Chosen Mate of the Beastmen Empire by Lewis Reed

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Nyx was teasing him and then backing off? Not a chance.

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Kian's thin lips pursed tight, his breathing heavy. His deep eyes locked onto Nyx, as if daring her to face the consequences of igniting his passion. Yet he couldn't read her mind, unsure if she was really willing.

Even with their dual cultivation partner contract, he'd never force her.

After a long silence, a sudden wave from pleasure of teasing him surged through the Soul–Connecting Bracelet on his wrist. Kian froze, then looked up to catch the mischievous smile tugging at Nyx's lips.

He almost laughed. 'Figures,' he thought to himself.

His large, elegant hand snagged Nyx's ankle, the softness of her skin beneath his fingers. With a gentle pull, he shifted her position. Trapped beneath him, Nyx curled her toes, looking both delicate and helpless.

"Let me help, Nykie," Kian said. His face stayed calm, but his voice had lost its usual cool edge.

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Cultivation did ease fatigue, and with Kian's help, it worked twice as well. That's why Nyx wasn't completely worn out, but she still sprawled like a lazy rabbit, her fur seeming to melt in the imagined midday sun, unwilling to move.

Kian sat beside her, using a tiny comb to smooth her fur. Her ears twitched and flattened backward at the touch. She was so cute it hurt. His self–control crumbled. After a few seconds of struggle, he couldn't resist brushing his fingertips over her fur.

The next moment, the angry bunny latched onto his wrist, kicking and squirming. She only stopped her zero–damage tantrum when Hazel's and Kyle's voices drifted from outside.

That morning, disciples from the Sword Guild and Herbal Valley had arrived. Elder Cyan sent them to fetch Nyx for guest greetings.

Ever since Nyx saved the Violet Soul Grass, Herbal Valley's elders had been eyeing her. They'd brought piles of spirit plants as gifts, practically trying to steal her away. But Elder Cyan chased them out before they could say more than a word.

Among the guests was Warren Mitchell, head of the Sword Guild. An old friend of Elder Cyan's, he'd led his team to the Celestial for the Sect Competition and dropped by to catch up.

Hearing Elder Cyan had a new disciple, he'd offered a Heavenly Grade Magical Artifact as a welcome gift.

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"Thank you, Mr. Mitchell." Nyx bowed politely. She couldn't meet an elder as a rabbit, so she had quickly shifted back to human form and smoothed her clothes before coming.

Warren Mitchell had a kind face, as steady and generous as a mountain–exactly what Nyx pictured a cultivation leader to be. After presenting the gift, he chatted briefly, then his gaze landed on Kian behind her.

Maybe it was a sword cultivator's sixth sense. Even without the Demon–Breaking Sword, Warren knew at a glance that Kian wielded a blade.

Elder Cyan chuckled, "I called you here to meet my youngest disciple's dual cultivation partner."

He mused, "Even though this kid's set on staying with Nyx, his talent shouldn't go to waste. If he doesn't want to join the Celestial, that's fine, but the Sword Guild's different."

Among the hundreds of sects and clans in the cultivation world, sword cultivators were a dime a dozen. But when it came to true mastery, the Sword Guild reigned supreme.

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Warren sized Kian up for a long moment, unable to hide his admiration. "This kid's got real talent, he thought,

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He didn't need to test Kian's skills–one look was enough. The young man's presence and gaze were something else, filled with grit and resolve most lacked.

Warren couldn't help thinking, 'Cyan's as lucky as ever. Picks up a talented disciple out of nowhere, and his disciple's partner turns out to be a once–in–a–millennium sword prodigy

A spark of excitement shot through Warren. For a second, he even considered taking Kian as his own pupil. But after a pause, he shook his head with a sigh. "I'm not cut out to be his mentor. His sword's too sharp

Sure, they were both sword cultivators, but their styles might clash. Trying to teach Kian could end up doing more harm than good.

