

Thief 101

Chapter 101 - Not Your Servant!

Ace disregarded Vance's threats and continue to run. He was afraid that Vance would attack him with some kind of skill while moving and was on high alert because of it and ready to evade at any moment.

But after two hours, except from time to time threatening and cusses, nothing else come from that old man and Ace felt quite weird about it, *'Is this guy a retard?'*

Ace's reaction was very normal because he can use multiple skills simultaneously from the beginning of his cultivation and never fight with anyone stronger than himself or saw someone using two or more skills at the same time.

However, now that he finally encounters an opponent who was almost invulnerable for him to fight but that invincible opponent was not using anything and just chasing him while using his qi.

Ace couldn't help but wonder, *'Is there some kind of limitation on him using over one skill?'*

He didn't know if his guess was true or not, but didn't want to test it and simply continue to run. But if this was the case, then it is nothing but good news for him.

Vance's face was as dark as charcoal because, even after two hours, Ace wasn't slowing down a bit. This gave him a great shock. *'Just what is his secret?'* He wondered.

He took notice of the other things besides Blood Rose and this give birth to intense greed in his heart. If he could capture Ace alive, all the secrets on Ace would be his to take with Blood Rose included!

Six more hours pass and the game of cat and mouse continues.

Ace was now sure there is truly some kind of restriction on using skills, and this made him quite relieved. He was curious about finding out just what this restriction truly is but wasn't mad enough to ask the guy who was pursuing him like a mad dog.

Ace had to admit a cultivator of Qi River Realm was not to be underestimated because he was finally feeling a toll on his body by using lightning steps for eight hours straight while the old guy seems to only using his pure qi to keep up with him.

This also means Vance didn't know any movement skills or Ace might've been caught long ago. Nonetheless, Vance wasn't seemed tired, well, except for his face that almost seem on the verge of insanity.

Vance's shock has turned into humiliation because even after eight hours, he can't catch up to that thief that was weaker than him. If this were to spread to the middle lands, his reputation would go straight to the sewer, and he would become a laughing legend.

But what can he do that thief was just too damn strange, now he finally understands why that cunning rascal stole his storage ring because, without it, he can't restore his depleting qi or use any of his treasures or pills!

This was truly infuriating him, but he wasn't panicked about it since Ace was moving toward the sky-changing border, and once he reached it, he would have nowhere to run anymore!

Vance was not an idiot; to tell Ace about the truth of that border, or he might change the direction and outrun him, so he controls his temper and chases after him with patience.

He can still chase after him for six straight days like this, much less for ten hours, well if Ace can still keep up, that is!

Vance still hope to intercept Ace before reaching the border because he wasn't sure if that terrifying power behind Layla would watch that place or not. But he was sure they would intercept him if they found out about the thief's location.

In the end, ten more hours pass, and Ace didn't slow down a bit like he has Qi equal to his own and terrifying movement skill.

Ace was also a little surprised because for ten hours Vance spoke nothing or cursed at him like before and quietly chasing after him. He wonders if that old codger was cooking something, and it has to be related to sky changing border.

If it was before, he might've not known, but he clearly understands the meaning of going there for the natives of the low-level land.

Ace can still change his direction but didn't because he was certain, if he goes back then he might also bump into those black cloth men, and he will not take any chances with them.

Especially with that terrifying being present within their ranks.

That's why he was going straight to the border and see if he could use 'that' in there and escape this old geezer. But if he planned to fail, then he has a backup plan ready just in case.

The sun was rising. Ace saw the sky was becoming more golden as he was approaching the sky changing border.

But sadly, he can't enjoy the scenery with Vance around and keep advancing.

Vance also saw the change in the sky and sighed heavily as his expression turn grave as he looked at the surroundings vigilantly to see if there were any of those black clothing men around.

Ace also felt Vance's nervousness and was confused by it, but he can't figure it out no matter how much he thinks and kept his focus on the current business.

At this moment, Vance finally broke the silence, "Little thief, you can't escape from here and only go to your death if you move any further. Give me back my storage ring and the things you stole from Dulce and everything in your possession, and I'll let you go."

He was trying to coax Ace into stopping before he bumps into Layla's people and if Ace stops, he would capture him and escape the low lands quickly. As for sparing him, heh, he would never do that.

Ace also know this old guy's words were empty and didn't decrease his speed at all.

Vance sighed helplessly and killed anyone if he encountered Layla's people. They won't know it was him and assume it was all that thief in the end. Well, at least he hopes that would be the result.

At this moment, Ace spotted a huge clear field, miles away, and the sky above that lush field was also much brighter golden than low lands. *'Is that the border between low and middle lands?'* He wondered as expectation shone on his face.

Vance saw the change in the sky between the low and middle lands, his reaction was depressing, much different from Ace because he knew that was nothing but an illusion! Even he didn't dare to go on that lush-looking beautiful plain.

Because the Sky Changing Pass can work in the specific area that was known as the Life Gate and beside this life gate, anywhere is death, nothing else!

"Little guy listens to this old man and stop before you regret your own choices!" He yells again. But to his dismay, Ace didn't seem to care about his 'kind' warning at all.

Ace didn't care because he knew what was there and at this moment something happened that even Vance didn't assume!

"If I were you, I would listen to him." A beautiful voice drifted in the air and with this melody-like voice descend a weighty oppression force!

When Ace felt this tremendous pressure, "Th... this!" he instantly felt a familiarity with it as if he felt this particular force before.

'That mysterious expert!' Ace finally remembered and his morals hit rock bottom as his complexion turn ashen because he finally remembered just where he felt that terrifying force before.

Vance's expression was even uglier because just by that voice, he knew who the person was. "H-how is she here so quickly?"

He mused loudly as despair flash on Vance's face.

Vance couldn't help but think bitterly. His luck was just too terrible for these past two years because he first lost the blood rose then he wasn't even able to find that thief.

But when he could finally find that thief, he fails to capture him. Now that he was finally closer to achieving that, someone else had arrived, and he knew he can't beat her no matter what he does.

Vance notice Ace's speed has decreased because of that terrifying pressure, yet it didn't affect him.

"Master Vance, please capture him before this little rascal goes straight to his death. I'll be there in few moments." That meld voice sounded again.

Vance smile wryly because he could guess that lady would not make it in time and Ace would step into the border when she arrived. That is why she uses her pressure to slow Ace down, not him.

Now Vance can easily capture Ace, but he has to hand Ace over when that woman comes and this was not good news for Vance.

However, at this moment, mad resolve flash on Vance's face as he yells loudly, **"I'm NOT your servant!"** And he immediately stopped!!

Chapter 102 - Low Sky Changing Border

When that force descends on Ace, his speed decreased, and knew he can't reach the sky-changing border before Vance would capture him.

And when that voice resounded again, Ace knew those two knew each other and quickly take the last invisible bead out from his thief's space.

He was just going to crush it when he heard Vance yell.

"I'm not your servant!"

Ace couldn't help but look back at the old man who has been chasing him like a mad dog for the entire night has suddenly stopped!

Vance also looked profoundly into Ace's eyes before moving his lips. "Escape!"

Ace was astonished but didn't have time to mull over it and under that pressure, he uses his full power to increase his speed even if it was a tiny bit.

"Vance, YOU!" At this moment, that beautiful voice sounded again, but this time there was clear wrath in it.

Ace didn't know the moment he looked forward, a devilish smile creep out on Vance's old face as he scoffed in his heart, *'If I can't have it then you all can forget about it either!'*

Vance knew he can't beat this mysterious veil woman, and she might kill him just to keep his mouth shut. That's why he let that thief go to his death.

By doing this, Ace would turn into ashes and no one will ever have Blood Rose or that thief's secrets. If she didn't get manage to capture Ace, she may not kill him.

After all, killing an Azure Alchemist of Pill flame organization for just a dead thief is not worth it. Just by this, one can imagine how shrewd this old man truly was.

It was just pitying that thief will take his storage ring with him, but he didn't care since it wasn't his actual wealth and Zelda would also get only Ace's dust.

On the other hand, Ace knew this old man was not kind enough to let him leave like this, and he wanted him to die by encouraging him to go into that area.

But now he had no other choice since he could feel that pressure increasing at a tremendous pace, that's mean that terrifying existence is closing in at a breakneck pace!

He was just half a mile away from the boundary line of low and middle lands.

Ten miles away, a silhouette was moving like a blur and its speed was almost fifty times faster than Ace.

This was none other than Layla!

Ten days ago, when Zelda points out about Vance, she instantly rushed over here alone and with her cultivation base. She was indeed very fast and reach just in the nick of time.

She used her apparition-wave rings to finally discovered Ace and was astonished because she saw that thief wasn't alone; he was being chased by Vance. And what surprised her most is Vance can't catch up to Ace, even with his prowess!

Layla also didn't sense Ace's true cultivation and was dumbfounded by sensing him being at the third gate. Because he was using the speed equal to a River Source Cultivator.

'This made little sense!' She instantly shot that notion out of her head as her eyes turn sharp. *'This thief has a terrifying secret on him!'*

When Layla saw she won't be able to make it in time before that thief would step into the formation and Vance didn't able to stop him either. She finally uses the Apparition Wave Rings to amplify her voice and also advises Ace.

