Chosen Mate of the Beastmen Empire by Lewis Reed

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"Hi…" the guy called out.

The tiny rabbit darted back into Kian's jacket. She'd dealt with enough unwanted approaches in the Celestial wire stepper freld to strike up conversations with her.

Perhaps it was her tiny stature that made it easy for people to overlook her anus as a demon cultivator and instinctively regard her as a spirit pet. Those with deep pockets would even dish out offers to buy her right on the spot.

Now everyone in the Celestial knew better, but the new arrivals from Sword Gold and Herbal Valley hadn't caught onyez

Nyx's cheeks squished into soft mounds as she pressed her face against Kian's firm chew, annoyaace women all seiter face.

'Should've stayed human, she thought. I hid so well. How'd he spot me through the crowd?

One glance at the young sword cultivator's outfit told her he was loaded. Expensive fabrics, rare tankers for a sand cultivator to dress like this, he had to be obscenely wealthy.

And rich folks had a habit of thinking money solved everything. Just like those Celestial silver spoon disciples wint hounded her before, refusing to take no for an answer.

Nyx tucked her head in, feigning sleep. Minutes passed, and nothing happened After waiting a bit longer, the sword cultivator still didn't utter the words she'd expected.

She wondered. 'Maybe I'd overreacted? Maybe he'd been looking at someone else?

With the canteen packed to the brim, she figured he might've been eyeing someone else. Maybe he'd spored an old friend She'd probably just been imagining things.

Convinced she'd imagined it, she popped her head out of Kian's jacket. Suddenly, the guy's gaze slammed into her—so intense it felt like a hand pressing against her fur. She fell back in fright.

Kian's hand shot up, catching her through the jacket before she could fall and holding her in his palm. After a few reassuring strokes, Nyx pulled herself together and crawled back out, shaking her dizzy head.

The sword cultivator's eyes softened as he studied her bristling fur. "Hi, are you a Celestial disciple?"

Nyx assumed he was addressing Kian, so she ignored him and busied herself rubbing her cheeks and smoothing her fur

When the silence stretched on, she finally sensed something was off and realized he'd been speaking to her. 'Hah?'

'He's actually talking to me? Not treating me like a spirit pet? she wondered.

During her entire time at the Celestial, countless people had tried to strike up conversations with her, but no one approached her quite like this.

Pride swelled in her chest. She perked up, forgetting her earlier scare. "I'm from Herb Peak" She didn't sense any malice or covetousness from him and actually thought quite well of him.

Still, given he'd gone out of his way to approach her, she offered a cautious warning, "I already have a dual cultivation partner," she said, hedging her bets.

With that, she clambered onto Kian's shoulder and nuzzled his cheek, staking her claim. The soft brush of her fur against Kian's skin made his furrowed brows relax a little.

The sword cultivator froze for a second, then smiled and said, "I've got a dual cultivation partner too. A rabbit demon, just

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like yours."

When he spoke of his cultivation partner, the harsh lines around his eyes softened. She sharp, cold air that clang to him melted away completely, like snow vanishing in the sun.

Kian tensed up right away, cupping Nyx protectively in his hand, shielding her from the sword cultivator's gaze

He locked eyes with the cultivator. After a moment's scrutiny, he decided the guy was telling the truth. Still, his grip on Nyz' didn't budge, his body coiled tight and his expression guarded.

"Don't worry, I mean no harm. Just a fellow sort of kinship when I saw you, the sword cultivator said, never once sparing Kian a glance. His attention remained fixed solely on the little rabbit, as if Kian wasn't even worth acknowledging

With that, he casually tossed over a storage bag, which landed softly in Nyx's paws. "A little something to make up for startling you."

The dainty storage bag sailed toward her. Nyx instinctively cupped her paws around it, then nearly dropped it when she probed the contents with her spiritual sense. "Ni Ako way!" she stammered.

The bag overflowed with rare treasures-heavenly herbs and mystical ores jumbled together, but even a quick glance revealed their staggering value.

She thought, 'I can't just take all this out of the blue. We've barely spoken, and he doesn't even know me. Why would he hand over so much?'

The treasures were incredible, but Nyx felt like she'd been handed a hot potato. But the cultivator waved it off, looking loaded.

