

Thief 171

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Chapter 171: Ghost Crane

The next daybreak, the golden sky was covered in clouds. But it didn't fluster Alvin since he was settled on leaving today with Finn.

The entire night Alvin didn't leave Finn out of his sight and kept monitoring the entire royal palace with his martial sense.

If Finn's condition was not so grave he might've taken him the moment Finn regain his consciousness.

As for the reason for his agitation, it was of course Nightmare Ghosts. If it was just Natalia he wasn't afraid of her but unfortunately, she wasn't alone and that's why Alvin have to treat even her discreetly.

Although Alvin was sure about those ghosts being ignorant when it comes to element physiques, he still didn't want to take any chances and leave this place as quickly as possible to meet with the elder in Damien Capital City's branch

Inside the bedroom where Ace spends the night.

Ace was now fully recovered because of the 1st-Grade Pill he bought from the system shop. He had to admit these pills from the system were tailor-made for him and as long as he had them he can heal any kind of injury.

The only regret was system didn't provide any pills for soul recovery yet.

Speaking of which, Ace never tries to escape the palace. One reason was because of Alvin's constant surveillance and the second was after he reflected it; this might not be a bad thing.

Because if he plays his part well then he might reap enormous benefits from this ordeal!

But first, Ace had to find out what Alvin was considering him and how he can keep it that way. Moreover, he had to carefully examine the pros and cons of being whatever Alvin suspected him of.

If this thing was in his favor, he will play along but if he found any excessive danger to himself, then he had already prepared an escape plan.

Now, he just has to make Alvin talk before they could reach the Damien Kingdom.

Ace's eyes were closed since he was pretending to be asleep while constantly imagining different scenarios.

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'Creek...'

The golden door creek opened at this moment and Alvin enter with a graceful woman beside him.

She was his sister Sofia who also happen to be an Azure Rank Alchemist!

But she didn't wear the Azure Flame Robes that was the symbol of Azure Alchemist and Pill Flame Organization because Alvin didn't let her since it would draw unwanted attention.

Finn opened his eye and drowsily saw his visitors.

Ace's eyes narrowed when he saw the graceful woman in dark green attire and sense her soul fluctuation and soul signature.

'She's that Qi Flowing River cultivator!' He vividly remembered the second expert presence in the royal family's carriage that time and now he finally saw her.

While Ace was observing Sofia, she was also doing the same and closely measuring Finn.

Sofia was very arrogant because of her status and background. She was only here for Sky Stealer's secrets but she didn't search for him because she knew her brother was an expert in it.

But now even her brother has failed and instead of Sky Stealer, he brings some random kid and even leaves so quickly without giving her any proper explanation.

This gives her a terrible impression of Finn but she can't do anything since Alvin was protecting him and didn't let her even see him yesterday.

Sofia disdainfully looked at Finn and pursed her lips, "Just a fifth Qi gate imp. Why are you protecting him?"

'I also wanted to know that.' Ace wore a wry smile when he senses Sofia's resentment toward Finn. He could now imagine this journey is going to be quite a lively one.

Alvin coolly said, "You don't need to know. If you keep acting like a spoiled brat, I'll ground you when we reached home."

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Sofia's face sank and didn't dare to rebuke anymore, but she didn't stop glaring murderously at Finn.

After berating his sister, Alvin looked at seemingly afraid Finn and smile faintly, "Forgive my sister, she's just a little angry with me. Get ready we're leaving."

'I can see that.' Ace scoffed, but he merely nodded as Finn.

On the side, Sofia was flabbergasted when she saw Alvin speaking so gently with this brat because he never spoke like this even with their parents.

She examined Finn more carefully but no matter how many times she looked at him, Finn or his aura was extremely normal to her.

This stimulated many doubts in her heart but she was too afraid to question him in front of Alvin. So, she can only wait for an opportunity to interrogate this brat and uncover his secrets.

Ace sense Sofia's intense curiosity and his heart sank, 'I better stay away from her.'

Now that he played along with Alvin, he had to be very careful of these people around Alvin or he might find himself in someone's torture chamber.

His best bet was to stick with Alvin who seem to be quite protective of Finn since he didn't even tell his sister about this theory of his.Â

Ace quickly takes a bath with the help of palace maids. He was quite unwilling but he can't do anything about it since Finn was used to this kind of lifestyle and even more inappropriate things than just this.

After wearing new white robes Finn's skinny figure looked quite handsome with long black hair.

"Let's go, our ride is waiting." Alvin nodded toward clean Finn and led the way.

Finn excitedly followed Alvin and resentful Sofia.

'This is it!' Ace inhales deeply. He knew this is going to be his biggest con-act and if he messed up even a little, then this will be his last.

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Ace observed the luxurious royal palace and couldn't help but think it was just too damn exaggerating!

After crossing some large hallways, Ace's group of three finally reached a large open area.

Ace's eyes instantly contracted after what he saw before him.

There was a 15-meter large silver-grey crane, gracefully sitting in the open field. Only its beak and eyes were golden grey and it looked quite beautiful sitting below the soft light.

"Ghost Crane!"

Ace exclaimed in shock because this aerial-type demonic beast was too rare. The main reason for this was, it can reach the Qi River realm at maturity, just like the one sitting before him!

The purity of their bloodlines also limited demonic Beasts like other powerful beings in this world.

The more powerful ancestral bloodline a demonic beast has the more powerful its cultivation grows and vice versa.

A demonic beast that can reach the Qi River or Soul River realm was very rare in the middle-lands and most of them were in a forbidden area of the middle-lands.

That's why Ace was astonished to see this kind of rare and fully mature aerial Ghost Crane.

"Magnificent isn't it?" An old man with a gentle smile appeared beside Finn at this moment.

Ace was stunned when he saw this old man with long grey hair and a long beard appearing beside him like a ghost.

'A peak Qi River cultivator!' Ace's heart sank because he never expects another expert this powerful appearing here.

Moreover, he didn't sense this old man's soul signature until he show himself!

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'Another treasure that can fool my soul sense!' Ace instantly guess the reason for the failure of his soul sense.

"Don't be alarmed, this is Beast Master Luke. An envoy from Beast Calling Organization and also the owner of that Ghost Crane." Alvin impassively introduced Old Man Luke.

"Beast Master Luke!" Finn quickly greeted Luke politely.

"Hahaha, you don't have to be on edge around me. Just call me Old Luke." Old Luke nodded with a gentle smile on his face.

"Are we ready for takeoff?" Alvin impassively looked at Old Luke.

"Yes, as long as Lord Flame General gives command we can take flight any time." Old Luke replied with a smile.

Alvin nodded in satisfaction before saying, "Then let's go. I'll fill Grand Beast Master in the details when we reached the Damien Kingdom."

"Yes." Old Luke solemnly nodded when he heard Grand Beast Master's name.

Old Luke didn't dare to delay anymore and controlled the Ghost Crane with his beast taming technique.Â

The Ghost Crane instantly let loose a loud, rattling bugle cry and stand straight on her long beastly legs.

Old Luke jumped on the Ghost Crane first before gesturing the other three with a smile, "Please."

"Let's go." Alvin cover Finn within his manifest wood Qi and jump on the Ghost Crane, Sofia followed suit.

"Didn't my family say they'll be here for my departure?" Finn asked in bewilderment.

On the contrary, Ace was happy inside since he don't have to deal with Finn's mother anymore but he still pretends like Finn so no one suspects anything.

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"They all give their regards." Alvin faintly said.

It was Alvin's doing that he didn't let them meet Finn since it would waste too much time.

However, the actual reason was; Alvin's sense of Natalia's Qi projection just an hour ago, and that's why he was in such a hurry!

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Chapter 172: Black Reaper

"They all give their regards." Alvin faintly said before he conjured a golden emblem from his storage ring and give it to Finn.

"From your mother." Alvin gravely said as he gave that emblem to Finn. A hint of melancholy flashed past Alvin's eyes.

Ace take a deep breath and received the golden emblem.

This emblem was like a palm-size coin and there were two words engraved on both sides. "Preserve" and "Success".

"Oh, a lucky charm and it seemed to be made by some precious material. You quite lucky to have a loving mother." Old Luke smiled warmly.

Ace felt this emblem was heavy than a mountain and quickly store it in his thief's space. For some reason, this emblem stir the very core of his heart and he didn't like this feeling in the least bit since he didn't know why he was feeling this way.

'Next time, I should consider choosing a face with no family or some family-like Javier's.' Ace made a mental note with a heavy heart and suppress that foreign sensation.

"Let's go." Alvin nodded toward Old Luke.

Luke chuckles and with a wave of his sleeve, a grey light barrier enveloped the four of them.

Ace saw the barrier with great interest, but he didn't dare to use his runic eyes in the presence of a Qi river core expert. This was a gamble he didn't want to take.

"Hihi, leaving without saying goodbye how cold of you brother Alvin!"

A jeering voice drifted at this moment and with this voice descend a humongous force!

Old Luke and Sofia's faces turn pale when they felt the aura and the Ghost Crane also cries in alarm before its legs shiver and with a thud, it landed straight to the ground.

Ace's heart sank, 'Another Qi River Core expert!'

"Hmph!" Alvin coldly snort and the pressure instantly vanished from everyone.

