"That's a very good deal. I want this Spiritual Piercer."

The attendant was surprised to hear that. He was delighted to get that many Rank Three Spirit Stones. Now, he will even get a commission for selling the Spiritual Piercer to Roan. Of course, he also understood that Roan did it to not raise any suspicion for both of them.

The Spiritual Piercer that looked like a need was quickly prepared to Roan, who paid the 500 Spirit Stones without blinking. After that, he turned around and left the shop.

However, he snorted as soon as he stopped out.

'Sure enough, a few bugs got interested.'

500 Spirit Stones wasn't a small sum even in the Inner City. Besides, Roan was walking alone. Although fighting in the city was prohibited, no one would say anything if no one saw anything. If it was someone important or a big group, those guys wouldn't try anything. However, since Roan was by himself and his cultivation was only in the Initial Stage of the Core Formation Realm, they thought it might be worth a try. That being said, a few eyes aimed at Roan while he walked away.

Roan continued to walk in the crowded streets for some time. However, it didn't take long until the movement around him decreased. Still, Roan continued to walk as if nothing happened. Finally, he reached the residential part of the Inner City, where the movement was low. There, he made a few more turns until he ended in the back of an alley without anyone to be seen.

Seeing that Roan was finally alone, those guys who had been following him in the shadows showed themselves and rushed inside the same alley. Three of them had cultivations at the Initial Stage of the Core Formation Realm. As for the last one, he was at the Middle Stage. Unfortunately...

"What?!"

"Where is he?!"

"He came here, I'm sure!"

"It must have been one of you idiots who scared the lamb away."

"Let's separate. If he's still around this place, we can get him."

However, it was at this moment that a voice entered their ears.

"There is no need to look for me. I'm right here."

The robbers felt a chill on their backs and immediately turned around while bringing their weapons out. Unfortunately, it was too late.

'Death Style, Third Form, Three Claws of the Dragon!'

Swish, swish, swish!

Three heads then flew in their air, not giving their owner a chance to even scream.

"Ah!"

Roan killed three of the robbers in one strike. However, there were four of them. Roan hadn't killed the Middle Stage guy. The man knew that he had the advantage in cultivation but completely gave up the idea of fighting Roan here. He had seen Roan's speed and technique. Even if he went all out, he wouldn't be able to replicate as much as half of the result. It was obvious that Roan was several times stronger than him.

'Path of the Lightning!'

Lightning Element gathered on the man's legs as he shot out of the alley. As long as he arrived in a crowded area, Roan wouldn't dare to attack him there. As for seeking revenge against Roan, that idea didn't even pass through the robber's mind. Unfortunately for the robber...

'Death Style, First Movement Form, Shadow Steps!'

'Death Style, First Form, Stellar Piercer!'

Even without Rean's Enhancement ability, Roan was still more than fast enough to catch up with this guy.

The man noticed the ray of black light coming from his back and panicked. It was just too fast! He quickly stepped aside, barely missing a fatal strike through his heart. Still, the strike hit the left side of his body.

"Ahhhh!"

Unfortunately for him, Dark Element immediately began to eat away his life force, making the injury quickly rot. Nonetheless, the robber gritted his teeth and bore the pain as he began to run once more.

"Did I say that you can go?"

Suddenly, Roan emerged from the shadows in front of him as if he was a ghost!

"What?!"

The guy tried to change the direction he was trying to flee but soon noticed that his movement was sealed. It was then that he looked down and saw several black vines attached to his legs.

'Death Style, First Energy Form, Shadow Bind!'

Roan's sword flashed once more, aiming for the guy's head. In the end, all the robber could do was close his eyes and wait for his death. There was simply no time to dodge or use any action anymore.

However, he noticed that the sensation of his neck being cut didn't come as he expected. When he opened his eyes again, he understood why. Roan had stopped his sword just a millimeter away from his neck. He could even feel the Dark Element emanating from Roan's White Star, which affected his skin too.

"It's too early to die. Let's make a deal here. You tell me what I want to know, and perhaps I'll be merciful enough to let you go. It will depend on how much your words are worth, though."

The man didn't even think before nodding. Hell, he would even tell his dick size if Roan wanted it.

"First, what's your name?"

"I'm Dudle Suo."

Roan nodded.

"Dudle, swallow this pill."