"How about you show me around this Herb Peak canteen? I'm new here." He figured if she felt like she'd earned it, she'd accept the gift.

The truth was, he'd been to this top sect so many times that it had lost all its charm. Years, decades, even centuries went by, but everything stayed the same—except for this canteen. It was finally something different.

Had the sword cultivator inquired about anything else, Nyx would have shrunk from playing tour guide. But since he'd stumbled upon her area of expertise—the Herb Peak canteen—her ears perked up and confidence filled her voice.

"Right this way," she said.

As the canteen's secret chef and supplier, she carried a lot of clout here.

Even though she typically dined in her home's small kitchen, a private room was perpetually set aside for her in the bustling canteen. Modest in size, it nonetheless provided a perfect buffer from the din outside.

The little rabbit hopped onto the table and rubbed its paws together, and unfurled the lengthy menu. "Let's pick our dishes!" Regular folks had to pick from the daily specials, but she as a partner, had perks.

Not sure what the cultivator liked, she pointed out some signature dishes, explaining the ingredients, flavors a

cture.

The sword cultivator didn't seem to have any preferences. He just kept being overly generous. "Let's get one of everything What else do you like? Feel free to add more. I'll pay with spirit stones."

Nyx froze for a second. She thought, 'Al least he didn't order the whole dishes.

It wasn't about the spirit stones. Ordering a mountain of food would just be wasteful and pile extra work on the busy chefs. So Nyx carefully picked out a few dishes

The sword cultivator watched her like a doting dad, his voice gentle. "Don't hold back on my account." Even though he was a

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cultivator, he wasn't short on cash.

His gace made Nyx's fur bristle, and she turned her head, thinking, 'Who does he think he is, trying to act like my dad?'

'I'm already 100 years old,' she lied, stretching the truth to make him back off.

To her surprise, the sword cultivator's brows lifted. His gaze turned even softer. "So young…"

Shocked, Nyx couldn't help but perk up her ears. "What about you? How old are you?"

He really did look young—smooth face, easy smile. But she knew looks meant nothing among cultivators. Once they formed their foundation, their bodies reverted to youth, but age and wisdom still showed in their eyes.

Yet his eyes held no traces of wear. Just clear, untarnished light.

The sword cultivator shrugged with a faint smile. "I've lost track. Time flies when you're cultivating. Maybe I'm several thousand years old now."

In the cultivation world, being several thousand years old was ancient. Most cultivators couldn't live that long without reaching high realms. Patriarchs over ten thousand years old did exist-like the Celestial's leader-but they were rare than phoenix feathers.

Nyx had just filtered about her age, assuming he was exaggerating too, but she had proof. She buried her face in Kian's arms to dodge the topic.

The sword cultivator let it drop. His voice turned gentle, and he chatted like he was indulging a junior, smoothly changing the subject.

When Ernest heard Nyx had ordered, he rushed her dishes to the front of the line. A servant carried them in reverently. "Please enjoy, Nyx."

The lids trapped the enticing aroma. The instant they were lifted, the mouthwatering fragrance burst forth, swirling around in a rich tide of spiritual energy.

The sword cultivator's eyes lit up. He inhaled deeply without hiding his appreciation. "This smells amazing."

He thought, 'No wonder the canteen is packed. The food here is something else. I didn't expect the Celestial to dabble in culinary cultivation.'

As he ate, his expression grew dreamy. Too focused on stuffing his face to talk, he wolfed down the food and placed several more orders for dishes.

In truth, he hadn't had his fill. Deep down, he longed to savor every item on the menu over and over again, but he noticed the line of disciples outside. He was only getting this feast thanks to the little rabbit, so he held back.

Stuffed and happy, he sat, eyes crinkling with satisfaction as he chatted. "You're Nyx Voss?"

When the little rabbit nodded, his grin widened. "My dual cultivation partner's last name is Voss too."

'Both rabbit demons with the same last name—what a coincidence. And her dual cultivation partner's a swordsman too," he mused.

That thought finally turned his gaze to Kian, who'd been ignored till now. The sword cultivator gave him a head-to-toe look.

"Quiet guy, maybe too quiet. But he stands straight, has sharp brows, and an air of calm. Guess he'll do as her partner," he decided.

