

Death 421

Death... and me

Chapter 421: Sigh of Disappointment

Roan was having a good time extracting the herbs' medicinal liquids to the point that he ignored everything else. That's to show how high the quality of the materials in the Alchemist Main Branch is.

'Old Worm told me that they cultivate most of their herbs here. Seems like they're very good at it too. It was the first time I used the Galova Leaves, but I still got a superb result on the first try. It was not only my Light and Dark Element, but the herb itself helped in the process.'

Roan was a rarity between the participants. Most of the participants focused on the herb they were best at. They kept extracting the medicinal liquid of those herbs time and time again, trying to get the best result possible. Still, a few of them were as confident as Roan, so they also took the opportunity to try other herbs afterward. Lita Xue and Cluhe Sol were good examples of it.

Time passed as more and more vials of medicinal liquids arrived on the stage. All of them were put in a queue so that they could be checked with the formation later. Eventually, the two hours were over.

"Enough! Any vial of medicinal liquid that appears from now on will not be accepted. Assistants, bring the ones that have been finished already."

In just a few minutes, a few more of those vials appeared on the stage.

Roan heard that but decided to ignore it. They would be analyzing the vials, which would take some time. He might as well work on a few more extractions since he didn't have time to try all the new herbs. Old Worm couldn't help but show a faint smile as he saw that.

'It's good that you know what's really important.'

He left Roan alone and then focused his attention on the stage. Waki also noticed that Roan wasn't paying attention. After all, Roan was one of the few that caught his attention. Still, he simply ignored that since it would make no difference.

"Every vial has the participant's name and number. We have prepared several analyzing formations in partnership with the Formations Guild. To see the results in real-time, just send your Spiritual Sense into the monitoring formations around the room."

"All of you sent several vials, but only the highest result will be considered. Suppose you perform better with a later Vial. In that case, your previous result will be deleted as the new one will be displayed. Obviously, it will be matched accordingly in the ranks. In case there's a draw, the results of your second or third best medicinal liquid will be used to determine who is better."

"Alright, let's not waste any more time. I want to see who will be in the top 100. Start!"

The assistants on the stage immediately began to work as they put the vials on the formations one by one. Because there were several rolls of shelves with vials, the first ones to be delivered ended up in the back of the queue. That being said, the last ones to arrive would be the first ones tested.

Immediately, everyone sent their Spiritual Senses into the monitoring formations mentioned by Waki. Old Worm, of course, did the same thing. Only Roan and a few others who were confident in their results continued to practice as if nothing was happening.

At first, the positions in the rank shifted nonstop. But after ten minutes, they finally began to stabilize.

-Cluhe Sol, Vermilion Rak: 82.53%-

-Salan Vinci, Ramulia Sun Flower: 79, 67%-

-Roan Larks, Southern Ice Ginseng: 78.96%-

-Manu Filaken, Wind Leaves: 78.65%-

-Lita Xue, Tantum Swamp Root: 77.73%-

-Jonaf Qerliot, Samal Region Uvra Flower...-

And just like that, the results kept coming. The variations were enormous as well. While the top 100 was all above 70%, the bottom 100 had results below 40%. Obviously, the base had most of the changes.

Still, none of the elders and spectators paid much attention to it. The best candidates had already finished their best herbs at the start of the competition. The results showing right now were the results they got from other types they weren't used at. Only by the end would the best products appear.

Still, the alchemists beside Old Worm were surprised with Roan.

"Fauk, your kid is doing quite well."

"Indeed. I never thought that Dark and Light Element could be used for alchemy."

"Well, that's why Dead Fauk decided to take a disciple, no? He liked the kind of rarity his disciple brought to the field."

"That makes sense. Otherwise, it would be hard to catch Fauk's attention."

"By the way, what position you think he can take?"

Everyone was quite curious about Roan, so they kept bothering Old Worm with questions. Well, Old Worm kept ignoring them as always, much to their helplessness.

Around thirty minutes later, the average of the top 100 increased once again. Because the herbs provided for extraction were the same, herb names began to repeat as different results were achieved with other alchemists.

-Cluhe Sol, Ramulia Sun Flower: 84.73%-

-Lita Xue, Vulcan Lotus Seeds: 82.12%-

-Ilma Sasamil, Wind Leaves: 82.10%

-Salan Vinci, Midnight Algae: 81.78%-

-Roan Larks, Afrilo Cold Mucus: 80.86%-

-Manu Filaken...

Eventually, the batch of herbs made in the first 20 minutes of the exam began to be tested. Roan also just so happened to finish the extraction of another plant. Just as he was about to take another one, he received a Spiritual Sense Message from Old Worm.

'That's enough for now. The last results will appear, so you won't have enough time to finish the next extraction.'

Old Worm wasn't warning Roan about the results. With the numbers displayed so far, Roan would definitely be in the top 100. It's just that Roan would be called with other qualified alchemists to another place, so he would need to stop his extraction midway. Naturally, the herb would be wasted, and Old Worm didn't like to waste things.

Roan nodded as he looked at the results so far.

'Qalan Herb, huh? As I thought, this Cold Yin Plant was the best one among those I never tried before. It still gave me the 5th position. Still, it is far from the quality I achieved with Tavarian Stalk.'

It turned out that the only herb Roan had worked with before was the Tavarian Herb. The guild had purposely selected a few rare materials to see how the participants would deal with them. The situation wasn't much different for the other participants too.

Finally, the last batch of medicinal liquids was analyzed as the results began to appear one after another. Roan was almost the very first one to deliver his medicinal liquid, so his result would appear at the very end.

The first one of the favorites immediately caught everyone's attention as soon it appeared.

-Cluhe Sol, Midnight Algae: 91.73%-

"Oh! It's Elder Sulikan's disciple. As expected, that's an excellent result. He should have consolidated his 1st position with it."

"Indeed. Still, I'm curious about the others."

"Indeed. The best results always appear at the end."

Sure enough, someone ended up passing Cluhe.

-Avram Samikil, Xakron Green Sap: 92.12%-

"See? Using a herb that you know can make a huge difference."

"Avram wasn't even in the top 20 before. Now, he immediately shot up to the first position."

"We might get a few more surprises."

-Lita Xue, Ramulia Sun Flower 92.79%-

"And there we go. It's the girl from Zafril Country."

"The top 100 has a lot of the Capital's powers like the Subordinate Clans, Sasamil Imperial Family, and some other wealth and strong families. Still, there's a good amount of outsiders too."

"There is Fauk's boy as well. He came from outside. He is still in the 7th position even after the best medicinal liquids were processed."

Sure enough, the results of the only herb Roan had worked before appeared at the very end.

-Roan Larks, Tavarian Stalk: 94.82%-

In an instant, the entire room froze, just like what happened to Rean. Immediately, everyone focused their eyes on Roan and Old Worm.

However, Old Worm and Roan shook their heads in disappointment.

"Indeed. It's hard to achieve a good result when you aren't using your own tools."

Everyone almost vomited blood! Is that what you call a bad result? What kind of master and disciple is this? Are they trying to humiliate everyone else?

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Chapter 422: You Did Well

At the moment, a discussion was going around in the Formations Guild Test Field.

"Can he pass the test like that? The idea was to crack down the formations, right?"

"Indeed. I don't know if Zako would accept that."

"Perhaps he'll send Rean back since that's not how it should be done."

Droman couldn't help but sweat a little after hearing those statements. It would be good if Rean was sent back, but he was afraid that he might get disqualified instead.

Rean then arrived in front of Zako as he sheathed his sword.

"I just need to wait for the next 299 people, right?"

Zako's mouth twitched when he heard that question. First of all, he was still in disbelief that Rean resisted the pressure of the formation. That's not something an Initial Stage Core Formation Realm should be able to.

"Do you think I would accept that kind of result?"

However, Rean gave a puzzled look at Zako as he replied.

"Why not? The rules said that the first ones to arrive at the other side would be qualified. I'm here now, so I obviously passed."

