

# **The Shining Star Above The Heaven**

## **#Chapter 221: You Are Not a Burden - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 221: You Are Not a Burden**

*Chapter 221: You Are Not a Burden*

Aldrian sighed after reaching that conclusion. If it was true, there would be more chaos within the empire. If the master of one of the largest organizations on the continent truly had a connection with the devils, it would only show that the devils had already penetrated too deeply into the empire, which was not a good sign for anyone.

The events in the Forgeheart Kingdom were still fresh, and they had finally realized that the devils' influence could extend to the inner circles of noble families. There would be unrest and widespread trust issues across the entire continent if people discovered that one of the largest organizations on the continent was also under the devils' influence.

Most people on the continent might view the events in the Forgeheart Kingdom as nothing more than the greed of the dwarves. However, if the Alchemist Association were also found to have connections to the devils—especially its master—it would lead many to truly question their sovereigns or those in power.

Aldrian could only hope that his guess was wrong, but he felt it was the most likely situation regarding Master Dan. He sighed at this trouble, noting that his sense of the devils seemed to have strengthened. He now felt irked even by people with strong karmic connections to the devils. He wasn't sure when it began, but until now, he had never experienced such an irksome feeling when meeting people with strong karma to the devils—Duke Badin, for example.

Was it because he had visited the devils' territory? Perhaps. When he thought about it, the longer he interacted with the devils, the more sensitive he became to their traces and presence.

He then walked toward his room, and that was when he saw Baek Ji-Min leaning against the wall outside of his room. She looked in his direction, sensing his presence, and greeted him with a beautiful smile. He felt a pang of guilt for not giving her enough attention since they had left the demon territory. Her mother had wanted her to leave the demon territory for her safety. He wasn't sure if her mother's situation had been resolved, but she had entrusted her daughter to him for this journey. Determined, he had done his best to ensure her safety along the way.

"Were you waiting for me?" Aldrian asked with a smile, to which Baek Ji-Min responded with a nod.

"Let's go inside; this isn't a good place to talk," he said as he opened the door for her. Together, they entered his room.

Once inside, he prepared tea for both of them. When he was finished, he sat on one of the chairs beside a table meant for receiving guests and placed the glasses of tea on the table. Baek Ji-Min sat opposite him, her gaze falling on the glass of tea he had set down.

"Thank you," she said.

She touched the glass and picked it up, her gaze fixed on the tea, where she could see her own reflection on its surface. Sensing something was off about her, Aldrian decided to start the conversation.

"Is something troubling our beautiful lady?" he asked in an elegant voice. "If anything is wrong, I will gladly help to the best of my ability."

Baek Ji-Min finally smiled at Aldrian's words, but her expression soon shifted to one of sadness. After a few moments, she looked into his eyes.

"Aldrian, do you think I've been a burden to you?" she asked softly.

Aldrian raised his eyebrows at the unexpected question.

"What burden? You? No way. I never consider you a burden. In fact, I'm happy that our group has an additional person to accompany us on this journey—especially a beautiful woman. I would never reject that," Aldrian replied, half-joking.

"I'm serious, Aldrian!" Baek Ji-Min said, her expression showing irritation.

"I'm being serious here. I never consider you, or anyone in our group, to be a burden. Your presence adds more color to our group. You've never done anything that jeopardized our safety, and you've never put me in danger. Well, even if you did, I have confidence that I could handle it. So no, you are not a burden," Aldrian said with unwavering confidence.

Baek Ji-Min smiled at Aldrian's answer, but her gaze remained on the surface of her tea.

"I'm glad you think of me like that, but I still feel like I haven't contributed anything to the group. Instead, I feel like I'm a burden."

Aldrian frowned as he looked at Baek Ji-Min. He couldn't understand why she was suddenly feeling this way. However, a realization struck him, and he smiled at her.

"If you're worried about the problem with the young master of the Lucard family, you don't have to. I've already taken care of it," he said, waving his hand.

Baek Ji-Min widened her eyes as she looked at Aldrian.

"Hah, really? You're the same as Sylphia in this. You and Sylphia hid this problem from me because you were afraid it would affect me or my plan, but no, Jimin, that's not going to affect me. I can guess that you've already heard from Sylphia about my opinion on this matter, and now you want to talk to me because you feel guilty. So please don't worry. What you did was the right thing, and you are not a burden. Stop overthinking it," he said in a reassuring tone.

"In fact, because of that, I can make young master Danius my new 'friend,' so it's all good," he added before taking a sip of his tea.

Baek Ji-Min continued to look at Aldrian, but then she lowered her head to gaze at the glass in her hands.

"Thank you. I'm sorry for bringing you trouble when you have your own matters to deal with," she said.

Aldrian simply smiled at her.

"You're welcome, and if something like that happens again, you must defend yourself or help your friend. And if you can't face them, then call me. I'm serious here, Jimin. I don't want you to hold back in the future just because of this event. Is that clear? I know you have your pride and your own morals, so I prefer you to keep that way. Don't let those arrogant young masters have their way," Aldrian said in a serious voice.

Baek Ji-Min looked at Aldrian again, noticing his serious expression—it was clear that Aldrian wasn't accepting "no" for an answer. Finally, Baek Ji-Min smiled again, this time with genuine relief.

"Yes."

Upon hearing her answer, Aldrian instantly smiled and took a sip of his tea.

"Anyway, let's talk about something else. How's your everyday life been? Has anything interesting happened, or have you encountered any problems?" he asked.

They continued talking like friends do, just as they had in the demon territory when they had first gotten to know each other, sharing many things.

Baek Ji-Min also seemed to speak more openly. The weight that had been on her heart just moments ago appeared to vanish from her tone. They continued talking for hours

before Baek Ji-Min finally excused herself. She left with a happy expression, causing Aldrian to shake his head.

*"Those girls really treat themselves too harshly for my sake,"* he said, looking at Baek Ji-Min's figure before closing the door to his room. *"How cute."*

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In Rivas City, a group of cultivators in armor stepped out of the teleportation portal. When the people saw one of the men at the front of the group, they instantly bowed in respect.

"My lord, welcome back!" some of them shouted.

However, a moment later, another group followed the first, and when the people saw the young man leading them, they also greeted him.

"Welcome to Rivas City, your highness!"

Grand Duke Rivas and the First Prince of the Doria Empire, Hector Doria, have now arrived in Rivas City after staying in Fanalis Town. After determining that there were no issues, the Grand Duke decided it was time for him to return. As for Hector, he had another purpose in Rivas City.

"At ease. There's been no problem while I was away, right?" Grand Duke Rivas asked.

"No, my lord, there is..." one of the men in Rivas family attire began to answer, but then he hesitated, remembering something. Grand Duke Rivas, who had been watching him, stopped him mid-sentence, frowning.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"No... no, my lord. It's just... you'd be better off asking Commander Ikhsan about this matter. He can explain it much more easily, my lord, because this situation has never happened before," the man answered.

Hearing the man's response, the Grand Duke's frown deepened. Hector, who had also overheard, was intrigued. What kind of problem had arisen that couldn't be explained?

The Grand Duke then looked at Hector and spoke in an apologetic tone.

"I'm sorry, Your Highness. It seems we'll have to postpone our visit to the mansion. A sudden problem has arisen."

"It's alright, Grand Duke Rivas," Hector replied. "You can hear them out first. To be honest, I'm quite curious myself about what kind of trouble could arise here in the heart of the Rivas Grand Duchy."

After that, they met with a low King-stage cultivator with a mustache. He was the person who had tested Aldrian with the Orb of Origin when Aldrian first stepped into Rivas City.

"Welcome back, my lord!" Commander Ikhsan said, bowing.

"At ease. I heard you've encountered a problem. Explain it to me," Grand Duke Rivas said.

"Well, um, actually, it's not a problem, my lord. However, it's like this..." Commander Ikhsan then recounted his meeting with Aldrian and how he had tested him.

After hearing the story, both Grand Duke Rivas and Hector were left in shock.

*Chapter 222: What Kind of Person is He?*

After hearing the story from Commander Ikhsan, they felt as though they had encountered something both absurd and amazing at the same time. Destroying the Orb of Origin? Golden light and energy suppressing other forms of energy? They really didn't know how to make sense of it, but one thing caught their attention: the golden light or energy.

Grand Duke Rivas had already discussed with Hector the person who unleashed the technique that left a giant mark on the battlefield. They had also finally learned that this person was the same one who saved Irene. At that moment, the grand duke didn't know what to do after reaching this conclusion. He had sworn to search for that individual, but if he truly was the one who unleashed such a technique, there would be no way to find him if he chose to hide. More than that, with that kind of strength, forget about using force to bring him here.

However, although he wanted to meet the man who seemed to have captivated his daughter, he was even more curious about Aldrian's identity or origin. How could someone like that not already be famous across the continent? Was he someone living a reclusive life, indifferent to the outside world? No, if that were the case, he wouldn't have joined this war or potentially been the reason for the devils' retreat.

From Commander Ikhsan's story, he finally had a clue. It seemed that this person came from the Forgeheart Kingdom, based on the teleportation schedule at that time. With this information, perhaps he could trace where the individual came from and uncover something about him.

Hector was also thinking the same as Grand Duke Rivas. He now had a clue about this person's past and could begin searching for his traces.

"Alright, I understand. Thank you for the report. You have been a great help, General. I will reward you later," said the grand duke.