The man looked suspiciously at the dark pill in front of him. However, he only had to give a glance at Roan's dark face for his doubts to disappear.

"Good! If you continue like that, you might really survive. I just gave you a poison that I created myself. If you don't take the antidote in the next hour, you are dead. Now, let's start."

"You definitely were sent after me by that shop attendant. But let's forget about him for now. What I want to know is where I can find the black market of Sasamil City."

In the end, Roan had never trusted the attendant's words. What he really needed was someone who knew what he was looking for. After showing his wealth, someone would come after him... or so was his plan. Fortunately, it played well. Now he could get the real information from this guy since Roan had his life in his hands.

Death... and me

Chapter 378: Sacrifice

The guy swallowed a bit of his saliva before responding.

"I only know a little about them. After all, peasants would just die if they get involved with them. Will you really let me live if I tell you?"

Roan pondered for a bit and said.

"Let's do it like this. There must be more than one place like that. Bring me to the most important one that you know. I'll think about your fate once we arrive there."

The guy quickly nodded as Roan took his sword away from his throat. The shadow bind also disappeared after that. Of course, the guy was injured, so he couldn't walk like that. Roan then touched his shoulder, and soon enough, Light Element began to flow into the guy's body as his hair changed color.

'Life Style, Second Form, Instant Recover!'

With their Soul Connection having a limit of 3000 kilometers, Rean and Roan had it quite easy when exchanging elements.

The guy looked with wide eyes as his injuries swiftly closed up. Of course, it would have been even faster if the one doing it was Rean instead. Eventually, his injuries completely disappeared as if there had never been any in the first place.

"Take it."

After healing him, Roan then threw a set of clothes to the guy. After all, the clothes the guy was wearing was ragged with quite a lot of blood marks. The guy didn't even know where Roan took the clothes, but he immediately changed anyway.

"Your time is ticking, so you better be fast. Of course, if you want to try to escape after we reach a place with a lot of movement, you might as well do it now. I won't pursue you. I refuse to believe anyone will be able to cure the poison on your body anyway."

Roan turned around and began to walk out of the alley. He really didn't even bother putting the guy in his eyes.

Dudle was conflicted for a moment. He was at the Core Formation Realm, so he did know how to get some Poison Cleansing Pills. However, the problem here is if it would really work or not. If it didn't, he would basically be buying his own death. Seeing how confident Roan walked away without binding him at all made Dudle even more conflicted.

In the end, he gritted his teeth and quickly followed Roan. As for trying to attack Roan, he wasn't idiotic enough to do so after seeing their difference in strength.

"I'm not sure where the most important black market in the city is. Some rumors say that it's located right inside the Core Region. Of course, I know a pretty good one right here in the Inner Region. That's the best I can do for you."

Roan nodded, not minding too much. Considering the power of Sasamil City cultivators, a simple Core Formation Realm thug wouldn't have knowledge of everything. Still, that was more than enough for Roan. He could start his investigation from there.

"Lead the way."

Dudle then sped up, afraid that he wouldn't arrive in time and die in the middle of the street.

Meanwhile, Rean and Droman had just entered the Core City after passing through the gate. Droman had the permission to see the Formations Guild Main Branch Repository, so they didn't have any problem doing it.

The Core Region was really different from the Inner or Outer City. There were almost no shops around. It was all made of gigantic residences that were even higher than the Core Region Wall. As he walked, he noticed the names on those residences.

"Lavil Clan. This is one of the Nine Protector Clans of the Imperial Family, isn't it?"

Droman nodded.

"Yes. This side of the Core City is where the Lavil Clan residences are located. The Core City has a total of nine gates connecting to it. Naturally, each one of them has a clan right beside it. Still, all of them lead to the center, where the Imperial Palace is located."

Rean couldn't help but ask.

"Then, where are the guilds located?"

"In the middle of the path. There are a few open areas where you can find their buildings. The gate we used to enter the Core City just so happens to be the closest one to the Formations Master Guild."

The Core City was only around 30 kilometers in diameter. With Rean and Roan's cultivation, it didn't take too long for them to trek half of this distance. After some time, Rean saw an enormous tower in the distance with a giant Spiritual Light description on the top.

-Formations Master Guild-

Obviously, that sign was made with the help of Formations. It didn't matter from which side you looked at it. The words always seemed to be turning in your direction.

