

## Thief 161

### Chapter 161 - Rain

9-11 minutes

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The very next moment thereafter the sudden slash, ten human streams of blood rose!

The ten living baits' heads were rolling on the muddy ground as their eyes were filled with incredulity.

No one expected this gushy outcome.

All the people in the living bath group thought that these nobles only needed some of their blood and after they will let them go

But the reality differed completely from what they expected. From the start, these nobles didn't plan to spare them at all.

And why would they? If the news of this huge conspiracy got out, the outcome would be disastrous!

After all, if people were to find out that the institute leaked the test nature beforehand then its reputation would take a tremendous hit!

Moreover, these nobles would be despised by many and there is a very big chance of rebellion!

That's why these aristocrats didn't have any plan to spare anyone from the start. Even if there are other nobles in these baits.

As long as, there are not from the capital city, they're not important!

After seeing the deathly fate of the first ten living baits, the others didn't stay still and let that guy butcher them!

Everyone in the living baits group quickly grab their weapons in panic and attacked those two nobles' footmen with no hesitation!

"Humph! Meaningless struggle!" The boy who killed the first ten sneered after seeing those living baits' bloodshot eyes.

The boy with scholar looks also didn't put these ants' dying struggles in his eyes and didn't move from his position showing any hint of fear.

However, something unexpected occurs when those hundreds of Qi-less attacks reached those two nonchalantly standing footmen.

The boy with a raptor in his hand was going to attack like before since he had the immense advantage of being in perfect condition and these attacks being without any Qi!

But before he could move his hand, he saw a beam and before he could make head or tail of it, this beam brushed past his neck!

He felt nothing first and thought it was just his imagination until he felt something warm and wet on his neck.

This is the last thing he felt before his head was rolling on the floor and dying in confusion.

The scholar boy also meets the same fate, and he also dies because of that mysterious beam!

When those living baits saw this astonishing scene, they were bewildered.

**"RUN!"**

Some in the living baits roar out loud.

Everyone snapped out of their stupor and began fleeing in different directions!

This was their chance to escape. Even if the odds were against them they were not willing to die like this!

When Mark and Leo's parties saw those two peaks fifty Qi gate lackeys' unexpected deaths, their hearts sank!

They didn't take any action because killing someone with those two lackeys' capabilities in a flash is not a laughing matter.

They could tell something went extremely wrong!

"A powerful expert is hiding in those living baits!" Leo grimly said.

"Whoever it is, they didn't seem to come in peace." Mark narrowed his eyes.

"Your highness, please leave this place as quickly as possible! There is something extremely wrong!" A tall boy in green robes grimly said to Mark!

"Let's wait, since that person didn't attack us it means it didn't want to kill us. We just happen to be captured the wrong person!" Haley calmly speaks at this moment.

Mark frowned and said, "What do you mean we caught the wrong person?"

Haley nonchalantly said, "It's manageable, we caught someone who was hiding its capabilities. Didn't you see it just killed two of our people when they kill? We can assume that it was a warning and now that every living bait is running it will also get away without giving away its identity. All we had to do is just not prove it."

"And how are we going to do that?" Mark asked in bewilderment. He had to admit his sister's guess was almost on point. That's why he asked for her opinion this time without rebuking.

"It's very simple, we just have to let all the living baits escape." Haley reply.

Mark grimace after hearing Haley. It was indeed the only thing they can do, but in doing so they will also have to let go of their chance of obtaining Phantom Horn Lizards easily!

Because they had spent 3 whole days to collect these living baits and if they let go of them, then this means they had to find those lizards like everyone else!

"You heard the Princess. Don't go after them let them die on their own!" Leo's calm voice resounded at this moment.

Mark's face fell when he followed this annoying voice and saw Leo has sneaked closer to Haley in this disturbance!

"Who gives you the permission to come here?" Mark glared at Leo with a hint of anger in his voice.

"My heart." Leo smile at Hailey and replied. But he didn't look at Mark.

"YOU!" Mark wanted to hit Leo when he saw Leo teasing his sister so bluntly.

Those beside them had a wry smile on their faces. They knew this White Ghost was a womanizer but hitting on the princess and doing it in front of the Prince nonetheless, just show how gutsy he was.

***'Tip, tip, tip...'***

At this moment droplets of water dropped on the aristocrats.

"Fine, we're not chasing those slaves, this method is as good as impossible in this rain anyway." Mark pursed his lips and said with deep resentment in his eyes.

"Young Prince is wise." Leo chuckles while nodding.

Mark clenched his fist tightly, he could tell Leo was making fun of him.

Haley spoke to her brother who was on the verge of exploding, "Royal Brother, how about we continue our alliance with Young Duke? Now we need every alley we can get since we're going deep in this forest."

Mark hatefully looked at Leo before taking a deep breath. He soothes his anger because he also has the same opinion as Haley.

"Who said we're going deep in this forest?" Leo chuckles at this moment.

"Oh, I wonder what Young Duke has in mind?" Haley impassively looked at Leo as a hint of interest flashed past her beautiful eyes.

Leo smile broadly while Mark's face sank, but he didn't retort since he also wanted to hear Leo's plan.

"Who said all the living baits are gone?" Leo smile slyly and said, "I knew where Young Duke Anthony and his minions are."

"You wanted to ambush Anthony?" Mark frowned.

Leo sneered at this moment, "Don't tell me our Young Prince is concerned about his subjects?"

"We can't do anything in this rain." Mark coolly said.

"So, did Anthony. We just have to wait for this rain to stop." Leo gloom the next moment, "But if the black water swamp flooded this forest, then we have to work extra hard."

Leo knew once the black water swamp floods this area many extremely toxin demonic beasts will come with it. This forest is the only area where one can find Phantom Horn Lizard easily but it was whole another story when it was flooded.

The most frustrating thing was the living bait method also only worked in this area since those Bloodthirsty Earth Mantis were founded in this place.

Although this method might work in water, the blood will draw even more vicious beings and it is very difficult to see in black water.

But Leo knew that Young Duke Anthony too well, and he knew Anthony will take his chance and might pull off the impossible because Anthony had a very precious detection treasure of his family.

As for how Leo know about this information, it is very simple because he seduced and sleep with Anthony's younger sister!

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On the other part of the poisonous forest,

Ace was pretend to be fleeing with his party of eight after the chaos.

Although Ace's party members' conditions were not optimal, they were still unwilling to die.

When the first drop of rain fell on Ace's face, he was instantly thrilled because the time has finally come when he can use his abilities to some extent even if that expert didn't give up and keep using his martial sense in this rain.

But to Ace's astonishment the moment the first drop of water fell on the group the martial sense completely vanished!

*'Hahaha, so you also have limits.'* Ace was ecstatic, but he didn't let this sudden joy cloud his judgment and kept pretending to be a helpless living bait.

Because there was a possibility that this is a trap so he could make a mistake. Since the rain was still slow Ace didn't want to take any chances.

Just five minutes after the rain, Ace was still moving while supporting Dewan and Nola was leading the way weakly.

Crosby was not with them as he was slipped away long ago since he knew it would court death to stay with this group.

**"Stop, right there!"** At this moment an authoritative and powerful voice resounded in the vacancy out of nowhere!

When Ace felt this soul signature, he nearly had a stroke!

## **Chapter 162 - Nightmare Ghosts**

9-11 minutes

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Inside the dark swamp forest, the rain was pouring hard, and dark clouds covered the sky.

The forest was gloomy and poisons, to begin with, and this dark sky and heavy rain make the environment even more spooky.

A group of eight people was standing in the middle of nowhere and this was indeed Ace's party that escape from those nobles a couple of minutes ago.

But their pace was abruptly hindered by a powerful voice a moment ago.

When Nola, Lilith, and the others heard that mighty voice their faces turn bloodlessly pale!

Everyone thought that someone from Leo or Mark's group found them and this person want to take them back so they could continue that gashly living bait plan.

However, no one was willing to go back and die like livestock.

**"Scatter!"** Nola scream while she ran in a different direction.

Nola's character wasn't bad, but even she was unwilling to die here so she fled in a different direction in the hope; she would escape while someone other would distract the enemy.

Everyone had the same thought in mind as Nola and even if they were weak, the will to live overcome their poisonous weak bodies and they ran!

Even Dewan whose condition was worse than everyone free himself from Ryan's support and weakly ran in a particular direction.

Dewan was very grateful to Ryan because Ryan was carrying him since he was gravely injured and he didn't abandon him in that disorder either.

But now he didn't want to drag Ryan or the others with him so he chose the direction where the enemy's voice came from!

**"I'll buy you guys some time!"** Dewan collects every bit of energy in his body and roared while clenching his spear tightly. He was ready to die so the others could escape!