Hearing Grand Duke Rivas, Commander Ikhsan immediately bowed his head.

"Thank you, my lord!"

Grand Duke Rivas nodded and finally walked toward his mansion, followed by Hector and their group. When the people saw the grand duke's return, they began shouting victory chants. Their excitement grew even louder when they noticed the first prince among the group. Knowing that the first prince of the Doria Empire had also been on the frontlines—and given his fame—the crowd erupted with even greater cheers of triumph.

After walking for a while, they finally arrived at the Rivas family mansion, where Grand Duke Rivas was immediately greeted by his wife, Elene Rivas.

"Welcome to our humble residence, Your Highness. I congratulate you on your safe return," Elene said, bowing respectfully to Hector after greeting her husband.

"No, Madam Elene, I feel bad for coming so suddenly. I apologize," Hector said.

"No, no, Your Highness, it's alright. On the contrary, it's an honor to have you visit our home. Now, please, let's go inside. You all must be tired after such a long battle. We can discuss other matters later."

They entered the mansion as Hector was directed to the guest room. A few hours later, after everyone had freshened up, Hector and Grand Duke Rivas arrived at the dining room, where an array of dishes had already been prepared for them to enjoy.

"Excuse me, Madam Elene, I haven't seen Miss Irene since earlier. Is she in the mansion right now?" Hector suddenly asked before they began their meal.

"I'm sorry, Your Highness. She will be here shortly. She's been like this ever since she came back from the frontline—seems like she prefers to keep to herself in her room," Madam Elene said.

After a few moments, footsteps could be heard approaching the entrance of the room, and at that moment, Hector's heart skipped a beat as he looked at the beautiful woman now standing in the doorway.

"My apologies for being late. I had to prepare myself," Irene said, looking in Hector's direction and slightly bowing her head. "Welcome to our humble home, Your Highness. Once again, I apologize for the delay." Her face was serene, showing no emotion. It was a stark contrast to how she interacted with her family, or even more so when she met Aldrey or Aldrian.

"No, it's okay, Miss Irene. Please, don't act too formal in front of me," Hector said.

To be honest, if Hector were looking for a wife, the woman in front of him would be the most worthy candidate. Given her status, there was no doubt that she was more than worthy. She was the daughter of Grand Duke Rivas, the most powerful grand duke of the neutral faction. If he could marry her, he would gain the support of the Rivas Grand Duchy.

But regardless of her status or political stance, her talent alone is rare on the continent. A strong cultivator with genius talent, there are few like Irene in the Doria Empire. Even her merits on the battlefield are tremendous. She was not some spoiled young miss of a noble family, but a thorny flower that grew in a harsh environment.

However, he knew that Grand Duke Rivas himself would reject his proposal because of his status. Unless something significant happened, there was no way Grand Duke Rivas would change his opinion. Once his daughter married one of the princes, their family would be dragged into the succession race, and that was exactly what Grand Duke Rivas wanted to avoid the most.

Irene then sat in the seat opposite Hector and began eating her portion of food. Hector looked at Irene once again and sighed. Although it was a pity, he had something more important to focus on than matters of marriage. Grand Duke Rivas also glanced at Hector, as if he knew what was on his mind. If Hector were not a prince, he would have liked to have him as his son-in-law.

But suddenly, he thought of Aldrian, the one who made his daughter show such different expressions. He felt a surge of irritation. Even though Aldrian was much stronger than any cultivator he had met, he still didn't know what kind of person he is.

After they finished lunch, Hector looked at Irene and stated his intentions.

"Miss Irene, the purpose of my visit is to gather information about a person named Aldrian. I would like to learn more about him from someone who could be said to have been saved by him. We have already gathered information from the people he saved from the devils in Sazim, and now you are the last person I would like to ask about him."

Irene raised her eyebrows but then suddenly smiled. It was the first time Hector had seen Irene smile like this, as he had always seen her with an expressionless face. Grand Duke Rivas facepalmed, thinking again that his daughter had lost.

As for Elene, she was puzzled as she looked at Irene and her husband. Who is this Aldrian? She only knew that Irene seemed happier when she returned from the battlefield. Elene had asked her daughter about it, but Irene's response had been dodgy, and she only showed a happy face. Did her change in expression and mood have anything to do with this Aldrian?



Hector, who noticed the change in Irene's mood, could only sigh.

"Miss Irene, I want to know your opinion on what kind of man this Aldrian is. It seems you have interacted with him, and from what I understand, this man returned after rescuing you. This is based on eyewitness accounts that saw him appear after you were brought to Ilyon," Hector said.

"We are trying to assess and ensure that this man is not a future threat. If possible, we want to build a relationship with him. His strength is what we need in these uncertain times, especially with the prophecy of the Heavenly Direction Church seeming ever closer. Given the current war, we are certain the devils will not stop here." He added.

Irene nodded at Hector's explanation. It was true that Aldrian's potential was terrifying; he would be the most powerful spear for anyone who could grab hold of him. Irene felt that this assessment of Aldrian was only one reason. In her opinion, the imperial family wasn't much different in this regard. She believed the main reason they were interested was that they saw this as an opportunity to make Aldrian their hidden card.

She saw Hector waiting for her answer, but her thoughts drifted to the first prince.

*"Or does His Highness want to bring Aldrian to his side as a helper for the succession race?"*

After considering this, she took a moment to organize her thoughts before answering Hector.

"He is a man with strength unlike anything I've ever seen in my life. For me, it's not an exaggeration to say that he is the strongest cultivator at present. His methods and techniques are extraordinary, and from my interactions with him, I can tell he is not someone who can be manipulated. He holds firm to his principles. In my opinion, he is someone who will treat others the way they treat him," she said, her voice full of confidence.

After hearing Irene's answer, the others looked at her with varying expressions. Hector was deep in thought, pondering her words seriously. Madam Elene widened her eyes in surprise, while Grand Duke Rivas... well, he was in tears, feeling the weight of how much his daughter had changed.

#### *Chapter 223: The Day of the Auction*

The others who heard Irene's description couldn't tell if she was exaggerating or not, but one thing was certain: this woman had been captivated by that man! Even if there was nothing between them, Irene was already mesmerized by him. Only a fool would fail to notice the admiration on her face when she spoke about him. Moreover, this came from a woman renowned for her cold personality and indifference toward the opposite sex.



*"Oh my, is Irene finally interested in a man? This is wonderful news! I thought I'd have to wait until I was old and gray for her to show interest in someone,"* Madam Elene thought to herself.

When Irene returned from the Everlasting Silent Forest, Elene could sense something different about her daughter. As a woman, her instincts told her that Irene was hiding something. At that moment, she couldn't dismiss the possibility that Irene might have met someone while she was trapped in the Everlasting Silent Forest. In fact, she even considered the chance that Irene might have some connection with Aldrey from the Flamcrest family, who had disappeared at the same time as her and returned simultaneously.

However, when she looked at her daughter now, she was certain that Irene was interested in this man named Aldrian. Was he also trapped in the Everlasting Silent Forest with Irene? She could only speculate.

"Did this man tell you anything about what he's done over the past years or anything related to his past?" Hector asked again.

"He shared parts of his story with me. He didn't tell me about his origin but from what he said, he was just a wandering cultivator, traveling through various territories. There's nothing remarkable about his past; he seems like a simple man who hasn't caused any major disturbances. But I can't confirm if that's the truth," Irene replied, touching her chin as if deep in thought.

She had no intention of revealing the full truth about Aldrian to anyone—not until the time was right to present him as her son.

She also remained wary of the First Prince, knowing how clever and brilliant Hector was. If she talked too much and accidentally revealed something that hinted at Aldrian's connection to her, it could cause significant trouble for her, her family, and Aldrian himself.

"Do you know where he is right now?" Hector asked.

"I apologize, Your Highness. I don't know," Irene replied. "Even after he saved me, he didn't share anything about his destination or plans. After telling me part of his story, he simply disappeared."

"Sigh, it's alright then. It seems I'll need to find him through another approach," Hector said. "In your opinion, could he become our friend or our enemy?" he asked again.

"Like I said, Your Highness, he will act according to how people treat him. If you want to be his friend, then you must treat him as one—and so must others," Irene replied.

Hector nodded in understanding but then fixed his gaze on Irene's eyes.

"Did he tell you why he came to this war? Why he appeared at that time?" he asked, his tone serious. This was one of the most important questions—it could be the key to finding or meeting Aldrian.

"I don't know, Your Highness. He never told me anything about it," Irene answered, shaking her head.

"Sigh, it only makes my curiosity soar. This mysterious man who suddenly shook the battlefield in the northwest and even breached devil territory... no wonder Miss Irene holds him in such high regard," Hector said, then sipped his drink and stood up. "Anyway, I believe I've gathered all the information I can. It's time for me to continue my investigation elsewhere. I'm sorry I can't stay longer. Thank you for your hospitality, Grand Duke Rivas and Madam Elene."

"It's alright, Your Highness. Even with this short visit, we are already grateful," Grand Duke Rivas said, also standing up.

"Then I will take my leave. You don't have to escort me outside; you can continue your time together. I know Grand Duke Rivas truly missed Madam Elene and Miss Irene, so please excuse me," Hector said before walking toward the entrance. However, before he could step outside, he turned to Irene and smiled.

"I hope to meet Aldrian in the future. I really want to learn more about him," Hector said before walking away and disappearing from sight.