But not only Ace didn't stop, but even Vance didn't listen to her order and stop instead of capturing Ace.

This truly infuriate her, but she was helpless to do anything and could only increase her speed and hope her false martial sense could slow Ace down before she caught up.

Everyone thinks she was Qi River Core cultivator, but it wasn't true because her real cultivation was at the Peak of Qi River Realm and only a single step away from entering the Qi River Core.

But this last step was akin to cross a sea just by swimming!

Yet, despite being only in Qi River Realm, she can use vague Martial Sense or False Martial Sense and by amplifying it with those black rings.

Cultivators possessed Martial Sense when they enter the Qi River Core Realm. As for False Martial Sense, it only has five percent of actual martial sense prowess.

A Peak Qi River Cultivator like Layla can form a false martial sense, but that's only if she satisfied some special conditions like she had to possess a seven-slate or perfect foundation!

That was also the reason for Ace's confusion and couldn't figure out if this expert was a Qi River Core Cultivator or not.

Because he knew the martial sense was too terrifying, and it can instantly lock him on the spot if he didn't have countermeasures for it. However, this force was only able to agitate him and find his presence from a huge distance, not like the Martial Sense he knew.

Ace was now only six hundred meters away before he steps into the formation.

He heard that beautiful, yet solemn, voice again. "You stop right now, or you'll die! Let me tell you in front of you is only an illusion and once you cross the boundary of the low land, it will kill you and turn you into ashes!"

Ace only snorted and didn't stop because he already knew. But he can't just let that terrifying woman capture him. Once that happened, his life would be over!

Vance frowned upon hearing Layla revealing this secret to Ace but was overjoyed the very next moment when Ace didn't believe Layla and continues to move.

Layla's eyes were dismal when she saw Ace moving without even heeding her warning and ignoring her. "You stop right there, and I'll spare you!" She yells again.

She was only two miles away from Ace now.

Ace was only two hundred meters away before he enters the boundary and speak for the first time while scoffing, "As if I would ever believe someone from higher lands!"

Layla's eyes were filled with intense killing intent, and at this moment she quickly takes out a milky white crystal-like stone from her storage ring. She places that milky stone in her right hand where 'Apparition Wave Rings' were.

Abruptly, a huge dark aura released from the rings, and the pressure increased a hundred folds!

Vance instantly fell to the dirt group by this pressure, and cold sweat was running on his ashen face.

Layla has just used a Peak-Level Qi Stone!

Qi stones have many functions, and one of them was to increase the power of special Rune Treasures! And Layla's rings were one of those specific treasures.

These Peak Qi Stones were quite rare, and that is why Layla's heart was dripping blood when she used it on a petty thief!

But to her dismay, she saw Ace's speed is only decreased a little and aside from that Ace was still moving without difficulty. She bewildered looked at those rings and could help but think if they were broken.

Yet, Vance was lying on the group, gasping for breath, this mean those rings were working just fine. But Ace was unaffected by them for some reason!

Ace felt the enormous increase in the force but only sneer because this pressure was nothing in front of heavenly punishment. This decreased his speed, but it wasn't able to stop his steps.

He was only fifty meters away now and Layla began to panic for the first time because that thief was just too bizarre and nothing seemed to faze him.

"Stop right now and we can negotiate!" Layla's voice was filled with bitterness.

Ace keep running as if he didn't hear Layla's soft voice.

At this moment, Ace was only ten meters away from the boundary.

Suddenly, his eyes turned white as soul qi begin to surge in them. Ace has activated soul-shattering eyes!

He felt intense pain in the mind space the moment the skill was active, but he only grits his teeth and keeps focusing on the greenery in front of him.

This skill was not at the low-level proficiency but was almost there, it was just that Ace didn't practice it, since it had a terrible backlash. But now was not the time to worry about that.

The moment his eyes completely turn white, the beautiful scenery in front of him turns into barren and gloomy land.

This was also Ace's only plan to find the way out of this formation because every formation has flaws.

This skill was easily spotted the flaws in the formation that were not second grade and Ace knew even a grade one formation was like a heavenly treasure in this world. How could they use this kind of formation here?

But what left him dumbfounded was there was a huge sky-like light barrier between the border of low and middle lands.

Just how the hell did he suppose to locate any flaw in that humongous barrier?!?

Chapter 103 - Mysterious Thief Symbol

9-11 minutes

It was the first time Ace saw a formation of this magnitude. Nonetheless, he was happy because he can now see where the formation was with his new eye's skill.

'That woman is approaching closer and closer. I have to hurry!'

Ace pours more heavenly soul qi into his eyes and the formation barrier becomes clearer, but the pain in his soul also becomes more intense as bloody tears gush from his eyes. He knew he can't hold much longer before the soul skill would stop operating.

Finally, Ace discovered a vague dark hole fifty meters on the right side and, with no hesitation, dash in that way.

Layla was now only a mile away from Ace when she noticed him stopping ten meters away from the formation and her spirit instantly lifted and thought that rascal had finally come to his senses.

On the other hand, Vance's heart sank because if she captured Ace, Layla would kill him!

But to both of their astonishment, Ace move again and this time he didn't seem to stop.

Layla uses every ounce of her cultivation base and shortens the distance at a tremendous pace, but she was still late in the end because, at this moment Ace, both hands shine in a golden hue as a mysterious symbol appeared on both of his hands.

With golden hands in front of him, Ace instantly change towards the barrier and the next moment vanished!

A couple of moments after, Layla stopped at the spot where Ace has vanished with eyes full of uncertainty and defeat because what Ace did, in the end, was completely out of her understanding. He didn't turn into ashes and just vanished, it was indeed strange.

The lush scenery was still there, but no trace of Ace left even with her false martial sense. Layla didn't find any mark on him!

Layla looked at the illusion gloomily and knew that thief is most likely dead, and she can't even retrieve his corpse!

In the heat of the moment, she didn't even think about those golden hands much and with cold eyes looked at Vance, who was dumbfounded looking at the place where Ace has vanished.

Vance instantly shiver as he notices that icy cold stare and knew he was in for it now!

When Ace spotted the flaw, he instantly rushes there as he used the fifth form of treasure opening hands while praying; this formation would not be a first-grade formation!

'Lock Tearing Key!'The moment he activated the fifth form his both hands become golden as an ancient key-like symbol appeared on his fingers and in the center of his palms.

While gritting his teeth, he finally touches the barrier and was immediately elated because a tear appeared in the barrier, and he instantly enters with no hesitation.

This formation barrier was not a grade formation, but only a quasi-grade formation barrier that even Qi Soul Realm Cultivation can't cross.

But Ace has two essential skills to pass this terrifying formation barrier, and this gave him the edge that he needed to enter the formation!

After Ace entered, the tear instantly close and Ace felt that woman's pressure finally lifted, but he didn't dare be careless because he knew that he only enters the front door and still has crossed the whole formation.

But first, he needed some rest because he used the soul-shattering eyes way too much and now his eyes were bleeding as intense pain in his true soul was almost killing him.

He removed the two-face mask. His actual face was painted red, as his eyes were almost listless.

'This is just the beginning, and I needed to use the soul-shattering eyes to find a way out of this strange place.' Ace thought bitterly as he looked around.

There was nothing but darkness and an old smell filled the air and terrifying silence. As if no one has stepped to this place for thousands of years.

Before his eye skill was deactivated, Ace hazily saw the empty area was filled with mysterious patterns and didn't dare to walk around carelessly.

Ace didn't know why, but he felt something is very sinister about this place that gave him the chills. He calmed his racing heart and focus on his soul recovery.

Now that he was inside the barrier, no one would come after him, not even that terrifying woman. This gave him some relief as he closed his eyes to recuperate.

Outside the border's formation barrier,

Two days have passed since that thief 'death' and every one of Layla's power included Zelda has come here.

All of them were camping a mile away from the position where Ace enters the sky-changing border.

At this moment, inside a luxurious camp, the atmosphere was as forlorn as it could be.

Layla's eyes were filled with killing intent as she was looking at the bloody man in front of her.

It was none other than Vance Golden!

At this moment, he looks nothing like his old scholarly self. His face was thrashed pretty badly. It was clear Layla didn't hold back when taking 'care' of him.

But she didn't dare to kill him because just as Vance predicted, now that thief is gone, she would not provoke Pill Flame Organization so easily. Before she could've just shown the organization, the Blood Rose and Vance dead would be forgotten, but not now.

She has already used quite some resources in searching for that thief and only gets his dust in the end. And now, by killing Vance, she can't afford to pay the ransom of an azure alchemist to the organization!

That's why he was still alive and only received 'some' beating.

Zelda's eyes were also showing intense fierceness as she said angrily, "Aunt, what you wanted to do with this old guy?"

Layla takes a deep breath as she calmed her intent to kill Vance before speaking. "What can we do? Just heal him and let him go." There was a hint of frustration and helplessness in her sweet voice.

Zelda nearly blow her top hearing her aunt, but she knew they really can't afford to offend the organization right now.

Shadow Finder, who was also in the camp as well as nine other Qi River Realm Experts who were dressed just like him, speaks at this moment.

