

The Shining Star Above The Heaven

#Chapter 301: After Their Night - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 301: After Their Night

Chapter 301: After Their Night

The sun began to make its presence known to the world, its rays illuminating the land. For many, it was a signal to begin the day's activities. However, in one corner of Flamecrest City, a pair of lovers remained entwined, oblivious to the outside world. Beneath the blanket, their naked bodies still bore the marks of their passionate night together.

Aldrian was the first to wake, his eyes slowly opening to the soft light of morning. His gaze immediately fell on Sylphia, who was nestled against him, her arms wrapped around his body as if seeking comfort.

However, he raised an eyebrow in surprise when he noticed her sleeping face. She appeared even more beautiful than before, her skin smoother, and her aura is more refined. From his perspective, she seemed almost like an entirely different person, leaving him puzzled about what could have caused such a change.

Did their dual cultivation cause all of this? He thought it might have, but he hadn't expected the effects to be so drastic. He had already anticipated that Sylphia's cultivation would improve significantly, and he wasn't disappointed—he could sense the change even now. However, for it to also enhance her appearance, refine her aura, and make her seem as though she had undergone a complete metamorphosis overnight was entirely beyond his expectations.

He didn't dwell on it too much and simply attributed it to his unique energy transforming her in this way. Instead, he chose to enjoy her peaceful sleeping face and the feel of her alluring body pressed against his. Gently, he stroked her hair with love. At that moment, Sylphia began to stir, moving her head closer to his chest and hugging him tighter.

A warm smile spread across his face as he continued to stroke her hair. In a soft voice, he asked,

"How do you feel? Did you sleep well?"

"Mmm, it's the best sleep of my life, and right now, I don't want to wake up yet," she murmured, keeping her head buried in his chest. He smiled at how pampered she seemed, choosing to indulge her. Without complaint, he stayed by her side, holding her close for over an hour after they woke. Only then did Sylphia finally, albeit reluctantly, rise from the bed.

As she stood up, revealing her stunning, naked form, Sylphia froze when her gaze fell upon the full-length mirror nearby. The reflection staring back at her left her utterly stunned. Her face appeared more beautiful, with some of her features seeming sharper, more refined, and exuding a newfound maturity. She also noticed she had grown taller, and her skin looked as smooth and flawless as white jade.

Sylphia was shocked by the drastic changes in her appearance after her intimate night with Aldrian. Could it be that he caused this transformation? She moved her body from side to side, then turned to inspect other changes. A smile spread across her face as she felt more confident in her new change. However, as she admired herself, she suddenly felt a heated gaze from the side. Turning her head, she met Aldrian's eyes, his gaze burning with intensity.

She smiled as she wanted to ask what was going on, but before she could, Aldrian suddenly pounced on her and penetrated her from behind. The next moment, the sounds of moaning and slapping echoed through the entire room. Only after Aldrian had released his load into Sylphia twice did he finally stop, and they left the room after tidying themselves up.

As they walked together, Sylphia couldn't help but comment, her voice carrying a slight sulk through her voice transmission. *"Truly, you're a beast. You've come so much inside me—what if I'm pregnant now?"*

"It can't be helped when you have that voluptuous and sexy body that always stirs my libido. If you're pregnant, then there's no other choice but to go back to the Ivory Empire and ask His Majesty, Emperor Ladwin, to formally ask for your hand in marriage," he replied.

Sylphia felt happy when he said that. However, she knew she wouldn't get pregnant. She knew that Aldrian must have been aware that this wasn't a good time for them to have children, so he must have done something during their intimate moment to prevent his seed from fertilizing. She could sense it as well.

There is still much Aldrian needs to do before they can think about having children. And let's not forget, Aldrian is still only 15 years old! Though, that can be set aside since Aldrian is not ordinary 15-year-old. He's more like an adult than a young boy, with how tall he is and how he acts in front of others. And as the mysterious woman said in her dream, he has a great origin or past, so he might not be just a 15-year-old after all.

What Sylphia thinks isn't false, as it aligns with Aldrian's own thoughts. Every time he releases his seed inside Sylphia's womb, he makes sure to control it so that his seed can't fertilize, ensuring she doesn't get pregnant. This technique, which he learned from the Lust Devil, is quite convenient for him. When the time is right, he can make his seed fertile, and even one shot will be enough to make her pregnant in the future.

They walked down to the lower floor and met Baek Ji-Min, who seemed to have just come from the restaurant. Baek Ji-Min noticed how they walked together, appearing more intimate with each passing day. At that moment, her woman's intuition picked up on something different about their relationship. She looked at Sylphia, whose face was flushed, as Sylphia, in turn, looked at her.

Since they already using a disguise technique, Baek Ji-Min didn't notice any changes in Sylphia's outer appearance, but she could still sense that something was different about her—something that wasn't there before Baek Ji-Min observed how their hands were affectionately connected, and suddenly, a feeling stirred inside her heart. She knew what kind of feeling it was.

Envy.

She didn't understand why she felt this way, especially when she should be happy for her friend, who had found happiness. She knew that Sylphia had feelings for Aldrian, as they sometimes talked when they had time together. Seeing them so close should have made her happy, not filled her with envy or negative emotions toward Sylphia.

She showed a knowing smile at them while hiding her true feelings, which, unfortunately, were clear to Aldrian. He was someone very sensitive to others' emotions, and Baek Ji-Min's negative feelings were easily sensed by him, even though she tried to mask them with a playful smile.

"It looks like I need to keep an eye on her in the future," he thought.

"Sylphia, what did you do last night? Why is your face so flushed?" Baek Ji-Min asked in a teasing tone. Seeing Baek Ji-Min like that, Sylphia's face flushed even more.

"Shut up, stop asking about that!" Sylphia said, trying to close Baek Ji-Min's mouth. The two of them acted like best friends, and just watching them gave Aldrian happiness. Their first meeting could be described as thorny, with them not getting along well, but as time passed, their relationship grew much closer. Now, they could joke around like normal best friends.

He only hoped that this kind of relationship would last forever. To ensure that, he needed to make sure there were no issues and prevent any potential threats to their bond, like negative feelings. If Baek Ji-Min's negative feelings grew and became more intense, he would step in to prevent it, but for now, he would simply observe her.

"Aldrian, I'll borrow Sylphia. You can walk on your own. You're not planning to follow her everywhere, are you?" Baek Ji-Min asked.

Aldrian smiled at her and answered,

"Go ahead, I won't disturb you girls."

Baek Ji-Min grinned and dragged Sylphia away from him. Sylphia could only surrender as her friend pulled her along, heading back toward the direction of their rooms. Aldrian shook his head with a smile and continued walking toward the exit of the inn, thinking about what he wanted to do for the day. Truthfully, after the trouble with the Flamecrest family had been resolved, he didn't have anything left to do in the city.

The only thing he needed to do right now was wait for Carol to do her work. Once the time was right, he would step in. Until then, he basically had free time.

"Well, I might as well take a walk and see how things have developed since yesterday's events."

He strolled around the city with no particular destination in mind. Occasionally, he would stop to observe people going about their activities before continuing on his way. From what he had gathered, everyone considered the Flamecrest family to be the true heroes, having attacked Boraz Fortress without anyone knowing. The information brought by the captives Aldrian had saved the day before had been confirmed, and now there was an uproar throughout the empire.

To think that the Flamecrest family could take down Boraz Fortress with their strength alone was beyond anyone's expectations. Many knew how formidable that fortress was, having become a thorn in their path toward the devil territory. Even with the combined strength of several families, it wasn't guaranteed that the fortress could be taken down. So, it was easy to imagine the reaction of the empire's people once the news spread.

The name of Flamecrest was cheered by the entire populace, even by those who had criticized and condemned the family just days before. Now, they shouted their name in admiration. The contrast was striking compared to only a few days earlier, when many viewed the Flamecrest family with doubt and negativity.

Aldrian smiled at this and kept walking. However, unbeknownst to him, someone spotted his figure and narrowed their eyes.

Chapter 302: Aldrey's Curiosity

Not far from Aldrian, a group of Flamecrest family guards stood. Their leader—an Earl-stage cultivator—watching Aldrian intently. Narrowing his eyes, he retrieved a piece of paper from his storage ring.

The paper bore a drawing of a person, and the figure depicted was identical to Aldrian. He glanced between Aldrian and the drawing several times before confirming that the person matched the image.

The leader then took out a long-distance communication artifact.

"This is Guard Patrol Number 17. We've confirmed the presence of the individual young master Aldrey instructed us to monitor."

In the training ground of the Flamecrest family, Aldrey stood in the center of the battle platform. Opposite him, another member of the Flamecrest family prepared for combat. His opponent was a cultivator at the low Grand Duke stage. The two stood 100 meters apart, each holding an ordinary sword.

A crowd of onlookers had gathered around the battle arena, their anticipation palpable as they awaited the clash.

A few seconds later, both Aldrey and his opponent vanished from sight. The sharp sound of clashing metal suddenly reverberated across the training ground.

Ting!

The wind generated by their clash swept across the surroundings, even reaching the faces of the onlookers, who raised their hands to shield themselves. Following the initial strike, Aldrey and his opponent exchanged moves, each aiming to overpower the other.

However, every attack was expertly blocked, and their battle continued for about a minute. Suddenly, flames ignited beneath Aldrey's feet. Using the burst of power, he closed the distance between himself and his opponent with incredible speed.