"Like hell it was! We wanted you to use the flaws in the formation to pass the exam, not brute force!"

Rean gave an even more puzzled look as he responded.

"What are you talking about? The fact that the formation didn't have the power necessary to hold me down was a very obvious flaw. I used it in my favor to pass through it. How come what I did is not valid?"

Immediately, everyone around swallowed their words. Indeed, that wasn't just any flaw. That was a huge flaw! No one could think of a way to refute Rean's words.

"This..."

Rean continued.

"Don't be too sad. Even though it was a very ugly fault, I know you can do better next time."

Zako felt like sending Rean flying with a kick. It wasn't him who put that formation there. Why was he being comforted because of it? He's a Heaven Level Formations Master. He doesn't need it at all!

Still, he calmed down after a while.

"Sigh... forget it. I can't deny that the lack of pressure from the formation was a flaw indeed. Besides, you were ahead of everyone else to start with, so I doubt you wouldn't be between the first 300 anyway. Just get behind me and wait for the rest."

Rean smiled as he moved to the area Zako mentioned. There was another monitoring formation there that Rean used to accompany the other participants.

In the end, it wasn't before thirty minutes later that the first participant came out of the three formations test. It wasn't someone Rean knew, but he could tell where he came from due to his clothes. There were a few spectators close to where Rean was waiting, so he went there to ask the others who that guy was.

"It's Havek Sasamil."

"His Master is also someone from the Formations Guild Main Branch, right?"

"He is. Well, Havek is part of the Sasamil Bloodline, but he isn't a direct descendant."

As Havek walked in Zako's direction, he had a prideful expression on his face.

"Hahaha! It seems like this young Master was the first to come out. Well, everyone praised my talent for formation, so that is to be expected."

Turns out that he was quite a narcissist. However, Havek quickly noticed everyone's weird expressions as they looked at him. Suddenly, he received a Spiritual Sense message from his Master in the crowd.

'Shut up, you idiot! Can't you see the white-haired boy there? Stop humiliating both of us.'

Havek didn't pay attention at first because Rean was close to the other spectators. However, he finally noticed that Rean was inside the area where the qualified participants should be waiting.

"What?!"

He quickly approached Rean before asking.

"Hey, when did you come out?"

Rean scratched the back of his head as he answered.

"Ahem... It wasn't too long. Just thirty minutes."

Havek's mouth twitched. Is this guy trying to pull his leg?

"Are you for real?"

Rean nodded.

"There is no need for you to mull over it. I was just lucky."

Havek nodded.

"Well, it must have been. Wait, I feel like I saw you before somewhere..."

"Ah! Aren't you Qia's hubby?"

"Hu-Hubby?!"

Rean didn't know what to say. Well, it wasn't completely wrong either.

"I see, I see... No wonder that prideful girl took an interest in you. I thought it was only because of Droman's Communication System that she did it, but it seems like you have your own perks as well. Hahaha!"

"Anyway, I expect a good challenge from you in the next phases."

Havek then turned around and went to where his Master was waiting. As for Rean, he couldn't help but think.

'He reminds me of Tissan...'

The next participants then began to come out of the formations test one after the other. The second one was a guy from outside the Capital. His name was Dian Surteri, a Formation Master from Erken Country.

The third all the way up to the tenth ones were all part of the Capital as well. Qia just so happened to be between them.

"Oh! I knew that you would pass the test, but I didn't expect you would come out before me."

Qia smiled as she got close to him. She quickly held his hand as she looked at Havek.

"Indeed, Havek is one of the best between us all, so I guess it's no surprise he appeared before us."

Rean scratched the back of his head as he explained.

"Ahem... In fact, I was the first one to come out."

Qia's smile disappeared as she looked at Rean with a shocked expression.

"Are you for serious? How-"

Just as Qia was about to ask, Havek came running in their direction.

"Hey, hey, hey! I heard how you passed the last formation. That was crazy! I've never thought someone would do something like that. Oh, Qia is here too, it seems."

Qia's mouth twitched as she asked.

"What do you mean by that? Are you disappointed?"

Havek shrugged his shoulders as he replied.

"Not really. You came out when I thought you would, so that's fine. The only surprise so far was Rean. As for the rest, I don't have much interest in them."

Qia shook her head and decided to ignore Havek's attitude. Everyone between the young Formation Masters knew what type of person he was anyway. Complaining about him would bring her nowhere.

"So, you said that my future husband here surprised you. How did he do that?"

Havek immediately nodded with an excited expression.

"Oh, that's right!"

Havek then explained everything. Sure enough, Qia looked at Rean with a weird expression after hearing everything.

"This... isn't that cheating?"

Rean was just about to answer when Havek intervened.

"Are you an idiot? Oh, right. You aren't as good as me, so it's understandable that your head can't see how impressive it was."

Qia really felt like cutting that guy's head now. Nonetheless, Havek ignored her as he continued.

"He could see that the formation didn't have enough power to hold him down. Laywomen like you might have thought that it would be against the rules to break through. However, the formation's weakness to hold him down was a flaw in itself. Can your small mind see it?"

Bam

"Ouch!"

Qia couldn't help but kick that guy's leg.

Still, she ignored him soon after and looked at Rean.

"As expected of the man I love, you did well."

Rean, who had practically been a spectator between these two, could only accept the compliment in the end.

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Chapter 423: Using the Worst Results

Old Worm had long since recognized Roan's ability to increase the quality of medicinal liquid. For quality alone, Light Element played a larger role than when Roan had to eliminate impurities. When it came to removing impurities, Dark Element took place as the most important one.

Waki noticed that he lost his attention for a moment.

"Ahem... Well then. The last ones have been tested already, so the top 100 has been decided. As for the ones who didn't make it, you can go back home already. That's all."

Roan, Cluhe, Lita, Avram, and the rest, who made it into the top 100, followed Waki to the back. As for the rest, they could only watch these people in jealousy. Still, Roan and the others didn't seem to be happy or anything. In their eyes, it wouldn't be a problem to pass this first test to start with. It's just that no one expected Roan to make such a high-quality medicinal liquid, so they couldn't help but look at him with interest.

Roan noticed that but didn't care. He already decided that he would enter the top 10 since he needed those Rank Four Spirit Stones to buy that skill book. Well, he would try it anyway, even if he didn't know about that book.

The alchemist exam's first phase was the same for all the halls. Because of that, all of them finished around the same time. When Roan was brought to the next testing area, there were a lot of participants that had passed the first phase somewhere else. He and the others were then guided to their own tables, where they would take the second test.

The other examination halls were not as strict as Waki, so there were more qualified alchemists from them. In the end, the second phase area still had around three to four thousand participants. Roan quickly verified his surroundings and the people there. After all of that, he shifted his attention back to his table.

'The same equipment as before. It seems like we won't be using our own tools in this entire exam at all.'

Roan then began to prepare everything since these tools were not the same ones he used in the previous room. As he did that, more and more participants arrived. Some of them tried to talk with Roan, but he simply ignored them.

At some point, Old Worm and the other spectators arrived in the room as well. Old Worm was feeling quite annoyed, though. His fellow guild members didn't stop asking him about Roan at all. Every now and then, he answered with a few words, but none of them seemed satisfied.

As all of that happened, Waki joined with the other elders from the other halls to talk.

"How was it in your halls? Was there any problem?"

The man who was talking was called Mancil Werxa. He was the main figure of the Alchemist Guilds in the entire Empire and the only Heaven Peak-Level Alchemist.

Everyone then shook their heads after hearing the question.

"That's good, then. What about the participants this time? Who are the ones worth taking notice of?"

This time, the elders finally had something to say.

"My hall had two participants who seemed capable. One did 90.23% of quality, while the other got 91.90%."

"Mine was not that well-off. The first place's medicinal liquid quality only reached 88.03%. It was quite disappointing."

One by one, they reported their findings. Finally, Waki mentioned his.

"Seems like I have the highest number of those who can surpass 90%. Four of my participants passed it. The first place even got almost 95%! Or 94.82% to be more specific."