'That reminds me of Calina's pendant.'

The two quickly arrived at the entrance where a few cultivators were guarding. Rean couldn't help but be a bit surprised, though. Even with his Core Formation Realm cultivation, he couldn't see these guards' cultivation at all.

Droman understood what Rean was thinking and laughed.

'Hahaha! Don't be too surprised. All the guilds here have to show this much power. These guards are all in the Core and Soul Fusion Realm with their leader in the Nascent Soul Realm. It works more like a display of strength.'

The guards at the front noticed Rean and Droman approaching.

"Halt! State the reason for your visit."

As Droman mentioned before, not just anyone could enter the Formations Master Guild's Main Branch. Droman quickly took out the permission and showed it to the guard. After a moment, the guard nodded as his stance changed.

"Oh! So it's Senior Droman, the creator of the Communication System. We have been waiting for your arrival. Sorry for the way we treated you. With the annual Guild Test approaching, we are getting even more guests than usual."

Droman smiled and shook his head.

"There's no problem. I'm also here for the same reason anyway. I want my disciple here to take part in the exam, so I'll use my free month in the repository to teach him as well as I can."

The guard smiled, not minding it too much. The permission already stated that Droman could bring someone with him. The white-haired boy was obviously the one in the picture.

"Please go ahead, Senior Droman."

The guards opened the way as Droman and Rean entered the tower.

"The Guild seems to be very polite towards you, no?"

Droman let out a chuckle before sending Rean a Spiritual Sense Message.

'Of course. Did you forget that the Formations Guild tried to give me a free pass to become one of their members after discovering the Communication System? You already know the reason why I refused. However, that doesn't mean they gave up already. Naturally, they will treat me as well as they can. I wonder what they would think if they found out that you were the one who created it. Hahaha!'

Rean smiled but shook his head.

'Let's hope they don't find out. It would be too much of a hassle. If anyone asks, I learned everything about the communication system from you.'

Droman agreed with Rean.

'That's good then. Anyway, let's go to the counter to request an entrance into the repository.'

They quickly arrived where the guild's attendants were located. Inside there, they saw many other Formation Masters. Surprisingly, there were many young cultivators there as well, just like Rean.

'Are those ones...'

Droman nodded.

'They're probably the disciples of some of the Guild's Formations Masters. Can you see the badge on the robes of the old ones? Those are the official member badges. Every year is the same thing. These official members bring their own young ones to try and get one of the new generation slots. As you can imagine, they have a huge advantage over those who can only come during the exam day.'

Rean didn't find it strange. If you had the resources, you should use them. Fairness? That has never been a word often used in the cultivation world. Besides, he was exactly doing the same thing. Using Droman as a connection to get a better chance at studying Formations in the Main Branch.

Just as Droman and Rean were about to reach the counter, one of those Guild Members came forward.

"Oh! So it's Formation Master Droman. Welcome, welcome! So, have you thought about our offer? You can join our Main Branch straight away if you want. With the Communication System Formation you came up with, you have more than the necessary qualifications. There is no need for a test."

The other Formation Masters heard that and immediately looked in Droman and Rean's direction.

Droman could only scratch the back of his head with all that attention. He didn't think he deserved that at all.

"Ahem... I'm still thinking about it. I was just lucky to think about that new type of Formation. I have taken the Main Branch's Test in the past but didn't get even close to passing it."

Another Formations Master shook his head.

"That's not an issue. Your contributions are what really matters here. Many other Formation Masters Joined our Main branch without the test. They were like you, people who made important discoveries. You should really consider our offer. Besides, we got the blueprints of your... errr... version 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 Router Formations. They're incredibly amazing!"

Droman still shook his head, though.

"I'll think about it. For now, I only want to use the free month the guild gave me to teach my disciple in the repository. His talent is many times higher than mine, so perhaps he can join the guild through the tests."

The attention of the Formation Masters immediately shifted to Rean after that, which made his mouth twitch.

'This old geezer couldn't hold the pressure and sacrificed me in the end.'

Death... and me

Chapter 379: The Formations Master Guild Welcome

"Oh! So this is your disciple? Hahaha! Great! Many of us have our own disciples participating this time around. Milo, come here."

A young man who seemed to be around 16 or 17 came forward. Just like Rean, he was also in the Initial Stage of the Core Formation Realm.