"Sixth Lady, may I speak with Master Golden first before we set him free." Everyone's eyes shifted to him.

Layla narrowed her eyes as she said, "You may."

Shadow Finder walk towards Vance in everyone's curious gazes and asked coldly, "Master Golden, how did you lose your storage ring, and did that bird-like mark appeared after that thief steal the ring?"

Vance's eyes flash with hatred, hearing Shadow Finder's words that stab in his heart like sharp knives.

Vance didn't hate Layla because he simply can't afford to! First, he didn't know who these people were and only knew about this famous Green Flame, and even she was surrounded with fog of mysteries.

Second, he can't get even with them. So, he was just happy they even let him live and only hated that 'dead' thief!

Vance weakly said, "I didn't know how he did it and yes, this bird mark appeared after my storage ring was stolen."

Speaking of which, he didn't inquire about the sky-changing pass because Shadow Finder knew you cannot store the sky-changing pass in the storage ring for some reason and that's why everyone carried it in the old fashion way.

"Interesting." Abruptly a dagger appeared in Shadow finder's hand as he cut Vance's finger with that strange blackbird mark!

"AHH, Y-YOU!!?" Vance cries in pain as he looked at Shadow Finder's cold eyes hatefully.

Everyone in the camp was astonished because they knew this guy would never do anything meaningless and curiously studied the clean-cut finger on the ground.

Shadow Finder didn't faze by Vance's odious eyes as he takes out a green pill with a purple circle on it.

"Eat it and your injuries will heal, included your sliced finger." He said coldly as he gave the pill to Vance.

Vance was dumbfounded because that pill in Shadow Finder's hand was a Purple Grade Restoring Pill!

He was an alchemist himself and knew the purple circles only appeared after when a purple grade alchemist creates a purple grade pill!

It was his dream to become a purple alchemist, but the threshold between azure and purple grade was just too big for him to cross in his lifetime.

Vance didn't reject the pill and instantly swallowed it. He didn't know what this mad guy wanted by doing all this, but this pill can help him regrow his finger. After all, only purple grade restoration pills can restore little limbs like fingers.

In everyone's questioning eyes, Vance's injuries and his finger healed at the speed that naked eyes can see.

At this moment, something happened that left everyone dumbfounded, included Shadow Finder.

When Vance's finger finally grow back, the bird mark from the sliced finger disappeared, and it again appeared in the same place where it was before.

On Vance's newly regrown finger!

Chapter 104 - A New Funcation Of Thief Panel

9-11 minutes

After two days, Ace's tightly shut eyes finally opened. His complexion was still pale, and his eyes were hazy.

'These soul damages are truly cumbersome to heal!' Ace smile bitterly. 'It would still take me a week or two before my soul fully recovered.'

Even after two days, the backlash on his true soul from using the soul-shattering eyes still didn't mend completely, but his body was fully healed.

But there was an even bigger problem in front of him at this moment and that was this formation between low and middle lands, where he was currently trapped, well, kind of.

With his excellent night vision, Ace examined the surroundings but found nothing, except old dirt. Nothing was there, no life or skeletons that he imagine there would be.

Because before him, many adventurous fellows try to cross it, but Ace knew they all died a horrible death, and that's why he was expecting a graveyard full of bones inside the formation. Yet, there was nothing.

However, Ace didn't dare to move from his place because before his eye skill was stopped, he saw a vast web of strange symbols scatters throughout this old ground.

If he unknowingly steps on those symbols, he would be disintegrated at the very moment, just like the illusion barrier behind him. He could only enter because of treasure opening hands fifth form.

'If I knew the rune crafting, I might be able to understand something here.' Ace sighed weakly when he thought about rune crafting.

But the very next moment, his dull eyes shimmer as he quickly opens the notification panel to check something with a face full of eagerness and expectation.

"Yes, it is there!" Ace utters ecstatically.

He finally remembered that he pick-pocket that old geezer's storage ring!

At that time, he didn't have time to pay any heed to the system voice. Now he had all the time in the world to check what he gets from that old man.

That means he will get TP for it and since that old man was from a kingdom and a River Source Expert, his wealth can easily rival Dulce's or perhaps even exceed her!

As for how he's going to open that ring, that wasn't his concern because he needed just enough TP for buying that manual in the system's shop!

A transparent black panel appeared at this moment,

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[Notification Panel]

[[Unseen Notification]]

[Pick Pocket success]

{Host steal}

{1: Low-Level, Middle-Grade Storage Space Treasure} (5th Mortal Level-Runes)

{14: High-Level, Low-Grade Storage Space Treasure} (4th Mortal Level-Runes)

{87: Middle-Level, Low-Grade Storage Space Treasure} (3rd Mortal Level-Runes)

{105: Low-Grade Storage Space Treasure} (2nd Mortal Level-Runes)

{251,766: Low-Grade Pills} (Green-Ranked pills)

{55,283: Middle-level, Low-Grade Pills} (Blue-Ranked pills)

{20,334: High-level, Low-Grade Pills} (Azure-Ranked pills)

{65: Low-Level, Middle-Grade Pills} (Purple-Ranked pills)

{14: Low-Level, Middle-Grade Weapon} (5-Stars)

{288: High-level, Low-Grade Weapon} (4-Stars)

{Techniques and skills Low-Grade (Warrior-Grade): 43 Techniques, 153 Skills},

{Techniques and skills Mid Low-Grade (Master-Grade): 3 Technique, 13 Skills},

{Qi-Stones Trash-Grade (Low-Level): 203 Million},

{Qi-Stones Lowest-Grade (Middle-Level): 43 Million},

{Qi-Stones Low-Grade (High-Level): 2.1 Million},

{Qi-Stones Mid-Level, Low-Grade (Peak-Level): 22}

{Formation Barrier Plate Middle Grade, (5th Mortal Ranked Runes): 2}

{Slave Contracts: 2,672}

{Medicine Herbs and Metal Ores: 1,1 Million Herbs, 13,546 Metal Ores}

{Rewards: 32,000 Thief Points}

[Thief Point(s): 36,240]

[Host has stolen treasures worth 32,000 TP]

[One Low-Level Thievery has added to Thievery Count]

[Low-Level Thievery: 4]

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Ace could help but inhale deeply. 'This old man's wealth is truly not trivial! Just who was he?' He wonders.

Because this was the biggest TP reward he ever got from the system and that old man has to be someone of a prominent position in the golden hammered kingdom.

But the next moment he throws that thought to the back of his head and simply didn't care anymore.

Since that old man was someone from the golden hammered and also the one who sent that bitch here, he deserved to be robbed by him.

However, if he knows that the old man is an Azure Alchemist from the Pill Flame Organization and this storage ring was not his actual wealth, Ace would take that old goat more seriously.

But Ace didn't even know about the organization, much less what the actual wealth of an Azure Alchemist means. If Ace knew, he might make alchemists the prime target of his thieveries from now, no.

That's also why Vance didn't care about this storage ring that much because this was only his ten percent wealth, and his actual wealth was in the organization!

One can imagine by this just how wealthy an alchemist can be!

Ace felt it was a pity since he can't open this ring or else just the EXP of these pills and medicinal herbs inside were enough to help him cross at least two small stages!

Nevertheless, he was thrilled about this big tally of TP that he received and was about to open the system shop when the system's voice buzz in his mind,

=====

"[System has detected storage ring stolen by the host.]"

[Since it is counted as low-level thievery in Thief Panel, it can be opened with 100TP]

[Do you want to open with 100TP?]

[Yes/No]

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Ace was stunned, he didn't dare to believe what he just heard and quickly saw the transparent black panel in front of him.

When he read for three-time, he finally believed that he can now open the storage rings without killing the owner!

"System, is this also a function of the thief panel?" He had to confirm it.

"[Yes]"

"Hahaha, not bad, not bad." Ace praised the system for the first time in a while. "Open it and transfer everything in my thief's space. Sort it neatly, according to the sections for unique treasures I created!"

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"[100TP deducted]

[The Storage Ring is now opened]

[The system has also sorted everything in the Thief's Space according to Host command.]"

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Ace quickly scan the thief's space and saw glittering treasures systematically arranged inside.

The most eyes catching on them all were that big treasury of luminous city and a mountain of dazzling Qi Stones!

He didn't even step in the Land of Kingdoms, yet his wealth alone rivals any 2nd-Grade Kingdom!

Ace's eyes were twinkling brightly as he saw the small mountain of glittering pills as well as the medical herbs!

He wanted to quickly convert them into EXP, but first, he does what he was going to before the system's sudden interference.

"System, I want to buy [Heavenly Rune Crafter: Foundational Manual] and one [Random Teleportation Life Coin]." Ace transmitted thoughtfully.

He wanted the Rune Crafter Manual because he was hoping to find something useful that can help him escape this place.

He didn't want to use soul-shattering eyes like before unless he wanted a critical injury to his true soul. If that happened, Ace didn't know how long would it take to heal it since didn't have any method to heal soul injuries quickly at this moment.

As for the life coin, he simply decided to buy it because there was a word LIFE in it, and it has no limitation, just like the invisible beads. Since he was in this dangerous place, it might save his life at some critical point.

