

Reincarnated as an Energy with a System

Chapter 421: Gem

Wake up in the morning. Go to the zoo at 10 o'clock. Work for another 10 hours. Go back to the hotel room. Sleep.

That was Ning's schedule for the last 5 days. Ever since landing the job, that was what he had been doing all the week.

The part-time job was changed to a full-time one when the zookeepers realized how good Ning was with the beasts.

He was even given a higher-paying salary. A total of 120 Sils in a week. Quite low for someone like Ning, but again, he wasn't here for the money.

Ning was happy taking care of the Aether beasts, he had come to surprisingly realize that there weren't many other beasts out there. Especially in the wild.

Up until then, he had only learned about very few domestic beasts that were used for everything from food to clothing to other necessary products. These beasts weren't something Ning had learned about before like Cow, or Goats.

They were something completely different, and of course, the Zoo wouldn't keep something so common there.

The Xanders Imperial Zoo was established over 120 years ago when the previous emperor still ruled. The beasts that were brought there were children of the beasts they killed in that war. They were the spoils of war.

Some of those beasts had children, other beasts were added later on. That was how the imperial zoo was able to keep itself afloat during all these times.

After the war with the Aether beasts was over, the beasts were hard to see in the forest in the east. That was the reason so many people came there every day to see the Aether beasts.

This was the only way for most people.

Ning walked into a room that held a snake-like Aether beast in it. This beast was one of the only beasts in the entire zoo that never responded to Ning, no matter what he had said.

It would just calmly come to him and eat what was given. Ning walked inside with chopped-up pieces of meat in hand and put them on grass inside.

He waited for the beast to come and eat. He waited for a while. However, no beast came to eat it.

The snake-like beast lived on top of the branches in the tree that was planted inside. The ceiling was a metal cage that let enough sunlight into the room.

Ning could see the beast sleeping on top of the branch and called to it. "Come on down, the food is here."

However, the beast didn't respond at all. Ning called out a few more times before he realized something was wrong.

He walked up to the tree and knocked on it. Seeing no response, he used his magnification skill to look closely at the beast on top.

Something was different about the beast today. It took a while, but Ning realized what it was.

'It's not glowing,' he thought. The lightning-like scars which would usually pulse with a purple glow were nowhere to be seen today.

"Doesn't that mean...?"

Ning looked towards the glass window at the many people that were waiting for the beast to come down and eat its food.

Ning sighed. He had to call the person in charge.

The old man from before came upon his request and ordered someone to check up on the beast.

As Ning expected, It was dead.

"Sigh, it's not your fault. This was just an old beast," the old man said to Ning, just in case he would place the blame on himself.

Ning nodded.

"Can you go get some people to come to carry this beast for me please?" the old man asked.

"Okay," Ning said and left. He could carry the beast all by himself, even just by using Aether as well. However, he didn't want to show something so shocking in front of so many people.

He called a few people and they arrived to take the beast. Ning lent them a hand. He wasn't sure what was to be done with a dead Aether beast. He hadn't seen one die before this. So, he was quite curious.

The old man made the people carry the beast to a separate room that was not allowed for normal visitors to come to.

He then went out for a few minutes. After he returned, there was a man with an apron that walked in.

"Let's begin," the old man said.

The man with the apron brought out a giant weapon and without any notice started chopping the snake-like beast.

Ning was a little shocked. This was not what he had been expecting. The butcher kept on chopping with no hesitation around the neck of the beast, looking for something.

Ning walked up to the old man and asked, "Sir, what is going on? Are we selling Aether beast meat on the side or what?"

"What?" the old man looked surprised. Then, he immediately burst out laughing as he had never before.

"Hahaha, no," the old man said. "This is just a rule placed on the zoo by Emperor Kron."

"A... rule?" Ning asked.

"Yes. The emperor really didn't like beasts I guess. Whenever one in the zoo died, it was to be butchered and its gem sent to the palace," the old man said.

"Gem?"

Just as Ning asked that the butcher reached into the freshly cut meat and pulled out a spherical, black and purple, glowing rock the size of a human eye. It was rugged and nonuniform in shape, but as the man called it, it was definitely a gem.

"A monster core?" Ning softly spoke to himself. He didn't realize that Aether beasts even had cores, or as these people called it, Gem.

'I really don't know much about them, do I?' Ning thought. He planned on learning them sometime in the future.

Just then, the door behind them opened and a figure walked in, fully dressed in perfectly ironed suit and pants.

Ning recognized the man and was surprised. The old man saw and recognized him too.

"Mister Ning, I didn't expect to see you here."

Ning replied, "I didn't expect to see you here either, Mister Tim."

Chapter 422: Learning About The Aether Beasts

"I thought you were a bodyguard, Mr. Ning. I didn't expect to see you working in a zoo," the old man Tim said.

"Oh, I do whatever I want, Mister Tim. I was a doctor before coming here. I became a bodyguard just for a bit. Now I'm working in a zoo," Ning said. "Don't worry though, this is just a part-time job. I have enrolled in the Aether Tower, so soon I will graduate and get certified. Surely you won't reject me when I come there then, right?"

"Oh," the old man was surprised. "Did you really enroll in the tower?"

"Yes," Ning said. "I start my studies in 2 weeks."

"Great," the old man seemed genuinely happy for Ning. "What about the admission payment? Do you need help with that? I know the tower asks for a lot, one of their ways to force someone to work for them in long term."

"Thanks for the concern, but I don't need any help at the moment," Ning said.

"Alright, I will pass on the good news to the Princess and the Prince consort then. Good meeting you, Mr. Ning," the old man said and walked away.

He then took the rugged Gem from the butcher, inspected it for a bit, nodded, and then left.

"Young man, are you really enrolled in the Tower?" the zoo's old man asked him.

"Ah yes," Ning said. "That was the reason why I only wanted to work for 3 weeks."

"I see," the old man said. "We would've loved to keep you for longer, but it seems the next 2 weeks is all we have."

"I would've loved to stay as well given how well you've treated me, but I need to further my Aether studies," Ning said.

"No, no, you don't have to explain. I understand completely. I was once a youth too, I too wanted to learn in the tower as well," the old man said.

Ning nodded and looked to the side. The butchered beast was still there. "What will you do with the parts?" he asked.

"Oh, we'll send them to experts who can make use of these beasts. They usually get turned to clothes or weapons or whatnot. I leave the worrying to them," the old man said.

"Alright everyone, return to work," the old man said and walked out.

Ning looked back one more time at the dead beast and walked out. The rest of the day went normally. A dead Aether beast didn't really cause a scene or slowed down the visits to the zoo at all.

Once the day was over, Ning returned back to the hotel. He immediately made the system buy him a few pieces of information on Aether beasts since he didn't know a lot about them.

What he learned gave him a fair bit of surprise.

Aether beasts came in every shape and size. From small creatures the size of rats to big ones the size of elephants, and everything in between existed.

The Aether beasts could only be found in the massive forest that separated half the continent. The other forests all around the world didn't contain them at all. That was to say that in most of the world, aside from Xandria, the Republic of Ember, The Principality of Losmana, and the Ruins of Afterlife, no other countries and empires had to worry about them at all.

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Of course, there were also the Aether beasts in the ocean that many of the places bordered, however, the Ocean Aether beasts never left their place, so the people had nothing to worry about.

Another thing Ning learned about the Aether beasts was that they had no abilities at all. That was surprising to him. Considering he had been with beasts that could cultivate the same way humans did, it was surprising that these beasts were not the same.

Instead, Aether beasts were physically gifted. An Aether beast's body couldn't be so easily harmed. They had a superior body that also had enhanced speed, defense as well as reaction speed.

Fighting against an Aether beast as anything less than an Aether grandmaster who could enchant his own body to improve their physical status was a death wish.

"Would weapons work?" Ning wondered. From what he just learned, normal weapons like swords, spears, bows, and arrows would surely not work at all. Even something like a gun would barely do any damage to Aether beasts.

If anything, you wanted heavy artillery, the kind that could put holes in a steel door, destroy bunkers. Maybe even get a few bombs. Only those should be sufficient enough to deal damage to these Aether beasts.

However, the planet Vilmore wasn't at that time period yet. It would still take them a while to create such strong weapons, Ning was sure of that.

"So only Aether users can truly fight against them huh?" Ning wondered. Suddenly, his face changed to one of confusion as he thought of something weird.

"Didn't Emperor Kron fight against the beasts with just a sword? How did he do that? Did he have his weapons enchanted? That would take the constant attention of some Aether users," Ning thought. This was a really curious thing of the past that he had come across.

"Wait, maybe he was an Aether Grandmaster. He could definitely fight them if he was one," Ning thought.

"System, was Emperor Kron an Aether Grandmaster?" Ning asked. He had learned that the Emperor didn't have talent in Aether, but even without it, being an Emperor, he surely had found Aether Ores or Liquid Aether to improve himself to the most basic level.

<Yes>

"Ah, that answers it," Ning thought. He stopped thinking about the emperor and went on to learn more about the beasts.

The beasts were all similar in nature as they held an Aether Gem on their neck area that strengthened their entire body.

The gems usually had to be large, so Aether bugs didn't exist in the world. There were only normal bugs.

Ning read about the beasts for a bit longer and was finally done with them.

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A few days passed. Ning was working in the zoo once again. His job was still the most important of all— Tending to the food of the beasts. By now, everyone in the zoo had come to realize that the new recruit was loved, or at least not hated, by the beasts.

Some became jealous since Ning earned a lot more now, some became thankful since they didn't have to be the ones to confront a hungry Aether beast. Most however didn't really care about Ning at all as they didn't pay attention to him mostly.

He opened a door and walked in to feed a monkey-like Aether beast. Once he was done, he walked out to see the group of visitors that were looking at the monkey.

Ning walked away from the room and went to get the food for the next beast. Along the way, he saw a group of visitors part ways as fully suited up people walked left and right of a black-haired man.

Ning too moved to the side and let them pass. 'Some son of a noble?' Ning wondered for a bit and went back to his own task.

"Hey, brother Ning, how's your day going?" one of the staff members asked. The kid who had just called out to him was a new staff that joined just 2 days ago and was meant to replace Ning once he left in a week.

He was about 15 years old from Ning's perspective and was really eager to be earning some money.

"Oh, Hi Mark. I'm doing okay, how's your day going? Are you accustomed to feeding the beasts yet?" Ning asked.

"Uhh... I wouldn't say that. I still get terrified when I get near those beasts," Mark said.

"Well, you gotta learn to tame in your fear kid. The ones you are feeding are the dull ones, known to never hurt anyone. If you cower in front of these other vicious beasts, they won't let you go in and out so easily," Ning said.

Mark's face paled a little. He was scared of what he was to do.

"Don't worry, there's a trick," Ning said.

Mark's eyes perked up. "What trick?" he asked.

"When you go in, act like you are strong. Don't cower, don't hideaway. Look straight at the beasts and let them know the food is here."

"Make sure you don't intimidate them too bad though. Some of them will think they are in danger and instead attack you. Just let them know that you aren't afraid, but you aren't a threat either."

"That's how I mostly do it," Ning said. "Despite how they look, Aether beasts are intelligent creatures that will know when to not try to harm someone for their own safety."

"Oh," Mark said as he nodded. "I will keep that in mind, brother Ning. Thank you." The youth was enthusiastic about working in the zoo now.

Ning didn't lie or anything. This was something he had learned from the system as well as just being here.

If one wasn't scared of the beasts, the beasts would assume they have the strength to match that confidence and leave you alone.

The boy named Mark was about to leave the room when a man entered. Ning and Mark looked at the plainly dressed man and didn't recognize them at all.

Whoever he was, given that he wasn't wearing the zoo staff's uniform, he was not welcome here.

"Sir, you will have to leave this—" Mark was just speaking when the man brought out a gun and pointed at the two of them.

