

R Cultivator 211

Chapter 211: The Entrance Trials Begin

"Alright, all the best," GG said with a reassuring smile as she watched Tyler step into the registration booth.

The door slid shut, and in an instant, his surroundings shifted. Tyler found himself in an empty, sterile white room. A screen blinked to life before him, and a simple prompt appeared:

> [Enter your name]

He typed, "Tyler White," using the virtual keyboard that had appeared below the prompt. As soon as he entered his name, a soft white light swept over him, scanning his form.

> Age: 12.

Tyler's mouth twitched in mild irritation. He had nearly forgotten that his Life Orb — an invaluable treasure that allowed him to regenerate and appear years younger — made everyone and everything believe he was still just twelve years old. Even his bone age was aligned to this illusion. It was a powerful asset, though one he preferred to keep under wraps.

The screen flickered again, bringing up a new prompt:

> [Select the category you are good with]

A variety of bubbles floated before him, each labeled with a skill: Arrays, Alchemy, Technology, Charms, Blacksmithing, Cooking, and more. Tyler's gaze lingered over the options before he chose Arrays.

In the blink of an eye, the sterile room around him transformed. Tyler was now standing in a dimly lit cave, its walls lined with intricate array symbols pulsing with faint magical energy. The exit was blocked by a complex formation of interwoven glyphs and barriers.

"Is the test started?" Tyler asked aloud, glancing around for instructions. But no answer came.

In the corner of the cave, he spotted a small, floating cube labeled, "Request any Materials."

"Huh, interesting," he muttered, recognizing the test as a practical array-breaking challenge. The cave was sealed with an elite-level array, which would be a tough obstacle for most, but to Tyler, it was merely a puzzle waiting to be solved.

Picking up the cube, Tyler began requesting materials, his mind already calculating the fastest way to dismantle the array. "Give me Phoenix copper, threads of Silk Spider, dragonflame powder..." he listed, selecting rare ingredients he knew would aid in breaking down the magical defenses before him.

With each material appearing in his hands, he worked swiftly, laying out Phoenix copper filaments in precise geometric shapes, binding them with Silk Spider threads, and sprinkling just enough cave lizardflame powder to weaken the array's outer layers. With a few more expert moves, he pressed his palm against the cave wall and watched as the symbols faded away, the barrier collapsing in response to his crafted counter-array.

Meanwhile, in another part of the booth,

Lily side

Lily frowned as she reviewed the list of categories in her registration booth. "I'm good at investigation... but there's no option for that," she muttered, eyes darting over the choices. Finally, her gaze landed on Combat. With a shrug, she tapped it.

In an instant, her surroundings shifted to a dark, stone dungeon. The air smelled of damp earth and decay, and a small, floating cube appeared before her, displaying a variety of weapons.

"hmm?" she murmured, scrolling through the choices. Her finger hovered over the whip icon before she selected it. The weapon materialized in her hand, its weight familiar and comforting. As the cube disappeared, skeletal figures began emerging from the shadows, their hollow eyes fixed on her.

Lily smirked. "Weak," she muttered, unfurling the whip with a quick snap of her wrist. With practiced ease, she struck at the oncoming wave of skeletons, the whip crackling with energy as it cut through her opponents. Bones shattered and scattered, and she barely broke a sweat as she cleared the dungeon room.

On another place

Silvia side

Silvia smiled as she held her hand over a pool of water, her fingers guiding a small school of fish as they darted back and forth in mesmerizing patterns. She had chosen Tamer, and her test environment placed her by a lake where she was tasked with controlling the water creatures.

With every wave of her hand, Silvia manipulated the fish to dance in perfect synchronization. She could feel her bond with the creatures growing as she guided them into complex shapes and loops, her quiet laughter echoing across the still waters.

In the Alchemy department...

Mathilda side

Mathilda stood before a withered plant, her hands deftly mixing ingredients to create a vibrant green potion. She had chosen Alchemy, and her task involved restoring the plant to life.

"Let's see... a pinch of nectar, crushed rose petals, and..." she murmured, pouring the potion carefully onto the roots of the plant. In moments, the withered leaves unfurled, and the plant sprang back to life, sprouting fresh blossoms. Mathilda grinned in satisfaction as a cascade of colorful petals bloomed before her.

Over in Cooking...

Darla side

Darla found herself standing in a bustling restaurant kitchen, faced with a steady stream of hungry patrons. She moved gracefully from station to station, her hands a blur as she prepared dish after dish. Guests were enjoying her cooking, their smiles of satisfaction fueling her determination.