Besides, he can't buy anything else besides these two with his TP at this moment.

Speaking of which, he didn't use the invisible bead here because its effects only remain for a minute, and he didn't know just how large this formation truly is. Besides, he won't use it unless it was a life and death situation since it was also his last bead.

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[35,000TP deducted successfully]"

[Thief Point(s): 1,140]

[The information of the Heavenly Rune Crafter: Foundational Manual is now starting to transfer into the host's brain.]

[Random Teleportation Life Coin is now activated.]

[Life Coin: 1]

[Description: It will be used automatically when the system detects any life-ending danger to the host's life.]

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A huge torrent of information enters Ace's brain, but this time it was painful, just like the first time when he received the information from the system. It was because his soul was still not fully recovered.

Ace gritted his teeth as he endured the intense pain.

The pain finally faded after an entire minute. The information of this single manual was quite large, and it takes Ace an entire hour to process and arrange every last bit of it.

His eyes finally open, there was a hint of excitement in them as well as shock.

'This heavenly rune crafting is truly heaven-defying!' Ace thought ecstatically.

As for the life coin, since it was in the hands of the system to activate it, he was assured of his safety and completely forget about it.

His entire focus was on the rune crafting at this moment because he finally found a way to leave this damn place without injuring his soul.

But Ace knew it would not going to be that easy!

Chapter 105 - Heavenly Rune Crafting

9-11 minutes

Ace scan through the manual of the Heavenly Rune Crafter calmly.

The Heavenly Rune Crafting was heavenly because after learning it, Ace can use the Heavenly Soul Qi for rune crafting as well as normal worldly qi.

If he would've learned any local methods for rune crafting, he simply can't become a rune crafter because his soul qi was heavenly soul qi!

Ace finally understands just how beneficial soul cultivation truly is and feels quite blessed to begin a soul cultivator. Because without soul qi no one can become a Rune Crafter and only soul cultivators can possess soul qi.

The heavenly rune crafter foundational manual was divided into five separate parts. Each part was very important and linked to the other and with missing even one, rune crafting was impossible.

The first part was the **Runic Eyes**, a foundational eye technique for a Rune Crafter. It was divided into three levels, **Runic Manifest Eyes**, **Runic Analysis Eyes**, and **Runic Evaluation Eyes**.

After mastering all three levels, one can see, analyze, and appraise the rune symbols. Without this kind of technique, it is impossible because they were made of the soul qi.

It was not like Ace's true and false eyes or the soul-shattering eyes that can find flaws in the rune symbols, arrays, and formations. It was a true rune crafting technique.

Eyes techniques were the essence of rune crafting and without learning one, you are just blind in this field. Every rune crafter has one special eye technique for rune symbols.

One has to know in this entire continent only ancient sects have skills for crafting. Or Pill Flame Organization in lower lands! This is just how rare and important soul qi users were.

The second part was the technique for controlling the soul qi, called the **Runic Soul Manipulation Technique**, which has twelve levels.

The techniques for controlling soul qi were used to skillfully control the soul qi while crafting the rune symbols. Because rune crafting was a very delicate process, and just by a tiny bit of mistake, the entire array or formation would be ruined!

The third part was **Basic Myriad Rune Symbols Encyclopedia**. As the name suggests, it was a complete encyclopedia on every basic or foundational rune symbol and its structures.

The fourth part was **Basic Myriad Runic Structural Encyclopedia**.

In this encyclopedia, there was complete instruction on how to combine different basic rune symbols into arrays or formations, the materials needed, and information on how much qi control one needed to crafter a basic rune symbol perfectly!

The final and fifth part was the **Heavenly Rune Crafting technique**. When one master the first four basics, this technique is used for crafting and it has twelve levels.

Perception, Control, Comprehension, Structure, and Crafting was the five-foundation principal of Rune Crafting.

Last but not least, there were twelve tiers describe in the foundational manual of Rune Crafter before Grade One. Just like this world nine mortal ranks of rune crafters.

Tier-1 Rune Crafter is the lowest, while Tire-12 Rune Crafter is the highest.

As for the grade one rune crafting, the foundational manual didn't have any information about this grade. It was, after all, just fundamentals of rune crafting for grooming a grade one rune crafter after the person mastered it completely.

'Sigh...'

Ace sighed in amazement as his eyes shine with intense interest. He just wanted to immerse himself into learning this remarkable rune crafting. But control his excitement because this wasn't the time or place for it.

Besides, he can't learn any five of the basic principles without the element soul qi!

It truly frustrates him but it did not discourage him and asked, *"System, if my cultivation advanced, will I be able to use heavenly soul qi just like soul probing?"*

He wanted to hear yes because if he can't then the soul-shattering eyes were his only option.

"[No, Heavenly Soul Qi of Element is too much for the host body to handle.]"

Ace smile bitterly as he said after suppressing his disappointment, *"How many EXP will I get after converting every pill and herb in my thief's space?"*

"[System has a suggestion.]"

Ace narrowed his eyes because this was not the emotionless voice of the system. *"What kind of suggestion?"*

"[Save the medicinal herbs they are used in heavenly rune crafting.]"

Ace was stunned as he swallowed hard because he did not know about this aspect of rune crafting since he can't open any of the encyclopedias.

"System, just use the pill in calculation!" Ace immediately change his command.

=====

"[Starting the calculating...]"

[All the pills in thief's space can be converted into 30 Million EXP]

[Did you want to proceed with the conversion?]

=====

A smile creeps out on Ace's face, *"Proceed."*

He quickly wanted to increase his cultivation because, by doing so, he can use soul-shattering eyes more easily. At least that is what he thought.

=====

"[Conversion Complete!]"

[30 Million EXP has been added to Host status]

[Congratulation host on reaching the High Stage of Heavenly Foundation Building]

[Host status has been updated]"

=====

Ace quickly closed his eyes because, just like the last time, a huge flood of heavenly qi explode out from the dark void and the heavenly qi circulates his dark meridians.

But this time, the rotation of the heavenly qi wasn't just stopped at nine, but the qi circulates ninety-nine times before entering the dark void again and turns into HD-Qi.

The HD-Qi enters the nine dark foundation slates surrounding the dark void. Those dark slates begin to rapidly expand again.

When the HD-Qi was absorbed, they have expanded by nine-hundred percent! Now they were nine-hundred square meters in size.

Those pitch-black foundation plates now looked like some large, dark lands. This was truly a tremendous leap this time!

Ace opens his eyes, and the dullness in them has lessened after his breakthrough. He smiled ecstatically, *'I feel much better now.'*

He looked at his Martial Cultivation Column because he was confused about why this many EXP only help him reached the High Stage of Heavenly Foundation Building, not Peak.

====

[Martial Cultivation: Heavenly Foundation Building {High-Stage}]

{EXP: 29.95 Million/50 Million}

====

Ace take a deep breath in astonishment because if he remembered correctly from mid to high stage, he only needed one million EXP. But now he needed fifty million to reach the Peak Stage of Heavenly Foundation!

At this moment, the system's voice sounded again,

=====

"[Soul Probing 15% Power has been unsealed!]"

[Host can now probe the soul of Middle Stage Qi Foundation Building Cultivators and the time limits of soul probing have also increased to two hours a day]

"[Light Element Qi {Martial & Soul} has been unlocked.]"

[Light Element Qi: The ability to freely use worldly light element qi of both martial and soul type!]

[Limitation: Host can only use any type of Qi {Martial or Soul} for 24 hours and has to stop for 48 hours.]

=====

"W-what?" Ace shout out loud as he was bewildered after hearing about the light qi.

This was the same reward he gets about absorbing the light elemental orb. But never get to use it or didn't know how to.

Yet, now the system has unlocked it on its own and this was an immense advantage for him because he can use element qi of both soul and body at the same time in the heavenly foundation realm!

Even with that limitation of one-day use and two-day intervals, it was enough for him to do many things in twenty-four hours, as he can now learn rune crafting!

He knew it was not the heavenly element qi but still; it was the element qi, and it was written in the manual's instruction that Ace can use any type of element soul qi as long as he has it while rune crafting.

It will decrease the crafted rune symbols effect by fifty percent and the symbols will be imperfect compare with the rune symbols crafted by the heavenly soul qi that can become perfect rune symbol!

However, Ace didn't care as long as he can learn only that eye technique first level. It was enough for him to at least see the hidden rune symbol in this barren-looking place.

Ace has to wait before using the light qi because his soul wasn't in optimal condition right now.

However, Ace didn't notice at this moment, in this silent and dark place, something was observing him with great interest!

In the depth of low sky border formation, an ancient husky voice mumbled, "How did this child tear a hole in this formation? How many years has it been since I saw someone alive entering this place."

There was a hint of astonishment in this voice and yearning for something.

"But this child is quite bizarre. He was clearly at the mid-stage just two days ago and his soul was also somewhat weak, but how did he manage to breakthrough in the high stage with a soul injury?"

But alas, Ace didn't even hear or felt this presence and for the first time, he was completely in dark!!

Chapter 106 - Reality Check!

8-11 minutes

An entire week passed since Ace was trapped inside the formation of the low sky-changing border.

