

Strongest Mage with the Lust system

Chapter 241: It's hard to become strong

After sitting cross-legged, he tapped on the 'enhancement' and agreed to enhance 800 units of his Mana.

Weng!

Immediately after he clicked on it, a strange energy appeared out of nowhere, entered his Mana core, and started merging into his Mana.

"Argh...!"

Although he already knew that there would be a lot of pain when the enhancement process started and had prepared himself to endure it, he still found it hard to bear and cried out in pain.

Fortunately, most of the buildings in this world had soundproofing formations established, or everyone in the city lord's mansion might have been alerted by his shrill screams.

After around six minutes, the enhancement of 800 units was done, and the pain slowly lessened. However, unlike last time, it didn't vanish in its entirety. He was still feeling a searing pain in his core which was caused by the pressure exuded by 2300 units of three-star Mana.

Huff... Huff... Huff...

Max was drenched in sweat, gasping for breath.

Plop!

He didn't have the energy to move his body at all. Therefore, he directly flopped on the bed.

After resting for a while, he recovered a bit.

"System, is there any solution for this pain that I'm feeling in my core right now?" He asked,

[As the host already knows, this is because, after the enhancement, your Mana level is higher than the Mana core. Therefore, the only solution is strengthening the core to a level where it can handle pressure.] System replied.

"Fuck. I have already used the last foundation strengthening liquid I took from the trio. It'd take a lot of time if I were to do it without any assistance." He muttered in a gloomy tone.

[Host can buy the foundation strengthening pill from the shop.] The system suggested, which caused Max's expression to darken.

After this second evolution, the system was more human-like. Although it was good since he could converse with it and no longer had to hear that robotic voice, now it was mocking him for his 'poverty.'

"Can't you see I don't have any LPs left to buy it? Even if I had, I wouldn't have bought it since it is too expensive." Max coldly said. He truly wanted to curse at it, but that wouldn't make any difference.

[If that's the case, the host can use the currently enhanced Mana to strengthen the core. It will effectively raise the level of the Mana core, and the pain will vanish.] System said.

"Huh? That can be done?" Max asked in surprise. He knew that one could only start reconstructing their core when all the Mana in it had turned faint orange. This was because the core reconstruction had to be done in one go.

However, now the system was suggesting that he could use it to strengthen his so that it would be able to endure the pressure of enhanced Mana.

[Yes, host. This is the most convenient method if the host wants to ensure that Mana core doesn't give you any more trouble in the future. However, if you do this, the used Mana won't be able to regenerate naturally again.] The system replied in affirmation.

"Oh?" Max finally understood why he had never heard of this method before. It wasn't because others didn't know of this but because it wasn't used.

After all, if they used it, the amount of enhanced Mana used would vanish forever. This meant that they would have to purify and condense it from the beginning, prolonging the already lengthy process of Mana enhancement.

Max fell in contemplation. If he used this method, his core would undoubtedly become sturdier, and he wouldn't have to endure this pain or worry about his core crumbling due to pressure. However, he would have to spend more LPs to replenish the used Mana.

"Well, LPs are meant to be spent." He shrugged, sat down in meditation pose again, and started using some of the already enhanced Mana to strengthen the core. However, even after an hour, he wasn't able to merge a single unit in it.

'Fuck. It's too difficult.' He cursed inwardly and focused all of his attention on the Mana core. He didn't even hear that someone was knocking on his door.

...

"Is he not inside?" The petite woman in a skin-fit cream dress stood outside Max's room with a frown. She had been knocking on the door for a while now, but there was no response.

Swoosh!

'So, what if he isn't here? I will wait until he returns.' She thought and took out a token from her spatial bag and inserted it in the groove of the door.

Weng!

The formation blinked, and the door opened.

As she stepped inside the room, she saw Max sitting on the bed, immersed in cultivation.

'So, he was here all along, but since he is so focused on cultivation, he didn't hear anything.' She thought, and then a somewhat reverent expression appeared on her face as he thought, 'It's no wonder he is so strong at such a young age.'

After that, she took out a chair from her spatial bag and sat down, waiting for him to finish his cultivation session as she admired his handsome features.

Phew!

After half an hour, Max exhaled and opened his eyes.

He was finally able to merge one unit of enhanced Mana into his core. After doing so, he realized that merging merely one unit of three-star Mana had provided the same effect as a mid-tier grade two foundation strengthening liquid.

'One and half hours to merge a single unit! At this rate, when the time comes, I would need one and half years to reconstruct my Mana core.' Seeing this speed, his eyebrows furrowed. This speed was too low.

'However, if I were to use a high-tier grade two 'foundation establishment liquid,' I should be able to cut this time by half. However, that would still be too slow since only half a year is left until the inter-academy competition.' His head hurt thinking this, and he realized that no matter if one had some advantage or not, it wasn't easy to become strong. (A/N: See author's note.)

He then shook his head and murmured, 'I'll worry about it when all the Mana has been enhanced.'

Just then, he saw a slender woman sitting a few meters away from him. She smiled at him and asked, "You are done cultivating, right?"

Chapter 242: Unsullied

"Yeah. I'm done." Max nodded. He then frowned and asked in displeasure, "But why are you in my room without my permission?"

"I..." The petite woman was dazed. She just realized that what she had done was very rude and disrespectful. She knew that her plan to seduce him had gone down the drain, and he would be angry with her because of this.

In this world, barging into someone else's residence without their consent was unacceptable. Whoever did so would be regarded as an enemy. After all, when in the safety of their residence, everyone would have their guard down and sleep, have sex, or cultivate without worry.

For example, if you were cultivating without a care in the world and someone barged in, it was very easy for them to end your life and find out your secrets.

This was why there were formations protecting the room and soundproofing formations to prevent people from spying.

Swish!

The petite woman stood up and bowed deeply toward him, "I'm very sorry. I was too excited to meet you, and when you didn't open the door, I thought you were out...."

After hearing her explanation, Max was rendered speechless. Simply because she wanted to meet him and thought he wasn't in the room, she decided to unlock the door and wait inside.

"What kind of reasoning is this? So, what if you wanted to meet me? Does that give you the right to barge into my room like that?" Max shouted in displeasure.

What if she had heard him talking to the system or sensed the anomaly in his core when he enhanced the Mana using the system? Although he knew she wasn't at the level where she could actually sense it, what if she somehow did that? The secret that he had a system would have been exposed, and it certainly wouldn't bode well for him.

If it wasn't because he was in dire need of LPs and she seemed willing to 'help' him with that, he might have thrown her out by now or maybe even attacked her straight away.

"I..." The petite woman's face turned pale. Her thin lips trembled, but she couldn't say anything more. At the same time, her eyes became moist, and tears threatened to fall.

"That's okay. Remember not to do anything like this in future." Seeing that she was feeling bad and was about to cry, Max calmed down. He didn't want to scare her away. After all, he needed her.

"I-I will." The petite woman bit her lips. After that, she turned around and whooshed toward the door. After committing such a mistake and making him angry, she wasn't hopeful of doing anything with him, and her mood also soured.

"Wait." Before she could reach the door, Max called out.

Halt!

The petite woman stopped in her tracks. Without turning around, she asked in a weak voice, "W-what is it?"

Although she tried to keep her voice normal, Max could see her body trembling. He sighed and jumped out of bed.

Shua!

In the next instant, he was standing by her side.

"Huh?" The petite woman sensed this and was about to say something when suddenly, she was lifted by two sturdy arms.

"W-what are you doing?" She stuttered, and her face went red. She tried to resist but to no avail. Max then carried her to the bed.

After reaching the bedside, he gently placed her on the bed and lightly kissed her forehead.

Thump! Thump!

Seeing his actions, she suddenly realized what was going on. He must have noticed her intentions and wanted to make it up to her because he scolded her. Of course, this was her own imagination, but this left her heart racing.

"You wanted to do it with me, right?" Max whispered in her ear, blowing warm air in it.

"Mm~" Her body trembled slightly, and her face blushed as she shouted in her heart, 'I was right. He had noticed it. What do I do?' Because of how nervous and panicked she was, she unconsciously shook her head, "N-no."

"Are you sure?" Max asked as his fingers sensually caressed her soft lips.

The petite woman didn't reply and closed her eyes while her breathing became hot.

Max faintly smiled and didn't speak anymore. Taking her silence as yes, he proceeded to kiss her cheek.

He then turned her face toward him and gave her lips a quick kiss. The petite woman's eyelashes, glistening with teardrops, fluttered.

Max gently wiped her tears and then planted his lips on hers. He took her thin upper lip between his lips and kissed it gently before doing the same to her lower lip.

Un~ The petite woman who was acting all shy opened her little mouth and started kissing him back.

After savoring the taste of each other's lips, their tongue sprang into action and quickly intertwined, greedily kissing and sucking.

'Mm?' Max found her movement stiff and awkward as if it was her first time kissing.

Huff... Ha~ huff...

After a few minutes, Max broke the kiss. The petite woman had an expression of reluctance, her eyes sparkling with lustful fire.

Seeing this, Max smiled, "Don't worry, there is much more to come."

"Un." Hearing this, she nodded. However, after realizing this, she blushed and hurriedly turned her face away, trying to hide her embarrassed expression.

Max chuckled inwardly and proceeded to take her clothes off. As he took off her top, a cute pair of snow-white orange-sized boobs was revealed in front of him.

'How refreshing!' He thought inwardly. Her breasts were the smallest among the women he had sex with until now, even smaller than Leticia's, and he found them quite pleasing to the eye.

After admiring them for a moment, he took off the lower part of her dress along with her panties.

Looking at her lying naked under him, Max unconsciously licked his lips which caused her to blush even more, and she unconsciously closed her legs and covered her breasts.

She then looked at him worriedly and asked, "Are... are you disappointed that they are too small?" Max was taken aback by her question. Then he understood that she was self-conscious about her petite figure.

"Nope. Although they are a little small, they are adorable and beautiful. There is no need to hide them." Max shook his head.

"Really?" The petite woman's expression relaxed after hearing this, and she slowly moved her hands away, but her legs remained closed tightly, her body stiff.

"Yep." Max nodded, reached out his hands, and grabbed both of her small but cute breasts.

Hmm~

The petite woman's body shivered when she felt his touch. Instinctively, she wanted to move his hands away. However, before she could do anything, Max had brought his head down and licked one of her nipples while his hand firmly grasped her other boob.

Mm~ A cold sensation coursed through her body which she happened to like even more. Therefore, she gave up any thought of resisting due to her embarrassment and simply closed her eyes, enjoying the wonderful sensation of his touch.

Max also enjoyed playing with her small boobs. He could grasp one in a single hand which gave him another kind of satisfaction. After a while of squeezing, sucking, and rubbing, Max moved his hand, placed it on her thighs, and started caressing them.

Seeing how stiff she was, Max once again felt that she was completely inexperienced. 'Could she be a virgin?' He suddenly thought of this possibility. However, he chose not to ask lest he make things awkward.

After a while, the petite woman relaxed her lower body, allowing him to move his hand to her pussy.

Max smiled and moved his hand to her pussy and started rubbing her labia, causing her to moan and clench her pussy.

'Mm? Looks like she is indeed a virgin.' The moment he touched her pussy, he had the feeling that it was untouched. This was due to him experiencing many women.

Nngh~ Ahn~ Ha~

After a while, she became wet, and her moans became more rapid.

Nngghhh~~

Noticing this, he decided to insert one of his fingers inside. When his finger was only one-inch inside, she trembled, her pussy tightly clenching on his finger.

"So tight!" Max exclaimed. He had experienced his fair share of virgin pussies, but her tightness was on a whole other level.

He didn't stop and pushed more than half of his finger inside. Immediately after, her body arched up, and warm liquid flowed out of her pussy, drenching his hand.

Ha~ Huff! Ha~

After a few seconds, she was done ejaculating and furiously gasped for air.

Max had taken his finger out and looked at her with a smirk on his face. After she came to her senses and saw him looking at her, she was too embarrassed to show him her face and hurriedly covered it with her hands.

'How cute!' Max was amused. He then asked, "You are a virgin, aren't you?"

Chapter 243: Too tight

"S-so what if I am?" The petite woman, who still hadn't overcome the pleasant sensation of climaxing, became flustered by his sudden question and retorted angrily.

"Nothing. It's good that you are." Max smilingly shook his head.

However, inwardly he was surprised. Since the status of women in this world was higher than that of men, in most cases, they could do whatever they wanted and weren't conservative about their sexual needs. It was very uncommon for a woman past her thirties to be a virgin.

"Humph!" The petite woman snorted but didn't dare look him in the eye due to embarrassment.

"Aren't you going to un-undress as well?" She asked.

"Oh! I will." Max realized he was still in clothes that were drenched in his sweat. He hurriedly took them off and controlled his fire elemental Mana around him.

Sizzle~

Tiny flickers of fire appeared around him, and the temperature increased. The sweat on his body became steam and evaporated. After training in his spells, he became quite

familiar with his elemental Mana, and his control improved significantly. Doing something like that wasn't difficult any longer.

The petite woman noticed what he was doing and didn't seem surprised. However, looking at her body, which had started to become a little sweaty, she was embarrassed. Just as she was about to say something, Max pounced on her.

Immediately after undressing, he started kissing her thin red lips forcing her to stay silent. His hands once again explored her slim body before finally stopping at the sacred place between her legs.

Although she was wet enough, given the tightness of her pussy and the fact that she was nervous, Max knew if he were to put his cock in it, she would be in much pain. Therefore, after massaging her clit and outer labia for a while, he again put his finger inside.

Nnghh~

Her body trembled as she felt his finger diving deeper, and she moaned in pleasure.

'Mm?' Max frowned. Her pussy was too tight, and he was having difficulty moving it deeper inside. However, this made him want to put his cock inside it as soon as possible. But first, he had to ensure it was loosened up a bit so as not to make her suffer in pain.

Schlick! Schlick!

Using a bit more force, he started to move his finger in and out of her unbelievably tight hole. At the same time, he began caressing her boobs with his tongue and rubbing her clit to help her relax a little more.

After a few minutes, she relaxed, and her pussy became more hospitable to external intrusions.

Ahnggh~~

Suddenly, her body jerked up, and her pussy tightened once more. However, it wasn't because she was climaxing but because Max had 'forced' another finger inside her and continued rubbing her insides.

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Ha~ Ha! Ha~

After several minutes, the petite woman was panting crazily with a numb expression on her face. Because of the intense stimulus she felt due to his fingering; she climaxed two more times in this short while.

Meanwhile, Max was barely able to hold himself back. But his efforts were not in vain, as he could put three of his fingers inside it, albeit barely, which means he should be able to proceed to the next step.

'This should be enough. I guess.' Max thought, positioned himself between her legs, and put his cock on top of her pussy.

Slap! Slap!

He slapped and rubbed it between her underlips, smearing it with her liquid to make it easier to penetrate her pussy.