Darla grinned, glad to put her novice-level skills to the test. Though cooking wasn't traditionally seen as part of the Alchemy, she knew the academy valued all skills. Foods can give buffs and effects to warrior and mage.

Across the hall in Healing...

Astrid side

Astrid was in the midst of a battlefield, surrounded by wounded warriors. She moved from one person to the next, her hands glowing with healing light. Though the scene was chaotic, Astrid worked calmly, her skills as a healer bringing comfort and life to each fallen soldier.

With each spell she cast, she closed cuts, mended broken bones, and restored vitality to those in need. It was grueling work, but Astrid was in her element, her natural compassion guiding her hands as she moved through the makeshift infirmary.

Back to Tyler...

Having successfully broken through the cave's array, Tyler found himself back in the booth. A voice sounded above him, calm and automated:

"Your specialty has been recorded. Please proceed further."

Tyler took a step forward, the doorway leading him back into the main hallway. He had deduced that he hadn't been physically transported anywhere — instead, the entire experience had been a mental trial within a virtual space. This wasn't a test, per se, but rather a method of recording their skills and categorizing their abilities.

All the things happened in a second in Real world.

Ahead of him, the others were also emerging from their booths, each looking slightly dazed but triumphant.

Tyler and others moved towards another area. The real entrance exam begins...

Chapter 212: Exams

Tyler emerged into a vast hall with a towering platform at its center. He scanned the surroundings, noticing that others—both children and adults—were streaming in, their expressions a mix of excitement and apprehension. Although the crowd was thick, Tyler couldn't spot any of his crewmates. They must have been directed to separate testing areas.

As Tyler waited, a table materialized in front of him, topped with a small holographic projection. The figure in the image was a middle-aged man with stern features, sharp eyes, and a slightly weathered expression, giving him an air of authority and experience. The hologram straightened, and with a calm yet authoritative tone, he spoke, "Hello, students. Welcome to the entrance test. I am Khalid, a professor of Abyss Art."

The figure introduced himself succinctly, then continued, "There will be three stages in this test: the written exam, the practical exam, and the final interview. Only those who excel in the written and practical exams will advance to the final interview. Make sure to do your best."

With those words, Khalid's image flickered and disappeared. Tyler looked down to see several sheets of paper now lying on the table, waiting for him to begin. He picked them up and glanced at the first page, which outlined the structure of the exam.

The written portion was a rigorous test designed to measure each applicant's readiness for the academy. The multiple-choice questions spanned various subjects, from reading comprehension and logic to math and critical thinking. The purpose was clear—to assess their knowledge and problem-solving abilities and determine if they were capable of handling the academy's demanding curriculum.

Tyler found himself smiling as he began to read. The knowledge he'd amassed from Hawk's books would undoubtedly come in handy now. He scanned the first question:

"When did the Abyss emerge?"

The question reminded him of the long, insightful discussions he'd had with Hawk, where they had covered everything from the historical roots of the Abyss to the nature of its influence on their world. He quickly scribbled down his answer and moved on, his confidence growing with each question.

The exam continued with questions about basic materials and their properties—common ingredients that were used in charms, arrays, and a few inquiries about fundamental technology. Since Tyler had selected Arrays as his specialty in the prior aptitude test, the majority of questions focused on Array mechanics, configurations, and the underlying principles of energy transfer in technology. For someone of Tyler's skill, the questions seemed unusually straightforward. He raised an eyebrow.

"Isn't this a little too easy?" he murmured under his breath. But then he realized something odd. His voice didn't carry. It was as if he were talking in a vacuum. Experimenting, Tyler tried to reach for his storage devices and noticed with some surprise that they were gone. Even the copper pot he usually kept at his waist had vanished. He blinked, realization dawning on him.

"So... I'm inside a virtual space again?" he thought, slightly frustrated. "When did I even enter it?"

Despite this minor annoyance, Tyler refocused on the exam, working methodically through each question. As he neared the end, the difficulty of the questions ramped up, requiring deeper thought and more nuanced knowledge. Still, he managed to complete the test before time expired.

The moment he put down his pen, a gentle pull seemed to tug him from his seat, and before he knew it, he was ejected from the virtual space. Blinking as his vision adjusted, Tyler found himself back on the vast platform, his surroundings exactly as he'd left them. A quick glance down confirmed that the copper pot was back on his waist, and his storage devices were once again secure.