Ace didn't want this, but he had no other choice in this matter, and in the end, he let Dewan go as his heart turn icy cold.

Ace felt the Dark Void release Heavenly Darkness Qi and his turbulent nerves instantly calmed down.

He wasted no more time and also pretend to run like the other six although he had calmed down he was still fearful though.

Because the owner of this powerful voice was none other than the hidden expert Ace was trying to avoid all this time!

Ace ran like a mortal in the east direction but never use his skills or inviable bead for some reason. However, he knew what could've drawn this unexpected guest here so quickly!

This was bound to happen after what happened during the living baits gathering but he never expected this guy would reach here so quickly!

The scariest part was Ace never detected the soul signature nor its presence until this expert was only twenty meters in his soul sense range!

This gave Ace the chills because it means this mysterious expert also has some treasure that can hinder his heaven-defying soul sense!

Ace only detected him because this expert showed himself his own accord.

*'So these treasures that my soul sense can't detect existed and they might be the end of me! Damn those rice bastard originations!'*

Ace resentfully thought after his guess turns accurate and he knew only those organizations have these kinds of treasures.

Ace could've seen this coming long ago when the martial sense suddenly vanished from his soul sense radar. He only thought that it was because of the rain and became ecstatic, he never thought of other possibilities.

Just because of this sudden rapture, he didn't notice the one important fact, and that was when the martial sense vanished Alvin's soul signature also vanished with it!

If he just took notice of this, he could've concluded what he does just now much earlier!

However, this little carelessness also gave him another crucial lesson; he can never become careless while a powerful, mysterious enemy is still on the playing field, and never relies on his senses all the time since there are treasures that can counter them as well!

Ace vowed to be even more observant and calm in the future if he left this place safely!

Just twenty meters away from where Ace's party fled.

A blue caped person was standing on the top of a tall poisonous tree as it was nonchalantly watching those eight ants scattered in different directions and one was moving toward it.

This blue caped person was indeed Alvin who has come here for his first target in his suspect list!

Alvin could've stopped them by just using his Qi river core cultivation base pressure but he didn't because of some particular reason. That's why he shouted and even stop using his blue cape that was a very powerful concealing treasure!

This is the exact treasure that just fooled Ace's soul sense!

As for his heavenly sense Ace never used it because Alvin would've sensed it.

"Heh, still pretending, eh." Alvin mutter to himself while a stiff smile creep out on his impassive face and he blurred from his standing spot before vanishing like a ghost.

The next moment, Alvin appeared twenty meters away, but he wasn't covered in the blue cape anymore and he wore plain white robes. But even in this heavy rain, he was completely dry with no speck of dust on his robes.

Alvin coldly looked at a silhouette moving clumsily before him and his lips curls upwards.

"Reveal yourself!" Alvin coolly said and released a slight aura of his river core cultivation on that silhouette five meters away from him.

Suddenly that silhouette's inept movement becomes sharp!

It was trying to flee!

Alvin didn't even wince after seeing this sudden quick movement skill and released twenty percent of his cultivation base aura.

That silhouette's distinctive movement becomes weaker as it shivers a little before finally stopping and turning around to face Alvin!

It finally gave up on fleeing since it could tell it was impossible in front of this terrifying being.

When this figure finally turned around, it was a little girl in her early fifteens!

Alvin smile faintly seeing this submissive attitude that he wanted. He closely looked at his first target of suspicion.

This little girl's face was very cute but her skin was bluishly showing clear signs of being poison like the others. This little girl was none other than the shy girl and the youngest member of Nola's party, Natalia!

Alvin coolly spoke at this moment, "Heh, your disguise skills are not so bad, but it can't change your Qi projection nor you're good at hiding your capabilities. If you didn't kill those two ants to warn the other fools and revealed your Flowing River cultivation I was saving you for the last!"

Natalia's shy face was long gone, and she was coldly looking at Alvin with no hint of fear in her eyes.

"I'm not your enemy!" She gravely said in her beautiful voice.

Alvin chuckles coldly, "Let me decide after I ripe this face of yours"

Alvin exploded his aura to thirty percent as he was ready to use his vicious methods.

"WAIT! Look!" Natalia was alarmed when she felt the mountain-like force crushing down on her and a black wooden token abruptly appeared in her hand!

Alvin's eyes contracted when he saw that black wooden token. There was a vivid red skull engraved on it and surprisingly, the skull eyes sockets were lit in purple flame!

"You're a '**Purple Assassin**' from Nightmare Ghosts!" Alvin exclaimed and retrieve his aura spontaneously.

Natalia have a sigh of relief after she felt the mountain-like weight lift.

"Yes, I'm a Purple Assassin from Nightmare Ghosts and I can't show you my real face and you know why!" Natalia grimly said while coldly looking at Alvin's astonished face.

"Yes, I apologized for my previous action. You should've shown me your **'Ghost Token'** early." Alvin faintly said but deep in his eyes was a hint of fear!

The organization, Nightmare Ghost was very low-key, but this organization is the scariest of the three giants!

The reason for it was very simple because every member of this organization was a trained killer!

Nightmare Ghosts had different ranks of assassins, **White, Grey, Blue, Purple, Black, Royal Killer**, and **King Killer!**

As for how Nightmare Ghosts Organization divided these ranks no one knows but some people believe that it had to do with the special heritage of **'Night Killer Ghost Sect'** behind it!

The Night Killer Ghost Sect was the sect of killers in Royal lands and its members are called Night Ghosts.

There was a scared code of Night Killer Sect that was famous throughout the entire Azure Wind Continent;

***'Never kill a Night Ghost or the Killer Night will loom over you for eternity!'***

Although, this was the code of Night Killer Ghost Sect it was even famous in lower lands though because Nightmare Ghosts Organization also follow this code blindly!

That's why no one dares kill someone from the Nightmare Ghost because once someone does it the entire organization will never stop until they kill that person's entire birthplace!

### **Chapter 163 - New Mission!**

9-11 minutes

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That's why Alvin apologized so quickly and didn't kill Natalia because Nightmare Ghosts Organization would've not cared if he was a Flame Guard of Pill Flame Organization or a Qi River Core cultivator. They will haunt him to no end!

Even the Pill Flame Organization can't stop them until they're willing to go on an all-out war for him. But that was also impossible because no one know where the Nightmare Ghost Organization headquarter was hidden.

Natalia coldly glare at Alvin and nodded in understanding because it was indeed her fault for not showing her Ghost Token sooner. She thought it would be possible to escape Alvin even if he was a Qi River Core cultivator because of her pride.

But now she found out the difference between her realm and Alvin's was like day and night.



"Why are you hiding in these participants?" Alvin pensively inquire, now that the misunderstanding has been clear he wanted to know what purpose does a purple assassin had to pose as a participant.

Natalia took a moment to consider whether to tell Alvin or just leave because Alvin can't do anything to her now that he knew she was from the Nightmare Ghosts except he had a death wish.

"Sky Stealer!" Natalia coolly stated.

Alvin pull a long face when he heard the name because he was also here for the Sky Stealer.

"But we thought you guys weren't interested in that thief since your organization rejected the other two organizations summon to discuss the matter of Sky Stealer."

Before Pill Flame sent Alvin here, a meeting was held between two leaders of two giants, and they mostly related this meeting to the notorious thief Sky Stealer.

However, this meeting was supposed to be between the three leaders, but the leader of Nightmare Ghosts never showed up nor did the organization respond in any way as if they weren't interested in him.

In the end, the two organizations moved on without Nightmare Ghosts.

But now, an assassin showed up here and her target was none other than the thief which means Nightmare Ghost was very interested in this thief. Yet they didn't want to work together with anyone.

This also implicated that the organization wanted to monopolize that thief's secrets to itself without sharing them with anyone!

"I know nothing about this summon." Natalia coolly replied as a hint of understanding flash past her eyes.

Alvin frowned, *'Just what is that Old Ghost planning?'* he thought gravely.

"Please don't interfere in my business again. Since you know my Qi Projection, I assumed it won't happen again." Natalia said in a warning tone.

It if was someone else talking to a Flame Guard like this will mean certain death but it was not the case for a Purple Assassin!

Alvin's face turn ugly and he said with a hint of anger in his voice, "Do you think I can't do anything to you?"

Natalia deeply looked at Alvin's sullen face before saying, "Indeed you can but I'll have you known ..."

Alvin's face was wrapped in fear when he heard Natalia's words and he blurted, "You can go. I'll report this to the headquarter."

"Thank you." Natalia nodded but before leaving she said with a faint smile, "If you found anything about that thief please inform me, I'll be in participants for a while."