"Hihi, just like I remember always so cold to friends." That laughing voice sounded again.

"Stop this nonsense Black Reaper and show your ugly face." Alvin coldly said while increasing his aura.

"Hihi, it seemed that Lass indeed told you about me." The next moment a tall figure appeared out of thin air. He was completely covered in a black cloak.

"Do you think she could've left without paying the price if she didn't reveal your presence?" Alvin darkly said.

"Indeed, but admit it brother Alvin, you didn't have the guts to kill her even if she were alone." Black Reaper scoffed.

Alvin's face darkened because Black Reaper's words were true. He really can't kill Natalia that day since it would put a hit on himself.

Black Reaper's, and he had some history between them. And his presence just give Alvin's the reason to forbear Natalia, but it also showed just how much Nightmare Ghosts wanted that thief as well.

That's why Alvin was on edge all this time because he can't fight someone like Black Reaper who never fights head-on. Moreover, Black Reaper was famous for killing a person in the Qi river core realm with one strike!

Alvin just wanted to leave as quickly as possible or he wanted to be at least in the air where Black Reaper can't use his sneaky attacks. Alvin was confident in beating this guy if he fights head-on.

But alas, Black Reaper didn't let him have his way and intercept him before the Ghost Crane could fly.

Now the situation was grave!

Ace on the other side was terrified because he doesn't sense this Black Reaper soul signature nor his Qi or Soul waves. It was as if he wasn't here at all!

'That cloak!' Ace's eyes narrowed when he saw the pitch-black cloak on Black Reaper.

It was indeed the treasure that was hiding Black Reaper's existence itself and it was more powerful than Alvin's or Old Luke's treasures combine!

"Cut to the chase what do you want?!" Alvin stiffly demanded.

Black Reaper's face was hidden underneath that black cloak but Ace felt a chill run down his spine when a powerful martial sense lock on him.

'He's also here for me!' Ace grimly thought as he does his best to act ignorant as if he didn't know Black Reaper was using his martial sense to scan him.

Alvin also sensed Black Reaper martial sense scanning Finn, but he didn't stop him and let him examine Finn.Â

Alvin knew Black Reaper was suspecting Finn to be Sky Stealer, and that's why he intercepted him. As long as Black Reaper confirms Finn wasn't a fake he'll probably leave.

As for Black Reaper founding out about anything special about Finn that was night impossible since the records of element physics only exist in Pill Flame Organization!

Just as Alvin thought after finding nothing amiss with Finn, Black Reaper retract his martial sense and spoke with a hint of meddling in his voice.

"He's indeed a real person. But I'm quite curious why are you taking this ordinary brat with you?"

"Since you asking so politely, I'll tell you." Alvin coolly said, "He has the talent to become a Black Rank Alchemist."

Old Luke and Sophia on the side were astonished hearing this because Black Alchemists were very rare and if this brat has such potential, then he can become a person with a prominent position in the organization one day.

"Is that so?" Black Reaper's facial expression was hidden underneath that black clock so no one knows what he was thinking.

'It's a lie. There is something else.' Ace on the side instantly see through Alvin's lie since his soul sense was always active.

Ace recently found out that his soul sense was invisible even in the martial sense presence so he was not afraid of using it to the fullest anymore.

Alvin has indeed made up this excuse so Black Reaper would leave without causing any trouble because if this guy attacked even he has to be careful much less protect the others beside him.

"Fine. I'll leave you alone... but on one condition!" Black Reaper's playful voice sounded.

"Speak." Alvin grimaced.

"Hihi, I want a night with that beauty." Black Reaper's lustful voice sounded as he pointed toward Sofia!

"Bastard!" Sofia was enraged. No one has dared to treat her like some whore.

"If you want a fight so be it." Alvin shows intense killing intent at this moment.

Although Finn was indeed very important, it was not confirmed yet and Sofia was his blood sister so how could he sell her to this bastard.

A hint of disdain also surfaces in Ace's eyes. He never expected these Nightmare Ghosts to be so wanton, and they didn't seem to have a good relationship with other organizations as well.

"Hihi, I was just joking and teasing Lady Sophia. I'll take my leave now." Black Reaper laugh mildly and vanished from the spot just like he appeared before.

Although, Black Reaper wasn't afraid of fighting Alvin it wasn't worth it since there was no reward. Moreover, if Alvin went all out, then they would cause a tremendous commotion and Black Reaper superiors would not like it.

So, Black Reaper backed off after pushing Alvin's buttons and focus on finding that thief since only one day was left in the kingdom level test to finish.

Alvin's tense nerves finally settle after he saw Black Reaper finally disappear, leaving them alone. He knew he just dodged a bullet.

"Let's go before that lunatic changed his mind." Alvin gravely command Old Luke who was also seemed quite relieved.

"Yes!" Old Luke also knew they just escaped a clammy and didn't want to stay here any longer, especially not after finding out the famous Black Reaper was here.

The Ghost Crane spread its monstrous silver-grey wings and gracefully wave them and take flight.

This was Ace's second time experiencing flight but this time he was going to travel on a Qi river level demonic beast and this make him somewhat nervous!

Just in a few seconds, the Ghost Crane was fifty meters in the cloudy sky and with a cry of joy, it flips its wind and shot in the east direction like a loose arrow.

In a minute, the Ghost Crane has reached its full speed and covered a hundred meters in an instant!

Ace was astonished by this speed, 'This Ghost Crane can easily catch me if I run in the open fields.' He mused.

"The journey to the Damien Kingdom is going to take us a month on this Ghost Crane. Trust me, if it were any other demonic beast we have to travel on foot between the Natural Earthen Boundary of 2nd Grade and 1st Grade lands." Old Luke saw Finn's curious expression and couldn't help but preach his knowledge to this youngster.

"Why is that?" Ace read about this before but he didn't know the reason behind this.

That's why he wanted to pass those tests so he could cross this boundary with no inconvenience because he read that almost 90% of people die just to cross this Natural Earthen Boundary!

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Chapter 173: Natural Earthen Boundary

Old Luke didn't answer Finn's question right away and first, glance at Alvin for his approval.

Since this information was only known to 1st Grade Kingdoms!

He also didn't know why Alvin was bringing this boy with them, although he was curious, he didn't have the right to question Alvin's arrangement.

Ace also noticed this brief exchange and stay quiet while waiting for Alvin to decide.

Alvin nonchalantly nodded, his meaning was clear, 'You can tell him.'

"Brother you can't tell this peasant about this information!" Sofia was also watching this closely and when she saw Alvin giving his approval she instantly protests.

'Is she jealous?' Ace pull an amusing face because he could tell this woman was not doing it just for the sake of secrecy. She was doing it for Alvin's attention.

Ace's guess was on the mark because after Sofia see Alvin's kind treatment to Finn which she never got despite being his actual sister, she felt extreme jealousy.

Moreover, she might not show it but she admires Alvin sincerely and always wanted him to treat her like Finn. Yet Alvin was austere with her all the time just like her father.

Now she saw Alvin treating this unknown brat like a prince, she finds it unfair and if not for this formation barrier protecting them from the air current, she would have pushed Finn off from the Ghost Crane. Even if Alvin punished her afterward.

"Shut up!" Alvin berated coldly.

Sofia resentfully glares at Finn since she can't do anything to Alvin.

'Just you wait. I'll take care of you the moment I got the chance. He won't be there to always protect you!' She thought while murderously glaring at Finn.

Finn wore a silly smile at this moment as if he had no idea what was going on.

'How troublesome.' Ace thought wryly.

Old Luke clear his throat as if he saw nothing and asked Finn, "The Natural Earthen Boundary is very special you know why?"

"No. But I heard there is a forbidden area between 1st Grade and 2nd Grade-Lands called Earthen Mist Forest. Isn't that the reason this boundary was named, the earthen natural boundary?"

Ace truthfully answered with what he conjures up by himself after pounding over the vague information he had for a long time.

"Heh, good kid, you're right about the origin of its name." Old Luke chuckles lightly and continues, "But do you know why this forest is called the forbidden area and the most dangerous place in the entire middle-lands?"

"I do not know." Ace honestly answered.

He also wanted to know that because he read that even a peak Qi river cultivator can die there if they enter too deep in this Earthen Mist Forest.

Only those top ten kingdoms have the method to cross it with no casualties.

That's also why Ace didn't want to cross this deadly boundary on his own and wanted a place in the institute so with their help he could cross this boundary with no danger.

After all, Ace even read about some soul-type demonic beasts in this forest and they were not easy to deal with.

Old Luke nodded in satisfaction seeing Finn's earnest expression and said, "It's because of the Emerald Mist! The Earthen Mist Forest is covered in this Emerald Mist all the time of year and this mist can bewitch even someone like me if I enter the deepest part of this forest. The scariest part is the victims of this Emerald Mist do a very strange and horrifying thing!"

"What thing?" Finn asked with a horrified face.

'I wonder if this mist works on me.' Ace wondered.

Old Luke answer with a grim face, "They all dig their grave themselves and then buried themselves after cutting their throats!"

Ace's eyes narrowed because this was just too exaggerating and hard to believe that someone could do this to themselves.