His opponent, momentarily stunned by Aldrey's speed, attempted to block Aldrey's next move by predicting the direction of his attack. Watching closely, he saw Aldrey swing his sword toward his upper torso and quickly moved to intercept it.

However, his eyes widened as Aldrey suddenly shifted the sword's trajectory toward his neck with a fluid, elastic motion of his hand.

"A feint attack?"

The Grand Duke stage cultivator was finally forced to use his fire element technique to escape Aldrey's attack. He attempted to repel Aldrey with flames erupting from his pores and spreading outward.

However, he was stunned when Aldrey's sword, seemingly aimed at his neck, instead slashed through the fire, creating a gap in the fiery defense. Seizing the opportunity, Aldrey unleashed his own fire technique with his free hand, slamming it into his opponent's body.

His opponent could only defend himself with his arms as he blocked Aldrey's attack. With a powerful slam, he was thrown several meters away from the impact. The Grand

Duke stage cultivator steadied himself, gasping at what had just transpired. He looked at Aldrey with admiration, then sheathed his sword and gave a slight bow.

"Truly magnificent, young master. Your ability to seamlessly combine technique and swordplay is far more efficient than I could have imagined. I believe I am no longer a match for you," he said.

Aldrey sheathed his sword as well and smiled warmly at his opponent.

"No, Commander Dilan, you are still a formidable opponent. There are areas where I am still lacking compared to you. I will continue to need your guidance in the future."

Commander Dilan smiled at Aldrey's humility, he couldn't help but marvel at the young master's astounding growth. Aldrey was still at the High Duke stage, having only broken through three months ago. Yet, his combat proficiency far exceeded expectations, allowing him to push back a Low Grand Duke stage cultivator like himself.

It wasn't just Aldrey's combat skill—his mastery of the fire element had also advanced to a level capable of rivaling that of a Grand Duke stage cultivator.

"Truly, the genius of the family," Commander Dilan thought.

The onlookers were also amazed by Aldrey's performance, marveling at how skilled their young master was. Many felt as though no one on the continent at the same cultivation level could defeat him.

Their faith in Aldrey and the Flamecrest family grew stronger as they believed that, with Aldrey's presence, their family would continue to thrive and prosper.

Although their family had recently faced the devils' plot, hadn't they ultimately overcome it? The plan had been thwarted, and their family managed to emerge with minimal losses. In fact, it was said that their family had even taken down the Boraz Fortress, according to those who claimed to have been rescued from the site.

This was later confirmed by their elders, who inspected the fortress location and found only a vast expanse of devastation left in its wake.

However, the elders didn't actually know who was responsible for this. All of the captives simply stated that they had been saved by two individuals. They only mentioned that, if asked, the Flamecrest family was the one that had rescued them, which is why that information was conveyed.

The onlookers, being lower-ranking members of the family, believed that the family had a secret force capable of taking down the Boraz Fortress. If only they knew that all the higher-ups in the Flamecrest family were just as confused about this matter. At this moment, they were still investigating the identities of the individuals who had destroyed

the fortress. They had a description and some clues, but they still didn't know who the man and the elf in the description were.

Aldrey ignored the admiring looks from the onlookers as he stepped down from the platform. There was one thing that still lingered in his mind: the strange young man. Aldrey felt an inexplicable sense of familiarity, yet he couldn't place who he was. He couldn't understand why he was drawn to that stranger, but the feeling was strong enough that he could never forget his face.

After the princess's announcement, Aldrey didn't see the young man again, even after searching for him around the city plaza. He thought that the strange feeling had finally ended. However, not long after the captives from the Boraz Fortress were freed, they provided a description of their savior.

From their description, it seemed to match the man he had seen at the plaza, though Aldrey wasn't sure if it was him, as many people shared a similar appearance. But then, the captives mentioned something that became a crucial clue: he was accompanied by an elven woman.

When he saw the strange young man, he also noticed an elven woman standing beside him. Using the information crystal, he showed the captives an image of Aldrian, created from his memories. The moment they saw the image, they confirmed his guess: the young man was the one who had saved them. Finally, he could confirm that the person who had saved the captives was indeed the same individual he had suspected.

He still had many questions even after finding his answer. How could that young man have been at the Boraz Fortress when he was in Flamecrest City? Did he have some kind of teleportation artifact? And how was it connected to the fortress? The captives had said that the man possessed strange abilities, ones that could move them instantly from the fortress to the city plaza. Aldrey wasn't sure what to make of it.

The captives also mentioned that only those two individuals had saved them and destroyed the entire fortress. Doesn't that mean the young man or the elf must be at least at the high emperor stage? If so, who are these people? Cultivators at the high emperor stage or higher are usually well-known across the continent. Why are they in Flamecrest City? Why did they attack the Boraz Fortress, and so on.

All of his curiosity and attraction toward the young man led him to seek out any trace of him. He spread Aldrian's image to the Flamecrest guards around the city, just in case they spotted him. The Grand Duke also asked about it, so Aldrey simply told his father that Aldrian was responsible for the Boraz Fortress's downfall.

The only people who knew this information were him and his father because Aldrey did not want to spread it just yet. He wanted to understand the young man's motives and origins first. The Grand Duke agreed with his son and decided to let Aldrey handle the matter.

After Aldrey stepped down from the battle platform, he saw one of the guards rush to his side. The guard handed him a small piece of paper, and as Aldrey opened it and read the contents, he raised his eyebrows and looked at the messenger.

"I'll change my attire first. I'll be there shortly," he said.

"Yes, young master." The messenger nodded before excusing himself.

Aldrey had just received news that the young man had been seen strolling around the city. Not wanting to miss the chance, he hurried to change out of his training attire and into something more casual. To avoid being recognized, he donned a robe to cover his body and face, ensuring that no one would spot him.

In a part of the attraction district, Aldrian continued walking with his hands behind his back. For the past fifteen minutes, he had sensed a group of people following him, but they seemed to have no ill intentions. When he realized they were from the Flamecrest family, he didn't mind and allowed them to follow.

From the looks of it, the Flamecrest family had already gotten wind of his connection to the Boraz Fortress's downfall. However, he didn't care if they knew. He understood that, sooner or later, it would become known to them.

Aldrian then entered a restaurant and ordered a feast along with a private room. He wanted to set the stage for anyone who wished to meet him, as he was certain someone from the higher-ups of the Flamecrest family would come.

His guess was confirmed 15 minutes later when he sensed someone in a robe approaching the restaurant after interacting with a group of guards. When Aldrian saw who it was, he raised his eyebrows.

"Father."

Chapter 303: Conversation Between Father and Son 1

Although the person approaching his place was already covered in a black robe, Aldrian easily recognized his father. To be honest, he was quite surprised that the visitor was his father himself. Initially, he had thought he would meet one of the family's elders, but to think it was his father instead.

After pondering for a moment, he concluded that his father might have come personally to demonstrate how seriously the Flamecrest family considered this matter.

He saw his father walking toward the restaurant and approaching one of the staff members, who seemed visibly shocked by his father's arrival. Normally, the restaurant's

policy prohibited divulging customer information in private rooms, but it appeared the staff member had informed his father about his room's information when asked.

It was understandable—Flamecrest was the true ruler here, and the staff must have been terrified to refuse the young master's request. Aldrian then watched as his father and the staff member walked toward his room, stopping in front of his door.

Although Aldrian appeared calm, inwardly he felt nervous. This was the first time he would meet his father face-to-face after leaving the secret realm. He wasn't sure if his father would recognize him, especially since he had taken great care not to show any signs that he was Aldrian.

Not long after, the staff knocked on his door, and with a wave of his hand, Aldrian opened it from where he was seated. His father finally saw him, just as Aldrian also looked directly at his father. Their eyes met—red against blue. There was no discernible expression in Aldrian's eyes, while Aldrey's face reflected a hint of curiosity.

"Why do his eyes remind me of Irene?" Aldrey thought, though he quickly dismissed the notion and stepped forward, positioning himself in front of the staff to avoid any misunderstanding.

"My apologies if I disturbed your time with my sudden visit, but may I have a moment of your time to talk?" Aldrey said.

"What an honor it is for me to receive a visit from the young master of the Flamecrest family. Of course, young master, we can talk for as long as you wish," Aldrian replied.

Aldrey nodded and gestured for the restaurant staff to leave before entering the room and sitting across from Aldrian. Once seated, he didn't speak immediately but instead began to observe Aldrian carefully. His expression shifted into a frown as he studied the young man before him more intently, sensing something peculiar.

"Why does he feel so familiar? Is it because of his eyes that resemble Irene's? No, there's something else about this man," Aldrey thought.

Aldrian appeared relaxed, sipping his drink and closing his eyes as if savoring it, but inwardly, his nerves were on edge. Sensing his father's intense stare, he was keenly aware that Aldrey was scrutinizing him. Judging from his father's expression, something seemed off.

"He doesn't know, right?" Aldrian wondered.

After 15 seconds of silence, Aldrey decided to break it.

"Once again, my apologies for my sudden visit. I must say, judging by the feasts here and the private room, I suppose you were already expecting someone to come to you?"

He glanced at the generous portions and the room, which seemed designed to accommodate more than one person. Moreover, Aldrian didn't appear particularly surprised by his arrival.

"Perhaps that's just your impression, young master. I simply wanted to enjoy myself," Aldrian replied with a slight smile.

Aldrey wasn't convinced by Aldrian's response, but rather than engage in meaningless chit-chat, he decided to move straight to the main topic.