However, as Irene watched Hector leave, she felt something was off. Why did the First Prince look at her like that? Did he gain something from their conversation? She was certain she hadn't given him any useful information about Aldrian or anything that would connect him to her—or to anything else.

Suddenly, she felt a wave of nervousness. What if the First Prince had picked up some clues just from their conversation? Truly frightening! That's why she had always been so wary of the First Prince and his sharp mind. She could only hope that Hector hadn't caught on to anything and that her anxiety was simply a result of her stress over matters related to her son.

"Father, Mother, I would like to return to my room. Please excuse me," she said, giving a slight bow to Grand Duke Rivas and Elene.

The couple watched their daughter's retreating figure, each lost in their own thoughts.

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Outside the mansion complex, Hector was already walking toward the teleportation station with his group. As he walked, he reflected on his conversation with Irene.

*"Although I didn't gain anything definitive, I did get something interesting from Miss Irene,"*

he thought.

*"The way she spoke about Aldrian, and from the movements of that man, I can guess their relationship is closer than anyone thinks. Are they lovers? Or something else? It doesn't matter, but now I'm certain that to meet Aldrian, Miss Irene is the key."*

For Hector, the most striking thing was the way Irene spoke about Aldrian's personality. There was no way someone who wasn't close to him could speak with such confidence about his character and the principles he would follow.

The second thing that stood out to Hector was Irene's answer and tone. Although she tried to appear as natural as possible, he could tell that her responses were carefully crafted to steer him—or anyone else—away from Aldrian. She seemed to be working hard to hide Aldrian's whereabouts, making his investigation more difficult by shrouding him in mystery with vague clues.

The last question he asked and her answer, Hector didn't believe for a second. From all the clues he gathered about Aldrian, and his conversation with Irene, he guessed that Aldrian's reason for coming to this war was Irene herself. The way he disappeared after Irene was saved, and at the same time the devils retreated, could be a coincidence—but to Hector, this seemed the most likely explanation.

Hector smiled at Irene's effort, finding it somewhat cute. The smoke that surrounded Aldrian little by little began to dissipate from his sight. To Hector, Irene was the door to an existence called Aldrian, but for now...

*"Let's head back to the capital first. It seems there's something interesting going on."*

He had heard something about the Alchemist Association and wanted to visit the capital before anything else. He couldn't pass up the chance to gain something from it.

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A few days later, the day of the Alchemist Association's auction for the new pill had arrived. Representatives from major sects and families had already gathered at the capital. Many people wondered what the Alchemist Association was really up to. Announcing something like the Six Stripes Pill—was it a joke, or something more?

However, if such a thing as the Six Stripes Pill truly exists, who could be the alchemist capable of concocting it? No one had been able to create a Five Stripes Pill for millions of years, let alone this unheard-of Six Stripes Pill. Whether this was just a marketing technique by the Alchemist Association or something more, they would find out tonight.

The capital city, which had already become a gathering place for nobles since the end of the war, received many arrivals not only from within the empire but also from outside it. Although it wasn't on the same scale as the birth of the middle divine-grade artifact in the Forgeheart Kingdom, many nobles and major factions still sent their representatives to see what the Alchemist Association was up to. They were eager to find out what kind of trick the Alchemist Association was trying to pull with this "Six Stripes Pill" auction.

Aldrian's group was already inside the auction hall adjacent to the Alchemist Association building, preparing to watch the auction. This was Aldrian's first time attending an auction, so he couldn't pass up the opportunity when Grandmaster Marco offered him the chance to watch.

The association had provided him with a special room at the highest point of the hall, giving him a clear view of the entire space. The room had transparent glass that couldn't be seen through from the outside, allowing him to observe the high podium in the center of the hall where the auctioneer would be.

There was another room identical to his, located beside it. These rooms were typically reserved for VVIPs, such as members of the imperial family or those of similar status.

As night approached, the situation grew more crowded, and the hall was soon filled with eager bidders. The auction was about to begin!

#### *Chapter 224: The Auction 1*

The hall began to fill with people, most of whom knew that if the Association truly managed to create something like six-stripe pills, the auction's conclusion would ignite a frenzy capable of shaking the cultivation world. Many of the "small fry" realized they had no chance of obtaining the pills, as the behemoths would clash over them.

The hall capable of accommodating five thousand people and was designed in a half-circular shape to provide all bidders with an unobstructed view of the auctioned goods. Along the walls, numerous private rooms catered to those who valued privacy and had deeper pockets. Among them, the most luxurious and elevated room was now occupied by Aldrian, with another equally prestigious room situated right beside his.

From there, he could see several representatives of noble families and major sects. Some of them wore alchemist robes distinct from those of the Alchemist Association, leading him to surmise they belonged to other alchemist organizations. This event, naturally, would draw the attention of alchemists from across the continent, so it was no surprise that some had come to attend.

He even noticed representatives from the church and the Rivas family, but as none of them were familiar or known to him, he chose to ignore them. Moments later, he suddenly sensed someone entering the room beside him. Under normal circumstances,

it would be impossible for Aldrian to peek inside the another room due to the formations designed to block any attempts to observe its interior from the outside.

However, the entire hall was enveloped within his domain, extending from the Alchemist Association building, so there was nothing that could escape his sense and sight. He directed his attention to the room beside him and observed a handsome young man with a cultivation level at the Middle King stage. The man's sharp features and black hair gave him an allure that would captivate any woman. His regal attire and elegant demeanor further complemented his striking appearance, enhancing the impression of a flawless visage and physique.

*"So, he is the second prince of the Doria Empire, Alderia Doria,"* Aldrian thought.

This was the first time he had seen a member of the imperial family here, but that was all. He then turned his attention back to the front. It seemed the auction was finally about to begin, as the lights in the hall dimmed, leaving only the platform in the center illuminated, with a path leading backstage.

Suddenly, a figure appeared standing on the platform, dressed in butler attire with a smiling face. Many had not noticed his arrival, but they all knew who he was—the auctioneer of the event.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Alchemist Association Auction Hall. I'm Dave Gallard, acting as the auctioneer and representative of the Alchemist Association. We welcome and appreciate your presence here for yet another round of auction. However, this time will be different from any auction we've held before. This is a special event that will be engraved in the history of the continent, and all of you here will witness it firsthand—witness history in the making!"

After Dave finished his opening speech, the crowd erupted into applause.

"I know, ladies and gentlemen, you're all here because of the announcement we made about the star of tonight's show. But before we dive into the main event, let's take a look at the side dishes—whoops, I'm sorry to the one who concocted these side dishes. Your creations are excellent, but not quite on par with the main course. Apologies, master, I'm just joking."

"Hahaha."

"Anyway, let's get started. Normally, we would present the pills created by our great grandmasters as the main attraction, but tonight, to make way for the true star of the show, these pills will serve as the side dishes to kick things off for all of you. The first pill of tonight's event is the Enlightenment Pill, concocted by the esteemed Grandmaster Aberin."

The crowd gasped in surprise. They had never expected the opening pill to be one concocted by one of the grandmasters of the association. It was hard to believe that the time had come when such pills were no longer the main attraction but only a complement to the true star of the auction.

The auctioneer then picked up the box that had been brought from backstage by a woman and opened it. As soon as he did, the fragrance of a four-stripe pill filled the entire hall and only after a few seconds, he closed the box again to keep the pill secure.

"I'm sure you've all heard the rumors about the Enlightenment Pill concocted by Grandmaster Aberin. It has the ability to help those at the Emperor stage increase their comprehension or even reach enlightenment in the elements they've mastered. For those at the Emperor stage, you must understand the significance of this—if your comprehension increases, or even reaches enlightenment, by swallowing this pill, it can drastically improve your cultivation! This pill is of an excellent grade, with a potency no less than 80%!"

The crowd erupted in uproar, as many present were at the Emperor stage themselves or came from factions with Emperor stage cultivators. At the Emperor stage, breakthroughs were much more difficult, being a lengthy process that required immense energy and a high level of comprehension. It was not uncommon for an Emperor stage cultivator to remain stuck at the same level for the rest of their lives.

The prospect of using the Enlightenment Pill to aid their elders in breaking through to the next level was incredibly enticing. Such a breakthrough would significantly enhance their faction's strength, making the pill even more valuable.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, I will open the bidding for this wonderful pill at 10,000 peak-level energy stones. Each increase must be no less than 5,000 peak-level energy stones, starting now!"

"20,000!"

"30,000!"

As soon as the auctioneer started the bidding, many representatives immediately raised their number planks, shouting their bids. This pill, concocted by one of the grandmasters of the Alchemist Association, was one of the rumored treasures that had circulated among Emperor stage cultivators for some time. They knew they had to bring it home!

Aldrian watched the bidding war with interest. These people certainly didn't hesitate to squander their wealth for the chance to obtain the pill. He understood that this pill would greatly enhance their power, but he was still amazed by how desperately they sought it, to the point of draining their resources. It was only one pill, and this was just the opening item. Yet, they were bidding as if it were the last and most precious item they would ever have a chance to acquire.



Fortunately for him, Aldrian didn't need any kind of pill, but then he looked at his group. There was someone who would benefit from a pill like that. He could buy it for him to help with his cultivation, and in the end, it would increase his group's strength.

"Do you want this pill?" Aldrian asked, directing his gaze towards Xin Haotian.

Xin Haotian glanced at Aldrian for a moment before turning his attention back to the platform.

