

The Fall 736

Chapter 736: Limitless

Evolving his bloodline was risky considering the chaos he had caused when awakening it the first time, but he didn't have many options if he wanted to get out of here. It was either that or wait in this cave until the trial ended. This place seemed safe enough with the flowers eating all the Twilight Energy, but he refused to just sit around for over two whole years.

Besides, wasn't this the perfect opportunity? There shouldn't be a single cultivator able to reach these depths, and he hadn't even seen any beasts except that monstrous thing. Meanwhile, there were dozens of peaks all around him, many of them no doubt containing extremely valuable treasures he was simply unable to find.

Along with the absurd amount of ambient energy in the Twilight Chasm, he had the perfect stage to breakthrough, no matter how much energy his bloodline demanded.

He needed to make some preparations before taking that step though, and he started setting up a series of arrays in the middle of the cave. It wasn't the usual illusion and isolation arrays he used when arranging a temporary cultivation cave, but rather protective arrays. Last time he had formed a huge vortex, and he was afraid that he'd drop the mountain above him right on his head if he didn't think things through.

That's why he arranged two layers of protection. One offensive array to blast a large hole in the rock above his head in case a section fell toward him, and another to block any errant debris.

He also started digging through the stone with [Love's Bond] having all four of his free chains entrench themselves in spiraled patterns downward to secure him in place. The cave didn't seem connected to the ocean outside, but there were no guarantees that would still be the case that vortex Ogras described appeared again.

After that, Zac wasted no time, and the [Cardinal Kernel] appeared in his hands. His cells were already extremely agitated from the flowers around him, and Zac's hands even started shaking from barely constrained hunger as he cut a small wound in his hand and let his blood drip down on the dark-green crystal before he firmly gripped it in his hands.

The Natural Treasure hummed to life as it went from green to red, and Zac soon found a stream of primal energy entering his veins. His heart started to furiously beat like a war drum, and the energy quickly spread through his whole body.

His body greedily sucked more and more energy out from the crystal, causing the air to twist around the heart-shaped treasure. Eventually, it cracked, completely drained by the Void Emperor-bloodline. Zac wasn't satiated at all though, and he felt a familiar state of madness brought on by hunger coming over him.

This time he wasn't completely out of his mind thanks to his strengthened soul, but he still started to greedily chow down on the hundreds of fruits he had found just a few weeks before. Each one of them contained so much energy it would take a normal E-grade cultivator weeks to refine, but the energy had all been absorbed by his cells before the fruits even had reached his stomach.

The more he ate, the more voracious the hunger became. He could feel it. He was still incomplete, and just like last time, the promise of perfection loomed in the distance. He was reaching the tipping point, and he pushed away any final misgivings as he swallowed one fruit after another, madness and desire burning in his eyes.

Something far in the distance cracked, and Zac's vision started to blur. He first tried to fight it, but his mind was swiftly dragged away. The last thing he sensed was tens of thousands of gates appearing in the area, each of them taking everything from their surroundings.

He had once more become the void.

"I'm here to help clean up," Karz said demurely without lifting his gaze from the ground.

"Ah! Gar, eh, Karz, is it?" the quartermaster coughed. "Well, chambers 2, 14, and 28 will need cleaning today."

Karz's heart beat an extra time when hearing he had been assigned to a single-digit chamber, and number two at that. This would be a pretty big haul. Still, he controlled his aura and expression as he walked toward the inner parts of the Alchemy Hall. Thanks to months of building his 'reputation', he passed straight through the security checks without causing any waves, gaining access to an area that not even Inner Disciples could enter.

The scheduling formation indicated that chambers 14 and 28 would open in an hour or so, while chamber two was more imminent. Karz walked over to the finely decorated waiting hall and sat down in a corner where he wouldn't be in the way. Even then, his appearance caused some ruffles, and he saw two cultivators looking at him with frowns on their faces.