As he thought about who could mentor Kian, one name came to mind. Problem was, that guy never took on disciples….

After some thought, Warren said slowly, "Our sect's Sword Saint–he's the top swordsman in the cultivation world right now. He's never accepted disciples, but if he gave Kian some pointers, it'd be a game–changer.

Kian bowed in thanks and tucked the information away. He'd been studying at Celestial's Sword Peak for a while, picking up some moves, but he always felt like something was missing.

'Sword Saint?' Nyx blinked, confused. She'd thought Warren was the strongest, being the Sword Guild's leader. How could someone rank higher?

As if reading her mind, Warren smiled kindly, "Being the leader doesn't mean having the highest cultivation, not in our guild."

Sword cultivation needed total focus, but leading a sect meant drowning in mundane affairs. It's hard to keep improving when buried in chores.

Warren took the job precisely because his talent had hit a ceiling. He'd worked his butt off to get where he was, but further progress was a long shot. So he stepped up to shoulder the responsibility.

Nyx's eyes lit up. "Is the Sword Saint here at the Celestial too?" When Warren nodded, her mood soared.

She thought, 'With the Sword Saint around, Kian could learn during the Sect Competition. If he learns fast, we won't have to be apart!

Having made up her mind, she started rummaging through her storage bag, trying to figure out what gift would impress Kian's never–met mentor. But the others weren't as hopeful.

Elder Cyan and Warren shared a look, both subtly shaking their heads. The Sword Saint only had eyes for his sword. Chances were slim he'd bother teaching some random kid.

Most sword cultivators blew all their spirit stones on sword nurturing, leaving them broke and unable to buy much else.

Offer them spirit plants or pills, and they'd likely take them–after all, gifts usually came with strings attached. G. advice in return wasn't much of a hassle for them.

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But the Sword Saint was a different story. Born into a rich cultivation family, he'd never worried about spirit stones. No one knew what could actually catch his eye.

Just as expected, when Warren personally brought Kian to visit, the Sword Saint slammed the door in their faces. He was only at the Sect Competition to support the Sword Guild. Disturb him with anything else, and he wouldn't even cut Warren any slack.

Since they couldn't even meet the Sword Saint, Nyx's carefully picked gift went undelivered.

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Watching her bunny form with droopy ears and a worried face, Kian gently scooped her into his palm. Using his fingers like a comb, he stroked her fur.

"Don't sweat it," He comforted her, pressing a kiss on her tiny head. "Mr. Mitchell said he'll take me to watch the Sword Saint practice swords tomorrow morning."

He figured, 'If I didn't get any tips, so be it. Maybe just watching the master practice will teach me something.

Noticing Nyx moping, Kian tried to change the subject. "Some Sword Guild and Herbal Valley disciples headed to the canteen. Wanna check it out, Nykie?"

Before, the canteen was only for Herb Peak disciples. Other peak elders and disciples could eat there sometimes, but rarely. For the Sect Competition, they'd expanded it, but it still couldn't fit everyone. Food sold out fast, but now anyone could buy. However, the canteen was only famous inside the Celestial. Most visiting disciples didn't care about the food.

When Nyx got there, the place was packed–mostly Celestial disciples. While outsiders weren't interested, the Celestial disciples had been dying to eat there.

A few Sword Guild and Herbal Valley disciples tagged along with friends, squeezing into the crowd, looking lost. They stared around, confused by the bustle.

As a bunny, Nyx nestled inside Kian's jacket, just her fluffy head peeking out. She hid well, and with everyone busy fighting over food, no one noticed her.

Thinking everything was safe, she tapped Kian's chest with her paw, ready to leave. Then a burning gaze hit her.

Nyx stiffened and looked back. A young guy with a longsword on his back stood there. He had a boyish face, probably a Sword Guild young disciple.

He didn't even try to hide his staring. After ogling the bunny for a moment, he pushed through the crowd straight toward her.

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