"Remove your uniforms right now, or I will kill you," the man spoke.

Chapter 423: Hostage Situation

The short man with the mustache didn't look particularly threatening, but the gun in his hands said otherwise.

Mark, who was standing next to Ning immediately started cowering at the sight of the gun. He didn't know what was happening, but all he knew was that he didn't want to die.

"Do-Don't kill me, please," the young man said with his hands in the air

"Shut up and take off your clothes now," the man said.

Ning scratched his chin as he wondered with a weird face, 'Surely this guy doesn't like young men right? That shouldn't be true.'

"What are you looking at? Hurry up!" the man shouted.

"Woah dude, chill," Ning said.

"Brother Ning, what are you doing?" Mark was terrified. Seeing Ning not do what the man was saying, he thought he could see death approaching.

"Don't worry," Ning said. Suddenly, the gun in the man's hand moved. The metal gun was crushed by something invisible and deformed to a point where it was unusable.

"What?" the man cried out in surprise.

"Yeah, that's what you get for trying to rob us," Ning said and walked up to the man.

"Don't come close—"

SLAP

Ning slapped the man and made him drop onto the ground. The man felt his cheeks burn from the pain and started tearing up.

Ning crouched and placed his hands on his head.

"Stop crying," Ning said. The man did what he said. "Who are you? And why are you here?" Ning asked.

"I am Gregory Jewels, Master," the man said. "I am here to take someone hostage."

"Take someone hostage?" Ning was surprised. He turned around to look at Mark. "You're here for him?" Ning asked.

The man turned to look at Mark and said, "I don't know who that is. We are not here for him."

"Who then?"

"We are here to capture prince Felix," the man said.

"Prince? There's a prince here?" Ning questioned. Just then, he remembered the young man that had 4 or so bodyguards around him.

'Could it be him?' he wondered. 'But he had black hair. I don't see how that prince could be significant to the kingdom at all? I guess he would still be a prince in the end, regardless of his hair color.'

"Prince Felix, that's the firstborn of the Emperor, right?" Ning asked. The man nodded.

"Yes, Master," the man said.

"You guys think you can bypass his bodyguard? He's a prince you know. His bodyguards shouldn't be normal people," Ning said.

"No, master," the man said. "Prince Felix might be the firstborn, but he doesn't have as much importance in the empire as the 2nd or the 5th prince. The guards he gets aren't comparable to those two."

"Also Prince Felix is a person who stupidly takes pride in his weak Aether powers, so he doesn't keep strong guards around him, or so we've heard," the man said. "That makes it easier to get close to him."

"Mmm, I don't know. Still sounds impossible given that the guards would have been chosen by mister Tim, and he wouldn't let just anyone be a guard for the prince," Ning said.

"We have strong people too, master," the man said.

"Oh," Ning said with a surprised face. "How strong?"

"We have 12 Aether Grandmaster, 3 Aether Magister, and..." the man took a long pause before he said, "1 Aether King."

Ning's eyes turned solemn. An Aether King was a strong individual that could probably take on their entire guards.

"Hmm, if this is true then guards would be in danger now," Ning said softly.

"They won't be in danger, master," the man said. "They already are in danger."

"Hmm... what do you mean?" Ning asked.

"2 of the prince's guards were already killed before he even came to the zoo and replaced with 2 of our Aether Magisters. Once we take control of the Zoo, they will reveal themselves and handle the remaining 2 guards," the man said.

"Take control of the zoo?" Ning asked in surprise.

'Shit! Their plan wasn't just to kidnap the prince, it was to take hostage of everyone in the zoo,' Ning thought.

Suddenly, Ning saw something move behind him. A mop came right for him and hit him on the back of the head.

Ning was pushed forward and he got angry. He immediately turned around to see Mark holding the mop.

"What the hell are you doing?" he asked angrily.

"Yo-You! You are with these bad guys, aren't you?" Mark asked.

"What?" Ning asked angrily. "Didn't you see me beat him? Didn't you see you interrogating him?"

"Y-yeah, I did," Mark said. "But I also heard him call you Master. You must've planned this."

Ning was about to get angry again when he realized what had happened. "Sigh, how do I explain this?" Ning thought. There was no explanation he could give that would make sense for a criminal to call him Master, and him not be the bad guy here.

"Screw it," Ning thought and stood up. He grabbed the mop that Mark attacked with again and threw it to the side. He then grabbed Mark's head but didn't use Supreme Domination. He didn't want a loyal servant out of this young man.

Instead, he asked the system, "Erase the last 5 minutes from this kid's mind."

<Confirmed>

A slight glow appeared beneath his hands that disappeared just as quickly. The youth involuntarily closed his eyes and opened it back up again.

"What... huh?" he was super confused.

"Mark, are you okay? Are you alright?" Ning asked as he violently shook his body.

"What... what's going on?" he asked.

"Ah, thank god you're okay. You just fainted when you saw this guy point a gun at you. Be careful, he's a kidnapper. Hide in this room, I will go out and take care of them, okay?" Ning asked.

This was way too much information for Mark to handle at once. "Huh? What?" he asked.

Ning grabbed the man by the collar and pulled him up. "Just stay here, and hide. I will come to get you later on okay?"

With that, Ning left with the man and walked out.

Chapter 424: Fighting An Aether Magister

"Go to the authorities and tell them what you and your group are going to do here. Confess your crimes," Ning said.

"Yes, master," the man said and walked away.

"Alright, since the prince is in trouble, let's go save him. That will hopefully get me on better terms with the royal family," Ning thought.

Just then, Ning heard something through the speakers that were laid all over the Zoo.

"Attention Everyone! We are the Great Raiders group, and we have taken over the zoo. Any attempts at running away or fighting back will get you killed. This is not a joke."

The man spoke no further. He was on the point and short. Ning continued walking after hearing that and saw people along the way.

There was a group of people huddled on the floor next to a giant glass window. In front of them was a man with a gun.

When he saw Ning, the man didn't attack. Instead, he looked at him first. Ning looked at him as well.

'Did he get the zoo staff's uniform from someplace else too?' Ning wondered when he saw the man's clothes.

It took the man almost 5 seconds before he realized he wasn't looking at his ally. This was someone he didn't know, an actual staff.

"Hands in the air," the man shouted as he pointed his guns towards Ning. The people on the floor made wimping noises.

Ning looked at the man carefully and used Aether Analysis on him. 'Aether Starter? Not even an Aether Student?' he thought in surprise and confusion.

'Shit! There must be way more people than just the 16 that guy mentioned. There should be a lot of henchmen for the lower-end work,' Ning thought. The situation was a bit more dangerous than he had at first expected it to be.

"I said—"

The man was about to say something when he felt a force tug on his body. He slammed against the wall opposite the glass and dropped to the ground.

Ning walked up and grabbed his gun. Then he looked towards the huddled-up people and asked, "Are you guys okay?"

The people were so scared that they couldn't even speak. One of the kids in the group finally gathered up some courage and said, "Yes, we are fine."

"Alright, sit here and don't go anywhere. There are a lot more bad guys and since they should be wearing Zoo staff's clothes, you can't tell them apart. Although, they shouldn't hurt you as long as you don't move or act stupid, okay?" Ning said.

The people there nodded.

Ning nodded back at them. He tied up the terrorist and left the place. Along the way, he found another few people in the same situation. He saved them too.

'Geez, this is starting to remind me what happened back in the Five Professions academy,' he thought. 'I hope it's not a similar situation as back then.'

After a few minutes of taking care of the terrorists, Ning came across the first bigshot of the group. It only took him a single Aether Analysis to realize that he was an Aether Magister, a step above Aether Grandmaster, and was an Invoker at that.

'This should be one of the 3,' Ning thought. He was curious how Invokers fought in this world now. He hadn't met a lot of them.

Ning realized that the man was in charge of stopping the guards of the zoo. The guards were huddled up in a corner, covered in some sort of slime that was making it impossible for them to move out of.

"Who are you?" the man asked the moment he took notice of Ning. Not for a second, he thought that he could be their men.

'This is a clever one,' Ning thought.

The man immediately took out a gun and pointed at Ning. 'Eh? He's not going to use Aether?' he thought.

BANG

Without any notice, the man shot Ning. Ning immediately twisted his body to get out of the bullet's way, but the bullet still grazed his arm.

"Dammit!" he cried and glared at the man. When he did, he noticed that the man already had the next shot ready.

BANG

Ning jumped out of the way to dodge the bullet, and when he looked up, it was time to dodge once more.

BANG BANG BANG BANG

Four more shots came one after another, all shooting at Ning with the intention to kill. This man didn't care about keeping hostages for his demands at all. He was ready to kill anyone that posed the slightest threat to his plans.

"Goddammit! I will kill you," Ning shouted at him while holding his left shoulder where one of the four shots had landed.

'6 shots done, that should be—'

The man cocked his gun again and pointed at Ning. Ning's eyes went wide.

BANG

The man shot for the 7th time, using a gun that could only hold 6 bullets in total. Ning was caught off guard and got hit right in the legs.

Then the man cocked his gun again and pointed. Ning wasn't going to let him shoot this time.

Ning swiped his hands and even as he did, the man shot. The aim was already off due to Ning's interference, but the fact that a bullet even escaped through the nuzzle surprised him.

'He's creating bullets directly into the gun,' he thought. That was not very different from creating arrows to shoot with a bow, but the composition of a bullet was far different than that of an arrow.

The fact that this man was creating them so effortlessly was not only because he was used to it, but also because he had the talent for it.

'I need to stop him now,' Ning thought and immediately forced the man's arms to straighten up sideways like he was ready for a hug.

The man showed no reaction and simply did something, however, it didn't work. Finally, the man's face changed. It went from confusion to worry in very quick succession.

"What... What's going on? Why can't I feel your enchantment?" the man cried out.

Ning let the bullets in his body fall to the ground and stood up with a fully healed body.

The man was about to question what was happening once more, but Ning didn't let him.. Instead, he slammed the man to the side of the wall as well and dropped him unconscious.

Chapter 425: Scar Faced Leader

'That was an Aether Magister? He was so easy to fight against,' Ning thought. Being a magister, Ning would've thought that he would've had more tricks up his sleeve, but it seemed that being an invoker really wasn't that useful in such fierce combat after all.

'I guess invokers are only useful in other sectors where they don't have to rely on creating something to fight,' Ning thought.

He walked over to the guards that lay unconscious, covered in some sort of slimy substance. The clear slime was sticky in texture, but it didn't really stick to his hands as he expected it to. It worked more like tape, rather than glue.

'Did that guy make this? How did he imagine something like this?' Ning wondered.

Ning couldn't pull it out with his hands, so he had to use telekinesis to pull it all out. Due to the massive area, the sticky slime was covering, it took Ning a lot of force to fully pull it out.

"Hey, wake up!" he lightly slapped the faces of those guards who struggled to open their eyes. They had been barely breathing under the massive slime, so it was understandable.

After a few slaps, with red cheeks, the guards opened their eyes.

"Wha—" they looked around and saw the terrorist unconscious on the ground. "That bastard, he surrounded us with his men and... and... what happened after that?"

The men were confused.

"You guys, capture him and don't let him wake up. There are still terrorists around, so go capture those as well," Ning said. He explained a bit more about the situation so that the guards were up to date on it.

The guards were hesitant about letting Ning do it all by himself since that hurt their pride and reputation as a guard, but seeing an Aether Magister unconscious right now, they had to swallow their pride and accept that they would only hold Ning back.

These guards consisted of some Aether masters and grandmasters, so they would be able to handle most of the terrorists.

They would only face trouble if they came across a group of Aether Grandmasters, or the stronger terrorists, but given that the terrorist's main objective was the prince, Ning

was sure that if the guards didn't come across them as he had explained to them, they should be fine.