"Wahh! W-what are you doing? It won't fit. Let's s-stop here, okay?" Feeling a thick and warm object rubbing against her pussy, she looked down, and her face paled upon seeing his gigantic rod. All her courage and will to have sex vanished at this moment as she begged.

"Don't worry. You won't feel too much pain." Max smiled and kissed her to calm her nerves.

"Are you sure about... Argghhhh!" Hearing this, she calmed down a bit.

However, she couldn't finish her next statement when a strong surge of pain assaulted her nerves. Her eyes bulged as she cried out loud. Her fingers clawing on the bed mattress, almost ripping it apart.

"Argh...! Too tight." Max groaned. Given how nervous and frightened she was after seeing the size of his cock, Max knew she wouldn't be ready to take it in anytime soon. Therefore, when he felt her relax a bit, he grabbed her waist and thrust his cock inside her.

Because he had to do it so suddenly, he couldn't properly control his strength; his cock penetrated all the way inside her narrow pussy. Causing her to cry hysterically.

Seeing how much pain she was in, Max felt apologetic and knew he should have waited a bit more. Looking down, he noticed that there was some blood flowing out. Therefore, he didn't make any hasty moment and let the pain subside.

He leaned forward, cupped her crying face, and sealed her lips with his.

"Mffhh Mnmh"

Her cries were muffled. She hugged him tightly, and her nails scratched his back due to the pain.

Max felt a stinging pain in his back and thought it wasn't a good idea to kiss her yet. However, he didn't say anything and stayed in the same position, letting her vent. After all, his body was sturdy enough to ignore such minor scratches.

After a while, she stopped crying and calmed down. Max looked at her face. Her eyes were red due to crying, and tears were still flowing out.

"I'm sorry. I was too hasty." He apologized and gently wiped her tears away.

"Un." The petite woman nodded, then said, "Y-you can continue, but please be gentle."

"Okay." Max nodded, kissed her, and started to move his waist slowly.

Although Max moved very slowly, the petite woman's body would tremble, and she would feel pain. However, after doing it for a while, the pain lessened, and she started to feel pleasure.

Schlick! Schlick!

Ahn~ Nngh~ Mm~

Max was watching her expression, and seeing that she wasn't feeling as much pain, he gradually increased his speed. After a while, the petite woman's pained cries were replaced by pleasure-filled moans.

Chapter 244: In the Elder's office

Huff... huff... huff...

After four hours, Max and the petite woman were lying on the bed, panting. The petite woman was completely spent. Her legs were spread apart, dripping with cum. However, She didn't have enough energy to move her legs. So, she continued lying like that, heaving deep breaths.

Max was lying beside her, his hand supporting his head as he watched the beautiful scene of her breasts heaving up and down. Entranced, he reached out to grab her breast.

"Kya~" The petite woman suddenly leaped up and moved away from him. "I-I think this is enough f-for today. How about we stop here?" She looked at Max warily and proposed.

"..."

Max looked at her speechlessly. Was it necessary to act as if he was some demon?

"Cough. Okay. We'll stop here." Max coughed and nodded, remembering how things had turned out in the past four hours.

Plop!

Hearing him agree, the petite woman took a breath of relief, fell to the bed, and passed out.

Max looked at her and mumbled, "Maybe I should have stopped sooner."

Because the tightness of her pussy was something he had never experienced before, Max kept wanting to fuck her more. Although he gave her time to 'rest,' apparently, it wasn't enough for her to recover.

Seeing that her lower body was covered in their love juices while her upper body was dripping with sweat, he carried her to the bathroom, washed her body, and placed her on the bed after flipping the mattress. After that, he took a bath and opened his status screen.

[Lust points: 30000]

"Oh?" Max was surprised after seeing his LP count. However, after remembering how many times they did it, it was normal that he gathered this much.

Looking at his status screen, he mumbled, "Let's first bring intelligence to 100 points as well." He knew that there were two effects of higher intelligence. First, his senses would be heightened, which was very helpful. The second one was that his control over Mana would be increased.

Weng~

Immediately after increasing it to 100, he felt the familiar throbbing sensation in his head. However, it didn't last too long before vanishing.

Then he looked toward a corner of the room roughly ten meters away. He could see the tiny protrusion on the wall with more clarity. 'As expected, my senses have been enhanced.' He nodded in satisfaction.

He then walked to the bed and lay down. The petite woman wasn't the only one exhausted; he was too, although not as much as her.

...

Soon one hour passed, and Max had recovered. He then glanced at the woman beside him; there was no sign of her waking up anytime soon.

"Well, I should go and meet the Elder now. After all, I can't waste my time here." He chuckled and went out of the room.

When he reached the Elder's office, he found a man standing there. He was the replacement of the petite woman for today.

"Hello. May I know who you are and if you have an appointment with the Elder." He asked.

Max was surprised that he didn't recognize him. After all, everyone who saw him would know that he was a disciple of Cloud academy. 'Oh, right. I'm not in the academy's uniform.' Max realized.

He then said, "Hello. Yes. Please tell her that Max is here to meet her. She would know."

"Mm?" The man frowned and looked him up and down. Although he was suspicious of his identity, given the fact that he was able to come all the way to the office and his calm temperament, he knocked on the door and told her that Max was here to meet her.

"Send him in." Elder's voice sounded from inside.

Hearing this, the way the attendant looked at Max changed and respectfully gestured for him to go inside after opening the door.

Max nodded and stepped inside the room and then closed the door after him.

"How was it?" The Elder put the papers down, which she was looking at, and asked with a knowing smile.

Seeing her smile, he understood what she meant and said, "It was good."

"Oh! How good?" She asked.

"Pretty good," Max said.

"You! Was it better than when you did it with me?" She asked, with no hint of embarrassment on her face.

Max was about to nod his head but stopped and then said, "No, it wasn't as good as you."

"Okay." She nodded without showing any emotion on her face. However, Max could see that she was relieved and pleased.

Inwardly, he let out a breath of relief. He had skillfully avoided enraging her.

After that, he went around her table, carried her from her chair, and put her on top of the table.

She didn't say anything and let him do what he wanted. Without further ado, he started undressing her.

"Oh, it seemed you weren't satisfied by her, huh?" She muttered in a low voice, and her smile widened even more.

"You can say that." Max nodded and then smirked. "Let's see if you can satisfy me." Saying this, he grabbed her boobs which were more than two times larger than the petite woman's and started to squeeze and suck on them while rubbing her pussy.

The Elder grabbed his head as she enjoyed his caresses.

In just a minute, her pussy had become wet. Seeing this, Max also took off his clothes, and after teasing her pussy with his cock for a while, he thrust it inside in one go.

Ahn~

Feeling his thick cock reaching her depths, she put her arms around his neck and moaned in pleasure. Although she had sex with him the previous night, her pussy had been itching for his cock since then. If it weren't for the fact that her niece was with him, she would have left the office and charged into his room long ago.

Suddenly Max remembered that when he was outside, he could hear her voice and asked, "That attendant outside can hear us."

"No, he can't. I've activated the formation. You continue." She shook her head and urged him.

Thwop! Thwop! Thwop!

Ahn~ Ngh~ Hmm~

"Okay then." Max nodded, put her legs on his shoulders, pulled her closer so he could reach deeper, and started pounding her.

Chapter 245: Dalton's determination

A handsome blue-haired youth in Cloud academy's uniform walked out of the city lord's mansion. The guards and the people roaming around the mansion looked in his direction with surprised looks.

The reason for their surprise wasn't because he was a disciple of Cloud academy, but the fact that two women, one mature and beautiful while another one petite and cute, came were there to see him off.

"Hey, isn't that the city lord? How come she is out to send a normal disciple away?" A handsome-looking middle-aged man muttered in surprise.

"Is he their relative or something?" Someone guessed.

"Relative, huh? I don't think city Lord would have enough time to see someone off even if it was her relative since there is always a lot to do in the office." A woman shook her head; her eyes gleamed as she looked at the youth.

Since they all lived and did business in the sun feather city, they knew how the city lord's mansion worked. Even the important guests had to wait long to meet the city lord. However, now she was out at the gate, sending a youth away.

Max felt many people looking at him and couldn't help but feel a bit awkward. "Okay, guys. It was nice spending some quality time with you. If there is a chance, I'll visit you again." Max said as he looked at the Elder and petite woman who were feeling down because of his departure.

"Hmm, don't forget what you said." The Elder smiled and nodded. She then looked at the petite woman who had an unwilling expression, and shook her head. She could understand her feelings since she was feeling the same.

Max glanced at her, took a step toward her, and whispered something in her ear, which caused the petite woman's face to turn red, and she nodded, "Un."

The Elder standing by her side looked at her and chuckled inwardly.

After bidding them farewell, Max gradually walked away and disappeared from their sight.

"You know he didn't have any feelings for us, right?" The Elder patted her shoulder and walked back inside.

The petite woman didn't say anything and stood there for a while in a daze.

Phew!

She exhaled deeply and murmured, "I know that. But he was the first man I had, and I don't think I will be able to find someone comparable to him."

...

After coming out of the city lord's mansion, Max went to the sun feather market. He wanted to see if he could buy the medicine to heal Flavia's scar. After all, he now had a total of 23,000 Mana stones, which should be enough since Belen had said it should cost around ten thousand.

"Hello, sir. What would you like to buy?" Max found the biggest medicine shop in sun feather city. The moment he stepped inside, a young girl greeted him.

"Yes. I want to buy medicine capable of healing bone-deep scars without leaving any mark." Max told her.

"Certainly, sir. Will you please tell me how that scar came to be? Was it by some magical beast or some other accident?" The girl led him into a small room and asked.

"Yes. It is from a beast, and most likely, it was a dark elemental beast." Max said after thinking for a moment. Although Flavia hadn't told him anything, when he met her, he had sensed some faint residue of the dark element from her scar.

After hearing him, the attendant thought for a while before saying, "I'm sorry, sir. According to your description, the medicine required should be the top-tier grade three appearance recovering pill. However, we don't have it because it's difficult to make, with a high price but low demand."

"I see." Max wasn't too disappointed since he had already expected this after knowing its grade. As she said, regular shops wouldn't have such high-graded stuff, especially when its demand is quite low.

"Do you know how many Mana stones should be enough to buy if it was available elsewhere?"

"Since it's a top-tier grade three medicine, you should have at least eighty thousand or more." The attendant replied after thinking for a while.

'Eighty thousand, huh?' Max was surprised but didn't show it on his face. At the same time, he was somewhat relieved that it wasn't available since he wouldn't have been able to buy it.

The attendant looked at him with twinkling eyes and asked, "Would you like to purchase something else, sir?"

"Yeah. I want some high-tier grade-two foundation strengthening liquid. Can you tell me what its price is?" He asked, remembering that he needed this liquid to consolidate his core since he would be enhancing more of his Mana during the trip back to the academy.

"That would cost 6000 low-grade Mana stones per bottle. How many do you want, sir?" She asked with a smile.

Hearing this, Max realized that it was a thousand Mana stones cheaper in the academy.

"Please bring me three bottles of middle-tier and three high-tier grade-two ones," Max said after thinking.

"Please wait for a minute, sir. I'll be right back with the requested things." The attendant said and went out of the room.

After a short while, she returned with a small box containing six bottles. She handed them to Max and said, "That will be 21600. However, since sir is from the Cloud academy, you only need to pay 21,000."

"Okay. Max took the bottles, stored them in the inventory, and paid for the required Mana stones. Afterward, he walked out of the shop and headed toward the city's exit.

The young attendant watched him leave and sighed inwardly, 'Such a handsome man. I wish I could have him.'

...

Whoosh!

A white and faint orange shadow whooshed past trees after trees in the forest. It was Max. Because the academy was quite far from the sun feather city, he needed to use his enhanced Mana if he wanted to return sooner. If not, then it would take around a week to return.

"Sigh! It would have been great if I had a flying pet." Max thought. He had been running for more than an hour at his highest possible speed, but he was still in the vicinity of the sun feather city.

When he sold the spear to the Elder, he had thought of this problem and inquired if he could buy a flying pet in those 23,000 Mana stones.

Unfortunately, Elder shook her head immediately and said, "You would need at least 50,000 Mana stones to buy an early-stage two-star flying beast. As for stronger ones, the amount would be even higher."

After hearing this, he had no choice but to drop the notion. He had thought of asking her, but she didn't have much herself.

After running for one more hour, his enhanced Mana had been exhausted, and he had traveled more than 200 Miles.

Now that his Mana was exhausted, he didn't continue running since there was a chance of encountering some powerful beast or bandits. So, he chose the safer option and found a place to rest.

He was currently in a barren mountainous region that stretched for a thousand miles.

After finding a relatively safe place between giant rocks, he took out some Mana stones to recover.

...

While Max was traveling back to the Cloud academy, in a forest close to the royal academy, Dalton and a few other people in golden-colored uniforms were fighting a green python.

Bang!

Dalton gave the finishing blow and killed it. However, his face didn't show any sign of happiness.

"Hey, Dalton. What's the matter with you? You took the finishing blow and still have such a gloomy expression. Is everything all right?" A curly-haired man who looked to be in his mid-twenties slapped his shoulder and asked.

"No. It's nothing important. Just a bug that I have been trying to get rid of, but he manages to live every time." Dalton said, killing intent flashing in his eyes.

It had been four days since he last talked with the people responsible for killing Max. He knew that they had also failed, just like Bartan. This surprised him.

He knew these people were at the peak of the two-star realm; moreover, one among them had enhanced some of his Mana to the three-star level. But even then, they died? How could he not be surprised?

He clearly remembered that a few days ago, it was reported that Max had reached the peak two-star realm, and the reason he was able to kill Bartan was also this. However, how could he have killed the people he sent now if that was the case?

Had he already enhanced his Mana? But how could that be possible? Even with the resources of the royal academy and his family's support, he had barely reached the

peak two-star. As for starting to enhance his Mana, he needed a few more weeks at the very least to do that.

Did Max have a more formidable background, or was he more talented than him? No matter which was the case, this strengthened Dalton's determination even more.

Chapter 246: Danger!

"Oh, Who is it? Someone from our academy?" The curly-haired man asked, intrigued. Others in the group also threw interested glances toward Dalton.

Dalton looked at the curly-haired man and shook his head, "It's a guy from the Cloud academy."

"Oh? Cloud academy? How about I help you? The curly-haired man offered.

"No. I will handle him. Let's proceed. We need to finish our mission as soon as possible." Dalton declined and walked deeper into the forest.

The curly-haired man shrugged and turned to others in the group, "You heard him. Let's go." Saying this, he walked beside Dalton. They were the strongest in this group of five, so they could order them around.

The other three nodded, took out the beast core, and followed after them.

...

Somewhere in a remote place, Inside a gloomy cave, an alluring figure was panting heavily as she rested against the cave wall.

She was Rima. Just a while ago, she had been through a tough battle against a group of four wolf-like beasts, three early-stage two-star beasts and one middle-stage one.

'How unlucky! I encountered that group of beasts immediately after parting with Belen and Leticia. If they were with me, we could have killed them easily.' She sighed inwardly. She then ate a mana replenishing pill and took out a few Mana stones to recover her exhausted Mana.