Ace was only concentrating on his soul recovery the entire time and today his soul was completely recovered.

"How much time has passed?" Ace opens his glimmering eyes while wondering.

He does not know about the flow of time here because there was no concept of night and day inside the formation and it was constantly silent.

"Well, it doesn't matter since I'm trapped here." Ace smiles bitterly while mumbles, "I should be able to learn the first part of the rune crafter manual now."

Ace's eyes shimmer the very moment he thought about the first part, Runic Eyes of Heavenly Rune Crafter Foundational Manual. This was his key to leave this damn palace.

The first level of the Runic Eyes can help the ruin crafter to see the rune symbols that were impossible to see with naked eyes. This kind of technique was the most basic for any rune crafter.

"System, how should I use the light soul qi?" Ace quickly asked since this qi was not his natural Heavenly Qi, and ordinary worldly qi, he didn't know how to proceed with it.

====

"[Did host want to activate the Light Element Soul Qi?]"

[Yes/No]

====

'Well, this is handy.' Ace was happy about this easy way to use this worldly qi and didn't have to learn it from scratch. **"Yes, activate it."**

====

"[Light Element Soul Qi has been activated.]"

[Time Remains: 23:59:59]

====

'Oh, with this timer, I didn't have to always worry about the time limit.' it overjoyed Ace since he can put all of his focus into the Runic Eyes now.

At this moment, Ace felt a tingle in his mind's space and quickly use his sense to see what was occurring inside.

The orange soul core was calmly floating in the center of Ace's mind space while slowly rotating, diffusing misty orange qi in the mind space.

Suddenly, a small milky white soul core appeared within from orange soul core!

This white soul core size was one-fifth of the orange soul core. This white core slowly floats few inches away from Ace's original heavenly soul core before settling.

When the milky white soul core stops, as if it was finally at the right position, it begins to slowly rotate around the orange soul core while glowing in white, just like a moon around the sun!

The sudden appearance of this new white soul core astonished Ace.

"[Now the host can use the false light soul core to steal the light soul qi from the world.]"

Ace finally snapped out of his shock as a wide grin appeared on his face. *"Heh, stealing qi from this word? I like the sound of it."*

He didn't dwell on it anymore since the time was limited and he won't be able to use the light soul qi for two days.

With a thought, Ace draws light element soul qi from the white soul core. To his surprise, this-worldly was much easy to handle than heavenly qi and he quickly get used to it.

After making himself comfortable with light soul qi, Ace inhales deeply and puts a serious face. *'Runic Manifest Eyes...'* Suddenly white transparent mist streams from both of his eyes.

This mist was none other than light soul qi. It is impossible to see with naked eyes, and only someone with an entire realm higher than Ace can see this qi.

At this moment, deep within the formation,

"Hmm? Isn't this light element soul qi??" An old husky voice exclaims out loud. "What!! This pup is an Early Soul River Cultivator?? But how can that be? I saw him breaking through into the high stage of Qi Foundation Realm a week ago myself!"

This voice was sounded in great shock at this moment.

"Wait, a moment! There is no trace of martial qi on him now? Was I hallucinating at that time? I must be it! No one can cultivate both soul and body at the same time from time immemorial!"

This voice seems to calm itself. "It appears trapping here for so long has really messed up my senses. But this pup is quite interesting. He is an early soul river cultivator at such a young age and even has an affinity with the light element, which complements soul cultivation.

"Should I take this chance? Well, it's not like I can get another like this one. If far better than trapping here at least!" The husky voice went silent as if it was mulling over something.

One month pass since Ace was trapped inside the low sky-changing formation.

In this month, Ace has learned the Runic Manifest Eyes earnestly whenever his rest period was over. This technique was unique from the other eyes skills he learned in the past.

That's why he is having difficulty in understanding it but after a month he beginning to understand the crux of this rune crafting first part and was very close in master the first level of runic eyes!

As for the two days when he can't use the light soul qi, he learns the soul-piercing bullets. Because it was not harmful to him at his current level.

He tries studying the pulseless stealth, but it was too difficult for him to understand as if he was stuck. So, he put all his focus on the soul skill.

One more thing that was worth mentioning is Rune Crafting Manual was helping Ace in underling more about the soul qi. Before he was completely clueless about how he should improve in the soul, but now things were different.

If not for the limited time and being trapped in this place, Ace wanted to study the soul-controlling technique of heavenly rune crafting.

This makes him even more determined to quickly leave this place.

Two more months passed,

At this moment Ace's eyes were tightly shut while he sweat profoundly. White transparent soul qi was constantly flowing from his shut eyes as if there were on white fire.

Suddenly, Ace shut eyes shot open as the transparent soul qi instantly sinks in them, and not even a trace of soul qi left.

His dark blue eyes were calm as water, but if one saw more carefully, there was a white luster around his dark blue iris now.

Ace's lips curls upwards in a smile because he finally comprehends the first level of runic eyes the Runic Manifest Eyes in three months!

Wasting no more time, Ace looked around with the help of Runic Manifest Eyes and was astounded because the surrounding area was filled with different and complex, runic symbols!

'I can finally see these rune symbols!' Ace was ecstatic because all of his efforts were not in vain, and can finally see the hidden rune symbols.

He was quite surprised now that he sees the real rune symbols because before he can only see flaws in the arrays and formation with both of his basic and soul eye skills.

Yet now, he can clearly see these mysterious runes and they were just too profound for him to make any sense of them at this moment.

Ace's brows suddenly locked together when he looked around more carefully. Because he saw these strange symbols were glowing in different lights and there was not a single empty spot like when he saw with soul-shattering eyes three months ago.

The spot where he was holding for three months was also one of those empty spots he saw with soul-shattering eyes, but now he using the Runic Eyes, even this spot was glowing in dim white light.

'Now I have to combine true and false eyes with Runic Manifest Eyes!' Ace mused grimly. *'No, it's almost impossible. They simply didn't compliment each other!'*

This was his grand plan for escaping this place, by combining his basic eyes skill and a rune technique. Because true and false eyes can spot flaws and, by combining it with this runic technique, he can easily spot the flaws in symbols as well.

Furthermore, if Ace really succeeds, then he didn't need the soul-shattering eyes in the long run either.

At least that is what he thought before mastering the runic eyes first level. He was confident in doing it, however, now he finally understood just how impossible it was to combine martial and soul techniques and skills alike!

Ace was in a huge dilemma when an ancient husky voice drifted in this silence and enter his ear, "Little Brat, your talent in soul is almost equal to this Patriarch."

Ace nearly jump in fright when this sudden voice sounded in his ear. He instantly used his heavenly sense to the max to find this voice owner but failed.

"Heh, you even manage to form soul sense in the early soul river realm, and your soul sense is unique and powerful as well. Just which technique are you practicing?"

Ace finally gives the horror of his life because it was his first time since anyone has ever pointed out his soul senses!!

Chapter 107 - Patriarch Empty Dream (Part 1)

9-11 minutes

Ace was terrified because no one has ever assumed him of being a soul cultivator, much less praising his heavenly sense. This means there is a horrifying being live in this place and he couldn't but think of that nasty feeling he had when he first entered this place.

'How can there be someone else in here?' Ace thought grimly, but he can't run away now because if he moves carelessly in this place he will be dead!

Furthermore, this terrifying being can even sense his heavenly sense. Where can he run if this voice owner wanted to capture him?

Ace takes a deep breath. "Who are you?" As he asked, the invisible bead has already appeared in his hand. If he senses anything amiss, he would shatter it instantly.

"Hoh, me? I'm Patriarch Empty Dream, you must hear of me before." There was a clear pride in this voice as he introduces himself to Ace.

Ace grimaced before saying thoughtfully, "Senior, please forgive me. I'm only from low-level lands and didn't hear of senior's mighty name before."

"What low-level lands?" Empty Dream was confused as he asked, "Child, where is this place? Are we not in the Azure Wind Continent?"

Ace was startled hearing this, *'He didn't know about low lands?'* Despite his vigilant Ace still, reply truthfully.

"This is the Azure Wind Continent, but it is divided into four different layers and we are in the lowest level sky changing border."

"Since when did Azure Wind Continent have different layers and this bullshit border???" Empty Dream demanded again in a stiff voice.

"From the start, I guess." Ace didn't know the answer to this question himself and honestly replied.

"Hmm, I can tell you're speaking truthfully." Empty Dream responded with uncertainty, "Tell me everything you know about the current Azure Wind Continent."

'He is a soul cultivator!' Ace thought gravely because only someone with soul sense can confidently say; he was telling the truth.

This gave Ace the chills. It was his first time being the prey of someone else soul sense and he was helpless to do anything. Now, he finally understands just how it felt to be in dark in front of a soul cultivator!

"Senior, first can you please answer this junior question." Ace dryly asked. He didn't know just what the deal with this old fellow.

But this Empty Dream didn't attack him from start and just keep asking the meaningless questions that give Ace a little courage. That's why he asked to see if this old guy was short temper or not.

"First, tell me everything you know about the azure wind continent!" There was clear oppression might in Empty Dream voice this time.