Once done, Ning watched the guards leave. Now, he needed to locate the prince and help him.

'System, where is the prince right now?' he asked.

<The Junction>

"I see," Ning thought and walked off.

The junction was a resting area at the center of the zoo. The zoo itself was circular in shape. People entered from the gate, took a left, and went around the place as they looked at the various Aether beasts.

They would walk around until they went a full circle and returned back to the gate once more, whereupon they would leave.

At the center of the circle was a massive open space with no beasts at all, where people could rest and enjoy their free time.

There would usually be a lot of people at the place, so Ning got a little worried if something happened to them.

'I need to hurry,' he thought and walked off. He walked out of the circular building and into the open sky. There were a bit more buildings around the place before he reached the junction.

Ning quickly got rid of a few more terrorists who were keeping a few of the civilians hostage and sent them back towards the outer ring of the zoo where he knew there were no terrorists.

Ning hid behind a building and slowly peeked out to check the situation.

Sitting on the bench in the middle was the black-haired prince. Next to him were two of his black-suited guards, while the other two were on the ground beside him.

The prince had a serious look on his face, maybe even a hint of anger, but thankfully he wasn't acting upon his anger and the situation was still fine.

Ning poked out his head a little further and saw a few more people standing beneath a tree's shade.

'More terrorists?' he thought. This was going to be troublesome. It was obvious that the two guards next to him were the two Aether Magisters that the other terrorist had told him about.

Still, Ning used his Aether Analysis to check. As expected, there were 2 Aether Magisters and 6 Aether Grandmasters at the place. Both of the Magisters were Enchanters too, so he wouldn't be able to win as easily as against the Invoker.

Ning was having a hard time figuring out how he could save the prince without revealing his abilities. Maybe he might have to after all.

Just then a man in a gray overcoat walked towards the prince. The prince noticed his arrival but said nothing.

The man had a large scar running across his face all the way from his right eye to the left of his lips. Half his nose was gone and instead, there were only two irregular-sized holes instead.

The man flicked his fingers and suddenly a seat that was far away from him arrived right behind him and he sat.

'Another Enchanter,' Ning thought.

The man took out a pack of cigarettes from his coat and looked at one of the Invoker grandmasters who quickly walked up to him and lit up his cigarette.

"Your highness, do you know who we are?" the man spoke to the prince.

"Who the hell are you people? I have been asking this since forever, and now you come to mock me with this same question?" the prince shouted angrily.

"Oh, my apologies," the man said. "I asked my comrades here not to interact with you more than what was necessary, so they might have offended you a bit," the man said.

"We are the Great Raiders group. You can... think of us as thieves or more accurately, bandits I suppose. We usually stick to the roads and steal whatever walks upon it... but we were paid a hefty sum of money to kidnap you," the man spoke as he took a drag of his cigarette.

"Do you know why?" he asked.

Chapter 426: Monologue

"What? Why the hell would I know?" the prince asked. "Look, you might not be educated and not know much about the empire. You might have just come here and kidnapped me because you thought as the first prince, I am very important to you."

"But I'm not okay? I am just—"

"Ssshhh!" the man put a finger in front of the prince's face and shut him up. "We know who you are, Prince Felix. We know what your place in the royal family is as well."

"In terms of importance, you would be the fourth most important child of the emperor, we do know that. We also know that a father never truly loves his children based on their merits, so he will do anything to save you," the man said.

"Wha— What do you want?" the prince's face got serious.

"Hmm... we came across a special tidbit about the zoo from someone. Do you know what it was?" the man asked.

"Wh-what are you talking about?" the prince asked.

"I would be surprised if you don't know this since this is just simple information that even we learned about it," the man said.

"I know this? What do I know?" the prince impatiently asked. The terrorist wasn't getting to the point fast enough and that was making him angry.

"Don't worry, I am explaining, aren't I?" the terrorist said as he made a hand gesture that said everything was okay.

"You see, apparently, when Aether Beasts die in this place, their Gems are handed to the royal place. You did know that right?" the terrorist asked.

"What? Of course, I knew that. Everyone knows that in our family. What's so important about this information" the prince asked furiously. He wasn't happy that he was being asked such simple stuff.

"Well, do you know what's so important about Aether beast's gem? Why your family collects them?" the terrorist asked with a sinister smile.

The prince looked confused. "They have no point. My family only gathers them because my grandfather hated those beasts and wanted to eradicate their kind. He wanted the deaths of these beasts to be something everyone learned about in the family, so he made sure that after every single beast's death, its gem was sent to the palace in full glory."

"The glory ended after grandfather's death, and the transport of the gem became not important. That's all," the prince said.

The terrorist didn't speak and only smiled at the prince, making him more uncomfortable.

"What?" the prince asked as his face changed from confusion to curiosity. "What? Do you know something about the gems that we do not?"

"Hahaha, good job on trying to get me to answer your questions, but don't worry, I'm not so easily manipulated. But god, you sure do know how to turn every answer into a question, don't you? Is that something that they teach you in the royal palace?" the man asked.

The prince stayed quiet and didn't say anything. "So? Are you not going to answer me?" he asked.

"Unfortunately, I was not asking you to see if you were also aware of something, but rather if you knew something we didn't," the man said. "You see, we were tasked to get the gems by our boss, but we too don't know what's it's all about."

"We are also curious what all of this is all about. Why anyone would need gems of those stupid animals anyway, but... hey, it's our boss so we can't really disobey him. Besides, I hear we are getting paid a hefty sum for this simple job, so we can't complain either," the man said.

"What your boss?" the prince looked surprised. "You are not the head of this operation?"

"Oh no, I am the head of this operation, yes. But our group is a lot bigger than just us few, " the terrorist said. "Haha, don't bother asking any more questions. I am not going to answer any of them after all. You can't make me jeopardize our group's safe from just a couple of questions."

The prince kept quiet and looked angrily at the man with the scar. "Sir, he is looking at you quite disrespectfully. You should teach him a few lessons so he knows to respect you," a man walked up to the scar-faced leader and tried to get on his good side by suggesting some things.

"You idiot. Do you think we will get to leave freely after hitting a prince? Just taking him hostage has already made us public enemy number 1. Not to mention we have taken so many other people hostage as well," the leader said.

"Just sit tight and wait," he ordered. He took another drag of his cigarette and blew out the smoke.

"We have already contacted the royal family, your highness, so you won't have to wait here for long. Anytime now, they will come here with the gems and we will be out of your hair before you know it."

"Until then, if you want to talk about anything, I can accompany you. Just... don't try to be smart and use that Aether of yours."

"Yes, I know you are an Invoker, an Aether Magister at that. But you should know you won't be able to beat all of us, especially since the 3 of us are Enchanters," the leader said.

The other two 'guards' walked forwards and smiled at the prince. "So, just sit tight and wait for until—"

The leader stopped speaking when he saw a human head quickly back away from behind the building it was peeking from.

"It seems someone is here already, prince. Hopefully, it's someone to present to us the Gems... or else, we might have to kill that person."

Ning had focused too much on the conversation between the leader and the prince and forgot that he was hiding at the moment.

'Shit!' He thought. 'I guess I will have to fight now.'

He had nothing prepared, but he had no choice.. So, he openly walked out from behind the building and started walking towards the group of terrorists.

Chapter 427: Fighting An Aether King

Ning walked out from behind the building and looked at the terrorists.

"A kid?" one of them looked at him in surprise.

"Looks like the staff. How are those incompetent buffoons failing to keep a single young man in check?" one of the terrorists said.

"What do we do now, boss?" another one asked.

The scar-faced boss looked at Ning and frowned. "Are you one of the staff, boy?" he asked.

Ning found an opportunity, so he decided to take it. "Yes! Yes! I'm a zoo staff. Do you guys know what is happening around here? I was at the toilet and when I came out, it was like the zoo was closed," Ning said.

Getting closer, Ning could see the more distinct features of the boss. The gray hairs on his head, the patches of skin where he had no hair on his neck, as well as the grayed-out right eye where the scar was.

"Tsk, it's just a kid who went to shit at the wrong time. Hey you, send him to one of the others and make him stay there," one of the magisters ordered the other terrorists.

"You fucking idiot," the boss suddenly shouted.

The magister jumped a little when he heard his boss's voice. "What's wrong, boss?" he asked.

"What's wrong?" the scars on the man's face twitched. "Do you think that's just any kid? He clearly knows what's up and has been secretly listening to our conversation for the last couple of minutes probably."

"Not to mention, he said he walked here all the way from the toilet. Where do you think a staff member's first place to go is when they notice something weird?" the boss asked.

The other terrorists realized that something was wrong.

"Besides, him walking here without being noticed by anyone... that's just impossible. Get on guard, he's probably a fighter," the leader said.

Ning's facial expression immediately changed from that of someone confused to that of someone impressed.

"You have a good head on your shoulders. Shame it looks so ugly though," Ning said.

Suddenly, all the people around the leader brought out their guns and pointed them at Ning.

"Wh-Wha-What are you doing? Are you going to kill a kid?" the prince started freaking out.

"Calm down, your highness. Just close your eyes— it will be pretty quick," the scar-faced leader said. He then turned around to Ning and said, "I would've just captured you and kept you with the other hostages, but... you, you talked about my scar, teased it even."

"Unfortunately for you, I don't let anyone who talks about my scar, live," the leader said.

Unlike the other subordinates, the boss didn't bring out any guns. Instead, he simply moved his fingers.

Ning was fully focused on the boss at the moment, so he didn't notice what was happening around him fast enough.

Two benches that were laid around the junction came flying directly at Ning. He barely noticed it at the last moment and immediately ducked. The two benches hit each other, but they remained floating.

"Shit!" Ning thought and rolled out of the way before the boss dropped it where Ning was with a heavy force.

The benches were made up of metal, but even then they didn't survive the damage they were taking and were completely deformed.

That didn't mean they were any less dangerous. In fact, the jagged, crumbled metal was starting to look far more dangerous to be around.

Ning immediately stood up and saw the two crumbled benches coming flying towards him. This time, he didn't dodge. He put out his hands and stopped the benches mid-air.

The leader's facial expression changed when he saw that. He could feel a force acting on top of his own force, pushing it in the opposite direction.

'Not bad,' he thought when he realized that the young man in front of him was almost as strong as him. However, the boss had barely been using any of his powers.

Suddenly, the force behind the benches increased as Ning barely managed to react in time. The benches moved a little bit towards himself before he stopped it from moving.

The boss could feel the increase in force once again. 'This kid...' He was starting to realize how much of a trouble Ning was.

The subordinates looked back and forth and were wondering why the boss was playing with the kid. He was never the type to do so.

The boss increased his force behind the benches once again, but Ning was ready to counteract it.

The boss's eyes changed as he realized that Ning was a real threat. He then put all he could muster into the benches and pushed on it as hard as he could.

However, he couldn't move it one bit. He, an Aether King, was losing in a match of enchanting against a kid who worked in a zoo.

His pride was starting to be destroyed. However, he was never a person to act on his pride or his anger. He had a short temper, but he wasn't impulsive.

He didn't let the fact that he was losing get to his head and ruin the mission. The job came before him.

"Shoot him!" the boss suddenly said.

"What?" the subordinates were surprised.

"Shoot him!" the boss repeated.

"But, you are atta—"

"SHOOT HIM!!!"

The subordinates got scared and immediately cocked their gun and pointed at Ning.

"Shit!" Ning realized he was in some trouble. He immediately added more energy to his telekinesis and ripped the benches away from the boss's control.

The men started shooting just then, and Ning used the benches as a barrier between him and the bullets. He had an actual barrier he put behind the benches, but it was daytime and hard to see.

The bullets rang all around as they hit the metal bench and made a loud noise. The prince was already looking away as he believed Ning would be dead by now.