"Alright, no doubt now," he thought, giving his storage device a subtle pat. "That was definitely a virtual test."

The sound of murmurs and gasps pulled his attention back to the stage. Khalid had reappeared in front of the crowd, his imposing form towering over the platform. Tyler's eyes widened slightly as he took in the sight—Khalid stood at an impressive 7 feet 5 inches, clad in a desert-inspired outfit that seemed to reflect his affinity with sand. He rode atop a mesmerizing wave of sand, which surged and curled beneath him as though alive, creating the image of a man surfing a frozen tsunami.

With a booming voice that echoed across the platform, Khalid addressed the students, "The first stage has concluded. The results will be posted shortly. In the meantime, prepare yourselves for the practical exam." He scanned the faces in the crowd, his intense gaze lingering on a few individuals as though he were weighing their potential.

Tyler couldn't help but wonder what the practical test would entail. His mind began cycling through possibilities. Would they be required to construct an Array from scratch? Or perhaps dismantle one under a time constraint? He had no doubt the practical portion would be far more challenging.

Khalid's voice echoed through the vast hall, "The practical exam begins now."

Before Tyler could blink, a white light enveloped him, and he found himself standing alone in a large, dimly lit room. The walls were lined with ancient runes, and the entire space pulsed faintly with the hum of powerful arrays woven into its structure. Every corner of the room seemed sealed by an intricate barrier.

"Your goal is to escape the room as many times as possible," Khalid's voice resonated from above, almost as if speaking directly into Tyler's mind.

Tyler instinctively reached for the copper pot at his waist, only to realize it was gone. "Again... virtual space," he muttered, a hint of frustration in his voice. The academy's ability to plunge him into these simulations without warning was unsettling.

"Alright... let's get to work," he muttered, refocusing his attention on the room's only visible exit: a sturdy door at the far end, secured with a complex locking mechanism. Floating text appeared above the door, displaying several options: Array, Alchemy, Cooking, etc.,

Curious, Tyler selected Array. In an instant, the door's appearance shifted to a heavy stone slab, adorned with complex array patterns etched in faintly glowing lines. Several materials materialized in a neat pile to his left, and Tyler quickly understood the task: he had to select and utilize these items to disable the locking array.

"Too easy," he smirked, rolling up his sleeves. Array work was one of his strengths, and the patterns on the door, though intricate, seemed basic to him. In minutes, he pieced together a dispelling charm using the available materials, focusing on disrupting the door's energy lines. With a soft hum, the array deactivated, and the stone door swung open.

Tyler stepped through, but instead of moving forward, he found himself back in the same room. The door he had just unlocked was gone, replaced by a similar-looking door but with new floating text above it.

"Huh." He frowned and glanced back, confirming there was no exit behind him. The white walls stood resolute, giving no hint of any previous door. The word 'Array' is completely dimmed. Even if he touched it, nothing happened. Intrigued, Tyler chose the next option above the door: Technology.

This time, the door transformed into a sleek metal slab with a numerical keypad and a set of embedded security arrays that pulsed faintly with power. To his left, a new set of materials and unfamiliar devices appeared, including strange tools he hadn't seen before—tools that clearly weren't meant for array work alone.

Tyler ran his fingers over the smooth surface of the door. The combination of technology and arrays fascinated him. His mind raced as he examined the keypad, which appeared to link to a protective barrier that would likely repel brute force. He wasn't sure how to disable it directly, and the unfamiliar tools didn't help.

After several moments of contemplation, Tyler smirked as a plan formed in his mind. Using the materials provided, he quickly crafted a small, self-detonating array, designed to create a controlled explosion just strong enough to crack the security mechanism. Positioning it carefully, he stepped back and watched as the array flared brightly and then detonated with a low boom. The door's frame shuddered, cracks spread across the metal, and with a firm push, Tyler forced it open.

But as soon as he crossed the threshold, the familiar sight of the same locked room greeted him. The door he had just shattered was gone, replaced by a new option above the next door.

"Again?" he murmured, eyebrows raised. The instructions echoed in his mind: Your goal is to escape the room as many times as possible.

Nodding to himself, he looked at the remaining option: Combat. Selecting it, he braced himself.

He also looked at the cooking option. He was little confused, 'We can open a door by cooking?'