...

Rustle ~

When she had recovered about ninety percent of her Mana, her ears perked up as she heard leaves rustle outside the cave.

Whoosh!

Rima became alert immediately as she looked toward the entrance of the cave. Mana swirled around her as outlines of a wheel started to materialize in front of her.

However, the next moment, her face turned ghastly pale when she saw seven pairs of eyes gradually coming toward the cave. Without waiting for a single second, she dashed deeper into the cave.

Although she was already at the peak of the middle-star two-star realm and had a powerful spell like [Destruction wheel], she wasn't worried about fighting beasts, even if they were high-stage two-star ones.

But it was different if she were to fight a group of beasts, even if they were middle-stage or early-stage two-star ones. After all, her spell was a single-target attack.

She decided to dash deeper into the cave instead of out because the cave was narrow as one went deeper, only enough to fit a single wolf. This means she wouldn't have to fight all the beasts at the same time, giving her a better chance of surviving this danger.

Moreover, even if she wanted to escape from the cave, she couldn't have done since they had surrounded the Entrance, and she knew her speed wasn't enough to throw them off.

Grr~

The beast outside sensed her escaping deeper into the cave and immediately charged inside and chased after her.

Whoosh!

Soon, Rima saw a turn in the cave, and after the turn, it became even more narrow, barely enough for her to stand. Seeing this, she became jubilant and immediately charged inside, and after going in 3-4 meters, she stopped. Then focused on finishing the [Destruction wheel].

Grr~

Just a moment after, she heard a wolf's growl. Following this, a giant wolf's head size of her body entered the cavity and bit toward her. However, it couldn't reach her since she was standing some distance away from its reach.

Bang! Bang!

The wolf rammed its body against the cave, forcefully trying to enter but couldn't. Therefore it raised its claw and aimed to slash at Rima.

Shua!

However, before it could bring it down, the two-meter large wheel shot toward it and cut its claw, followed by the rest of its body into two.

Shua!

It didn't dissipate after killing the wolf in front and proceeded to cut through the bodies of two more wolves standing right behind it because of the narrowness of the cave.

Awoooo~

Seeing three of their comrades die, the rest of the wolves howled in anguish, and their eyes turned red in madness.

Bang! Bang! Slash! Slash!

They started to ram and slash at the earthen walls blocking them.

Crumble~

Although the rocky walls were quite sturdy, they couldn't endure the barrage of attacks from the wolves and started to crumble piece by piece, enlarging the entrance to the cavity.

"Damn it." Rima cursed. She could see that they would be able to enter and hack her pieces in just a few seconds.

Weng!

Mana burst out from her body and started to materialize in the shape of two wheels; however, their size was only 70% of the previous. At the same time, her Mana began to gather inside her throat, strengthening it.

She was going to cast the [Sonic Annihilation]. Although she wasn't too familiar with it since Max had given it to her barely a week ago and there was a risk of hurting herself, she had to use it if she wanted to kill these bloodthirsty wolves. If not, she would be the one to die.

Bang! Howl!

The rocks blocking the cavity crumbled and opened the pathway for the wolves to enter. They howled and charged in.

Rima had moved to the end of the cave and was desperately trying to finish the cast of her spells. Her face paled when she saw the wolves charging toward her, and the fear of death crept into her heart. However, she forced herself to stay calm.

Whoosh!

The next moment, the wolves were in front of her and slashed at her neck.

Qiiii~~

Just before the wolves' claws could slash her neck off, she opened her mouth, and deafening sound waves hit them, immediately immobilizing them.

Because the wolf in the lead was directly in front of her, it was hit head-on. Its claws which were only a few inches away from her developed faint cracks in them, and blood started to pour out of its eyes and snout.

Thud!

The leading wolf fell to the ground, seemingly unconscious. As for the rest of the wolves, they were immobilized just for a few seconds before recovering. However, before that, two sharp Mana wheels shot toward them and cut off two of the wolves' necks.

Seeing that there was still one more wolf alive and was about to come out of its dazed state, Rima immediately ran toward the exit while taking out an escaping talisman and crushed it. She didn't have any Mana left. So, she didn't have any other way except to escape to save her life.

Immediately, ripples of energy spread from the talisman and covered her body, giving her speed a significant boost.

Howl~

However, as she was about to run past the living wolf, it howled and slashed toward her.

Splash!

Due to the momentum, Rima couldn't move her body in time, and its claw slashed at her torso, and blood splattered.

Whoosh!

Ignoring the nerve-wracking pain, she ran out of the cave and sped out through the forested region.

...

"Mm?" Suddenly, Max opened his eyes with a frown on his face. For some reason, he felt uneasy and immediately focused his senses outwards and scanned the 300 meters around him and didn't find any danger.

"Strange. There is no danger. Why would I feel this way?" He murmured in confusion. He then stood up, dusted his clothes, and started running toward the northeastern direction where Cloud academy was located.

Whoosh!

Two days later, Max traversed the barren region and entered yet another forest. He could have traversed this area sooner. But because he needed to stabilize his Mana core, the journey was delayed. However, he was successfully able to merge two more units of enhanced Mana into the core, strengthening it.

Now he could enhance 200-300 hundred more units to the three-star level without having to worry about his core crumbling or the pain.

However, to be on the safer side, he decided to use two more units to strengthen it before enhancing more units. After all, with his current strength, almost no two-star beast was able to threaten him.

He had encountered a group of the high-stage two-star speed type beasts, but they weren't able to catch up to him when he used his enhanced Mana to run. Of course, it wasn't like he was completely invincible in the two-star realm.

There was a time when a flying beast chased after him. Even with his speed, he wasn't able to throw it off. Fortunately, only its speed was great but not offense and defense. He was easily able to kill it using the combination of [Flame barrier] and [Calidus Brahium].

BOOM!!!

Suddenly he heard a loud explosion from deep inside the forest, which caused the earth to quake.

'Hm? What power! Is some three-star beasts or mages fighting there?' Max exclaimed in shock and looked in the direction of the explosion. Although his vision was blocked by tall trees, the cloud of dust and smoke was visible in the sky.

Gradually, the cloud of dust cleared, and a black figure appeared in his sight. Because it was tens of miles away from him, Max wasn't able to see clearly what it was.

All of a sudden, he felt a pair of eyes looking at him, which was probably the figure in the air.

"It noticed me?" Max was shocked. He was hidden in the trees, and it should be impossible for him to be seen.

[Ding. Danger detected. Host is advised to use all the means to escape out of here, or death is inevitable.] Just as his mind was reeling in the shock. System's somewhat panicked voice sounded in his mind.

Chapter 247: Returning to the academy

Although Max was shocked by what the system said, he didn't stay and question it.

Whoosh!

Orange-colored Mana burst out of him and covered his feet as he dashed through the forest like a streak of lightning. However, he still felt a predator was watching him, causing his soul to shiver.

Therefore, he took out an escaping talisman and crushed it in hopes of increasing his speed. However, it didn't increase by much.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Just then, he noticed two figures shooting through the sky toward the black figure.

"It seems they are here for that 'person.'" Max was relieved. Now he could get away without any problem. At the same time, he was astonished to see that they could fly.

From what he knew, only those who have transcended the 'mortal boundary' could learn to fly. This meant the black figure and these two people were the five-star mages, at the very least. Realizing this, he shivered before and poured all his Mana into increasing his speed.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

When he had traveled only a mile, he heard explosions from where the black figure was.

...

After three days, in the afternoon, when the sun was shining brightly in the sky, Max arrived at Belsh town and entered the inn he had stayed in.

The innkeeper respectfully showed him to the room and prepared a warm bath for him.

While lying comfortably in the bathtub, Max opened his status screen.

[Name: Maxwell Garfield]

[Age: 18 years]

[Strength: 100]

[Agility: 100]

[Stamina: 100]

[Vitality: 100]

[Intelligence: 100]

[Mana: 9995 (2295 units three-star level)]

[Element: Fire (Concentration: 70%)]

[Lust points: 200,000]

Shop...

In these three days, he had used two more units of his enhanced Mana and strengthened his core even more. Apart from this, he had raised his agility and strength to 100 points which were at 80 points previously.

Because he was on the move at all times and had to fight the beast on the way, he integrated with his enhanced stats quite quickly.

'I still have 200,000 LPs left. I can enhance two thousand units more.' He thought with a smile on his face.

Without delay, he tapped on the Mana enhancement and chose to enhance two thousand more units.

Weng!

Like usual, nascent energy appeared inside his core and started merging with his Mana, causing him to grit his teeth to prevent himself from crying out.

Several minutes later, the enhancement process was completed. Max focused inside his core and could see a little more than 2/5th of his Mana had turned faint orange. Thanks to his already strengthened Mana core, there was only negligible pain this time.

Seeing this, the corners of his lips curled up into a smile. In normal cases, one had to spend months, if not years, to enhance this much Mana to the three-star level and had to use many precious resources to prevent the core from crumbling as more and more units were enhanced.

However, he did it in less than a week and didn't have to worry too much about his core becoming weak since he could use his enhanced Mana to strengthen it without any worry.

'I wonder what Leticia and others' reaction will be when they find this out.' He chuckled as he imagined it.

'But I should be careful too. After seeing my improvement speed, others might try to find out my secret.' He thought. Of course, 'others' here represented the academy's disciples and even Elders, not Leticia and others.

Max rested for the day in the Belsh town and used two more Mana units to consolidate his Mana core.

The following day, he departed from there and headed toward the academy.

...

Whoosh!

An eagle landed in front of the Cloud academy's gate, and a few disciples who had turned after completing their mission jumped down. Max was among them.

"Brother Max. We are going to report the success of the mission to the mission hall. Do you want to come with us?" A strong-looking man asked. He was Tylor, the crystal man Max met at the end of their outing period. Behind him stood the girl Max had saved from the fiery wolf, looking at him shyly.

"Okay, let's go then." Max nodded. Although he had already received his reward for the mission and the Elder should have reported it, he needed to go himself in person to report so that the academy would know that he had returned.

Therefore, the group of three headed toward the mission hall.

Inside the hall, the Elder assigned the mission to Max was sitting with a gloomy expression. A few days ago, he had received the news that the mission assigned to Max had been completed even after its difficulty had been increased for some reason.

'Those bastards. They couldn't even kill a newbie inner disciple. Now, I won't get the promised reward.' He thought in anger.

Moreover, after seeing that Max was able to get rid of three people at the peak of two-star and then complete the mission alone, he knew Max had the potential to reach higher heights.

This caused him to be worried about him exacting revenge on him since he intentionally assigned him a suicide mission. 'Sigh! I shouldn't have become greedy and done what young master Dalton wanted. Hopefully, that Max guy would die-'

"Hello, Elder. We are here to report the completion of our mission." Just as he was regretting doing what he did and hoping that Max wouldn't return, he heard a disciple's voice which caused him to stiffen slightly.

Phew!

As he raised his head to look at the disciple in front, he let out a breath of relief since it wasn't that blue-haired youth but a bulky man. He extended his hand and said indifferently, "Give the mission parchment and proof that you've completed the mission."

Tylor nodded, took out the mission parchment and a few herbs from his spatial bag, and gave them to him. After that, the girl behind Tylor did the same, but she had some beast cores instead of herbs.

The Elder noted their mission and gave them two spatial bags, "Here is your reward. Return the empty bags."

Tylor and the girl hurriedly finished storing the Mana stones in their bags and returned the empty ones to the Elder. After that, they stepped to the side.

As they moved aside, a blue-haired youth, who the Elder didn't want to see, appeared in his sight. The youth then chuckled playfully, "Hehe, Elder. I'm sure you haven't forgotten me, right?"

Chapter 248: Extortion

"N-no. There are so many disciples in the academy. How can I remember a single one?" The Elder stuttered a bit but quickly regained his composure.

Max smiled, but his smile was cold as he said, "Elder is right. However, I know you. You are the same Elder that assigned me to a mission."

Elder's expression became grim the instant he heard this. Tylor and the girl who apparently was Tylor's girlfriend looked at Max strangely. However, noticing Elder's expression changing, they seemed to understand something and remained quiet.

"You remember me. So what?" The Elder asked as his eyes flashed with a hint of killing intent. No matter how talented, he was only a two-star disciple. If he, an Elder, put his mind to it, he should be able to get rid of him before he reached the three-star realm.

Max noticed this and frowned. He didn't want to have any conflict with him just yet. He was only reminding him that he knew what he did, but this Elder seemed prepared to go to the extreme.

Suddenly, Max thought of something and leaned toward him and whispered, "I know Elder has no enmity with me, and I'm also ready to forget that you tried to push me to death's embrace, but I have a condition."

Although Max wasn't afraid of him, given the fast rate of his progress but he was worried that his women might be targeted. Therefore, he said this not to make the Elder too determined to kill him.

"Oh?" The Elder seemed surprised by his words and asked, "What's your condition?" He also didn't want to go to the extreme if he could help it since the academy must have noticed that Max was an outstanding disciple, and he might be found out if he were to plot against him.

"How about Elder give me some Mana stones to cultivate?" He asked with a smile.

The Elder's brows creased for a moment before he nodded, "Okay. How much do you need?"

"What about 20,000?" Max asked. Although he wanted to ask for more, he had guessed that a low leveled Elder wouldn't have such wealth.

"20,000?" The Elder looked at him coldly. Even if he counted all his savings, he wouldn't have that many stones.

"I can give ten thousand at most." He said.

"Mmm?" Max frowned and then pretended to think for a moment before saying, "15,000."

The Elder glared at him as if he wanted to eat him alive. But he suppressed his emotions and said through gritted teeth, "12,000."

Seeing his constipated expression, Max didn't try to haggle too much and nodded, "12,000 it is then."

After that, Max stepped back, took out a mission parchment along with a letter written by the Elder of the sun feather city stating the increased difficulty and that he had successfully completed it, and gave them to him.

The Elder glanced at them and then gave him a spatial bag with an unwilling expression.

Max gleefully took it. He knew it had the Mana stones this Elder agreed to give him since he had already obtained the mission completion reward in the sun feather city.

After he was done storing them in the inventory, Max gave the spatial bag back to him and smiled, "Thanks for your generosity, Elder."

Hearing this, the Elder, who was already angry and depressed about losing his savings, almost coughed out blood.

Max then added in a low voice that only the Elder could hear, "I hope you won't do anything stupid in the future since that wouldn't result in anything good for you."

After saying this, Max turned around and left. Tylor and his girlfriend also followed after him.

The Elder watched him leave with a cold expression on his face.

...

After exiting the mission hall, Tylor's girlfriend glanced at Max and said in a worried tone, "Sir, I think you shouldn't have acted that way with the Elder even if he offended you somehow. Especially that last sentence. I could feel that his killing intent toward you became stronger after you said that to him, although he didn't show it."

"Oh?" Max looked at her in confusion. He had lowered his voice and noticed that even the Elders in some distance didn't hear him. How could she have heard it?