"I appreciate your good intentions, but thank you. I doubt that pill will increase my comprehension whatsoever. My light laws are a bit special, I must say. The light laws I comprehend are an inheritance given to me by 'them'—you know what I mean. It will not increase with the help of a pill like this. Even if there were a pill that could increase my comprehension, it would have to have light properties that align with my unique characteristics," Xin Haotian explained.

Aldrian nodded in understanding. Xin Haotian's cultivation technique and comprehension of light laws came from the inheritance bestowed upon his family by the dragon and phoenix in the Everlasting Silent Forest. These beings, powerful beyond measure, were figures Aldrian assumed came from another world entirely, given their overwhelming strength and presence.

The name of his cultivation technique, *The Illumination of The God of Light*, also indicated its connection to the God of Light. With 'God' in its name, it was undoubtedly an extraordinary technique, possibly even the inheritance of this very god. If there were any, there were not many pills on this continent that could help Xin Haotian increase his comprehension.

There was no other Emperor stage cultivator in his group. If he bought it and gave it to someone below the Emperor stage, like Sylphia or the others, it could actually harm them. The energy contained in the pill would be far too overwhelming for them to absorb, causing it to be wasted. In the worst case, their dantian or meridians could explode from the excessive energy. If he wanted to help them, he would need to find or concoct a pill more suited to their cultivation level.

"Congratulations to Room Number 12 for bringing home the Enlightenment Pill, concocted by Grandmaster Aberin, for 200,000 peak-level energy stones. The pill will be delivered to your room shortly, and payment can be made at the same time."

The crowd could see the number displayed above the window of the room. This was the method used by bidders inside the private rooms to place their bids, ensuring their secrecy throughout the auction.

Hearing the final bid, Aldrian widened his eyes. To think this single pill could fetch such a price. It was just one pill, and the grandmasters likely had other kinds of pills they could present at any moment. No wonder all the alchemists were such a wealthy bunch.



However, he also knew that gathering the ingredients for such pills was an expensive endeavor in itself. Still, this was already a huge profit for them.

After a while, the next pill was brought out, concocted by Grandmaster Maria. This pill also benefited Emperor stage cultivators, but it didn't hold any particular value for Aldrian's group, so he passed on it. The pill was quickly bought by Room 3. Aldrian saw who placed the bid, but he didn't delve deeper into their identity.

Finally, the next pill was revealed, and this one caught Aldrian's attention.

#### *Chapter 225: The Auction 2*

"The next pill is concocted by Grandmaster Marco and is one of his finest creations, second only to the Four Elements Pill. While the Four Elements Pill helps a cultivator comprehend the four basic elements, this pill offers a similar effect by focusing on the combination of elements. The special thing about this pill is that it is the Ice Properties Pill."

"With this pill, you can enhance your potential to comprehend Ice Laws, Blazing Ice Laws—the combination of fire and ice—and Freezing Wind Laws, the combination of ice and wind. For those who have already comprehended Ice, Fire, or Wind Laws, this pill will significantly boost their comprehension. The most remarkable feature is that as long as your cultivation is above the Earl stage, you can benefit from consuming this pill," the auctioneer said with a grin after explaining its properties.

The crowd's excitement grew as they heard about the pill's effects. It seemed Grandmaster Marco had once again succeeded in creating another masterpiece. This pill essentially carried the properties of Ice Laws, with Grandmaster Marco using mostly ice-element ingredients to concoct it. Although ice cultivators were rare on the continent, there was one prominent example who stood out and was widely renowned.

#### *The Blizzard Witch*

Irene Rivas was an exceptionally powerful ice cultivator, showcasing the immense potential of Ice Laws, which could become a formidable technique in the hands of the right person. Although there were no ice cultivators present in the hall, attendees could still purchase the pill for their kin who had comprehended Water Laws, the foundational form of Ice Laws. They hoped it might help evolve those laws into Ice Laws. As for the pill's other effects, they regarded those as a bonus, knowing how difficult it was to comprehend the complexities of Ice Laws derivatives.

If it is for water element cultivators, they have many in this hall or across the entire continent. This pill is a precious treasure, although not all cultivators here can consume it!

"This pill is of Excellent grade, and Grandmaster Marco has named it *Ice Dominion*, the bidding for this wonderful pill at 10,000 peak-level energy stones. Each increase must be no less than 5,000 peak-level energy stones, starting now!"

After that, the bidding began, with the price steadily rising. Aldrian was actually interested in this pill, as it would greatly benefit his mother. Although his mother didn't seem to comprehend Fire Laws, it could help her increase her comprehension of Ice Laws and assist her in working with Freezing Wind Laws.

He knew that his mother was already on the edge of comprehending a small part of Freezing Wind Laws, as she had also comprehended Wind Laws. When he saw her technique against the Lust Devil, he realized that she only needed a small push to touch the Freezing Wind Laws. After thinking for a moment, he decided to join the bid for her sake.

Aldrian looked at the people still bidding. Due to the pill's unique properties and effects, it seemed to attract fewer bidders compared to the earlier pills. However, for those with compatibility to Water Laws or anyone who had already comprehended Water, Fire, or Wind Laws, it could be their chance to increase their strength.

The bidding price was not far behind the earlier pills, and it became even fiercer because for some, this pill was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. As expected, the Rivas family had already placed their bid. They hadn't been as aggressive with the earlier pill, but after learning about the pill's effects, they knew they had to secure it for Irene. With her already high strength and talent, if she consumed this pill, she would experience another breakthrough!

"500,000!" The representative from the Rivas family bid from their room.

Once the price spiked so high, and with some of them realizing it was from the Rivas family, all the other bidders fell silent. The price had already become excessive for most of them, and seeing the behemoth-like Rivas family so determined to secure the pill, they decided to step back.

*Ting!*

Suddenly, a sound resonated from the highest point, where the two most special private rooms were located. The crowd looked up, shocked to see the number displayed on one of the room's mirror.

1,000,000.

They were shocked that the price had already reached a point usually reserved as the starting bid for a low Divine Grade artifact! No low Divine Grade artifact was ever sold for less than 1,000,000 peak-level energy stones, and now this pill had just touched that mark. Could this be the most expensive pill ever sold?

The Rivas family's representative was also shocked by the number displayed on the mirror. They gritted their teeth at the sudden bid and the special position of the bidder, which made them hesitate. In the end, they could only sigh and let go of the pill. Although it was a pity, there was still the star of tonight's auction to look forward to. They needed to preserve their resources if what the Alchemist Association had announced aligned with their speculation.

The crowd began to wonder who was inside one of the two most special rooms, as these were usually reserved for the imperial family or those worthy of such status.

Inside the room, Sylphia and the others stared at Aldrian in shock. They had never seen him squander his wealth or even flaunt it before. They were aware of some of his fortune, as Aldrian had once told them about an inheritance he received from Emperor Thonias, which included a significant amount of wealth. This was the first time they had seen him spend such a large sum at once.

From the pill's properties, they quickly realized who Aldrian had bought it for.

*"It must be for his mother,"* they thought.

Aldrian smiled as the auctioneer finally announced that he had won the pill. However, just then, the door to the room opened, and Grandmaster Marco rushed in.

"If you want the pill, I'll gladly give it to you," he said to Aldrian. "To be honest, I actually created two of these pills. I feel bad that you bought it from me for such a high price. Even that amount far exceeds the cost of creating this pill."

But Aldrian shook his head.

"No, it's not right for me to simply take your precious pill. I will buy it. You've put in your best effort to concoct it, so I will show my appreciation by purchasing it."

"But I can—"

"I insist," Aldrian said, locking eyes with Marco. Seeing Aldrian's resolve, Marco sighed and smiled.

"Alright, you must have someone dear to you for you to spend so much wealth on a pill. I still believe that price is more appropriate for the pill you'll buy later, so I feel honored that my pill was purchased by you at such a price. This will be the most expensive pill I've ever had auctioned."

Aldrian smiled. "Yes, someone dear to me," he murmured.

After a moment of waiting, a woman approached to deliver the pill. Once Aldrian received the special box containing the pill, he transferred the payment through the storage ring. After confirming everything was in order, the woman went on her way.

Inside the room, Aldrian opened the box and looked inside. As soon as the box was opened, the fragrance of the herbs filled the room. However, one distinct sensation stood out: a cold chill spread across their skin, and even the temperature in the room dropped slightly. Aldrian was truly amazed by Grandmaster Marco's skill in creating such a pill. But then, a thought suddenly crossed his mind.

"Can my Eyes of the Heaven tell what ingredients were used to make this pill or the method behind its concoction?" He didn't hesitate for long before trying it. Using his intent for, "How is this pill made?" Suddenly, a screen appeared before him, displaying complete information about the pill and the process to make it to perfection!

"Good."

Aldrian was truly satisfied. His Eyes of the Heaven had never disappointed him and always worked according to his will—well, except when he encountered the Heavenly Demon and his wife. But he understood that their existence was beyond comprehension, and their information was not something easily obtained. He had simply lacked the strength. Therefore, he didn't feel disappointed.

After admiring the pill, he closed the box and turned his attention back to the platform outside. This time, the number of items being auctioned was fewer than usual, but all of them were of exceptional quality, each concocted by grandmasters. It was the first time the Alchemist Association had held such an auction.

As the Alchemist Association continued with the auction, the crowd's doubts began to fade, replaced by growing excitement. They were eager to see what the association had claimed to be the Six Stripes Pill.

They didn't have to wait long, as the main event had finally arrived!