"The purpose of my visit here is connected to what happened at Boraz Fortress yesterday. I'm sure you already know what I'm referring to," Aldrey said, watching Aldrian's reaction carefully. However, Aldrian remained unfazed, even at the mention of Boraz Fortress.

"There were many captives—people who had been missing for years, as well as those who were recently kidnapped. We had no knowledge of their location until yesterday, when they reported being rescued by someone. All of them gave the same description. After my own confirmation, it became clear that the one who saved them and destroyed Boraz Fortress was you." Aldrey paused, his gaze fixed on Aldrian.

"There are many questions in my mind that I hope you can answer. Are you willing to satisfy the curiosity of this man?"

Aldrian smiled upon hearing the way his father spoke to him. With such a polite tone, how could he refuse? Even if his father hadn't been polite, Aldrian would still have told him everything eventually. He didn't want to push too far and risk a misunderstanding—especially since his mother would likely scold him for it later.

"Please ask, young master. I will gladly satisfy your curiosity," Aldrian replied.

Aldrey sighed in quiet relief, finding the young man surprisingly reasonable and easy to talk to. He had prepared himself for a potential rejection, expecting someone so powerful to be aloof or arrogant. Yet this young man had shown none of those traits, and for that, Aldrey was grateful.

"Then, may I know your name? It feels rather rude not to ask before we continue our conversation," Aldrey said.

"My name is Drian," Aldrian answered without hesitation, his expression calm and unwavering.

"Okay, young master Drian, where do you come from?"

"I'm just a vagabond cultivator seeking adventure, so I don't really have a place to call home or an origin. However, I spent my childhood in the western region of the Ivory

Empire," Aldrian replied. Of course, by "western region," he meant the Everlasting Silent Forest, though Aldrey wouldn't know that. Instead, Aldrey assumed he was referring to the city of Balin, where the elves were known to be more tolerant of other races. It made sense to him that Aldrian was traveling with a female elf.

"I see. Then, why are you here? I mean, in this city—are you looking for adventure here?" Aldrey asked again.

"Well, you could say that. I heard that the Flamecrest family was facing some unexpected trouble, so I came to this city to look into it. I was curious to see if the famous Flamecrest family was really as the rumors describe. But from what I've seen, it seems it was just the devils playing tricks."

Hearing Aldrian's answer, Aldrey narrowed his eyes. From Aldrian's response, certain phrases and the tone of his voice caught his attention. It seemed that Aldrian had known from the start that the Flamecrest family's trouble with the devils was something unexpected, and that the family itself was innocent. Aldrian also didn't appear to trust the rumor about the Flamecrest harboring devils, despite claiming he had come to investigate the truth of it.

If he had truly come to the city just to check the rumor, he wouldn't have phrased it as "the Flamecrest family has unexpected trouble."

As Aldrian noticed his father deep in thought, studying him closely, he gave him a slight smile. He knew that his father must have caught some deeper meaning in his words—after all, Aldrey was incredibly perceptive.

Suddenly, memories from his childhood surfaced. He recalled the times when his father had taught him cultivation, techniques, and everything else to prepare him for the world. Those were precious moments that still occasionally surfaced in his mind. He knew how his father had always watched over him and strived to give him the best.

But now, sitting before him—not as his father, but as a stranger with whom he was having a conversation—it felt strange.

"Why are you suddenly smiling?" Aldrey's voice snapped Aldrian out of his thoughts. It seemed he had smiled unconsciously, but it didn't matter. Those memories were too important to him, and showing his smile to his father felt like no big deal.

"I'm just remembering something from my past," Aldrian replied.

Aldrey didn't understand why, but seeing Aldrian's smile stirred an indescribable feeling within him. Aldrian's blue eyes and the smile he had just shown reminded him of Irene, and for a moment, he felt as though he were looking at his own son. His son had inherited many features from his mother, and whenever he smiled, it always reminded him of her.

But then, Aldrey shook his head. The face before him was different from Irene's or Aldrian's. The only similarity was the blue eyes. It seemed he was reminded of them because he missed them so much.

"Ah, when will I be able to see Irene and Aldrian again?" Aldrey thought to himself.

He quickly composed himself and asked another question.

"How did you do it? How were you at the Boraz fortress, destroying it, when you only just heard the princess's announcement in this city? I'm certain it was you, not someone else. I saw your face yesterday, after all. The elf is a huge clue too. But... well, you don't have to answer if it involves a secret of yours."

"No, it's not really a secret. I simply found a teleportation artifact from the devils that led to that place, so I used it," Aldrian explained, before taking another sip of his drink.

Aldrey fell silent once more, never breaking his gaze from Aldrian. Although he wanted to know the details of how Aldrian found the teleportation artifact, there was something that had always been nagging at him. After a moment, he asked the question that had been lingering in his mind.

"Have we met before? Why do I feel so familiar with you?"

Chapter 304: Conversation Between Father and Son 2

"Have we met before? Why do I feel so familiar with you?"

Once that question left his mouth, Aldrey looked at Aldrian's reaction. He focused on those unreadable blue eyes. Aldrian didn't show much expression aside from a smile, leaving Aldrey uncertain of what he was thinking. A person like this was dangerous to face as an opponent because nothing could be discerned from that face.

Aldrian also looked into his father's eyes, thinking of a thousand ways to answer the question. He could lie to his father, or he could be honest and simply admit that he was Aldrian. After considering for a moment, he decided there was no harm in revealing himself now. Sooner or later, his father would find out anyway.

He felt it was the right time for his father to know that his son had already left the secret realm and made his mark on the continent. The son he had trained for so long had grown into someone capable of bearing the burden of their family's challenges.

His recent meeting with his mother had shown him that he could trust his parents' judgment and not overthinking. With a sigh, he looked at his father and said,

"We met a few years ago."

Aldrey frowned. They had met a few years ago? Where? He tried to recall the young man's face, but nothing about him seemed familiar. Aldrey hadn't encountered many new people since leaving the secret realm, and he was certain he had never seen this face before.

Even if he stretched the timeline back to when he was still trapped in the secret realm, there was no one like this young man there either. And before being trapped? He was confident he had never encountered this young man then, either.

"Sorry, I don't think I've ever seen you before. Is it possible that you saw me, but I never noticed you?" Aldrey asked.

"No, we met face to face. You always talked to me," Aldrian replied.

Aldrey frowned more deeply. Always talked to him? Suddenly, something clicked in his mind. The feeling he got when he saw this young man was unusual and inexplicable. It was the first time he had ever experienced such a sensation, and it had been bothering him since yesterday.

His heart trembled as a realization struck, aligning with his instincts. His gaze wavered as he looked at Aldrian, the questions in his mind multiplying.

"I want to ask again. Did we meet outside the empire?" Aldrey asked, but Aldrian could hear the change in his father's voice—it was trembling slightly.

"Yes," Aldrian replied.

"Were you close to me?"

"Yes."

"Was your mother also close to me?"

"Yes."

"Are you in disguise right now?"

"Yes." Aldrian then slowly removed his disguise. His black hair began to shift, turning red from the tips upward. His face started to change, becoming more radiant—a face so striking it could captivate even a goddess. His blue eyes remained the same but grew clearer, perfectly complementing the now-unveiled features beneath the disguise.

"Did you always come to me and your mother when you were afraid of something?" Aldrey's voice was slightly choked, and his eyes had turned faintly red. He struggled to hold back his emotions.

"Yes."

"Did you always follow me in whatever I did outside the house?" By "house," Aldrey meant their home inside the secret realm.

"Yes."

"Did you always try to imitate me in everything I did?"

"Yes."

"Did your mother always scold me when she saw you come back from outside with a dirty body and wounds?"

"Yes."

By now, nearly all of Aldrian's disguise had disappeared, leaving only a small section of black hair on his head. His true appearance, the full glory of Aldrian Aster, was revealed—the face Aldrey had not seen for the past five years. Although five years had passed, Aldrey could still see traces of the little Aldrian in that face.

"Did your father and mother love you?" Aldrey stood up from his seat and slowly approached Aldrian.

"Yes."

Aldrian's smile grew warmer with each question his father asked. At this moment, Aldrey's red eyes were glistening, and Aldrian could see how much effort it took for his father to hold back his tears. Though none had fallen yet, it would only take the slightest push for Aldrey to break down and cry.

"Did you call me 'father'?" Aldrey asked, his voice already trembling slightly as he sniffled, stopping beside Aldrian.

Aldrian stood up, meeting his father's gaze. At that moment, his disguise fully vanished. His face bore an undeniable resemblance to Irene, yet exuded masculinity and charisma—a striking combination that could captivate anyone at first sight.

"Yes," Aldrian replied, his tone steady yet warm. He then bowed his head slightly and said,

"I'm here, father."

Unlike his meeting with his mother, where he had shed his tears in front of her, overwhelmed by the emotion of seeing her again after so long, this time he held back his tears. Though deeply moved by finally meeting his father face to face after so many

years, he wanted to show his father that he was no longer the same child he once was. He had grown into someone dependable, someone who could bring pride to his father.

Aldrey instantly hugged Aldrian. In that moment, he was no longer the powerful cultivator at the duke stage, nor the genius of today's generation from the Flamecrest family. He was simply a father, releasing the pent-up longing for his little family—especially his son. Aldrian's height was nearly the same as Aldrey's, so he could hug his son comfortably. Aldrey patted Aldrian's back a few times, as if to show just how precious he was to him.