A tremor run through Ace's entire body because there was some mysterious power in that husky voice. *'Just what is his cultivation realm?!*

"System, can I use that life coin now?" Ace quickly transmitted. He didn't like this kind of feeling where he was trapped like a mouse in the presence of a tiger!

"[No!]

"[System didn't detect any life-ending danger to host's life at this moment.]"

Ace smile wryly, *'You're not reliable at all!'*

He takes a deep breath and told Empty Dream about Azure Wind Continent that he knows truthfully. As for hiding something, heh, in the presence of soul sense, it was nearly impossible until Ace learn to calm his soul fluctuations that he didn't know how to.

He was just a rookie when it come to soul cultivation and this was his first time coming in contact with an actual soul cultivator and a terrifying one at that.

After a long explanation, Ace felt he speak for the longest time of his life.

"That treacherous bastard!!!" Empty Dream's enraged voice echoed in the silence of sky-changing formation.

Ace gripped the invisible bead at this moment he was ready to shatter it at any moment.

'Sigh...' A helpless sigh sounded at this moment. "Boy, forgive my early behavior. I just can't believe that traitor divided this beautiful continent and even build these borders."

Ace was confused at this moment because for the first he felt sorrow in this voice and couldn't help but asked, "Senior, are you someone from an ancient sect?"

"Ancient Sect? Heh," Empty Dream sneering voice rang, "Boy, since you tell this patriarch the truth and I didn't speak with someone for ages, let me enlighten you."

Ace didn't speak and listen carefully to what this old fellow has to say.

"I don't know just how much time has passed, but after hearing you, I can assume; They have removed all the traces of me from the history.

"But let me tell you, in ancient times, Ancient Beast Race ruled the golden sky world. It was the most glorious period for them, but one day, suddenly, different races appear from different parts of this world. No one knows just where they come from.

"The ancient beast race was infuriated by these sudden invaders, and they began mass extermination to clean their world. But it was not as easy as the beast race deem it would be.

"In the newly emerge races there were three races that were even stronger than ancient beasts. They were Devils, Demons, and Ancient Hunters.

"Facing beast race wrath and their huge numbers, these three races gathered together every other being that was not related to ancient beasts and form friction against the ancient beasts.

"This was the first war that this world has ever seen. It was called the **Resistance Cold War**. This great war raged for almost two hundred years until the ancient beast finally realized that this world can no longer be there alone anymore.

"Because they suffer the most in the hands of these allied races, especially cunning devils and curl demons, and when you add sneaky hunters in the mix, this made a deadly combination of carnage.

"That's why the Beast Emperor of that time accepts every race and the Resistance Cold War finally stops after the death of millions.

"But this wasn't the end of the conflict between the races because following the war with beast race was over, the allied races didn't have any purpose to continued their alliance anymore, and the allied races separated.

"Do you know the ten continents we know today were once only a single humongous mainland?" Empty Dream didn't wait for Ace's answer and continued,

"After the war, every race divided this vast continent's territory according to their prowess of race. Simply put, the one with the most power gets the biggest land, while the weakest gets nothing at all.

"Some weak-simple-minded races like Ogres, Golems, Cyclops... simply go under the banner of powerful races like devils, demons, ancient hunters... and become their slaves.

"In these weak races who chose the path of slavery for survival were humans as well." There was deep sorrow in Empty Dream's voice when he talks about humanity's past.

Ace has a bewildered expression on his face because what he heard was just too shocking. He never even imagines that there was such a history of his world. Especially humanity, who was now the number four race in this world!

Ace couldn't help but ask, "Senior, then how did we break free from the path of slavery?"

Empty Dream said with a prideful voice, "Heh, we fight, of course!

"Humans chose the Ancient Hunter Race for protection and become their vassals. Because only Ancient Hunters looked exactly like humans except for their different colors of hair.

"The human body is quite fragile, and we didn't bear any abilities at birth either. But we are unique from other races because we can reason and comprehend, and our bodies or souls can become strong if we have techniques and skills.

"For decades, humanity does slavery under the ancient hunters, but it was only until a hero emerges who changes the entire course of our race. His name was Clavus, who was later known as the Humane Sage!

"In ancient records, the Humane Sage was the very first human who discovered the true potential of the human body and he has an astonishing ability of comprehension.

"He creates many techniques from scratches for humanity and secretly taught all humanity cultivation, and this was the real turning point for the humans.

"The humanity finally understands their true potential and in the leadership of Humane Sage, the revolt of humanity began. Many heroes emerge from humanity and contribute tremendously.

"However, no one has ever imagined that this revolt of humanity against the ancient hunters would aflame the second biggest war of golden sky world, the ***Race Supremacy War!***"

Empty Dream's voice was filled with passion. He didn't talk with someone for ages and Ace was an excellent listener, and he almost forgot that he was confined.

Ace's eyes also shimmer with a strange light. He is a human himself and hearing the glorious history of the human race, his blood boiled.

"Senior, what happened next?" Ace eagerly asked, he desperately wanted to know what happen in the Race Supremacy War!

Chapter 108 - Patriarch Empty Dream (Part 2)

8-11 minutes

'*Ahem...*' Empty Dream dry cough rang at this moment after hearing Ace's question as if he was embarrassed. "Child, this patriarch also didn't know about the Race Supremacy war, there is no record of it, I only know the name."

Ace was still waiting for the other part of the story eagerly when he heard the Empty Dream's embarrassing words and he nearly fell.

Empty Dream speak quickly as if he saw Ace's dark face, "Brat, I'm telling the truth there is no record of this war left in history except its name.

"All I know is when the supremacy war was over, the single huge mainland was broken into ten pieces and the ranking of races was also decided and no one waged any more wars after that.

"Trust me, if it has any record, I would be the first person to know. Because I'm the descendant of the Humane Sage and also the eighth-generation Patriarch of Humane Sky Sect!"

Ace was bewildered to discover the terrifying background of this voice. He didn't know if this old fellow was telling the truth or not, since his senses were powerless. But if this was true, then he has to be some kind of living legend!

However, Ace frown as he asked, "If senior is decent of Humane Sage and the patriarch of a sect, then how did you end up here?"

"It's was all my fault for trusting that tortious disciple so much!" Empty dream voice was chilly as winter when he mentions his disciple.

Ace narrowed his eyes but stay silent to let Empty Dream continued.

"In my time, there were no distributions or boundaries on this continent and there was only one sect. The whole azure wind continent flourishes and humanity were united under Humane Sky Sect.

"But I had made a huge mistake by taking a venoms snake as my disciple. I got blinded by his terrifying talent in soul cultivation and ignore his other aspects."

'Sigh...' Empty Dream sigh helplessly, "I treated him like my son and even taught him the core technique of Clavus Clan.

"The Clavus Clan was famous for their talent in soul cultivation because the Humane Sage was also a soul cultivator and we have the complete set of soul techniques and skills for Eight Soul Cultivation Realm!

"But the Seventh and Eighth Realm Techniques and skills were no easy to get and only someone with Calvus Clan blood have the chance to get them. When I tell that traitor about it, he finally showed his fangs!

"First, he acts like he always had, but as the time passes, the sect changed and I don't know how, but that bastard even gains help from Devil Race Experts and struck me down together with them.

"I clearly remember in the attackers two high-elders from the sect were also involved. But that snake didn't kill me because he somehow even found out only the Patriarch of the sect knows about the place where the final two techniques of our clan were hidden.

"In the end, I didn't budge, even after they killed my clansmen, but that traitor ambition knows no bounds and, with the help of devil race experts, they separate my soul into five pieces and lock them in different locations.

"I don't know what he will gain after doing it but he was plotting something nasty. But alas, I was helpless to do anything because they have powerful soul treasures to protect themselves.

"However, that traitor didn't know the wonder of my clan's seventh realm soul technique. Even after they tore my soul into pieces, I regain consciousness and it might be the same case for my other soul parts.

"But I was trapped here, and no one seems to enter this place. Well, of course, until you come. I'm sure you are the only one who can help me." Empty Dream's voice was filled with enthusiasm when he mentions Ace.

Ace felt he was the unluckiest person at this moment because this whole matter seems to be great and he didn't want to get involved with this master and disciple.

Because if that person can even trick someone like Empty Dream and gain help from Devil Race and most importantly, he was most likely to be the one who has changed the entire structure of this continent.

That's means that guy was possibly the strongest person in the entire azure wind continent!

Meanwhile, he already has Mathies' true body, which is a Qi Soul Manifestation Realm Cultivator as an enemy, and if he provokes this kind of existence as well. He would have no place on this entire continent to hide!

Ace force a smile as he declines politely, "Senior, it was all a coincidence, a mere fluke. Even you can tell I'm trapped here, so how could I possibly help you with this crucial matter?"

"Heh, you think I'm an idiot who will tell these kinds of things just to anyone and ask any hillbilly for help?" Empty Dream scoffed at this moment, "Your talent in soul is almost equal to this patriarch and you even seem to possess very good rune crafting eyes technique.

"If I'm not wrong, you only learn it here and the time was also very short. Your talent is not high as that snake, but possessing a talent equal to this patriarch is not a laughing matter either!"

'This old fox was observing me from the start and only shows his presence because of my talent in the domain of the soul.' Ace smile wryly, learning his secrets so easily exposed.