"Alright, ladies and gentlemen, prepare your pockets, for we've reached one of the highlights of tonight's auction! Open your eyes and witness the history!" the auctioneer announced, as a woman brought a box onto the platform.

### *Chapter 226: The Auction 3*

The box is unique, adorned with beautiful engravings that make it luxurious and mysterious. People can only speculate about the kind of pill it holds. Murmurs ripple through the hall, creating a noisy atmosphere, but the auctioneer merely smiles. This is the reaction and tension he wants to evoke.

After the box reached his hand, he held it up for the attendees to see.

"Behold the pill of the six stripes!"

When the auctioneer opened the box, the attendees gasped at the sight of a yellow-white pill with six stripes on its surface. The murmurs grew louder as they took in the extraordinary sight. Even the alchemists stood up, straining to get a closer look at the pill with intense focus.

A group of alchemists also focused their senses on the pill. Those who saw them immediately recognized their identity—they were alchemists from the Vindas Empire's Alchemist Group, the prestigious Vindas Alchemist Family's Association. Typically, individuals of their status would occupy the private rooms above. However, today they stood among the general attendees, mingling with those of "lesser" privilege.

However, they understood why they were seated here among the other alchemists who had gathered. It was because they could observe and sense the pill more accurately from outside the private rooms. The formations within the rooms restricted their senses, preventing them from properly examining the authenticity of the six-striped pill on the platform.

They wanted to ensure it was truly the real deal and that the Alchemist Association wasn't trying to scam anyone. Although they trusted that the Association wouldn't do something as outrageous as scamming people, the existence of a six-striped pill was too extraordinary to believe. Thus, they needed to see it for themselves.

That's why, as soon as the box was opened and the pill became visible, all the alchemists present didn't hesitate to examine it with their sense. Even before their senses could reach the pill, they were already mesmerized by its appearance. The yellowish-white hue and the six distinct white stripes on its surface unmistakably confirmed it as the six-striped pill the Alchemist Association had announced.

From its appearance, there seemed to be nothing amiss. The strong herbal fragrance was so potent that they believed this pill could even affect an Emperor-stage cultivator. They eagerly awaited the auctioneer's announcement to reveal exactly what kind of pill it was.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we present to you the King-stage Energy Replenishment Pill!" the auctioneer declared.

The hall fell silent. For several seconds, no one made a sound, as if questioning whether they had misheard.

"What?"

The auctioneer smiled and repeated, "Yes, that's correct. This is the six-striped Energy Replenishment Pill for King-stage cultivators."

"Are you kidding me? This is just an Energy Replenishment Pill!" someone shouted.

Only after that did many others begin voicing their displeasure. Even some high-status attendees frowned at the scene.

Despite being a six-striped pill, it was still just an Energy Replenishment Pill, and there was nothing particularly special about it. They had expected something far more extraordinary, something that would create a sensation for years to come, based on how the Association had announced it.

The groups of alchemists from all around frowned at the Energy Replenishment Pill, but for a different reason. They knew exactly what kind of pill this was for King-stage cultivators and could easily concoct it themselves. However, the pill before them was so different from those on the market that they had initially thought it was something entirely unknown. The only indication that this was indeed a King-stage Energy Replenishment Pill was the yellow hue of one of the herbs used—the essence of a thousand-year-old ginseng.

They wanted to learn more about what made it different, so they refrained from commenting when they first heard it was just a King-stage Energy Replenishment Pill.

The auctioneer merely smiled at the commotion from the crowd. He understood how they felt, as it was just an Energy Replenishment Pill—something that many alchemists could easily concoct. However, after seeing and experiencing its effects firsthand, he felt as though he should kowtow to the alchemist who had created it. This was truly a masterpiece. When he learned that it was made with the same ingredients as a normal Energy Replenishment Pill, his mind was blown.

A true genius had appeared, and another 10-star badge alchemist had joined the ranks of the Alchemist Association. He felt proud and eager to meet this genius, but the grandmasters had said he could only meet the person if he wished to. Though it was a pity, he still admired the genius.

Now, he had a job to do.

"Now, now, ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention for a moment?" the auctioneer said, using his technique to ensure he had everyone's focus. "I understand your reaction, but once you see what this pill is capable of, I guarantee you will no longer underestimate it."

"What kind of effect do you expect from it, besides replenishing the energy of a King-stage cultivator?" someone at the King stage asked.

"Well, that is true," the auctioneer replied, "but what if I told you this pill won't just replenish some of your energy—it will restore all of it? What if I told you that even after your energy is fully replenished, there will still be remnants that can aid you in your

cultivation? This pill goes beyond its original purpose as an energy replenishment pill and can actually assist in cultivation. Do you understand what that means?"

After hearing the auctioneer's words, the crowd fell silent, but their faces quickly turned to shock.

"Are you serious?"

"I know it sounds absurd, which is why we've brought in a pill tester who is willing to demonstrate the effects of the pill." The auctioneer replied.

The auctioneer then glanced backstage, and a man with a tired, pale face stepped onto the platform.

"As you can see, this person here is a peak King-stage cultivator who has already exhausted his energy. His dantian is nearly empty, and his meridians are like a dry desert, with no flow of energy due to the severe depletion. In short, he is in a state of lacking the energy of heaven and earth. Now, to authenticate this, I will allow some of the attendees to come forward and check if this man truly has drained his energy."

"Alright, let me do it," someone said, and the crowd recognized him as an alchemist from the Vindas Alchemist Family Association. They thought that, because he was from a rival association, he would offer an unbiased assessment and wouldn't be working together with the Alchemist Association.

The man appeared middle-aged, with a cultivation level at the low Emperor stage. He stepped onto the platform and approached the pill tester, extending his hand to touch his wrist.

After checking for a few seconds, he looked around and nodded.

"His energy is truly almost depleted. Inside his dantian, there's only about 5% of his energy left, so he is indeed in a state of lacking the energy of heaven and earth," the alchemist said.

The people finally agreed that the man was genuinely in a state of lacking the energy of heaven and earth, where his body was in its weakest state—especially if he hadn't trained his body. This was the most fatal weakness for cultivators who focused purely on inner cultivation without body cultivation. Once your energy is drained, you can't do anything, especially if you find yourself in a dire situation.

"Is there anyone who wants to check again? If you still have doubts, feel free to examine this person," the auctioneer asked, sweeping his gaze across the entire hall.

After a few seconds of silence, no one stepped forward to follow the alchemist.



"Alright, if there is no one else, then I will give this pill to this man, and you will see the effects directly. Thanks to the grandmasters, especially the one who concocted it, who, with his gracious heart, allowed one of the pills to be used for this demonstration."

The auctioneer then handed the pill to the pill tester.

The pill tester stared at the pill for a moment before swallowing it. The instant the pill reached his intestines, his eyes widened. The crowd watched closely, not wanting to miss a single detail of the effect.

Suddenly, the pill tester's body, which had appeared sickly, became rejuvenated. His skin, once like a dry branch, grew healthier, and his pale face disappeared, replaced by a fresh complexion full of vigor. But that wasn't all—an intense surge of energy erupted from his body. The pill tester was momentarily shocked, but he quickly seated himself in meditation.

The people who witnessed this were shocked by the sudden transformation of the pill tester. The change was so rapid and stark compared to his earlier condition. He was now a peak King-stage cultivator, full of life, unlike the lifeless, withered figure he had been just moments before.

After waiting for a few moments, the pill tester stood up and examined his own body. The alchemist, who had been standing nearby, approached him to check his condition again. After a few seconds, the alchemist was shocked by what he found. His body staggered, nearly slipping.

"How is that possible?" he muttered in disbelief.

*Chapter 227: The Auction 4*

"How is that possible?" the alchemist murmured, his voice trembling.

Noticing the alchemist's reaction, the crowd gasped, assuming the result was just as the auctioneer had claimed.

"His energy is fully recovered, and his cultivation has even improved slightly—how is that possible?!" the alchemist exclaimed, turning to the auctioneer. "How did the energy replenishment pill turn out like this?!"

Hearing the alchemist's words, the crowd trembled. If the pill could completely replenish an entire cultivator's energy, it essentially gave them a second chance at survival.

This pill is typically consumed when cultivators need rapid energy replenishment, such as during emergencies like a fight. Battles between cultivators of the same level often take time to conclude due to their equal strength. The only factor that differentiates them

is their energy management. The first person to run out of energy is usually the first to fall.

The issue with energy replenishment pills is that they only restore a small percentage of the energy within the dantian. They can never fully replenish the dantian's entire energy capacity.

This limitation exists because alchemists cannot fully purify the ingredients used to concoct the pills. Even the most "excellent" energy replenishment pills can only restore up to 50% of the dantian's energy at best, and not all pills can achieve that level. Only those crafted by the most skilled grandmasters can reach such quality. Most pills available on the market typically replenish between 5% and 50% of energy.

That is the case for common energy replenishment pills. However, if there were a pill capable of fully replenishing a cultivator's energy, it would likely belong to the legendary Unblemished tier—a level of alchemy that has been lost to time. This remains only a theory, as no one has ever successfully concocted an Unblemished pill.

Now that a pill capable of fully replenishing energy has appeared—and with six stripes, something never seen before—they understood the significant implications it could have. For King-stage cultivators, this pill essentially allows them to fight indefinitely, as long as their bodies can endure. In the pill market, its introduction would revolutionize the energy replenishment segment for King-stage cultivators. The Alchemist Association would solidify its dominance in this market, leaving no room for competitors.