Aldrian returned his father's hug, and after a minute, Aldrey gently grabbed his son's shoulders, looking into his face. Although no tears had fallen, Aldrey's nose and eyes were red from holding back his emotions, and only the sound of his sniffing could be heard.

As he looked at Aldrian's face again, a wave of pride surged within him. He had never felt this proud before, seeing how much his son had grown over the last five years. Aldrian was nearly the same height as him now, and he seemed to have become a strong cultivator in his own right. Any problems or burdens that had weighed on his shoulders seemed to fade away the moment he saw Aldrian.

"What is going on, son? Why are you here? Wait—what happened in the secret realm? How can you—"

"Relax, father. Let me tell you my story, and you'll have all your questions answered."

Aldrey fell silent. Even the way Aldrian spoke now was different—more mature. There was no trace of the childlike voice he remembered from the secret realm. Aldrey nodded and pulled his seat closer to Aldrian, wanting to sit near his son and hear everything. He was determined to understand what had happened to his son and why he was here.

After that, Aldrian began telling his father about his adventures, starting from the moment he left the secret realm and made his way to the Ivory Empire. What he shared was largely the same as what he had told his mother, though some parts were omitted or altered due to the secrets he still held.

Aldrey listened to his son's story for the next few hours, his face showing many different expressions. However, the most prominent was a look of pride, which appeared every time Aldrian spoke of his actions, decisions, and the results he had achieved. In that moment, Aldrey felt as though his life was complete. Even if he were to die young, he would have no regrets. His son had become so strong and dependable, even forging his own connections with sovereigns and noble families.

Although his son's story seemed absurd, Aldrey knew better. Aldrian could not be measured by normal standards. How could a young man, whose very birth caused a phenomenon with the appearance of a dragon and phoenix visible across the entire

continent, be considered ordinary? Aldrey, more than anyone, understood just how extraordinary his son was, with potential and strength beyond imagination.

From the very first day he began training his son in cultivation, Aldrian had proven compatible with many elements. When he left the secret realm with Irene, Aldrey believed there was no one on the continent who could defeat Aldrian at the same cultivation level, even if that person were the most talented cultivator from a noble family. In fact, Aldrey was terrified by the out-of-this-world growth of his son, when he had personally trained him.

But then he smiled at Aldrian, a smile that showed a father's relief at seeing his son safely before him. Although all of Aldrian's achievements were monumental, making the entire continent tremble, there was nothing more reassuring than seeing his son safe and sound.

"Your adventure is truly amazing, son. I have no doubt that your name will be etched into the history of this continent—no, I believe once your name is known to the world, it will resonate across the entire continent. Your achievements are far from simple; they have caused an uproar across the continent," Aldrey said.

Aldrian also smiled, simply accepting his father's compliment. Just like when he was a child, he felt proud and glad that his father acknowledged his actions and achievements. However, he saw his father's expression shift to one of irritation. Aldrey then asked in a slightly annoyed tone,

"So, mind telling me why you didn't mention who you really were earlier, 'Drian'? I feel so foolish for speaking to you so politely; I just want to bury myself." His father emphasized the 'Drian' in a sarcastic tone.

Aldrian's smile turned rigid, knowing that his father was likely itching to give him a good beating!

Chapter 305: Conversation Between Father and Son 3

"Wait, Father, let me explain," Aldrian said with a rigid smile.

"Brat, you'd better have a good reason. If not, you'll remember your past when you ran back to your mother crying," Aldrey said, his gaze burning.

Aldrian smiled bitterly, looking at his father like this. It felt as if he were seeing the father of his childhood, who sometimes punished him for his mischief.

"Father, I just wanted to let you realize it on your own instead of shocking you with my presence here. I thought it wouldn't be good for you if I suddenly announced myself," Aldrian said hurriedly.

"Not good for me?! Do you not know who I am? Do you think I'm some old man on death's door? Even if you had shown yourself at the city plaza back then, there wouldn't have been a problem—as long as Flamecrest didn't know about your relationship with me," Aldrey replied, sparks of flame already flickering from his attire.

Seeing his father like this, Aldrian quickly thought of a way to divert Aldrey's anger. Finally, he came up with something that might calm his father down. Though he knew his current body would sustain little to no damage even if Aldrey spanked him with all his might, he still didn't want to relive those childhood moments—running to his mother crying after being spanked.

However, Aldrian then noticed his father exhale, and the sparks of flame on his body disappeared. Aldrey's expression suddenly shifted into a smile before he burst into laughter. Aldrian was stunned by how quickly his father's demeanor changed. When the laughter subsided, Aldrey's face now bore a teasing expression.

"Truly, even after becoming like this, you still have this side of your character. I was afraid you'd grow more aloof and indifferent once you came out of the secret realm," Aldrey said, his expression softening with relief.

"I worried that after I left you, and when you emerged from the secret realm, your character might change—exposed to the ugliness of the outside world. That you'd become arrogant and forget your past."

Aldrian smiled warmly.

"Of course not, Father. I'm only like this in front of you and Mother," Aldrian said with a smile. "To be honest, after coming out of the secret realm, I've learned many things. Naturally, I had to adapt to the outside world. Sometimes, I've had to go to extremes to achieve my goals. Well, you must know what I mean, right?"

Aldrey also smiled as he grabbed Aldrian's shoulder once again.

"I know, son. As long as you don't go against your moral values, I have nothing to say. The most important thing is that you're safe. Sometimes, I've wondered about the situation in the secret realm—how you were doing, whether my son was still okay, whether my son was this or that. But seeing you now, I can finally put my heart at ease."

Aldrey then leaned back in his chair.

"So, what are you planning to do from now on? After the uproar you caused, everyone already assumes the Flamecrest family was behind the destruction of Boraz Fortress. At this point, the only person who knows your identity is your grandfather, Grand Duke Flamecrest. Although he doesn't yet realize you're his grandson, he's interested in you and even wants to meet you because of what you've done."

"I don't think it's the right time for me to meet Grand Duke Flamecrest yet, Father. I believe the right moment will be after I've finished my business here in the empire. By then, I'll feel more confident meeting him."

"What business do you have in the empire?" Aldrey asked.

"Devil hunting."

Hearing this, Aldrey frowned and touched his chin, as if deep in thought.

"Devil hunting? I see. Do you need any help?"

"No, Father. I just need the Flamecrest family as my support," Aldrian replied calmly.

"Not long from now, another chaos will erupt in the empire. At that time, Flamecrest can pour oil on the fire. With this event, the devils' network in the empire will collapse. They'll be forced to stay low and refrain from acting for a long time—perhaps even until the time of prophecy."

"What kind of chaos?" Aldrey asked, his gaze narrowing.

A wicked grin spread across Aldrian's face—something Aldrey had never seen from him before.

"The Larson family."

"Larson family? What about them? They hold the same status as the Flamecrest," Aldrey said, his tone warning Aldrian. "I hope you're careful with whatever you're planning, Aldrian. While the Flamecrest is stronger and has gained momentum due to recent events, the Larsons are still a grand duchy with immense power and connections. If you provoke them, even the imperial family might have to intervene."

Aldrey leaned forward, his expression serious. "In the political landscape, they wield more influence than the Flamecrest. Unlike us, who focus on the borders, they've spent generations building connections across the empire. If something happens to them, it could affect many parties. You must tread carefully."

Aldrian merely smiled in response to his father's concerns.

"What you said is true, Father. However, no matter how much bigger their influence or power may be, if they are found to be working with the devils, there will only be one result for them."

Aldrey's eyes widened.

"What?"

"Yes, Father. The Larson family has deep connections with the devils, and once that's revealed to the world, there will be no escape for them." Aldrian spoke with a serious expression, but then relaxed his face.

"Before I continue explaining the details to you, I have a question, Father. It's about Princess Loraine."

Aldrey narrowed his eyes.

"Her Highness? What is it about?"

"How is your relationship with her?" Aldrian asked.

"Well, I've known her since we attended the same academy. We were pretty close since we were even in the same class, and had a rivalry back then, but to this day, our relationship is still close," Aldrey said. Then, realizing that Aldrian's question likely had something to do with his plans, he added, "What's going on, Aldrian? What does this have to do with Her Highness?"

"Nothing, Father. I just wanted to ask about her since I saw her in the city plaza. I'm just curious because I've never seen her directly, and I noticed she was close to you. I wanted to ask about that." Aldrian spoke casually, though in truth, he was unsure whether to reveal the truth about the princess to his father. After hearing Aldrey's response, Aldrian decided to hold back.

If they were truly close, once Aldrian revealed the truth, there would likely be moments when the princess and Aldrey would meet. At that point, the princess might notice something strange about his father. Aldrian couldn't guarantee that his father would be able to control himself, especially considering that the princess was one of the Lust Devil's lovers.

The Flamecrest family had long guarded the border against the devils, and now his friend was revealed to have a connection with them? That kind of betrayal would make his father despise the princess, and it could even lead to offending the imperial family, something Aldrian hoped to avoid. Not all members of the imperial family were complicit in such matters; they simply didn't know about the princess's ties to the devils.

Aldrey continued to narrow his eyes at Aldrian, but since he couldn't read anything from his son, he chose to accept it and let it slide. Given all the experiences Aldrian had gone through, based on his story, Aldrey knew that his son wouldn't do anything that could be detrimental to him.

Afterward, Aldrian explained the Larson family's connection to the devils and the fall of the Duclan dukedom. Of course, his father was already aware of the Duclan family's downfall. Aldrian deliberately left out the part about the princess's connection to the devils. When he finished telling his father, Aldrey gasped in shock.