"Heh, I wanted to go in this forest now." Sofia scoffed at this moment.Â

Old Luke knew no one believed him and gravely said, "It is very normal if you don't believe this old man. But you can confirm it with Grand Beastmaster, two hundred years ago there was a Qi river core cultivator who wanted to uncover this forest's mystery but he never come back alive and vanished in the depth of this forest.

"I can assure you I'm not making this up because this cultivator was the former, Grand Beastmaster and also the mentor of the current Grand Beastmaster!"

Alvin narrowed his eyes and finally show a hint of interest while Sofia's face was flush with fear and she didn't speak about going into the forest this time.

'A Qi river core cultivator dies, and he was even from one of three giants!' Ace was also stunned and he finally understand why this area considers the most dangerous area of the entire middle-lands.

"Why did he go there, though?" Alvin spoke at this moment, he didn't know about this forest history and now that he found out a cultivator like he never returned from there, this piqued his interest.

"I heard, the old Grand Beastmaster discover something very strange, and that's why he ignored the danger and enter the forest." Old Luke answered with uncertainty.

"Oh, what thing?" Alvin asked again.

"There was a legend about this forest; if you're a wood, water, or earth element cultivator your cultivation speed can increase if you manage to dive enough deep inside," Luke stated.

"Oh, did someone prove this legend?" Alvin's voice was hesitant since he was a wood element cultivator himself. If this was true, he didn't mind investigating this forest.

"Heh, no one is alive to answer that question. It's only the word of a madman who manage to escape the depth of this forest and lost his mind afterward and die." Old Luke shook his head.

"A madman who can even make a Grand Beastmaster enter the forest, huh." Alvin retorted softly.

"It's because this madman was Sacred Lotus King!" Old Luke said with a hint of reverence in his eyes.

"What?! The same Sacred Lotus King who shake the enter high and middle lands after creating the Realm Breaking Lotus Pill!?" Alvin exclaimed in shock.

"Indeed, they both are the same person." Old Luke solemnly nodded.

"Brother, are we talking about the same person who breaks into the purple alchemist rank despite never being in the high-level lands?" Sofia chimed in.

"Yes. It's the same person. He was supposed to be a prodigy in alchemy and he manage to reach this level at the age of 30!" Alvin nodded solemnly.

"But didn't they say the Scared Latus King died because some enemy poisoned him?" Alvin looked at Old Luke with doubt. He never thought that he would discover this astonishing secret here.

Alvin never talk with Old Luke in his way here because he didn't consider Luke his equal. But now that Old Luke opens his mouth to talk with Finn, Alvin's opinion of him has changed since he knows this extraordinary information.

Ace on the side was listening to this conversation carefully. It was supposed to be only about the Earthen Natural Boundary but now it has taken a completely different turn.

Old Luke on the other hand was talking with no reserve because of Alvin and he wanted to curry favor with this person. But he didn't think he would get any chance after he found out about Alvin's cold personality.

However, now talking with Finn gave him this chance he has been waiting for all this time and he won't blow it just because of some old history's secrets that were collected by Beast Calling.

"That was just a front to hide his madness and shameful death. But he was friendly with our fourth last Grandmaster, that's why we have actual records that even Pill Flame didn't." Old Luke pridefully declared.

"Did this forest was always like this?" Alvin probe, now that he knew about the actual story behind this legend and the person who started it. Even he was now tempted to go there and explore it.

But he wasn't an idiot since he now knew about the madness and death of two Qi river core cultivators, Alvin would not take any measures without weighing out his options.

"This..." Old Luke pounder for a while before answering with uncertainly, "I don't know but I heard from the Grand Beastmaster that this mysterious mist become vague in the era of second-generation Grand Beastmaster. But it is probably older, no one knows."

"Oh, more than 20,000 years ago." Alvin was astonished.

"Yes." Old Luke answer truthfully, "At that time, no one takes it seriously but as time pass the mist become thicker and more dangerous. Only sacred lotus king took an interest in it and after him our Grand Beastmaster.

"But no one dares to go inside after them since there this mist wasn't the only problem. There are strange earthly beings and many natural traps.

"The Scared Latus King last sane words wasn't just about the fast cultivation, there were more...!"

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Chapter 174: A Possibility

"The Scared Latus King last sane words wasn't about just the fast cultivation, there were more..." Old Luke carefully remembered what was written in the old records before speaking, "Oh, they were: This forest is like a natural fortress as if it is protecting something!"

"Strange." Alvin mused but no matter how much he mulled over it these words made little sense to him at all.

However, Ace who has been listening to them earnestly all this time showed opposite emotions to his usual composed self. His eyes were twinkling with ecstasy and his breath become a little rugged!

A startling thought has completely taken over his mind the moment he listens to this last line of Scared Latus King and it just won't go away.

'AN ELEMENTAL ORB!'

Ace circulate the HD-Qi to calm his frantic heartbeat because he knew this was just his opinion based on a madman's words. So, losing his calm over a mere guess and stimulating these three powerful experts' suspicion wasn't worth it.

'This Earthen Mist Forest, I have to check it myself!' Ace makes this forbidden zone his top priority because just this mere possibility of having an Elemental Orb was enough reason for him to go there.

One had to know, Ace can't reach the higher realm without absorbing these Elemental Orbs and he knew they were very hard to find. But the system has given him enough hints and now he found a place that was completely matched some of the system's signs.

Ace never thought this misfortune of being captured by Alvin and then his decision to stick with Alvin would give him a probable location with an Elemental Orb.

If Ace didn't learn from his previous experiences, he might leave everything and go to that forest whenever he gets the first chance.

Now that he knew all these dangerous facts about that forbidden area he won't go until he was completely sure of coming back alive.

'At least now I know where to look after I reached the end of Heavenly Foundation Realm.' Ace ecstatically thought. He wasn't in the hurry to go there and he'll wait until he believed he was ready.

'These organizations have many astonishing secrets. I should also clean their libraries. Who knows, I might find more clues about elemental orbs.' Ace took a mental note for the future.

"But I didn't see any mist in our way here? Why is that?" Alvin spoke at this moment, he has taken a great interest in this forest, and if not for Finn's presence he might start to explore the outskirts of it.

"Hehe, that why I said without this ghost crane, we have to cross the forest on foot but I would also be without any dangers since that path is very safe. It just takes us far longer than on the sky." Old Luke pridefully stroke the Ghost Crane.

"You still didn't answer my question?" Alvin pursed his lips.

"Oh, please forgive me. It is because this fully mature Ghost Crane can fly at a very high altitude and the Emerald Mist can't reach this high up. But don't take this in the wrong way and imagine you can reach the core area with this method. Trust me, many tried this method, and probably all of them are nine feet under." Old Luke chuckles coldly.

Alvin's face darkens because he was thinking about using this method but Old Luke pours cold water on his fantasy.

"Brother, let's forget about this forest. Don't you find it strange that no one ever tries to investigate this matter even after a Grand Beastmaster and a prodigy die there?" Sofia's face was filled with anxiety and fear because she knew what her brother was thinking and tried to talk reason with him.

"Don't worry I won't go there. But I'll have to talk about this with Father and ask for his opinion." Alvin stiffly retorted to Sofia and then looked at Old Luke, "Tell me everything you know about this forest and I'll put some word to the Grand Beastmaster for you."

Luke's eyes shimmer with excitement, he didn't expect this Flame General would take a deep interest in this mystery. But Luke didn't miss this opportunity and spoke about everything he knew.

Ace on the side suddenly discovers something and his heart sinks to rock bottom, 'Wait a minute. He's asking everything in front of me without even caring about I would divulge this information!'

Ace quickly glances at Sofia and this time she coldly grinned at him like she was looking at a dead man!

Even she has noticed this peculiar behavior of her brother and she knows Alvin would never make any mistakes.

'This bastard will kill me the moment he considered me useless!' Ace's heart turns cold the moment this thought surfaced in his mind.

'Heh, let's see if you can kill me first or... hah. But because of your vanity, I'll know about this forbidden zone as much as you do.' Ace coldly sneered in his heart and pretended like an ignorant Finn and closely listened to their conversation.

He knew he was safe as long as Alvin didn't confirm his guess and that would be when they reached the Damien Kingdom.

One week has passed since Ace's group of four began their journey to the Damien Kingdom.

In this week nothing special happened besides the information about the Earthen Mist Forest. Now everyone on Ghost Crane knows as much as Old Luke about that forbidden zone.

Ace was now doing nothing, and all the time he was just pretending to cultivate. But he wasn't doing anything since his cultivation technique wasn't something he could show in front of these three experts.

His only option was just to ponder over his sword technique but he can't immerse himself into it because if he somehow managed a breakthrough then everyone will be able to feel the technique's power or if he fell into a trance that would also be not good for him since this kind of profound techniques didn't exist in the middle-lands either the geniuses that can cultivate them.

Ace didn't want any of this to happen at all costs.

Suddenly Ace felt as if his mind become clearer and lighter, and a comfortable feeling wash over him.

"Heh, you feel that, right?" Old Luke's amusing voice sounded at this moment.

"Yes." Finn nodded in confusion.

"Hehe, we just enter the 2nd-Grand lands and what you felt is the abundant Qi density." Old Luke grin.

"Oh, we already cross the large 3rd-Grade lands?" Ace was astonished since it was too fast!

"Don't be surprised this Ghost Crane reputation for being the faster areal demonic beast in the Qi River realm wasn't just for show!" Old Luke grin proudly.