Tylor spoke at this moment, "Brother Max. She is a sensory type mage and can hear even the whispers if she is at a certain distance from the target."

"That's impressive." Max nodded and then said, "Thank you for your goodwill. However, you don't have to worry about it. He shouldn't dare to do anything."

"But what if he did?" The girl asked. She was genuinely worried for him since he was her savior.

"If he did..." Max didn't say the complete sentence, but suddenly, his body exuded a strong surge of killing intent which immediately caused the duo's movements to stiffen.

However, it was only for a split second, after which Max controlled himself and smiled, "As I said. You don't have to worry about it."

After that, he bid them farewell and headed toward the resource hall. He was going to exchange the beast cores in his inventory for Mana stones and buy some more foundation strengthening liquid because all that he purchased in sun feather city had been used by him already.

...

Max quickly arrived at the resource hall since it was close to the mission hall. Just as he entered, he saw Jasmine leaning against the counter in boredom. He smiled and walked toward her.

"Mm?" Jasmine looked up when she noticed someone approaching her and was about to direct whoever it was to other counters since she wasn't in the mood to do anything.

"You are back?" However, when she saw Max, her eyes sparkled, and she almost shouted.

It had been only around a week since he went out, and before going, he told her that it would take him around two weeks. After that, she found out that he was assigned to a mission in sun feather city and lost any hope of him returning at all.

So, she was surprised to see him return so soon, and that too without any visible injury.

Other people present looked at Jasmine weirdly but didn't say anything since they knew she was always in a bad mood and would lash out at them if they commented anything. However, that didn't stop them from looking at her and then Max with strange looks.

Max didn't mind their gazes. He walked up to her, leaned toward her, and said, "Yes. Did you miss me?"

Jasmine saw the look in his eyes and immediately understood what he was thinking.

Chapter 249: He isn't simple

"W-why would I miss you? I'm a bit surprised to see you return... so early." Jasmine glared at him as if telling him to behave.

Max looked around and saw other Elders and a few disciples present still looking at them. Especially one male Elder was glaring at him with hostility.

"Cough! I'm here to exchange some beast cores." Max coughed and stated why he was there.

"Okay. Take them out." Jasmine nodded in satisfaction. At least this guy knew how to behave.

Max tapped his spatial bag, pretending that he was taking them out of his spatial bag when in reality, almost all of his things were stored in inventory.

Whoosh!

Suddenly, the counter in front was filled with many cores of different colors and sizes.

"Woah! Is this guy for real? Did he kill this many beasts by himself?" A disciple on the counter a few meters away from him was stunned.

Not only he, but even the Elders also looked at the cores and then Max with surprise. However, their thoughts were different from the disciples. How much time must he have taken to kill so many beasts? And how much time has it been since an inner disciple like him went on a mission?

"Did you kill them all by yourself?" Jasmine asked suspiciously.

"Haha, Elder Jasmine. Do you have to ask this? He obviously had the help of others, or how could an inner disciple do this alone." A peal of arrogant laughter sounded from the entrance of the hall.

"Hm?" Max frowned; he could feel the hostility in this voice which puzzled him. He didn't have many enemies in the academy.

When he turned to look and saw who it was, he nodded to himself in understanding. It was the black-clothed man that Karon, who was pestering Anna, had brought to Max's door to cause trouble, who was then told off by Eliana. So, it was expected that he was hostile toward him.

Jasmine also looked at him and frowned but didn't say anything.

The black-clothed guy, followed by two others, came up to them and sneered, "Why aren't you telling the truth? Could it be that you want us to believe that you killed so many beasts in just a week and that too without any help?"

Max looked at him as if he was looking at a clown, "Who said I wanted anyone to believe it?"

The black-clothed man was immediately enraged by the look Max gave him but didn't say anything about it and looked at Jasmine and the other Elders. "Elders, as I said, there is nothing to be surprised about."

Ever since that day when he was humiliated by Eliana and Max, he had vowed to get his revenge. However, he knew that Eliana wasn't someone he could afford to offend, so Max was the only one he could trouble.

But this possibility would also thin out if he managed to impress some Elder and become their personal disciple. Therefore, he was trying to prove that Max wasn't as talented as they might have thought after seeing his collection of beast cores.

Elders seemed a bit disappointed and didn't pay any more attention to Max, which caused the black-clothed man to let out a breath of relief.

Max shrugged and looked at Jasmine, "Elder, please tell me how many Mana stones I would get in exchange for them."

Jasmine saw his carefree attitude and asked in a low voice, "You did it alone, right?" Unlike others, Jasmine knew he went on a solo mission, and given the location where most disciples avoid going, she was pretty sure he didn't have anyone's help.

"Yeah." Max nodded nonchalantly. In his eyes, this wasn't a big deal.

Jasmine, although she had guessed that he did it alone, was shocked by his confirmation, and once again, she thought, 'This guy isn't simple indeed.' After which, she started checking the ranks of the cores and determining their prices.

The black-clothed man gave Max a venomous glance and then went to another counter to report his mission.

...

After a while, Jasmine was done scanning all the core and said, "There is a total of 34 Mana stones, and all of them are from middle-stage or high-stage two-star elemental beasts. Since you want them to exchange them for Mana stones, you will be given 8000 stones in total."

Because Jasmine hadn't lowered her voice when saying this, the people present heard it clearly and looked at Max with interest.

'Tch, what a lucky bastard!' The black-clothed man gnashed his teeth in hatred. Even for an old and experienced disciple like him, 8000 stones were a significant amount. But now, a newbie earned them so quickly.

Suddenly his eyes twinkled as he thought of something and looked at Max greedily. It was obvious that he was planning to rob him.

"Okay." Max nodded. This amount was way more than what he got from the 30 cores he exchanged after the outing. He then added, "Please, six bottles of high-tier foundation strengthening liquid."

Although his core was in a much better situation than when he enhanced his Mana in the sun feather city, there was still slight pain.

After all, the collective pressure of 4300 units of three-star Mana wasn't something his core, even though strengthened considerably, could easily handle.

Jasmine looked at him and thought, 'It seems there is a problem in his core. That's why he keeps buying this foundation strengthening liquid.'

She stood up, went deeper into the hall, and came out with six small bottles. She then handed them to him along with his remaining Mana stones and whispered, "If you can please me, I'll reward you with one or two more bottles."

Understanding what she meant, Max chuckled and nodded, "Sure." After that, he headed to his dorm.

...

Max was sitting crossed-legged on the floor, his forehead glistening with droplets of sweat.

After returning to his dorm, he found a letter on the bed. It was from Anna. She said that she had passed the test for becoming an inner sector disciple and therefore took a mission for one. According to the description of her mission, it might take her a little more than two weeks before she returned. Therefore, he shouldn't worry for her.

After that, he went to check if Belen and others had returned or not and found out that they haven't yet.

Therefore, he decided to cultivate and strengthen his core to make it sturdy enough to bear the pressure of his current enhanced Mana and prepare for the next time he enhanced more of it.

Phew!

'It's really not easy.' Max grumbled. Although he had become familiar with the process by now, he still found it challenging. Moreover, he would get bored just after an hour of cultivation, and continuing any longer would be too difficult for him.

He marveled at the thought that in this world, people would cultivate for weeks and months in one session. How could they?

However, he already knew the answer to this question: to become strong. To become strong, they had no choice but to do it even when they could no longer continue.

He then remembered the horrifying power that being in the forest showed. His mere glance had caused his soul to shake. What if the people who kept it busy didn't arrive on time and it attacked him? Just as the system said, his death would have been inevitable.

"Fuck it. I have to work hard if I want to ensure my survival and the safety of my loved ones and avenge my mother. Moreover, I need to be strong enough to roam freely and enjoy everything this world has to offer." He said to himself, trying to boost his morale.

After that, he drank one bottle of the foundation-strengthening liquid and continued his cultivation session.

...

When it was night, Max finally opened his eyes and took a deep breath. Using the high-tier foundation strengthening liquid, he was able to merge two more units in his core in just a day, and the slight pain and discomfort he felt were now gone.

However, Max knew that it was only temporary since he was going to enhance more which would cause the pressure to intensify.

"Although it's a bit early, I should go to Jasmine's residence." Max licked his lips and stood up, ready to go out and earn some LPs.

Knock! Knock!

However, just at this moment, he heard someone knock on his door. 'Hmm? Who could it be?' He frowned.

"Hey, it's me. Come out." A sweet and slightly arrogant voice called out.

Chapter 250: Dinner with a beauty

Max recognized the voice and went to open the door.

Creak~

As the door opened, a beautiful girl in the academy's white uniform appeared in his view. For a moment, Max didn't want to move his gaze away from her fairy-like face.

However, he quickly collected himself and asked, "Do you need something?"

"No. W-what would I need from an inner disciple like?" Eliana was flustered upon seeing the look in his eyes and quickly said, "I heard that you've returned. So, I came to pay you the promised Mana stones."

After saying this, she brushed the light blue colored ring on her figure lightly, and 350 Mana stones appeared in front of her, which floated toward him under her control.

Max noticed the ring on her finger. It was a spatial ring with the same function as a spatial bag but more convenient to carry and would also look good when wearing.

He calmly waved his hand, and a wave of Mana enveloped the stones. After that, they vanished in thin air.

"Oh?" Eliana was surprised. "Have you started to enhance your Mana already?" She asked.

"That's right." Max nodded. He wasn't surprised that she could tell because one could extend their Mana out of their body only when the quality and power of Mana had surpassed two-star level.

Max didn't know this before but coincidentally found out when he was experimenting with his Mana while traveling back to the academy.

Eliana gazed at him deeply and then nodded, "Good. Keep working hard."

"Okay. I'm going then." She said and turned around to leave.

However, Max suddenly called out and stopped her.

"Would you like to have dinner with me? It will be my treat."

Hearing him, Eliana scoffed in her heart, 'Just because you have become strong, you want to get close to me.'

However, she was puzzled when she turned around and noticed his expression because she could tell that he didn't seem to have such intentions. His eyes were clear, and he had a faint smile on his lips. Unconsciously, she stared at him for a few seconds as if in a daze.

"You'll pay?" She asked after coming to her senses.

"Yes." Max nodded calmly.

"Okay then. Let's go." Eliana agreed since she hadn't eaten anything yet and was hungry. If he wanted to treat her, she wouldn't say no to a free meal, and if he had some other intention, she was capable enough to beat him up.

Just as Max was about to step out, he noticed his condition and said, "How about you come inside and wait for a while?"

Eliana creased her brows, hearing this. Max saw her expression and pointed toward his clothes, "I was cultivating just now and am too sweaty. I can't go out like this with a lady such you, right?"

Only after he said, this did she notice that he really was sweaty. But after hearing his last sentence, a faint blush crept on her adorable cheeks, which she quickly hid, "No need. I'll wait here. Just be quick."

...

After half an hour, Max and Eliana were sitting inside a restaurant, having dinner while talking. Being a gentleman, Max had offered Eliana to order whatever she wanted to eat.

He had expected Eliana to say he should order what he wanted since this was the usual response of the girls back on earth, but to his surprise, she nodded and ordered the most expensive dishes without hesitation.

"So, when did you join the academy?" Max asked, trying to break the ice.

"It's been four years now," Eliana replied and continued to eat with no intention to converse with him.

Seeing this, Max stopped wasting his breath and focused on the delicious dishes in front of him.

After they were done, Max paid the bill, which was 150 Mana stones. When he was paying, Eliana noticed his expression, which was as calm and casual as before. This surprised Eliana.

She had ordered so many expensive dishes on purpose because she wanted to see his stiff expression when he paid the bill, but it seemed her plan had failed. This caused her to be frustrated inwardly.

'He must be feigning indifference.' She thought. After all, even she, as a core disciple, couldn't afford to spend so much on a single meal while he was just an inner sector disciple.

"So, what did you want to talk about?" She asked after leaving the restaurant.

"Can you tell me about the inter-academy competition in detail? I mean the strength of top ten contenders etc., that might be helpful." Max asked.

Although she had told him in the sun feather city that he needed to be at least a mid-stage three-star mage if he wanted to get a rank in the top ten, he didn't believe it was this difficult. That's why he wanted to know her reason for saying this.

Eliana darted him a side glance; she could guess what he was thinking. She shook her head inwardly and said,

"Even the weakest disciple from the top ten academies would be at the peak of the two-star realm with at least half of their Mana covered to three-star level and a powerful spell that could easily harm someone in the three-star realm.

So, you can imagine how difficult it would be to get into the top ten. Someone in the early stages of the three-star realm wouldn't be confident enough to say that he would be placed in the top ten. That's why I said you should be at least a mid-stage three-star mage. And if you want to be ranked higher, this alone wouldn't be enough, and you would need to have some powerful spells.

From the three-star realm onwards, only the quality of your Mana, strength of element, and powerful spells and how skillfully you can use them differentiate you from the masses. Unfortunately, most of the disciples lack in these aspects, forcing them to mediocrity." She sighed at the end.

Her words surprised Max. It seemed that she wasn't sure whether she would be able to perform well or not. He sighed audibly, "It seems I need to work harder."

Eliana glanced at him but didn't say anything; her initial opinion of him had changed after finding out that he had already started to enhance his Mana.

Chapter 251: Enraging Jasmine again

"So, which rank are you aiming for?" Max asked after a while.

Eliana didn't say anything for a moment. Just as Max thought that she wasn't going to reply just like last time, she said, "Top three,"

Hearing this, Max couldn't help but give her another deep look.

"What? Do you think I can't?" She snorted, dissatisfied by her reaction.

"I'm not sure since I don't know how strong you are. But hey, I sure hope you achieve this." Max said.

"Hmm." Eliana didn't say anything, but her expression returned to normal. 'At least he isn't a bootlicker.' She thought.

"Okay. I'm going now." She said and walked away. Max watched her leave and then headed toward Jasmine's residence.

...

Just like before, he was greeted by two female guards at the entrance of Jasmine's residence.

Before Max could say anything, they beat him to it and said, "Please wait for a moment." Saying this, one of them went inside. She returned quickly and allowed him to enter.

"Thanks." Max nodded at them and went inside.

Jasmine was sitting out in the hall with a glass of red-colored wine in her hand. Noticing his arrival, she waved her hand and sent her maid away before asking, "Would you like some wine?"

Max walked up to her and sat opposite her, "Sure." He said, picking an empty glass from the table.

Jasmine raised her brows but didn't say anything and poured his glass.

As they drank, she asked, "You must be aiming for the inter-academy competition, right?"

"That's right." Max nodded as he took a sip of the wine. It was a bit sweet and Mana rich. He felt refreshed after taking a sip and exclaimed, "Good wine."

Jasmine looked at him with interest, "If you are, why do you still have time to come to me?"

"Because I consider enjoyment equally important." He said and finished the wine in one gulp and extended his hand toward her, asking for a refill.

Jasmine filled it again and asked, "Aren't you afraid it will affect your performance, and you might not be able to clear even the selection competition?"