"If that's the truth, then the empire has truly been manipulated by the devils for so long!" Aldrey thought.

Losing a dukedom like Duclan's has greatly weakened the empire's power. Many parties deeply regretted the incident at the time, but to think it was a ploy of the devils. To soothe his father's anger, Aldrian explained his plan regarding the Larson family and how the Flamecrest could help bring down the traitorous family. Hearing his son's plan brightened Aldrey's mood, as he found it to be an excellent strategy.

They continued talking about many things, enjoying the feast in front of them. The atmosphere was light and joyous, and they lost track of time, letting their conversation flow without a care.

The Larson Grand Duchy, located in the northwest of the Vindas Empire, shares a border with the Atria Empire. For many years, this region had remained peaceful, as the Atria Empire had not been hostile toward the Doria Empire. The tranquility allowed the Larson family to expand their influence without the threat of border conflicts.

Inside the luxurious room of the Larson family's mansion, Grand Duke Larson sat at the head of a long table, surrounded by several of the family's elders. With short brown hair, a beard, and sharp, cunning eyes reminiscent of a sly fox, he exuded an air of cunningness. However, the ugly expression on his face made it clear that something had deeply angered him.

"Now, does everyone understand why the hell princess is helping the Flamecrest instead of following the plan?"

Chapter 306: The Larson Family's Confusion

The elders could only look at their family's patriarch in silence, equally baffled by the princess's sudden and unexpected change. The devils had assured them that once the princess announced Flamecrest as the sinner, the Larsons would deliver a fatal blow to Flamecrest. Even if Flamecrest wanted to resist the accusation, they would be powerless against the combined forces of the many nobles and the imperial family.

Once Flamecrest had no way out, it would only be a matter of time before they collapsed, and their position was taken by the Larsons. With Flamecrest gone, the only remaining threat to their family would be the imperial family. However, with the princess on their side, they would have the imperial family's support. There seemed to be nothing wrong with the devils' plan.

However, what they heard from Flamecrest City yesterday was truly ridiculous and had made Grand Duke Larson angrier than ever before. The first thing he heard after emerging from a week of seclusion this morning was the princess was suddenly not

following the script, and there was other news that seemed utterly absurd—news that Flamecrest had attacked the Boraz Fortress and secretly destroyed it. Many were shocked upon hearing this, as the news struck like a sudden thunderclap on a sunny day.

How could a fortress that had stood for millions of years and served as an obstacle to the empire's attacks on devil territory fall in just one day? And to think it was brought down by the Flamecrest family's power alone! With this news coinciding with the princess's announcement on the same day, Flamecrest was enjoying momentum like never before. Many began congratulating the Flamecrest family on their glory and success.

The Flamecrest family's status soared, and now even the imperial family would have to step back in acknowledgment of what the Flamecrest had accomplished. After this event, there was no way the devils' plan could work against them anymore. If they continued pushing the devils' agenda, it might be seen as suspicious, leading the masses to speculate and create rumors that would ultimately favor the Flamecrest instead.

"How in the hell could they have destroyed the Boraz Fortress?! Do we not have any spies in the area who saw any movement from the Flamecrest forces crossing the border?"

"Our spies didn't see any movement, my lord. We've already questioned all of them, and their answers are the same. Even the locals reported seeing nothing unusual," one of the elders replied.

"Then, are you telling me the Flamecrest destroyed the fortress with so few men that no one noticed even the smallest sign of their presence?!" Grand Duke Larson shouted, his voice shaking the entire room. His middle Emperor-stage cultivation aura spread, causing the elders to feel immense pressure.

Taking down a fortress that housed Emperor-stage devils and thousands of troops would require significant resources and a large number of troops. Yet, they hadn't seen any movement like that yesterday or even in the days before. The idea that a small team of cultivators could have destroyed the fortress was dismissed, as it seemed utterly impossible.

"Useless bunch! Execute all the spies in that area. What use are they if they can't even detect something as big as troop movements?!" Grand Duke Larson ordered. An elder stood up and rushed outside to carry out the command.

The grand duke then sent a message to his temple while deep in thought. With all the plans having failed and the Flamecrest at the peak of their momentum, he couldn't find any opening to attack them. He gritted his teeth, realizing he needed to understand what went wrong with the plans before he could make his next move. Something

strange had happened for the devil's plan to fail, and the sudden fall of the Boraz Fortress only added to the mystery. He lacked the information he needed to piece it all together.

"Everyone, get out!" the grand duke shouted, and the elders immediately left the room in an orderly manner. Once they were gone, Grand Duke Larson leaned back in his seat and after a few moments, he took out a communication artifact.

"I need to ask something," he said. Not long after, a man entered the room. He immediately addressed the grand duke without any courtesy.

"What is it?" His tone held no respect, and his eyes glinted with slight contempt. However, Grand Duke Larson ignored this as he asked his question.

"Is there nothing from your side to explain what's going on?"

"We still don't know much. This matter is still under investigation, and I can't say anything more."

"Are the devils also caught off guard by this?"

"Like I said, I don't know. We're still waiting for confirmation about what happened with the Flamecrest family," the man replied. They fell silent as the grand duke thought for a moment and sighed.

"Then, do the devils have another plan after this?"

"We haven't decided yet."

Hearing this, Grand Duke Larson sighed again.

"Alright, I understand. Please let me know if there's any development and if we need to take any action."

After that, the man left without looking back at the grand duke. The grand duke didn't mind the lack of respect from the man. Although his cultivation was lower, the man was actually the bridge between him and the devils.

That man was the devils' envoy, placed by their side to assist with the Larson family's operations. Right now, many powerful devils were stationed within their territory, ready to mobilize if needed. Thanks to them, the Larson family had a hidden trump card.

However, in return, the devils demanded a base within the Vindas Empire as a hub for their operations. He was the one who had accepted the devils' whispers and was now working with them, so he couldn't complain about their lack of respect. After all, it was he who needed them to achieve his goals. Furthermore, because of their plan, the

Larson family now had greater strength, bolstered by the support of the imperial family—something that would have been difficult to achieve alone.

It was a mutually beneficial arrangement for both sides, so he saw nothing wrong with it. In this time of prophecy, which seemed to be drawing near, he chose to side with the winner. He was one of those who feared the uncertain results of the prophecy, knowing it could be devastating for his life and family. Only after working with the devils did he finally understand why such a prophecy existed. The devils' influence had already spread throughout the empire, and he had no doubt that other empires had been infiltrated by them as well.

If the scale of infiltration was the same as it had been in the Vindas Empire, chaos would soon spread across the continent once the time was right. It would be no surprise if darkness engulfed the land. With so many traitors and devils in each empire, it would be impossible to contain them once they began their attacks.

"Yes, I just want to survive, to ensure my family's survival in the future," Grand Duke Larson thought.

"I will be the last one laughing in the end." His eyes gleamed with confidence, certain that his choice was the right one.

After a few hours of conversation, Aldrian and Aldrey were finally done. Aldrey stood up, clearly ready to leave the room.

"Ah, you'd better be careful. After this, the elders will likely find out about you. I've already spread your face drawing to the city guard captains, which is why they can find you and report back to me. The elders will probably match your drawing with the descriptions they got from the people you saved at the Boraz and come looking for you. The only reason I'm the first one to know about you is because I saw you in the city plaza yesterday, and my instincts played a big part in this," Aldrey said to his son proudly.

"It's okay, Father. Let them come. I think it's also good because I can use them in the future. When your relationship with Mother comes to light, they can be useful to help you if needed," Aldrian replied.

Aldrey nodded and sighed.

"Aish, I want to talk to you more, but I'm afraid this has already gone on too long and is attracting attention from your grandfather. I can already imagine all the questions he'll have for you. And I want to meet your group, especially my future daughter-in-law," Aldrey said with a teasing tone. He was truly amazed by Aldrian, to think he could make the princess of the Ivory Empire his woman.

Of course, he already knew about the famous Princess Sylphia of the Ivory Empire, who had attracted many men because of her beauty. Who wouldn't want the elven princess as their wife? He had seen her a long time ago when he visited the Ivory Empire and met with their emperor. He'd heard that they were strict with outsiders, but to think that the emperor would allow his daughter to journey with his son...

Aldrey could only take pride in his son's ability. No woman could escape his son's handsomeness and charisma!

"It's okay, father. There will be more chances in the future. In fact, after the issues within the empire are resolved, we can meet more freely," Aldrian said.

Aldrey sighed again and smiled at Aldrian. "Alright, take care of yourself. Remember, whatever you do, your safety is the most important."

"I will, father." Aldrian answered. After that, Aldrey left the room, leaving Aldrian alone.

Aldrian continued smiling even after his father was gone, glad that he had finally been able to meet and talk with his father face to face. After a moment of happiness, he decided to continue walking through the city. His mood was excellent, and he felt that today would bring something

Chapter 307: The Sudden Disturbance Inside the Inn

Back at the inn where Aldrian and the others are staying, Sylphia is with Baek Ji-Min and Eleine. Shortly after Sylphia and Baek Ji-Min begin talking in Sylphia's room, Eleine joins them. They discuss what happened to Sylphia the previous night and how her relationship with Aldrian right now.

They were truly shocked by Sylphia's transformation, as they had never witnessed such a drastic change overnight. She was more beautiful than ever, and her cultivation had advanced with absurd speed. Now at the Middle Earl stage, she had risen by two minor stages—a feat that would typically take years, achieved in just one night!