"I understand." Finn nodded with reverence-filled eyes.

"I want to see the Emerald Mist." Alvin's authoritative voice sounded at this moment.

Old Luke's face twisted in fear the moment he heard about this and Sofia's expression wasn't good either.

Ace was also stunned, he didn't what this guy has been thinking for seven days and now that he finally opens his mouth he made an extravagant request that could put everyone's life in jeopardy.

"F-flame General, please re...consider." Old Luke suggested in a supplicating tone.

"Yes, listen to this Old Man!" Sofia quickly backed Old Luke.

"I only want to see it and we can do it by flying hundreds of meters above it right?" Alvin pulled a long face seeing everyone is looking at him as a madman.Â

He just wanted to evaluate the famous Emerald Mist, even he knows better now that going there was suicidal.

"Oh, we can do that but only if the winds were not too strong that time." Old Luke sigh in relief and so does everyone else.

"I understand." Alvin merely nodded. He knew if winds were too strong that mist can reach quite high and that would put all of them in danger.

Fifteenth Day,

"We're flying above the Earthen Mist Forest." Old Luke's grave voice awakened everyone from their meditative state.

Ace gravely looked around, yet he saw nothing but golden sky and clouds. As for below, everything was blurred. If he wanted to observe down below he had to use his heavenly sense that he can't because of obvious reasons.

"Can we go down now?" Alvin pensively asked.

"No, we should wait to cross the most dangerous area, and then we'll be safe to fly over the Emerald Mist. If anything happened that time we just have to protect this Lad." Old Luke gravely stated. His tone was clearly of someone's unnegotiable!

"Fine. Do as you see fit." Alvin nodded. He could sense the firm resolve behind Luke's words and he knew this guy won't gamble with his life.

Truth to be told, Ace also wanted to see this mist now because in these fifteen days he had conjured up a theory that he can only confirm after he comes in contact with this Emerald Mist.

Alvin has just given Ace the chance to test this hypothesis!

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Chapter 175: 1st Grade Kingdoms Land

The 1st Grade Kingdoms-land was rich with high-quality Qi. The density was a hundred times greater than the 2nd Grand lands and a thousand times denser than the 3rd Grand-lands Qi density!

If someone from the 3rd Grand-lands comes here, they have a much harder time breathing and it will take some time to accommodate with this thick Qi environment.

But once they settle within this environment, they'll feel an enormous difference in their prowess, especially in cultivation!

Sometimes, those who were stuck at a bottleneck will instantly breakthrough after arriving into this dense Qi environment.

As for the Qi density of High-level lands... let's leave for later.

The Damien Kingdom was the No.1 Kingdom or one could say the overlord of entire middle-level lands.

This Kingdom was in the most prosperous place of entire middle lands and this entire kingdom was as big as ten 3rd Grade Kingdoms combined, with 21 provinces!

Some people believed it was as big as a 3rd Grade Empire but no one has any evidence of it.

Its history was over ten thousand years old and it was hard to believe that this kingdom was once an insignificant 3rd Grade Kingdom!

But after it claimed the first place from the previous number one kingdom and destroyed it, Damien Kingdom never lose its place as number one to anyone.

Whoever challenged it in Ranking Wars, the result was the same for everyone; complete and utter annihilation!

Now it has been five thousand years since someone challenged this Overlord for Ranking Wars!

Whereby, now the Damien Kingdom was bonafide Overlord, not just by name and position!

The biggest province of 21 was Royal Damien Province, where only nobles lived and no commoners could even step into this province without permission.

This province was also where Royal Capital City, Damien Royal Institute City, Flame City of Flame Pill Organization, and last but not least, Beast City of Beast Calling Organization!

As for Nightmare Ghosts' Nightmare City, no one knows the exact location of their branches, but their middle land's main branch was also hidden somewhere in this vast kingdom.

But most people assume they were also in this province since they would never choose a place that makes them look lower than the other two giants.

These five cities were the most famous and most difficult places to enter in entire middle-level lands even if you have status, you can't enter these places without special tokens and if anyone tries to break inside their ends were not novel.

Especially Nightmare City which location was unknown and if you somehow stumble upon it only those ghosts know your end.

At this moment, in the radiant golden sky.

A silver-gray streak was moving like a shooting star towards the Royal Damien Province and with no hint of stopping it cross the periphery of the province.

This silver-gray beam was, of course, the Ghost Crane, which travel with no break and at full speed for 32 days.

This is the most terrifying part about these demonic beasts, they can move for months once they reached their maturity.

Furthermore, they only needed Qi to survive after they enter the Qi River realm just like cultivators, and alchemy pills can replenish it.

Ace was calmly sitting cross-legged while his eyes were closed.

He was feeling quite light head and his analytical abilities also improved significantly from the moment he entered the 1st Grand lands 12 days ago.

The closer he got to the Damien Kingdom Ace felt the world became more colorful and his evaluation process became faster.

Although, this worldly-Qi was useless for his cultivation but breathing in high-quality Qi benefit him in many other ways that still didn't know about.

"We're in Royal Damien Province." Old Luke's cheerful voice sounded.

"Lord Flame General, where do you want to go from here?" Old Luke was in a good mood from the moment they enter the Damien Kingdom a day ago, it was his birthplace after all.

Old Luke has predicted they will reach this place in 30 days and they would if they didn't waste two days flying slowly over low altitude in the Earthen Mist Forest!Â

As for what happened in these two days and what they experience, only these four know.

"Flame City!" Alvin said without thinking twice. He was eager to test Finn's with the help of the Craft Elder and hoping for his guess to be right.

If it was, then Alvin would get a huge amount of benefits and might become the youngest Flame Elder in the history of Pill Flame Organization, at the age of 80!

These elders of Pill Flame Organization were divided into two groups.

The first group was, Craft Elders. These elders were promoted from Alchemists, Crafters, or Rune Crafters after they did some outstanding service for the organization, or if they achieved Purple Rank in alchemy, 6-Star in Crafting, and 7-Mortal Rank in Rune Crafting!

The second group was Flame Elders, these elders were promoted from Flame Guard Regiments and it was very difficult to become one because every one of them is at the Peak of Qi River Core Realm!

If someone became these Flame Elders, their status would be just below Grand Elders and higher than Craft Elders. Moreover, the Flame Elders have access to the most powerful cultivation techniques and skills of the organizations!

However, this threshold was very difficult to reach for Alvin because he knew just how difficult it was to progress after one entered the Qi river core realm.

That's why he took this gamble and if it paid off, then Finn will become his stepping stone and he will complete his dream and get the same status as his father without going through many difficulties!

Although Finn would be the biggest winner of this if he had a wood element physique.

But Alvin didn't care as long as Finn recognized his kindness. That was also the reason he was treating him kindly.

But if Finn failed his expectation, then he will kill him the very moment and move on to his new backup plan and that was the Earthen Mist Forest!

Old Luke nodded with a smile and controlled the Ghost Crane to go in the Flame City direction.

Ace also has opened his eyes and calmly listened to their conversation. He had the map of Damien Kingdom and long ago remembered it and so does the other top nine kingdoms' maps.

He knew in these top ten kingdoms these branches of three giants were in the form of cities and his mission was to theft these thirty cities, whereby ten cities locations were completely unknown!

Furthermore, in these 32 days he didn't find the reason behind Alvin's obsession over Finn, nor did he try to probe since it was clear as the day after he saw Alvin's didn't even tell his sister.

Now Ace has two choices, either escape or continue his con-act and see it through.

No matter how many times he thinks about these two options, both of them were filled with dangers.

Especially the second option where he will become whatever Alvin thought of him and Ace now have some idea that Finn was even more important to Alvin than the mysterious Sky Stealer!

That's why Ace was having second thoughts about escaping the moment he got the chance.

Now that he was already in the 1st Grade-lands he can go wild!

Because he knew wanton killing was forbidden here and this law was created by none other than Three Giants and High-level lands!

Ace has read about this astonishing law and from the moment he laid his eyes on it, he wanted to fly over here but alas it was an endless journey.

With this extreme law in play, he can steal without caring about a possible genocide and he knew these people in the power will not take extreme measures until they want to lose the public trust and their reputation as unshakeable beings!

Because if they started killing anyone and everyone, they would break their so-called unbreakable law just for a mere thief!

This will be nothing but admitting themselves that they can't capture him and they can break the laws anytime and every time they deemed them breakable.

No one will ever follow these laws again and those people in power who have been benefited from this law all these years didn't want this to happen at all costs.

Since it will make it hard to control these natives with just an iron hammered and after how many times they twisted these laws for their use and punished the innocent.

Now abolishing them just because they were the ones being pushed around by a mere thief will cause a massive mutiny!

After all who told them to suppress these commoners with laws to such limits.

As for this peace, it was nothing but a hallucination, as long as someone just gives the slightest spark, it will become an unstoppable flame and burn the entire aristocratic society!

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Chapter 176: Flame City Of Damien Kingdom

The Flame City of Damien Kingdom was probably the biggest and magnificent city of the entire middlelands. No one dares to cause any trouble here even the royal family has to show a humble attitude in this city of Pill Flame Organization.

The city has four flame gates and the citizens of Flame city were all members of the Pill Flame Organization in one way or another.