"It will but not negatively." Max smiled and then asked, "Why? Are you worried about me?"

"No. Not worried. But I was just curious." She shook her head and stopped asking any more questions.

After seeing that he brought many beast cores, most of which were at least middle-staged and claimed that he killed them alone, she became curious as to how he trains.

After having sex with him a few times, she realized that he was focused more on fleshly pleasure and less on cultivation, but even then, he was still one of the strongest among his peers. So, it was somewhat baffling for her.

A few minutes later, they had finished two jars of wine. Max stood up, walked toward her, raised her chin, and kissed her lips which had the taste of wine, "Shall we do what is important now?"

"Yes. Take me to my room now." Jasmine said she was a bit tipsy after drinking so much.

"With pleasure." Max smiled, carried her, and walked toward her room.

After entering the room, he threw her on the bed and took off his clothes before ripping hers.

"That was one of my favorite dresses. Damn it." Jasmine became angry and shouted. At the same time, she was surprised by his sudden aggressiveness since he hadn't acted this aggressively before.

"Oh, sorry. I thought that would be quicker." Max chuckled, put his hand on her pussy, and started rubbing her clit without giving her any chance to say anything more.

Ahn~

Jasmine frowned at his reaction but didn't say anything. After seeing what he was capable of, she felt the need to please him. That's why she kept her temper in check and focused on enjoying his touches.

Moreover, she was afraid that he would stop seeing her if she displeased him too much. After all, he was in this relationship with her only for her body, and given his looks and talent; it wasn't difficult for him to get more girls in the academy.

Max didn't care what she was thinking and continued to rub and pinch her clitoris, making her moan in ecstasy.

A while later, she had become wet enough. So, he stopped pleasing her and put his cock near her mouth, "It's your turn to please this little guy."

Jasmine hesitated for a moment before she opened her mouth and took the tip inside. Her warm tongue started licking it as her lips wrapped around it. At the same time, her hand began stroking his shaft.

"Yeah. Good. Keep going." Max put his hand behind her head and forced her to take more of it inside.

Jasmine didn't resist and started sucking it while slowly moving it in and out. Occasionally, she would put it deep inside her throat, making Max groan in pleasure. Compared to last time, her movements were masterful.

And because of this, his cock became hard as a rock very soon and started throbbing. Jasmine felt this and knew he was about to cum and tried to move away, but before she could, he grabbed her head with both hands and thrust his cock deep into her throat.

"Mmpfff..." Jasmine's eyes widened at his sudden thrust, and in the next moment, his hot and thick semen gushed out from his cock and filled her throat to the brim.

Gulp! Gulp!

"Ahhh! Amazing." Max exclaimed with his eyes closed. After he was done ejaculating, he took out his cock and moved away, readying himself for her retaliation.

"Cough! Cough! You bastard. Who told you to do that?" Jasmine had a coughing fit and shouted in anger, Mana swirling around her.

"Hey! Listen to-" Before Max could say anything, Jasmine slapped toward him, her Mana taking the shape of a hand that followed her movements.

Whoosh!

But Max had already circulated his three-star Mana and vanished from his spot, easily dodging it. He appeared ten meters away, "Are you crazy? That could have seriously injured me."

"Huh? You dodged it?" Jasmine was surprised. Because the last time he dodged her attack, she had used more power to ensure that he wouldn't be able this time. But she still failed to hit him.

Chapter 252: Pass out

Soon, she recovered from her surprise and glared at him, "I have told you not to do that, haven't I?"

Max saw her face, which was red from anger, and realized that he had overdone it, "I'm sorry about that. I couldn't control it because-"

"Because you felt good. Well, I didn't." Jasmine interrupted him coldly. She didn't want to hear his excuse.

Seeing that she didn't attack him again, Max carefully said, "I'll remember not to do this ever again. So, can we continue now?"

"You!" Jasmine was speechless and enraged. 'This bastard can't see anything apart from sex.' She gnashed her teeth, trying to suppress her anger.

"Okay." After taking a few deep breaths, she nodded. Although she wanted to refuse and throw him out, her lust didn't let her.

Max smiled and slowly approached her. Since she was already wet, he didn't waste any time on foreplay. Putting his cock between her legs, he started pounding her. But he wasn't rough or forceful because he first wanted her anger to die down.

Squelch! Squelch!

Ahn~ Oh~ Ngh~

Soon the room was filled with the sensual sounds of mating, which lasted almost the entire night. When they were finally done, both Max and Jasmine were too exhausted to move. Therefore, after cumming last time, they didn't bother to clean themselves and directly fell asleep.

...

Because he was too exhausted, Max woke up late the next day. When his eyes opened, he was lying alone in her bed, naked.

He stood up and went to take a bath. When he came out of Jasmine's room, he found her maid sitting in the hall. Seeing him come out, she blushed and then bowed, "I hope sir slept well. Mistress has already left to do her daily duties."

"Hmm." Max nodded and asked, "What time is it?"

"It's going to be noon in one hour." She replied and then asked, "Sir should be hungry. Would you like to have breakfast here?"

"Okay. I'll do that." Max nodded and sat down on the sofa. The maid looked at him for a few seconds and then excused herself to prepare breakfast for him.

After she had gone away, he opened his status screen to see how many LPs he earned after exerting himself for an entire night.

[Lust Points: 60,000]

'As they say, hard work pays off.' He mumbled to himself. 'If I get this many points daily, in just ten or so days, I will be able to complete the enhancement.' He thought.

However, he knew that was his wishful thinking since he wouldn't get this many points from Jasmine every time because her yin energy would start to weaken after doing it a few more times. Moreover, given the condition of his core, he could enhance around 1000 units in one go one. After that, he would have to spend more time strengthening it again.

After twenty minutes, the maid returned with a big tray of dishes. She placed it in front of him and said, "Please enjoy." After that, she stood beside him, looking at him as if he was some kind of treasure.

Max didn't mind her and started eating his food. After he was finished, the maid asked with an expectant look, "Was food to your liking, sir?"

"Yes, it was delicious." Max smiled at her. Hearing his praise, the maid beamed at him, "Thank you, sir."

"Okay. I'm going now. Tell your mistress that I will come in the evening." Max told her and walked out.

...

Max didn't go to his dorm room after returning from Jasmine's but went to check whether Belen and company had returned yet, but they hadn't. The same was true for Flavia.

After that, he went to the training ground where he could train his spells. Even though he had reduced the casting time of [Calidus Brachium] to twenty seconds, he knew it wasn't enough.

On the return trip from the sun feather city, he encountered a peak two-star speed-type beast who had almost ended his life without giving him enough time to cast his spell.

If he didn't have his Mana enhanced which caused his speed to be several times faster than before, he would have died there. If, at that time, his cast time was lower, he could've killed that beast.

Because most of the disciples were out on the missions, the training ground as much wasn't crowded, and he quickly found an empty room. He was going to train his spells, [Calidus Brachium] and [Flame barrier], for two hours straight.

...

Bang!!!

The wall that was said to be able to endure attacks from middle-stage three-star mages trembled when Max punched it after casting [Calidus Brachium] using his three-star Mana.

"Mm, it seems I shouldn't use my enhanced Mana to cast [Calidus Brachium] in case this wall gets damaged. I wouldn't be able to pay for it if they asked for compensation." Max mumbled. Although he knew the possibility of such was low since he was using 1500 units of Mana to cast, he didn't want to risk it.

Therefore, he decided to train [Calidus Brachium] until his two-star Mana was exhausted and then train [Flame Barrier]. Like this, he spent the next two hours in the training room.

By the time two hours were up, he could see that time required to cast [Flame Barrier] had reduced significantly. Now he only needed around 15 seconds to cast it successfully. As for [Calidus Brachium], there was barely any progress.

After that, he returned to his dorm, rested for a while, and then spent all the LPs and enhanced another 600 units of his Mana to the three-star level.

"Arghh!"

As the enhancement process started, Max let out a pained groan. This time, the pain he was feeling was at least 20-30% higher than before. Because he was enhancing only 600 units this time, the process ended quickly.

Just when he thought it was over, he realized it was too soon to feel relieved as sharp pain originated from his Mana core and assaulted his nerves.

"Damn it. This pain." Max cursed. After using another two units of enhanced Mana to consolidate his core, he guessed that he could enhance a few hundred units more without feeling any pain, and even if there was some, he should have been able to endure it.

But apparently, he was wrong about it. Although he enhanced only 600 units this time, the pressure was almost 50% more than what it was previously, causing pain to become almost unbearable.

Whoosh!

Without delay, he took out a bottle of high-tier grade two foundation strengthening liquid, drank it in one gulp, and then started consolidating his core again.

Because the pressure on his core was higher, he struggled to merge more Mana in it. When it was nighttime, he opened his eyes. However, his brows were still creased together.

After wasting more than eight hours, he could merge only two more units in his core with much difficulty. But even then, the pain didn't completely go away.

He stood up and wobbled toward his bed. He had exhausted most of his stamina, trying to suppress the pain while focusing on strengthening his core. Now he didn't have enough energy to walk properly. Therefore, the moment he lay on the bed, he passed out.

...

Midnight... Jasmine's residence...

Jasmine was in her room pacing back and forth. She opened the door and shouted, "Can you see him?"

"No, my lady. There is no sign of him." The maid entered the villa and answered her question.

"That bastard... what does he think I am? How can he make me wait like this when he himself said that he would come?" Jasmine said through gritted teeth.

When she returned home in the evening, her maid told her that Max had said that he would visit her in the evening. Ever since then, she had been waiting for him, but he didn't show up, causing her to flare up again.

"Um, my lady. Should I go and call him?" The maid asked after seeing how desperate her mistress was acting.

"No. Let him be. He must be doing something else, or given his perverted personality; there is no way he wouldn't come." Jasmine took a deep breath and shook her head.

The maid looked at her weirdly and thought, 'If my lady knows this, why are you getting angry?'

Chapter 253: Strengthening the core

Jasmine glanced at the maid and said coldly, "I'm going to sleep now. If he comes, tell him to go back." She then walked back to her room.

"Yes, my lady." The maid bowed toward her.

...

Early morning, the next day...

Rumble~

Max's eyes opened when he heard his stomach rumble.

"Fuck. I'm starving. What time is it?" Max got up and rubbed his sleepy eyes. Because he was too exhausted and passed out, he didn't have dinner and was famished right now.

"Argh!"

Just as he got up, a surge of pain assaulted him. It was from his Mana core, but fortunately, it was bearable. "Now I have to spend the day strengthening the core." He helplessly shook his head.

He had to admit that he didn't have patience like other people. If he didn't have the system, with his lazy and lusty personality, he couldn't have reached the two-star realm, even if his aptitude for Mana was normal.

"Hm? Jasmine must be angry too." He remembered that he told her maid to pass on his message that he would come yesterday. This gave him another headache. He didn't want to enrage her since she was his primary source of LPs right now, which he needed a ton of.

"Well, let's freshen up first and have some breakfast before worrying about anything else." He shrugged and went into the bathroom.

After a while, he exited his room and went to a nearby restaurant to have breakfast since he didn't know how to cook food.

When alone in the wilderness, he usually ate the food prepared by Anna. Thanks to spatial items, food wouldn't go bad for a long time, and when all of his stored food was finished, he would grill some magic beast meat. Although it wouldn't be too tasty, it would be edible.

"Welcome, customer!" A young lady in a maid's dress welcomed him. He nodded and entered the restaurant. As he looked around to search for an empty table, he noticed a

familiar figure ordering food. It was Haory. Since he had seen her, he walked toward her.

"Mm?" Haory noticed someone coming toward her and raised her head to look. and was surprised after seeing that it was Max. "Oh? It's you."

"Yeah, it's me. Hello, by the way." He said, somewhat speechless. This girl was still the same as before.

"Hello. You are here for breakfast, right? Please sit." Haory said, after seeing that she was somewhat rude.

Max nodded and sat down. He then called a maid and ordered some dishes.

Meanwhile, Haory was looking at him strangely.

"What is it?" Asked Max.

"How come you are here alone? Haven't Belen and others returned from their missions yet?"

"No. They haven't returned yet. It might take them a few more days. When did you return?" Max shook his head and asked.

"A few hours ago." She replied.

Just then, some waiters came toward them with plates full of food in their hands. They placed them on the table and said politely, "Please enjoy!" Before going away.

"Let's eat," Haory said and started eating. After waking up early in the morning, she had started traveling back to the academy without eating anything and, thus, was starving. Max nodded and focused on eating his food since he was even hungrier than her.

It didn't take them long to finish all the dishes present, but they weren't full yet. Max looked at her and smiled, "Shall we order more?"

"Yes." Haory nodded, a bit embarrassed.

After that, they ordered some more food and quickly finished it. Finally, their hunger was satiated. Haory stood up, ready to pay, but Max stopped her and paid for her share too.

Haory looked at him appreciatively and said, "Thank you!"

"It's fine. That's just a few stones." Max shook his head and walked out of the restaurant with her.

Suddenly, Haory asked, "Are you going to participate in the selection competition?" She remembered that he didn't show much interest when Belen and others had told him about it. So, she was curious whether he was going to participate or not.

"Yeah. I'm planning to. Are you?" Max nodded and asked.

"That's right." She nodded with a determined look.

After chatting for a while, Max found out that she was about to reach the high-stage two-star realm in a few days, which surprised him.

But that didn't last long when he remembered how she was completely focused on cultivation and training, and coupled with her talent, which was certainly good, and the resources in the academy, it was to be expected that her cultivation speed was faster.

'I wonder if Belen and others can make it?' He thought. Belen had reached the high stage in the two-star realm a few weeks ago and was progressing at a steady pace. As for Rima and Leticia, they were progressing well too, but it would take them some time before they could brake past the middle stage, especially for Rima because she was focused on training her spells.

After parting ways with Haory, Max didn't go to Jasmine's or to check whether Belen and others had come because the pain in his Mana core, although bearable, was making it uncomfortable for him to move around.

Therefore, he returned to his dorm and started cultivating.

When he was done, it was already evening. Although he was spent after so many hours of continuous cultivation, his core had returned to normal.

However, he shook his head, 'I can't go on like this. I should first merge at least a few dozen or so enhanced Mana units in my core to prevent this suffering.' Max decided. He didn't want to bear this pain every time he enhanced his Mana.

He then lay in his bed and rested until night to recover his stamina. Following this, he stood up and walked out of his room. He was hungry and needed to visit Jasmine, too, to appease her anger and tell her that he would be busy for a few days.

...

"Oh? So you finally found some time to come here, huh?" Jasmine asked in a cold tone, clearly displeased.

Max knew she was being sarcastic because he didn't show up yesterday. Trying to keep his voice calm, he said, "Well, it's because I couldn't come yesterday because-"

"It's fine. I don't want to hear your excuse. You can go now. I'm busy today." Jasmine interrupted him before he could finish his statement.