Seeing the expressions on everyone's faces, the auctioneer grinned, knowing they had finally grasped the potential of this pill.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this extraordinary pill will start at the same price as the earlier ones! The bidding begins at 10,000 peak-level energy stones, with each increment no less than 5,000 peak-level energy stones. Let the bidding start now!"

The price was outrageous. If this were a normal King-stage energy replenishment pill, it would typically cost only 1,000 peak-level energy stones in the market. For King-stage cultivators, that price wasn't exactly cheap but also not overly expensive. However, the existence of this pill could mean the difference between life and death, so they didn't mind the cost.

With this new pill, the tide of any battle could be completely reversed! As long as they had this pill and their bodies could endure, they could continue fighting indefinitely. While this pill might not be as complex as those concocted by grandmasters, it provides a more immediate and powerful effect, making it accessible to all King-stage cultivators.

"50,000."

"60,000."

The situation instantly turned chaotic as bidders shouted one after another.

Ting!

"100,000." Even the private rooms began placing their bids. Some of the people present, who knew the nobles in the private rooms, gritted their teeth in frustration. Yet, they didn't give up and continued raising the bid.

When the price finally spiked to 300,000 peak-level energy stones, there were no more bids. In the end, it was still just an energy replenishment pill, and the price was truly mind-boggling. Everyone also knew who had won the bid, and they could only sigh in frustration.

"Congratulations to the VVIP room number 1 for winning the bid for this pill. It will be delivered shortly," the auctioneer said, slightly bowing toward the room.

Aldrian glanced at the second prince, the one who had bought the pill. To think that his concocted pill would be purchased by this prince. He merely nodded in appreciation for the prince's generosity in spending such a large amount of money on "just" an energy replenishment pill. Aldrian didn't care much about the price of the pill, but it amazed him that his creation could fetch such a staggering amount. If he didn't have Emperor Thonias' inheritance, he could have become rich overnight in this way.

"Aldrian, you will never fall into poverty with this ability of yours," Sylphia said, then sighed. "But you're truly extraordinary. To think that your pills have such an effect. No wonder, even though it's just an energy replenishment pill, the final bid was so outrageous."

"Well, I'm surprised myself," Aldrian said, showing a bitter smile.

After a few moments, the auctioneer's voice resounded again.

"Now that we know the six-stripes pill is real and its effect is extraordinary, I hope you're ready for the next few pills that will be presented to you."

The people's eyes widened upon hearing this. Was the auctioneer implying that there were more six-stripes pills? The people's eyes widened upon hearing this. Was the auctioneer implying that there were more six-stripes pills? When the association had announced the auction, they had only explained that the appearance of the six-stripes pill would change the cultivation world and that it would be auctioned. They had never mentioned there would be another six-stripes pill!

Their question was quickly answered when another pill, crafted by Aldrian, was brought to the platform. This one was an energy replenishment pill for Emperor-stage cultivators. The hall erupted in excitement, for this pill was even more precious than the King-stage one. If it had the same effect, they would have to have it!

After a round of chaotic bidding, a winner was finally decided. The final bid was even more outrageous, reaching 700,000 peak-level energy stones!

"Congratulations to room 20 for winning this pill. The pill will be delivered shortly," the auctioneer announced.

Aldrian looked toward room 20. He glanced inside and saw a middle-aged man with a mustache, adorned with luxurious jewelry. The man was slightly overweight and radiated the aura of a low Emperor-stage cultivator. A few of his guards were also present in the room.

*"Rubelo De Lumeria, from the Lumeria family, one of the grand dukes of this empire,"* Aldrian thought.

There are four grand dukes in the Doria Empire: Rivas in the northwest, Gouvard in the northeast, Lumeria in the southwest, and Herlion in the southeast. These families wield immense power and are crucial to the strength of the empire. If the Rivas family is famous for their unmatched battle prowess, then Lumeria is renowned for their immense wealth.

The Lumeria family is a business-oriented family, known for managing the Diamond Spirit Commerce, a vast commercial group with significant connections and influence, much like the Golden Swan Commerce. Although it may be slightly outpaced by the Golden Swan Commerce or the Golden Phoenix Commerce, it remains one of the top three behemoths in the continent's business associations. The Diamond Inn, where Aldrian and his group are staying, is also one of their establishments.

*"Lumeria is also part of the neutral faction in the succession race, just like the Rivas family. They seem to be staying clear of taking sides, still weighing which faction they will support,"* Aldrian thought.

The mind of a businessman is driven by profit and benefit. That's why Aldrian thought Rubelo remained neutral. At this time, no one is certain who will secure the throne. However, once there is a clear sign of who the winner will be, Aldrian was sure this family would instantly throw their support behind that figure.

*"Maybe I can approach them to make a few deals?"* Aldrian thought, before turning his attention back to the platform. Another pill he had concocted had made its appearance, and the bidding war began once again. No one harbored any doubts this time; after what had happened earlier, no one held back. The situation became even more hectic than before, as everyone, from the lowest noble to the highest, scrambled to acquire these pills.

All the common pills, which are usually cheaper and accessible to most cultivators, had now become rare treasures here. On top of that, every pill that followed was a six-

stripes tier pill, amplifying their effects. As a result, everyone in the hall was eager to get their hands on them.

After a few more pills were auctioned off over the next hour, the final product was sold to one of the noble families. This pill was called the Breakthrough Pill, which in this auction was for Marquess-stage cultivators to help them break through to the Duke stage. Normally, these pills are used to increase the chances of a breakthrough, but the pill concocted by Aldrian didn't just raise the chances—it guaranteed a breakthrough!

Unfortunately, only one Breakthrough Pill was sold tonight, and it was the only one of its kind, leaving most of the attendees a little disappointed. After the final pill was delivered to its new owner, the auctioneer swept his gaze across the entire hall.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, I know you're all wondering who is the one that concocted these amazing pills that have never appeared on the continent, right? Well, I'd like to address that on this occasion."

Hearing the auctioneer's words, the people's expressions turned solemn yet curious, all focusing on who the person behind these extraordinary pills could be.

#### *Chapter 228: The End of the Auction*

"This occasion also serves to announce that the Alchemist Association has welcomed another 10-star badge alchemist into its ranks. He is the one who concocted all of these six stripes pills. Let us applaud the new esteemed grandmaster and the association's success."

The applause that followed this announcement was mixed with shock. The Alchemist Association had gained another grandmaster? Why hadn't there been any announcement from the imperial family? The second prince, however, only raised his eyebrows. To think that another 10-star badge alchemist had joined the association's ranks.

For the past few days, he had been receiving reports that something was going on in the association. He didn't know the details, but it seemed to be related to the three grandmasters of the association and an unknown person. He didn't want to ask the association master for his own reasons and chose not to dwell too deeply on it, letting the events take their course.

To think that it was the new 10-star badge alchemist. However, he was confused as to why the association hadn't informed the imperial family about this. He knew that the Alchemist Association was an independent organization, separate from the imperial family, but although not mandatory, news of a new 10-star badge alchemist was typically shared with the imperial family first.

The imperial family could then reward the alchemist and extend their protection to the association's alchemists. In this way, they maintained a strong connection with the Alchemist Association.

The second prince wondered why the association had chosen to hide this matter. There could be many reasons, but he set those thoughts aside as he listened to the auctioneer continue with the announcement.

"As for his identity, I must apologize to the ladies and gentlemen here. At his request, we cannot disclose his name or any information related to him. However, he has stated that he will reveal himself when the time is right."

Many were disappointed by this, but they understood the alchemist's request for several reasons. With his abilities, he would be under immense pressure if his name were made public. There would be many inconveniences, such as people seeking his pills, especially nobles or even the imperial family, as well as threats from those who might wish to kill him to prevent the Alchemist Association from rising further.

However, people wondered if the imperial family knew about this—it seemed this alchemist truly wanted to distance himself from all kinds of potential trouble. If he didn't want to inform the masses, it meant he wasn't seeking fame and was only leveraging the benefits of being a member of the association.

The second prince, knowing that the imperial family had not been informed, shared the same thoughts. However, if this alchemist believed he could entirely avoid the imperial family, he was mistaken! The second prince began contemplating how he might find this alchemist. He then looked at the platform, pondering for a moment, before glancing at the wall that connected his room to Aldrian's.

*"Who is the person in the room next to mine?"* he wondered, someone who seemed to hold the same status as the imperial family according to the Alchemist Association. At first, he hadn't cared, and the association had also refrained from revealing the identity of the private attendee. This was in line with the association's rules, which prohibited disclosing the identities of those using private rooms, so he understood their commitment to secrecy.

However, now that there was the mysterious identity of the alchemist, he couldn't help but wonder about the person residing in the room next to his. Sometimes, the least likely places turned out to be where mysterious figures were hiding. But this was not confirmed, and if he was wrong, he would bring trouble upon himself for offending someone of such caliber. There were other things that made him doubt the identity of the person in the room beside him, but he wasn't in a rush. He would approach the matter carefully.

"As you can see, his ability is unparalleled. He can concoct these pills with the highest quality every time, and the good news is he will continue to release his products in the



future. So, ladies and gentlemen, please pay attention to the Alchemist Association for upcoming auctions. We look forward to your attendance. On behalf of the Alchemist Association, I, Dave Gallard, would like to thank you for your participation and say goodbye until the next auction," the auctioneer said, as the light illuminated the entire hall once again.