"Let's have a sparring match sometime." The sword cultivator traded communication talismans with Kian and Nyx. "I am Greg Campbell from the Sword Guild," he said.

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He refused to take back the storage bag he'd given Nyx, insisting she keep it.

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Suddenly flushed with treasures, Nyx stared after the departing sword cultivator. 'Are rich folks always so generous?' she wondered.

A large hand covered her eyes, plunging her into darkness. Nyx closed her eyes, rolling over to expose her fluffy belly.

A searing kiss landed on her, making her squirm and wriggle, ears twitching wildly.

"Just give me a bit more time, Nyxie," Kian murmured. "I promise I'll do better."

Nyx blinked in surprise. She could earn enough to support them and had no shortage of treasures, but she wouldn't crush his enthusiasm.

The little rabbit hopped onto Kian's shoulder, whispering, "Deal."

Dawn broke when Warren arrived the next morning.

"The Sword Saint's a solitary guy. He lives and breathes swordplay. Even if you stand right in front of him, he'll act like you don't exist. Don't take it personally," he warned, trying to spare Kian disappointment.

Besides his cold shoulder, there's plenty to watch out for. Warren ticked off more warnings. "His sword energy's all over the place-we'll stay back. Stick close behind me and keep still, or you'll end up hurt."

'Don't greet him. And don't open your mouth while he's practicing. Best if you ignore me too. Just keep quiet.

'If you're still hoping to be his disciple, drop it now. It's not that I won't help. He's a lone wolf who's never taken on anyone…" Kian listened in silence, nodding. He had a knack for fading into the background. With his act tucked away, he shadowed Warren like a ghost.

Even an ordinary training session from a master-level sword cultivator shook the earth.

The mountaintop was shielded by a barrier. Disciples from the Sword Guild and Celestial's Sword Peak crowded outside, craning their necks to catch a glimpse of the Sword Saint and maybe steal a technique or two.

The barrier blurred their view-all they caught were glimpses of his figure flickering in and out. Sword energy sent spiritual power ripping against the barrier, safeguarding onlookers yet blocking real inspiration.

Warren sliced open a gap in the barrier, shielding himself and Kian behind him with spiritual power as they slipped inside. A sharp-eyed Sword Guild disciple spotted them right away. "Hey, Mr. Mitchell's here!"

"Who's that trailing behind him?"

"Could he be Mr. Mitchell's new disciple?"

Why else would Warren bring someone to watch the Sword Saint practice swordsmanship? Only his top disciple, that privilege.

They wondered when Warren had taken on this new disciple. No one had caught wind of it.

The Sword Peak disciples squinted, puzzled by his familiar figure. "He looks like one of ours…"

Noticing the Sword Guild disciples' confused faces, they quickly explained, "He's not from the Celestial. He's the dual cultivation partner of Nyx from Herb Peak. That's why he's not wearing the uniform or carrying a token."

"Now that you mention it, he is a sword cultivator…" another piped up.

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"He's got talent. Some Sword Peak elders tried recruiting him, but he turned them down-said he wanted to stay with Nyx." Someone scoffed, "Thought it was true love, but looks like he's after something bigger."

"Sword Peak and Herb Peak aren't half far. Does he really think the Sword Guild is close to the Celestial?"

"Enough, call it out."

"That's Mr. Mitchell! If he took an interest in you, could you say no?"

The Sword Guild was every sword cultivator's dream. These Celestial sword cultivators secretly regretted not joining the Sword Guild disciples and were ashamed. Being disloyal to the sect was taboo.

Kian wasn't bound by sect rules. He could choose. And with talent like his, catching Warren's eye? Talk about luck.

"Think Mr. Mitchell will put in a good word with the Sword Saint?"

"Maybe the Sword Saint's already eyeing his talent? Wanna take him on?"

"Even if he doesn't, a few pointers would be gold…"

The Sword Peak disciples seethed with envy, wishing they were in Kian's shoes.

The Sword Guild disciples let out a collective scoff, doubling over with laughter. "You're kidding yourselves!" Outsiders might not know about the Sword Saint, but they did.

"He won't spare this guy a second glance, let alone admire him."

Genius or not, the Sword Saint ignored them all. He wouldn't spare anyone a glance unless they were a top-notch cultivator who could actually challenge him.