Alvin's face darken but he didn't dare to retort in any way and merely nodded in agreement as if he was afraid of something.

*'I need to be more careful and leave this place as soon as possible after capturing that thief unostentatiously. How troublesome, these ghosts are indeed wanton and difficult to deal with.'* Alvin thought with deep bitterness.

Natalia didn't stay and dissolved in rain. She knew Alvin would probably not tell her anything, but she wasn't worried about it in the least.

She was confident in finding that thief first after all she could mix in the masses and a very powerful cultivation base.

*'I should stick with that group now.'* Natalia thought as she moves in a precise direction like wind.

Alvin also didn't dwell on this place and moved on to his next target. Now that he knew about the presence of Nightmare Ghosts he was in a hurry to find that thief and leave this place.

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Five hundred meters away from where Alvin and Natalia were, Ace was leaning against a tree.

When he senses Alvin's soul signature moving towards Natalia's, his lips curl upwards into a broad smile.

The reason for him not using the invisible bead or his escaping abilities after finding Alvin's propinquity was exactly because he knew about Natalia's truth from start!

Ace has long seen through Natalia's disguise and cultivation after using Soul Shattering Eyes for a brief moment.

But he didn't show it in the least bit and didn't leave Nola's party either. Ace was sticking together with them because of Natalia's!

Ace thought it would be to his advantage if he sticks with another person in disguise that the martial sense can see through. This will reduce his chances to draw any suspiciousness on himself tremendously.

He was right in the end because Natalia never suspected him when she was with him and she even drew all the attention on herself and solved the crisis when she killed those two lackeys of Mark as a warning.

But he was still uncertain when Alvin appeared so quickly because if Alvin would've killed everyone else that would be a calamity for Ace.

However, Alvin never touched them and he let them escape and Alvin's target was also Natalia as Ace assumed long ago.

Ace also notice one peculiar thing about Natalia after all this time he spend with her and that was her disguise technique!

Techniques and Skills also have their own special Qi or Soul fluctuations and Ace has been long accommodated to sensing the difference in fluctuations!

That's why he instantly felt he had sensed this technique's particular fluctuation before and until now he only encountered one person who had this kind of powerful disgusting technique and that was Jason!

This gives Ace another clue about the identity of Natalia and he quickly labeled her as another Assassin like Jason!

But he was still uncertain about her target.

Ace has encountered two assassins in a brief time, one can be said to be coincident but this second one was in this competition between all these participants.

Moreover, her cultivation was too powerful and there wasn't a single person who could've matched her prowess in the entire Regal Kingdom. This attracted Ace's thoughts to Alvin's presence here and Ace concluded she was also here for him!

And now he sensed those two standing in their spot for too long doing nothing which means they're not enemies and probably talking about something which interests both parties.

*'These three giants making it more difficult to steal!'* Ace thought with a wry smile on his face while thoughtfully looking at the dark cloudy sky.

**"[New Mission is Available!]"**

Ace snapped out of his thought when he heard the system's abrupt sweet yet icy voice inside his mind.

"A new mission?!" Ace exclaimed out loud in bewilderment.

This was his first mission after he enter the land of kingdoms and also his first mission that going to be with no multiplayer which mean no extra rewards!

*"System your timing is always the worse!"* Ace resentfully transmitted.

He was trying his best to lie low for the time being but suddenly the system gave him the mission and he knew this will not be an easy one.

But he had no control over the mission since every mission will trigger based on his life's special events or when some special conditions satisfy the criteria set by the system!

All Ace knew is if this mission is related to his life's event then it's going to be a very difficult one so he hopes it was something from the system!

Ace takes a deep breath and opens the mission panel with a heavy heart.

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**[Mission Panel]**

**[A new mission has been issued!]**

**[Opportunity Makes a Thief: These self-proclaimed three Giants currently plaguing Host. Because of this, they're hindering Host's progress in the path of Thievery and this is unacceptable. Please take this opportunity as a challenge and also teach Three Giants an unforgettable lesson!]**

[*Mission: Steal everything from Three Giants' ten main branches in Top Ten Kingdoms of Middle-Level Lands.*]

{Prgress:0/30}

[Rewards based on Host Performance]

{Three Hidden Rewards}

{Time Left: 10 years}

{Mission Failure Punishment: System shop closing for 200 Years!}

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Ace's face was darker than charcoal after seeing this new mission.

***"System aren't you asking me for death by telling me to theft 30 capital level branches of three giants?! You even included that den of killers in it!"*** Ace enraged voice transmitted in his mind.

Although he was planning on stealing from Pill Flame but only the lesser branches, not capital level!

But seemingly the system took his trivial intention wrongly and gave him this impossible mission!

## **Chapter 164 - Hunt**

8-11 minutes

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Ace found this mission difficult because even if he manages to pull off thievery on Pill Flame and Beast Calling, it would not be the case for Nightmare Ghosts.

Because no one know where their capital-level branches were located!

As for how they conduct the business of assassination... hah, it's for later.

Ace smiled bitterly after he didn't get any information from the system like always. He could now do nothing but burn in this fire that he set by himself.

"You guys bought this upon yourself!" Ace mumbles in an icy tone while clenching his fists, "I'll make sure to empty everything and not only just from your main branches!"

Ace blame everything on those organizations since the system was only doing what it was supposed to be. It's just that the timing was very terrible and this put Ace in a lousy mood!

**"[A true thief never let an opportunity pass by!]"** A crisp voice rang in Ace's mind at this moment.

*"Heh, just like you."* Ace click this tongue and sneered because he knew this wasn't the system.

*'I should also continue moving, now that those two are gone in different directions. I should first find that lizard.'* Ace thought and toss this mission topic back to his head since it was not the time to mull over it neither the location.

In the heavy Rain, Ace used the breathless stealth and lightning steps and headed straight to the depth of this forest with no hint of hesitation.

Now that the martial sense was not present to hinder him anymore Ace was moving at full speed.

Ace knew he had little time before that expert would come back and he also didn't know just when would this rain going to stop falling.

That's why he first wanted to find the Phantom Horn Lizard so he could hide and leave when he thought the time was right.

Ten hours pass.

The rain was coming heavy, and it didn't show any sign of slowing down. Now one could see the black water on muddy ground which mean the black swamp was overflowing.

Ace didn't stop moving for even a second until now because he sense something.

This place was filled with wild night blue flowers and tall black bark tress.

Ace was standing on a black branch of a tall tree, he was using his heavenly sense and calmly observing something fifty meters from his position.

There was an eight inches long lizard, it was pitch black included its big round eyes that cover half of its skull and there was no iris in them nor eye shuttles.

However, there was a blue horn on its head. This horn was only one inch long, and it was curved like a new moon and sharp like a blade. This was the Phantom Horn Lizard of the fifth Qi gate realm!

Currently, this Phantom Horn Lizard was resting on a large black mushroom with no care of its surroundings because this part was the core of the dark swamp forest and also the most toxic!

No one dares to come here until they're peak stage Qi foundation realm cultivators with many years of experience and a huge amount of antidotes pills!

Moreover, this Phantom Horn Lizard was a lethal poison itself and that's why its predators were in single digits in this entire forest.

However, Ace was not like anyone and this place was like the outside world to him except for the rain and swamp or the annoying bugs.

At this moment the phantom horn lizard was lazing around when suddenly the luster in its pitch-black eyes faded because it was dead!

The very next moment, Ryan's figure emerged beside the dead Phantom Horn Lizard like a ghost.

"Too easy." Ace chuckles lightly and with a wave of his hand place the corpse of the Phantom Lizard in his thief's space.

Ace easily killed this lizard with a soul-piercing bullet from fifty meters away. This soul attack was too powerful for any being to handle below Ace's cultivation base and its range was profoundly connected with Ace's Heavenly Sense!

Meaning he can kill anyone from 250Meters away!

He could still pick Qi fluctuation or soul signatures from 500 meters away with his soul sense, though.

*'I'm hundreds of miles inside this forest and there are still eleven days remaining until the end of the competition. That expert was watching the contestants and probably wouldn't think I can pick his martial sense which lesser his chance to come here anytime soon much less he didn't have this kind of martial sense range. I should just stay here for ten days before sneaking back.'* Ace mused and stuck with his plan of staying in this part of the forest.

Ace found an excellent hiding place and chose to stay there for ten days.

Although, he was almost sure that Alvin would not come here from his experience. But he didn't take any chances and made some preparation in the case Alvin decide to come.

After preparing everything, he sat there cross-legged and also closed his eyes while he pondered over Soul Barrier of Soul Guardian Barrier Art.

He didn't dare to practice rune crafting here openly, so he only left with Soul Barrier that he recently began to learn and also camouflage steps.