"Senior, I still can't help you because I'm trapped here and your matter is possibly related to royal lands. I can't go there anytime soon even if I escape." He was telling the truth.

"Boy, I know what you're thinking, but if my conjecture is true, then there is a chance of my other two soul parts being in the other two sky-changing borders. And they might also regain their awareness as well.

"I can help you escape this place and those two-soul pieces can do the same if they are conscious because this entire formation is built on my soul piece. This should solve your problem in entering those so-called royal lands, right?" Empty Dream confidently said.

Ace's eyes brighten. Hearing this old guy can help him leave this place because his plane was not possible, and he didn't want to spend a long time here. He can learn the rune crafting, but it would be just too slow, and he can't raise his strength quickly as well.

More importantly, his primary goal was also the royal lands. It would make his journey easier if this old guy's hypothesis about his soul parts was true.

Ace takes a deep breath before saying, "What do you want in return?" He wanted to hear the conditions before accepting anything from Empty Dream.

"Hoho, it's very simple. You just have to collect soul wisps of my every soul piece and after you combine every part, I'll be free from this damn place and become whole again.

"Don't worry about the rewards. After I become whole, I'll impart my clan's soul techniques and skills to you and made you the next patriarch of the Humane Sky Sect!

"But you have to be very careful because if that traitor found out about my soul regaining conscious, he will become alert and erase my conscious." Empty Dream warns as if Ace has already accepted his task.

Ace frowned upon hearing Empty Dream conditions and his 'tempting' reward. Trustfully, Ace wasn't a tad bit moved because his technique and skills were perfect and he can only cultivate them because of his heavenly qi.

As for being the Young Patriarch, he didn't want to lose his freedom. So collectively there was nothing he wanted from this Empty Dream except the entry in higher-level lands. Simply put, he was getting the shortest end of the stick.

Ace said with a grim face, "Senior, but I didn't know where is your other two soul pieces."

This was probably the biggest problem in this whole deal. Even if he found other two pieces of Empty Dream Soul, there were still two pieces missing and their locations were unknown.

Empty Dream speaks as if he was also in deep thoughts, "You are right about it but those two pieces would definitely be in the Sect or some other places since that traitor didn't keep them close, it means he is after something. You just have to find other suspicious places like these borders. But you have to be careful not to alert that bastard."

Ace smiled bitterly and said, "Fine, but if I won't able to find them don't hate me."

He wasn't going to particularly search for them, but if he found them between his travels, he didn't mind lending a helping hand to this old ghost. Since he was going to help him in crossing these borders.

Empty Dream elated voice rang when he heard Ace finally agreeing, "Boy, let us establish a soul contract!"

Chapter 109 - Soul Contract

9-11 minutes

Ace grimaced after hearing the name 'Soul Contract' because he didn't know what kind of contract it is. But the name soul was not a laughing matter.

"Umm. Senior, what is this soul contract?" He asks thoughtfully.

"Oh, I almost forgot, your knowledge is quite shallow." Empty Dream elaborated like an elder, "Soul Contracts are like slave contracts but there are more powerful and almost unbreakable.

"But it differs greatly from slave contracts because in this contract both parties have to agree on each other conditions before successfully establish it. But don't worry, once the conditions are fulfilled, the soul contract will end at the very moment.

"However, if someone dares to go against the conditions written in soul contract, their soul will be destroyed, meaning instant death!

"Soul Contracts are very handy if you can't trust someone completely. Boy, don't take it to heart, you know this patriarch predicament. It's not like I didn't trust you, I just don't want to take risks anymore and I know you are the same." Empty Dream said.

Ace brows locked together hearing the purposes of this soul contract. He couldn't help but agree with Empty Dream's statement about not trusting each other completely, because he was the same.

If he forms this soul contract with Empty Dream, it will ensure his safety and the notion of betrayal would be out of the question. Of course, it would only remain until the contract is fulfilled.

Ace thinks before if he should just use the soul-shattering eyes and reject Empty Dream's offer, but now that he thinks more carefully, this old ghost was just too shrewd.

Because he clearly said that he can help him escape the formation, then didn't it mean he can kill him if he wanted to with the formation as well?

Empty Dream said nothing about controlling the formation completely and only said he can help him escape. But Ace's mind sharpened with all the experience he had gone through in low lands and he instantly guess that empty dream was hiding this trump card to threaten him if he rejects his offer.

'This cultivation world is truly a place where only strength rules.' Ace thought bitterly and his mood sours spontaneously.

From the start, he was playing in the hands of Empty Dream, and rejection wasn't an option anymore. Well, it was, if this damn system activated that life coin, but he knew he has to depend on himself in this situation.

This conjecture gave Ace even more reason to not trust this old ghost completely.

If Empty Dream knows Ace has already found about this trump card and almost saw through his scheme, he would instantly put Ace at the level of his traitor disciple!

Empty Dream was talking with Ace nicely just to form goodwill between him and Ace, but by revealing the soul contract, he gives away his crafty nature.

Nonetheless, Ace has no choice in this matter anymore as he said calmly, "Senior, there is one problem, we didn't have any soul contract."

He assumed since it was like a slave contract; it has to be some kind of treasure or special item and if that old ghost was trapped, then he didn't have this kind of treasure here.

Empty Dream could easily tell by Ace's chaotic soul fluctuations that something was amiss, but he can't put his finger on it. But after hearing Ace's question, he completely forgets about it and thought it was only natural for Ace to be overly cautious.

"Heh, soul contracts didn't need any specific treasures or needed rune crafting like slave contracts. Soul Cultivators at the Soul River Core realm can easily make it by controlling the soul sense, that is if they had the rare method of forming the soul contract."

Empty Dream voice rang, "From the moment I was awakened, I have stored some element soul qi, and it is enough to form the soul contract and help you escape this formation. Now we just have to decide on the conditions."

'This old fox!' Ace cursed in his heart because it seems Empty Dream was ready from the start and there was no escaping from this contract.

But Ace was quite shocked after discovering the soul cultivator can make this fascinating soul contract out of thin air and wonder if he can do it with his heavenly sense, but alas, he didn't have the method.

"We'll do." Ace said with a straight face. It's not like he has any other choice.

"Oh, I didn't know your name. Without it, we can't form the soul contract." Empty Dream asks Ace.

"Javier." Ace replied with a plain face.

"Heh, your correct name." Empty Dream snickers slyly.

'Damn soul sense!' Ace's face stiffed, but he was helpless, "Ace."

"Ho, what a strange name." Empty Dream comment.

Ace's face darkened but didn't rebuke Empty Dream.

After that, Empty Dream and Ace discussed the conditions of the soul contract.

There were only three conditions,

First, Ace will help empty dream to find his other soul pieces, but he will not search for them specifically. However, if he hears any kind of news or rumor related to them, he will have to scrutinize it.

Second, Empty Dream will not harm Ace in any way nor will Ace.

Third, Empty Dream will help Ace crossing the Sky Changing Borders if Empty Dream's other soul parts were present in there demanding nothing from Ace or playing any kind of trick. And if Ace revives Empty Dream, Empty Dream will give Ace the entire soul cultivation inheritance of the Clavus Clan.

After they settled the conditions, one square foot long two green transparent sheets appeared from the depth of sky-changing border.

They float in front of Ace. He was astonished because every condition was written just like they have decided on these green transparent sheets.

'So, this is a soul contract.' He thought.

Ace carefully read the soul contract and found nothing harmful to him or any loophole in it and there was Empty Dream's actual name written on it. But he still can't tell if this old ghost was telling the truth or not, since his soul senses were useless here.

At this moment, Empty Dream's voice sounded again, "Now, we just have to imprint our soul mark on it and the contract will be established. One contract will enter your True Soul and the other will enter mine.

"Let me tell you something interesting. If we hide our actual name, the soul contract cannot enter the other party's True Soul, and it will cancel instantly. Because the true name is imprinted on our true soul.

"I don't know how this works, but most seniors believe it has to do something with 'First Call' meaning whatever someone calls you at your birth it is your true name, but this theory isn't accurate.

"It was only the case for humans and other weak races, though, races like Devils, Demons, Ancient Hunters, Ancient Beasts... have their true name from birth."

Ace was astonished because he never thought that even a simple name has such a secret.

"Heh, what do you think? I would fake my name just to create a loophole in the contract? Boy, I meant you no harm, and this contract is very fair.

"How about I'll impart my insights of Rune Crafting's first nine ranks? Consider it my goodwill." Empty Dream' chuckling voice sounded.

Ace's face reddens because he thought of this name loophole thing. Now, empty dream even offers his insights on rune crafting and Ace's eyes instantly glow.

His rune crafting was heavenly and has twelve tiers, but if he has the insights of normal rune crafter's, it will really be an enormous help for him in the path of heavenly rune crafting, and can learn it more quickly.

"Thank you, Senior, I hope you won't take any offense of this junior previous doubts." Ace quickly apologized to Empty Dream.

"Heh, I know your situation and I would do the same if I was in your shoes." Empty Dream Chuckles, "Now let us sign this contract and remember never to speak my true name or that traitor might find out about you. Soul Cultivators are very terrifying beings and have many methods to locate you with just a simple name!"