Chapter 213: Resonance Again

The metal door before Tyler was sealed under thick ice. Without hesitation, a dragon-scaled hand emerged from him, clenched into a fist, and smashed into the door. The ice shattered, the metal door splintering with it. Tyler took a step forward—only to find himself in the same room again.

"Now... What is this?" Tyler grumbled, selecting the floating Analyze option above the door. Out of curiosity, he watched as a prompt appeared: Guess the 4-digit code and use the tools provided.

Glancing to his left, Tyler noted a strange assortment of items: a small watch, a headset, several powders, and other odds and ends. Ignoring them, he walked up to the door and, without much thought, entered random numbers into the keypad.

To his astonishment, the door beeped and unlocked instantly.

His abnormal luck is insane.

To understand this A 4-digit passcode has 10 possible choices for each digit (0 to 9), and since the digits are independent, the total number of combinations is:

$$10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 = 10,000$$

So, if each combination is equally likely, the probability of guessing a specific 4-digit passcode is:
 $1/10,000 = 0.0001$ or 0.01%.

To able to guess the passcode in first try. Tyler was clearly frightened. He appeared in the same room again.

As he stepped through, the room reset once again. This time "Hmm... I wonder how the cooking works...." He eyes lingered on the cooking option.

Curious, he selected it. The door morphed into a massive stone face, its mouth stretching wide as it called out in a booming voice, "Feed me!"

Tyler sighed, realizing his journey would end here. He wasn't escaping this room anytime soon.

After the exam, Tyler stepped out into the bustling main hall, his expression a mixture of frustration and relief. GG approached with Zuzia perched on her shoulder. At the sight of Tyler, the little creature meowed excitedly and flew over, settling comfortably on his shoulder.

"How was the exam?" GG asked.

"It was tougher than I expected. But I did what I could. Anyway, it doesn't really matter since I already have the recommendation medal." Tyler shrugged.

GG's eyes narrowed. "Huh... don't be so sure. If you don't pass, that wolf bastard will use it as an excuse to question the authority of your medal."

Tyler chuckled, brushing her concern aside. "Trust me, I won't fail."

Just then, Silvia, Lily, Darla, Mathilda, and Astrid arrived, all looking equally drained from the exam.

"How many times did you girls escape the room?" Lily asked, a smirk tugging at her lips.

Darla spoke first. "One. I chose Cooking."

Mathilda's eyes gleamed mischievously. "Two! I melted the door using Alchemy, and also... Cooking. That giant face on the door didn't stand a chance," she chuckled darkly, earning wary looks from the others.

Tyler's lips twisted into a grin as he and the others exchanged glances. Mental note: don't let Mathilda cook anything.

"One escape," Astrid said softly. "I healed the wounded beast that was blocking the door."

Silvia nodded, "Same here. I picked Taming and made the beast step aside."

Lily raised a brow and then turned to Tyler. "I escaped twice—Combat and Analyze. Used some powder to see fingerprints on the keypad, then typed the numbers."

She looked at Tyler expectantly. "And you?"

"Four," Tyler replied casually.

Everyone blinked in shock, and even GG raised an eyebrow, intrigued. The exam's format was different each year, and now she was curious about the specific challenges Tyler had faced.

"It'll be evening before they post the results," GG said, a gleam of excitement in her eyes. "Why don't we grab lunch at The Mellow Taste?"

Tyler tilted his head. "Is that the best restaurant on campus?"

"Absolutely," GG replied with conviction, and Zuzia's ears perked up at the mention of lunch, her gaze sharp with anticipation.

The group exchanged nods, eager for a well-deserved meal after the taxing exam. And with that, they headed off, laughter and lighthearted chatter filling the air as they left the exam hall behind.

They arrived at the restaurant, an elegant structure made entirely of glass, with breathtaking views that extended across the campus. However, there was a problem—every table inside was occupied, and a long line of people waited to be seated. The crowd was thick, and it was clear the restaurant's popularity was overwhelming on the day of the entrance exams.

The group exchanged uncertain looks, glancing at the packed line and then back at each other, weighing their options.

A few minutes later, Tyler bit into a juicy burger, nodding approvingly. "Not bad, not bad," he said between bites, savoring the flavors.

Since it was entrance exam day, nearly every restaurant in the area was packed, and they hadn't been able to secure a spot at The Mellow Taste. Instead, they'd managed to bribe their way into a nearby, less-known restaurant and were lucky enough to get a table.