However, after hearing what happened to Sylphia and Aldrian, Baek Ji-Min and Eleine understood that Sylphia's sudden rise in cultivation was likely because of Aldrian—no, it had to be because of him. They couldn't help but blush when they heard what transpired between Aldrian and Sylphia the previous night, as it was the first time they realized Aldrian could be such a beast.

Eleine, as Aldrian's guardian, felt happy that her young master had found love—and with none other than the princess of the Ivory Empire. While she didn't concern herself with whom Aldrian loved, she hoped for the best for him and believed Sylphia was a good match for her young master.

Baek Ji-Min, on the other hand, felt embarrassed hearing Sylphia's story, but at the same time, a wave of jealousy stirred within her. She couldn't fully grasp what was happening, but every time Sylphia spoke about how deeply she loved Aldrian and how he held her with such tenderness and affection, it made Baek Ji-Min's heart burn. The feeling was both uncomfortable and alarming, and she couldn't understand why it was surfacing now.

Was the lingering effect of the Envy Devil's domain still influencing her mind or body?
Or...

Did it mean her attraction to Aldrian wasn't just tied to his unique Being's essence but also to him as a man?

When she reached that conclusion, she realized she no longer understood her own feelings. She had been certain her fascination with Aldrian stemmed from his unique being's essence. But to be drawn to him as a man? A man she could imagine spending her entire life with?

She didn't know. And it seemed she would have to uncover the truth about her feeling herself.

They continued their conversation until, suddenly, a commotion erupted not far from their room. A faint tremble ran through the walls, prompting them to investigate. When they checked to see what had happened, they found a shattered door and lingering traces of energy from a technique. Some people had already gathered, drawn by the disturbance, and were approaching the scene.

Sylphia and the others approached the destroyed door and peered inside the room. What they saw left them stunned—a room in ruins, as if a battle had just taken place. In the midst of the destruction, they saw a man lying in a pool of blood. He seemed dead, but Sylphia and the others could sense that he was still breathing, albeit very shallowly.

The crowd hesitated to help the man, unsure of his circumstances. What if he was a criminal? What if he was on the wanted list of some powerful faction? These uncertainties made them reluctant to intervene.

Sylphia and the others also hesitated, but then Sylphia noticed something beside the man's body that caught her attention. After bracing herself, she decided to approach the man.

"Sylphia." Eleine and Baek Ji-Min tried to stop her, but she reassured them and stepped in front of the dying man. What she saw was a small piece of paper, drenched in blood, but still legible. On it was a single word: 'LARSON.'

"Larson? Does this mean the Larson family? Is this man from the Larson family?" Sylphia thought, gazing at the man in his dying state. It seemed as though survival was impossible for him.

Sylphia, knowing the Larson family were the bad guys in the empire, felt a strong urge to let him die. But she couldn't confirm his identity.

What if this man was actually a victim of the Larson family and left behind a clue that could reveal them as the culprits?

Not thinking any longer, Sylphia decided to save the man first. Regardless of his identity, she had to help him. If he was from the Larson family, he could be a source of information for Aldrian later. But if he wasn't, he could still be useful in bringing the Larson family to justice for their deeds.

Baek Ji-Min and Eleine had already moved beside Sylphia, ready to guard her in case anything unexpected happened. They had also seen what Sylphia saw, but they couldn't understand why the Larson name was written on the paper. However, seeing Sylphia's determination to help the man after reading the note, they stood by her side, prepared to protect her.

Xin Haotian stood among the crowd, observing the man lying on the floor and the surrounding area. He had been the first to sense that a fight had broken out in the room. It seemed the attacker had failed to kill the victim with a single blow and had instead fallen into a trap set by the dying man. He didn't know the full circumstances so he chose not to interfere. However, it appeared that something had caught Sylphia's attention.

Sylphia saw that the man's condition was already severe, with a stab wound on his chest and blood flowing nonstop from it and his orifices. There were also signs of poisoning, making her unsure if she could save him.

However, she then thought of the new technique that had suddenly appeared in her mind after she woke up this morning. Along with her outward transformation and the rise in her cultivation, something unbelievable had taken place inside her mind. She had gained a sudden comprehension of a new technique and elements.

She didn't know how it was possible, but then she thought of the mysterious woman in her dream. Was this what she meant by a parting gift? Did she give her this technique and comprehension with just a single touch on her forehead, and that was it? She trembled, unable to comprehend how it could be.

How strong and absurd must one's abilities be to transfer techniques and knowledge so effortlessly, as that woman had done?

One of the techniques embedded in her mind was a healing technique based on nature—powered by the blessings of the Heavenly Tree of the world.

Sylphia lowered her body and extended her hand over the stab wound on the man. Though she had never used this technique before, it felt as though she had practiced it many times in her mind. As she tried to use the technique, a green hue appeared on her hand, slowly spreading toward the wound.

The man, who had seemed on the brink of death with his breath growing weaker, trembled for a moment before his heartbeat began to quicken. The green hue spread across his body, and Sylphia watched as the signs of poisoning slowly faded away.

The people who witnessed this were surprised and stared at Sylphia in amazement. Even from where they stood, they could feel the soothing sensation radiating from the green hue emanating from her hand. They believed it was a healing technique, and one of the most complex ones, as it seemed to be curing the dying man.

The man's breathing began to stabilize, and his heartbeat returned to normal. His wound healed at a speed visible to the naked eye. When she finished the healing, Sylphia stopped her technique. A drop of sweat rolled down her forehead as she felt the complexity of the technique. This healing technique was capable of mending any injury, as long as the victim wasn't dead and the wound wasn't caused by a karmic attack.

Sylphia was satisfied with the result and allowed the man to rest. By this time, the inn's staff had arrived with their own cultivators to secure the area. One of the cultivators approached Sylphia and the ladies.

"Do you know who this man is?" he asked.

"Yes, he is with us. My apologies, but it seems someone attacked him in this room. We will pay for everything that was broken," Sylphia said without hesitation. Afterward, the inn staff began cleaning the broken room, and the man was taken to Xin Haotian's room to rest. Sylphia then explained her actions to Xin Haotian and the others, as they were unaware of the traitorous Larson family.

Only after she explained everything did they finally understand the truth and the reason behind Sylphia's decision. This man could be a valuable source of information!

Chapter 308: The Man's Identity

Aldrian returned to the inn in the afternoon and noticed that one of the upper floors of the building had a broken wall being repaired by the inn's staff. The floor in question was the same as his group's, sparking his curiosity about what had happened as he walked toward it. Deciding to ask his group directly, he headed to Xin Haotian's room, where he sensed their presence along with an unknown unconscious man.

Upon entering the room, Aldrian found his group gathered there as expected. However, his curiosity lingered on the unfamiliar man lying on the bed. Sylphia approached Aldrian with a smile, seemingly aware of the questions forming in his mind.

"I know you have questions, but while you were gone, something happened," Sylphia said. She then explained what had occurred in the destroyed room and why she decided to save the man.

Aldrian raised his eyebrows as he finally understood the reason. He glanced at the man again, activating his Eyes of the Heaven. The information revealed that the man's name wasn't Larson. However, the fact that he intended to leave a sign with the name Larson written on a piece of paper must hold some significance.

He then walked over to the unconscious man and placed a hand on his forehead. Attempting to read the man's memories, Aldrian soon discovered a mind seal within the man's mindscape. Such a seal indicated that the man was likely part of an organization.

The seal, however, wasn't complicated for Aldrian. With little effort, he broke it and delved into the man's memories. After a few minutes, a smile spread across his face. The others, noticing Aldrian's sudden expression, immediately understood that he had uncovered something useful to him.

After a few moments, Aldrian finally stopped reading the man's memories. Then with a jolt of lightning, he attempted to wake him up. The unconscious man instantly gasped awake, startled by the shock to his soul, and looked around at his surroundings.

"Wait, I'm still alive?" the man thought.

He was certain he had died after suffering a fatal stab wound and poison strong enough to kill him. However, it seemed he had survived, as he recognized the room as one belonging to an inn. Glancing at the strangers gathered around him, he assumed they were the ones who had saved him.

"Thank you for saving me. But may I know who you are?" the man asked cautiously. They didn't seem to be locals, especially given the presence of an elf.

"We are just vagabond cultivators without any affiliations, so there's no need to worry," Aldrian said calmly. "Our rooms are not far from yours. When we heard a commotion, we went to check and found you in critical condition. So, we decided to help."

"I see," the man sighed in relief.

"Now it's my turn to ask you some questions," Aldrian continued. "Why were you attacked? Who are you? And why did you leave a piece of paper with the name 'Larson' on it?"

Although Aldrian had already pieced together much of the story from the man's memories, he still needed to ask to avoid raising suspicion and to earn the man's trust.

The man remained silent, hesitating as if unsure whether to speak. Aldrian, however, did not push him and waited patiently. Finally, the man gritted his teeth, seemingly reaching a decision, and looked directly at Aldrian.

"I have something I'd like your help with," the man said.

Feigning ignorance, Aldrian raised an eyebrow and responded, "Help you? Let's hear it first. I need to judge whether it's something I can assist with."

The man nodded, his determination growing. At this point, he didn't care about anything else—his priority was spreading the truth, even if it meant seeking help from strangers like Aldrian.

"My name is Ghulani Calway," he began, "and I am a member of an intelligence group under the Larson family."

Aldrian listened attentively as Ghulani continued.