The people were still in disbelief that they had just witnessed an auction for the six stripes pills. After this, the news of the pills' authenticity would spread, and the continent would be in shock once again, just as it had been after the appearance of the middle divine-grade artifact. The name of the Alchemist Association would soar to new heights, and there would be a surge in orders for the pills due to the existence of the six stripes pills.

The mysterious alchemist's identity would also be a topic of conversation in the future, until he reveals himself.

As the people began to disperse, Aldrian looked at his group.

"Let's go back; we have nothing more to do here," Aldrian said, then turned his gaze to Grandmaster Marco, who was still in his room since he had entered earlier.

"Grandmaster Marco, I will take my leave now. If there is anything, you can contact me as usual," Aldrian said, cupping his hands.

"Alright, safe journey," Grandmaster Marco replied with a smile.

After that, Aldrian left the room and followed the pathway that connected to the Alchemist Association's main building beside it. The VVIP rooms were designed with special paths, ensuring that no one could know who was inside, even after the auction was over. Each VVIP room had its own separate pathway, so even if two people came out of these rooms at the same time, they wouldn't see each other's faces due to the different routes.

After they reached the end of the pathway, Aldrian moved toward a different exit from the others. Finally, he saw the main street of the city. From there, everything was fine, as they could blend with the crowd easily and avoid raising any suspicion.

They walked for about half an hour before arriving at the huge mansion in the luxurious district. This was the new residence for Aldrian and his group, a place provided by the Association Master not long after he mentioned that the association would give him a place to stay. The Association Master had truly exaggerated by offering such a large mansion, but Aldrian had accepted it. After all, he had his own plans in mind.

The Association Master explained that the mansion was empty because the previous owner had passed away, and there was no one to inherit it. So, he decided to buy the mansion. However, he purchased it through a third party, using a name unrelated to the



association, to avoid making it obvious that the mansion had been acquired by them. This also helped to avoid drawing suspicious eyes that might try to uncover the identity of the mysterious alchemist.

Aldrian and the others always used the back gate, where no one passed by, due to the mansion's exclusive nature. This way, no one would recognize his face and realize that he was now the owner of the mansion. It would be easy for those who knew him and his connection to the three grandmasters to discern something if they suddenly saw him owning such a grand mansion.

After tonight, many people might start to doubt his identity, but as long as they don't have solid evidence, it would remain nothing more than baseless speculation. He could simply deny being the alchemist they were searching for, and that would be the end of it. After all, he never wore his alchemist robe or 10-star badge anyway.

However, after moving here a few days ago, Aldrian finally discovered something. True to his suspicions about this place, after establishing his domain and checking the entire mansion, he found many hidden formations that would be missed by most people. These formations could only be detected if the resident of the mansion focused their senses or accidentally touched the formations with their energy.

The formations were located in some hidden places within the mansion, making them difficult to find. Once Aldrian became aware of their existence and their locations, he checked each one carefully.

Most of these formations were actually a type of tapped formation, where every sound near the formation would be transferred somewhere else. The rest of the formations were teleportation formations. Aldrian didn't know where these teleportations led, but he could manipulate the teleportation formations to redirect anyone who teleported here, ensuring they would land in his designated location.

He also manipulated the tapped formations so that they wouldn't transmit voices clearly. Instead of the actual conversations, what could be heard at the opposite end was the sound of heavy rain, which would obscure the real sounds. This would confuse anyone trying to eavesdrop on his or his group's conversation. If he completely disabled the formations, it might raise suspicion in those on the other end, so it was better to make it seem like the formation had a problem.

After they arrived at the mansion, Aldrian immediately checked for anything amiss while they were at the auction. After a few moments of scanning, he found nothing unusual, so he and the others entered their respective rooms.

Aldrian had already informed Sylphia and the others about the formations, so they also treated the mansion with caution. After everyone settled in, Aldrian sat on his bed to meditate, something he enjoyed when he wasn't practicing or engaged in any other activities. He remained in that position for hours until, suddenly, he sensed a movement.

## Chapter 229: Old Acquaintance?

Aldrian opened his eyes from meditation as he sensed movement outside the mansion. A single figure, radiating the faint aura of low Emperor stage cultivation, had entered the mansion's perimeter. The intruder demonstrated a refined movement technique, blending seamlessly with the sound of the wind.

Moving through the shadows of the night, he infiltrated the mansion without obstacle. From his movements, it was evident that he was an expert in wind laws, as his steps mimicked the seamless flow of the wind.

Upon entering the mansion, he paused briefly to survey his surroundings before walking in the opposite direction of Aldrian's room. His behavior suggested that he was searching for something, as he checked each room methodically. After finishing his search of the mansion's left wing, he moved toward the right wing, where Aldrian and the others were located.

The intruder, moving closer to their quarters, seemed to choose Xin Haotian's room first, as it was the nearest. Observing this, Aldrian focused on Xin Haotian, who he knew was merely pretending to sleep. There was no way Xin Haotian could have failed to detect the intruder the moment they entered the mansion.

*"Don't kill him. Just capture him and extract information from him,"* Aldrian's voice resonated in Xin Haotian's mind, leaving him momentarily stunned.

*"I know,"* Xin Haotian replied calmly.

He continued to maintain his relaxed posture, sleeping with both hands behind his back. The moment the intruder entered his room and observed his relaxed posture, a sense of unease washed over him. Realizing something was amiss, the intruder attempted to flee the bedroom. However, it was too late—Xin Haotian, utilizing his light laws, had already moved to block his escape.

The intruder was stunned by Xin Haotian's swift movement and attempted to create distance by deploying a smokescreen and using his movement technique. However, his efforts were futile. With a burst of speed, Xin Haotian grabbed the man's wrist and delivered a powerful punch to his gut, dropping him to the ground. Writhing in pain, the intruder found himself unable to move, his body immobilized by Xin Haotian's light laws.

The intruder was completely immobilized by the light energy, unable to move even his mouth, ensuring he couldn't attempt suicide. Xin Haotian glanced at the masked figure before reaching down to remove the mask. Beneath it was a black-haired man, his eyes filled with urgency as he appeared to be trying to say something. However, with his body restrained down to the smallest movement, he couldn't utter a word.

Xin Haotian released the lock on the intruder's mouth, and the man quickly spoke.

"This energy?! Wai—, don't kill me! I'm not here to do anything bad!"

Xin Haotian tilted his head slightly.

"Not doing anything bad? Then why enter the mansion in secrecy? If you had no ill intentions, why move so covertly?"

"I only came here to check something, and that's it. I have no ill intent," the man explained.

"Is that so? Then what exactly are you checking, and are you working for someone?"

"Don't you remember me?" the man asked, but Xin Haotian only responded with a confused expression.

"What are you talking about?"

"The energy, the light energy, the light laws... It's unmistakable. You are Sir Xin Haotian. It's me, Lorenzo Faticanti."

Xin Haotian frowned, realizing that this person knew him. Though he was already famous for his light laws, the tone in the intruder's voice suggested he knew him personally. Xin Haotian tried to recall someone by that name. He studied the man's face again, raising an eyebrow as he felt he had seen this face before. After a few seconds of deep thought, he focused on the intruder once more.

"You... you are Hector Doria, the first prince's guardian knight?" Xin Haotian asked.

A few hundred years ago, an incident occurred where Hector Doria, the first prince of the Doria Empire, nearly lost his life to the devils. At that time, the devils launched a hit-and-run tactic across the border, sending high-ranking devils in teams. The first prince and Lorenzo, his guardian knight, were trapped by the devils in a border area where an ambush had been set, and they were nearly killed.

However, the Sword Saint, the strongest of the continent's great swordmasters, arrived and saved the day with a powerful sword strike. Lorenzo could never forget that day when Xin Haotian demonstrated his lethal sword technique, combined with a beautiful sword dance that obliterated enemies in a dazzling illumination of light.

Because of Xin Haotian's appearance at that time, the Doria Empire was able to counter the devils' strategy. The devils could no longer execute hit-and-run tactics when faced with Xin Haotian, as they knew they couldn't escape once they saw him.

"I didn't have the time to thank you back then, Sir Xin Haotian, for saving both me and His Highness the First Prince. Because of your intervention, we were able to make it back safely," Lorenzo said, despite his immobile state.

"The First Prince tried to find you, but you were too fast and elusive, really difficult to track down. In the end, we were unable to find you and could only hear about your traces from time to time, but we never managed to meet you again."

"You don't need to thank me. At that time, I was merely passing through the border of the Doria Empire from the Vindas Empire. Along the way, I also dealt with some of the trash I encountered. You and that young man are simply a matter of fate, as it all happened to be in my path," Xin Haotian said, waving his hand dismissively.

Suddenly, another man appeared beside Xin Haotian. The unexpected appearance of the newcomer stunned Lorenzo, especially as the man looked at him with interest. Aldrian, having heard everything from his room, decided to come personally due to this sudden turn of events. Now, someone connected to the First Prince was here and seemed to know Xin Haotian.

He had no connection to the First Prince, so why was the so-called guardian knight here?

"So, Lorenzo, why are you sneaking around like a thief? You seem more like an assassin than a knight," Aldrian asked.

Lorenzo frowned at the sudden appearance of the man and the blunt question. He had never seen this person before, but seeing how unfazed the Sword Saint was by his presence, he assumed they must be connected. He then answered.