He recognized one of them to be a Core Disciple of the Alchemy Hall, but the other woman was unknown to him. However, Karz guessed that she had already completed her body tempering and entered the Profound Realm, judging by her aura. She was young as well, making Karz believe she had to be some talent among the Core Disciples.

"Who is that?" the woman said with a disgusted tone, and Karz could tell that she wasn't really trying to hide her voice. "I can smell him even through the medicinal aroma."

"Oh right, you just came back. I don't know his name, but he's called Garbage," the other voice answered. "An elder found him in the garbage heaps last year and took pity on him. I heard he actually has a Heavenly Affinity barely high enough for him to target Inner Discipleship, but there's something wrong with his head. He's obsessed with refuse, and is more interested in collecting and disposing of it than cultivating. It's kind of convenient though, so people just let him do his thing. He's managing the refuse for most core disciples and even some elders."

"Should have left someone like that among the trash," the first speaker spat as the two walked around a corner. "A lowly person will always stay lowly."

"You're right. Do you know what a disciple saw when they spied into his courtyard? He actually..." the other cultivator said before the voice got indistinguishable from the distance.

Karz had heard the whole thing, there wasn't a single ripple in his heart. He knew he was being despised, but what did he care? In fact, it made his goals easier. And if there was one thing he knew to be true in this world, it was that her decree was fundamentally and irrevocably wrong. The only certain thing was change.

However, he couldn't help but snort at how naïve he was before, back when he still scavenged for scraps a few years ago. Old Vek had talked about the Cultivators as though they were some sort of celestials, full of poise and grace. But coming here he had soon realized the truth.

In some ways, they were even dirtier than the scavengers down at the ground.

Subterfuge, backstabbing, playing little games to mess with each other just to pass the time. They were just mortals who grew increasingly cruel and twisted as their powers grew. They were bound by conventions, fettered by things as honor and reputation as surely as if they were trapped by real feathers.

It wasn't surprising. They didn't understand true desperation, the hunger that pushed you into a fight to the death against another scavenger just for a rotten carcass. They saw him as lowly, and he saw them as foolish. He soon threw that woman out of his mind as he eagerly waited for the door to open.

A dense cloud of medicinal aroma eventually wafted out from the chamber as the thick gates swung open, and his pores opened and greedily swallowed as much as they could without exposing his secret. Following the aroma a young man appeared, wearing an even more exquisite robe compared to the woman before.

His appearance didn't match his clothes though, as his hair was in disarray as his eyes were completely bloodshot and glazed over. But he still stopped and refocused when he saw Karz sitting outside.

"It's you," the young man said with surprise when he saw Karz waiting outside.

Karz knew who this was; Laondio Evrodok. He wasn't surprised that this man had been allowed to use the second refinement chamber, the second greatest cultivation chamber except for the one the supreme elder used for his experiments. In fact, Karz had heard that Chamber Two had recently been upgraded to even surpass chamber one, all for this man.

If Karz was at the absolute bottom of the totem pole to the point that people actually called him Garbage, then Laondio Evrodok was his polar opposite. The ragged-looking man was actually the greatest genius the sect had ever seen in its four-million-year history, and not by a small degree from what Karz had heard.

He was being personally groomed by both the Sect Leader and the two Supreme Elders, and many hoped he would be the one to move their mountain to even greater heights. His talents were so great that a Herald from the upper realms would descend in a few years to try him out. In a few centuries, he might be a Herald himself, ruling over the mortal realms like a god.

"I'm just here to clean," Karz said.

"Here," Laondio grinned as he took out a vial containing a few pills. "A small thank you. Your service is appreciated, but you cannot forget your own cultivation."

"What's this?" Karz asked as he looked at the weirdly shaped pills.

"My latest recipe. It's an impurity-cleansing pill! I call them [Pure as Laon]!" the man said with pride.