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Three days past and the heavy rain finally stopped but the dark swamp flooded almost the entire forest.

This makes things very difficult for hot-blooded participants.

In these six days, almost ten thousand of them die by poison, and fifteen thousand die by the small poisonous insects and bugs that come with black water swamp.

No place was safe even the trees were deadly.

Those who survived had a hard time just staying alive, and that's why over thirty thousand participants escape the forest leaving with their lives and an unforgettable deathly experience.

One thing that was worth mentioning was because of rain no one found any phantom horn lizard and this make those with ambitions agitate and the moment the rain stopped they all came out from their hiding places.

Just like that the competition starts again!

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The ninth day of the Kingdom-level Test.

"How're things progressing?" A voice sounded from the shadow of a tree.

"Very good my Lord, these youngster looks quite promising from any previous batches of Regal Kingdom." A husky voice replied.

"Hmm. Interesting... how many can pass the Kingdoms Level Test?" That voice question again.

"NONE... But they will give satisfactory performance for us to receive our promised rewards from the institute." In answer, a sweet voice of a girl echoed.

"Good, very good!" That voice sounded extremely pleased before it speaks again. "Any trace of that Sky Stealer?"

"No, it seemed he has vanished... our guess is he leave the Regal Kingdom."

"Hehe, just a disappointment in the end." That person's disdainful laugh rang the area with a hint of dissatisfaction in his voice.

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The eleventh day of the Kingdom-level Test.

Ace has patiently waited in his hiding place to this day just like he decided to and no one came here not any participant or any experts.

Now was the time to leave this forest without alerting anyone those hidden experts and report back to the regal city.

Ace thought many of the contestants would've left by now so this was the right time for him as well and if he was lucky enough, those experts might also give up on finding him in this place.

But Ace would not take his chances and after making himself as muddy as possible and ripping his clothes carefully he began his journey back. He looked just like a gutter rat at this moment and even smell like one.

However, Ace wasn't bothered by this since these looks can probably save his life.

On his way back, Ace didn't use stealth or any flashy skill like lightning steps and he only relays on silent steps to go back.

After eighteen hours of journey Ace finally reached the area where he was separated from Nola's party.

"I wonder if those guys are still alive." Ace mumbles to himself as a hint of grievance flashes past his eyes while looking at the quiet place.

Ace knew probably none of them would've to remain alive in their conditions and with no Qi in this place, except Natalia.

He like his previous party's quite a lot even if he spends little time with them especially Dewan and Nola.

Ace vividly remembered Nola's painful face when she abandoned everyone for her survival and the final determined look on Dewan's face when he put his life on the line for strangers.

"Sigh... May we meet again!" Ace mutter before continuing his journey.

But before he could use the silent steps Ace abruptly stopped while narrowing his eyes into slits.

*'This soul signature!'*

Ace looked southeast with a profound look and the next moment an icy smile crept out on his face!

#### **Chapter 165 - Face: 4**

9-11 minutes

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Ace was moving on the trees without making any sound in that familiar soul signature's direction.

In a minute, Ace arrived at an area filled with the smell of blood.

What Ace greeted by, made even him feel like; little insects were crawling under his skin.

Before Ace's eyes were many human limbs and severed heads floating over black water!

It was hard to tell that this water was from the black water swamp or it was human blood.

Ace's heart turn cold when he spotted one particular severed head, in the dark bloody water!

Although the severed head was completely covered in mud and dark water, Ace could recognize it anywhere.

**'NOLA!'** Ace's killing intent soar when he recognized the severed head.

It was indeed Nola's severed head which also means she was dead!

Almost a hundred severed heads were floating in the dark bloody water at this moment.

Ace quickly scan through those severed heads, to see if there was another member of his former party in them but to his relief, there was only Nola's.

Nonetheless, Ace didn't want to see this kind of end for cheerful Nola and grief wash over him.

*'If I was more powerful, I might've saved her instead of just abandoning them all to die.'* Ace thought helplessly, *'I still can't save anyone! How pathetic.'*

In his heart, Ace knew it was the survival of the fittest in this world but he still blames himself for being too weak.

Ace forcefully suppress his sentiments while shifting his eyes towards a particular direction and the grief in his eyes instantly turned into deep killing intent!

Twenty meters away from the bloodbath.

A group of six people was hiding on a tree while watching the hideous scene with great expectation in their eyes.

A tall and skinny young man in lavishing blue robes was nonchalantly sitting on a tree branch while drinking some kind of liquor.

"Young Marquess, how much longer do you think it will take for Bloodthirsty Earth Mantis to take the bait we prepare?" A pretty girl asked with a hint of excitement in her sweet voice.



"Pretty soon. This place was meant to use by White Ghost, Leo but they seem to run into some trouble and end up losing their living baits. I heard even Prince Mark's party was with him." The Young Marquess faintly replied while drinking the liquor.

"Yes. From our scouts, we heard Price Mark and White Ghost, Leo ally! Furthermore, everyone in that alliance caught a Phantom Horn Lizard, and they were the ones who leave this damn place first just five days ago!" A black bulky boy spoke with a hint of longing in his voice.

"Well, no one saw it coming." The skinny boy chuckles lightly before proceeding, "Other nobles also seem to do quite well and only our group left. Since we were busy supplying everyone with living baits"

"Hehe, Young Marquess, you are sounding like you regret taking that task and making a huge profit out of it." The girl giggles.

"Hahaha, well I can't retort to that now, can I?" The skinny boy laughs with a smirk on his face.

"Is that so?" At this moment an icy voice rang in the vacancy!

The skinny boy and his group felt their heart being gripped by grim ripper when they felt an intense killing intent bolted over them!

At this moment, only one thought came into their minds; RUN!

But it was too late and the very next moment expect the Young Marquess everyone else bodies loses their strength and like flies they fell from the tree before splashing in the dark water below.

Those five didn't even know how they die!

The Young Marquess face turn ghastly pale seeing his peak fifth Qi gate retainers die so suddenly and he didn't even see the enemy!

"W-who are you!!! You know who people you just kill?!" The Young Marquess yell like he wasn't afraid but his body was trembling in fear.

"Oh, aren't those five were your minions Young Marquess Finn?" At this moment Ryan's figure emerged on a tree before Finn!

This Finn was certainly the same person who order Crosby to lure Nola and the others in this forest and sold them to Leo!

Ace precisely picked his soul signature in the vacancy and that's why he came here to collect some debts but meet with that ghastly sight.

Now that he knew this guy's party was also the reason for Nola's death and Ace would not go to spare anyone.

He killed others with soul-piercing bullets and spare this Young Marquess for another reason.

"Y-you... who are you?! If you leave now I'll forgive your crimes!" Finn's face was ashen, and he knew this ugly guy was too strange.

That's why Finn wanted to escape from here as soon as possible because fighting with this kind of opponent who can kill five peaked fifth Qi gate cultivators without being seen was courting death!

"Sigh..." Ryan sighed and said with a mocking smile, "Still didn't lose your arrogance but don't worry I won't kill you now since I need your memories!"

It dumbfounded Finn when he heard this; he thought this guy was a madman and was going to offer his storage ring to haggle with his life.

But to his astonishment, a strange black owl tattoo replaced the storage ring!

"S-Sk..." Finn finally remembered just where he saw this owl symbol before and he nearly faint from anxiety.

How could he not know just what this owl symbol represents?

It represented the infamous thief Sky Stealer!

"Just die." Ryan coldly said and didn't let Finn complete his sentence.

Finn felt as if a hammer stuck on the back of his head before losing consciousness.

Ace coldly looked at unconscious Finn before looking at the notification panel.

=====

**[Quick Report of Thieveries]**

**[Successful Pick Pocket Count: 6]**

**[Low-Level Thieveries: 6]**

**[Total Rewards: 5,500TP]**

---

**[Thief Point(s): 32,030]**

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**[Low-Level Thievery: 35]**

=====

Ace didn't forget about taking all of their storage rings before killing them and these rich goats gave him six low-level thieveries.

*'I should quickly get rid of this guy after saving his face and taking his memories.'* Ace thought.

He picked Finn and leave the area to find a place where he could use Soul Probing and use the hundred-face deception mask to save Finn's face before finishing him.

Ace has been thinking over how he could move forward without drawing any attention to himself and he has long been planning to find another face to pass this test.

Because if he passes this test with Ryan's face he would become famous in the Regal Kingdom and those noble families might also investigate the background of Ryan's face.

If that happened they might also find this guy's real background and after that everyone would know the Ryan who passed the test didn't exist!

Which put Ace in very big trouble.

That's why he took this Young Marquess face since he belonged to a noble family of the capital city and no one would find it any suspicious if this guy passed the test!