However, not a single of those bullets even hit Ning.

Chapter 428: Imagine

The bullets kept on coming. Even after it should have ended by now, the bullets kept on getting fired.

'Damn those Invokers,' Ning thought. Between the loud noises and the bright sparks from the bullets hitting the metal, and the smoke coming off from the guns of the terrorists, he could barely figure out what was happening to the prince.

After all, the prince's safety was Ning's number 1 concern at the moment.

The bullets stopped coming, and there was a moment of silence. Ning knew this was the moment and immediately threw the mess of a bench directly at the few Aether Grandmasters that were standing around.

The magisters were too close to the prince for him to try hitting them. The metal accurately landed on 4 of the 6 grandmasters and incapacitated them.

"What? He's not dead?" the terrorists looked at him surprised.

Ning looked at them dead in the eyes. The fear he was feeling in his head was already lowered by a lot when he had realized just how weak an Aether King was against him.

The prince turned around after the noises had disappeared and were surprised to see Ning still alive. He wanted to say something, but he kept it to himself for the moment.

"This one is strong. Move with me," the boss said.

"What do we do, boss?" the two magisters asked.

"Tear him up, limb from limb," the boss said. The two magisters nodded and got to work. 1 of the other 2 grandmasters also got ready.

Suddenly, Ning felt a force tug on his body like he had never before. The people in front of him were trying to control his body.

Ning felt a force on his head and a stronger force on his torso. A force on his arms and legs as well. In all the 6 distinct parts of his body, he felt something tugging at it.

"Shit!" he thought and suddenly, the forces changed direction. The right arm was stretched to the right, the right leg was stretched to the right.

The left arm and left leg were also stretched to the left. His head was being pulled upward, while his torso was being held still so that the other parts could be torn off more easily.

When the terrorists had said they were going to tear him limb from limb, he hadn't expected it to be in such a... horrible way.

Ning lamented about not having a tough body as he felt it be really ripped apart. He immediately used his telekinesis on himself to try and stop his body from being torn.

However, he soon came to realize that he couldn't use telekinesis on himself at all.

Since Telekinesis as a skill used his body as a point of reference on whether to use actual Energy or mental energy. Thus, he was unfortunately not able to use telekinesis on himself at all.

Whoever had created the skill had after all found it pretty useless to have to move their own body with their mind, when it was already how it worked in the first place.

Ning realized too late, however, and now he was struggling.

He could fly, teleport, or even just use telekinesis on his attackers to get away from this situation. However, doing so didn't feel right to Ning.

In the first place, he didn't want to expose that he was more than just an Aether arts user.

Secondly, an Aether King was just a step above the halfway point in the journey of an Aether Arts user. If he was already struggling against an Aether King, he wouldn't be able to fight the others at all.

"I can't keep relying on the system for everything. I need to learn how to escape from all of this on my own," Ning thought.

He tried thinking of ways to get out of what was happening right now. His body was very sturdy, so it would take a bit more for the terrorists to tear him apart.

This gave him just enough time to think. Just then, Ning remembered something.

"Hmm, let's give it a try," he thought. He had never done what he was going to do, but... it was not a bad time to try.

Even as his head was being pulled out, he took a deep breath and concentrated.

'Imagine,' he said to himself. 'Imagine the feeling of power coursing through your body. Imagine the strong body you once had, the indestructible body you had as a body cultivator.'

'Imagine it as you once more,' he thought to himself.

Just then, something brilliant happened. All the Aether that was gathered in Ning's body started burning immediately. Large quantities of Aether left his sea of Aether and started spreading around his body.

Some attached to his bones, some attached to his ligaments, some attached to his bones, some attached to his organs.

All of the Aether he was unconsciously using up was being sent to each and every corner of the body. Then, they reacted.

Suddenly, every single piece of cell that had even the slightest hint of his Aether attached to it suddenly got firm and strong.

Ning opened his eyes and pulled his hands back. One of the magisters suddenly dropped onto the ground and started vomiting.

Ning then moved his legs as well, and the other Magister fell to the ground and started vomiting.

They were both screaming in pain for some reason. The grandmaster saw all this and immediately stopped using Aether. He didn't want to go through what the two magisters were feeling at the moment.

Ning felt his head lighten up after the grandmaster stopped. Now, only his torso was being controlled.

Ning smiled. Now that his limbs were free, he could do things of his own. He suddenly raised his hands forward and grabbed the leader using his telekinesis.

The leader suddenly stopped controlling Ning's torso and Ning fell onto the ground. But he didn't let go of the leader.

It was time to give him a taste of his own medicine.

Chapter 429: Jamie And Fiona

The leader floated in the air, completely in the hands of Ning who was looking for revenge. The other terrorists were on the ground for some reason Ning didn't understand.

Ning remembered what happened when someone was out of Aether. They would burn up their nerves instead of Aether and fall onto the ground completely paralyzed.

If they didn't gain back Aether in some time, they would fall into a comatose state and very slowly die.

This was not it. Ning didn't have time to wonder however and focused his attention on the leader. He moved him away from the prince and started doing to him what he did to Ning.

Arms, legs, and head, all being pulled away from the torso caused incredible pain to the leader. The leader started shouting in pain as his whole body got pulled to the extreme and was starting to get red all over.

Ning could tear his limbs apart at any moment, but he didn't. Despite being terrorists, if he did kill them, he was sure that he would be in a heap of trouble from the law of this country.

In such a civilized place, he doubted people could just overlook a death or two like back in Kumia.

So, all he did was keep him there, in that exact same state for as long as he could.

The leader could breathe, could talk if he wanted to. All he couldn't do was fight back and free himself from Ning's clutches.

The prince had already turned around and was looking towards Ning with a face of awe. He looked at the terrorist leader in pain and didn't know what to say.

Suddenly, Ning saw someone attack him from behind and immediately dodged to the side. The leader fell onto the floor, groaning with pain.

Ning got back up and saw a guy with a sword. He wore tight-fitting trousers and t-shirts. His short black hair was perked up straight and his beardless face made him look quite handsome.

His face was square-shaped, and with his height at about 170 cm, he wasn't as tall as Ning.

The man's face was stoic with almost no emotion and all he wanted to do with kill Ning.

'What the hell? He doesn't look like the rest of the terrorists,' Ning thought.

"Jamie, stop!" a calm voice came from the side.

A woman appeared from what seemed to be out of nowhere and stood in front of the kid. "He's not an enemy," she said.

The kid side-eyed the newcomer and finally got back from his stance. He put the short sword back onto the sheath on his hips.

The new woman looked towards Ning. She was older than the kid, possibly in her mid or late 30s. She wore tight black pants with a large brown belt that had a gun in the holster beside it. Above it, she wore a black tank top that showed off her slightly muscular hands.

She was taller than the kid at about 185 cm, and her hair tied in a bun above her head made her look even taller.

Her fair face with the dove-like eyes made her particularly attractive, but the stance she stood in gave off a 'come close and I will kill you' kind of vibe.

She looked at Ning for only a second before her eyes changed towards the terrorists that were on the ground.

"Your highness, are you alright?" she asked, immediately shifting her attention to the prince.

'She's here to help?' Ning wondered as he looked back at the kid with the sword. 'So he's here to help too? Makes sense,' Ning thought.

"Fiona, you're here?" the prince asked with a surprised look. It seemed he wasn't expecting to be rescued.

"Of course, your highness," she said.

"Why would you do something so dangerous?" the prince was getting his calmness back and was now starting to get angry.

Ning wondered if the prince likes the girl given how angry he was for her putting herself in danger.

"What if the terrorists had decided to kill me when you attacked? Did you think about it?" the prince asked.

'Oh,' Ning thought. The prince wasn't worried about the girl. He was worried about himself.

"Don't worry, your highness. I know what I am doing," she said. "Are these the terrorists?" she asked while pointing at the terrorists on the ground.

"Wha— Ah, yes. These are the terrorists. There are the henchmen and that crying guy is their leader," the prince pointed towards the scar-faced leader.

"I see," she said. Immediately, without any hesitation, she pulled out the gun from her holster and pointed at the groaning leader, and without batting an eye, she pulled the trigger.

BANG

The prince jumped in fear when he saw the leader die. "What are you—" before he could even finish his sentence, the woman named Fiona turned around and pointed at the other terrorists.

The rest of the prince's words were lost in the sounds of the bullet firing. One after another, the gun that should have held 6 bullets, was shot out 9 different times.

"What the hell are you doing?" the prince shouted at her.

"What do you mean, your highness?" she asked. "These are terrorists. This is what they deserve after what they did today."

"Do you know how dangerous that is? What if there was a sniper aimed at me right now? I would be dead," the prince shouted.

"Don't worry, your highness. We checked the periphery before we arrived here," she said.

The prince looked shocked. "Did you really plan to kill them all along? Did you not want to negotiate with them first? You didn't even care about my life," the prince said.

"Your highness! Your life is our number 1 priority. There is no way we couldn't care about it," she said.

"Then why the hell did you decide to attack them before negotiating with them?" the prince shouted at the woman who was taking the cries of the prince without batting an eye.

Chapter 430: Hero?

The woman waited for the prince to shut up before speaking. "We did plan on negotiating first, your highness," she said. "We were ready to comply with their demands to save you."

"What?" the prince finally calmed a little. "You were ready to comply?"

"Yes," she said. "We had even brought the gems the terrorists demanded to rescue you."

"What?" the prince's eyes perked up. "You have the gems? Show me."

"Unfortunately I can't, your highness. Senior Tim has the gems and he's outside of the zoo. You can ask him yourself later," Fiona said.

"You didn't bring them here? Were you not planning to give it to them in the first place?" the prince asked.

"We were planning to start with the negotiations first, your highness, but they never came out to negotiate anything. After noticing something was wrong, I sneaked in to see what was going on along with Jamir."

"That was when we saw that young man fighting with the others all by himself. We were planning to return once the kid died, but... who would've thought that he alone would destroy all of the terrorists," she said.

"There are more," Ning spoke from the side.

"Sorry?" the lady was taken aback.

"There are more terrorists in the zoo. They are merely henchmen, but they should be keeping hostage of the other visitors in the zoo," Ning said.

"I see," the lady said. She looked towards the kid and said, "go deal with them."

The young man nodded and ran away. The lady watched the kid leave and turned to ask. "Who are you, kid? To defeat all of these terrorists by yourself, you aren't an ordinary staff, are you?" she asked.

"Well, I guess you could say that," Ning said. "Since the prince is safe with you, I will go look at the other staff members."

"Ah, I'm afraid I can't let you do that," the lady said. "Please stick around so we can question you a bit."

Ning stopped and turned around. "I don't see what you could possibly ask me that you won't be able to ask the prince himself," Ning said.

The lady looked at the prince and then back at him. "Sure, we could, but... I saw things that the prince won't be able to explain. So... please stick around," she said.

Ning could hear the forced politeness in her voice. He could tell that she was trying her best to sound as polite as she could.

He sighed. "Fine, ask me what you want. I'll see if I can answer it," he said.

"Great," Fiona said. "Let's start with your name then."

"My name is Ning Ruogong," Ning said.

"I see, Ning," she said. "What's your rank?"

"Sorry?" Ning was taken aback. He thought the lady would ask him age or something next, but she skipped them.

"What's your rank? Your aether rank," she asked.

"It's... I don't have to answer that," Ning said.

The lady looked at him directly in the eye for a few moments and sighed, "okay, then can you explain how you single-handedly beat so many terrorists that bested the guards we put on the prince?" she asked.

"That's easy," Ning said. "It's because I'm strong."

The lady stopped. "You're strong, huh? How strong?" she asked.

Ning chuckled. "Do you have any other questions?"

"Yes, one last one. Why did you put your life in danger to save the prince? Do you fancy yourself a hero?" she asked.