Max stared at her in silence. He didn't expect a mature woman like her to behave like some teenage girl. He found it amusing. However, he didn't say anything about it and simply nodded, "Okay then. I'll come back in a few days. Make sure you are free by then."

After saying this, he turned around and left, leaving a stunned Jasmine.

She had thought that he would try to appease her anger and ask her to do it, but he acted the opposite. Suddenly, she thought of something, and her face fell, 'Could it be that he is starting to lose interest in me?'

As this thought crossed her mind, she became afraid and angry at the same time. She then bolted out of her room to stop him, but he was already gone.

"What happened, my lady?" Her maid saw her run out in a hurry and asked.

"Nothing." Jasmine shook her head and thought, 'It's okay. He said he would come back in a few days, right? I'll make sure to please him then so he doesn't think about it anymore.'

Although Max sometimes did things that enraged her, she had to admit that he would leave her satisfied every time. That's why she didn't want to lose him.

"Oh, right." She suddenly remembered something and waved her hand. Two crystal bottles appeared in front of her that flew toward her maid, "In a while, go and deliver these to him."

The maid grabbed the bottles and bowed, "Yes, my lady. Should I give him some message from you?" She asked carefully.

"No," Jasmine said and returned to her room.

...

Max returned to his dorm and sat on his bed, cross-legged. He had dinner before going to meet Jasmine. So, he was planning to cultivate for a few hours before sleeping.

Half an hour later, someone knocked on his door, forcing him to stop his cultivation.

Unhappy as he was, he still went to open the door. Who knows whether it was Anna or some of his women who he was waiting for?

Creak~

However, he was disappointed after seeing that it was Jasmine's maid. "What is it?" He asked with raised brows.

"Um, Sir, mistress has sent these." She took out two bottles and gave them to him.

"Oh?" Max recognized that they were bottles of high-tier grade two foundation strengthening liquid.

"She is quite generous. Gifting two simultaneously." Max chuckled lightly. He remembered that the day before, she promised to give him a bottle if he satisfied her, but she forgot to give him, and Max also forgot about asking her since she was acting all grumpy.

"Did she say something?" He asked curiously.

"No. She only ordered me to deliver these." The maid replied and then excused herself.

'Well, it's good. I will be able to merge a few more units thanks to these.' He thought, closed the door continued his cultivation.

For the next five days, he didn't do anything apart from eating, sleeping, and cultivating. When bored, he would go out to take a stroll around the academy and check if any of his women had returned and then resume his schedule.

On the sixth day, he had to stop his cultivation because Belen and Leticia had returned.

Chapter 254: Searching for Rima

On the sixth day since Max started cultivating...

Knock! Knock!

Someone knocked on the door.

'Hmm...' Max opened his eyes, a slight frown on his face, 'Well, I was going to stop and go out to get some fresh air anyway.'

He stood up, stretched his body, and went to open the door, not bothering to become angry due to the sudden disturbance as it would be a waste of energy that he found himself lacking after cultivating day and night.

Creak~ Whoosh!

Just as he pushed open the door, a familiar fragrance wafted in his nose, and he found himself hugging a small soft body. It was Leticia.

Belen was also standing at the door; she smiled slightly at him in greeting, but Max could see she didn't seem too happy. But he didn't think too much and nodded at her before patting Leticia's back.

"You are back." Max smiled.

Leticia nodded and hurriedly asked, "Is Rima with you?"

"No. I think she hasn't returned yet." Max shook his head. He had been going to check to their dorm to see if they had arrived or not, so he knew she wasn't back yet.

Leticia's face went pale, and she trembled after hearing this, "Max, Rima. S-She she..."

"What?" Max felt a bad premonition in his heart seeing her so flustered.

"She disappeared. We didn't find her anywhere. She.... sob!" Leticia broke out in tears.

"Disappeared?" Max's expression froze. But he forced himself to remain calm and said, "Calm down first, okay? Come in. Let's sit, and then you tell me what happened."

...

After they had calmed down, Max asked, "Now tell me. What happened?"

"Let me tell you." Belen took a deep breath and explained,

"We traveled together for three days. When we reached a town called Anbez, we parted ways with Rima since she needed to go to a different place. However, she had told us that her mission wouldn't take many days and she would wait for us in that town.

But when we returned after finishing our mission, she wasn't there. We waited a day more, thinking that something might be delaying her, but she didn't show up, and when we went to find her where she was supposed to go to complete her mission, she wasn't there.

When we asked around, we came to know that she had returned to a nearby town and booked an inn to rest. Then the following day, she left. The innkeeper told us that she was heavily injured when she came, and her injuries hadn't healed completely when she left.

We came back thinking that she might have returned, but... when we reported to the mission hall a while ago, because Leticia was concerned about her since she was injured, she asked whether Rima had reported to the mission hall; they told us that she

hadn't yet. We checked her room, but it was locked, and she isn't here with you either. I'm afraid something has happened to her."

After hearing her explanation, Max stood up. "Let's go."

Belen and Leticia were baffled, "Where are we going?" Belen asked.

"To search for Rima," Max said, his fist clenched tightly, nails digging into his palms. Without waiting for a moment more, he walked out. He couldn't sit still after hearing this. She was his woman, and he needed to know what had happened to her.

"But how would we find her? We don't have any clue where she went after leaving that town?" Leticia asked as she followed after him. Belen did the same.

"We will go and ask Elder's hall for help. They should be able to find out where she is using her disciple badge." Max said. He knew that badge wasn't a mere identity and had more features. It could also work as a kind of tracker, but only Elders knew how to use this feature.

Very quickly, Max and company arrived in front of a grand building in the center of the main peak.

"Halt!" The guards immediately stopped them. One of the guards said, "No one is allowed to enter Elder's hall without an Elder's permission. Go back."

Leticia hurriedly stepped up and said, "Sir, one of our close friends went missing on the mission. We need to find her. I hope you can allow us entry."

"If that's the case, you should go to that building. There you'll find people that can help you." The guard nodded and pointed toward a building a few hundred meters away.

"Okay. Thank you, sir." Leticia nodded and then, with Max and Belen, went toward the building.

There was a signboard hung at the entrance stating: Search and Investigation hall.

They entered and went to reception, where a man in his thirties was lazying about. Seeing people come over, he raised his head and looked at them questioningly.

"Hello, Elder. One of our friends went mission during the mission. We need your help to find her." Leticia said.

"Hmm. Who was she, an outer sector disciple or an inner disciple? When did she get recruited, and her name?" The man asked.

"An inner disciple. She is a new recruit, sir. Her name is Rima," Leticia said.

"What a hassle." The man rubbed his forehead and stood up. "Wait for a while." Saying this, he entered the room behind him and came out with a register and a badge.

He then searched for her name on it. It didn't take long before he found it and then tapped the badge a few times before pouring his Mana into it.

"I've started the tracking system in this badge. It would flicker when in a ten thousand meter range of this missing disciple's badge. Take this." He threw the badge toward them.

Belen frowned, "Elder, are you saying that we go and search for her on our own? Shouldn't it be the academy's responsibility to send someone to find the missing disciple?"

The Elder sighed and said, "You are right. But we are understaffed right now. I gave it to you because I saw that you seemed to care for your friend. If you want the academy to find her, I'm afraid you would have to wait at least a week before we can dispatch someone."

"One week is too long. She might be in danger." Max shook his head.

The Elder said, "That's why I'm asking you guys if you're willing to go and search for her. If you are, I can make it a searching mission. If you can find her, you'll be given the reward as usual."

Belen and Leticia looked at Max, waiting for his decision. "Okay. We'll go." Max nodded. He was worried and didn't want to delay for a second. From the start, he had the intention to go in person to look for her.

The Elder looked at him and sighed in his heart. 'I hope she is alive.' He could see that these disciples were very concerned about their friend, but he wasn't optimistic that she would still be alive.

"Wait for a while. I'll make some arrangements." He said and walked inside the hall.

...

Whoosh!

Max and company sat on a flying eagle and flew toward the location where Rima was last seen. The Elder had sent this eagle to shorten the traveling time. Because its speed was pretty fast, it only took them one day to reach their destination.

"Disciples, be careful. If you encounter some danger, withdraw." The man operating the eagle said. He was a member of the search and investigation hall and knew why they were here.

Max didn't say anything and jumped down. Leticia and Belen followed. The man on the eagle looked at them, shook his head, and flew away.

Max took out the badge to see if there was any reaction, but there wasn't any.

"What should we do now?" Leticia asked, biting her nails in anxiety.

"Don't worry. She will be all right." Max forced a smile to comfort her while praying in his heart for Rima's safety.

He then turned to Belen, "Belen, take out that Map. We'll search around all the possible traveling routes.

Belen nodded and took out the map, and opened it. The Elder had given them this to make it easier to search the area. All the traveling routes, danger zones, etc., were marked on it.

"Let's start with this one. It is the shortest path leading to the academy. She should have chosen this one." Belen pointed to one route. Max nodded, and the search for Rime started.

Chapter 255: Little elf girl

Two days had passed since Max, and the company started searching for Rima. However, they didn't find any trace of her.

"Max..." Leticia and Belen had worried expressions as they looked at Max, whose face was now pale and eyes red.

Max noticed their expressions and took a deep breath, "Don't worry. I'm fine." He said,

For the past two days, they had searched all the possible routes leading to Cloud academy without result, and when Max thought of the possibility that some beast might have already killed her, he was frightened.

One of the most important reasons he wanted to become strong was that he didn't want anything to happen to those close to him and ensure their safety at all times. However, he had already lost someone close to him. This almost caused him to have a mental breakdown.

'No, she might still be alive, but it's just that we haven't found her yet.' He thought and then said to Belen and Leticia, "Let's go and check the area around the place where she was supposed to go to complete her mission."

Belen and Leticia looked at each other but didn't say anything. They have already checked that area but didn't find any clue. So, in their opinion, going there again would be fruitless.

However, they knew how Max was feeling right now since they were feeling the same. After all the time they spent together, they had become like sisters. So, they were hoping that she was alive and they could find her.

Rustle! Crack! Bang!

Suddenly, they heard someone running through the bushes, and before they could react, a figure had crashed into Belen. Max was surprised that he didn't notice this and immediately got ready to attack, but after looking at what it was, he stopped.

Belen was caught off guard and fell to the ground. Just as she was about to attack whatever it was, they heard a stuttering voice.

"H... help. Hu...man... Please."

"Hm?" They looked at the figure lying by Belen's feet with stunned expressions.

It was a little girl, barely seven or eight years old. She looked very adorable, like a beautiful flower. Everyone who saw her would have the instinct to protect her. But right now, her green clothes were torn from many places, and she had many small bloody wounds across her body.

However, the reason Belen and others were surprised wasn't because of all this but because her ears were long and pointy different from normal human ears.

"Is she an elf?" Max blurted out in utter astonishment. He was the most surprised among them. This girl was just like an elf in the legends.

After Max had assimilated 'Maxwell's' memories, he knew that there were some other races in this world, and Elves were one among them, boasting superior beauty and natural Mana affinity.

"Yes. She is." Belen replied, stunned.

"Please, he... help me hu.....man." The little elf girl spoke in a begging tone. Although her voice was low and she spoke weirdly as though unfamiliar with the language, they understood what she was saying.

"Don't speak. Drink this first." Belen hurriedly took out a bottle of her life elixir and extended it toward her mouth. The little elf's nose twitched slightly before she opened her mouth and let Belen feed her.

As she drank it, a green glow surrounded her body, and her wounds healed at speed visible to the naked eye. All the injuries had disappeared in just a few seconds, which astounded Belen.

"Belen, was that a high-quality elixir?" Leticia asked. She was also stunned to see all the injuries heal in a short while. While they were in the cloud mountains for the outing, she had used it and knew that although this life elixir was several times more effective than healing pills, its effects were this astonishing.

"No. It's the same as what I had before. It's just that these elves have a high innate affinity with natural Mana giving them fast recovering speed." Belen shook her head. Although she knew this before from the records she had read in the past, witnessing it with her own eyes, she was still left surprised and couldn't help but feel a bit envious.

She was a plant elemental mage who strived to increase their affinity with natural Mana as it would make them stronger. However, doing that was a challenging task. But these elves also had almost a perfect affinity. So, it was natural that she would feel this way.

"He...help. Help! Help!" The little girl suddenly looked behind toward the woods, and her face turned pale.

Max looked toward the little girl, puzzled by her sudden outburst. However, a moment later, he noticed the disturbance in the woods; his brows creased as he became alert, and Mana burst out of his body, circulating around him.

At the same time, he darted a surprised glance at the little elf girl. Although she seemed to be just a child, her senses were sharper than him.

Belen and Leticia noticed this and became alert. They knew that Max's senses were very sharp, and now that he was preparing himself to fight meant that some threat was approaching, so they also became alert.

Belen cast her spell and made a vine shield around them, and took the girl in. Leticia also circulated her Mana and conjured several wind blades around her.

Rustle! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The next moment three black hounds jumped out of the woods and eyed the human group warily.

"Dark bloodthirsty hounds?" Belen recognized the beasts and became wary. However, she soon noticed that they were only one-star beasts.

The little elf girl curled behind Belen, shivering in terror. Seeing her becoming so terrified, Belen was overcome with pity and suddenly waved her hand.

Whoosh-!

Three sharp pointy vines sprouted from the ground and penetrated the hounds' skulls before they could even react.

Thud!

Their dead bodies fell to the ground, and the vines and the vine shield retracted underground.

Leticia and Max also stopped circulating their Mana, seeing that the problem had been solved.

"Little girl. Where are you from? How come you are wandering these woods alone?" Belen asked.

As everyone knew, this world was too big, and human settlements covered only a small percentage of these lands. More than 80% part was covered by enormous uncharted forests, mountains, and the ocean.

Elves generally resided deep into the forests, and because they were a peaceful race, they preferred to remain hidden from the public eye and would rarely come out and interact with humans.

Moreover, according to what Belen knew, there wasn't any elven settlement in the vicinity of the Green leaf kingdom. So, it was surprising to encounter an elf here.

"Please... Help! There... bad people..." The little elf was stunned to see the beast chasing her die in a second. However, after hearing Belen's question, she quickly came to her senses and pointed in the direction from where the beast came and started begging for help, her eyes teary.

"Let's calm down first. Tell me slowly." Belen patted her back, trying to calm her down.

The little girl calmed down, seeing that she wasn't making much sense to these humans, and started speaking in stutters, "There... bad people... captured us, and other good humans. They want... kill us. Help! Please!"

Hearing this, Max and company suddenly thought of something. What if these people also kidnapped Rima? Thinking this, their eyes twinkled, and the hope that had almost vanished reignited.

"Let's go. Show us the way." Max hurriedly said. Now that they had some clue, he didn't want to delay any longer.

Belen nodded and asked the elf girl to show the way.

Whoosh!

The little girl nodded. A green glow surrounded her as she dashed in the direction where she was pointing.

Max and company were surprised by her speed which was compared to an average two-star mage. After that, they followed her and whooshed through the woods.