None-affiliates may not stay here any longer than a week and every person needed a Flame Token just to enter the city.

Furthermore, this Flame Token was only available for aristocrats and commoners can't even approach this city much less enter it.

If you want to enter and you're a commoner, you have to be with an aristocrat!

They can buy each Flame token from the eastern flame gate and its price was sky high, 100 high Qi stones, and middle Qi stones were not allowed in this city!

Speaking of which, 1 High-level Qi Stone was equal to 1,000 Middle-level Qi Stones and 100,000 Low-level Qi Stones!

As for Peak-level Qi stones, one was equal to, 1,000 High Qi stones!

But no one trade Peak Qi Stones because they can increase the cultivation speed of Qi River cultivators by hundred folds while High Qi Stones can increase the cultivation speed of Qi River cultivators by mere ten folds.

As for middle and low-level Qi stones, they can also increase the cultivation speed but they were only helpful for those in Qi Gates and Qi Foundation building realms.

At this moment, a 15-meters silver-gray crane landed in front of Northern Flame Gate. This was indeed the Ghost Crane of Old Luke.

The northern flame gate was thirty-meter-high, it was only reserved for VIPs of the three organizations and no other person can enter through this gate.

"Please state your name and rank." An imposing voice sounded from the deserted gate.

The gate was deserted not because they didn't monitor it. It was because 6th Mortal Ranked Formations were protecting it and as the matter of fact, every gate of the city was protected by at least 6th mortal rank formations!

This was just the entrance; the entire city was like a fortress and filled with arrays and formations. If someone dares to cause trouble here, they can forget about escaping or hiding.

"Open the gate, I'm Flame General Alvin Elias!" Alvin coolly stated as he jumped down from the Ghost Crane with Finn and Sofia.

Ace was looking at the shining gate with a hint of disbelief in his eyes, his soul sense was tingling in alarm because of the city's gate. It was a grave warning that he only felt when he faces a life-threatening situation.

'No wonder they're the richest bunch and they know how to spend their wealth.' Ace grimly thought, he never imagined this Flame City can be this tightly secure, and the thought he had about escaping wavered.

"Please show your token!" The person on the other side didn't seem to be moved by just Alvin's words and demanded the proof.

Alvin didn't retort since he knew this person was only following the rules and even he had to follow them. He flipped his hand and a crimson red token appeared in his palm. There was a General engraved on it in golden letters.

Alvin nonchalantly flicker and the crimson token turn into a crimson streak and shot toward the closed gate.

But just when Ace thought this token are going to collapse with the gate something magical happened. The token passed through it like the door was just a mere illusion!

'What?' Ace was shocked.

"Please enter esteemed Flame General." The voice rang again but there was a hint of respect and reverence in it this time.

The tightly shut gate began to creek opened thereafter the voice.

"Thank you for your trouble, Old Luke. You can leave now and tell Grand Beastmaster I'll visit him very soon." Alvin looked at Old Luke and solemnly nodded.

"Oh, it wasn't any trouble, and I enjoyed my time. Farewell, I'll pass your message." Old Luke smile broadly and fly the Ghost Crane towards the Beast City which wasn't far from Flame City.

Old Luke was quite happy at this moment since he knew Alvin will put some good words for him to Grand Beastmaster after what Luke did for Alvin.

Ace's focus was completely on the door at this moment, he wanted to use his runic eyes so badly that he almost did it. But his reason stopped him and sneaked here if he got the chance.

After the gate completely open, a tall, muscular man in his late twenties appeared in everyone's view. He wore full-body crimson armor with a flaming symbol of Pill Flame engrave on it.

This crimson full-body armor was the symbol of the Flaming Guard regiment, which means this man was a Flame Guard like Alvin. But his cultivation was much low, only at Empty River.

"Please, this wavy esteemed Flame General, the carriage is waiting inside." The Flame guard respectfully bow to Alvin and stated.

"You don't need to stand on ceremony. Inform the Craft Elder I want to meet him immediately, it is a pressing matter." Alvin nonchalantly said while he entered the city.Â

"Yes, I'll inform the Elder right away." The flame guard solemnly nodded before presenting the crimson token to Alvin, "Your identity token."

Alvin coolly took it back and place it inside his storage ring.

"These two black tokens for the guests of esteemed Flame General." The flame guard took two more black tokens engraved with a guest symbol on them and present them to Finn and Sofia.

"I don't need it. I have my own." Sofia scoffed and conjure her Azure Alchemist token and disdainfully waved at the Flame Guard.Â

"Please forgive me, Lady Azure Alchemist!" The Flame Guard quickly apologized even if it wasn't his mistake. Because Azure Alchemist holds a prominent position in Flame City.

When Ace saw the Azure token in Sofia's hand, he instantly thought about two tokens that he had in his thief's space!

'So, I can use those tokens like this.' Ace takes a mental note.

The flame guard looked at Finn with uncertainty. Now he wasn't sure if this brat was an alchemist or not but he didn't dare to hurry him since this brat was traveling with a Flame General and an Azure Alchemist.

"Thank you, senior." Finn respectfully took the black token for guests and thank the Flame Guard.

"No problem." The Flame guard solemnly nodded.

"Let's go, I'm sick of flying now." Sofia stride toward the lavishing carriage waiting for them.

Alvin didn't retort Sofia, and he was even agreed with her on this one. He followed with Finn.

When Ace saw the carriage, he was astonished because this carriage wasn't a horse carriage, since there were no horses. It was attached to a horse-like beast, but it was two-meter-tall and graceful with two goat's horns on its head and four brown eyes on its skull.

'A third Qi gate, Demonic Horse.' Ace quickly recognized this breed of demonic beasts.

This breed of demonic horses can be easily tamed and with no technique, that's why they were used in pulling carriages here since they were more resilient and much faster than a normal horse.

Sofia, Alvin, and Finn embark on the three-meter large carriage.

"Let's go to the Flame Palace," Alvin commanded the coachman who wore a novice Flame Guards light-red armor.

These Novice Flames Guards do odd jobs like these until they were selected in the regiments.

The carriage moved toward the Pill Place, which was also the central command of the entire city and also the commanded center of nine other Flame Cities in entire middle-lands.

Ace was scrutinizing the city from the carriage's window as they were moving at great speed.

It dumbfounded him when he saw so many alchemists on the streets like ants and they weren't a single person who wasn't wearing the Pill Flame Symbol in this many people.

Moreover, Ace also notice that almost every shop on these streets was sealing the medicinal herbs or concocted Pills!

'If I can have all those pills, I can reach the peak Heavenly foundation stage in no time.' Ace inhales sharply.

Truth to be told, this place was EXP heaven for him and he was controlling himself from using Pick-pocket by sheer will.

Ace also located some shops related to Rune Crafting and also some smitheries.

"Heh, now you understand, we're from completely different worlds!" Sofia's mocking voice enters Ace's ears at this moment. She couldn't help but mock Finn after seeing him curiously looking outside.

"Yes." However, Finn didn't give her the satisfaction and kept looking like he heard nothing and merely answer her in a mild tone.

Sofia's beautiful face turn ugly when she saw this brat ignoring her and taking her words for wind.

"YOU..."

She was going to spit some more venomous words when she saw Alvin's stiff glare and shut her mouth.

'Just you wait. After Brother assumed you useless, you're mine!' A murderous glint flash past Sofia's eyes as she glared daggers at Finn!

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Chapter 177: Flame Palace

After riding the carriage for an hour, a magnificent structure came into Ace's view and he was amazed.

They were probably still miles away from their destination yet this fiery humongous palace can be seen from the carriage.

'What an exaggeration!' Ace couldn't help but though in amazement. This was the most beautiful and the biggest building he saw till this day.

He also noticed that, after this palace came in view the landscape began to change.

There were no more shops or housing anymore and rows of beautiful pavilions replaced everything in this path to the flame palace.

Furthermore, Ace was picking many powerful Qi signatures from these pavilions and the weakest of them was at least the early foundation building stage!

"This is the Place region and also the residential area of alchemists above Green Rank and their shops. If someone wanted a specific pill and they had the materials, they can pay these alchemists for their private services. Only early foundation building stage members are allowed in this region." Alvin said at this moment.

"Oh, it's like hiring an alchemist." Ace mumbles in understanding. This was the first time he heard about this kind of practice.Â

"You can say that, but these alchemists are extremely arrogant and even if they accept your request they'll demand an exorbitant price or some rare medicinal herbs," Alvin said with a hint of annoyance in this voice like he was explaining his personal experience.

"I understand." Finn smiles faintly while he glimpsed at Sofia.

Sofia's face fell when she saw Finn sneaking a peep at her, she knew what this brat was thinking and wanted to strangle him but alas, she can't.

"Heh, yeah she's one of them." Alvin also notice Finn's gaze and couldn't help but chuckle.

"Brother, I'm not!" Sofia pouted in resentment, even if Alvin was speaking the truth.

'Why is he acting so friendly now?' Ace thought with suspicious eyes.

Alvin never joke or talk like in their entire journey and now his sudden change of attitude wasn't adding up.

Ace knew the moment Alvin confirmed he was useless, it will be his last day and the key to this confirmation was obviously that Craft Elder, who controlled the branches of entire middle-lands and also the lord of Flame Palace!