"Yes, Master."

Milo's master nodded, satisfied.

"This is a descendant of mine, Milo Sue. He will also participate in the exam a month from now. I'm also bringing him into the Formations Guild Repository to teach him before that."

Rean couldn't help but ask.

"Shouldn't the repository be closed to anyone who isn't a member of the Main Branch Guild?"

Milo answered that question in the place of his master and ancestor.

"That's not exactly the case. Indeed, it's quite hard to allow other disciples or me to enter the Repository without being members of the Main Branch Guild yet. However, if a member of the Guild pays the price, an exception can be made."

Milo's master nodded.

"Indeed. It was quite expensive to get permission as well. Unlike our friend Droman here, I wasn't insightful enough to create something like the Communication System. I'm quite envious of you for being able to bring your disciple without paying anything. Hahaha!"

In the end, it was the same thing for the other young men and women around. Rean pondered as to why Old Worm didn't do the same thing for Roan, but then he remembered the part of 'having to pay a high price' to get their disciples inside. Old Worm lived in the Dalamu Sect. Perhaps, he didn't have the conditions to pay, or perhaps it would be too expensive.

A few more Formation Masters came and complimented Droman as well. This sight was a little different than Rean expected. He thought that those guys would be a bit more reserved or not fancy the fact that Droman could join their Guild just because of the Communication System. But to his surprise, most of them seemed to welcome Droman and himself. Of course, Droman didn't really join them so far.

Although Droman tried to shift everyone's attention to Rean, the high-level Formation Masters ended focusing on him again. Before Rean could say something, they already dragged Droman away to discuss more of 'his' Communication System.

Rean wasn't left alone, though. Other young participants of the next exam came to greet him as well. However, most of their attitudes shifted 180 degrees in an instant once Droman and their masters were gone.

"Hehe! Your Master did something impressive in inventing the Communication System. I was even more impressed with his Router Formations. Aren't you a lucky kid? You got to ride his success just like that."

"Rean, right? I'll be direct here. You and the other peasants from outside the capital should just go home. It will save everyone's time."

"Hahaha! His master was just lucky. In the end, that old geezer Droman can't beat any of our masters in a normal Formation Master competition. His Communication System is indeed impressive. But in the end, that's all he has under his belt."

Rean was taken aback by this sudden shift. However, although their expressions showed disdain, he could somehow tell that something didn't seem right about how they were acting. It was as if what they said wasn't real. Nevertheless, he wouldn't just take it lying down.

"Hehe! That's more like it! A competition where there are only friendly interactions would be too boring. It's good that you all have such resolve. That will make this exam a lot more interesting."

The young men and women were surprised to see Rean's sudden display of confidence. They were expecting that this 'country bumpkin' would feel cornered in this situation.

"Oh? You're better than I thought. My name is Lata Lavil Martolie. I'm also an Earth High-Level Formations Master."

"That's a little unexpected. The last girl left the building with her tail under her legs. Call me Fuonte Dekaslo, just like everyone else, I'm an Earth High-Level Formations Master."

All of a sudden, a female cultivator put a hand on his shoulders.

"Hmm... quite strong, aren't you? Very good. Let's see if you can back your words up a month from now. By the way, I'm Safira Sasamil."

More of them introduced themselves as well. The change in their behaviors happened too quickly. In the end, it seemed like they were testing Rean's resolve more than trying to provoke him. Still...

"So many Clan descendants. There are even members of the Imperial Family here."

Milo nodded.

"This is the Core Part of the Capital, after all. A lot of the Formation Masters are naturally part of the Guild. Not just this one, but the main branches of the other side occupation guilds have many protector clans and imperial family members in their ranks as well. Don't mind them. They did it to me as well when my master first brought me here. It's kind of a ritual of theirs."

It was then that another voice appeared from behind.

"Milo. Don't spoil everyone's fun."

Milo and Rean turned around just to see another female cultivator walking in their direction.

"Qia, huh? Is it really okay for you to distance yourself from your master? She always complains that you should spend more time studying than talking."

"Milo's right. We don't want to be scolded by Senior Jala later again."

"Agreed! She's kinda scary."

Rean was at a loss for a moment.

"Err... and this lady is?"

Milo then introduced the girl.