They would encounter some beasts occasionally, but they would be easily killed by Leticia and Belen. Max noticed that they were stronger than the time when they were in the mountains.

After running for half a day, Max suddenly noticed that the tracking badge was faintly flashing.

Seeing this, Max became happy and nervous. It seemed Rima was indeed in this direction, but he didn't know whether she was safe or not.

Chapter 256: Dark mages [1]

'I hope you are safe.' Max prayed in his heart and suddenly raised his speed.

Shua!

He appeared beside the little elf girl and picked her up.

The little girl was stunned by his sudden action before her expression twisted, and a green glow surrounded her.

Max's brows raised, seeing that she wanted to resist, and he said in an emotionless voice, "You don't have to worry. I'm just helping you to move faster."

The little girl looked at him for a moment and calmed down; the green glow receded.

Max nodded in satisfaction, and Mana surged out from his core which then enveloped his legs, causing his speed to increase several times.

Whoosh!

Belen and Leticia looked at each other and saw the shock in each other's eyes. Although they were also puzzled why he would suddenly grab the girl and run away, their surprise after seeing his speed almost stupefied them.

"Max, he... he is so fast," Leticia uttered, her eyes fixed on Max, who was gradually going away from them.

"Let's hurry up, or we will be left behind." Belen took a deep breath and said in a deep tone. After that, she raised her speed to her limits.

When Leticia heard her words, she understood another hidden meaning. Taking a deep breath to calm down the shock she felt just now. After that, Mana burst out of her, and her speed became 3-4 times faster, and she immediately caught up to Belen.

"Here, hold my hand." Leticia extended her hand toward her. After Belen held her hand, Leticia's speed increased yet again. However, it was still slower than Max's speed.

Fortunately, the path ahead was devoid of any vegetation, and they could see Max's silhouette in the distance, which made it easier for them to follow him.

...

After traveling in the desolate region for a few more hours, Max finally arrived in front of a valley. However, he had to stop there because, at the entrance, four people in black clothes stood guard, and each had a black hound similar to the ones chasing the little girl.

The little elf girl's body trembled in his arms after seeing them, apparently terrified.

"It's okay, little girl. You don't have to be scared." Max smiled at her comfortingly. Seeing his smile, the little girl's nerves calmed down.

She then pointed toward the valley and said, begging, "There... deep in a cave... my family captured. Please save."

"Hmm, I will." Max nodded, looking toward the valley with a hopeful and worried gaze.

However, he soon frowned. The path to the valley from where he was hiding was around half a mile and was completely barren, with nothing to hide behind. Even with his speed when using enhanced Mana, he won't be able to approach the valley entrance without alerting the guards.

While he was thinking of a way to approach the guards and kill them, Leticia and Belen arrived beside him. Leticia was completely out of breath.

"Why are you hiding-" Belen asked, but mid-speech, she stopped after noticing the people guarding the valley entrance.

"How should we proceed now?" She asked, noticing that if they wanted to enter the valley, guards would be alerted beforehand.

Max raised his head to look at the sky and said, "Let's wait for a while. When it is night, We'll directly charge inside."

He guessed that under cover of night, they should be able to move two hundred meters more without alerting the guards or hounds.

"Okay. We'll do this then." Belen nodded and sat down to recover her stamina and Mana. Leticia also sat down, but unlike Belen, she took out some Mana stones because she had expended a lot of his Mana to follow Max.

After less than half an hour, the night fell and visibility in the area dwindled. The little elf girl was getting restless. Max patted her little head and then said,

"Belen, Leticia. Remember not to make any sound until we are 300 meters away." He then directed them to ready their spells and attack when they were in their range.

"Let's move out." He said and moved toward the entrance while making sure not to make any sound. The little elf was following closely behind him. She seemed to have understood that he was the strongest of the three.

Crack!

When they were only a few meters away from the 300-meter boundary, Leticia stepped on a small stone that cracked.

'Fuck!' Max cursed in his heart. Although the sound was very faint, he knew that the hounds had definitely heard it. Without delay, he circulated his Mana and charged out.

Grrr~

Just as Max had expected, one of the black hounds suddenly growled while gazing in the darkness ahead.

"Hm? Something is wrong." The guard beside it immediately became alert.

"What can be wrong? Who would come to such a desolate area at this time? It should be the hounds we sent to chase that little elf down." One other guard shook his head; however, even though he said this, he also raised his guard up.

Whoosh!

Suddenly a figure flashed in front of the guard who had just spoken.

Bang!

Before he could react, a punch had landed on his forehead, and his skull exploded like a water balloon. After killing him, Max turned toward another guard, ready to move toward him.

"RUN!"

However, they didn't stay still. After seeing that this enemy killed one of their brother in a single punch and coupled with his ghostly speed, they knew they weren't his match and immediately turned to run inside the valley.

Sou! Sou! Sou!

However, just at that moment, the wind howled, and two other heads were detached from the guards' bodies. Before the last guard could take another step, several vines sharp as spears sprouted out of the ground and pierced his head.

Growl!

The hounds were dazed for a second, seeing their masters being killed in a fraction of a second. Then they fearfully growled and ran inside the valley in a panic. But Belen's vines didn't let them move too far away before reaping their lives too.

Max looked at two women coming toward him and nodded. The little elf was following Belen. When she saw the corpses, her small body trembled in fear.

"Let's go." Max walked inside the valley. Inside, the valley was even darker since barely any moonlight was able to reach inside it. Because of this, they had to move slowly lest they alert the people inside.

Suddenly the little elf moved ahead of them, signaling them to follow after her.

Following her directions, they quickly arrived in front of a cave that sloped downwards. Surprisingly, there wasn't anyone guarding it.

"Are you sure this is the cave?" Leticia asked dubiously.

The little elf hurriedly nodded her head.

"Do you know how many bad people are in there?" Belen asked.

"Eight humans. They are... strong." The little elf said with a fearful expression.

Belen then turned toward Max, "Max, it could be dangerous if we just barge in there. After all, we only know their number, and who knows whether there are more now."

Max thought for a while and nodded. Following this, he raised his hand, and a small fireball appeared in front of him. He hurled his hand toward the entrance of the valley.

Boom!

It flew more than 400 meters before exploding and creating a loud noise.

Belen and Leticia were surprised when they saw him suddenly attacking. However, they quickly understood why he did this.

"Hurry up and hide." Max suddenly said and moved behind a large rock a dozen meters away from the cave entrance.

...

Inside the underground cave, a giant circular formation was established, which had nine pillars on it. Each pillar had a person tied to it, blood dripping down from their bodies. The blood didn't pool below them but flowed toward the center of the formation, where a middle-aged man sat with his eyes closed.

Eleven people in black clothes were standing in different parts of the formation, chanting something in an unknown language.

Apart from them, four other people stood out of the formation, looking at the middle-aged man in veneration.

"Argh! Why are... you doing this? Please let me go. I'll give you guys all my wealth." An obese man tied to one of the pillars cried out, his face pale.

However, no one reacted to his cries. Seeing this, he kept begging, offering everything he had.

"Tch, damn fatty. They won't let us go no matter what you offer them." A young lady covered in blood tied to the pillar near him said in a cold tone, despair flashing in her eyes.

Chapter 257: Dark mages [2]

The young woman, covered in blood, was none other than Rima. After completing the mission, when she was returning to the academy, these people in black clothes suddenly attacked her. Because she was already injured, she couldn't defend against them and was captured.

The fat man looked at her angrily and shouted, "What do you know? If I offer them enough money, they... might free me."

This fat man was a businessman. A week ago, when he was traveling in the desolate region to go to another city to trade, these people came out of nowhere and knocked him out, along with his two henchmen, who had already died from the blood loss.

Apart from the fat man, Rima, and three more humans, the rest of the people were of the elf race.

"It's of no use. They won't let any of us go no matter what we offer them." Rima shook her.

Hearing this, the fat man and a few others who were conscious right now glanced at her with terrified gazes.

"W-why? Do they really want to k-kill us?" The fat man asked, and the hope in his eyes dimmed considerably.

Although he asked this, he also knew that these people hadn't kidnapped them for money, etc., because ever since they were brought here, these people hadn't asked for anything and just inflicted injuries after injuries on their bodies so that the blood continued to flow in that strange formation.

"It's because they are dark mages. I'm not sure if you have ever heard of this term before." Rima said, fear flickering in her eyes.

"Dark mages...!" Two middle-aged men similarly tied to the pillars and two elder elves shuddered in fear upon hearing this. It was clear that they knew what dark mages were. In contrast, the fat man had a confused expression.

Rima wasn't surprised that this guy didn't know about dark mages, as the information about them was intentionally being held by the people in power because they didn't want ordinary people to live in constant fear.

One another reason for this was that in the past few decades, the dark mages hadn't appeared, causing most people to forget about them. However, those who knew what the term 'Dark mage' entailed would be terrified and wish they had encountered some ferocious beasts instead of these dark mages.

Dark mages were people who, to become strong, had abandoned their humanity and walked the path of demons, every race's worst nightmare.

Using some demonic spells, the dark mages can improve their strength rapidly, even if they aren't talented. However, because these mages aren't actual demons, they can't directly absorb the faint demonic energy in the environment.

Therefore, they would choose an alternate method to kill the living beings, use their flesh and blood, and refine that into demonic energy, which they can use to improve their strength.

Rarely did anyone captured by the dark mages manage to escape with their lives because the moment dark mages captured you, they would use some demonic methods to seal the Mana core and Mana flow in your body and then use some unique chains that would constantly drain your vitality, causing you to become weaker by the moment. In these situations, how can anyone escape? It was a wonder that the little elf girl managed to do this seemingly impossible task.

Boom!

Just as the fat man was about to ask what she meant by dark mages, everyone heard an explosion going off above ground.

"Hm?" The man sitting in the middle of the formations suddenly opened his eyes.

He then glanced at the four people standing outside the formation, "Go up and check what's this disturbance about."

"Yes, dark knight." The four immediately nodded and rushed toward the exit of the underground cave.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The four charged out of the cave a few seconds later and looked around.

"Hm? There is nothing here." The female figure in the lead muttered in confusion after not finding anyone around the cave.

"Tch, even if there was, could you have seen it in this dark?" A pale white youth said coldly and then ran toward the valley entrance. "Let's go and ask the guards if there was some problem. I don't want to be punished if we overlooked something."

The female sneered coldly and then followed after him. The other two also followed.

"Hm? It seems there was indeed someone." When they passed by the crater that was created because of Max's fireball, the youth frowned.

Whoosh!

Bang!

Suddenly, they heard air whooshing behind them and hurriedly dodged to the side and turned around to see who it was when they heard something exploding.

...

Max, Belen, and Leticia, with the little elf girl, had barely hidden behind a rock when four black figures charged out. If it weren't for Max's heightened senses, they would've found out, causing the difficulty of this 'mission' to increase.

After a moment, the group of four turned their back toward them and moved toward the valley entrance.

"Let's go," Max whispered and immediately charged toward them without waiting for a moment's delay.

In the next second, he caught up to the guy behind the four and punched at the back of his head.

Bang!

Because the guy in question was caught off guard, Max's punch landed on his head without any resistance, and his head exploded.

This was the moment that the other three turned around. Seeing one of their own dying, their already ghostlike faces became paler in shock and fright as they exclaimed in their hearts, 'Thank god. I wasn't behind.'

"Kill him!" After the initial shock, the pale white youth roared, and dark energy burst out of him. A dark bonelike sword appeared in his hand, which he then slashed toward Max.

However, before the energy slash could reach him, Max had disappeared from his place and appeared in front of the second black-clothed guy.

"Die!" The man immediately reacted and punched Max's face, his fist covered in dark smoke-like energy.

When the pale white youth saw his attack was so easily dodged, he was enraged and immediately tried to raise his sword to slash again. The female and the last man also moved toward him to attack.

"Huh?" However, they were immediately dumbfounded, and terrified expressions appeared on their faces because they realized that they couldn't move at all. When they looked down, they saw that at some time, dark green vines had sprouted out under them and firmly wrapped around their feet.

Bang!

Max dodged the man's punch and arrived at his side, and threw a punch of his own, blasting his head off too.

"Fuck off!" The youth and the female shouted and attacked the vines to free themselves. However, just at this moment,

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Several sharp wind blades flew toward them, causing their hair to rise on ends.

"Damn it." Both of them felt death loom over them as the wind blades closed in.

Boom!

Suddenly, dark energy burst out of their bodies and formed a shield in front of them. The wind blades collided in the dark shield and disappeared without causing any damage.

"Hurry up and alert the dark knight." The youth shouted at the female before slashing toward Max, who now had approached him.

Bang!

Because Max was only a few meters away from him, and the dark sword was slashing toward his neck at a very fast speed, he knew he wouldn't be able to dodge in time.

A frenzied light flashed in his eyes as his three-star Mana burst out, causing his speed to rise dramatically.

Crack! Crack!

Before the pale white youth could complete his slash, Max appeared half a meter away from him, clenched his neck, and twisted it backward, producing crisp crackling sounds.

Max then looked toward the remaining woman in the group, but she was already dead, her heart pierced by the vines.

Phew!

Max exhaled deeply and looked behind him. Belen and Leticia walked toward him with victorious smiles on their faces.

"Good job!" Max nodded, a light smile on his face. Hearing his praise, both ladies smiled happily.

"Okay. Let's hide. After this commotion, the rest of them should come out." He said, and they returned to their previous position behind the rock by the cave entrance.

Meanwhile, in the underground cave, the middle-aged man sitting in the center of the formation frowned and said coldly, "Start the ceremony!"

Chapter 258: enraged

"But lord knight-" The eleven people standing in the formation had worried faces as they looked upwards, indicating their worries.

"Don't worry about it. Once this ceremony completes, I'll break through to the middle-stage three-star mage. It'll be easy to kill these intruders at that time, even if they have some three-star mages. So, hurry up and start the process lest they come down and interrupt us." The middle-aged man said in a hurry.

He understood that these people were worried because once they started the ceremony, it shouldn't be interrupted, or they would suffer serious injuries. However, the middle-aged man didn't want to stop now.

He had prepared for this moment for more than two months, and now that everything was fully prepared and the ceremony needed only a dozen or so minutes to complete, he didn't want to delay any longer, even if some uninvited guest had arrived to disturb them.

Once the ceremony was completed, his strength would improve to the middle-stage three-star realm, and dealing with them would become easy unless there weren't any mages in the middle-stage three-star realm or above, which was not possible in his opinion. After all, there weren't many three-star mages in this area.

"Yes, lord dark knight." Everyone nodded. They then each took out a stone similar to Mana stone, but they were more lustrous, and put them into the formation.

Weng!

The outline of the formation started to shine brightly before dimming again. After that, they poured their Mana into the formation while chanting some strange spell. The chains tying Rima and others on the pillars trembled as if coming to life and pieced their limbs.

"Ahhhh...!" Sharp pain coursed through their bodies, and they felt their life energy and blood leaving their bodies and being absorbed by the dark chains.

...