Everyone looked at Waki, surprised. Even Mancil got a bit curious.

"Over 94%? That's quite rare. Which clan did he come from? Or maybe he was from the Sasamil Imperial Family?"

Waki shook his head in response.

"No, he came from outside the capital. Do you remember that Dalamu Sect?"

"Dalamu Sect? The Communication System Formation one?"

Waki nodded.

"That one. This boy came from that place as well."

Mancil pondered for a bit before saying.

"They are quite lucky with talents. In any case, our Alchemist Guild doesn't have much to do with Formations, so let's put it aside. So far, it seems like we have around twenty young alchemists worth keeping an eye on. Of course, while some might be bad at Medicinal Extraction, it doesn't mean it's the same with the next steps of concoction. There's still a chance of a few more talents appearing in the next phase."

After that, the elders kept talking for a while as they waited for everyone to prepare for the next test. Finally, an assistant of the guild appeared and said.

"Senior Mancil, all the preparations are done. We can start the second phase at any time."

Mancil nodded before turning around with the other elders. They all went up to the stage, where everyone immediately noticed their presence. Mancil didn't take the lead, though. He simply sat at the back and left the talk for the other elders to do. He was here basically to observe, that's all.

In the end, an elder called Oligan came forward.

"Congratulations to everyone who made it into this phase. As most of you could already imagine, the second test will be purifying. We brought several medicinal liquids from the last test. However, giving you your own creations wouldn't really serve as a test. That being said, we took the worst results that appeared during the last phase. Obviously, their creators already failed and were sent back home."

"It's no secret that the higher the quality of the medicinal liquid, the easier it is to purify it. That's why we're doing it. We want to see what you're really capable of. Anyway, you can use any method you feel like to purify the medicinal liquids. The vials with the medicinal liquids will be distributed randomly. Whatever you get will be what you need to work with."

"There is a total of 3200 alchemists remaining. When this phase is over, only three hundred will go to the next phase, so you better put your all into it."

"Alright, that's all. The exam starts now!"

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Chapter 424: More Rules

Back in the Formation Master Guild, Rean and the others kept waiting for participants to come out of the formations. As time passed, the frequency got higher. After some time, all of the formations in the testing field turned off together. A girl then looked behind and saw how everyone appeared behind her.

As mentioned by Zako before, once the number of qualified people passed through the formations, they would turn off altogether. That girl just happened to be the last one.

At first, everyone inside was surprised by that, but soon, they understood that they had failed. They could only look at the crowd behind Zako with jealousy as they waited there. Rean couldn't help but sigh. Close to the end, a lot of them were practically together. If the last girl who came out was just a few seconds slower, she would have lost her position to someone else. He could only imagine how those who were so close felt.

Seeing that it was over, Zako came forward and announced.

"Everyone who's still inside the formations has failed. The exit will be opened for you behind. Those who are accompanying you should leave as well. As for the two hundred that passed the exam and their companions, follow me. I'll guide you to the next part."

Rean, Havek, Qia, and the other participants followed Zako. Droman and their elders, obviously, followed right behind. The situation here wasn't much different from what Roan got. Rean's group could see many other participants who passed through the tests on other test fields.

"Hey, it's Milo!"

Milo heard someone calling his name and immediately turned around.

"Oh! It's you two, huh? Seems like we're together again. You better be careful, though. I have no intention of holding back. Hahaha!"

Rean and Qia laughed as well as they nodded.

"Obviously, neither of us would do that."

"By the way, what about the others?"

Rean made a few friends during this time in the Formations Guild, so he wanted to know about them.

Milo shook his head after hearing that question, though.

"Laio and Beami were in the same group as me, but they failed to come out inside the top 200. I just looked around, but I couldn't find Huvel and Artin either, so I guess they failed as well."

Suddenly, a voice came from behind them.

"Hey, since when did I fail?"

Rean's group looked in the direction of the voice and soon found who it was.

"Oh! I can't believe Artin passed."

"What the hell you mean you can't believe it? I, your grandfather, am a genius, alright?"

Rean and Milo laughed as they welcomed the guy. Artin was from the Capital and also had a Master who was part of the Formations Guild. However, neither of them were part of the nine subordinate clans or the Sasamil Imperial Family.

"It seems like my group was the last one to arrive. Is there any other testing field ongoing?"

Milo shook his head.

"I already checked the numbers. Yours was seriously the last one. You guys were just that slow."

"Hmph! I passed the exam a long time ago. It's just that I had to wait for the 200 to be selected before coming here. Anyway, they should announce the second test anytime now."

Rean, Milo, and Qia nodded as they went together to the front. A few minutes later, another elder of the Formations Guild called Turin came forward to talk.

"Well, it seems that you guys have some ability compared to the others who failed. Anyway, congratulations on passing the first exam. I'll now explain the rules of the second phase, so listen carefully."

"We will give you the materials you need, so you will have one hour to make a protection formation of your choice. Protection Formations come in various types and elements. There are also protection formations that don't use any elements. In any case, this is a fair way of testing your skills."

"After that, we will use a neutral attack formation to strike it as many times as it is necessary until it breaks. The power of the attack will increase every time as well. Your score will be based on how many attacks it can support before breaking down."

"Although you can make any formation you desire, you are prohibited from using Cores or Spirit Stones. The formation can only rely on Spiritual Energy from the surroundings to power itself."

"You don't need to be afraid that others will take away your own formation's Spiritual Energy since each formation will be tested separately. Alright, I believe I made it very clear. Is there any question?"

Milo then raised his hand.

"What if there are two identical scores?"

Turin nodded.

"There are three hundred slots open for the next phase. Still, if someone shares the same score in the 300th position, the one who passed the first exam faster will advance."

Someone else then made another question.

"Can we use our own materials to create the formation?"

However, Turin shook his head as he said.

"No. The guild will provide you with the necessary materials. That's to prevent others from using their better background resources to gain the advantage."

Everyone nodded and didn't ask anything else. Seeing that the participants went silent, Elder Turin finally announced.

"Alright, Formations take a lot of space, so we will need to use a much bigger field if we want everyone to fit their formations in the same area. There is a Teleport Formation underneath this room, so prepare to be teleported. Your companions will come together, so there's no need to worry. The guild will also take full responsibility for your safety."

No one was surprised to hear that. The Formations Guild had conducted countless tests in the past, so such an approach had been used many times already.

Suddenly, the ground where everyone was standing shone with Spiritual Energy from the Spirit Stones powering the formation. Soon after, a flash of silver light enveloped everyone before they disappeared.

A moment later, another formation outside the city flashed before the entire group appeared there. Quite a few Formation Masters were waiting for them on the other side. After seeing the participants' arrival, the guy in charge of the preparations came forward.

"Turin, everything is ready. The Spiritual Energy distribution in the entire field is identical, so it won't matter where they build their formations."

The field was quite impressive. There were several types of environments available for them to use. Forest, River, Desert, Rainy, etc... The Formations Guild made sure that everyone could work on the best formations they knew. This way, no one would be able to complain of unfairness.

Turin then looked at everyone.

"Now then, talk to the Formations Guild assistants on your side. They will provide you with all the materials you need to build your formation. However, we won't offer you any rare material. After all, it would be too expensive since only ten Formations Masters will join the guild. Still, considering that you only have one hour to build your Protection Formation, the materials available should be more than enough. After all, rare materials are usually used in more complex formations that take much longer to be built."

"Alright. You have thirty minutes to make your requests. I'll tell you when you can start creating your formations."

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Chapter 425: Test and Results of Second Phase

Returning to the Alchemist Guild, Roan received a vial containing some Vermillion Rak Medicinal Liquid. This was a type of flower generally found in the southeast side of the country. Of course, the guild cultivated their own items here in the Capital.

'Hmm... I didn't try this one in the previous phase. From what I know, this is a type of Fire Elemental Flower that grows in hot climates. The Yang Energy inside is quite abundant as well. However, the guy who made this medicinal liquid did a really shitty job. There are even a few remnants of the flower's stem inside. Why would you take this exam with such lousy skill?'