Meanwhile, as Tyler enjoyed his meal, a man appeared at the academy via teleportation, materializing suddenly at the entrance. He was carrying a large bundle on his back, carefully wrapped in a thick cloth. The bundle unexpectedly gave a slight tremble before falling still. The man's eyes widened in panic, and he shifted his gaze anxiously around. He seemed intent on leaving, but with so many people bustling about, rebooking the teleportation array was impossible. Forced to adapt, he hurriedly set off in another direction, moving as quickly as he could through the crowd.

Just after he left, Tyler unknowingly arrived at the same spot. Sensing a faint, familiar resonance from his copper pot, he followed it in a particular direction until he was halted by a guard.

"Only main academy students are allowed beyond this point," the guard informed him sternly, blocking the way forward.

"What is that place?" Tyler asked, trying to catch a glimpse beyond the guard's shoulder.

"It's the dormitory," replied the guard.

Tyler nodded, thoughtfully brushing his fingers against the copper pot. The resonance only happened few seconds then it stopped. Whatever had triggered the resonance, it seemed to be somewhere beyond that dormitory entrance—the same resonance he'd felt back on Cedar Islands. Perhaps it was fate, Tyler mused. Whatever was calling to his mysterious copper pot had resurfaced nearby. Deciding to investigate later, after officially joining the academy, he turned and walked back the way he had come.

Meanwhile, the man carrying the cloth bundle had reached his room in the dormitory. He locked the door behind him, quickly activating multiple defensive arrays to ensure his security. With a sigh of relief, he finally unwrapped the cloth.

He then took a chest under his bed and opened it revealing an exceptionally rare, exotic-looking fruit. A pleased smile spread across his face as he admired it. He then brought the fruit near the object inside the unwrapped cloth.

A few minutes later...

He now has multiple copies of fruit.

Then, after a few moments, he produced another identical fruit. His grin grew wider as he duplicated it again and again, filling the room with the fruits' tantalizing aroma as a small pile began to form.

Chapter 214: Final Interview (1/2)

"As they say, 'Tall trees catch much wind.' It must've been suffocating," Lily remarked, her eyes narrowing as she scanned the crowd.

Tyler raised an eyebrow. "What are you talking about?"

"Look over there," she said, tilting her head towards a figure in the distance.

Tyler followed her gaze and spotted Senior Cyan, who was watching him with a complicated expression. The older student's face was a blend of surprise, unease, jealous and what seemed like reluctant admiration before he turned and walked away. Tyler was momentarily baffled.

Lily shrugged nonchalantly. "It's probably because of the results."

"Why do you think it's because of the results?" GG asked, clearly intrigued.

"He came from the direction of the results announcement board," Lily replied, her tone as casual as if she were pointing out the weather. She gave her shoulders a little shrug, as if it were obvious.

GG looked at Lily with newfound respect. The girl was younger, at least in appearance, but there was an intelligence and perceptiveness about her that GG rarely encountered. Strong, smart, and mysterious—Lily's true age was unknown to GG, but she sensed the girl had a vast depth of experience.

The group headed towards the announcement board, which was hard to miss. It was a massive, hollow, graphic screen that stretched wide and thin, suspended like a monolithic banner over the main square.

Thousands of names were displayed in neat rows, but it was easy for each examinee to check their own results: as they stepped closer, their individual name and rank would appear automatically. If anyone wanted to check results for someone else, all they needed to do was enter the examinee's number, name, or other relevant details.

As they approached, the screen began to shift and adjust. Lily's name appeared first, then Silvia's, Mathilda's, Astrid's, and finally Darla's. Each name popped up in sequence, bringing varying levels of excitement from the group. Mathilda, in particular, let out a triumphant cheer upon seeing her rank: she had secured the 15th position. Lily followed close behind with an impressive 25th rank.

These were significant accomplishments, especially considering the sheer number of examinees. Tens of thousands of applicants from diverse backgrounds and regions had gathered for this Entrance Exam, each one aspiring to secure a place in one of the world's most prestigious academies.

But one name was conspicuously absent: Tyler's.

GG's face registered confusion, and she glanced toward Tyler, about to voice her question. But before she could say anything, the display board underwent a sudden, unexpected transformation. Every name vanished, leaving a blank slate for a heartbeat. Then, a single name appeared in enormous, bold letters, dominating the entire screen.

Tyler White - Rank 1 in Entrance Exam.

Full marks in the Written Exam.

The announcement was almost absurd in its grandiosity, as though the system itself was proud to display this extraordinary result. Tyler, along with everyone else, blinked in surprise.