"Is it as good as the [Turbulent Wind Pill]?" Karz asked, even he slightly excited by the gifts. Those kinds of pills would save him a lot of time.

"Well, no, it's much worse," Laondio coughed, making Karz's eyes dim a bit. "But it's cheap! It costs just a fraction of those exorbitant pills."

"Oh...?" Karz hesitantly said.

Laondio was clearly not satisfied with the lukewarm response. "Think about it! What separates the haves and have-nots in the world right now?"

"Resources," Karz said without hesitation.

"Exactly!" Laondio said, his dry eyes lighting up with excitement. "It's resources! The wealthy cultivators get to eat the greatest Heavenly Treasures and Cultivate closest to the purest Dragon Veins. Meanwhile, those with lower stature are bound to struggle on the road of cultivation. Impurities will accumulate quickly from absorbing the Earthly Qi, and even the greatest geniuses will find their road to cultivation cut short because of providence rather than effort.

"This is the first step to even the playing field! A cheap pill to help those with nothing to fall back on break through the chains of fate, to make anyone's potential limitless!" the alchemist explained, and Karz's eyes widened as he felt the air around the young man twist like his conviction was imposing its will on the heavenly laws.

"I heard you grew up on the ground? Your body must have absorbed a lot of Earthly Qi while living outside of the protection of the Dragon Veins. This will hopefully help put you back on course," Laondio continued.

"Why are you giving me this?" Karz hesitantly asked.

"I heard how much you have helped people around here. This is just a small token of thanks," Laondio said before he walked away.

The gesture was nice, but ultimately superfluous. Ever since that weird spot in his back had burst open, he had continuously rid himself of the taint. In the beginning, it was to the point that his sweat was a disgusting black ooze, but by now his situation was mostly fine. In fact, he believed that his constitution would have been a lot better compared to even Core Disciples if not for his nightly activities.

Karz scurried into the room, and he looked at the piles of discarded flowers, stems, shells, and other leftovers from Laondio's alchemy session. He briefly wondered if the young star would be as generous with his pills if he knew that it wasn't selflessness that drove Karz's actions, but rather greed.

The rest of the Cultivators on this mountain might see a bunch of worthless scrap in front of them, but Karz saw something even better than the Origin Pills that were distributed every month to Outer Disciples such as himself.

He put all the scraps into his bag of holding before he carefully cleaned the whole room, putting everything back to where it was supposed to belong. He didn't really care about this part, but he saw it as payment for the valuable materials he collected. An hour later he had spruced up the other two alchemy chambers as well, and he left the inner sections of the Alchemy Hall.

"Thank you, young man," the quartermaster smiled as she furtively looked around. When she saw that no one was looking she handed him a bound parchment. "This is for you. It is the entry-level fire-control technique we teach Inner Disciples. If you master the methods to control the flame, you can become a proper assistant who gets paid by the Sect for your hard work. You could even become an Alchemist if your Heavenly Root allows for it."

"Thank you," Karz said with surprise as he quickly stowed away the method.

An entry-level technique was not much compared to the top-methods the Sect possessed, but he knew that the Quartermaster had bent the rules a bit in his favor for providing this.

"I will work hard to learn this method."

"Don't worry if you can't master it," the Quartermaster smiled. "Alchemy is a grand path, but it ultimately not for everyone. Even if this one doesn't suit you, I am sure that someone hardworking like you will find another one."

"Thank you," Karz bowed before he started his trek down from the Alchemy peak.

It was unfortunate. Kind-hearted people like the Quartermaster would never reach the peak in cultivation. Her advancement opportunities would be stolen through back-room deals of less open-hearted cultivators, and she'd be stuck as lower management even if her talent indicated she should rise higher.

But after talking with Laondio, Karz was a bit conflicted. He had considered the ruthless struggle for treasures and methods Heavenly law, but was that really an absolute? Were there no better ways than everyone clawing for every advantage they could get? Or was the young genius simply a dreamer with his head in the clouds after never having encountered any real hardships in his life?