However, Roan wasn't the only one cursing the quality of his Medicinal Liquid. Everyone else was basically in the same boat. But in the end, they put those thoughts behind as they started their Medicinal Purification.

Roan sent the medicinal liquid into the cauldron provided by the guild and turned the fire on. The liquid quickly got hot but didn't boil. Roan controlled the temperature to be like that. After some time, his hair once again changed into a combination of black and white as he sent his Element and Spiritual Sense inside.

'That's quite good. At least I can see those remnants clearly, thanks to the temperature difference between it and the medicinal liquid. Let's start now.'

Light Element spread through the entire medicinal liquid as Dark Element followed right behind. As always, Light protected the good properties of the medicinal liquid while the Dark attacked the impurities. Little by little, Roan's medicinal liquid amount decreased as the impurities disappeared.

The others weren't slow either. Cluhe used his Wood Element differently. It connected to his medicinal liquid and dragged the impurities out instead of destroying it like Roan. Lita Xue was similar to Roan, though. It's just that she used her Blue Flame to achieve the same result. Roan had also noticed her before exactly because she relied on two opposite elements, just like himself.

Oligan, Waki, Werxa, and the other seniors of the Alchemist Guild all verified those participants closely with their Spiritual Energies. Naturally, they paid special attention to Roan and those who had the highest result in the previous phase.

"So that's Waki's kids, huh? That Dark and Light Elements boy is quite interesting. Did he cultivate two different techniques to control Yin and Yang Energies?"

"That other girl is also interesting. Kala Fian is her name, and she came from Balo's group. She can only use a single element, but her proficiency with it is a tad above the others. It'll be interesting to see what she can do once she manages to control two at the same time."

"Cluhe is basically the only Wood Element user between the top-ranked ones from the previous phase. Look at Elder Zanti's expression on the side. You can see how proud he is. Cluhe is indeed doing it very well."

"Hehehe! As a woman myself, I'm looking forward to the other girls too. That Lita and her Fire and Water fusion is quite surprising. It's a beautiful blue flame. If you consider that she's still in the Middle Stage of the Core Formation Realm, that becomes even more impressive."

Werxa shook his head, though.

"There are quite a few good seeds this time. Their results, in the end, is what matters. After all, we don't have slots for everyone."

Werxa looked at those boys and girls with a peculiar light in his eyes. It was as if his thoughts were wandering much further than the exam.

Because everyone only had a single chance, they all worked extremely carefully on their removal of impurities. The elders didn't give any time limit either since there was only so much they could do with a single vial of medicinal liquid. It wasn't before an entire hour went by that the first medicinal liquids cleared of impurities began to appear. Roan, just like in the first phase, was one of the firsts to deliver it.

Once the first ones began to deliver, the rest started to do the same. Another hour quickly went by until the last vial was sent for analysis. However, a few of the alchemists present had disappointed or sad expressions. Obviously, they knew that they wouldn't have much of a chance. In Roan and the other previous top-ranked ones' case, they all seemed quite calm.

Oligan then looked at the assistants, who nodded back at him.

"Very well. The last vial is here already. Let's not waste our time here, shall we?"

Oligan then signaled for the assistants to start. The vials immediately began to enter the formations that checked the percentage of impurities in the medicinal liquids.

"Everyone, use the monitoring formations close to you to see the results in real-time. Once again, only the first 300 will advance. Good luck to all participants."

Roan and the other top-ranked participants were among the first contestants to deliver their vials. Because of that, they were once again put at the end of the queue. Well, anyone could tell that the guild arranged it to be that way.

Thirty minutes went by, and 50% of the vials were tested in the several formations placed on the stage. However, there were a few surprises.

1st: Qobes Sian, 71.03%

2nd: Divrad Howega, 70.73%

3rd: Yulie Sul, 70.12%

4th: Fanwas...

"Oh! A few of them still reached 70% purity even though their medicinal liquids were that poor."

"These ones are definitely guaranteed in the next phase. Let's see what the top ones from the last phase can do."

The first one to appear was Avram.

-Avram Samikil, 69.11%-

Sure enough, it wasn't easy to work with poor quality medicinal liquids. Besides, a lot of the top-ranked ones got herbs that they were not familiar with. Only a scant few were lucky enough to get something like that.

Soon, another one appeared. It was a member of another hall called Ruivo Hanz.

-Ruivo Hanz, 72.65%-

And just like that, the results kept coming.

Death... and me

Chapter 426: Mommy Orb

-Imai Taran, 73.52%-

"As expected."

"Surprises were bound to appear now that the type of test has changed."

"Hehe! Let's check the rest out."

-Saraif Lavil, 73.26%-

-Lusen Sasamil, 72.98%-

A lot of excellent results continued to appear. However, most of them came from the Sasamil Family or the subordinate clans.

-Bludo Porem, 73.67%-

"Oh! Someone surpassed Imai."

"Well, that's Elder Suan's grandchild. Elder Suan already retired to focus on his cultivation, but that didn't mean his descendants stayed still."

"This year's batch is really promising."

Werxa nodded as he looked at everything. However, deep down, he couldn't help but sigh.

'Not enough, not enough at all...'

Suddenly.

-Cluhe Sol, 76.71%-

While all of the elders were delighted to see that result...

"As expected."

"Look at Zanti. He's grinning from ear to ear."

"Hehe. Don't forget that it isn't over yet."

Werxa's brows only barely moved, though. He then looked at what kind of medicinal liquid Cluhe worked with. Following that, he used a Spiritual Sense message to question Zantis, who was watching from the sides with the other spectators.

'Zantis, I saw that Cluhe refined a vial of Golomeia Dark Vine medicinal liquid. Did Cluhe work with this kind of plant before, or was it his first time?'

Zanti was taken aback by that message. However, when he saw who asked it, he immediately answered.

'This old man's disciple hasn't worked with that herb before. I've watched his whole training so far, so I'm sure he didn't. Even if he did touch it without me knowing, it wasn't more than a few times. He did that on his own, Guild Leader.'

Werxa narrowed his eyes after hearing that.

'Very well. That's a good seed. Take good care of him.'

Zanti immediately nodded as he thanked Werxa for the compliment.

Werxa, on the other hand, couldn't help but ponder.

'He's barely passable. Still, I need at least three.'

It was then that someone piqued his interest.

-Lita Xue, 83.67%-

Immediately, the room went in an uproar!

"Oh! That girl smashed Cluhe's previous number.'

"Wait! What was the medicinal liquid she used? If she got the one she was good at, then it could be understandable."

"Let me see... Her best result in the previous exam was using Ramalia Sun Flower. However, she got this result with a Tavarian Stalk medicinal liquid."

"Impressive. If Lita wasn't pretending in the first phase, she got this result with a herb she isn't familiar with. That's a great achievement."

Roan looked at that and didn't find the result strange. No one in the room had a better perception of Yin and Yang energies than him. Of course, his Yang Energy perception was because of his link with Rean. Roan had long noticed that girl and expected her to get this result in the purifying test.

'Her Blue Flames are made with Water and Fire. She used the Water Element's soothing trait to protect the medicinal liquid while destroying the impurities with the Fire Element. It's basically the same thing I'm doing, but at a lower level. If I'm not wrong, she has an affinity for the Fire Element while using a Yin Element cultivation technique to manipulate the Water Element at a similar level. Quite a clever way of manipulation. It's especially effective for the purifying stage of the concoction, just like me.'

If Rean was here, his mouth would surely be agape. That was an incredibly huge compliment when you considered who was saying that.

Roan wasn't the only one interested in her, though. Werxa had finally shown an expression of surprise.

'Now that's what I'm talking about! As long as she's properly taught how to do medicinal extractions, her purifying talent will reach even greater heights. I can use her.'

The tests continued until finally, the last vials began to be tested, including Roan's vial. Roan and Old Worm didn't seem to care too much about it, though. It was as if they already knew what to expect from it.