"A hero? Me?..." Ning thought. "No, I wouldn't call myself that." His face turned solemn, even a little sad. "If anything, I fail where heroes succeed. I'm no hero. I'm just a guy who saw a chance to get close to the royal family and took it."

"You... want to get close to the royal family?" the lady asked. "Is there... any reason?"

"Yes," he said. "I'm friends with your princess that just returned home. I was supposed to be her bodyguard, but mister Tim kicked me out because... I wasn't worthy. I'm just trying to show him that he was wrong."

The lady was genuinely surprised at the answer. "That... that information hasn't been publicized yet. Are you genuinely friends with the princess?" she asked.

"You can go ask her, or her husband, or even just mister Tim who you say is outside," Ning said.

"I will. This is an important piece of information so I will have to report it nonetheless," she said.

Ning heard sounds from to his right and saw the kid named Jamie to return. His short, one-handed sword had blood in it now.

"Are you done?" the lady asked.

The kid nodded.

"Did you only attack the terrorists?" she asked.

The kid nodded.

"Any casualties?" she asked.

The kid shook his head.

"Good. It seems everyone is safe and the terrorists are dead. Our job here is done. Let's go, prince," she said and made him walk.

She walked ahead of him and made Jamie walk behind the prince. Just before they reached far away, she turned one last time to look at Ning who was also going his own way.

She smiled a little, maybe even crazily. She was looking forward to something, which the prince seemed to be very familiar with.

'Goddammit!' he thought. The entire experience he had today was horrible. All the plans he had made since many days ago were totally ruined.

"Sigh, I'm tired," he said and walked out.

Fiona met up with Tim and explained to him everything she saw in there.

"Are you sure? That Ning kid defeated the terrorists?" he asked.

"Yes, and... " she got close to him to whisper, "he also knew about the princess's return. He said he was her bodyguard?"

"Yes," Tim said. "Sigh, I hope I didn't make a mistake by sending him away when he was so eager to work with us. He said he would come to the royal family, but at this point, I'm not sure anyway."

"Oh, you don't have to worry about that, senior," Fiona said as a wild smile appeared on her face.. "Even if he doesn't want to, I will make him come."

Chapter 431: Heat Based Vision

Surprisingly, in an incident that had nearly 20 terrorists working in it, there were zero casualties.

The terrorists made sure that absolutely no one was killed until the royal palace responded to their demands.

If anything, the only ones that died were the terrorists, except for the one guy that Ning managed to save by making him give himself up to the police.

The police had come to him, later on, to question exactly what happened. Ning explained it the best he could and since the royal family's people also helped in the situation, he wasn't questioned a lot.

The owner of the zoo thanked him profusely and made sure to give some sort of compensation for what Ning did.

Ning didn't want anything in return, still, he was given some money for his troubles. Ning accepted it in the end and went back to the hotel.

He laid on his bed, remembering the events that took place today. "So there can be times when Aether is more helpful than my energy, huh?" he thought.

Using Aether, he could mimic the strong body cultivation he had previously with his other body. While it wouldn't be as strong, still the fact that he could have a very strong body whenever he wanted, would be useful to him.

"I will have to practice that quite a bit though," he thought. Spending many seconds just imagining a strong body before actually getting a strong body wasn't the best choice in a fight.

Suddenly, he heard a knock on the door. He was confused. "Who's there?" he shouted.

"Sir, you have visitors," a staff spoke from the outside.

"I... have visitors?" he was confused. He stood up and walked up to the door. He opened it and was surprised to see the two people standing there.

"Lisa, Reeve, what are you guys doing here?" he asked.

"Brother Ning, I heard you were there in the zoo today, during the hostage situation. Dear Alexis, that must've been terrifying, " Reeve asked.

"Huh? Yeah, I was there. How did you learn about it?" he asked.

"We heard from Fiona. Thank you for saving my elder brother" Lisa said with a curtsy bow.

"Oh, it's alright. Come on in, we can talk inside," he said and opened the door fully. Lisa and Reeve walked in and Ning tried to close the door.

Just then, he felt a gust of wind pass him in a very unnatural manner. His eyes suddenly got serious and he stepped back, looking all around him. however, he couldn't see anything.

His vision suddenly shifted, and he started seeing things in all red, blue, and green. This was a heat-based vision he had bought while working with the beasts in the zoo. He didn't want any beasts to sneak up on it, so he bought it as a precaution.

Suddenly, in his vision, there were 3 humanoid figures, all yellow or orange in color. Ning's vision shifted once more and he could see normally again. Except, one of the 3 humans was no longer visible.

"Who's there?" he asked. He suddenly grabbed a candlestick from the table and aimed it where the person should have been.

"Brother Ning?" Reeve was surprised.

"Get back, someone is here," he said. "Reveal yourself or I will—"

"Alright kid, relax," a voice came from ahead of Ning. The air seemed to distort as a person appeared in it.

"You?" Ning asked when he saw Fiona pop out of the air once more.

"Oh, I forgot to mention. we had Fiona guarding us today," Lisa said.

"Eh? then why stay invisible? she could've shown herself," he asked

"Well, I had my reasons," she said as she turned towards Ning with a big smile. "Kid, how did you know I was invisible?" she asked.

"I felt the air move when you entered," Ning said.

"Oh," her eyes perked up. "And what about later? How did you know exactly where I was?"

Ning looked at her, trying to understand her intentions. Instead of answering, he asked, "how are you able to go invisible?"

Fiona's smile remained ever unchanging as she said, "That's a family secret of mine."

"Well, then how I saw you is a secret of mine too," she said.

"I see," Fiona said. She didn't seem to be angry with the response she got. "You said you wanted to be her highness's bodyguard right?" she asked.

"Yeah..." Ning said, wondering what she was going to talk about.

"Do you still want to?" she asked.

"I mean, yeah. Of course," Ning said.

"Do you want to become one right now?" she asked.

Ning was surprised. He didn't expect an invitation to come this easily, although that was part of the reason why he saved the prince in the first place.

Reeve and Lisa were both surprised and happy, they looked at Ning expectantly.

"Don't I have to be a certified Aether Magister from the tower if I want to become a guard? That was what Mister Tim told me," Ning said.

"Who are you kidding, young man? You defeated an Aether king, 3 Aether Magister, and multiple Aether Grandmasters by yourself. If you had told Mister Tim you were this powerful, he would've never told you to leave at all," She said.

"So... I can join right now if I want to? Without having to be certified by the tower?" he asked.

"Yes," Fiona said.

Ning thought for a while and asked, "Can I join part-time?"

"Part-time?" Fiona was confused.

"You see... I got accepted in the Aether Tower, and I want to go there to learn more about Aether, so if it is okay with me only working half the time, then I can join right now," Ning said.

"You joined the Aether Tower, brother Ning? Congratulations," Reeve said. Lisa congratulated him too.

Fiona thought for a moment to see if it was acceptable or not. She knew it wasn't. Having a guard that was missing half the time was just not possible to keep around.

But... she really wanted Ning to come under her.

So, she put her hands forth and said, "Welcome to the team, kid."

Chapter 432: First Day Of Class

Ning dodged a sword coming from the front. He twisted his incredibly strong physical body in midair and did a backflip to get out of the range of the short sword.

Jamie dashed forward once again to close the gap and hit Ning. Ning immediately turned around and imagined a rocky wall between him and Jamie.

The wall started forming from the ground, but before it could fully form, Jamie had already stopped and maneuvered around the wall to attack Ning.

The sword came at Ning's throat and stopped right before it could hit him. Ning had lost the match.

He sighed. Fighting with only Aether was really hard. "Good fight," he said to Jamie and wiped his sweats off.

Jamie nodded and sheathed his sword before walking away. The young man never spoke, or rather he couldn't. He was also a dud when it came to Aether, as in he wasn't able to use Aether at all.

Ning felt a little salty when he lost to someone with no Aether, but Jamie was seriously one of the strongest people he had seen on this planet.

Ning didn't doubt that if he was fighting against an Invoker that was Aether King, or maybe even Aether Emperor, he would surely win.

Since Enchanters could control the opponent's body, Ning wasn't sure how well Jamie could handle that.

He could've won his bout against Jamie just now, but he found that it wasn't very helpful during training since he would learn nothing.

He left the place to go take a shower before leaving the palace. After all, he didn't want to go to his first day of class with a sweaty body.

After wearing a robe-like outfit that only the people from Aether Towers wore, he left the palace.

It took him 20 minutes, and despite being able to use carriages, he walked his way to the tower.

Ning looked at the clock in his pocket to learn that it was 13:48 when he reached the tower.

The classes started at 14:00 and went on until 20:00 for 6 hours a day. He didn't know what he was going to learn, how he was going to learn, or anything else in between, but he was still feeling somewhat enthusiastic about it all.

Ning showed his new student ID at the gate and walked in.

He wasn't sure where he had to go exactly, so he went around looking for his class.

Along the way, he saw a statue of a female with a tall slender body, long flowing hair, a beautiful pair of eyes that only held majesty in them.

She held a wooden staff in her hand and wore a rather revealing set of robes. The statue itself held no names to it, or any denotation of when it was made.

All Ning could tell was that it was a beautiful piece of art.

He looked away from the statue and quickly went to find his classes. He couldn't do it on his own, he had to ask someone for help.

He quickly went to an elevator and rode it to the 5th floor where his class was being held.

He found his class soon enough and entered it. When he did, he was surprised at the size of the class.

It was very small. He didn't think the class was small when compared to the classes he used to teach in Kumia that could hold nearly 3 thousand different disciples.

No, this class was smaller than even the most normal of classes he could remember.

He looked around at merely 12 desks that could hold 3 students each, set up in a 3 by 4 row in the small room, facing a blackboard in front of them.

When he looked at the students in the class, he was even more surprised. There were about 30 students in there at the moment, and only 4 of them were barely any old.

The rest of the students were all kids that didn't even seem to be 10 years old yet. "No way, am I studying with actual kids?" Ning thought.

Ning walked in and went to one of the desks with one of the 4 older students and sat on it.

The one sitting there was a young girl with slightly brown hair. Ning looked around and saw that she was the only girl amongst the group of 5 adults.

"Hello, nice to meet you. I'm Ning," Ning introduced himself to her with a hand put forth for a shake.

The girl turned towards him but didn't shake his hands. Instead, she nodded a little towards him and said, "Hello, I am Rachel."

Ning put his hands down as it didn't look like he was getting a shake. He looked around at the classroom and was still confused as to why the kids were there.

"Sorry to bother you, but am I in the right place? I'm a new student of the tower and am starting today. Someone told me I was to come here, but I'm not sure if this is it or not," he asked.

"New student? Yeah, you are in the right place," the girl said. "I am a new student too."

The girl seemed pretty comfortable with speaking to him, despite not wanting to shake his hands. Ning wondered what that was about.

"Eh? Then why are there all the kids here? That seems really weird," Ning said.

"Huh? What do you mean the kids are weird?" Rachel asked. "It's us who are weird."

Ning was confused. "Sorry, what do you mean by that?"

"Do you not know much about the tower or what?" she asked.

"You could say that," Ning said.

"Oh, then I guess that makes sense," the girl said.

"You see, the tower's objective is to teach kids how to use Aether from a young age. They go around searching for capable kids and bring them here to teach them."

"Teaching us adults is not their primary focus at all.. That's why you see so many kids and so few adults."

Chapter 433: Sherry's Aether Lesson

Ning looked around at the room. The 25 or so kids there all looked way too young to be there, but he understood that the tower wanted to teach them young and had thus brought them here.

'Us adults are just getting a second chance at it, eh?' he thought. He then looked at the other 3 'adults'.

There were 2 men and 1 girl, all sitting on the same bench. They were on the 4th row of the 3rd column, meaning they were sitting at the corner of the room. He could tell that their age was upwards of 15 for sure, but couldn't tell their age beyond that.