Ace has over ten strategies in his mind about what he should do after finding out what Alvin wants from him. But he still didn't know just which one was most suitable to stick until he knew the truth.

'I just have to be ready to act at any given moment.' Ace thought grimly.

"Senior, I was wondering if I passed your test, what will I become? I mean an alchemist or a crafter?" Ace try to probe since Alvin was acting friendly so suddenly it was a good time to raise some questions.

"Heh, if you pass, you can become anything. Even a rune crafter." Alvin answer with a vague smile.

"He, a rune crafter? Don't give the poor guy false hope." Sofia condemned.

"We'll see." Alvin glare at his sister.

'This is more complicated than I thought!' Ace mused after he heard about the rune crafter.

Because rune crafter was not something that anyone can become and the pill flame organization controlled these techniques related to rune crafting thoroughly.

Furthermore, Finn was a Martial Cultivator which means they have converted his cultivation to the soul. Although it was possible, it was by no means simple and cheap!

Now Alvin casually revealed this sudden possibility, Ace considered this situation graver than he thought and this also means Alvin has very high hope for Finn!

Alvin on the side was looking at astonished Finn with a faint smile like a kind senior. But it was all just an act to make Finn comfortable and give him high hopes.

As for why Alvin was doing it, that was very simple, he just wanted to make sure Finn have a good impression of him and if he passed everything would turn in Alvin's favor.

However, if Finn didn't pass the test, then he'll simply die during this test and Alvin would move on with his backup plan!

This backup plan of Alvin was newly developed after he got the information about the Earthen Mist Forest, but first, he had to confirm Finn's authenticity as an element body before deciding to make anything final.

After half an hour, the demonic horse carriage finally stopped.

Alvin followed by Sofia and Finn disembark the lavishing carriage.

Ace saw before him tall red gates and gigantic walls surrounding the entirety of the flame palace.

The gates were opened and many organization members were going in and out after showing their identity tokens to Flame Guards situated on the gates.

Alvin coolly showed his general token and a flame guard quickly escort them inside.

After crossing the gate, Ace was astonished and though he has entered a completely different world.Â

The broad road was split into eleven different pathways and it was covered in silver-green floorings with beautiful golden patterns.

The right four pathways lead to four large pavilions, covering almost a two-mile area.

And the other four pathways were going toward a thirty-story white pagoda. It was clear; they built every structure with beautiful craftsmanship and rare materials.

Furthermore, the organization members primary focus was also these five buildings

As for the three pathways in the center, the central walkway was decorated with a row of beautiful statue fountains and at the end of these central pathways were a colossal fiery palace with a huge Pill Flame symbol on its front and it was decorated with different golden patterns. This was the Flame Palace!

No one was using these pathways to the palace, and its golden gates were tightly shut. Two flame guards in crimson masks were standing guards outside, they were both empty river cultivators!

Ace didn't inquiry about those five magnificent buildings and did it after he was out of the woods.

The flame guard was leading them to the center pathway, and they were going towards those two masked flame guards, who were standing there like statues.

When those masked flame guards saw Alvin's party coming towards the gate, they coldly released their aura of the empty river realm and said in an icy tone.

"State your business!"

"Hmph!" Alvin didn't even speak and snort while releasing his slightest aura in their response.

Those two masked flame guards quickly withdraw their aura and their eyes shimmer with reverence as they quickly greeted Alvin, "Flame General, please forgive us!"

Alvin coolly nodded and stop releasing his aura and said, "Where is Craft Elder?"

"He's waiting for you inside the grand meeting hall!" The muscular masked flame guard solemnly replied and quickly open the gate with a formation plate.

'This security is just too damn much.' Ace bitterly though.

From the moment he enters this city, he keeps seeing these formation plates almost on every gate and finally understands what it means to be the richest organization below royal lands!

The golden gates finally open and on the other side, another masked flame guard was waiting to receive them and its cultivation was a stage higher than the palace gate, flame guards!

"Please follow me. The elder is waiting for Flame General in the meeting hall." A sweet voice rang behind that mask, this flame guard was a woman!

Alvin coolly said, "Don't want to see my identity token anymore?"

"No, please forgive us for the inconvenience." The woman Flame Guard said with no hint of emotions.

"Heh, lead the way," Alvin grunt coldly and enter the Flame Palace, and the woman Flame Guard lead the way.

When Ace enter the Flame Palace, only one thought came to his mind, 'Beautiful.'

The entirety was decorated with different remarkable arts and craftsmanship and the regal palace looked just like dust in front of this flame palace!

Alvin's party crossed many hallways before reaching another door with another flame guard.

"The elder is waiting for you inside Flame General." It was another woman's voice, "You two can wait in the waiting room there."

She pointed at the door just ten meters away from the golden door and looked at Finn and Sofia coldly.

Ace expected Sofia would retort after this kind of treatment but to his astonishment, she didn't and quietly nodded and go toward the waiting room.

Finn looked at Alvin for his confirmation.

"Go, I'll summon you soon." Alvin nodded.

"Yes." Ace nodded gravely and followed Sofia.

'Here goes my chance to find out about the truth.' Ace helplessly thought.

The sound woman flame guard finally opened the golden door behind her and let Alvin enter and close the door.

Alvin entered a big and lavishing meeting room with only tables and chairs in it.

In the head chair, was sitting an old man with snowy long hair and a wrinkled face. He seemed to be in his early seventies. He wore a kind smile on his face and purple alchemist robes of the Pill Flame Organization!

This old man was the only Craft Elder and known Purple Rank Alchemist in entire middle-lands, Lan Ashwin!

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Chapter 178: Element Bath

Alvin saw the Old man looking at him with a set smile while he was sitting comfortably. He quickly greeted, "Craft Elder Lan."

"Hah, Come sit here, it's good to see you again so soon, Alvin!" Lan spoke in his husky voice with a smile on his wrinkled face and pointed at the closet chair with his old finger.

Alvin didn't reject and sat there with a mild smile on his face.

"How was the middle land?" Lan asked in a casual tone.

"Well, it wasn't a trash bin as they said in high-lands." Alvin chuckles with sarcasm.

Alvin and Sofia weren't from middle lands and they come here from the high-level lands just to find the Sky Stealer!

As for why that thief was so important to the organization only grand elders who also called the Flame Masters know.

Characters like Craft or Flame Elders just only know; that thief held very high importance to their organization anyhow.

That's why they send someone like Alvin who had tons of experience in finding people in high-lands and Sofia just tag along so she could reap some benefits after finding that thief.

"Hahaha, I agree with you on this one. When I come here for the first time, my thought process was exactly like you." Lan laugh heartedly.

However, Lan's laugh suddenly stopped and replace it was a grim face, "Do you find that thief? Is it the boy with you?"

Alvin's expression also turn solemn and replied, "No, he's not that thief and I think by the time I reached there he already has been gone. After all, after we post those wanted posters all over the middle-lands that thief would be an idiot to not escape the regal kingdom."

"Sigh..." Lan sighed and said, "You are right, it's like a ghost chase and he didn't appear after that big incident. He's probably laying low for the time being and I don't blame him because if I were him I would enjoy myself with that kind of wealth at my disposal."

Lan's joke in the end.

"Heh, yes, in the end, he's just a kid who somehow stumbled upon an ancient inheritance. It's just a matter of time he makes a mistake after thinking he's invincible." Alvin chuckles coldly.

Lan nodded in agreement with a cold smile, "Yes, so far he's been so careful but the taste of fame and power will blind him, eventually."

"I also encounter Black Reaper from Nightmare Ghosts!" Alvin gravely reported.

"What?! Those ghosts also send someone from the empire!" A hint of a surprise flashed past Lan's old eyes.

"It seemed so and that Old Beast who came here with me is also investigating this matter alone." Alvin nodded.

"I don't know why that thief is so important to every organization and those old fossils didn't even speak a word besides capturing him alive at all cost. But there is defiantly something deep here and to know the truth we needed to capture that thief." Lan pursed his lips.

Alvin grimly nodded in agreement, he also has his doubts about this situation and wanted to know but only Flame Masters knows about the actual play.

"Enough of this, even if you didn't find him, you bring crucial information about the ghosts. We gain something." Lan sighed deeply, "Tell about the boy with you, is he your disciple?"

Lan probe about Finn with a smile.

"No." Alvin mildly shook his head and proceeded, "But if my guess is right, that boy maybe even more important than some petty thief."

Lan eyes narrowed after hearing Alvin's words. He knew Alvin wouldn't have said something like this so casually until he has found something extraordinary about that boy.

Lan said thoughtfully, "I'm listening."

"Does Elder Lan ever hear about Element physiques?" Alvin questioned.

Lan mull over it for a while before answering, "Are you talking about the physique that legend to be rival with ancient hunter's Elemental Bloodlines?"

"Oh, it seemed Elder heard about them." This did not shock Alvin since these elders have access to even more historical records than Flame Generals like himself.

"Yes, my master talks about them once that how I know." Lan nodded with a hint of sentimentality in his eyes.

"Then what if I tell you that boy has this legendary physique!" Alvin solemnly stated.

"Heh, don't joke around Flame General. We both know this was just a legend with no solid evidence whatsoever." Lan didn't believe Alvin so easily.