Nola's death just gives Ace the final resolution to kill this guy and take his face with no guilt whatsoever.

If before Ace had any qualms in killing Finn and his retainers, now he had nothing but contempt for them since they were the ones who were supplying those other nobles with living baits!

Ace quickly found a well-hidden place and started the process of taking Finn's face and memories!

One thing that give Ace little relief was the martial sense was not present at this moment and he was hoping it would not show up until he was done with this guy.

"System can I scan and save this face without removing my mask?" Ace grimly asked. He didn't want to reveal his actual face especially in presence of this many experts.

"[Yes.]"

Ace has a sigh of relief, "*Began the scanning of this body.*" He commands the system while disdainfully looking at Finn.

The next moment a silver gem suddenly appeared on Ryan's glabella, it was the memory gem of the mask. The gem shone and just like before it shined for ten seconds.

=====

**[Face 4, has been successfully recorded in memory gem.]"**

=====

After the notification, the gem on Ryan's glabella dissolved back.

"*Activate face 4 with his natural cultivation base.*" Ace commanded the system.

The very next moment Ryan's face twisted and suddenly change into Finn!

Ace carefully observed and after confirming everything was fine, he used heavenly sense to check the surrounding before using the soul probing.

A large amount of memories fragments entered his knowledge see but Ace didn't flinch and kept absorbing the memories fragments showing no sign of stopping.

This time it takes only an hour to completely absorb Finn's 16 years' worth of memories!

Ace finally open his closed eyes and a glint of killing intent flashed through his eyes.

## ***'Soul Piercing Bullet!'***

### **Chapter 166 - Leaving The Dark Swamp Forest**

8-11 minutes

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## ***'Soul Piercing Bullet!'***

Ace coldly active his soul attack and destroyed the unconscious Finn's soul without showing mercy!

Now that Finn was dead his storage ring was also opened and Ace found some of his clothes to wear.

After changing into Finn's robes Ace stiffly looked at Finn's corpse.

In the end, he burned Finn with Nola's remains!

*'Sigh...'*

Ace sighed softly while looking at the burning fire with a hint of grief in his eyes. *'Rest in peace.'*

"It's time to leave." Ace mumbles while taking a last look at the fire and blur toward Dark Swamp Forest's exit!

While moving carefully, Ace was processing Finn's memories that he took just a couple of moments ago.

Ace has done this process with Victor before so it wasn't difficult anymore. He just discarded useless memories and keep memories he deemed informative.

Five hours pass and Ace was close to exiting the dark swamp forest.

In these five hours, Ace processed Finn's complete memories and now he knew many astonishing secrets!

Like the Living Bait Plan was forged by none other than the Royal Regal Family!

They also leaked the news about the test to the royal family and they were the ones who controlled this information.

Simply put, the mastermind behind all this was none other than King Kale Val Regal himself!

As for the person who leak this test's type to King Kale, it was still a mystery.

However, Finn's role in all this was just a supplier because Finn's family was in the business of slavery and they had many minions spread throughout the capital city!

Finn's family got a huge amount of Qi stones just for supplying the selected nobles with living baits that were involved in this living bait plan.

All they had to do was to sacrifice their minions like Crosby!

Ace also found out that the real scheme was to kill every peasant involved in this plan so no one would know about it ever.

However, Leo and Mark messed up after they let their living baits escape!

Now, no one knows what happen to those living baits afterward, but some nobles like Frank and Callen were given the hunt order, to find them and tied this loose end.

"Those bastards!" Ace clenched his fist tightly.

He knew it was probably too late to save anyone because this hunt order was seven days old!

All he can do now is to control himself from killing those nobles involved in this mascara!

Although he has avenged Nola after killing Finn, it was just a drop in the bucket if he wanted to avenge everyone because he even had to kill the Regal King to get justice for everyone.

However, Ace wasn't the hero of justice nor an idiot, his own life was on the line here with all those hidden experts like Natalia and Alvin searching for clues about him.

If he walked the path of revenge for some strangers, it would be akin to digging his own grave. And his life was bonded with someone else who he hold dearly so selfishness wasn't the option!

"Brother Finn!"

Ace wasn't using his stealth skills or silent step to its full capacity so someone spotting him was very normal.

When Ace heard this surprisingly familiar voice he immediately stopped and followed the source of the voice.

Ace saw a handsome young man was waving at him or Finn, with a friendly smile on his face.

Finn smile faintly and said, "Oh, if it isn't my favorite brother Frank!"

Ace act like Finn even if he wanted to kill Frank who led them to Leo the other day.

Because Frank was the son of an Earl in the capital city and his family was a vessel of Finn's family so killing him here can be very troublesome for him since he was now Finn and had to answer Frank's family.

He can always make some random story but it was just not worth it, he'll wait for now.

"Hahaha, your too generous brother Finn. Where is the other?" Frank grin broadly and asked with a hint of confusion in his voice.

Because he knew Finn never go around without his five guards but now that he was alone on the edge of dark swap forest he couldn't help but ask.

Finn shows a hint of killing intent and faintly said, "I kill those traitors."

Frank's face shone with astonishment as he exclaimed in shock, "What happened?"

"Nothing much they tried to fight over a Phantom Horn Lizard with me!" Finn pulled a long face.

"Heh, you can't trust anyone these days. Who would've thought you were just raising poisonous snakes all these years. But don't worry brother Finn I'll always be by your side." Frank coldly sneered.

He didn't find it any suspicious because it was a common occurrence; when a servant became overly ambitious and try taking his master's life to free itself.

That's why Ace forge this kind of story that any noble could believe.

"You become quite powerful even kill five of them and escape without a scratch!" Frank laugh, he was complimenting Finn.

"Heh, don't jest brother Frank. It's just that those idiots forget about the slave marks on them and die because of their stupidity!" Finn coldly chuckles.

How could Ace forget about slave contracts? These noble didn't even trust their siblings much less mere attendants without salve contracts!

"Hahaha, greed can blind anyone, eh." Frank finds it quite amusing not suspicious because Finn was acting extremely normal.

"Hahaha." Finn grin widely and said, "Since brother Frank is here does it means the matter has been dealt with?"

Ace was asking about those lost living baits of Leo and Mark.

Frank's smile instantly freeze when he heard this and said stiffly, "No, those living baits are like rats in this vast forest and we only found seventy of them, not the rest. But I think they're probably dead after all who can survive that rain without Qi not to mention those toxic demonic beasts and insects.

"Since the seventy we found were barely alive and we just give them mercy by killing them. That's why we close the search two days ago after all the test is ending soon and those brothers also needed to find that lizard."

Ace's face sank hearing this because Frank has a point.

"You did the right thing." Finn nodded and said, "You're here mean you also found the target, right?"

"Hehe, to tell you the truth I just kill an outer noble and my luck was not bad. I found two Phantom Horn Lizards in his storage ring." Frank laugh heartedly as he proudly told Finn about his accomplishment.

"I expect nothing less from my brother Frank." Finn grin.

Ace knew just what these outside nobles were. These nobles of the capital city call those nobles who live outside the capital city outer nobles and they thought of them just like the commoners.

"Let's go we're just around the corner to leave this damn place. We also have to dirt our faces, you know why." Frank said with a knowing smile.

"Yeah, I know. We have to hide our complexion to not draw any suspicion of the masses." Finn rolled his eyes.

"Then let's do it now." Frank laugh and rubbed the mud on his face and clothes.

Ace coldly looked at Frank before doing the same.

Ace wasn't surprised by this method to hide the fact that these nobles had the antidote pills from the start.

But what truly astounded Ace was those people of the institute who were supposed to monitor everyone so no one could cheat. These nobles were openly cheating but to present no one step up to stop any of them and this rub Ace the wrong way.

Because this simply means; the institute didn't give a damn about their lives and the fairness of this test. As long as these nobles didn't sully the name of the institute everything was fine!

*"System, I am truly glad you gave me this mission."* Ace coldly transmitted.

As for why he was feeling this way now, it was very simple because he would've done the same thing even if the system didn't force him into doing it, after what he learns about these people.

Now he can just do the same thing and get rewards from the system as well!

Ace can't wait to reach the first-grade lands and start the mission!

"Let's go, brother Finn." Frank was now covered in mud and no one can tell he was completely fine even after spending more than a week in this forest with no antidote!

"After you." Finn shows his white teeth.

Frank gladly take the lead and with Frank behind they both continued their journey.

After half an hour of the smooth journey, both of them finally left the gloomy Dark Swamp Forest!

However, before they could bask in sunlight a person wearing the institute attire block their way and coolly said in a dictatorial tone,

"Please show the Phantom Horn Lizard corpse, and if you don't have it, leave your participant token behind!"