-Roan Larks, 90.35%-

The room that before had gone in an uproar now froze in silence. The only thing that moved was Old Worm's head as he thought.

'Pretty much what I expected. Sure enough, having a natural affinity for the Dark Element instead of using a Yin Energy ability to control it is completely different.'

Roan acted the same way as Old Worm, not surprised with that result at all. He and Old Worm had concocted together for a very long time, so they knew that it would happen. One must remember that Old Worm commented in the past that he doubted Roan would fail in the Alchemist Exam to start with. These results only confirmed what they already knew.

However, the others were different. This wasn't just a fantastic result for a low-quality medicinal liquid. This was already very good, even if Roan had refined with a high-quality liquid.

"The hell?"

"How did he do that?"

"Was that the same herb as the first phase?"

"No, the herb he used in the first phase was a Tavarian Stalk, the one that Lita got her results just a moment ago."

"The medicinal liquid he got this time was Vermillion Rak, completely different."

Werxa was also shocked by the result. He heard the talk by the sides, so he immediately understood that Roan was Old Worm's disciple.

'Fauk, did Roan use to work with that flower before?'

Old Worm looked at Werxa behind the other elders on stage. Unlike Zanti, Old Worm didn't seem to care that the Guild Leader of the Alchemist Guild talked to him. Still, he shook his head.

'No.'

Well, he didn't say much either...

Werxa's mouth twitched after seeing Old Worm's reaction. Because he had to supervise the Alchemist Guilds' activities in the Sasamil Empire, he had little time to interact with the members of the Main Branch. That being said, he didn't know Old Worm as well as the other alchemists around him.

Of course, those alchemists were also making Old Worm run out of patience with the torrent of questions after this last result. If not because he wanted to see Roan's performance until the end, he would have left just like he did back in the Shadow Reaper Organization.

Werxa then shook his head and looked at Roan with his eyes twinkling.

'That girl Xue was already good, but this guy is just perfect. As long as he performs this well in the rest of the exam, I'll use him. Anyway, I will need three to start with, so I better bring Lita as well. As for the last one, I still have a few good members to consider from previous examinations.'

'Now... it will depend on the other guilds.'

No one knew what Werxa was thinking, though.

Last but not least, all the young alchemists' attention shifted from Lita Xue to Roan. Lita's results were already incredible, but Roan's result was just too overwhelming. If not because Roan was participating under all the elders' eyes, they would even think he cheated.

Cluhe, who was feeling quite satisfied with his result before, felt like he didn't even exist now.

'Who's this fella? One Lita was already enough, but now this guy also appeared.'

Lita, on the other hand, looked intently at Roan. She could tell that Roan was using the same technique as her. However, the level he reached with it was simply nothing she could compare with. Well... many alchemists also used that technique since it wasn't a secret to start with. It's just that only Roan caught her attention.

Obligan noticed that the commotion wouldn't die anytime soon, so he decided to intervene.

"Ahem... The rest of the results have been disclosed already. Now, I'm announcing the first 300 that are going to the next phase."

1st: Roan Larks;

2nd: Lita Xue;

3rd: Cluhe Sol;

4th: Bludo Porem;

5th: Imai Taran;

6th...

It was then that someone noticed something.

"Hey, can you see that? How long has it been since the first three positions didn't have a member of the Imperial Family or the Subordinate Clans?"

"Oh! Now that you've said it, it's quite surprising indeed."

"It's not that they did bad. Look at their results. They have all the positions from 4th all the way to 13th. It's just that there were too many dark horses."

"Well, one of them is more like a Dark Dragon..."

Sister Orb had heard those people and couldn't help but comment.

[Hahaha! Dark Horse is simply too fitting. You already have the Dark Element. As long as you use a fur coat and neigh a little, it should be perfect!]

Roan's mouth twitched.

'You've been silent for so long. Why must you open your mouth now?'

[Because I'm bored.]

'Go to hell! First of all, aren't you helping Rean pass his test? What are you doing here? You should know that I probably won't need you.'

[Sigh... that son of mine has grown up already. He doesn't need Mommy Orb to help him anymore.]

Rean, who was preparing to draw his formation, heard that comment as well.

'Who the hell is your son? Don't start inventing stories just because you didn't have a chance to help me.'

'First of all, why am I treated as your son while the Ice Block over there isn't?'

[Because Roan is not cute.]

Rean cursed out loud.

'To hell with that. We are identical except for the color of our hair.'

Roan snorted in response.

'Fortunately, that's the only place we look the same, little guy.'

[Roan's right! How can you compare with his 'I'm a zombie' attitude? It's just too sad to look at Roan.]

Rean finally nodded, satisfied.

'Well, that's true.'

Roan was the one to curse now.

'Who the hell's a zombie?'

While everyone was worried about their exams, those three argued in their own world.

Death... and me

Chapter 427: Guilds' Competitions

In the Formations Guild, Turin saw that time was up and announced.

"Alright. The test starts now. You can use any of the several field environments here to build a formation of your own choice. As mentioned before, you have one hour to finish your formations."

Rean, Qia, Milo, and the rest of the participants immediately rushed to the fields. Qia went for the region where Earth Element was more concentrated. Not only her, but at least half of the participants did the same thing. Earth was known for its defensive properties, so it was to be expected.

Milo, on the other hand, entered the Forest part. His formations would make use of the abundant Wood Element in there.

Havek chose the river for his one. He was especially good with Water Element Formations and was quite confident in his chances.

To make so many different environments in such a small space, the Formations Guild prepared an even bigger formation underneath the field. It could control the weather on each side without affecting the other. Naturally, they also designed an area where Lightning Element was abundant for the participants.

However, there were very few Lightning Element Formation Masters. It's not that others couldn't use the Lightning Element in their formations, but that Lightning was known for its huge consumption of Spiritual Energy to work. It was powerful as long as it had the Spirit Stones to work with. Unfortunately, such a thing wasn't allowed here.

Rean didn't mind, though. Even when he wasn't working on the Communication System Formations, he also practiced several other types of standard Lightning Formations. This last month inside the Formations Guild Repository helped him improve even more with that. Of course, he also learned about other types. That's why he could find the core or flaws of the formations in the previous phase that fast.

'Still, there is a huge lack of Spiritual Energy here. It seems like I can only do a double-layered formation.'

Double-layered formations were basically two formations built to work together. It wasn't wrong to say that instead of two, that it's a single formation. Naturally, making the two work like that without disturbing the functionality of the other was several times more complicated.

However, Rean had an advantage here. The communication system formation, or to be more specific, the Router Formation used this type of system to start with. Rean had done this kind of formation so many times that he even dreamed while doing it. The only difference was that he would change the communication formation into a defensive one.

'Hmm...? Defensive?'

Rean pondered for a bit before his eyes lit up.

'Yep, there is no better way to defend other than that.'

A playful smile appeared on Rean's lips as he got to work straight away.

Droman, who was watching Rean through his Spiritual Sense, narrowed his eyes.

'What is he doing? It won't work if he does it like that.'

Rean had really caught the examination elders' attention during the last phase, so they also paid attention to him every now and then.

"That kid is making a double-layered formation, isn't he?"

"He is, but it seems like he's still too inexperienced. Those runs won't be able to last for long."

"Hahaha! It's fine. Considering that he can do a double-layer, he should at least perform well enough to head into the next phase."

"I'm not too sure about that. Quite a few of our participants can do the same thing. This is, after all, the Formations Guild Main Branch exam."

Suddenly, someone else's voice appeared behind those examiners.

"That's enough. Pay attention to the other participants as well. Your job is to prevent anyone from cheating on this test. While you are looking elsewhere, someone might get the chance to play some tricks."

Those elders were taken aback as they looked behind.

"Guild Head! You came back!"

Her name was Saya Horzulun. She was a Heaven Peak-Level Formations Master. Just like Werxa, she was responsible for supervising the Formation Master Guilds in the Sasamil Empire.

"I just arrived from the Headquarters. Anyway, how are things so far? have you found anyone interesting?"