"I know, it is unlikely and even those records on element bodies are extremely vague but what if I was right? There is no harm in testing it, right?" Alvin speaks in a grave tone.

Lan deeply looked at Alvin and pursed his lips, "Do you know the method of testing element physiques? You just say by yourself there aren't many records on them."

"Yes, but I read these physiques can absorb and reason with the element Qi they have an affinity with. These are the early signs of true element physics awakening. As for the latter, I don't know.

"But I'm sure if we provide the higher-ups with enough evidence then they will look thoroughly in the secret sections of the ancient library which are off-limits to even us. There are bound to be more records on these element physics there. Just think about the boundless rewards we'll get to find this legendary physique!" Alvin's eyes shone with deep enthusiasm as he looked at Lan.

Lan's face also flushed with interest, it would be a lie if Lan say it did not tempt him after hearing Alvin's passionate appeal.

"If you're this confident then this means you know the specific element that boy had, right?" Lan inquiry. He was after all an old fox and by Alvin's confidence, it was clear he has very high expectations for a mere fantasy.

Alvin smiles faintly before saying, "Yes. But I wasn't enough for prof anything and might be harmful to the boy. But we have to be sure so lets me show you just where my confidence came from. However, if this experiment bears even the slightest bit of result, then I need you to concoct 'Wood Element Bath' for the boy."

Lan eyes narrowed and said, "You know just how costly element baths are right?"

"Yes. I know, but it is the only way to make sure that boy has the wood-type element physique. Besides, Elder can always sell that liquid to beast calling and we both know they'll be happy to pay any kind of price for it." Alvin replied.

These Element Baths were simply, pure elements Qi in liquid form and they can only be taken when someone reached the empty river realm to make the foundation sturdier.

Furthermore, this element bath can increase a Qi river cultivator's chances to enter the Qi river core by 10%, and every genius in high-level lands bathed in this liquid when they reached the Qi river realm.

However, the cost was something that only some old clans in high-lands and other two organizations can afford!

Besides, there are only six elements formulas for element bath available and only a Craft Elder can learn them or a Purple rank alchemist, since only they can concoct this element bath.

That's why Alvin came straight to Lan because he was the only one who can create this element bath in the entire middle-level lands and also has the rare materials!

"Fine. But only if you amazed me by whatever you're about to do." Lan sigh and finally agreed.

Alvin was right; Lan can sell this liquid to beast calling if this didn't work.

"But you understand; he'll melt to the last bone and become just an impurity in it if he took that bath in Qi gates realm!" Lan coldly asked.

"Yes, I know very well since I have taken one myself and nearly melted that time. That's why only genius with perfect foundation can handle the potent pure element Qi." Alvin grimaced when he remembered his personal experience.

"Oh, it seemed, it just your way of getting rid of useless trash." Lan smiled coldly, "I like it though."

"Hehe, he just knows too much now, and if he didn't have the element physique, then his talent can't even win him a position in flame guard regiment. So, even becoming an insignificant impurity in an element bath would be his honor." Alvin wore a devilish smile.

"Hahaha, then why are we wasting time? Show me your trick first." Lan grin with his devilish smile.

"Bring the boy!" Lan suddenly muttered to himself.

After a minute the golden door opened again and Finn enter the meeting room.

Ace didn't know what these two discuss alone but when he saw the wrinkled old man's warm smile, for some reason a chill run down his spine!

"This is Elder Lan," Alvin speak when he saw Finn's nervous expression on his face and introduce Lan to Finn.

"Elder Lan, this is the youngster I was just telling you about, his name is Finn." Alvin does the same and introduced Finn to Lan.

However, no one knows in this room that this meeting...!

Eternal Thief

Chapter 179: Understanding The Circumstances

"Junior pay respect to Elder Lan!" Finn quickly greeted Lan.

"Sit!" Lan nodded in approval with a warm smile and order Finn to sit beside Alvin.

Finn didn't dawdle and sat down near Alvin.

Ace deeply measured the old man before him and was astonished because he can't see through this old man's prowess in the slightest!

'These damn concealment treasures!' Ace instantly knew why this was happening and this old man's concealment treasure was far stronger than Black Reaper's.

Ace suddenly felt a strong martial sense locked on to him and finally felt Lan's prowess and received his soul signature!

Ace's heart turn cold because Lan's was far more powerful than Alvin and he was the strongest person he come to contact after Empty Dream, who was unfathomed!

His only comfort was the hundred-face deception mask that he bought just in the nick of time or he would have already been exposed and become a prisoner!

"Not bad for a 3rd Grade Kingdom's boy." Lan coolly said with a smile.

He already carefully examines Finn's foundation and found nothing extraordinary and his doubts regarding Alvin's judgment become deeper. Similarly, for his compliment, that was just a lie.

"Thank you, Elder. I don't deserve your praise." Ace acted like a humble Finn, but he could tell that Lan was lying.

Alvin also notice Lan's slightest change in attitude and knew Lan was doubting him.

Alvin looked at Finn and said, "Finn stand to that corner and I'm going to test you in front of Elder Lan just how I did when we first meet. If you pass, then Elder Lan will reward you!"

Finn's face shone with intense fear and blurted, "B-but I nearly die..."

"I wasn't asking!" Alvin's face fell and rebuke Finn before he could finish his sentence.

'Heh, showing your true colors already.' Ace sneered coldly.

"I'm sorry." Finn timidly apologized and do as he was told.

Ace didn't have any choice since Alvin became restless because of Lan's demeanor.

Lan said nothing and impassively watched.

Alvin didn't delay either and when Finn was in position, with no warning he hurled a strand of element Qi just like last time. However, this time he used five percent of his power!

If this was a real Qi gate cultivator, it'll blow like watermelon the moment it came in contact with his element Qi.

Lan's lips curled upward into a stiff smile and thought, 'He has no intention of sparing the boy if he failed. Heh, as expected of 'his' grandson!'

Ace coldly looked at the incoming streak and thought, 'Let's me see your reactions!'

The moment the green streak landed on Ace's stomach it penetrates his natural defenses like paper and enter his inky meridians.

However, before it could wreak havoc, the dark void slightly revolves, and it instantly absorbed the wood Qi!

Alvin and Lan were expecting some kind of twisted expression from Finn, especially the latter.

However, to both of their shock, even after a couple of moments Finn was completely fine!

Lan stood from his chair and stride to Finn with a startled face.

With no warning, he put a hand on Finn's head and use the martial sense again to see what happened. But to his wonderment, the element Qi has completely disappeared!

"Y-YOU?! What did you do?!" Lan has a flabbergasted looked on his face while asking this question in a shaky voice.

"N.... N-nothing." Finn answers with an innocent yet frightening face.

Alvin trembled slightly before jolt awakened by his daze and laugh out loud, "Hahaha, it's indeed an element physique!"

In his ecstasy, he even yelled the name 'Element Physique' in front of Finn!

'Element Physique?' Ace instantly picked the term, and he knew the gamble he made had paid off just by the look on both Alvin and Lan's faces.

"System do you know about this element physique?" Ace quickly asked the most knowledgeable being he knows, the system.

"Wrong question, tell me what you feel when that Qi hit you?!" Lan took a deep breath to calm his pounding heart. Now even he was sure there is something extraordinary about this boy.

"Umm... I feel just a tingle. Last time it was very painful, though." Finn answered with skepticism.

"[30TP]" The system emotionless voice sounded in Ace's mind at this moment.

"Take them!" Ace quickly agreed since this information was crucial to his next step and determine these two old men's actions, who also seemed frantic right now.

[Thief Point(s): 31,000]

"What did I say, elder?! I indeed found the legendary element physique!" Alvin has also reached Finn's side with a rapture face.

"Hit him again!" Lan inhaled sharply and command Alvin.

"Fine." Alvin knew Lan wanted to see what happened inside Finn's body with his martial sense and he has the same thought.

Now that Finn wasn't hurting anymore this means Alvin can test him in any way he wanted!

Ace did nothing and let them see what happened because he knew they won't be finding the dark void.

One had to know even Empty Dream wasn't able to find it much less these two far weaker than him!

"[Element Physique: Special Physique that can absorb a specific element from world, herbs or alchemist elixirs only, with no tedious processing.]

[Rarity: Uncommon]

[Advantages]

[1: Fast cultivation.]

[2: The ability to comprehend any skill and technique related to the specific element in one-tenth of the time that they normally took.]

[3: Complete comprehension of the specific Law in the fastest time.]

[4: An innate ability.]

[Note: This ability can unlock at random and sometimes the Element Physique's Possessor can't unlock it in its entire lifetime.]

[5: World's protection.]

[Note: The person with World's protection can't die easily and it had higher luck than a normal person!]

[Limitations]

[1: Element Physique is ranked among the lowest physiques between heaven and earth.]

[2: The Possessor is limited to only its specific element and law.]

[3: Skills or Techniques of distinct elements are almost impossible to learn!]

[4: Weakest against the counter elements, likewise strongest against weak elements!]

[Example: Water counter Fire while Wind makes Fire stronger.]

[5: Because of World's protection....]

Before Ace could read this information, Alvin has already ignited another element Qi strand toward him.

But this time both Alvin and Lan were monitoring Finn's foundation with their martial sense.

However, to both of their astonishment, the Qi strand dissolved the next moment after it enter Finn's meridians and none of its trace left!