### **Chapter 167 - Unexpected Blockade!**

9-11 minutes

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It startled Finn and Frank when they saw this person appearing out of nowhere but when they heard what he wanted they finally calm down.

It was very normal for the institute personal to demand the target because if they delay and let them leave they can just buy it out from somewhere else.

"Sir, please look." Frank respectfully said and flip his hand before taking a five-inch Phantom horn lizard carcass from his storage ring.

The person inspects the lizard carcass and after confirming it was indeed the allocated target, he stored the carcass in his storage ring before he said, "Show me your participant token."

Frank didn't dare to delay and quickly took out the participant token while showing it respectfully to the checker.

The checker didn't delay either and took out a formation plate from his storage ring before activating it.

The very next moment thereafter, Frank's participant token shone brightly and his participant number change from 12,112 to green 1,009.

This number showed indicate how many participants have passed the test and the limit was of course 6000!

"Oh, only one thousand has passed the test. Brother Finn, it seems we're still early." Frank exclaimed in surprise.

"You're right." Finn chuckled and without delay, he also took his corpse of Phantom Horn Lizard and show it to the checker who was waiting.

Ace only has one Phantom Horn Lizard that he hunted in the core area of the dark swamp forest. He didn't take more than what he needed to pass the test.

When the checker saw the size of Phantom Horn Lizard a hint of surprise flashed through his eyes and said, "You got some skills to hunt this peak Qi gate Phantom Horn Lizard all by yourself."

"Sir is too kind." Finn smile faintly.

Frank merely smile knowingly because he thought Finn only manage to hunt this lizard with the help of his traitorous servants. But he didn't dare to point it out since his family was the vessel of Finn's.

"Your token." The checker said while putting Finn's prey in his storage ring.

Ace take out Finn's token from his storage ring and received the green number 1,010 before storing it away in his thief's space.

"Here are antidote pills." The checker gave two pills green ranked pills to Frank and Finn.

If they didn't pass the test, he wouldn't be so kind to give them these pills and would've left after collecting their tokens. But since they did pass the test, he gave them antidote pills just like he was instructed!

"You two may leave now. Remember to report back in three days in the regal city's registration building." The checker said before he took his leave.

Both Finn and Frank thanks him for the pills showing no disrespect and they also leave the vacancy.

They were going straight to the capital city.

At this moment Ace sense something that he kept watching out for.

*'So, it's here.'*



This was Alvin's martial sense that hasn't been appeared in the forest.

**"You two stop right there!"** Alvin's sturdy voice rang in the wide field.

Ace's face was immediately wrapped in fear because this is not what he imagined.

In the end, both of them stop with terrified faces.

In these twelve days, Alvin has tirelessly searched for any contestants that he found suspicious and even kill them without sparing a single one.

But in the end, he never found traces of Sky Stealer.

He ends up leaving the forest and searched anyone who crosses the area without holding back.

This was his last chance to fish out Sky Stealer if he was here that is.

Frank's face was flush with intense anxiety because he never felt this kind of oppression might before, "Y-your... E-excellency... how did... we offend you?!" He shuttered.

"You didn't offend me if this makes you feel any better." A cold smirk sounded at this moment and suddenly Finn and Frank saw a slim, handsome middle-aged man appearing in front of them.

*'So, this is the owner of that martial sense!'* Ace's heart sank when he finally saw Alvin.

He never thought he could bump into Alvin like this when he was out of the dark swamp forest. Now he can just hope Alvin let them go or this is going to be the end of him!

"S-sir, what... do you want?" Finn also shuttered while showing an expression of extreme concern.

"Just receive one attack from me and you two can go." Alvin nonchalantly said without blinking.

*'I'm dead!'* Only this thought came into Ace's mind at this moment. He never expected this guy to be so ruthless.

After all, he a Qi River Core cultivator was asking two Qi gate realm brats to take his attack. What kind of logic was this?

But Ace has no choice in this matter. He knew this guy was testing them, so he suppressed his pounding heart and keep acting like Finn.

Frank on the other hand didn't know he was dealing with an almighty Qi River Core cultivator. He only thought that this was also some kind of test from the institute for a talented youngster like 'him'.

"Sir, please don't go easy on us!" Frank's fear instantly turned into delight when this thought surfaced in his mind.

Ace nearly fell when he heard Frank's words, ***'This MORON, I should've killed him back then!'*** He was regretting his decision to spare Frank.

Even Alvin showed a hint of interest after hearing Frank's words. He also thought that this guy was retard and the thought of not wasting his time on him surface in his mind.

But he still didn't take his chance especially when this involved Sky Stealer!

Ace knew he can't be too obvious, so he pretended that he understands something from Frank's words and said, "Oh, so this is like this. Brother Frank, I underestimated your intelligence."

Frank grin broadly and pretend to be humble, "Brother Finn you're far too kind. You're just tired or you could've seen through this surprise test before me."

'*I wish.*' Ace condemned in his heart.

"Sir, please test us to the best of your abilities." Finn showed a resolved face while confronting Alvin.

But inside Ace was crying tears of blood because this was just like shooting oneself in the foot!

After seeing Finn and Frank's determined faces, Alvin was now 80% sure these two retards can't be the infamous Sky Stealer.

"Here it comes." Alvin didn't want to waste any more time talking with them.

Alvin fired two green streaks towards them. These streaks were strands of Alvin's element Qi!

Although these strands only contained 2% of his power, even this 2% was enough to kill any Qi Gate realm cultivator!

Alvin only wanted to see how these two bodies reposed when they come in contact with his element Qi and if Alvin finds everything fine, he will retract the strand of element Qi, leaving these two alone.

This method was very simple yet very effective because the disguise didn't work for the inner physiques!

When Ace saw the green streak coming in his way he instantly knew what this guy was planning and he nearly swore out loud.

Because this stance of element Qi wasn't harmful to him but it was not a good thing in the least bit since dark void would absorb it the moment it entered his body!

If Alvin discovered this Qi Gate junior can absorb his element Qi like it was nothing, then this would be the end of Ace!

But it was too late to do anything since he can't control the dark void yet.

'*Cipppp*'

The stance of element Qi instantly entered Finn and Frank's bodies!

Frank's face turned deathly pale while thick veins popped all over his body and the next moment he vomited a puddle of blood before fainting!

Alvin coolly retracted his Qi from Alvin's body because it was a normal response and there is no need to torment Frank any further.

Because if he killed every passed participant of the institute it would a problem even for him.

Alvin shifted his focus to Finn who seem to be completely fine. His eyes narrowed into slits as a hint of curiosity flashed past them.

Ace felt the dark void tremble and knew he did nothing now Alvin would!

**'Dame it all!'** Ace swore and before the dark void could absorb Alvin's element Qi completely he forcefully moves his HD-Qi backward in his meridian channels, causing Qi deviation!

The next moment, Ace vomit a large amount of blood and fainted on the spot hoping this would work and the next time when he opened his eyes Alvin would probably go!

Ace has taken this enormous risk because he knew nothing going to work in front of this Qi river core cultivator.

The invisible bead can grant him one minute but that was it and he will be in the open when the effect wore off and Alvin would also know he was Sky Stealer.

At least now, Alvin didn't know the truth, and this give Ace the determination to take this gamble.

However, if something goes wrong, Alvin will capture him without a hitch and he would be in the hands of those three giants the next time he opened his eyes!

## **Chapter 168 - Element Physiques**

9-11 minutes

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Alvin intensely looked at unconscious Finn before retrieving his element Qi strand.

However, he didn't absorb it right away and examined it carefully. For a long time, Alvin keeps looking at the strand of his wood element Qi before ingesting it back.

"My wood element Qi show the slightest sign of dissolving before it took effect on this boy. Interesting." Alvin mumbles as a hint of interest flashed past his eyes.

With a wave of Alvin's sleeve, Finn's unconscious body landed in his hand like a doll.

Alvin put his finger on Finn's forehead and closed his eyes.

The next moment, his finger shone in a green hue!

Alvin was using his martial sense with element Qi to scan Finn's inners.

After five minutes, Alvin opened his eyes and withdraw his finger from Finn's head.

"Nothing strange to his meridians, then why did my element Qi show the signs of dissolving?" Alvin was very confused about this because this was absurd, "His inners are quite damaged if I send another Qi strand then he'll be dead."

Alvin didn't make an instant decision like he always does and hesitated because he once read a book in the organization's biggest library that was very old and only members like him have the authority to read it.

He reads about this Element Physique which can rival Ancient Hunters Elemental Bloodlines!

But it was so rare that it was almost a legend because no one ever appeared in lower-lands with these Element Physiques for ages.

If someone appeared they were all fought over and then taken away by ancient sects!