The elders quickly returned their attention to all the participants as they nodded their heads.

"Yes. One of them was that boy we just talked about. However, he passed the first phase in quite a peculiar way."

The one who talked was Zako. He then took the chance to explain to Saya about the first phase in his test field and how Rean worked around it.

Saya couldn't help but show some surprise on her face as she looked at Rean in the distance with her Spiritual Sense.

"No wonder you're interested in him."

The other elders nodded and then proceeded to talk about the other participants.

"There is also Havek Sasamil. Although he was a lot slower than Rean, his time of analysis was excellent."

"In my group, I had Felo Susume and Lanca Mion. Their times were very close to Havek's from Zako's group. Felo is a disciple of one of our members and a subordinate clan descendant, while Lanca came from outside the Capital."

"There is also Suli and Hersha Deskalo, from the Deskalo Subordinate Clan. They were in different groups but performed quite well. You can look forward to their performance as well."

The examiners then continued to give their reports from each test field. Saya heard all of that and nodded with a satisfied expression.

"As always, the main branch attracts the highest talents of the Empire. In any case, I have good news for you all. The Headquarters have already decided on the next guild group competition."

The elders were taken aback.

"What?! It'll happen again?!"

"Great! It's quite rare for this to happen."

Others thought it to be a bit strange, though.

"Why is it happening now? I doubt they don't know the situation between Chrole and us at the moment."

The elders immediately went silent after hearing that. Indeed. There's a big chance of a conflict breaking out in the next few years. There are only so many Empires in the world. A war between them was very rare due to their own power.

Saya nodded. As the high echelon of the Formations Guild, they were obviously privy to more information than others.

"That's why they want to start it right now. It would be bad to hold such a competition while the war is ongoing. After all, Empire Wars usually take many years to be over."

The other elders had to admit that it was true. Although their guild wouldn't be directly affected, it was still a bad thing since many talents would be lost.

"What will be the rules this time?"

"Also, when will it take place?"

Saya then explained.

"We will use three participants from our side. They will then join the other guilds in a group competition to define the overall position of each Empire."

The elders were taken aback.

"Wait! Are we joining hands with other side occupations?"

Saya nodded.

"Yes. Talismans, Blacksmith, Alchemy, Formations. Although there are more, those are the four main side occupations in our world. Each Empire will have these four guilds bring their best talents and compete together against the other Empires. Of course, there are regions of the world where there are no Empires. Maril Region is a good example of it. Still, the guilds also invited the main powers in those places to participate if they so wish."

All the elders were surprised to hear that. It's not that such a thing didn't happen before, but it had been hundreds of years since such a joint competition took place.

"What are the requirements?"

Saya then pointed at all the young Formation Masters in the field.

"Under 25 years old. That's basically it."

The elders nodded.

"In that case, Earth High-Level Formation Masters will probably be the limit of the competitors. However, there is no need to select the ones present in this field, right? We have quite a few more experienced members around 21 and 22 years old from examinations in previous years."

Saya shook her head.

"The competition will take place 7 years from now."

"Oh! I thought they would go through it earlier."

Another elder shook his head in response.

"That's to be expected. Although the situation in the two Empires isn't good, the Sasamil Emperor is still alive. No one expects this war to start for the next decade or so, at the very least. Before that, the new Emperor or Empress will have to ascend to the throne and consolidate their position. It's not even guaranteed that a war will happen to start with. In any case, 7 years is already quite fast for a competition of this size."

Saya agreed with him.

"That's correct. That will also give us the time to train our choices properly."

The elder and Saya continued to discuss that news as the second phase happened.

Rean looked at his project and couldn't help but nod, satisfied.

'That's perfect. The runes were made in quite a hurry, but it should still be fine. Now then, let's finish the connections between the two. With a Spirit Energy Gathering Formation and the Lightning one, I should be able to achieve the desired result.'

Finally, one hour went by. Turin then immediately came forward to announce.

"Time is over! If you didn't finish your formation, that's your bad luck."

Quite a few Formation Masters had ugly expressions. It was obvious that things didn't go as expected for them and one hour ended up not being enough. Still, rules were rules.

Turin ignored that as he looked at the Formation Masters assistants on his side.

"Bring the Spiritual Blast Formation."

Death... and me

Chapter 428: I Like That Boy

Rean and Roan had no idea as to what the elders were thinking. First of all, it was a wonder whether they would accept to take part in this kind of event or not.

Continuing on Rean's side, the Guild's Formation Masters brought out the Spiritual Blast Formation that Elder Turin asked for. This wasn't anything hard to make since it simply compressed Spiritual Energy before releasing it. In fact, it was quite lacking when one compared it to other formations that rely on elements.

However, this was perfect for this situation. The Spiritual Blast Formation didn't select any element in particular. It only absorbed the Spiritual Energy available and released the attack. The Formations Guild also planned to use Spirit Stones to power it up so that they could do their tests.

"Alright. First, the fire field."

Lanca and a few other Formation Masters of the previous exam were there. They quickly left the field so that their Formations could be tested. The assistants then approached the Spiritual Blast Formation to one of the fire-based defensive formations before activating it.

The Spiritual Blast Formation then absorbed one Rank Three Spirit Stone until it turned to dust before releasing its energy.

Just as the fire-based defensive formation was about to be hit, Fire Element began to gather around it, creating a magma-like force field. The Spiritual Blast hit it head-on, deforming a bit of the magma field. However, that was about it. The formation held the attack back without much difficulty.

The formation's owner, who was watching from outside, nodded in satisfaction.

"My Magma Force Field Formation is malleable. This is not going to be broken that easily. Hahaha!"

However, the next Spiritual Blast Attack came right after he finished. This time, the Spiritual Blast Formation used three Rank Three Spirit Stones to charge up.

Boom!

With three times the power, the Magma Field was left with an enormous hole on its surface. Although it didn't collapse, it was really close to it. The other participants then looked at the guy who just talked as if he was an idiot.

"How dumb are you? Even if that was only a Spiritual Blast Formation, it was made by the Formation Master Guild's elders. Did you think it would be just like any simple one you can build yourself?"

"Hmph! From the looks of it, you won't be able to hold even three strikes."

"He's not the only one. You all need to be prepared when your time comes."

During the next Spiritual Blast, five Rank Three Spirit Stones were used to charge the formation.

Boom! Shatter!

Sure enough, the guy's defensive formation wasn't able to hold it back and collapsed almost instantly. Seeing that, he couldn't help but show an ugly face.

Well, Turin and the rest couldn't care less about it.

"Surinan Fill, two strikes. The Spiritual Blast Formations seem to be working fine. Head to the next one."

The assistants followed the order and quickly moved the Spiritual Blast Formation to the next one in the queue. Once again, it absorbed a single Rank Three Spirit Stone before attacking the formation. The defense did hold it back, but things were not so good for the second time.

Boom! Shatter!

This one wasn't able to even hold two strikes. Surinan then sighed in relief after seeing that. At least, that proved that his Magma Field Formation wasn't the worst one.

"Talei Uifron, one strike. Next!"

The next five defensive formations were only able to hold one or two strikes in the end. Only the 6th one finally crossed that threshold.

Boom, Boom, Boom!

"He passed three strikes!"

"Finally, someone with some skills."

"Hehe! Do you think so? Look at how his formation is holding. It can barely stand."

"It was still better than the previous ones, though."

"Wait! Look at the Spiritual Blast Formation!"

Everyone heard that warning and looked at the formation. All of a sudden, most of their faces turned grim. The first blast used one Rank Three Spirit Stones, the second used three, the third used five... However, the fourth jumped straight to ten Spirit Stones!

Boom! Shatter!

The formation that withstood three strikes broke as if it was made of glass. Not even a single rune remained after that.

"Laol Volkiq, three strikes. Next!"

The confidence in quite a few faces disappeared after seeing that. They thought they would be able to hold four strikes at least, but the power of that Spiritual Blast was far above what they expected. Sure enough, the guild showed no mercy.