"Oh, she is also a descendant of the Imperial Family, Qia Sasamil. Believe it or not, she has quite a high position in the Imperial Family. She is the granddaughter of the Fifth Prince, Salael Sasamil."

Rean was surprised to hear that. Isn't that one of the main contestants for the throne? This girl's position was obviously many times higher than Calina, who was quite far down in the descendants' tree.

"Cough, cough... Nice to meet you, princess."

Qia nodded, not minding it too much.

"You can stop it already. Can you see anyone here treating me like I'm a princess or anything?"

"This..."

Now that Rean thought about it, even the clans or imperial family descendants didn't seem to get any preferential treatment in this place.

"Could it be that the Formations Master Guild Territory is special?"

Another young Formations Master, who overheard the conversation, nodded. From what Rean heard, he was called Malon Wavile. Wavile was also one of the Nine Protector Clans.

"That's correct. Not only the Formations Master Guild, but all the Side Occupation Guilds follow this same rule. Once you are inside their guilds, you are not considered to be anyone important. Only your status as a Formations Master matters in this place. Or do you think the others would treat Qia and us this freely outside? We would have kicked their asses already if that was the case."

Rean was once again reminded of the power that guilds maintain in the world. They were influential enough to ignore any kind of status while inside their walls.

Qia then winked at Rean.

"However, if you don't address me correctly elsewhere, don't blame me if I order your head to be cut."

Rean felt a chill on his back. For some reason, he didn't think that Qia was joking.

After the test was over, Lata took the opportunity to ask Rean.

"By the way, how deep are you involved in the Communication System creation? Did your Master tell you anything at all?"

Immediately, everyone's eyes lit up. Even Qia and the clan descendants were no exception. Sure enough, since their Masters were willing to pay so much for them to enter the Repository, they obviously were geniuses who loved Formations as well. The Communication Formation was a massive breakthrough in the Formations Master World, after all.

Rean felt like laughing when he heard that, though.

'How deeply involved am I? I, your grandfather, created that shit! Kneel down and pay your respects to this senior. Hahahaha!'

Or so Rean wanted to say. Unfortunately, he had to keep it a secret for now.

[Disgusting!]

'Eh? Did I think about it too loud?'

It was then that Roan's voice echoed in his Soul.

'What do you think, narcissist? I'm impressed how shameless you can be since you didn't really invent anything. You just copied the ideas you learned back on earth.'

Rean became a little red, which puzzled the people looking at him.

'So what? I'm just following the trending, okay?'

[Yeah, sure...]

Eventually, Rean returned his attention to everyone else.

"Ahem... Master had allowed me to help in his projects a lot, so you could say that I know quite a bit."

"Oh! For real? Tell us more about it."

Rean was puzzled by that, though.

"Eh? Why? The blueprints had already been made public. You should have gotten a copy already, no?"

Qia immediately shook her head.

"Having a blueprint and having someone who was there when it was created is completely different! You can contribute many insights that are not present in the latest formations. For example, how about you tell us what it was like creating this communication system at the start?"

Rean couldn't help but remember when he first talked to Droman about it.

"Well, that was a near-death experience..."

Back then, Droman's breakthrough almost killed Rean, after all.

Still, everyone looked puzzled at Rean. What does he mean by a near-death experience? Was the communication system this dangerous? How come it doesn't look like it in the blueprints?

"Ahem... It was just a way of expressing my feelings."

Just like that, Rean began to discuss Formations with everyone around him. Because they were all close in age and at the same Formations Master Level, it was a very entertaining and productive experience.

Death... and me

Chapter 380: Task

Meanwhile, Roan arrived at an inconspicuous building at the borders of the Inner City Wall. It didn't look all that new, but it was still better than most buildings in the Outer Region. When he and Dudle entered, the shop attendant immediately came forward.

"So it's Dudle, huh? Are you here to-"

However, he also noticed Roan right behind, so he stopped what he was going to say.

"Hello, young man. Do you need any antiques? They might not be on par with Spiritual Tools, but they are quite pleasing to the eyes. Well, I'm not sure if young people like you would have interest in this kind of shop, though."

Roan looked at Dudle, waiting for him to do his thing.

"Ahem... Senior Gval. We need some black rabbits."

Gval was obviously the name of the attendant. When he heard that, his eyes narrowed.