They were only recording about these legends, not any evidence since the last person rumored to possess an Element Physique appeared five thousand years ago!

As for why Alvin suspected Finn for an Element Physique bearer because he clearly remembered a person with an element physique can absorb element Qi which it had an affinity with even if that Qi was from a cultivator!

Now that Alvin saw his wood Qi show sign of being absorbed this led him to suspect Finn had a Wooden Element Physique!

Because an Element Physique only showed signs of awakening after the person reached Qi River realm and before one show only minor signs like Finn just did.

However, he had no way to confirm it and he didn't want to kill him accidentally either. Because if his hunch was right then this boy was even more important than Sky Stealer!

"What are the odds of this boy possessing the wooden element physique and even encountering a rare wood element cultivator like me." Alvin was bewildered as he murmured, "What to do now!"

Alvin was in a huge predicament.

*'I have very little chances of finding that crook and this boy possibly with an element physique just landed in my hands.'* Alvin mused.

In the end, Alvin wore a decisive face and settled, *'I should just take him with me to see the elder in the Damien Kingdom!'*

Without thinking twice Alvin took a crystal green pill from his storage ring and feed it to unconscious Finn.

This pill was a Black Ranked Healing Pill, meaning the highest-level pill one could find below Royal Lands!

Alvin didn't take any risks and use this pill because Finn's injuries seem to be quite served and this is no good if those injuries become any worse. That's why Alvin take out one of the few Black Ranked pills he had.

After making sure the pill was completely dissolved in Finn's mouth, Alvin took his leave without caring about unconscious Frank.

Alvin was now going back to the regal capital so he could fetch his sister and leave as soon as possible with Finn!

Ace didn't know his ability to absorb element Qi has put him in such a pearl!

One day passed in a flash.

Inside a lavishing room,

Ace's eyes sprang opened and an intense pain wash over his entire body.

Ace inners were gravely injured because he caused Qi deviation himself.

Although his dark meridians were only slightly jumbled, his organs were greatly damaged.

Moreover, these injuries were caused by Heavenly Darkness Qi which will not heal so easily just like what happened when Ace fall into a coma for years after experiencing Heavenly Punishment!

Nonetheless, he was healing slowly obviously because of Dark Void.

Ace smile bitterly, *'How ironic I wasn't injured by some enemy or heavenly punishment but by myself.'* He didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

But the next moment when Ace finally notice the lavishing ceiling and comfortable bedding, he was dumbfounded!

"Don't tell me I'm dead!"

Ace instantly stand up from his bead and checked himself and sighed in relief when he confirmed he was still in Finn's disguise.

"Where the hell am I?" Ace vigilantly looked around and couldn't help but again check if he wasn't just dreaming.

*"Notification Panel!"* This was the only way to confirm if he was alive or dead because the system would not follow him if he was dead.

=====

**[Notification Panel]**

**{1: Unseen Notification}**

**{Old Notification}**

=====

Ace has a sigh of relief seeing the notification panel popping up with no obstacle. He didn't remember any notification before going unconscious though, so he opened it.

=====

**[1: Unseen Notification]**

**[System detect 1 Middle-Grade Pill (Black) in host's body!]**

**[Conversion Rate: 1,000 EXP]**

**[Did the host want to proceed with the conversion?]**

=====

Ace was bewildered and asked, "How did I eat this pill?"

**"[Someone fed it to host when the host was unconscious.]"**

"Who?" Ace was stunned because they considered these kinds of pills treasures in empires but someone fed them to a minor character like Finn!

However, the system didn't answer Ace's any further and this just make his anxiety even worse.

"Just convert it." Ace said since this EXP can help him recover faster.

=====

**"[Conversion Complete!]"**

**[1,000 EXP has been added to Host status]**

=====

Ace didn't feel any improvement in his injuries and he wanted to leave this place as soon as possible because something was strange going on.

"System I want to buy a Grade-1 Healing Pill!" Ace instantly thought of a way to recover fast so he could at least use his skills.

Ace knew only these pills provided by the system worked on him or he had to cough up a large amount of EXP that he didn't have at this moment. So, he spent 1000TP.

=====

**[Grade-1 Healing Pills]**

**{Price: 1,000TP, Per Pill}**

**[Purchase has been successful!]**

---

**[Thief Point(s): 31,030]**

=====

Ace saw a completely crystal black Pill appearing in his thief's space and there was a golden circle on it.

He didn't have time to examine or admire this 1st-Grade pill and he instantly pop it into his mouth with no hesitation.

The pill instantly dissolved into his mouth and a huge amount of healing heavenly Qi enter his body.

Ace felt as if he was in a warm bath, and all the piercing pain he was feeling after waking up began to fade at an astonishing speed.

"This pill is indeed magical." Ace mumbles while he enjoyed the comfortable feeling.

"Hah, as long as you understand." A chuckling voice rang at this moment.

Ace was jolt awakened by this familiar voice.

Because of his grave injuries, his soul sense was only working to ten percent of its actual capacity and that's why Ace didn't sense Alvin's presence until he was standing right in front of him!

Alvin wore a smiling face as he looked at flabbergasted Finn and said, "How're your injuries?"

Ace was stunned because he never expected this question and thought something was going on that he didn't know about.

He still answered as he put a confusing face, "Thank you senior for the pill I'm feeling quite well."

Ace knew this guy misunderstood his words and thought he was mumbling about the black grade pill and Ace wanted to keep it that way.

Alvin's smile widen after hearing Finn was doing alright and said, "We'll be leaving tomorrow so rest well tonight."

Finn asked in bewilderment, "L-leaving?"

"Heh, yes we're leaving for the Damien Kingdom and I'm taking you to meet an elder there!" Alvin nonchalantly answered.

"What... e-elder? I didn't know senior at all, why are you talking me to the Damien Kingdom? Did I pass the hidden test?" Ace pretend to be stunned while asking core questions but he was truly frightened.

"Oh, I forgot to introduce myself." Alvin put a kind elderly smile and said, "My name is Alvin Cade and I'm a Flame General in Flame Guard Regiment of Pill Flame Organization!"

*'The famous fighting force of Pill Flame Organization!'* Ace's face sank now that he knew who he was dealing with here.

Ace knew this Flame Guard Regiment was the fighting force of Pill Flame Organization and every member of it was a force to reckon with and Alvin was a Flame General the highest-level Flame Guard!

Ace does this best to look surprised and hide his anxiety and asked, "Than senior is talking me to become an alchemist?"

Alvin profoundly looked at Finn and said with a hint of excitement in his voice.

"Hehe, if my hypothesis about you is right then my little friend you might become the most important person in the entire Azure Wind Continent!"

## **Chapter 169 - Out Of The Frying Pan Into The Fire (1)**

6-8 minutes

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Ace was flabbergasted when he heard Alvin's ambiguous words.

But now Ace was sure about one thing that Alvin still didn't know he was Sky Stealer.

*'But what is he considering me then? Whatever it is, it has something to do with the dark void.'* Ace thought gravely.

Ace didn't know about Element Bodies and the importance of possessing one. He does not know just the hunch of possessing an element body was enough to make him more important than... himself!

"C-can I see my family?" Ace tries another approach since he can't get any useful information out of Alvin.

He used Finn's family so he could leave this place first before changing his face and leaving the Regal Kingdom because Alvin's kind smile was giving him the chills.

Ace wasn't some naïve kid and he can instantly discrete a greedy smile from a kind one because he saw too many of them in his journey!

"Don't worry about your family. I already have King Kale contact them and they're waiting outside." Alvin smile faintly. "I'll send them inside."

Finn merely nodded in response.

*'Why is he so adamant about keeping me here!'* Ace's mood was dismal. The more he thought about it the more confused he became and so does his desire to escape.

But he was helpless to do anything since this guy was present and watching over him like some precious treasure!

*'I need to calm down first.'* Ace takes a deep breath and calm his chaotic nerves.

He could feel the grand-1 pill was still healing him and he estimate it would take 2 hours for him to fully recover, meanwhile he observed the situation.

After Alvin left a minute later, a group of people in lavishing attire entered the grand bedroom where Finn was.

Ace saw three men and two women and was astonished because in the front of the group was the Regal King himself!

The other four were Finn's parents and two elder siblings.

"Hahaha, nephew you seem in a good health. Good, very good!" King Kale laugh as he wore a gentle smile like he was meeting his nephew.

"Thank you for your kind words. Your Majesty." Finn wanted to stand up to greet the King properly but Kale quickly stopped him.

"Don't push yourself, you're still recovering, and call me Uncle Kale from now on." Kale smiled kindly.

*'Hypocrite.'* Ace sneered in his heart. He knew this King Kale was putting-up front to carry goodwill with Finn.