What he could tell from their awkwardness was this was definitely the first they had talked with each other.

Meanwhile, Ning and Rachel were sitting in the 4th row of the 1st column.

He wondered why she decided to stay so far apart from them. Was she not a talkative type? That shouldn't have been the case. From how she talked earlier, he could see that she wasn't particularly unsocial, so he couldn't understand why she wouldn't sit near someone closer to her age.

"So only 5 of us got chosen from so many people that came to get admitted huh? That's quite a low number. I would've assumed more would be able to get in," Ning said.

"The tower only has a quota of 5 people every 5 weeks. Just be glad that you had enough talent to get in. I heard that if you are rejected once, you can never go back to take the test again," she said.

"Yeah, I can see why that is. Since one can't possibly change their potential, it wouldn't make sense to get tested for the same thing twice. It's not like the result is gonna change," Ning said.

"Although, the potential isn't everything though. I wonder why they never bothered to check for talents," he spoke to himself.

"Why would they check for talent? What good is talent without potential?" she asked.

"I mean, potential helps a lot for someone, but that's not the only way to get stronger is it?" he asked.

"What other way is there?" Rachel looked at him with a weird look. "Unless you are rich enough to buy the occasional Aether ores that show up in the auction houses, it's pretty much impossible to get stronger without having the potential."

Ning wanted to explain how wrong she was in her thought. There were absorption techniques that one could use, even the ones with the worst potential, who could train up to become strong in due time.

Ning himself had never met anyone that did use the absorption technique, but he knew it worked because he had given it to Famir and Mavenna when he had first arrived.

He even used it himself. Heck, he was using it right now. With his automatic absorption technique, he was consistently taking in Aether from the surrounding, and when it reached a full, due to his incredible potential thanks to his new body, he would break through to the next level on its own.

Ning wanted to explain that, but he wondered if he should. Just as he was deliberating, a woman walked into the room.

She wore a dress of white and purple. Her hair tied in a ponytail behind her showed off her beautiful fair skin. She looked to be around 30 years old, but given how Aether also delayed aging, he couldn't be sure.

She was about 160 centimeters tall, so she was quite short in height, but her lean body made her look taller than she was.

She held a stack of books in her hand and walked up to the podium. She turned around to look at her new students, her sapphire-like eyes glistening with light.

She started pointing towards all of them one by one while mumbling something on her own. Once finished, she finally spoke.

"I see you are all here," the lady said with a gentle smile on her face. "Good morning! I will be your teacher from this day forward. You can call me teacher Sherry."

"Good Morning, teacher Sherry," the kids greeted her. The adults were a step behind, but they also greeted her.

Ning felt a little awkward during all this, but it was also fun in its own way.

"Please go around introducing yourself," Sherry told them. One by one, the kids started introducing themselves to each other, followed by the adults.

Ning learned the name of the other 3 students in their class to be Henry, Thomas, and Marie.

Once done, the teacher finally started the class.

"Since today is the first day of studies, I won't teach you many things, just the most basic of stuff," she said.

"Do you kids know what Aether is?" she asked.

Some kids nodded, some gave a confused look. As for the adults, everyone aside from Ning shook their heads to let her know they were not sure.

It wasn't that they were ignorant about Aether, but rather they weren't sure if what they had learned from the outside was true or not.

"Aether," She said as she walked away from the podium towards the students, "is a type of energy. To make something happen, you need energy, right? That's what Aether does."

Sherry explained to the kids what energy was.

"Although, don't confuse it with normal energy. It is very different from them all. Unlike normal energy like Heat or Sound, Aether cannot change to a different type of energy, and furthermore, it can be destroyed."

"Aether is also known to exist as a liquid in the purest of forms," Sherry said as she brought out a piece of rock. "It can also exist in a solid form or a gaseous form around us. "

"Other energies don't have form. Heat, mechanical, or any other type of energy, you can't find them in a physical form. At least we don't know of them having forms yet.. That makes Aether a one-of-a-kind energy that is truly unique."

Chapter 434: Incorrect Lesson

Ning listened to Sherry explain about Aether and couldn't help but shake his head at how wrong she was.

Aether was unique, yes, but the reasons she gave for Aether being unique was nothing but a lie. Or at least it was misinformation due to a lack of knowledge about the fundamentals of the universe.

Aether was a rare type of energy that could only be found on some planets in the universe. Ning didn't expect a teacher to have knowledge of this so he said nothing.

What he didn't expect her to be wrong on was that Aether could have Solid, Liquid, or Gaseous forms.

That was just plain wrong. Aether had none of those forms. Aether was just a type of energy. Like all the other types of energies, it held no physical form.

What it did do was find a certain solution of liquid, native to worlds like these and inhabit it. That small, violet liquid was what the world really knew as Aether, when in fact Aether was just energy that inhabited that liquid.

Similarly, for rocks, that same liquid was trapped in those ores that made Aether ores. As for being gaseous, it was small molecules of this same liquid flying independently in the air.

So, Aether, the liquid did have different forms as the teacher explained, but that was not really the Aether. The real Aether held no form.

Another thing the teacher said that was wrong was that Aether, unlike other energies didn't transform to different types of energies and only remained in one form. She also said that Aether, unlike the rest of the different types of energy, could be destroyed.

He could see why she would think that, but that was wrong as well. Aether followed all the rules of the universe. It was just that, the rules of the universe the teacher knew had some information missing.

Aether could transform into other types of energy, but it required something as a medium to do so. It couldn't do it on its own.

And that medium was the humans.

When an Enchanter used their Aether on something, the Aether in their bodies would change the property to become a different form of energy.

It would become mechanical energy if the enchanter wanted to move something or strengthen something. It would become sound energy if the enchanter wanted something to make noise. It would become heat energy if the enchanter wanted something to get hot.

In this way, the Enchanters were able to transform Aether to another type of energy.

As for the destruction of Aether, the most usual example given was an Invoker. An Invoker would create objects using Aether. However, after some time, depending on the creator's strength, that object would also be gone.

The people of this world took that as a roundabout way of Aether getting destroyed. However, that was not true at all.

When an invoker used their skills to create an object, they weren't just creating a physical object. They were also transforming the Aether in them to be part of whatever object they created.

The physical aspect of the object would be some part of the Aether, while the energy would be the other part.

At the end of the day, when the object disappeared, all the energy in the physical part of the object, including the object itself would return back to being Aether and disappear into the wind.

That was all. There was no destruction or anything. It was just Invoker turning Energy into different energy and physical object at the same time, which returned back to being Aether.

Ning knew that the teacher wasn't knowingly spreading misinformation, and wanted to correct her, but he didn't see the need to. In fact, he felt that this sort of revelation might bring up questions as to where he learned it or how he learned it.

He didn't want to deal with those troubles right now.

The teacher continued. "Not everyone in the world is born with the ability to use Aether, but they can acquire it if they were to be exposed to something rich in Aether. For example the ore I just showed you," She said. "Unfortunately, these items are incredibly expensive and not everyone can get them."

Finally, the teacher got something right. Ning nodded when she said it. He remembered back in the day when he gave Famir the juices of the fruit to awaken him as an Aether user.

"However, Potential and Talent is set from birth and it can't be changed at all. The most you can do is practice to be good at what you can do and stick with it," the teacher said.

Ning sighed, surprising Rachel who looked at him with a weird face. The teacher was wrong once again. Ning didn't want to think about it when he just had the same thing happen with Rachel.

He ignored his thoughts and listened to the conversation.

"You guys have some of the best potentials we have seen in a long time. Especially, you two there at the corner. I hear you are the cream of the crop this year with sky-high potential," Sherry said as she stared at Ning and Rachel.

"Now let's hope you can make good use of it."

Ning looked to the side in a bit of surprise. He remembered his results on the day of the tests, so for someone else to be called a genius alongside him, he was curious just how good Rachel was.

Rachel too was similarly surprised. She didn't think she would be compared with Ning and looked at him with a hint of shock on her face.

"The rest of you are not bad either. You are the best of the best, chosen from all around the country to be able to become proficient in Aether. Make sure you don't waste it," she said.

"Alright, let's move on. Since we are talking about Aether, let's continue talking about it. More accurately, let's talk about the user side of the Aether," she said.

A book flew from the desk and landed gracefully on her hand which she opened and read.

"Let's start with Enchanters."

Chapter 435: Enchanters And Invokers

Sherry started teaching about Enchanters. Her tone, mannerisms, choice of words she used to explain the things she did, all told Ning that her primary focus while teaching wasn't the adults, but the little kids.

He understood that, but still listening to a teacher use child-like language to teach the rest of the class felt ridiculous to him.

Still, he learned quite a few things from her that he probably would have needed a lot of time to learn about.

The enchanters had it very easy. Their system of Aether was the easiest to learn and master, and it also had many different applications that an Invoker didn't have.

Enchanters could use their Aether as Telekinesis, or they could use it to strengthen something or to head something. To make something buzz. As long as one's imagination of something was accurate, one could do nearly anything.

The amount of Aether they used depended on the size, shape, material, intensity, and various other factors. So, no one could really quantify how much Aether would be used for just a simple task.

On the other side of the spectrum were Invokers. Invokers could only create stuff. They couldn't even manipulate what they created. Creating stuff itself was a difficult task to begin with as well.

Just imagination didn't help one while creating. Imagination was just there to turn a concept in the mind into a physical form. Invokers still needed to know the making of an object before they created it.

They needed to have interacted with something before or knew enough about it from just learning about it before they could make it.

This was why creating stuff required more time than just simply manipulating one. This was why Invokers were frowned upon during battle and were rarely accepted in military positions.

The amount of Aether used by an Invoker depended on the object they created, the complexity of the object, and so on.

Sherry gave an example of it. She had Marie, the other girl from the adult who was an invoker, create a block of ice for the room.

Marie seemed to have had practice before and in just a few seconds, she managed to create a block of ice about half a meter wide.

The little kids watched in awe. They were still young, so they weren't advanced enough in the ways of Aether and could only create small stuff. So when they saw the massive block of ice forming on the table, they couldn't help but be surprised.

Sherry put forth her hand and the block of ice floated in mid-air. She then placed it next to the door of the classroom and started heating it. Pretty soon, the ice turned into water, and the water into steam and flew into the sky.

The students were all very surprised at this. Even the adult ones were surprised because of how fast Sherry was able to make the block of ice disappear. They couldn't help but wonder just what her rank was.

Sherry looked back at the shocked class and smiled. She then looked at Marie and said, "I want you to create ice once again."

"Okay," Marie responded and looked in front of her to create ice there.

"However," Sherry interrupted Marie's thinking, bringing the attention back to her. "This time, I want the block of ice to look like me."

Marie was about to nod when she realized what was being asked of her. "Sorry, teacher. Do you want me to make an ice sculpture?" she asked with a confused voice.

"Yes," Sherry said. "That is exactly what I want you to do. Since you were able to create an ice block, you should be able to create that too right?"

"Um, I've never tried making a statue before, but I can try," Marie said. She looked at Sherry as well as she could to imprint the image onto her mind and then used that image to imagine an ice version of it.

Thinking of something that she had never seen before was hard, but since she knew about ice, she really didn't have to imagine an ice sculpture itself.

White mist drifted from her hands onto the table that started to take form into a humanoid shape. The mist then started to solidify into ice.

At first, there was nothing to the ice but the vague shape of a human, but slowly it started taking better shape as details started to appear on it.

The tiny details were hard to remember, and Marie had to open her eyes multiple times to look at Sherry in front of her.

In the end, after 5 minutes, with a head full of beads of sweat, Marie managed to create... a rather ugly statue of Sherry.

The details weren't all very accurate, and that could be blamed on the artistic talent of Marie. However, the time it took for her to make the statue had very little to do with her artistic talent.