Ace swallowed hard and nodded in agreement. Now he was even warier of soul cultivators after meeting Empty Dream.

After the little talk with Empty Dream, Ace uses his light element soul qi to imprint his soul mark on the contract and this was also a kind of experiment to see if he can use this worldly qi in the soul contract.

'It worked!' Ace was ecstatic because by doing it, he can maintain the image of him being only a soul cultivator in Empty Dream's mind and won't have to reveal his world-shattering secret.

Empty Dream also suspected nothing and do the same.

Ace wasn't even able to see the nature of Empty Dream's qi and this made him somewhat frustrated because it means; the gap in their cultivation was just too great.

When the soul marks finally imprinted on the soul contract, one of them flies in the depth of sky border's formation, and the other shrink as it slowly enters between Ace's eyebrows before vanishing.

Ace saw the soul contract slowly go towards the soul core, but to his surprised, it goes towards the false light core and sinks inside it!

At this moment system voice rang in Ace's mind and his lips curls in a radiant smile!

Chapter 110 - A Free Thief!

10-12 minutes

Empty Dream's questioning voice sounded, "Boy, what are you smiling about?"

"I'm just happy about finally leaving this gloomy place." Ace replied with a grin.

He was only telling the part of complete truth because he didn't want to arouse Empty Dream suspiciously. This notification of the system was his biggest trump card!

Just as he thought, Empty Dream suspect nothing and didn't press the matter any further, "Now the soul contract is established, there is no need to be wary of each other. Here are my insights on rune crafting from Rank 1 to Rank 9."

Ace saw a green small glob of mist coming in his way just like the soul contract from the depth of sky changing border.

"Let it enter your *Sea of Knowledge* and don't resist." Empty Dream said as the glob slowly enter the place between Ace's eyebrows.

Ace knew what this **Knowledge Sea** was. It was the part of his brain where his every memory was stored. He sulks because if Empty Dream did something with that glob he can easily see everything in his memories, included system presence!

This notion came to Ace's mind because his soul probing was work exactly like this. It was random but it can retrieve someone's memories from their knowledge sea without even alerting them. Of course, if the person's soul was weaker than his own, then it worked or he suffer a terrible backlash.

Empty Dream's soul was much stronger than his own, and if he wanted to see Ace's memories, then he won't even know about it!

Ace still didn't know about how many more tricks Empty Dream had and didn't want to risk it anymore, especially with his biggest secret; the system!

The insights were very tempting for him, but not as important as his safety. He was going to reject the glob of mist when he hears the system's voice buzz in his mind.

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"[System detects foreign memories and a wisp of foreign soul sense.]

[Did the host want to eliminate the soul sense and contained the memories?]

[Or do host want to give this soul sense access to his Knowledge Sea?]"

====

'Heh, he wanted to see my memories by using his soul sense. This also shows his true sneaky nature.' A coldness instantly appeared in depth of Ace's eyes, "System, can you remove it without alerting this soul sense owner?"

He didn't want to alert that old ghost because if Empty Dream found out that Ace can find and even remove his soul sense, then he would be wary of Ace and might pull something even wilder.

They cannot hurt each other because of the soul contract, but there are other methods and Ace is still inside this damn formation. If Empty Dream trapped him here, this didn't mean he was hurting him.

That was also the reason for Empty Dream's bold play because he wasn't breaking any condition of the soul contract by seeing Ace's memories.

"[Yes, the system can do it with 50TP. The owner of this soul sense won't suffer any backlashes or know about it.]"

"Do it then." Ace transmitted with no second thought.

Instantly many foreign memories emerge in his brain or knowledge sea and they were all about rune crafting.

Ace didn't have time to go through them because Empty Dream's voice rang at this moment, "Why aren't you opening your knowledge sea? Did you still have any doubt?"

"Senior, I already have, and thank you for your kind gift. These insights are precious." Ace said with a smile while scoffing inside his heart.

"What?? You already absorb that enormous amount of memories?!" Empty Dream exclaims.

He was very curious about how did this little boy obtain these kinds of skills and techniques because Empty Dream now knows about the divide Azure Wind Continent.

And Ace was someone from the lowest level land that's why Empty Dream wanted to see his experience and mostly his soul techniques and skills, especially that Rune Eye Technique.

Because empty dream felt a strange and powerful fluctuation from that technique and it was possibly superior to his own that's why he sent his wisp of soul sense with that glob of memories to see just where Ace found that kind of skill.

However, to Empty Dream shock, his soul sense didn't even get inside Ace's knowledge sea and Ace even absorbed that enormous amount of memories so quickly and without showing any discomfort!

"Boy, are you playing with this patriarch? If you absorb all the memories, then tell me what is a Runic Cycle?" Empty Dream didn't believe and instantly asked a tough question that only an Eighth Mortal Ranked Rune Crafter would know the answer to.

"Runic Cycle is used in formations to keep the rune symbols operating with High-Level Qi Stones." Ace search those memories and instantly replied, *'Oh, qi stone have this kind of use as well!'*

Ace was also stunned because he didn't know these qi stones are so precious and he have tones of them! This made him quite happy.

"Then how did you solve runic displacement?" Empty Dream voice rang again with a hint of disbelief in it.

Ace again probe the memories and found the answer, "Oh, we can simply draw arrays around the displacement symbols."

Empty Dream asked three more troublesome questions that only a peak mortal rune crafter would answer and Ace answer them according to his understanding.

"Hahaha, boy you are talented and I gave the method of forming the soul contract, here. It is quite helpful to you." Empty Dream said like a benevolent elder.

Ace's eyes shimmer. He wanted this method even if he can't use it. He can always create a new one if he knows which direction to go.

But Ace also knows this old ghost was doing to infiltrate his memories again, but since the system can easily wipe out Empty Dream's soul sense, he wasn't worried about it at all now.

Still, he was also interested in this method of splitting your soul sense to infiltrate someone's memories. It was more useful than his soul probing.

Just like before, a misty glob enters Ace's brain and with 50TP, the wisp of Empty Dream's soul sense has also been wiped out.

Just like that, Ace has obtained the precious method of making soul contracts as he grins brightly.

"Don't tell me you already have the technique of soul contract as well?" Empty Dream inquiry with a hint of gloom in his voice.

Ace beam and he repeated the whole technique without stopping.

"Ha...ha... Boy, you are a genius..." Empty Dream dryly praised as his husky voice was filled with frustration.

He didn't know just what was going on with his soul sense or it has declined somehow, but he didn't suffer any backlash or felt anything suspicious that make Empty Dream even more discontented.

After all, he had given a precious soul technique and got nothing in return!

"Senior, isn't your soul qi is limited? Please don't waste it anymore or I might be trapped here." Ace said with a serious face, but inside he was laughing at this old ghost because he knew what he was probably thinking.

Empty Dream felt Ace's joyous mood and thought it was because of the insights and technique he has given him.

"Yes, you are right, it is quite limited and now get going. After helping you out, I would be in a dormant state for some time, so don't enter here recklessly again." Empty Dream finally give up on seeing Ace's memories because his soul qi was limited.

Ace take a deep breath as he thought, *'I can finally leave this damn place.'*

At this moment something floats toward Ace from the direction where Empty Dream's soul was trapped.

It was a small white marble and it directly drift into Ace's hand.

Ace grabs this marble and examines it; this marble was like a transparent crystal inside were filled with milky smoke-like substance.

"This is my wisp of soul, you just have found four more and I'll be revived." Empty Dream solemnly told, "You can't store it inside any normal storage treasure, so you have to be very careful with it. If you lose it, then it will be considered harming me and the contract will take effect, so be very careful especially not to show it to anyone."

Ace coolly said, "Don't worry, senior I'll take care of it and found your other soul wisps."

Empty Dream warns again, "Take it more seriously and be wary of that traitor!"

"What is his name?" Ace asked curiously.

"I can't say it because he will know immediately, but they call him Dream Shatter King!" Empty Dream's voice was filled with coldness as he said that name.

Ace has a peculiar expression because these weird names were just too much to take.

Empty Dream ignore Ace's weird reaction and said gravely, "Now, use your rune eyes technique and follow these white marks I left, and don't misstep or even I can't save you."

Ace quickly do as Empty Dream said, there were still ten hours before his light element qi limit would reach and he wanted to get out of here as soon as possible.

He saw now there was arrow-like white marking has appeared on those glowing rune symbols.

"Thank you, senior, I'll be going now."

After three months, Ace finally moved from his place and carefully followed the arrowed path.

"Is his soul, is 'Unique' just like that traitor?" When Ace vanished, Empty Dream's puzzling voice rang again. But soon everything returned to normal.

It was nighttime in the Land of Kingdoms. The moon's soft light was illuminating the vast clear fields as wintry winds were drifting, brushing through the tall grass.

At this moment, the outside area around the low sky-changing border, a tear appeared in thin air and suddenly a person appeared in black robes from that tear.

That tear instantly vanished after that person came out.

This person has a very handsome face that was glowing in soft moonlight, tall and slenderly built. His dark blue eyes were twinkling as he looked at the starry sky.

"Free at last!" This person was Ace!

End of Volume One: A Free Thief!