Of course, there were many even better formations present. A girl called Suia Rove finally broke the four strike threshold. The others who failed and those who weren't confident couldn't help but look at her, jealous.

Suia dropped her head in embarrassment with so many eyes on her. Nonetheless, she was very happy with that result, especially because her formation still seemed to be in good shape.

The next strike used the force of fifteen Rank Three Spirit Stones, but Suia's formation held the strike once again. Finally, her formation broke down at the sixth Spiritual Blast Strike, which used twenty Spirit Stones.

Turin then looked at the girl and nodded.

"Not too bad. Suia Rove, five strikes. Next!"

Immediately, everyone understood. If they wanted to guarantee their presence between the first three hundred participants, their formations needed to hold at least four strikes. Three might be possible, but they would most likely end in a draw with other participants. Once that happened, the results of their previous exam would be what really counts.

The tests continued without caring for their feelings, though. Soon, the first one hundred were tested. Between them, there were 18 who were able to hold three strikes, 5 got to four, while only 2 were able to defend against five strikes.

Suia wasn't part of those who performed well in the first exam, so she was a surprise to the others. However, the second one was part of the best ranked there. Orval Fole was third place in the 5th Test Field in the First Exam. He was also part of one of the nine subordinate clans.

Of course, the same way that unknown names appeared, some of the best-ranked ones in the first exam also fell short. Two of the guys in the top 5 in the first exam couldn't even hold three strikes and were definitely eliminated. No one found it unjust, though. After all, the ability to create a good formation was taken more seriously than analyzing them.

Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom...

Suddenly, one of the formations was able to hold seven strikes!

"Oh! It's Felo Susume. He was the first to come out of the restriction formations in the first exam in my kids' batch."

"Another Subordinate Clan, that's not too surprising."

"Still, seven strikes is already a good result. Depending on how Felo performs in the next phase, he might get one of the 10 slots."

With that, Felo immediately went to the top of the list.

Boom, Boom, Boom...

"Hey, It's Lanca! He held seven strikes as well!"

"H's not from any of the capital's power."

"That makes his result even better."

The Fire Field had a total of 337 participants. In the end, Lanca and Felo were the only ones to defend against seven strikes. They were also one of those who used double-layered formations to achieve their results. Just like before, there was another monitoring formation to show the results.

-1st: Lanca Mion, seven blasts-

-2nd: Felo Susume, seven blasts-

-3rd: Turuna Wavile, six blasts-

-4th...

As everyone verified the numbers, Turin continued with the exam.

"Next, Wind Field!"

There wasn't really a sequence to follow since all fields had participants inside. Still, Turin decided to leave Earth for last since it held half of them. As for the rest, he simply chose random ones, so right now was the Wind Field.

The Wind Field only lost to the Lightning Field in the number of participants, with a total of 276 participants. The Lightning Field had only 91, Rean included.

The tests in the Wind Field went smoothly. Soon, one more participant that reached seven strikes appeared, Suli Deskalo. Still, Suli was the only one to reach this number in the Wind Field. There were another five who defended six strikes and a lot more below this number.

"Next, Lightning Field!"

In the Lightning Field, there were only two participants who held good positions in the previous exam. One of them was called Dinki Sasamil, a member of the Sasamil Imperial Family. The other one, obviously, was Rean himself.

Dinki was the 34th one to be tested in that field, which only saw a single participant achieving four strikes so far.

Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom!

Finally, on the ninth blast, 80 Rank Three Spirit Stones were used, and Dinki's Lightning Formation finally collapsed.

However, Dinki couldn't care less. That's because he beat everyone's record by holding eight strikes!

"Oh! He did that with a Lightning Type Formation."

"All types of formations can achieve good results as long as you know how to make them. It's just that Lightning ones are usually too consuming. Still, Dinki worked around with his own double-layered formation without losing much power. That was very good."

"Well, that's the Sasamil Imperial Family for you."

While everyone talked about Dinki, the tests finally reached Rean's Lightning Formation.

Droman was quite nervous since he saw how Rean constructed his own. It's just that only Rean knew what it was supposed to do.

"I hope it will work. Please, hold at least four strikes."

However, Droman wasn't very confident about it since Rean's runes were not very resistant.

Well, the other elders who observed Rean's work also thought the same thing.

"Seems like the black horse might fall here."

"Well, the way he passed the first phase was quite weird to start with. A few people didn't like it."

However, no one noticed the peculiar expression on Saya's eyes.

"That boy, could he..."

The only other people thinking highly of Rean was Havek, which was kind of a surprise for this kind of person, and obviously, Qia, who held Rean's hand as soon as she returned.

"Hahaha! Rean, did you prepare another surprise for me?"

All the participants left the elemental field test areas. Now, they were together while they looked at the test go on. Rean smiled as he looked at the test field.

"Just look."

Havek's eyes shone as he paid close attention to the testing field.

The Spiritual Blast Formation was then brought beside Rean's one and charged the first strike with one Rank Three Spirit Stones. Soon after, it released the energy.

Rean's double-layered formation activated as it absorbed the Spiritual Energy and Lightning Element like torrents!

Seeing that, Droman paled.

"Not good. The runes won't hold that much Spiritual Energy and Lightning Element. Rean, what have you done?!"

However, something incredible happened right after. The Lightning Formation released a powerful one time only attack. The Spiritual Gathering Formation in Rean's Double-Layered Formation absorbed the power of that attack. It then gathered together with the previously already absorbed Spiritual Energy of the environment. Finally, it followed the Spiritual Blast Formation's attack back to its source!

Zap! Boom!

Immediately, the Spiritual Blast Formation got blasted away instead! As for Rean's formation, most of the runes inside broke apart, but the formation itself barely hold itself in place. If it got a single extra attack, it would definitely collapse. Unfortunately for others, no more attacks would come.

Suddenly, Rean began to laugh out loud.

"Hahaha! What's the best way to defend against an attack? That's to prevent the attack from ever coming again! Sorry, everyone, but I have the best defense ever!"

All the examiners' mouths twitched at the same time. However, Rean's words were not wrong. If your defense formation could prevent any more attacks from coming, then that was definitely a much better formation. In the end, they didn't know what to do.

"Is it... valid again?"

Saya, the guild leader who was watching from behind, couldn't help but giggle a little.

"I like that boy."

Death... and me

Chapter 429: What the hell?!

Oligan finished announcing the results of the second phase as the first 300 were selected.

"Those who I just mentioned, you can stay where you are. There's no need to change halls this time. As for the rest, they can head to the sides and watch the exam if they wish to do so. Of course, those who failed can leave as well, but I strongly recommend you watch the rest to broaden your horizons."

The participants who failed quickly left their tables, leaving a lot of space between those who succeeded. Not long after, the assistants went to each of the remaining participants' tables and changed the materials and tools on them.

Roan looked at the new equipment and immediately understood what they would be doing next.

Oligan saw that the assistants had finished their jobs and began to explain the mechanics of the next phase.

"The third phase will eliminate two hundred participants, leaving only a hundred behind. Your objective this time is to prepare medicinal pastes. As you know, pastes are not ingested, but rather applied over the body. There are several types of it as well. Paste for body enhancement, appearance change, scar healing, etc. There are pills used for healing, just like how there are pastes for it as well. It's a different product from pills, but they are also done by us, alchemists."

Oligan then turned around and ordered the assistants at the back.

"Bring them forward."

Many Stage One demon beasts were immediately brought inside the hall, three hundred to be exact. All of them were of the same species and seemed to have around the same age and strength. As soon as they appeared, many of the spectators and alchemists recognized them.

"Green Spotted Foxes."

"It's quite a common demon beast that lives in the northwest of the Empire."

"They are also easy to tame. Look at how docile they behave."

"Well, let's wait and see what they're here for."

Oligan waited for the foxes to be brought close to the participants before continuing his explanation.

"Each one of these Green Spotted Foxes have the same level of strength. I want all of you to create a body enhancing paste and apply it to your foxes. Green Spotted Foxes are known for their neutral characteristics, so it won't matter which kind of element you use to make the paste."