Ultimately, it didn't matter. Karz was far better off now compared to his years in the trash heaps, but he still didn't feel much closer to the 'glorious life in the sky' he had dreamed of before. As his power grew, so did his vantage. It even felt like the mountain he was trying to climb to the peak was growing even quicker than he was.

For example, it was only last month he learned of exalted existences called Void Heralds, cultivators who had broken through to unimaginable heights. These kinds of beings didn't even exist in the sect, or the neighboring clans for that matter. And that was still not the peak from what he'd gathered. Cultivation was really without end.

Karz eventually returned to his secluded domicile. Seeing the sprawling walls would probably confuse any visitor to the sect. What kind of Outer Sect Disciple got such a huge courtyard when space on the mountain was limited, even if it was almost by the foot? However, if they stepped inside, they'd soon understand why a place like this existed.

It almost felt like entering another world when he passed through the gates to his home. The dense Spiritual Energy outside had been slashed by more than three quarters, barely any better than what you'd see down on the tainted grounds. And what little ambient energy remained was oddly tainted for being so close to a Dragon Vein.

So what if the place was big? Any cultivator who lived in a courtyard like this was essentially crippling their cultivation.

Karz didn't understand the specifics, but an elder had called it a 'fault-line' of the dragon vein. It seemed as though the Dragon Vein used some spots to dump its low-quality energy, just like the sect used the incineration plateaus on the ground to get rid of their trash. But that didn't matter at all to Karz since he had his own unique methods.

The horribly bad cultivation environment wasn't the only odd thing about the oversized courtyard. It was another oddity that had raised a lot of brows in the sect, to the point that Karz had earned his unflattering nickname.

Piles and piles of scraps filled almost every empty free spot of the courtyard, creating mounds reaching up to five meters tall. Karz looked around for a bit until he found the right spot. It was a three-meter-tall pile of alchemic dregs that had almost turned to dry ash by this point, and he stowed away the completely drained materials before he released the pile he had collected during the day.

After that, he walked to a certain pile of garbage and lay down on top of it with a contented smile. It was a scene just like this that had completely thrown his reputation into the gutter, but Karz didn't care. He was sure that even the Sect Master of the Blue Spring Sect would join him if he possessed the same ability as he did.

Nothing happened for a few seconds as he lay there, but soon he felt a hunger from the depths of his body. It grew and grew until it couldn't be contained by his body any longer. That feeling had to be satiated, and the universe soon gave its answer as thousands and thousands of celestial tendrils rose from the garbage piles.

Like moths to a flame, the tendrils started to worm their way toward him. Most of them came from the recently added piles, while some were reluctantly forced out of the almost-decayed piles that had been there for a few weeks. Some tendrils were even drawn out from the air itself as Spiritual Energy freed itself from the Earthly Taint on its way to Karz.

His body was soon alight with force, the energy surging round and round between his meridians, leaving a little bit behind with every circuit. People thought he was just lazing about while lying in piles of garbage half the day, but he was actually cultivating at a speed that was probably unsurpassed in the Sect.

He and Landio had agreed that the main issue stopping most people from progressing was resources, but truthfully it was not just that. All methods of cultivation seemed to be filled with imperfections, where even the pills made by elders left over 70% of the energies of the Spiritual Herbs inside the discarded dregs.

Karz had no idea how to fix that issue, but his body had shown him the way to make use of that fact. He didn't know why, but he had quickly realized that others couldn't see this ability of his. All these beautiful tendrils that danced through the air were only visible to his gaze, a miracle just for him.

He looked at the sky as he silently cultivated with his homemade method. There were all kinds of worlds out there, many far greater than the Hur'Vaz Empire the Blue Spring Sect was part of. Cultivators powerful beyond compare, beasts as large as whole planets, treasures with unimaginable power.

The world was truly limitless. Thankfully, Karz believed he was too.