"How is this possible?!" Lan exclaimed with a bewildered face.

"It seemed it a trait of element physique." Alvin made a wild guess.

Ace on the other hand finally had a chance to read the information and was flabbergasted. Especially when he saw the fifth limitation!

First, Ace never even imagine these kinds of physiques existed and by the system information, it also appeared there were many physiques out there.

In the end, he was just limited by his knowledge and environment.

'So, that why Alvin was so obsessed with me. He thinks I'm a wood-type element physique and took my ability to process the foreign Qi in the wrong way. These two also didn't seem to know; these physiques can't process someone else Qi. Heh, good for me, though.' Ace thought with delight.

Ace finally understood what Alvin was after and why he wasn't killed and the reason for his unusual treatment.

But why he was bought to Lan still wasn't confirmed and his guess was it has to do with the confirmation of his authority as a real element physique and Lan's next words confirmed it.

"Let me test him with my fire Qi to confirm he can only absorb the wood Qi and after that, we'll move to the final test!" Lan solemnly stated.

Alvin agreed without any objection because he knew Lan was just making sure if Finn can only absorb wood elements and he also had this though. But he didn't dare to test it since he didn't know the consequences.

But now that Lan a Purple Alchemist was here Alvin was assured about Finn's safety.

Besides, what are the odds of someone possessing two-element affinity, but it was worth trying, right?

Ace scowled when he saw these two old men were treating him like the wind.

He knew this wasn't good because if he let Dark void do its wonder then it would be difficult to explain; how come he can absorb two elements at the same time.

Furthermore, no one would believe that this was a coincidence that he come in contact with the same elements he had an affinity with both times!

Even though, Alvin and Lan seemed misled by the possibility of a legendary physique appearance.

They would indefinitely notice this strange phenomenon and when they dost Ace knew the situation might take an unexpected turn and it would certainly be not in his favor this time.

Ace take a deep breath and quickly decided what he would do this time!

[Eternal Thief](#)

Chapter 180: Alvin's Plan

Lan didn't ask for Finn's opinion on this and with no hesitation just like Alvin, he hurled a fiery Qi from his finger toward Finn's meridians while using only one percent of his actual prowess.

Although he wanted to confirm Finn's absolute affinity with the wood element, he didn't want to kill him in the process though. Because if he accidentally killed Finn now Alvin would probably fight him to death!

If Finn showed even the slightest discomfort, he'll instantly withdraw the Qi strand!

Ace saw the incoming, fiery Qi streak and thought bitterly, 'And here I thought I didn't have to hurt myself anymore.'

However, before Ace could cause another Qi deviation, his face changed greatly and turn ashen the moment Lan's fire element Qi come in contact with his body!

When the fire Qi enter his meridians, Ace felt like a flame has been ignited inside, and an overwhelming burning sensation wash over his entire body.

The very next moment Ace caught up blood while his face was bloodlessly pale.

"Stop!" Alvin's face change and yelled in panic when he saw Finn's throwing up blood and knelling both on his knees.

Lan didn't delay and quickly withdraw his Qi strand while he mumbles to himself, "He indeed can't absorb other elements."

Alvin had a sigh of relief when he saw Finn was fine and only show lassitude.

'The dark void can't absorb Qi from someone of Lan's level!' Ace's face was ashen when he thought.

It was all happening because the dark void didn't respond to Lan's Qi or even try to absorb it as if it was helpless against it.

Before Ace simply thought dark void can absorb any kind of Martial Qi and he didn't have to be afraid of manifesting Martial Qi anymore. However, now that he found about the dark void limitation, he understands how naïve his thoughts were.

Everything has a limitation and the dark void was also the same. It was limited by Ace's cultivation.

But it was also a good thing because now that he knew about this limitation he'll be more careful when dealing with someone with extremely high cultivation like Lan's.

Because if he was in a battle or other circumstances and arrogantly took this kind of manifest Qi attack lightly, he'll be doomed and dead by now!

'Dark void can only neutralize Qi two large realms below me.' Ace mused grimly.

Nevertheless, he was profited from this since now he knew about this limitation and these two old men also seemed to be convinced; he can't absorb any other element!

"Young Friend Finn, I apologized about what happened earlier and I hope you could understand we're doing this for your good." Lan wore a kind smile and he even change the way he refers to Finn, "Here eat this pill you'll feel well."

Ace grimly looked at the Purple-ranked healing pill that Lan was giving him and he took it. He won't reject free EXP even if he was in a foul mood.

"I understand Elder's concerns and thank you for going easy on me," Finn said faintly and took the purple pill from Lan's, and thanked him weakly.

"Hahaha, good, very good, a wise mind and humble attitude." Lan's laugh heartedly and praise Finn's attitude.

Alvin rolled his eyes and thought, 'This old fox changes his colors even quicker than clothes.' But he never going to say it out loud.

"What do you think Elder? Does he qualify for the final test?" Alvin had a faint smile on his face like a gambler who had just won a big bet.

Lan smile wider and said, "Of course. Give me a day to prepare and in the meantime, you guys can rest. I'm sure you all will be extremely tired especially young friend Finn."

"Thank you, elder." Alvin also had a wide smile on his face.

"Young Friend Finn, wait outside for a moment. I'll have something to talk about with Alvin." Lan gently told Finn.

"Yes." Finn nodded in understanding and leave the room. Now that he had eaten that pill his complexion was somewhat returned to normal.

But the truth was Ace was recovering fast because of his heavenly foundation!

After Finn leave, Lan's smile vanished and a grim expression returned to his face as he looked at smiling Alvin, "You know the consequences, right? If he took that bath and can't handle it he'll die!"

Lan didn't want to throw Finn in that element bath anymore because now even he was fifty percent sure Finn has an element physique. But this element bath was not a laughing matter because there is no returning once you're inside!

Alvin's face was also stiff and said, "I know, but we don't have any other way. Even if he can absorb my wood Qi but it's not normal for someone to absorb already process Qi. Tell me, do you ever heard of this kind of thing before? And we don't know what it does to him if I keep doing it."

Lan eyes twitched because he knew Alvin has a point. He knew it was night impossible to absorb someone's Qi, and they just witnessed something out of their understanding.

"We should probably report this to higher-ups and see what they have to say. Just this ability is enough to make him important even if he didn't have the element physique. Give me one day to contact headquarter." Lan calmly stated his reason for telling them to wait for one day.

Alvin frowned slightly and said, "If we contact now then Flame Master William will get the hold of this information. He's the only Flame Master out of the forbidden ground and you know his nature very well. Once he got the information, we both know there will be no rewards for us if he got hold of Finn.

"So, it would be much wiser to become sure and then report this matter to my father and he'll awake my grandfather. Once he's out the forbidden ground even Flame Master William can't do a thing and we'll get what we deserve.

"But we have to be sure before we contact my father or we'll get killed for awakening an Absolute Flaming Elder!"

Lan's face turned blue to white when he heard Alvin's plan and he exclaimed with horror, "You want to awake an Absolut Flaming Elder?! Are you out of your mind?!"

"Do you have any better idea to bypass Flame Master William? Even my father is helpless against a Flame Master." Alvin grimly questioned.

Lan didn't retort Alvin's because he knew what Alvin just said was the actual truth.

This Flame Master William was infamous for his unfair and greedy nature in the entire pill flame organization that why Alvin was afraid of telling about Finn's or he might lose his real merits.

From the start, he planned to report this to his father so he could get his rightful remunerations.

"Trust me, it's better to kill that boy ourselves than handing him over to William. We're even doing him mercy!" Alvin said with a grave expression.

"Sigh..." Lan sigh in frustration and he knew this was his only choice since he also knew William very well and was also a victim of his unfairness.

"Fine, we'll proceed according to your plan but if William knows I help you in this, then I'll die one way or another. So,...." Lan deeply looked at Alvin.

Alvin know what Lan was asking for and nodded without a second thought before saying, "Don't worry, once we confirmed this you'll be under Elias Clan's protection."

"Hahaha, then we have a deal." Lan smile with ecstasy. He knew Elias Clan's strength and what their protection means!

"I'll summon you with Finn in the first light of morning. The sooner we do this the better." Lan solemnly affirmed.

"I completely agreed with Elder." Alvin nodded in agreement, "I'll be waiting for your words."

"Go, I'll have someone to escort you to your quarters and make sure Finn boy don't wander outside or speak with anyone," Lan warned.

"Don't worry about him." Alvin coolly said and leave the meeting room.

Now Lan was alone in the grand meeting room.

Lan suddenly murmured to himself, "What should I do?" A peculiar glint flickered past Lan's old eyes.

Meanwhile, somewhere in the 1st Grand-lands of middle-level lands.

Inside a luxurious chamber, a handsome young man wearing lavishing blue robes seemingly in his twenties was standing in front of an open window watching the golden sky like a peaceful statue. He has

a 6-feet tall, tone-built, with long black hair, and his pale face was very handsome. His brown eyes were full of vigor.

Behind him were kneeling five black-cloaked figures waiting for the young man to speak.

"Where is that thief?" The young man finally spoke in his vigorous voice.

"That thief didn't appear again for almost five months and from our spies we heard the Flame General of Pill Flame also leave that kingdom a month.." One of the clacked fingers answered respectfully.