She wiped her forehead and looked up front to see the smiling face of Sherry. "How was it?" Sherry asked.

"It... it was hard," Marie said.

"Good, and how low are you on Aether?" Sherry asked.

Marie focused on herself and her eyes went wide when she realized that she had lost half of her Aether already. That much aether would take at least a day to gather back.

"What? How?" Marie asked with surprise.

"Complexity," Sherry answered. "The more complex a task, the harder it is to create, and required more Aether."

"What I asked her to do was rather easy to do. All she had to do was create Ice and give it shape. But, imagine I told her to make the shape out of metal. And not one metal, but multiple ones."

"Make an arm out of steel. A leg out of iron. The head from bronze. The clothes from brass."

"She wouldn't have a problem with the shape, but now the material is adding to the complexity of what she had to create."

"Of course, it gets easier with time and you learn more and more how to create something efficiently.. But, the cost of aether forever remains the same."

Chapter 436: Alexis

The first class of the day was over. It was spent doing nothing but teaching the fundamentals of Aether.

Ning was really happy to learn a lot about it. He knew quite a lot about Aether already, but still learning the creativity with how people used it, or the socio-political aspects of Enchanters and Invokers, that was invaluable.

Ning was sure that if left alone, it would've taken him a really long time before he figured out there was something like that.

After the first class ended, Ning was really surprised to see Sherry leave, and another teacher walked in.

He wondered what that teacher was going to teach when he started writing numbers on the blackboard.

"Eh?" Ning and the rest of the 4 adults were surprised. They were being taught math.

It wasn't even difficult math either. They were being taught some basic addition and subtraction.

This was a class for children, yes, but Ning still didn't expect maths to be taught to them as well.

That was when the teacher turned towards them with a weird face and told them that they could leave if they wanted to.

The next relevant subject for them would be taught after the break. Until then, they could go hang out in the tower.

The 5 of them awkwardly stood up and walked out of the class. After lunch... that was at around 17 o'clock. Until then they were free to do whatever they wanted as long as they were on the premises of the tower.

Ning wasn't sure where he could go, so he asked the others. Thomas, a short-haired, square-faced man, told them where they could go.

He gave them 3 options exactly. First, they could go to the playing grounds on the 2nd floor of the tower where they could spend their time leisurely.

Second, they could go to the training grounds on the 4th floor and practice their Aether.

Finally, they could go to the 3rd floor, where the admission office was, and go to the library to read some books.

Ning didn't even hesitate when he chose to go to the library. There were a lot of things about this world that he wanted to know, that he wouldn't even begin to ask the system to tell him since he wouldn't know what to ask.

He walked down the staircase and went to the 3rd floor. The library was easy to locate with many people coming in and out of it.

As soon as he walked through the door, Ning could see a vast collection of books on the many shelves that were kept in the massive rooms.

He was like a child in a candy store and didn't know where to start. He randomly picked out a book from a shelf and read the title.

'Necessary precautions against Dysentery and Measles'

Ning put the book back. Maybe he shouldn't be picking out books randomly. He went around looking at the titles on the spine until he came across something interesting.

'The Religion of Aether'

"Religion?" Ning found a book that piqued his interest. He didn't know what it meant when it said religion, and he wanted to find out.

He picked out the book from the shelf. The outer cover of the book was made up of leather and was black in color, while the text on it was golden.

There was nothing else on the cover itself. No logo, no author name, nothing. Ning walked to an empty table just beside the shelf and sat down.

He opened the book and the very first thing he saw was a beautiful, tall female with slightly curly hair, holding a tall, walking stick.

Ning felt he had seen this somewhere before when he remembered what it was. "Ah, the statue from the ground floor," he thought.

The image and the statue were the same, with very minor differences. The hair wasn't really the same, and the figure was a bit different too. But somehow, based on the clothes and especially the staff in her hand, he could tell it was the same woman.

"How is this woman important?" Ning wondered and was about to flip the page when he saw some words at the bottom of the picture that wasn't very clear.

He got closer a little bit and was finally able to read it. An imaginary depiction of Goddess Alexis, it read.

"A-Alexis?" Ning's eyes narrowed because he felt like he had heard of this name before. "Where did I hear— Ah," he finally remembered. He quickly held his mouth and looked around, hoping no one heard him shout.

Fortunately, there weren't many people in the library, so he was fine.

"That's the god Alexis that Reever prays to sometimes right?" he thought. He hadn't heard of anyone but Reever prays to her, so he didn't know she had a religion behind her big enough to warrant a book on it.

Ning turned the page and read it.

Alexis, Goddess of Aether, is a figure known amongst the Aether users as the creator of Aether itself.

Based on that, there is a religion created with her as the face of it. The Religion of Aether.

Alexis was said to be a god that descended from the sky with a flurry of birds that are now extinct. It is said that with a wave of her hands, she created Aether onto the land, starting the Age of men.

Because of this, many men came to her to pray for her to bless them. The religion continued since then and has been one of the longer-lasting religions for a long time.

It has since then been proved that Aether is a natural phenomenon that no one created, but people still put their faith in the goddess they had never seen. This is especially common on the outskirts of the continent where education and development don't necessarily reach very fast.

Ning continued reading it.. He had expected the book to be a holy scripture for the religion, but it was simply an unbiased opinion of the author on the religion of Aether that held a figurehead Alexis as their god.

Chapter 437: Alexis' Grace

The book went into detail on a lot of things in the past that was related to Alexis. It recorded the many myths and legends of what Alexis apparently did.

After creating Aether, Alexis went around the land. In the process, she met two children, one boy, one girl, who she adopted because they were orphans.

She reared them for many years. The girl had an unruly personality. She didn't like the society of the time and wanted to see it change. She couldn't stand what was going on at the time, the war the differences, she wanted to change it all.

The boy on the other hand had the heart of an artist. He wanted to create, he wanted to make new things.

Since they were her children now, Alexis gave them the ability to do so using Aether.

The girl got the ability to change, while the boy got the ability to create. After they got the ability, they went on to do great things in the world, and in the process let the others know about Alexis.

Soon, Alexis gained many followers, all of whom viewed her like the deity she was. She graced each and every follower of hers by giving them the ability to use Aether so as they pleased.

That was how the people were able to use Aether.

Alexis used her powers to carve the waterfalls of Shalor. Alexis used her powers to create a massive division between the continent by making a forest in there.

Alexis used her powers to create a mountain at the center of the continent, that was said to be a gateway between life and death.

Ning read all of the things that Alexis 'did', and couldn't help but shake his head. "People still believe this?" he thought. He would've assumed that with the advent of science, the people's belief in the supernatural would've disappeared. Who would've known that it would still be there?

He closed the book, reading no further, and put it back on the shelf. He then went on to search for other books that interested him.

He found a few that explained some of the historical events of the continent. Like how the Serian Empire came out of nowhere and took over nearly half of the continent.

It noted the establishment of the Aether Tower in the Serian Empire many many years ago.

It noted how their internal struggle let the old Serian Empire break into 4 different sections that went on to become the current Serian Empire, the Principality of Losmana, The Freelands, and the 12 United Kingdoms.

The 12 United Kingdoms also went through some internal struggle and later had their kings overthrown, becoming a single massive land now known as the Republic of Embers.

It noted the deaths and destruction of the Peak of Afterlife. Ning felt a little guilty reading that.

It also noted Xandria's war with the beasts and how it nearly wiped out almost the entire Aether beast population on this side of the map. The battle of the Undying fort was something that the people wouldn't forget, and forever be in the debt of the late Emperor Kron Xanders.

Ning went on to read more books and before he knew it, it was lunchtime. He felt a little hungry, so he put the books back and made his way to the cafeteria.

He got himself a plate of the available food and sat down on an empty table.

Even as he did, a single thought ran in his mind. 'How did the information about the Aether absorption techniques disappear?' he wondered. 'Has it really been so long that information just disappears?'

From his perspective, it had been nearly 2500 years since the last time he had been in Vilmore. That was enough time for information to get easily lost.

However, with how important Aether Absorption techniques were, it was still a surprise to him that they disappeared.

"Oh ho ho! It's good to see you, my boy," A voice came from behind Ning and sat down at the bench beside him.

Ning looked to the side and recognized the old, chubby man with a bald head and gray beard.

"Oh, Vice President Ringer, good afternoon," Ning greeted the man. This was the same person that had given Ning the scholarship to study in the tower for free.

"I was worried you weren't going to come back," the old man said.

"Eh? Why wouldn't I come back?" Ning asked with a chuckle.

"Well, I asked the people to report me as soon as you entered the dorm, but I never got any report," the old man said.

"The dorm? Ah, I'm not staying at the dorm," Ning said.

"Huh? You won't be staying at the dorm? But that's the best place for a student to be," the vice president said. His face changed a little as he said, "are you worried about having to pay for the dorm? If you are down on money, you can take a loan from the tower."

"The students who can't pay always end up taking the tower and pay it back once they graduate. There is no shame if you need the money," the vice president said.

Ning was a little surprised that the tower acted as a bank for the students too. "That's not the case. I have a place to stay, so I don't need to be in the dorm," Ning said.

"Don't tell me you're still living in the hotel," the vice president said.

"No, no. It's a proper place," Ning said.

"I see if you say so. Right, how is the first day going? Are you learning well?" he asked.

"Yeah, it's alright," Ning said. "But... I feel like there is a lot of misinformation being spread around to the students."

"Misinformation?" the Vice president was a little taken aback. "What do you mean?"

"Well, you see," Ning said. "The teacher said that the only way to improve your Aether rank depends on the potential of the person.. But that's just wrong."

Chapter 438: An Old Scroll

"Haha, what's wrong with that?" the Vice president asked, clearly amused at the situation. "You don't mean to say that people can get better with talent instead as well, right?"

"No no. That's not what I meant," Ning said. "What I mean is, aside from just being born with the ability to gather Aether, you can also gather Aether with an absorption technique."

The vice president's face changed a little. "What's an absorption technique?" he asked with a curious look on his face.

Ning saw his face and got the idea that he too likely didn't know about it. He sighed and began to explain.

"It's a technique that you can use in your body, and soon enough, you will start gathering Aether on your own, even if you have no potential in your body to gather Aether naturally," Ning said.

The vice president's face got serious. "No way something so good exists, right?" he asked.

"It does," Ning said. "I use one myself."

The Vice president's eyes went wide. "You use an absorption technique?" he asked.

"Yes," Ning said.

The vice president thought for a while and asked, "where did you find it?"

"I didn't find it. It's... something that's been passed down in my family for many lineages," Ning said.

"Oh, what's your family name again? Ruogong? I don't think there is a noble family like that in this country," the Vice President said.

"Huh? No, I'm not noble," Ning said.

"You're not? Oh right, sorry. Can I see this absorption technique?" the Vice President asked.

Ning thought for a moment and bought a very simple technique that would make someone take about a year in Vilmore time to go from Aether Starter to Aether Student if they absorbed for 2 hours a day.

He made the scroll look rough and dirty, with parts of it torn apart. The Vice president looked at it with shocked eyes.

"This is the absorption technique?" he asked.

"Yes," Ning said.

"Hm, I don't really understand what it's trying to say, but I probably will if I read it a few times," he said.

"Do you mind if I take it back with me to study?" he asked.

Ning was fine with it since it was garbage in his eyes. Still, this world didn't have such techniques so he acted a little hesitant.

In the end, he sighed and said "Sure, vice president."

The vice president put the scroll in a storage ring of his and stood up to leave. Before he did, however, he got close to Ning and said, "this talk we had just now. Keep it between the two of us, okay? I don't want people to get excited about this only for it to turn out to be wrong."

"I will research it a bit and see if it is true. After I'm done, I will return this scroll back to you," the vice president said

"Okay," Ning agreed with a smile.