Silvia broke the silence, her mouth twisting into a pout as she shot Tyler a challenging look. "You said the written exam was tough, and that you randomly guessed on a lot of questions. Uncle Horny is now Uncle Liar!" she declared, folding her arms.

Tyler raised his hands in defense, an amused smile playing on his lips. "Would you believe me if I said it was just a fluke?"

Silvia merely turned away with an exaggerated huff, her pout deepening.

Tyler sighed inwardly, knowing there was more truth to his words than she realized. He knew exactly why he had achieved full marks. The written test had been multiple-choice, and he'd genuinely been unsure of most of the answers. With a blend of nonchalance and resignation, he had relied on pure guesswork. Somehow, his notoriously abnormal luck had worked wonders; almost every answer he'd chosen through "inky pinky ponky" had turned out to be correct.

He mentally chalked it up as yet another quirk of his Abnormal Luck.

The realization that the final interview was up next quickly set in as an announcement echoed through the campus.

[The Final Interview will begin in 60 minutes. All examinees, please prepare for the interview.]

"So, the final interview is going to start soon," Tyler mused, tilting his head with casual indifference. His face showed no sign of worry or nerves, his demeanor as calm as if he were going for a stroll. In stark contrast, Silvia was visibly tense, her fingers fidgeting as she scanned the crowd with a hint of apprehension.

Noticing her unease, Tyler reached over and gently patted her head. "Don't worry," he said with a soft smile.

The gesture was simple, but it seemed to work wonders, and Silvia's tense expression softened slightly. GG observed the interaction with a chuckle, amused by the sight of a twelve-year-old boy trying to comfort a fifteen-year-old girl.

"You look like an older brother," GG teased, a playful glint in her eye.

Silvia, however, remained serious. "He's not my older brother; he's my Uncle Hor—" She began to speak with conviction, but Tyler quickly placed a hand over her mouth, muffling the last part of her sentence.

"Uncle? Role play?" GG muttered, visibly flustered as she recalled the scene in the tram. A faint blush crept up her cheeks as she glanced away, her mind running wild with misinterpretations.

Tyler noticed her reaction and raised an eyebrow. "Playboy?" she muttered under her breath, almost unconsciously.

His confusion was evident. "What does that mean?"

She simply waved him off with an exasperated sigh, choosing not to explain. The group's banter carried on, punctuated by Silvia's occasional pout and Tyler's nonchalant responses.

Meanwhile, time ticked away, and the 60 minutes seemed to pass in the blink of an eye.

Note: the next scene is going to be in multiple pov. They are talking to everyone at the same time. So just imagine like a cut scene.

The light engulfed the examinees, pulling them into a surreal chamber before they could even comprehend what was happening. Tyler felt a strange sensation of weightlessness, and then, in an instant, he found himself in a massive, dimly lit room.

Three towering platforms loomed before him, each occupied by an enigmatic figure seated in grandeur.

At the center, occupying the most imposing seat, was a skeleton cloaked in ancient, flowing robes. His hollow eye sockets glowed with an unsettling, ghostly light that seemed to pierce through the soul. To his right, a figure sat composed of thick branches and vine-like limbs, resembling an ancient tree, his wooden face softened by a wise and grandfatherly expression. To the left was a veiled woman, her form obscured but radiating an undeniable allure; her silhouette hinted at elegance and charm, with a grace that made her presence mesmerizing.

Tyler looked around, realizing that he was alone. The vast chamber felt empty, yet somehow full. The chamber eerily silent save for the occasional crackling sound of the skeleton's bones and the creak of the tree-man's branches. Yet, unbeknownst to him, other examinees were present—each undergoing the same interview, but within their own unique, isolated perception.

i.e., Every other examinee was here, each standing in the same spot, but in a different layer of perception. They could neither see nor sense each other. It was as if each participant was undergoing their interview simultaneously, yet independently, each experiencing their own unique interaction with these mysterious figures.

A gentle, soothing voice echoed through the chamber, addressing Lily. "Hello, Ms. Lily Gomes. Such a charming young girl you are," the veiled woman said, a hint of warmth in her tone.

Mathilda stammered, her cheeks turning a shade pinker than usual. "You also look... big... I mean, hot—I mean, I'm sorry! You're very beautiful, Big Sister!" she managed to say, her voice betraying both awe and admiration. A delighted smile graced the veiled woman's lips as the skeleton's hollow eyes twitched slightly, hinting at some lingering irritation.