"My role is to report back to the Larson family about the situation in Flamecrest City. We document everything happening here, but our primary focus is observing the movements of the Flamecrest family."

"Yesterday's event, where the Flamecrest family suddenly managed to bring down the Boraz Fortress, has shocked the entire empire. No one knows how the Flamecrest family was able to accomplish such a feat," Ghulani explained. "Grand Duke Larson, who has always harbored animosity toward the Flamecrest family, flew into a rage over their achievement."

"As one of the observers stationed here, I was blamed for failing to detect any signs or movements from the Flamecrest family that could have foretold the destruction of the fortress."

"Luckily, I knew what would happen to me once I heard that the Flamecrest family was responsible for it. I know Grand Duke Larson's character," Ghulani continued. "There was no escape. Even if I fled to another territory, the Larson family would hunt me down wherever I went. So, in a desperate attempt to survive, I set a trap in case the family sent executioners after me. "

"And sure enough, the Larson family sent a killer squad to execute us for our incompetence."

"Thanks to my trap, I was able to repel my attacker before he could instantly kill me. But unfortunately, he still managed to stab me with a poisoned dagger—one powerful

enough to kill even a Duke-stage cultivator. Being only in the Marquess stage, I would have certainly died if you hadn't saved me. Thank you."

Aldrian continued to smile, as Ghulani's answer confirmed what he had already gathered from the man's memories. The Larson family would indeed blame these unfortunate souls for their failure to carry out their duties. The thought that the Flamecrest family had pulled off something like yesterday's event without anyone knowing must have infuriated Grand Duke Larson, as it disrupted the devils' agenda.

Aldrian could easily imagine the Grand Duke's fury, which only made him smile more. He then feigned confusion as he asked Ghulani a question.

"Well, from your story, what you did is basically espionage. So, you're essentially a spy for another noble family," Aldrian said. "But there's something that's been bugging me after hearing your story. Why would the Larson family be angry about the Flamecrest family's achievement in destroying Boraz Fortress? Isn't that good news for the empire? The fortress has been an obstacle to the empire all this time because of its strength and the troops guarding it. Why would the Larson family be furious to the point of trying to kill their own spies?"

"It's because the Larson family has connections with the devils," Ghulani explained.

Aldrian widened his eyes, feigning shock at the revelation. "What? How is that possible? Why would such a great noble family like the Larsons have connections with the wicked devils? Do you have any proof to back up what you're saying?"

"Of course! I'm one of the witnesses who saw how the higher-ups and some of the Larson family's cultivators have been working with the devils to expand their influence within the empire. Because of the Larson family's efforts, the devils have gained more room to maneuver according to their plan. One such plan is the downfall of the Flamecrest family," Ghulani said, his face urging Aldrian and the others to believe him.

However, all he saw were expressions of curiosity rather than shock. He felt confused, but he thought he had already captured their attention, even though he hadn't provided any concrete evidence of the Larson family's treacherous acts.

Little did he know, Xin Haotian and the others were already aware of the Larson family's connections.

"You're saying all of this... If what you say is true, then are you betraying the Larson family, which has been a part of your life?" Aldrian asked.

Ghulani gritted his teeth and set his face with determination. "They want me dead for something beyond our control. At this point, I believe my comrades are also already targeted by them. Although we don't know how the Flamecrest family managed what they did yesterday, it's clear that we, the observers here, haven't been at fault. We did

our jobs properly. Even with all our connections and informants, no one knew about the Flamecrest family's movements yesterday. If they want me dead, then I'll bring them down first. My life comes first, and if I die, I'll take the Larson family down with me."

Aldrian, seeing the resentment Ghulani harbored toward the family that had been a part of his life for so long, could understand his feelings after reading his memories. From those memories, Aldrian learned that Ghulani had received horrible treatment from the Larson family, which had caused his loyalty to be rooted in fear rather than respect or genuine allegiance.

Once that fear had vanished, Ghulani would want nothing more than to break free from the Larson family's control. The moment they sent someone to kill him and he survived, any trace of fear toward the Larson family disappeared. Now, all that remained in his heart was the desire to make them pay for everything they had done to him.

"Then, what kind of proof can you show us? If you provide us with something solid, we'll gladly help you. After all, it's the devils we're dealing with. Even if it's the great Larson family, we won't let evil prevail in this empire," Aldrian said, his tone firm and resolute.

The others, seeing Aldrian's acting, fought the urge to smile, but they held back. As for Ghulani, he sighed in relief at Aldrian's willingness to help. Most people would hesitate or refuse to get involved once they heard it was connected to a noble family, especially one as powerful as the Larson grand duchy.

"The Larson family has ties to the devils, and their influence has already spread across the empire. I can take you to the place where the devils are gathering in this city. A place that the Flamecrest family is unaware of, where the devils are actually scheming against them."

Chapter 309: The Problem of the Larson Family

Aldrian only smiled upon hearing Ghulani's words, knowing that the gathering place he mentioned was the same one he and Sylphia had visited before coming to the Boraz fortress. He had already killed some of the devils in Flamecrest, but he knew those were not the only devils present in the city. He could deal with the rest later.

"Alright, I'll help you. So, what do you need from me?" Aldrian asked.

Ghulani sighed in relief, then looked at Aldrian with a serious expression.

"Please help me spread the truth about what the Larson family has done to the people of the empire. Ruin their reputation so thoroughly that they can't lift their heads again. Right now, I'm alone and have no one to support me. If I try to spread this news on my own, it will have little effect, especially after the incident in Flamecrest. The masses won't easily believe news like this anymore.

So, I hope you can help me. You can share this information with the authorities in Flamecrest and ask for a reward. I believe they will offer you something generous in return for such valuable information. I can't do it myself because of my affiliations and circumstances," Ghulani said.

"With the rumor that the Larson family is connected to the devils, they will be forced to tread carefully and won't act recklessly. If they somehow discover that I'm still alive, they won't be able to focus their entire effort on finding me because of their own problems."

Aldrian sneered inwardly at Ghulani's excuse for why he couldn't inform Flamecrest himself. The truth was that Ghulani would be punished by Flamecrest if they discovered he was a spy from the Larson family. On top of that, he was one of the few people responsible for spreading rumors that Flamecrest was harboring devils.

Ghulani was one of the few people present the night Commander Marcus began showing signs of being a devil. He had acted as a mere passerby at the time. If Ghulani were brought to the Flamecrest dungeon and confronted by Jil, one of the witnesses from that night, Jil would instantly recognize him, he had seen Ghulani's face after all.

If the Flamecrest discovered this, there would be no chance of them forgiving Ghulani, let alone offering him any reward. Instead, he would be executed publicly as an example to anyone daring to mess with the Flamecrest family.

"I see. This is quite a dangerous request," Aldrian said, pretending to ponder. "If I spread the word that the Larson family is connected to the devils, they might track me. But the reward is rather tempting. Alright, I'll do what I can."

Hearing Aldrian's response, Ghulani's eyes brightened, and he quickly gave a slight bow.

"Thank you," he said.

"However, given the risk of this task, I'll need you to do something for me as well," Aldrian added.

Ghulani stunned.

"To do something?"

"Yes," Aldrian replied. "Something you can handle while staying hidden from the Larson family's sight."

Three weeks later,

In the Larson family mansion, the atmosphere was tense. Over the past week, rumors about their alleged connection to the devils had begun to spread, and more people were talking about it with each passing day. At first, many were hesitant to believe the rumors, recalling the Flamecrest incident. The masses adopted a cautious stance, choosing to observe and wait rather than jump to conclusions.

However, out of nowhere, someone began spreading details about what the Larson family had done to the empire. It was revealed that the devils could move freely within the empire due to the Larson family's assistance. This claim was supported by evidence that many people could see for themselves. Several locations harboring devils within the Larson grand duchy were leaked to the public, allowing cultivators to "take a look."

When a few cultivators began investigating the locations mentioned in the rumors, they found traces of devils. The situation escalated when several devils clashed with orthodox cultivators at another rumored location of the devils. All along, the rumors had been backed by strong evidence, and the information within them proved to be true.

This was a stark contrast to the Flamecrest family's case, where Commander Marcus's actions could be attributed to his own misconduct. This time, however, the scale was much larger, with numerous locations across the Larson grand duchy reported as havens for the devils. There was no way the Larson family could have been unaware, especially since some of these places were directly under their control and surveillance.

The fire grew bigger over the past two days, as several cultivators from the Larson family were caught red-handed communicating with the devils. This caused an uproar throughout the territory, and people started questioning what had happened to the Larson family. Was the Larson family betraying the empire? The situation worsened as discussions shifted, with many now speculating that the Flamecrest incident—and even the downfall of the Duclan family—were the Larson family's doing.

The rumors had gotten out of control, and the Larson family was powerless to stop them. Now, the Grand Duke and all the elders were in a meeting room, their heads throbbing as they tried to figure out how to handle the situation.

"Do we know who is spreading these rumors?!" Grand Duke Larson shouted, his face flushed with rage and veins bulging on his forehead. His fury was palpable, and it was clear he wanted to kill someone right then and there.

"How could the rumors spread so fast without anyone from our family knowing? What the hell are you all doing?"

"My lord, we have a few suspects we've been trying to track down, but their traces suddenly vanished. Some of our men have even lost contact with us. We suspect that some unknown party is behind this, given how coordinated the attack on our family has been," one of the elders explained.