"Good luck on your classes, young man," the vice president said as he left. Ning smiled, watching the old man walk away.

As soon as the old man disappeared, Ning's smile disappeared as well. "That was... weird," he thought. "Why did the old man turn so sketchy regarding the scroll? Does he know more than he's letting on?"

Ning couldn't really understand what had happened, so he decided to not be concerned with it for now.

He got back to eating his lunch and decided to wait for the day the vice president returned his scroll and revealed this 'new' information to the world.

Until then, Ning would do what he said and keep quiet about it. After lunch, Ning went back to his class to hopefully learn about Aether and hopefully not literature or other things.

Fortunately, his wishes were answered. Unfortunately, he now wished he would rather do literature than learn this.

The class after lunch break had 2 teachers coming to teach at the same time. One was an Enchanter, the other an Invoker.

The Invoker teacher would teach them into creating something basic like a small stone. Everyone knew stone. Even if they didn't understand the different types of stones, or how a stone was solid and such stuff, they were still familiar with stone.

This made creating them very easy. Which was what the lesson currently was. The students were all made to create stones.

As for the Enchanters, they were made to hover the stones. Just that. The Enchanter teacher handed them a stone and told the students to hover them in the air.

Ning couldn't believe how basic the lesson was. Not only him but even the other 4 adult students were also left scratching their heads at the ease behind the task.

Ning had registered in the tower as an Enchanter, so his task right now was to hover this small piece of stone. This was too easy.

Since the tasks were meant for the children, they didn't bother to make the task as difficult for the other students as well.

Henry stood up and told the teachers that this was too easy and they would need to learn something else.

"This is for the children, so we will have to start from the basics. Besides, most of you are from the rural parts of the empire. It is unlikely that you ever received proper education on Aether itself. So, you will have to start from the very beginning here," was the answer they got.

Ning got bored, he would rather do anything else, maybe even learn math. He slumped on his desk, with his head resting on one hand, while his other moved the stone in the air.

"Excuse me, can you move away a little," Rachel said.

"Hm, oh sorry," Ning said and got a little further away from her. He looked at her curiously and then went on to smell himself. 'It can't be that I smell, right?' he thought.

The class ended, and the next classes were once more the normal ones for the children.. The 5 students decided to leave the class, and since there were no more Aether-related classes for the day, they went back home.

Chapter 439: Conspiracy

Ning left the tower once his class was over and returned directly to the palace. He was a little happy that he got to leave at 18 o'clock in the noon.

He went directly towards Lisa's room to find Reeve.

Reeve was in the princess' chamber, reading a normal book. The doors opened and Ning entered.

Reeve looked to the side with a surprised face. "Hey, brother Ning. You're back already?"

"Yeah, it was a short day of class," Ning said. "Where's Lisa?"

"In the bathroom. She's getting ready because we are going to visit the city today for some shopping. Anyway, How was it? Your first day of school," Reeve asked excitedly. He had always wanted to join the tower, and now seeing Ning return from there, he was curious he hear about it..

"It was good. I learned... quite a lot actually," Ning said.

"Aw, that just makes me sad I couldn't go there, brother Ning," Reeve said. "Can you tell me what I would've learned if I had gone there?"

"Maybe it was for the better that you didn't go there," Ning said.

"Huh? What do you mean?" Reeve asked with a confused face.

"Say, you don't know about absorption techniques right?" Ning asked.

"Absorption techniques? What's that? " Reeve asked. He looked at Ning with a confused look. "I feel like you've asked this question before but never told me anything."

"It's—"

"Absorption technique? How do you know about that?" Lisa walked out of the bathroom, with her makeup done and a wig over her head.

She was wearing a yellow skirt and pink blouse and looked nothing like a princess at all, or even someone from a noble family.

"You know about it?" Ning asked with a serious face.

"Yes, I do," Lisa said. "Almost everyone in the noble families of those that are Earl and above, do."

"So, I was right," Ning thought to himself softly.

"Are you a noble too, Ning?" Lisa asked with a surprised look on her face.

"No, I'm not, but I do have an absorption technique. I was confused as to why Reeve or any of the other people don't know about it but to think that it was a conspiracy of the richer folks to hide such things from the residents," Ning felt a little angry.

"No, it's not," Lisa said.

"What isn't?" Ning asked.

"The conspiracy you are talking about. It's not the noble's," Lisa said. "I mean they are part of it, I guess you can say it's their conspiracy, but they aren't the one who came up with the idea," Lisa said.

"They didn't?" Ning looked at her with a confused look. "Then who did?"

"The Tower," Lisa answered.

"Wait, wait, wait! What the hell have you guys been talking about for the last minute? Technique? Conspiracy? What is it all about? Can you explain me?" Reeve asked.

Lisa turned to Reeve and explained to him was an Aether Absorption technique was.

"What?" Reeve looked at her with the most shocked look he had ever seen. "To think such an incredible thing existed, and us common folks never knew about it? Why? Do we not deserve to learn this thing?" he asked. "Are the nobility this scummy?"

"No," Lisa said. "As I mentioned earlier, it was the Tower's idea to slowly erase all knowledge of the technique. Since the techniques weren't that easy to acquire, to begin with, it didn't take very long for them to get rid of all evidence of it."

"When did they erase it? How could it be so simple as to erase the history of something's existence?" Reeve asked.

"For over a 1000 years ago. Before even the current calendar began," Lisa said. "The tower was a behemoth back then as it is now, however, they were also scared of another such order coming out of nowhere and undervaluing their existence."

"So, to forever monopolize the Aether market, they got rid of the techniques from other places and made it a secret. The nobles who learned that they would be stronger than the common folks and would likely continue to get richer as a reason had no problem accepting this suggestion."

"Since then, only the nobles have been able to use the arts and forever keep it a secret from the rest of the world," Lisa said.

Ning knew none of this so he nodded his head in understanding when Lisa explained everything.

"Do you have an absorption technique?" Reeve asked suddenly.

"Yes," Lisa said.

Reeve felt his heartbreak. "You knew I struggled with having a low Aether rank, and yet you never taught it to me?" he asked, his face turning a shade of red. There was part fury in that face, but mostly betrayal was what he was feeling at the moment.

"No," Lisa immediately said. "I didn't teach it to you because of some stupid rule the tower and the nobility, or because I wanted to see you suffer. I didn't teach you because I myself have forgotten about it."

"Huh?" Reeve looked up with a surprised look. "You have forgotten the technique? So you no longer use it?"

"I do use it," Lisa said. "But... it's sort of muscle memory at this point. When I use it, I don't even know what I'm doing since it's just a habit for me now."

Reeve's expression got better. "Then... can you get one for me now?" he asked expectantly.

Lisa shook her head, however. "Not yet, it will take a while," she said.

"A while? Why?" Reeve asked.

"In the royal family, only the emperor has the power to grant the absorption techniques to the other family members. He was who gave it to me as a child, and was made to learn it under a very strict condition to not reveal its existence."

"I had the thought of asking one for you last time we talked to father, but since I had just returned, I didn't want to make such requests," she said.

"Oh," Ning spoke from the side. "You guys already met up with the Emperor?"

Chapter 440: Getting Ready For A Day Out

"Huh? Oh yeah," Reeve said. "We met up with the emperor a little after you left the place, brother Ning."

"Oh, good," Ning said.

"Anyway, I didn't want to tell you about this beforehand to give you hope for the technique since I'm not even sure if my father will agree with the prospect of giving you an absorption technique in the first place," Lisa said.

"You think he doesn't like me?" Reeve asked.

"I don't know. I can never tell my father's emotion behind that stoic face of his," Lisa said.

"He did give us his blessing though, that should mean something right?" Reeve asked.

"We will know once I ask it next time," Lisa said.

"You don't have to wait until next time," Ning said. He brought out a book from his storage and handed it to Reeve. "Here, this is a technique. Read and learn it properly. In 2 days, you should be able to start absorbing Aether."

"What?"

"What?"

Both the husband and wife were surprised at the same time. Reeve grabbed the book and opened it, but before he could even read it, Lisa snatched it and read it herself.

"It's real," she said with wide eyes. "How do you have such a thing?"

"That doesn't matter," Ning said. "Just let him read it. Actually, you can also read it and see if it's better than yours. It's quite a good technique, I promise."

"Give it to me honey," Reeve said and took back the book. He excitedly started reading the book, but suddenly someone knocked on the door.

"Who's there?" Lisa asked.

"Your highness, senior Tim is here to meet you," a maid answered from the opposite side of the door.

"Oh, let him in," Lisa said.

Reever hurriedly stored his book in his storage necklace and acted as if he wasn't holding anything.

"Good afternoon your highnesses," Tim said and bowed as he came in. When he stood up, he saw Ning standing a little further away from him.

"Ning? What are you doing in the princess' quarters? You shouldn't be here," Tim said.

"Let it be, Uncle Tim," she said. "I told you that he was allowed to come here anytime he wants. He is the only friend my husband has in this place."

"They will start spreading rumors, your high—"

"I don't care what rumors they spread. I doubt they would stop spreading it just by me being civil," Lisa said in an angry voice. She calmed down a little and asked, "Why did you come here?"

"Princess Elina has learned about your trip to the market and wants to come with you. Will you be okay with that?" Old man Tim asked.

"Elina wants to go with us?" Lisa thought for a moment and said, "Sure, you can tell her it's fine."

"Great, I will go pass on the information," Tim said as he walked out of the room. However, before he left, he turned around and looked at Ning.

"You don't have anything to do right now, right? I will put you in charge of guarding Princess Elina," old man Tim said.

"Eh?" Ning was surprised. "Senior Tim, wouldn't it be better if I guarded li— Princess Elizabeth and her husband?"

"No," Tim said. "Since you are a guard in the royal family, you will have to be acquainted with the other family members too. No whining now, this is the job you chose. Go get ready. You will have to be ready for when the princesses leave."

Tim left after saying that and didn't add another sentence.

Lisa chuckled a bit from behind.

"Dammit, I don't want to deal with the other snotty princesses," Ning whined. "They feel way too pampered. I don't like being around them."

This time even Reeve chuckled. "You guys laugh at my misery?" Ning asked.

"No, no," Lisa said. "I promise, Elina isn't as bad as she seems. She's pampered, yes... maybe even a little snotty as you put it. But if she gets overbearing, I will take care of her, don't worry."

"Sigh, if you say so. I will go get changed. You guys can leave when you are ready," Ning told the two and left.

Ning left the area and went to the servant's quarters where the maids, guards, butlers, chefs, and other various servants of the Royal family lived.

The area was on the back of the palace, and there were nearly 100 rooms just for the servants.

Ning went into his room there and got changed into a guard's outfit, which was just a casual black shirt and pants to help them dissolve into the crowd and not stand out very much.

Once he was ready, he walked out of the room and went out to the front of the palace, along with 2 other similarly dressed individuals, waiting for the princesses to arrive.

The other two guards were both men, and were in charge of Reeve and Lisa, while Ning would be in charge of princess Elina.

Ning waited for them to come out and while he did so, he thought about how the day had gone so far.

He remembered his talk with the Vice president and how sketchy he was acting. 'That dude definitely knows about the absorption techniques. No wonder he asked me if I was a noble as the first thing after learning I had a technique,' Ning thought.

'Let's see how he deals with this situation then. It was smart of him to tell me not to spread this information so he could deal with it in silence, but he did promise to reveal it to others once he was done learning it,' Ning thought.

A smile crept on his face. "Let's see how long it takes him to 'learn' it," he thought. The door opened and the two princesses walked out, each equally beautiful.

One had a mature beauty while the other had a child-like beauty. By Ning's standard, she didn't look a day over 18.

"Let's go sister," Elina clung onto Lisa, and all 6 of the people there started walking out of the palace.