"Dudle, did you forget the rules?"

Dudle became nervous. Usually, there would be a process to accept new members for each black market. After all, it's not like they could keep it in the open.

"I know that I'm being too pushy, but I can vouch for this young man. I'm willing to pay the fee later if anything happens."

Gval looked at Roan and checked his cultivation with his Spiritual Sense. Only then did he notice that the teenager in front of him was already in the Core Formation Realm.

"Oh! To have such a cultivation at this age is quite good. Where'd you come from, boy?"

In fact, Roan looked a few years older thanks to Rean's technique. Otherwise, Gval wouldn't show just this small reaction.

Roan shook his head after hearing the question.

"That's my business. There are a few things I need that aren't available just anywhere. That's why I asked Dudle here for some help."

Gval didn't find it that surprising. The majority who came to the black market would often hide their own identities. He was pretty sure that the appearance he was seeing right now wasn't Roan's real face either.

Gval then looked at Dudle, who seemed pretty nervous.

"Something's not right. Little boy, did you do something to this idiot here? I find it difficult to believe that Dudle would just bring you here like that, especially since he knows the rules."

Roan faintly smiled in response.

"Sure enough, you would notice this much."

Roan then put a hand on Dudle's shoulder, which made the guy tremble for a second.

"His life is basically in my hands. I told him that he had to bring me to a Black Market or he would die. That's why he came straight here. By the way, he only has around 20 minutes left to live."

Dudle felt helpless.

"Senior Gval, I'm sorry. I was careless, and now I have poison in my body. I'll do anything. Just let this little demon buy the things he needs, will you?"

Gval couldn't help but snort.

Swish!

Before Dudle could even react, a needle pierced the center of his head as fast as lightning! Not only that, but a similar attack also came in Roan's direction. However, Roan hadn't dropped his guard for even a second since he arrived in this place.

'Death Style, First Movement Form, Show Steps!'

Roan merged with the shadow around, swiftly dodging the attack directed at him. The needle then passed through the walls before disappearing outside. As for Dudle, he simply dropped on the ground, dead. Well, Roan didn't give a damn anyway.

"Oh! Young man, you're quite fast."

Roan's faint smile didn't disappear even for a second.

"Thanks for the compliment. So, can I have access to the Black Market?"

Gval, who had just attacked, was taken aback by those words. Soon after, he laughed out loud.

"Hahaha! What a funny boy. Anyone at your age would feel nervous or would have fled straight away. I've never thought that you would be showing such confidence."

It turns out that Gval was at the Initial Stage of the Core and Soul Fusion Realm. So it was quite easy for him to get rid of Dudle, especially since the latter was directing his guard at Roan instead.

"You don't seem to care about what I did to this idiot here."

Roan shrugged his shoulders as he said.

"I already killed a few of his friends who tried to rob me, so why should I care about this final survivor? I only want one thing, access to the Black Markets. If I can't get it here, I'll try somewhere else."

"Oh! The way you put it, it seems like you are pretty confident in your chances of escaping, uh?"

Roan nodded, not trying to deny it.

"I'm not only confident. I'm absolutely sure I can do it."

Gval couldn't help but feel the urge to try Roan's abilities after hearing that. However, he gave up in the end. He could tell that Roan wasn't an average cultivator.

"There is no need to look for another place. However, you will have to go through the procedures before we allow you to enter the Black Market."

Roan nodded.

"I was expecting that much."

Seeing that Roan didn't mind, Gval then turned around and headed to the back of the shop. Roan didn't say anything and followed as well. As for Dudle's body, Roan was sure that it wouldn't be there anymore by the time he came out.

They quickly arrived in a separate room. Inside, Gval accessed a secret compartment where a few black tokens could be found. He took one of them and sent his Spiritual Sense inside. A few moments later, he looked back at Roan.

"This is the token that grants access to the three Black Markets available in the Inner City. However, I need proof of your intentions. We can't have just anyone stepping inside, after all."

Roan pondered a bit before asking.

"What do you need me to do?"

Gval nodded, satisfied.

"Just now, you used a movement ability based on the Dark Element. Obviously, you have some cultivation technique that provides you with Yin Energy. You are an assassin, or at least, you know how to act like one. That being said, your task will be to kill a certain someone. Bring me his head, and you will get access to the market."