"Once everyone is done, we will have these foxes attack a strength measuring dummy. The formation set inside the target can calculate the power of the attack through points. Before we brought these foxes here, we tested every single one of them several times with thousands of others. We can guarantee that these 300 foxes' strengths are all no higher than 5 points between each other. That's already considering the environment, the foxes' body state during the day, and their individual habits."

"As for their original number of points during the attacking test, all of them marked between 530 and 535 points on average."

"Considering how common and weak these demon beasts are, even a poorly made medicinal paste would increase their strength by at least a hundred points. Since their difference in power isn't higher than five, it won't change the final result much."

"One more thing. You are prohibited from preparing anything that could damage the foxes' body and life to increase its strength for a short period. The pastes must be beneficial to the user, never the opposite. It has to be a permanent and good change. Well, I don't think anyone would be idiotic enough to try it. However, we will keep our Spiritual Senses focused on your work, so you better not play any tricks on us."

"Alright, those are the rules for this phase. We have prepared the tools and a list with hundreds of common herbs and other materials for you to use. Just ask the assistant on your side, and they will fetch everything for you."

"Pastes of different elements have different times and ways of being made, so we will give everyone four hours to complete them. That should be more than enough regardless of what kind of paste you intend to prepare."

"Last but not least, the dummy is right here for the test. You can send your fox to attack it at any time you want. The result will then be put in the monitoring formation for everyone to see."

"Alright, the test has now begun!"

All the alchemists immediately focused their attention on the list. However, most of them already had an idea of what they would use in this test. Roan, of course, was no different. Old Worm had given him a lot of attention, so he also taught Roan how to make medicinal pastes. Roan even used some of it for Rean, Malaka, Calina, as well as himself. It's quite a common thing between cultivators.

'As I thought, only the most common pastes can be created with these herbs, mucus, types of blood, etc. But this is good since the others won't be able to prepare anything too different either.'

Roan then looked at his assistant.

"Bring me three Blooming Scarlet Flowers from the Ival region. The older, the better.

Five stalks of Greenlight Perfore, no more than 5 years old.

200ml of Stripped Fox Blood.

320 grams of..."

The assistant quickly noted all of the ingredients down and left in a hurry. The Alchemist Guild was very thorough with its preparation. In less than five minutes, all the things Roan asked for were already on his table.

Roan prepared the plate on the table and began to make the mix. The plate looked more like a cutting board, which was commonly used for this kind of job. The cauldron would also be utilized, but not straight away. Everyone else was doing the same thing as they prepared their own pastes.

Old Worm already knew what Roan was going to do. However, Werxa and the others were confused. That's because they hadn't seen such a mix before.

"What kind of paste is that?"

"It's not something I know."

"Well, he is a Dark and Light Element user, so it's highly likely that he came up with his own recipe."

"Oh! That's right. We don't have anyone who can use those two elements to start with."

Time continued to pass. Around two hours later, Roan finally turned his cauldron on. He asked the assistant for a specific type of spiritual redwood that contained the properties he needed for the fire.

However, it was then that something unimaginable happened.

Roan pulled the fox that the assistant was holding until now and suddenly... stuffed it inside the cauldron!

In an instant, everyone had the same reaction.

"What the hell?!"

Death... and me

Chapter 430: Object

The elders then looked at Saya with surprise in their eyes.

"Guild Head, this..."

"Should you be really saying that? If we look through it from the perspective of the others, he only held a single strike. His formation obviously doesn't have the power to hold any other attack back anymore."

"I don't think the others will like this either."

However, there were a few elders that disagreed with them.

"The main purpose of this test was to see which one of them had the best defense, so he isn't wrong."

"I agree. Since his formation destroyed the source of the attacks, it obviously doesn't have to defend anymore."

"In a certain way, you could say that his Defensive Lightning Formation held the attacks forever."

Saya then intervened in the examiners' discussion.

"Can't you see what he has done? Do you think it's that easy to destroy the attacking formation? The power necessary, the runes, the position, the resistance, the limit of power that the runes could hold. He calculated all of that almost perfectly. Although his formation runes are barely standing, the fact still stands that the majority didn't break. That's some superb control of one's ability!"

Saya then pointed at the other formations.

"Do you really think he wouldn't be able to hold at least four strikes with his proficiency in Lightning-type Formations? I might as well say that he would do even better than that. Perhaps, nine or even ten strikes would be possible."

"Nevertheless, he chose the best method to protect his creation. By the end of this test, his formation will be the only one standing in this field. We have never said that the others couldn't do the same, but

he was the only one to think of such an idea. It doesn't matter what you say. The truth is there for all of you to see."

The examiners who were against this dropped their heads. They couldn't come up with a reason to say that Rean failed to defend his position.

Eventually, Turin looked at everyone and announced.

"Rean Larks has passed due to his perfect defense, next!"

Unsurprisingly, a lot of voices were raised in the testing field. However, Rean couldn't care less. If he had failed, then so be it. He was being true to himself. He didn't want to make a formation that he knew that would be destroyed. He wanted something that could last. Isn't that one of the main principles of Formations to start with?

Qia's eyes shone as she hugged him tightly, much to Rean's helplessness. That girl was really taking advantage of the situation. Well, she was just happy that the man she chose was that amazing. Qia was even more confident that her mother was right. She was filled with determination to conquer this guy sooner or later.

"You are mine and no one else's!"

Havek, on the other hand, kept patting Rean's shoulder while laughing out loud.

"Hahaha! You really didn't disappoint me. As expected of the man I took as my rival. To think you would come up with the same strategy as me. Truly fantastic."

Rean was taken aback as he pushed Qia away, asking.

"Rival? What rival? Wait, did you say you thought about the same solution?"

Havek nodded.

"I understood that conventional meanings would be of no use against you. It was because of that that I lost so terribly in the first phase. However, I changed my mind and decided to put my all on it. I'll be honest, I've never thought about failing this exam to start with. I'm way too good to be kept in a small place like this."

As always, Havek couldn't help but inflate his own ego. However, his master, who was watching from the outside, was quite surprised by that.

'That idiot has never recognized anyone of the same age before. To think he would think like that about someone. Well, his talents for formations are indeed far above everyone else, so he has the right to be arrogant.'

Rean shrugged his shoulders after hearing Havek.

"Oh well... I've never had a rival before, so I guess it's not a bad thing."

However, Sister Orb's voice immediately echoed in his mind.

[What are you talking about? Don't you have your brother?]

'Shut up! That's just an anomaly I would rather forget!'

Havek then nodded at Rean as his eyes shone.

"Great! Since we have recognized each other as rivals, I might also give you a few pieces of advice. First, you should throw this woman away. She isn't on par with your ability. Forget about love and focus on formations."

Qia almost vomited blood when she heard that. Isn't he trying to spoil all of her efforts so far?

"Do you want to die?!"

Havek completely ignored her existence, though, as he continued.

"Second, I could see that some of your runes were quite rudimentary. It's not a surprise since you came from outside the capital. If you have to leave again after this, be sure to take as much information as possible with you. Just apply for the Jade Slips with the guild after we join it."

Havek totally talked as if entering the guild was already a given. That, of course, only pulled quite a few grim expressions in his direction. Everyone was putting so much effort into it, and they still don't have much of a chance. Just who does he think he is?

"Last but not least, be sure to thank the heavens that I, Havek, am your rival. If you use me as your driving force to improve, you will definitely shine in the future!"

Rean's face became weird.

'This has already surpassed the realm of narcissism...'

"Ahem... I will... hold the pieces of advice in mind."

Havek nodded with a satisfied expression before looking back at Qia.

"You're still here?"

Kick!

Ouch!

"Woman, what do you have to my legs?!"

"Hmph! First come, first serve! I found Rean before you, so he's mine, not yours. You better control your mouth in the future."

Rean scratched the back of his head while thinking.

'I feel like I became some kind of object...'