Mathilda, watching the veiled woman, practically drooled, momentarily forgetting herself.

The tree-man's branches creaked as he focused his attention to Silvia, a deep, kind voice resonating from within his wooden frame. "Ah, such a lovely elf," he remarked, his tone grandfatherly. "Your presence reminds me of a time when forests were in bloom... It's been ages since I've seen one as young and pure as you."

Silvia's ears perked up, her eyes wide with curiosity. She had rarely encountered such a unique being before, and the old tree's words filled her with a quiet sense of respect.

Then the skeleton's hollow gaze fixed on Astrid, his bone-clad fingers tapping rhythmically on his armrest. "Oh, look at who we have here... an angel?" His voice held a hint of amusement and reverence. "Indeed, an angel with quite the tale to tell."

Astrid blinked, trying to suppress the instinctive fear that bubbled up at the sight of the skeleton. Yet, his words were oddly comforting, as if he recognized her without any malice.

Finally, the skeleton's gaze fell upon Tyler, and he let out a dry, echoing chuckle. "Ho, ho, ho... the star of the show has arrived."

The veiled woman leaned forward, her eyes gleaming behind her veil. "Such a cute boy," she cooed, her voice like silk.

The tree-man, however, gave a dismissive snort. "Hmph." His branches rustled, betraying his slight disdain as he regarded Tyler with a critical eye.

Chapter 215: Final Interview (2/2)

Quick Note: the next scene is going to be in multiple pov. They are talking to everyone at the same time. So just imagine like a cut scene.

"What is your motivation for joining this academy?" the Skeleton Principal asked, his bony fingers steepled as he looked at each of them.

"I wanna cook better for my Boss White," Darla said in a serious tone.

The Principal paused, clearly expecting more. "..."

"Brother Tyler is joining," Silvia said, as if that was a completely satisfactory reason.

The vice principal tree man tilted his head. "..."

"Tyler told me to tag along," Lily added casually.

"..."

"I love alchemy a lot, so I'm gonna learn more about it," Mathilda said, finally giving an answer that sounded more substantial.

The woman sitting next to the Skeleton Principal sighed in relief, her charming aura glowing. "Finally, some kind of good answer," she muttered, just loud enough for them to hear.

"Also, my Captain Tyler is joining the academy," Mathilda continued, as if that were equally important.

"F@#&" the woman muttered under her breath, clearly losing patience.

Meanwhile, Tyler felt the three figures' gaze on him, their energy shifting in intensity. It was clear they knew he was that Tyler White the other girls are talking about and they weren't quite sure what to make of him.

He stepped forward, a hint of a polite smile on his face. "Hello, my name is..." But before he could finish, the three figures interrupted him.

"We know... Brother Tyler," the woman said with a faint smile.

"Boss White," the skeleton stated in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Captain Tyler," the treeman murmured, his deep voice vibrating like wood creaking in a forest.

"Oh... so it means everyone is attending the interview at the same time?" Tyler asked with genuine curiosity, he guessed the girls said something about him based on the way they addressed him. "Are you guys... clones or something?"

The Skeleton Principal let out a soft chuckle. "Not bad... nice observation. No, it's not exactly that. But it's something similar." He went on to explain the academy's unique methods, detailing how the interview session was conducted using a projection spell that allowed them to simultaneously interact

with multiple candidates. "However, Tyler, for you, there's no need for any further questioning. You already possess a recommendation medal, and on top of that, you ranked first in the entrance exam. As such, you're due to receive a proper reward."

"Reward?" Tyler echoed, slightly intrigued.

The woman on the panel nodded. "Indeed. Our academy prides itself on its structure and reputation. To question the authority of a recommendation medal, as one of our student did, is unacceptable. However, you proved your worth beyond the medal's assurance, and the academy won't let such actions go unpunished. While the one who forced you into the exam will be held accountable, you, Tyler, will be rewarded for demonstrating your capabilities."

The tree-man, who had remained silent up until now, showed no reaction, even though it was clear he was the one responsible for it. But the one who is gonna get punished is his student. He seemed indifferent to the entire discussion. He might also get reprimanded but he doesn't care.

Tyler shrugged slightly. He didn't much care about punishment for Senior Cyan, but the reward had piqued his interest. "What kind of reward?" he asked.