Ace clearly remembers before Finn never speak to the King because he didn't have the right to and now that Kale knew Finn has somehow won the goodwill of a flame guard he was acting like he knew Finn for a long time.

"What are you dazing for? Thank his majesty right now!" The chubby middle-aged man standing beside King Kale spoke at this moment with a faint smile on his face.

He was Finn's father, Marquess Blaze Eugene.

Finn snapped out of his bewilderment and blurted, "T-thank you, your mej... um... U-uncle Kale."

Ace was in no mood to show off his acting skills but he had no choice since he has been observed by Alvin's martial sense.

"Hahaha, Good, good." King Kale laugh heartedly and said, "Since you're doing well I'm at ease. I'll leave you with brother Blaze and sister-in-law now."

After exchanging a few pleasantries with Marquess Blaze, King Kale leave in a cheerful mood.

Now that Kale left the room only Eugene Family members remain.

The elegant woman standing quietly behind Marquess Blaze quickly approached Finn and hold his hand, "Little Finn are you hurt anywhere? Tell mother what happened." Her eyes were teary and her voice was filled with concern and love.

She was Rachael Eugene, Finn's mother.

Ace frowned a little because he could tell this woman's concern was real and for the first time hesitate to call her mother.

He knew from Finn's memories that his connection with his mother was very deep but feeling it himself was a unique experience.

*'Is this how a mother looked at their child?'* Ace had a nostalgic look on his face and a deep sadness gripped his heart.

"Why aren't you talking?! Are you still hurt?" Rachael asked with a voice full of anxiety while she caresses Finn's face tenderly.

"I-I'm fine." Ace snapped out of his thoughts and he subconsciously freed his hand from Rachael's grip while jolting his head backward.

Rachael was shocked after seeing Finn acting completely different from what he normally does and a hint of double appeared in her eyes.

*'Shit!'* Ace knew he just behave completely on impulse and now Rachael was probably thinking something was wrong.

"Don't worry. It just... I feel pain from physical contact." Ace quickly speaks to make up for his blunder.

Racheal's vague doubt quickly vanished since Finn's explanation was reasonable and nodded worriedly in understanding.

"Stop making little Finn's condition worse." Marquess Blaze frowned and speak at this moment.

Ace has a sigh of relief seeing Rachael standing up, but he still can't bring himself to look at her anxiety-filled eyes that were not for him.

"Little Finn, tell us how did you catch the fancy of someone from Pill Flame?" At this moment the young girl that resembles Rachael speaks in excitement.

She was Finn's elder sister, Kensley Eugene.

"I don't know I was just returning from the dark swamp forest when..." Finn told what happened truthfully and everyone listen with great interest.

"After that, I fall unconscious and didn't remember what happened next. But that sir just told me he taking me with him after tonight." Finn finally ended his story.

"Heh, truly dumb luck." The tall boy who was silent all this time sneered at this moment. But one could see deep envy and resentment in his eyes.

He was the eldest son of Marquess Blaze, Rayden Eugene.

Rayden didn't have any good feelings towards Finn because Finn was in his way of inheriting the family titled and slave business. If Finn would've gotten a good place in Damien Royal Institute's second test, then he would have become the actual successor!

However, now by some dumb luck, he caught the fancy of someone from the organization, and by the reaction of the King, that person had a prominent position in the organization!

## **Chapter 170 - Out Of The Frying Pan Into The Fire (2)**

6-7 minutes

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That's why Rayden was aggrieved and despised Finn for his dumb luck.

"Shut up. Is this any way of talking with your younger brother?!" Marquess Blaze berated Rayden.

Although Blaze has very high hope for Finn, even he never thought that Finn had some hidden talent for alchemy.

Because in hidden selection no one got selected from the Regal Kingdom and now out of the blue, a very powerful expert has chosen his son. How could he not be excited?

"Little Finn ignores your Elder Brother he's just dumb. I have splendid news for you." Marquess Blaze smiles broadly as the fat on his face quivered.

"What good news?" Finn asked in bewilderment.

Ace was now calm from before but Blaze's words make him agitate again.

"Hehe, His Highness King Kale wanted to wed Princess Haley to my Little Finn!" Rachael spoke with a faint smile on her face before Blaze could.

**"NO... I-I mean why?!"**

Ace nearly fell after hearing this ominous news.

If it was real Finn, he might have already reached cloud nine after hearing his ideal girl was going to be his wife.

But Ace wasn't happy in the least bit since he already has a goddess-like wife and if she was conscious, she will kill these people who wanted her beloved husband to marry some 'ugly' duck.

"Oh, you don't want to marry your dream girl?" Kensley tease Finn after seeing his dumbfounded face. She had a very good relation with Finn and was happy for him.

"N-no, I... it just so sudden." Finn blush as he retorted to his sister.

"Heh, don't celebrate too soon the marriage will only happen after you pass the test of Pill Flame Organization." Rayden scoffed at this moment.

*'That's good then.'* Ace had a massive sigh of relief after hearing the marriage was not happening right now.

"If you speak anymore, I'll put you with those slaves!" Marquess Blaze coldly looked at his son and warn him stiffly.

Rayden shivers a little before quickly nodding.

Rachael also gives a glare to her eldest son before speaking with Finn in a comforting tone, "Little Finn, don't sell yourself too low. After you enter the organization, there will be many like Haley in the line for you."

"Shut up. Do you want to eradicate our family woman?!" Marquess Blaze quickly rebukes his wife.

"Hmph, they can't do anything as long as Little Finn joins the Pill Flame Organization." Rachel retorted.

"Yes. But he didn't yet!" Masques Blaze pulls a long face.

"Time's up!" Alvin's commanding voice rang in the room.

The very next moment, Alvin enter the room in an imposing manner and coolly looked at Finn's family.

"Let him rest we have a long journey ahead of us."

"Yes, yes. We were just leaving. Thank you for taking care of our son." Marquess Blaze wore a flattering smile and quickly thank Alvin. He didn't dare show any disrespect to this envoy.

"Little Finn we'll be there to see you off in the morning." Rachael lovingly looked at her son and smile gently.

"Alright." Finn nodded.

After exchanging some words, the Eugene family left, leaving smiling Finn and cold Alvin behind.

"Senior, are you taking me to the Pill Flame Organization?" Finn looked at Alvin with full of expectation.

Alvin faintly replied, "Yes, if you did well I can ensure you that won't be our last destination."

Alvin has checked Finn's condition before with his martial sense and he knew Finn was recovering quickly. He merely thought it was all thanks to the black ranked pill.

*'He should be up and running in the morning. I have to leave before those ghosts suspect anything.'* Alvin thought gravely and leave Finn alone to rest.

Ace was finally alone again, *'Finally, I don't have to act anymore!'* He sighed in relaxation.

For a long time, Ace has been looking at the ceiling deep in thoughts.

*'Now that I think about it, this is also an opportunity to reach the 1st-grade lands without going through those annoying tests. Furthermore, he took me to the main branch of Pill Flame in the Middle-lands himself.'*

Unknowingly a smile crept out on Ace's troubled face.

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Somewhere in the Regal Capital.

Natalia's figure was kneeling on the floor at this moment but strangely there was no one in this room.

"Did you find any traces of that thief?" Suddenly, a mild voice drifted into the room.

Natalia keep her head low and politely answer, "No I didn't find any trace of him. It seemed he did flee the Regal Kingdom."

"Flee you say... so be it." The voice sounded vexed. "What about the Flame Guard?"

"I didn't encounter him again, and he's back in the royal palace. It seemed he's leaving tomorrow." Natalia replied faintly.

"Oh, leaving so soon. It seems I have to personally say goodbye." The voice coldly chuckles, "You're doing great, keep taking part in these ants' competition. If the thief is hungry for glory, then this is his best chance to get it."

"Yes!" Natalia nodded solemnly.

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At this moment somewhere in the 1st Grade Lands.

"Did the envoy arrive yet?" An old husky voice sounded.

"No, my Lord but they'll be here in a week." A man in his late forties respectfully replied.

"Any trace of the stolen treasury?" The old grim voice rang.

"W-we're searching." The man replied with intense fear.

"Trash! All of you are trash!" The old husky voice roared in anger. "If you can't explain to the envoy, then everything is over for us!"

"I-I know... but how did that item leave that cage? Aren't they say it's impossible?" The man asked with skepticism.

"If anyone knows do you think they leave that thing in a place like that?! Search for that hateful thief we'll know how he leaves with that thing once we capture him!" The old voice blared in anger.

"B-but three giants..."

Before that man could finish his words the old voice coldly cut him and asked in a mocking tone, "Do you think that person is afraid of three giants?!"