"His Highness, the First Prince, Prince Hector, is investigating the traces of the mysterious person known as Aldrian, and one of the places he asked me to check is this mansion."

Hearing Lorenzo's answer, both Aldrian and Xin Haotian were stunned and exchanged a glance. Could the First Prince have already tracked Aldrian here—this quickly? Aldrian knew that the moment he entered the war, traces of his actions would be left here and there. It was only a matter of time before someone followed those traces to find him. But it hadn't even been a month since Aldrian left the Rivas Grand Duchy, and yet someone had already picked up on his trail.

*"It seems the First Prince is truly a bothersome person, being able to track Aldrian this quickly. He must be a genius,"* Xin Haotian thought.

As for Aldrian, he pondered for a moment before turning his gaze to Lorenzo.

"How did your master come to believe that someone named Aldrian is here? Who is this Aldrian, anyway?" he asked, his expression neutral.

Lorenzo paused for a moment before answering.

"Actually, this is still a secret known only to a few, but we believe he is the main reason the devils are retreating in this war. As for why the Prince tracked it here, he told me it has to do with a chain of events from the war up until now. His Highness is choosing the most likely path taken by the man named Aldrian. So, my presence here is simply to confirm whether His Highness's speculation is correct or not. As for the details, only His Highness knows."

Lorenzo looked at Xin Haotian and Aldrian.

"Listen, I'm telling you this out of goodwill. We truly have no ill intentions towards you or anyone else here. Even more so now that I know Sir Xin Haotian, our lifesaver, is here. If His Highness knew that Sir Xin Haotian was present, he would have brought gifts instead and called off the investigation here."

Aldrian continued to look at Lorenzo. There was no lie in his words, so Aldrian was assured that Lorenzo truly meant it. However, that was from Lorenzo's point of view, Aldrian couldn't know what the First Prince was thinking.

*"Well, I'll just ask him directly. The opportunity has already presented itself anyway."*

Aldrian would finally have a direct connection to the imperial family. He needed their strength to confront the future problems caused by the devils. For the prophecy, he needed to this power to prepare and unite their vision as soon as possible. After a moment of pondering, Aldrian finally spoke to Lorenzo.

"Alright, bring your prince here, and I will show you Aldrian."

#### *Chapter 230: Meeting the First Prince*

Inside one of the rooms in the Diamond Inn, a handsome young man with brown hair sat with a pensive expression. In front of him knelt a person who had just reported something that made him thoughtful.

*"That guy knows Aldrian? Is this bogus or something else? But he was with the Sword Saint, so there's no way he was joking."* This young man was Hector. After returning to the capital, he immediately began searching for information about the Alchemist Association's auction of the six-striped pill. The first thing he did wasn't to verify whether the pill was genuine, but to investigate the alchemist who concocted it.

As the First Prince, he wanted to uncover this person's identity and establish a connection with them. He knew that if something as astonishing as the six-stripes pill had suddenly appeared, the alchemist who created it must be someone other than the usual grandmasters of the association.

Why did he think this? Because he had never heard of the grandmasters being capable of concocting a five-stripes pill, let alone a six-stripes one.

He thought it must be the work of someone outside the imperial family's attention. He began gathering information about unusual events in the Alchemist Association over the past weeks and even months. However, the only noteworthy incident he found was a meeting where all three grandmasters of the association met with a young man. He couldn't uncover any details about the young man's identity or his relationship with the grandmasters, but the event piqued his interest, and he immediately considered the young man the prime suspect.

Many claimed that the young man was just a beginner because of his behavior, which suggested he wanted to learn alchemy. However, he didn't immediately trust that information and wanted to confirm it first. Even if there was the slightest possibility, he needed to know if this "newbie" was the alchemist he was looking for. He tracked his movements and eventually learned that he had stayed at the Diamond Inn. But by then, the young man had already moved out, and no one knew where he had gone.

After a few days of tracking, he discovered a new clue: someone had purchased a property in the special district. After several more days of investigation, he found strong evidence, he decided to attend the auction first and then try to contact the alchemist.

The auction finally began, and he attended in disguise. When he witnessed the effects of the pills, a thought suddenly struck him—what if this mysterious alchemist had some connection to Aldrian or even Aldrian himself? The timing seemed too coincidental, as it followed the chain of events after people reported seeing Aldrian vanish, and the very next day, this alchemist appeared.

If—only if—the smallest chance existed that this alchemist was the same person, he couldn't ignore it, even though it seemed impossible. He thought that, even if this mysterious alchemist wasn't the same as Aldrian, he must still have some connection to him. The way they both acted was strikingly similar, they were causing shock and awe, yet neither wanted to be known.

Last night, he explained his plan and ordered his trusted knight to investigate the mansion where he suspected the mysterious alchemist was staying. However, after his knight returned and reported what he had found, Hector was shocked by the results, as they were beyond his expectations. The appearance of the Sword Saint was more than he could have imagined, and to think that he also had some connection to Aldrian.

"Is he still in the mansion? The man who knows the information about Aldrian?" Hector asked.

"He's still in that mansion, Your Highness, and he is waiting for you to come," Lorenzo replied. To be honest, he was quite upset when that man requested the prince to visit. Who was he to dare ask a member of the imperial family to come to his place? However, Lorenzo also knew that, at this time, they needed him, so he endured it.



For Hector, this man was quite interesting. To not fear a member of the imperial family—what made him so confident? The Sword Saint? The mysterious alchemist? Or was there something else?

"Let's go. I will come there," Hector said. After that, the two men moved toward Aldrian's mansion.

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After they arrived in front of the mansion, Hector that in disguise, glanced at the mansion for a moment before stepping through the large front gate. The moon still shone beautifully, and with only a few people passing through the area, the road was serene and quiet.

After he arrived at the front door, it opened on its own. Without hesitation, Hector and Lorenzo stepped inside. Once inside, they were stunned to see a beautiful woman and it's an elf?

"Welcome to our humble residence, Your Highness. Please, there is already someone waiting for you," Sylphia said.

Without hesitation, Hector followed Sylphia as she led them to one of the guest rooms. When they stepped inside, they found Aldrian sitting with a serene expression, sipping his tea. Hector, seeing Aldrian for the first time, was stunned, his instincts telling him that the person before him was extraordinary. He looked around but didn't see Xin Haotian or anyone else present.

*"Your Highness, that is the man I mentioned,"* Lorenzo said through voice transmission to Hector.

Hector then walked toward the sofa opposite Aldrian. He looked at Aldrian's serene face and, for some reason, felt a wave of nervousness. Although Aldrian didn't exude any visible aura or energy, his mere presence seemed to carry its own weight, as though it were pressure itself.

*"What's wrong with me?"*

He then sat down while Lorenzo stood behind him. Sylphia brought the tea and placed it on the table for Hector before quietly leaving the room. After waiting for a few moments, and seeing that Aldrian didn't speak, Hector decided to break the silence.

"I came here because my knight told me that you have information about a man named Aldrian. Can you please share it with me now?"

Aldrian, who had been enjoying his tea, looked at Hector and set his cup down.



"Your Highness, could you answer my question first? It's related to what I'm about to discuss with you," Aldrian asked.

Hector frowned but nodded.

"Go ahead."

"How did you find this place?"

"I investigated Aldrian's traces, starting from the town of Ilyon, Falanis, and to the Rivas city. However, my arrival here was purely coincidental. I never thought about Aldrian when I came to this city. My focus was solely on the six-stripes pills and the alchemist who concocted them. My curiosity got the better of me, and my intention was to try to build a connection with him."

"With my network, I traced the buyer of this mansion, who was someone never known to show interest in purchasing properties in this area. It struck me as odd that he suddenly desired to buy a mansion here. After a bit of digging, I discovered that he was only a third party in the transaction. He received a large sum of wealth from an unknown individual. From what I understand, this unknown identity is someone connected to the Alchemist Association. Why do I believe this? Because someone from the association noticed a person with similar characteristics among their members."

"The next question is why the Alchemist Association suddenly bought this mansion in such a roundabout manner. There are a few possibilities, but I've settled on the one that seems most likely: the mysterious alchemist. Considering the secretive way the mansion was purchased, it all connects. I believe the association was trying to find a place for him."

"However, I'm the type of person who looks for even the smallest clues, and this time, those clues might have led me to Aldrian. After last night's auction, I started thinking that the alchemist must be connected to Aldrian, since his appearance came not long after Aldrian disappeared from Ilyon. Others might see this as a coincidence, but for me, it's a possibility."

"After last night's auction, I ordered my knight to check this place, and I was truly shocked by what he found." Hector paused for a moment, looking at Aldrian.

"Are you satisfied with my explanation?" he asked.

Aldrian continued to look at Hector with a calm expression, showing no sign of emotion.

*"He's not lying. Good."* Aldrian had to make sure the first prince didn't learn of this place through suspicious means. This also involved the devils, and Aldrian needed to ensure that the prince wasn't one of their extensions.

Aldrian finally smiled at Hector.

"I'm satisfied, Your Highness. Good. I'm sorry for my rudeness, but I had to ask you about that for personal reasons."

Seeing Aldrian smile, Hector seemed more relaxed. This was far better than the calm face full of pressure he had seen earlier. Hector sighed.

"So, about Aldrian?"

"Well, you've already seen it."

Hector was confused by what the man in front of him said, but a second later, his eyes widened in realization.

"He is right in front of you."