The Skeleton Principal tapped his chin thoughtfully, his hollow eyes glinting. "Considering your achievement, the reward is substantial. You'll receive access to a private training area, one typically reserved for our advanced students and alumni. This area contains resources that will allow you to progress at an accelerated rate—materials and environments suited to enhancing both combat and intellectual prowess."

The veiled woman leaned forward, a playful glint in her eyes. "And that's not all, Captain Tyler. You'll also be given a unique token. This token allows you to request a personal session with any of our academy's master instructors, whenever you deem it necessary. Use it wisely, as such privileges are seldom granted to new entrants."

As they were explaining it to Tyler, meanwhile on Lily side.

"You know that kind of answer won't get you through the interview," the lady said.

"Oh, I apologize. I'm a warrior and have little interest in other fields. I do enjoy learning things that might be useful for our journey to the far North. Also, I'm pretty sure you wouldn't want to reject a young Master-Level Warrior," Lily said.

"A circus lion also learns to sit on a chair out of fear of the whip. But such a lion is called 'well-trained,' not 'well-educated.' Our academy can produce many well-trained lions at your level, but that's not our goal. We want people to learn—to choose their own way of life. That is our academy's vision," the skeleton principal said. The green flames in his eyes flared as he looked at Lily. "And, by the way, you are not young."

"That's rude," Lily pouted, continuing, "but it's true... you guessed it, huh? Well, we're not the only ones who've consumed a Natural Treasure that can even reverse bone age."

The skeleton principal's eyes brightened with interest. "Go on."

Lily began to tell a story.

The princess who wanted to leave the castle asked her father for permission. The king agreed, but with one condition: she must return to the castle before nightfall. Tempted by the freedom she found, the princess became greedy and decided to stay outside a little longer.

She stayed in a village where people showed her kindness and affection. She hid her identity as a princess, presenting herself instead as a merchant's daughter. But the princess was too naive to notice anything strange—until nightfall. The villagers drugged the guards and the princess, intending to sacrifice her to the Abyss.

When they reached one of the Abyss demons' hiding caves, they offered the princess as a sacrifice. But suddenly, the supposedly drugged guards and the princess opened their eyes—they had only pretended to be unconscious. They killed the Abyss demon and learned that the Abyss demons were spreading fear among rural villages, manipulating people into doing evil things.

The princess noticed something odd: some villagers were already strong enough to fight the Abyss demon if they had worked together. But they lacked spells and knowledge. So she decided to create an academy.

She began teaching magic to the villagers, and word spread quickly. Soon, many people came to the village to learn.

The prince was happy when the princess announced that she didn't want the throne anymore and would instead focus on her academy.

But when the prince became king, he grew fearful of the princess, who now had many powerful students. He sent an army to destroy the city, once just a village. But his army was easily defeated. This made the king realize the power of education. Initially, he'd opposed her beliefs, wondering what good could come from educating everyone. But now he was fully convinced.

His sister left the kingdom, leaving behind a message: "I don't want the throne. I just want everyone to have a proper education. Please, brother, don't destroy the academy."

The princess left for the North and was never seen again. The king grieved deeply. He took over as principal of the academy, nurturing its growth. He even renamed the Starfall Kingdom to Starfall Academy and encouraged others to open branch academies.

The names of that king and the first principal are never mentioned, and though many principals have come and gone, only a few people know that the principal never truly changed. He is still the same king, a grieving brother, and Mr. Principal Douglas—Douglas Starfall.

"The method of becoming a lich was lost after the Split of Aura and Prana," Lily said. "There's no way the only lich in the world is from an era before that. So... like us, you must have consumed something touched by the gods."

"Nice analysis," the skeleton said. "Well, age doesn't matter."

"Huh?" Lily tilted her head.

"I mean in learning... age is not an issue for those who want to learn," the skeleton replied with a sigh. Just because he had let slip a small secret, the girl had unraveled his entire history.

On Tyler side

"You really have interesting sub-ordinates." The principal suddenly said. Tyler was confused. The principal looked at him for a long moment before nodding slowly. "Very well. Welcome to Starfall Academy. But remember, the path of true learning is one of humility and dedication. Only those who are willing to let go of their pride will find what they seek here."

"Thank you." Tyler nodded and asked in confusion, "I just wanted to learn more about Technology. Why are you suddenly saying something like that?"

"As the leader goes, so goes the pack." the principal simply said. Tyler is more confused now.

"A fish rots from the head down." The tree man also nodded.

Both capture the notion that subordinates often reflect the character, values, and actions of their leader.

Tyler scratched his head in confusion.