Meanwhile, outside the cave, Max's brows were knitted. It had been around two or three minutes, but no one had come out of the cave, which was unexpected.

The little elf girl beside him suddenly cried, and a terrified expression appeared on her face. "Danger. My family... danger."

Just as Max and company were confused by her sudden outburst, Max heard the faint pain cries coming from the cave, and his face went pale.

"Let's go!" He immediately charged inside the cave without a second of delay. He didn't want anything to happen to Rima if she was there, just because he was being too careful when dealing with these kidnappers.

"Little girl. You stay here, okay? We'll come out after saving your family." Belen said to the little elf girl and then followed behind with Leticia.

Whoosh!

Although the tunnel leading to the underground cave was long and meandering, Max had reached there in a short few moments.

The instant he stepped foot in there, the sight of nine people tied to the pillar and howling in pain appeared in front of him, and his expression became deadly as immense killing intent burst out of him, and his sapphire blue eyes became crimson in anger.

Whoosh!

He became so angry because one of the people was Rima, his woman. Seeing her state, he lost his rationality and charged toward her.

Boom!

However, before he could reach there, the large circular formation glowed with dark light and formed a wall of dark light wall. Max hadn't expected this and ran into the wall as a loud bang resounded. Following this, he was thrown away.

The middle-aged man, whose eyes were closed with a pained expression, briefly opened his eyes, and a mocking sneer appeared on his face. Did this brat think he wouldn't have anything prepared to tackle a situation like this?

The other eleven people inside the formation also looked at him in disdain.

Pu...!

Max spat a mouthful of blood and stood up, his eyes clearing slightly due to shock.

Ahhhh...!

However, just then, the cries of Rima and others made his blood boil. But this time, he didn't lose his mind and started to cast the [Calidus Brachium].

Whoosh! Whoosh!

At the same time, Belen and Leticia arrived there and immediately noticed Rima and the others.

"Dark mages!" When Belen's gaze fell on the black-clothed people, she exclaimed in shock and dread.

Hearing this, Leticia's expression froze while Max finally glanced at the people inside the formation, and seeing their disdainful expression, Max's killing intent became even more profound.

"Belen, Leticia, Use your strongest spells and break this defensive light. Rima can't hold much longer." Max hurriedly moved his gaze away from the dark mages and ordered the women by his side before rushing the completion of his spell.

"Okay!" Both of them nodded with solemn expressions when they saw Rima crying out in pain and her body becoming frail by the moment.

Immediately after, Mana around them was stimulated as they started to cast their spells.

Max's breathing had become hurried, and sweat drops started to appear all over his body as he continued to pour his Mana into the spell while his eyes remained trained on Rima's pitiful figure.

Right at this moment, he felt regret. He regretted slacking off when he had time to train and cultivate and simply lazing off. If he had put some more time into training his spell, he would've broken the dark light wall and saved Rima.

Weng!

Suddenly, his spell cast was complete, and his fist was ablaze with crimson fire. Immediately, he moved toward the formation and punched at the dark light wall.

BANG!!

The dark wall trembled when his fist landed on it, but nothing happened.

The black-clothed people laughed in disdain, seeing that his attack couldn't do any damage even after he wasted so much time preparing the spell.

"How could it be?" Leticia muttered in shock to see this. She clearly knew how strong this spell of their man was, but it couldn't do anything to this thin dark wall. How could it be possible?

Belen was also stunned, but after seeing the formation outlines, she shook her head, "These dark mages are very crafty. They have a grade three defensive formation protecting them."

The middle-aged man sneered from inside the formation, "Little kid. You won't be able to damage it. The moment this process completes, I'll kill-"

Crack~!

However, his expression froze the next moment when he heard a crackling sound from the dark wall, and his eyes widened as the crack originating from the point of impact spread out before the wall eventually broke into pieces like glass.

"Belen!" Max shouted and directly rushed inside the formation.

Shua!

The next instant, he arrived in front of Rima, who was howling in pain. The dark chains had almost dug deep into her bones, and she seemed to have lost most of her vitality because her body had withered like a corpse. Her eyes were unfocused, and dark red blood was coming from them.

Seeing this, Max's heart ached as he grabbed the dark chains and pulled them.

Jing~!

As the chains were pulled and were about to snap, the dark smoke-like energy appeared on the chains and burned in his hands and, at the same time, strengthened the chains.

"Argh...!" Max gritted his teeth and endured the pain. His enhanced Mana surged out, and his strength instantly increased. Following this, he snapped all the chains one by one.

Losing the chains' support, Rima's withered body fell. Max hurriedly supported her. Seeing her condition, his eyes couldn't help but tear up.

After being freed from the chains, Rima's pained cries gradually stopped. She tried to open her eyes to see who it was that saved her from the torture, but she couldn't and immediately fainted. Her breathing was so faint that one would take her for dead without close inspection.

Max's heart trembled when he thought that if he were a few minutes late, Rima would have died. As he thought of this, his eyes seemed to burn with flames, and the thread of rationality he was barely holding on to snapped.

"Puh!" The moment Max broke the chains, the middle-aged man and the other eleven people chanting the spell spat out a mouthful of black blood.

"Continue the ceremony!" The middle-aged man shouted, his red eyes fixedly glaring at Max, who had carried Rima and walked out of the formation before gently putting her in one corner of the cave.

"Ahh, Save... us." Two of the four elves looked at Max with a begging expression and pleaded.

Chapter 259: Dominating a three-star mage [Bonus chapter]

Hearing their pleading, Max's footsteps paused, and he indifferently glanced at the elves. However, after seeing their conditions, the crimson hue flickered and signaled to Belen to save them. After that, he continued walking toward the middle-aged man one step at a time.

'Mm?' Belen's frowned. She felt that Max was suddenly acting strangely. But seeing Rima's condition, it was normal that he was enraged as she was also in the same state but a little better off than him.

Therefore, she didn't entertain this train of thought. She nodded toward him, acknowledging his intentions.

Small vine kingdom!

She put her hands on the ground and poured all the accumulated Mana. Several dark green vines sprouted out of the ground. They acted as if they had intelligence as some went to attack the dark mages, and some went toward the pillars and broke the chains binding the people.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Everyone tied to the pillars fell to the ground as the chains broke. Although they had lost a lot of vitality and only skin and bones remained on their bodies, their faces revealed relieved expressions after being freed from hell.

The two elder elves looked at Max and nodded in thanks before checking the condition of the other two younger elves, and their eyes couldn't help but tear up.

Humans, on the other hand, didn't show any gratitude and lay there lifelessly. No one knew if they were dead or alive.

...

"Ahhh! You bastards! How dare you disrupt the ceremony! I'm going to kill you." The middle-aged man let out a hysterical roar as he saw everyone being saved from the chains.

He abruptly stood up, wiped the blood from his lips, and lunged toward Max; a bloody killing intent and the aura of a three-star mage oozed out of him, making everyone, including Max, feel slightly suffocated.

"Humph!" A cold sneer appeared on Max's lips when he saw the middle-aged man charging toward him.

His Mana gushed out of him and started to compress around his right fist. Without him knowing, the process that was supposed to take around 20 seconds was completed in a few breaths.

Moreover, the crimson fire had engulfed half of his arm while the intensity of it was also 2-3 times stronger than before.

Because of his rage, he ignored the danger he usually should have felt when the aura of the middle-aged man washed over him. But his subconscious kicked in, which enabled him to complete the cast of [Calidus Brachium] using almost all of his three-star Mana.

But because he was forced to do what his body wasn't yet familiar with, the skin all over his body dried up and showed signs of splitting apart, and the veins on his hand and forehead bulged, threatening to burst any time.

"Die!" The middle-aged man appeared in front of Max, and his hand clawed toward Max, and dark energy burst out of him, which took the form of a giant bone claw that slashed toward Max, aiming to tear him into pieces.

"Max...!" Belen and Leticia shouted with pale faces and prepared to help him. After feeling the middle-aged man's aura, they knew he was a three-star mage. A three-star mage, even if injured, wasn't someone they could handle.

Max's footsteps paused, and his eyebrows rose slightly as if feeling danger. However, the next moment, his eyes blazed with fire, and a ferocious expression appeared on his face.

Whoosh!

He swung his arm and punched toward the incoming claw with his blazing fist.

"What?" The middle-aged man's pupils constricted when the aura of [Calidus Brachium] engulfed him. He had noticed the change in Max and knew he was forcing himself to cast a stronger spell but disregarded it.

After all, he was a three-star mage while Max was only an 18 or so young man who was at most a high-stage two-star mage, so no matter what he did, he couldn't compare to him, a three-star mage.

However, now he realized how foolish his thinking was. This kid, at this moment, seemed more horrifying than the most three-star mages he had been in contact with.

But he didn't have any time to regret it because he had already attacked, and Max's punch was only a few inches away.

BANG~!

Max's blazing fist and the middle-aged man's claw collided. After a loud explosion, the underground cave trembled, and the earth around Max and the middle-aged man caved in.

"Ahhhh...!"

Whoosh! Boom!

A moment after their attack collided, the middle-aged man uttered a pitiful cry and was thrown back and smashed into the wall tens of meters in the distance.

As the fire and dark energy settled, Belen and Leticia could see Max kneeling on the ground, heaving deep breaths. At the same time, they were astonished by the strength Max showed.

Shua! Shua!

Both women appeared beside him and helped him up. Leticia asked worriedly, "Max, are you alright?"

Max didn't answer and continued taking a deep breath. After a while, he replied in a hoarse voice, "I'm fine. Have you dealt with the rest of these people?"

"Yes. They are dead." Belen nodded.

Max looked toward the formation and saw eleven people held by the vines. Five had their hearts and head pierced, while six had their heads missing as if cut by a sharp sword.

It was Belen and Leticia's doing. Seeing that Max destroyed the dark wall, they diverted their attention to these people, and taking advantage of them being injured, they easily killed them.

"Good. Go and take care of Rima." Max nodded and walked toward the middle-aged man.

The middle-aged man was lying limply on the ground. The hand he used to attack Max had completely been pulverized. His clothes had been burnt, and his body was riddled with countless burn wounds. But even then, he was still breathing.

Noticing Max coming, he opened his eyes and looked at Max in terror. "You... cough! How can you have such a... horrifying spell? He asked, coughing out the blood at the same time.

Chapter 260: Pay double the price

Max looked at him with a cold sneer on his face and raised his hand.

Whizz~!

A fireball, half a meter in size, appeared above his hand.

"A dead man doesn't need to know this," Max said in a colder voice than ice.

The middle-aged man, whose expression had traces of fear until now, suddenly revealed a cruel smile and laughed, "Hehe, It seems you have exhausted your three-star Mana."

As an experienced three-star mage, the moment Max attacked him, he realized that although Max's spell was monstrous and was cast with three-star Mana, he, himself, was only a two-star mage who happened to have enhanced some of his Mana to the next level.

Whizz1! Whizz!

Suddenly, the dark energy started pouring out of him and enveloped his body. The middle-aged man then sneered, "Although fire and lightning element is the bane of my demonic energy, do you think that this puny two-star Mana-filled fireball can do any damage to-"

Seeing this scene, Max frowned. He had noticed that this man was trying to buy some time to attack. Therefore, without hesitation, he hurled the fireball toward him, "Let's see if what you say is true or not."

"You brat... ahhhh! Bastard! How can you have such a high concentration of elemental fire? Ahhh!" Seeing Max's actions, the middle-aged man had a disdainful expression.

However, he couldn't complete his statement, and suddenly his expression froze when the fireball landed on his demonic energy shield and destroyed it. After that, it continued falling on his body, causing him to let out pained screams.

Max's expression eased after hearing his screams, and then he threw a few more fireballs and turned him to ashes.

After he died, Max's eyes returned to normal as his anger subsided.

"Mm?" Just when he was about to turn around to go and check Rima's condition, he noticed something in the ashes.

He extended his hand and picked it up. It was a ring. "Hm? It didn't melt?" Max was slightly surprised.

Suddenly he realized something and dripped a drop of blood on it.

Weng!

The ring trembled slightly, causing Max's expression to brighten, and he quickly inspected it with his sense.

"Spatial ring!" He exclaimed. This was a spatial ring, an advanced version of spatial bags, and had the space size of a small room.

He then turned around and went toward the corner where Rima was. His heart couldn't help but ache in pain after seeing her current condition.

Belen, who was feeding Rima her life potion, noticed Max's arrival and looked at him with a sad expression.

Seeing her expression, Max's heart tightened. Ever since he met her, Belen always seemed to see everything with a calm attitude, and her expression had barely changed. However, now she had such a face meant that situation wasn't looking good.

"B-Belen. What is it?" Asked Max, his voice trembling.

"She had lost almost all of her blood and vitality. Even this life potion can't help her. If we want to save her, we need to give her a grade four vitality pill." She sighed and broke the news to him.

She then continued, "Unfortunately, this pill is rare like any other grade four pill, and there is only a slight possibility for it to be found in the academy or the merchant hall."

"Let's hurry up and return to the academy. I'll ask someone to lend the required Mana stones to buy this pill." Max hurriedly went toward her and was about to pick her up when Belen did something that caused him to freeze on the spot.

Belen shook her head and sighed, "It'll take us at least four-five days at our fastest speed to return to the academy. I'm afraid she can't last that long."

Hearing this, Max stood rooted on the spot and didn't say anything for a while. Then he heaved a deep breath and asked, "How much time she has?"

"Half a day at most," Belen said.

"What?" Leticia, who had been helping the elves and others in the distance, approached them. Her face went pale when she heard their conversation, and tears started pouring out. She was clearly unable to bear this, unlike Belen.

...

After a while of shock, Max calmed down, but his eyes had become wet as he asked the system in a whisper, "System. Is there a grade four vitality pill in the system shop?"

[Sigh, yes, host. There is.] The system replied with a sigh.

"I want that. I'll pay the required Lust points later." He said in a determined tone.

The system went silent after hearing his request. Max's heart started beating faster because of this silence. Although he knew that the chances of the system agreeing with him were actually low, it was his only hope of saving Rima now.

After a while, the system finally spoke, [Are you sure you want that? There is only one pill in the system shop, and you might need it in the future.]

Hearing this, Max's eyes shone brightly, and he immediately said, "Yes, I'm sure."

[Since you are determined, I can give you the pill, but you would need to pay double the Lust points required to unlock this pill which is 800,000.] System said.

The price stupefied Max, but without any hesitation, he nodded, "Okay. I'll do that."

[The pill has been stored in your inventory host.] System voice sounded once again.

Max hurriedly opened the inventory, and indeed, a golden pill was stored in there.

With a thought, the golden pill appeared in his hand. Only then he heaved a sigh of relief.

When Max was talking to the system, Belen noticed him muttering to himself, and then after a while, his expression became free of worries which caused her to be puzzled. Shouldn't he be worried the most since Rima was his woman?

Whoosh!

Max sat beside Rima, gently raised her head slightly, and put the pill in her mouth. After that, he used his Mana to help her digest it.