"I already know that much, you fool! I know the suspects are the survivors of our spies at Flamecrest. It's because of your incompetence that we've ended up in this predicament!" Grand Duke Larson shouted, releasing his pressure toward the elder. Instantly, the elder's head slammed into the table under the intense weight.

"For days, I've given you chances to fix this problem, yet you still failed. What use is there in keeping you here?" the Grand Duke asked coldly.

"Mercy, my lo—" The elder's plea was cut short as his head exploded, a wind-shaped blade passing through it, killing him instantly before the dagger vanished.

The others in the room were horrified. They knew that if they didn't offer something useful to the Grand Duke at this moment, they could be next.

"My lord, I have a few suggestions on how we can get out of this situation. Although there's no guarantee it will clear our name completely, at least it will divide public opinion. We can decide on our next step after that," one of the elders said, his voice slightly trembling.

"Tell me."

"This coordinated attack and the leak of information must be the work of the traitorous spies who survived our assassination attempt in Flamecrest. However, there's no way they could have spread the rumors this widely and quickly on their own. There must be someone with much higher powers aiding them."

With how quickly the news had spread, reaching even places directly under their watch in the Larson Grand Duchy, it was clear that someone was helping behind the scenes—someone bold enough to offend the Larson family.

"If we examine the situation, the rumors seem to have originated from an unknown source. We've already tried to identify it, but so far, the results have been null. However, since we can't locate the mastermind in the near future, I'm thinking we can take advantage of the anonymity of these sources to turn it in our favor."

The Grand Duke frowned at this but then his eyes widened as the idea finally clicked.

"So you want to create a scapegoat to bear our sins?"

"Yes, my lord. We can tell the masses that the other party, whoever they are, has connections to the devils. We can claim that they've been smearing the Larson name out of jealousy or some other motive. Some of our own people have also betrayed us in this matter, which is why certain members of the Larson family are connected to the devils. We'll say it's because of the other party's instigation that they betrayed us. The people won't know the true nature of our family, and public opinion will be divided, easing some of the burden on our family," the elder explained.

Grand Duke Larson pondered after hearing the elder's suggestion. While the plan wasn't entirely flawless, it was enough to lift some of the burden off his family. With divided opinions, they could at least garner some support from the masses, unlike now when most people were beginning to look at them with hostility.

A smile suddenly crossed Grand Duke Larson's face. In his mind, he already had a name—one he could use as his family's scapegoat.

The Duclan Family.

Chapter 310: The Princess Situation

The city of Finna, the capital of the Vindas Empire, is home to the empire's true sovereign. At the heart of this vast city stands a grand white palace, the residence of the imperial family. Its majestic architecture inspires reverence from all who gaze upon it, radiating an imperial aura that compels the citizens of the empire to bow in awe.

At this time, the emperor of the Vindas Empire, Herman Avandi, sat in his throne hall with his daughter, Princess Loraine, standing before him. His expression was filled with tenderness as he gazed at her. Since the death of his wife—the empress of the Vindas Empire—after giving birth to Loraine, he had given his daughter special treatment.

The empress was the only wife Emperor Herman ever had, and he never took another woman after her passing. Loraine's face and character reminded him of his late wife, prompting him to shower her with affection. Whatever she desired, he would provide, and her remarkable talents in everything she pursued only deepened his adoration. To him, she was his most cherished gem.

"Loraine, how is your cultivation progressing?" Emperor Herman asked in a gentle voice. Though his tone was naturally deep and commanding, he softened it whenever he spoke to his daughter.

"I'm doing well, Father. If everything goes smoothly, I should be able to break through to the High Duke stage next month," Princess Loraine replied confidently.

"Good, good. However, remember to prioritize your health above all else. I've noticed you seem tired these past few weeks. Don't push yourself too hard. Cultivation is a long journey that cannot be rushed. You're still young, my dear. With your potential and talent, even without giving it your all, you will inevitably reach greater heights."

"It's okay, Father. I recently had an enlightenment that required me to cultivate for a much longer period. I don't want to waste my talent and potential by not giving it my best," she said with a smile. Her expression revealed nothing unusual, but deep inside, she felt anxious.

For the past few weeks, she had been unable to stop thinking about the fate of her lover, the Lust Devil. As Aldrian had mentioned, shortly after she returned from Flamecrest City, a messenger from the devils came to her. He demanded an explanation for her deviation from the script and she was supporting the Flamecrest family. With her announcement at that time and the news of the Boraz Fortress's fall, the Flamecrest family had become essentially untouchable.

She had asked them about the Lust Devil first, expressing her desire to meet him, but they seemed to avoid her questions and requests. It felt as if they were hiding something from her. Their only response was that the Lust Devil was currently in seclusion and could not be reached by anyone.

That was her final clue: the devils were lying to her. She didn't know how long this deception had been going on. She had always done whatever the devils asked of her for the past few months, believing it was the Lust Devil's will. But now, it seemed that wasn't always the case.

The last time she communicated directly with the Lust Devil was four months ago, during the ongoing war with the Doria Empire. At that time, he appeared to be occupied with important matters, so she chose not to disturb him much.

Looking back, the Lust Devil must have been captured by the young man sometime between those four months. During that period, she had already carried out tasks she believed came from the Lust Devil.

She felt utterly deceived and without hesitation, she dismissed the devils' messenger. She resolved not to act on their requests again unless she saw the Lust Devil in person. For now, all she could do was hope that Aldrian would stay true to his word and keep the Lust Devil safe until she completed her mission.

She had already heard the rumors surrounding the Larson family. She recalled Aldrian's words about the chaos in the empire involving the Larsons. It seemed this was what he had been referring to, and now was the time for her to take action. The rumors had grown quite significant, and the Larsons appeared to be in a precarious situation.

"Father, I have a request. It concerns the recent rumors about devils in the Larson Grand Duchy," she said.

Emperor Herman hadn't expected his daughter to bring up the Larson family's troubles, but he was willing to hear her out.

"What is it, my dear? What request do you have?"

"Father, let me handle the Larson family issue. The rumors have already spread to the populace, causing instability in the empire. If we allow this to spiral out of control, it could even affect the entire empire—and the imperial family."

Emperor Herman looked at his daughter with curiosity. He had questions on his mind, particularly regarding his daughter's recent actions. From the incident with the Flamecrest family to this, she seemed to be taking matters into her own hands. From his perspective, it appeared as though she was positioning herself to gain achievements for the succession race.

However, he knew that his daughter was not someone interested in the throne. He had always considered her older brother to be more suited to the role of crown prince. If she wasn't after the throne, then what was driving her recent actions?

"You want to handle it yourself, huh?" he said thoughtfully. "But I've already given your elder brother the order to visit the Larson family. This matter is serious, and your elder brother needs to show his face once in a while. You've already taken care of the devils' plot in Duclan and the Flamecrest family, so I think it's time for your brother to step in. And after your time in seclusion, you need a rest."

Princess Loraine raised an eyebrow. Her elder brother was the one going to the Larson family? She clenched her fists behind her back. This was not good! If the Larsons decided to retaliate by revealing the truth about her to her brother, it would be the end for her.

Aside from Aldrian's mission, she wanted to handle the Larson family issue herself to minimize the risk of them using their trump card. She had to prevent them from exposing her connection to the devils to her elder brother.

"Father, I already have some connections with the Larson family, which will make it easier for me to approach and investigate them. If elder brother goes to them, and the rumors turn out to be true, they'll hide or even destroy any evidence. After all, elder brother's reputation is already terrifying." She spoke with a convincing tone, even subtly pleading in the hope that her father would change his mind. However...

"Well, he already arrived there yesterday in disguise. As you said, sending him formally would cause a commotion, so I had him go quietly without informing anyone. He'll stay there until he's certain about the situation before making a judgment himself. With his abilities, I believe he's more than capable of handling it," Emperor Herman replied.

"My dear, don't you know your brother? Just trust him. As for you, you need to rest after your cultivation. I can see the fatigue in your eyes. You don't need to push yourself."

Princess Loraine could only grit her teeth inwardly. If she kept pushing her father on this, he would start to grow suspicious of her. What he said made sense, and she couldn't refute him any further.

"Alright, I'll follow father's suggestion." For now, she could only step back and look for another way to deal with the Larson family, ensuring they wouldn't use their hidden card.

Hearing his daughter's response, Emperor Herman smiled.

"Good. You can go back to your room now. I've already asked the maids to prepare a herbal drink to help relax your body after cultivation."

Princess Loraine gave a slight bow to her father before exiting the throne hall.

"This won't do! I must do something about elder brother!" she thought. Her eyes glimmered with resolve—she would do anything to prevent her brother from discovering the truth about her.

In an unknown place,

The room was engulfed in darkness, with only dim light illuminating the space. A table and a dozen chairs were arranged as if for some kind of gathering. At this moment, more than a dozen people were present, with a woman seated at the center, seemingly the leader. This woman was Carol Duclan, the young miss of the once-noble Duclan family, whom Aldrian had saved from the Boraz fortress.

The group remained silent, as if waiting for something.

Suddenly, the door to the room opened, and a figure in a black robe entered, removing their hood to reveal their face.

"Mission successful for today," he said to Carol. "Another place has been leaked, and the cultivators are already storming it."

"Good. Was there any trouble while you were there?" Carol asked.

"A few rats from the Larsons tried to follow me, but fortunately, the assassins from the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion took care of them."

Carol nodded. Right now, these people, the remnants of the Duclan family had all joined her cause. Not just in this room, but in several hidden places like this one, many family members already gathered. They all shared the same goal—to seek revenge.